

# RE-EMBODYING LEADERSHIP THROUGH A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE SACRED

Submitted by Alison Margaret Grieg Young to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in Leadership Studies June 2014.

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## Abstract

The last couple of decades have witnessed an exponential increase of interest in religion and spirituality in the academic disciplines of leadership and organization. Some scholars argue that this interest is prone to neglect analysis of Western religion's historical origins and therefore of what may be its repressed influences on leadership and organizational practices. Others, that this revived focus on the sacred may be limited by an over-reliance on too narrow a theology rooted within a singular (Judeo-Christian) cosmology.

I seek to both speak to and expand the concerns of such previous research. I do this by introducing ecofeminism as a theoretical framework for a critical analysis of the macro level of what has already been framed as the repressed influence of mainstream religious orthodoxy within the field of leadership studies. Building upon the perspectives provided by ecofeminism and feminist spirituality I extend the aforementioned concerns by suggesting that some of the ethics within the Judeo-Christian cosmology itself bear some relationship to and responsibility in crises relating to environmental sustainability and social justice. I explore a number of related themes, arguing in particular that the

demotion of nature and partnership with what might be described as the divine feminine within Western culture are not only linked but also generate profound dysfunction, in both leadership and organization.

In the second section I present empirical data at a micro level, collected within a contemporary spiritual community where both nature and the divine feminine play central roles in its cosmology. The School of Movement Medicine functions as a financially successful business organization dedicated to the encouragement of spiritual fulfillment, ecological sustainability and social justice. The practices it teaches are specifically designed to assist those who engage with them to take responsibility for responding to the individual, societal and global challenges that lie before us - aiming, in other words to make leaders out of members.

My hope is that these explorations may answer some of the calls of previous work to broaden representation within the leadership and spirituality field, as well as enriching its theory and practice with greater potential to generate increased levels of social justice, environmental sustainability and human fulfillment.

**Keywords: Leadership; Ecofeminism; Cosmology; Shamanism; Insider Research**

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### **Previous related publications**

Ali Young (2010) *Management Learning* 41: 593 Book Review: *Doing Work Based Research: Approaches to Enquiry for Insider Researchers*. Carol Costley, Geoffrey Elliott and Paul Gibbs (2010). London: SAGE, 2010.

Ali Young (2011) *Walking between the worlds: from shamanic practice to academic practice in one giant leap*. *International Journal of Work, Organisation and Emotion* 4 (3/4) 350–360.

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London: Glasshouse Books, Routledge.

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## PROLOGUE

### Introduction

“Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement” (Cixous 1976: 875).

Writing in *Woman Managers – Moving On*, Judi Marshall (1995) begins her chapter on the practice of enquiry by explaining her own personal motivations for conducting her research into woman in senior positions who leave organizations. Myself a senior woman who let go of a career in my forties, I am, like Marshall, skeptical about the existence of objective truth, believing that particularly in social enquiries, researchers are indelibly inscribed in their own texts. Rather than approaching research as any kind of attempt to represent a detached scientific truth, I see it, much as Marshall does, as a quest for understanding, not only of the world around me but also of my place within it. Viewing this as strength, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have suggested that “new tales from the field will now...reflect the researchers’ direct and personal engagement with the historical period they themselves are living through” (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 14). I confess at the outset then that I present this thesis as an exploration of issues that matter to me. It is both a product of, as well as a reflection upon some of the tensions I experience in my own life, many of which intersect with the society I am a part of. In doing so it looks at religious hierarchy, gender, the body and the environment and how these relate to leadership and organizational culture in the everyday world.

Perhaps ultimately, any one of us can only make available that which we are already aware of. As I discuss in a later chapter on methodology at some length, I believe that the construction of any analysis is intimately influenced by the life experience, or what Sinclair (2010) refers to as the “place” of the person conducting the research in the first instance. I write as a fifty year old, white, able-bodied, Western woman. While I am highly educated and very privileged in some ways, there are other ways in which I remain on what bell hooks (1984) describes as the margins of my culture. I bring to my research over two decades of experience of working therapeutically in the field of domestic and sexual abuse, with some of the most disempowered sections of my community, many of them women and children. These experiences have done a great deal to heighten my awareness of social injustice as it functions in our institutional organizations. Incorporating therefore, Sinclair’s notion that being explicit about

our place holds the potential to highlight both power and vulnerabilities in new ways, what follows, particularly in this prologue, but also at other junctures when I write in the first person takes up her encouragement to write “leadership differently” (Sinclair 2010; see also Burrell 2000). Including both my own voice, as well as a range of voices from within the community in which I conduct my ethnography will I hope, also serve Ferguson’s (1994) suggestion that organizational studies as a whole will benefit from the inclusion of greater diversity. An approach that I view in itself, as what Meyerson and Scully (1995) refer to as a “tempered radicalism”<sup>1</sup> that attempts to push the boundaries of traditional approaches to writing social science. I also take inspiration from overtly feminist scholarship (Krieger 1991; Reinharz 1992) in an approach that places what qualitative researchers call reflexivity, in a central position, in such an enquiry.

Reflexivity, or awareness, of the way in which the placed and embedded, or what we may otherwise describe as the *embodied self*, influences and impacts the world around us, has been centre stage in the countercultural upsurges of the spiritual “revolution”, that this thesis partly concerns itself with, from the beginning (Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Stevens 2012; Western 2012).

Though as we will be exploring more, explicit acknowledgement of the self as body, still tends to play a very peripheral role in most of our institutional settings, including our academic analyses (Field 2000; Stevens 2012).

Whether or not it is concerned with the body, interpretations of the socio-cultural significance of counter-cultural activities and the phenomena associated with them fall broadly into two camps. Lasch (1979) and Schur (1976) have offered criticism of the pitfalls of the dangerous narcissism and self-absorption that can result from spending too much time focused upon the self; Clark et al (1981) couple it’s hazards with those of psychological regression; Bird (1980) with a loss of moral accountability; Sennett (1977) with the tyranny of the intimate - a position which seems to echo Grint’s, whose work is explored in depth in this thesis, own conclusions when he talks about the potential for totalitarianism inherent within the current spirituality at work movement (Grint 2010: 103); McIntyre (1981) objects to the triumph of the therapeutic, whilst Wilson (1976)

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<sup>1</sup> Meyerson and Scully (1995) have described tempered radicals as individuals within organizations whose life experience has sensitized them to injustice, leading to their commitment to work for social change. See also p. 256.

damns it altogether as culturally irrelevant. Given that women currently outnumber men two to one in the social movements of Human Potential<sup>2</sup> and New Age spirituality,<sup>3</sup> so associated with personal self-reflection, it is hard not to recall Freudian notions of female hysteria at this juncture (Kripal 2008; Mason 1990). In turn raising the question of whether the opposition to the personal, so evident in the work of such scholars relates to gender.

Other and perhaps fewer scholars, including Heelas, (2008) Roszak (1978) and Kripal (2007) however, take a different approach, arguing for the potentially positive social merit of 'knowing thyself' and perhaps also therefore, of becoming more aware of the way one's own repressions may influence and intersect with what goes on around us as we participate in the many organizations of which we are a part. While Beckford (1984) in looking at the emphasis on healing and life affirming renewal that often goes hand in hand in the Human Potential Movement and the New Religious and Healing Movements<sup>4</sup> that continue to emerge from it, also discusses their positive potentials. Potentials that he suggests may include; improvements in both individual and collective life; a renewal of religious imagination; a value framework that encourages a shared ethical stance and a renewed populism (see also Anthony and Robbins 1982; Bellah 1975; Capra 1982; Wuthnow 1978).

Writing from the perspective of eco-psychology Theodore Roszak (1978) makes very clear linkages between what he describes as the rising demand for the personal sovereignty of self-discovery with the increasing awareness of the 'rights of the planet'. Arguing that the scale of industrial society threatens the

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<sup>2</sup> The actual term Human Potential Movement is attributed to some of the original personnel involved with the Californian personal growth centre Esalen. A particular set of values that grew out of the humanistic psychology created by Albert Maslow in the 1940s and 1950s, it now encompasses a wide range of self-improvement groups and programmes, shaped by New Age philosophies and alternative spiritualities. Those within the movement subscribe to the idea that at it's best humanity holds the potential to experience happiness, fulfillment and creativity as our predominant state of being (Puttick 2004).

<sup>3</sup> With antecedents in nineteenth century religions it's contemporary forms are a highly eclectic mix that Hanegraaff (2002) suggests mean a wide variety of things to a wide variety of people.

<sup>4</sup> This is a specific term employed by Beckord (1984)

rights of person and planet equally, he proposes that what he calls the personalist approach amongst humans both mirrors and supports the need to support the diversity of the natural environment. Conceptualizing the ideals of equality and individuation as part of an intrinsic, ecological drive for survival, he argues that person and planet are inseparably interconnected. Indeed, that the same systems of scale that threaten our personal needs for recognition and autonomy and for a quality of life that supports us, also endanger the ecological fabric upon which we depend. The upsurge of demand to have our individuality *matter* amidst the anomy and alienation of the late modern era therefore has a vital functionality to it that also serves the needs of a healthy ecosystem.

“The man or woman who has learned to say, “I am the equal of kings and priests, I deserve to enjoy the full rights of the community...will never surrender the dignity those words bring into their lives...Under the pressure of that declaration of uniqueness, the most venerable institutions may be shaken to their foundations...deserted by people whose sense of personhood will not allow them to follow and obey as part of an organized mass...We begin with the insight that all systems and institutions that become large enough to inhibit our growth as persons endanger the planet as well. If, then, we work to deepen people’s sense of personal worth, strengthen their natural instinct for spiritual growth, augment their citizenly need to participate in the institutions that govern their lives, then they will find in themselves the most delicate gauge of ecologically intelligent scale. *Perhaps this is even the subtle interaction which the earth uses to defend against our depredations.* (Roszak 1978: 27- 37).

Indeed Roszak’s view that the individual subject and their state of being and behaviour actually *counts*, not as a cipher, but as an integral aspect of a wider whole, directly mirrors the belief system being propagated in the spiritual community that I research for this thesis and which is presented in ethnographic form in its second section. It is a viewpoint that stands in direct contrast to the distinction drawn by Heelas and Woodhead (2005) in their work in *Spiritual Revolution – Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, of the conventional religious, “life-as” conformity to role and external authority, being one that eclipses uniqueness. A definition corresponding much more closely to Grint’s (2010) exposition of the sacred, in his paper *The Sacred in Leadership*, which contains a series of propositions that I will be examining in considerable depth in the course of this thesis. So that, one of the things I seek to explore here is whether a re-constellated version of the sacred (of the kind that Heelas and Woodhead suggest is quietly, yet inexorably, replacing our historical model) has the potential to influence the way we do leadership, particularly in relation to gender and the environment.

Unique individuality, or what the Human Potential Movement (HPM) describes as self-actualization, of the kind being explored in my research community has, after all, been accorded an increasingly important role in Western society since some of the counter-cultural shifts of the 1960's that first challenged mainstream psychology, organized religion, scientific materialism and the kind of normalizing conformity that went with it all. Associated with a range of humanistic psychologists from Abraham Maslow, Carl Roger's, Fritz Perls and Wilhelm Reich to Michael Murphy and Richard Price, the founders of Esalen, who are attributed with coining the term HPM in the first place, Puttick (2004) describes its wide-ranging influence thus.

"The explorations and advances of the HPM trailblazed the now widespread interest of mainstream society in personal development, the quality of relationships, emotional literacy, human values in the workplace...A core HPM belief is that self-love is the precondition for real love of others – altruism – and that awareness (or insight) is essential for effective social action. It has also been argued that...self-development is a response to powerlessness...Within Western alternative spirituality, most of the groups loosely classified as New Age can also be fitted under the HPM umbrella, as can many Pagan and shamanic groups...Nowadays the HPM has expanded from the margins into mainstream society...it has also had a major impact on social attitudes through the adoption of its methods in teacher-training colleges, academic courses, and, above all, in management training programmes. The most interesting and significant secular development of the HPM is its impact on business philosophy...increasingly influenced by 'soft' HPM values...Whether business, personal development and spirituality can combine...easily and smoothly...is yet to be seen" (Puttick 2004; see also Heelas 2008).

Whether individual subjectivity can truly find a place of value within large organizational structures and the leaderships that run them, it is nonetheless arguable that it probably occupies a more central position in Western culture than it ever has before now, a factor that has also brought distinct change to some areas of academic study. Evidenced, for example, in some of the experimental and more subjectively focused writing styles already referenced (Burrell 2000; Kenny 2008; Sinclair 2010; Sparkes 2007). Though admittedly it is not yet embraced with open arms in many contexts.

Writing in an extensive account of the Human Potential organization, Esalen, mentioned above (a place that he suggests is part of the founding story of this changed cultural landscape and which coincidentally also plays a role in my own story) Jeffrey Kripal (2007), a professor of philosophy and religious thought, comments at some length about the role of his own subjectivity in the narrative he offers about Esalen.

“Richard Price often called Esalen the Rorschach or Ink Blot Institute. He was thinking of those funny looking ink-blot pictures...that psychologists use to test a person’s projections. “I see a butterfly, or maybe it’s a black bat...that looks sort of like a vagina”. That sort of thing. Price thought that Esalen, rather like the ink blots, encourages people to see themselves in it, and that there are as many Esalens as there are people deeply engaging the place as spiritual presence, as therapeutic refuge, as sensual spa and so on...Before we begin our story, then, I need to be very clear about what I think I am seeing in all this ink and about when and how I am projecting – that is, I need to own up to my own bat and vagina sightings” (Kripal 2007: 5).

Both leadership and the sacred, two of the main topics under discussion in this thesis, seem to me to be prone to the same kinds of issues, also being repositories for some of our deepest (and often, it seems, only partially conscious, if not outright repressed) longings and discontents. All this said, I too then propose to begin by introducing my reader to some of my background context and to some of the ways in which the problems that this thesis grapples with, intersect with my personal search for meaning over five decades - that is, with my subjective understanding. Given my disavowal of research as an objective endeavor it seems reasonable to arm my reader with some information about my own relationship with bats and vagina’s, or their relevant equivalents in this thesis. So that they will perhaps then be more able to decide for themselves how the projections or filters, of which I myself may not be fully conscious, have influenced this thesis. In particular the way in which I interpret what Kripal refers to as the “world as text”, as I engage particular aspects of my life in dialogue with the process of prolonged disciplined study we call writing a doctorate (Kripal 2007: 17). I integrate several threads now as I proceed to weave personal narrative, some of the ‘geographical landmarks’ that may be needed for later and social theory all together, in what follows in the rest of this prologue.

### **Society and Subjectivity – Catechisms, “Peaceniks” and Draft Dodgers**

Born in 1964 shortly after the assassination of JFK and a few years before the first landing on the moon and the death of civil rights activist Martin Luther King, I grew up in a highly political household. By the tender age of two I was already entertaining guests with the party piece my father had taught me, of crossing myself whilst simultaneously reciting Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky. My father, a historian, a proponent of what he described as democratic socialism, never considered himself an ideologue. And yet I knew from a young age on some very visceral, that is to say, embodied level, what John Gray (2007) proposes in

his book *Enlightenment's Wake*, that politics and religion often have a great deal in common and that atheism can be every bit as evangelical as any other faith. My father who had grown up in severe poverty and suffered from tuberculosis as a child took the view that economics were the key factor in the creation of social justice and collective well being, believing as Marx did that religion was the opiate of the people (Tracey 2012). Growing up in a rural area in Scotland where the church still exercised considerable control over people's lives during his childhood it is not too difficult perhaps to catch sight of the bat in flight there.

My mother meantime, like many other women in the have-it-all generation, not only worked full-time outside of the family home but also held ultimate responsibility for all the domestic activity within it, making her the subject of what sociologists blithely refer to as the double labour day (Hochschild and Machung 1989). In the intervening years between my birth and that of my physically handicapped brother's, she lost five babies. Various counter cultural influences may have begun very slowly to alter the family and the roles, tasks and rewards associated with it. But what one scholar refers to as, "the massive subjective turn of modern culture" had not yet resulted in psychological attention for such processes (Taylor 1991: 26). In other words there was no counseling in those days and I became powerfully aware at a fairly young age that women's bodies came with very particular kinds of problems. While my mother's work outside the home undoubtedly increased family prosperity I also began to understand very early on that well-being requires tending to more than just economic factors. I have little doubt that the emotional effect of these losses, as well as other traumatic family events, including one that extended back to the 1st World War, had considerable impact on the family's emotional climate. This in turn has been one of my own motivations for embarking on a journey in which I have attempted to learn to embody the kind of emotional literacy<sup>5</sup> advocated by the Human Potential Movement which I hoped would improve life for the following generations, including my own children.

Perhaps it is no real surprise that subliminally immersed in so much death at such an early age I also began my search for what we in the West refer to as

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<sup>5</sup> The expression emotional literacy is often used interchangeably with the phrase emotional intelligence, referring to a capacity to recognize and therefore deal with our emotional states responsibly and 'appropriately' (Orbach 1994).



“God” before I was ten, demanding that my father deliver my democratic right to attend Sunday School bible classes. As fundamentally opposed to religion as he was, he acquiesced. Deprived of the rebellion that might have emerged from a refusal to allow me to explore, I quickly decided that Christianity had significant ‘logical’ difficulties that meant that I struggled to take it seriously even from this young age. Not least of these was the distinct absence of good female leads. Of course I was not able to articulate this until a very long time after these formative experiences and it is only with the writing of this thesis that I have given full voice to that which I identified as a girl. I was nonetheless aware from almost the beginning of my personal journey with “mystical anthropology” that meaning lies in the story being told and that some stories seemed, to me at least, to have more credibility than others (Kripal 2007). And whatever the other limitations that existed in the household I grew up in, there was a basic impulse towards democracy that meant that I was empowered to discover this for myself.

Maybe precisely because I was actively encouraged from an early age to eschew external authority (except of course at times when it was my father expressing it) I have always had a strong tendency to look within for leadership – to “start with the self” – as well as a driving need to learn things via my own experience (Heelas 2008: 201). By the time I reached adolescence my ongoing forays into my personal search for spiritual meaning (Kripal 2007) were beginning to result in the *experience of* a whole range of strange physical, bodily phenomena that seemed to me somehow beyond the norm. Whilst I had absolutely no cultural context to place these within I also intuitively felt that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with me. I am aware that this might seem like a rather odd thing to include here. It constitutes nonetheless what William James (1909), the psychologist and philosopher of religion, would describe as part of the empirical data that underpins much of the narrative that follows. A “wild fact”, of just the sort that James advocates including as part of a “radical empiricism” displaying, “faithfulness to the full data of human experience that refuses to ignore anomalies simply because they can not be fit into the reigning scientism of the day” (Kripal 2007: 6; see also James 1909). Looking for reasons for my embodied experiences became just one aspect of the personal search that eventually took me to the community that is

researched here. There I discovered both spiritual practices and explanations that form part of a shamanic worldview (a perspective central to this thesis to which we will turn shortly) functioning very differently from mainstream Western culture, within which I also found ways to integrate elements of my life that were otherwise inexplicable to me. Reading *Women in New Religions – In Search of Community, Sexuality and Spiritual Power* I found these particular aspects of my own life mirrored in the description of the shift in a feminism that moved from hostility towards spirituality as a distraction, to a feminism that “started getting interested in Paganism, partly through a politically motivated search for a more egalitarian religion, partly through having psychic and ‘energy’ experiences that could not be explained in terms of politics or science” (Puttick 1997: 218).

Meantime, in the outer realms, while much of my childhood had involved my initial fumbling attempts to somehow understand the events of the Holocaust after I came upon a book depicting lampshades made of human skin, my late adolescence saw my preoccupation shift to the nuclear threat. From there, involvement in the peace movement took me into direct action. With it came the awareness that the emotions that arose for me in the midst of confrontations with the police and army at the nuclear bases of Faslane in Scotland near where I grew up, were far from Ghandi-esque. This was to ignite a fascination in me with the question of how action based on attempts to lead change might incorporate emotions in ways that produce peace rather than conflict, indeed how I might actually learn to *embody* the kinds of qualities that might assist in creating movement toward peace.

Finding my psychology undergraduate modules far too cognitive for my essentially empirical interests I began looking elsewhere. I dipped briefly into the reading and practice of Zen and Buddhist mindfulness and an exploration of psychic healing. This resulted amongst other things in a philosophy honours dissertation on the question of the usefulness of Western medicine. In it I referenced Kuhn’s (1970/1996) work on paradigm shifts in science in order to argue that contemporary medicine represents a fragmented rather than a holistic system. Little did I know at 21 that I would later spend 12 years working in the belly of the medical beast as a systemic psychotherapist working in the psychiatric service, before leaving this career to renew my search for a holism that it seems can often be elusive in our overall cultural context.

Back then at 21 though I began volunteering in the group programme attached to a local drug rehabilitation project in the infamous Gorbals in Glasgow. The group therapy programme that I had joined as a volunteer was led by an American man who was at that time in the early 1980's, prior to amnesty, still unable to return to the United States due to the fact that he had fled to Canada rather than fight in Vietnam. A natural democrat, he believed that the fastest way to provide empowering leadership for others in his particular context, was unrelenting honesty and transparency about one's own cultural wounding. Instead of gathering points towards my application to become a social worker I found myself participating in a group programme, sharing with others, what I was just beginning to realize were my own considerable difficulties with my cultural context. As a result I became involved in a form of peer based therapeutic practice called co-counseling in a group of body workers heavily influenced by the work of Wilhelm Reich.

### **Reich, Body, Authority and Encounters with Charismatic Leadership**

Reich, originally a pupil of Freud's, had not only proved too challenging for the more conventional psycho-analytic community who expelled him from their midst, he had also been forced to flee from Nazi Germany. He later became such a controversial figure that he was eventually imprisoned by the Federal Drug Administration in the US where he died in jail in 1957 (Corrington 2003; see also Kripal 2007). Remarkably both the Germans and the Americans burnt his books. Reich is also yet another character amongst those who make appearances in this thesis who was connected to and indeed even given refuge at Esalen shortly before his arrest in the 1950's. Writing on subjects such as *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Reich (1946) drew very clear linkages between authoritarian systems of leadership (and following) and the ways in which cultures relate to the issue of the free expression of what he termed life energy, or orgone. His work, which influenced a wide range of cultural figures from Norman Mailer to Michel Foucault, theorized that culture is very much written into the body in the form of something he describes as character armouring - a description referring to the ways in which the socialization process both shapes and is stored within the body's very musculature (Corrington 2003; Puttick 1997). In other words, that oppression and the willingness both to impose and submit to authoritarian leadership (which I would

argue is a spectrum) are, quite literally, written into our bodies (see also Miller 2005). And whilst acknowledging the socially constructed nature of gender, one scholar of the role of women in New Religious Movements (NMR's)<sup>6</sup> also refers to the way in which such authoritarian systems also tend to privilege "hard, military, 'masculine' values over the softer 'feminine' values of relationship, feeling, nurturing, tenderness, intuition" (Puttick 1997: 12). Rather interestingly too in terms of the subject of conditioned religious inheritance, one particular discussion of the somatic (therapeutic body work) movement at Esalen quotes one of its current Board of Directors, Don Hanlon Johnson, as saying that he has never known a single body worker who has remained within his or her original church, synagogue or religious community (Kripal 2007: 224). Indeed the whole purpose of the kind of movement meditation employed within the spiritual practices of the community I research is to undo such armouring within the musculature of the body and restore the body to a state in which the energy within has more freedom to express its innate health.

For my part, the mid 1980's saw me immersed in a community exploring both Reich's and other somatically (body-based) influenced psychotherapy alongside radical explorations of alternative child-rearing practices. My experiences at this time not only convinced me of the validity of Reich's ideas they also began to change my relationship with the world around me in a number of important ways. Not least of which was an increasing interest in what sorts of daily practices would assist me in placing my own authority, as opposed to someone else's, at the centre of my experience. This shifting focus has also been identified as part of much larger change abroad in society at large, away from external authority towards more internal, subjective reference points. A change that in my own life began to place me amongst those who privilege what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) term as subjective-life spirituality, as we begin to experience the sacralization of our unique subjectivity. Whilst I had, as I described, been encouraged to do this within my family to a certain extent I came to believe that much Western culture, including that within the family, runs counter to this aspiration. And although I had embarked upon these explorations voluntarily, committing myself to the work of attempting to

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<sup>6</sup> This term is employed by Puttick (1997), Arweck (2002) and York (1995), who uses it as another descriptor for the New Age Movement.

dismantle my cultural conditioning from the inside would bring extreme challenge into my life. Involving little less than what the shamanism at the heart of this thesis refers to as dismemberment. Halifax describes the process involved thus,

“The realization of power occurs most frequently in the midst of an ordeal, a crisis involving an encounter with death...The entrance to the other world occurs through the act of total disruption. The neophyte surrenders to the realm of chaos, frequently making use of the experiences of fear and dread to amplify the intensity of the situation...These horrific adversaries become tutors as the...shaman acquires direct knowledge from direct experience. From this can come the opening of compassion and the awakening of empathy in the healer” (Halifax 1982: 10)

Or in other words that there is nothing quite like the direct experience of our own emotional suffering to open us up to the suffering of those in the world around us.

Shamanism itself, is thought to have originated as far back as the early Paleolithic cultures and is variously seen in anthropological terms as both functional and/or relating to the human search for meaning (Morris 2006). A complex of beliefs and ritual practices, shamanism is often seen as the prototypical, or “ancient ‘ur-religion’ of humankind, as virtually co-terminous with humanity” (Morris 2006: 16; see also Harner 1980). Classical shamanism is generally viewed as being brought to the popular imagination in recent times by Mircea Eliade (1964) in his classical study, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, work focused upon North and South America and South-East Asia. It is nonetheless the case that shamanism exists as a worldwide phenomena, embedded in a vast array of cultural and religious circumstances, always dynamic and highly adaptive (Morris 2006; see also Griffith 2006 for a contemporary populist account; Harner 1980; Saladin D’Anglure 1996). For this reason many of those who study and practice it in contemporary settings, view it more as a worldview or an ideology than as any kind of religion in an institutionalized sense (Morris 2006; Townsend 1997; Vitebsky 1950/1995).

The word shaman originates with the Tungus or Evenki people from Siberia, who used the term saman to describe their specialized priests. Shamanism has an ancient history of employing a variety of methods, including drumming, chanting and dancing, the use of hallucinogenic plants, sleep deprivation and isolation, in order to induce what are referred to as altered, trance or non-ordinary states of consciousness. Harner (1980) refers to these as Shamanic

## States of Consciousness.

Within contemporary neo-shamanism the altered state or trance is usually achieved using drumming, chanting or dancing. In the community I researched, music played for dancing tends to involve the kind of repetitive rhythms known to induce such shifts in state. This particular community also employs fasting, the physical isolation of vision quests and burial ceremonies, singing and sweat lodges. The focus of such rituals in such a context tends to be on healing, self-awareness, empowerment, personal growth and a deepened sense of interconnection with the natural environment. The purpose of moving into an altered state of consciousness is intended to generate improvement in well being for either the individual or the community, where community is defined as inclusive of the non-human world around us, with the health of the latter being seen as intimately interconnected with the former (See Plumwood 1993).

The shaman has been variously described as an inspired prophet or leader, a charismatic religious figure and someone who acts to solve the many problems presented to them, specifically through the control of spirits (Morris 2006; Lewis 1986). Within traditional societies shamans were and still are also often the mediators between the community and the environment, as well as cultural repositories who assisted with the transmission of culturally binding narratives (Abram 1997). Indeed the shaman might even be seen as what is referred to in leadership circles as the proto-typical sense-maker. The shaman then has been in many, many cultural contexts, a leader.

Looking for guidance about some of the “altered states” I myself was going through during my twenties, the answers I found that both made most sense to me and empowered me to move towards a greater sense of personal well-being were to be found in anthropological studies of shamanic cultures. Particularly the work of Joan Halifax (1982), yet another Esalen resident and Marcia Eliade (1964), both of whom describe the kinds of crises that form part of shamanic initiation. I would not discover the practices of the community that this thesis researched until some years later but in the meantime I could certainly relate to the concept of an underworld journey or healing crisis described by Halifax and Eliade.

The point here is that I view shamanism as something that was initially quite simply one aspect of my embodied life experience (I only later came to develop

my relationship with it in a more disciplined way through engaging with a set of techniques and spiritual practices) rather than a faith per se. In addition, there was very little in the way of economic exchange involved in this phase of my life although I was learning a set of skills which would lead me towards a career in psychotherapy and later still to training as a shamanic practitioner, enabling the provision of services to my community for which I now sometimes charge money. Involvement with spiritual, psychological and body based 'healing' practices, which are often very interwoven in contemporary Western cultures, may in some instances be something that includes economic or resource exchange, as it has in tribal cultures for millennia. For all the reasons explained above, it is not something that I believe can be entirely reduced to concepts relating to the marketplace in all instances, which is where placed, specific analysis becomes important (Heelas 2008; Morris 2006). Given that this thesis has been funded within a Business School and that the whole subject of capitalism and the so-called New Age is a controversial one, I will, of course, be discussing the spiritual marketplace in the course of this work (Heelas 2008).

To resume the narrative of my relationship with such matters we return to 1992 when I found myself travelling to New York to visit family - a visit that would provide me with the perfect opportunity to meet and work with one of the doyennes of the spiritual marketplace, Gabrielle Roth. Roth, a teacher of what she described as an ecstatic shamanic dance practice, disseminated her work under the umbrella of the organization she founded, called The Moving Centre. In many ways this thesis, as well as the community under investigation within it, are very heavily indebted to her work with body, emotion and spirit. I was motivated to go and meet Roth after being introduced to her spiritual practice by the then directors of her work here in the UK, Susannah and Ya'acov Darling Khan. Roth (1989; 1999; 2004) who wrote a number of books on her philosophy of ecstatic, urban shamanism viewed her work as a process of empowering people through creative, artistic process. A professional performer myself when I first encountered her in my twenties I was hunting somewhat desperately for answers to all sorts of difficulties. Difficulties such as how to diminish my own personal suffering at the same time as making a useful and creative contribution to the well being of those around me. Problems that were

then and still are, very much interwoven for me.

Roth, founder of the 5 Rhythms movement in America advocated that the path to 'enlightenment' was to be found through the valuing and incorporation of the body into psychological and spiritual practices. Originally a professional contemporary dancer who incurred an injury that ended this career, she took herself to Esalen sometime in the 1970's (Roth 1990; Kripal 2007). Surrounded by the great and the good of the personal growth world, including Abraham Maslow, she met and was encouraged by both Fritz Perls, the infamous Gestalt guru and Gregory Bateson, the anthropologist, to begin sharing her skills and expertise in the arena of the dancing body. Roth herself was a complex figure. On the one hand, a self-confessed anorexic, rumored to battle with this Western dancer's disease for most of her life. On the other, completely persuaded (perhaps because she understood it so intimately on a personal level) of the urgent need for Western culture to heal its pathological relationships with both the body and the feminine. This was a conviction that she dedicated her entire life to until her death in 2012.

Roth's work employed dance as a form of contemporary spiritual practice based in what she termed ecstasy, or what Irigaray might refer to as *jouissance* (Whitford 1991). Within her work she sought, quite literally, to move away from the Enlightenment's association with a Platonic cosmology that sees the pure, invisible eternal (Godly) realm as separated out from the material, visible domain of the body. Instead she placed the incorporation of body, emotions, mother and the feminine, right at the heart of her spiritual practice, shamelessly committing the ultimate heresy of combining God, sex and the body in unified and ecstatic relationship with each other. God for Roth was located in the moment, equally present in each unique human expression, each equally important. The way to God was through the physicality of the body, here and now, in whomever or whatever was in front of and around us. Coming from the emotional and sexual repression of the 1950's, Roth sought to empower all who worked with her, from what she saw as the prison of socially conditioned roles and taboos (perhaps especially for women) around expressing power, anger or sexuality in public places. Seeing the source of liberation from the imposition of cultural strictures that limit what can and cannot be expressed as lying within the process of freeing the life energy within, like Reich before her, the personal,



in line with the old feminist adage, was highly political. The body itself, framed as the ultimate site of either life affirmation or denial, as her students were encouraged first and foremost, to address what Twine refers to as "the oppressor within" (Twine 2001: 33; see also Starhawk 1987). Roth did not privilege women as necessarily any more embodied than men and a mother herself, while she saw motherhood as valuable it was held in balance with the importance of the role of father, encouraging both sexes to engage creatively with both parenting and the world around them (Young and Taylor forthcoming). And whilst her work was not directly addressed to environmental challenges, she was passionately committed to the notion that a healthy society needs the value of the body and the emotions, as sources of wisdom, to be balanced with the mind. Given the systematic inferiorization of the body and the emotions because of their association with the feminine in Western culture (Field 2000) it is not difficult to characterize the essence of her practices as extremely politically radical. Highly impressed by both an interview with her in a New Age magazine called *Kindred Spirit* and the work of her UK directors whom I pursued quickly after as I read this interview, I was keen to meet her as soon as possible.

When I did I was shocked to find myself in a large loft in Greenwich Village with about two hundred others, in a very different situation from the intimacy of the fifteen strong group that I had first worked with in Devon. I couldn't help doing some mental arithmetic, balancing her profit for that weekend with the question of just how many people it is possible to effectively support at once. In spite of the emotional vulnerability required of participants, unlike my experience in England, there was no support system in place. As the only Scot in attendance I felt hugely "other" and not a little alienated, but within the practice in question, the answer was and still would be, to simply dance your alienation, consciously. So I did. One participant physically attacked another and being something of a sensitive and curious being I watched carefully for the response from our leader. No intervention. As my involvement with Roth continued I gradually concluded that she functioned very much in the way that many traditional shamanic leaders in pre-modern cultures are described (Eliade 1964). The initiate is often put through (or experiences) a series of grueling

ordeals and they either survive or they don't.<sup>7</sup>

Writing in her first book, *Maps to Ecstasy*, Roth mentions in passing having been a student of Oscar Ichazo, a self-styled Chilean guru. Roth studied with and taught his system, known as Arica, for several years until, as she recounts in her first book, the filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky suggested that she needed to, "Cut her father's balls off" (Roth 1989: 20). I assume that he referred to a need to free herself from the influence of male-dominated leadership and authority, relationship with which, according to the psychotherapeutic discourse is seen as beginning with our own fathers. Roth presumably took his advice because some time later she did indeed create and begin teaching her own body of work encapsulated in her 5 Rhythms.

Briefly researching Ichazo, I discovered, perhaps unsurprisingly given her role as his student, a number of similarities in both their work and their approach to their creations. Ichazo's work has been popularized through the tool known as the Enneagram, a tool sometimes used in a similar way to the Briggs-Meyer test employed in the human resources world (Palmer 1955/1996). Ichazo, like Roth, believed in an essential spiritual essence beyond what they both describe as the ego, or socially "constructed persona" (Roth 1989: 19; see also <http://www.arica.org/>). Interestingly, given some of the organizational politics that unfolded between Roth and the founders of The School of Movement Medicine, the organization researched here, in the years before Roth's death, over intellectual property rights,<sup>8</sup> Ichazo was himself involved in a legal dispute over his right to copyright his work (see *Arica v. Palmer*, court case, provided by *Information Law Web*). Both Roth and Ichazo seem in some senses to rest very firmly within the paradigm of Western individualism, that I also argue in

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<sup>7</sup> Malidome Some, an African shaman from the Dagara tribe, as well as the author of two doctorates, writes a fascinating account of his own transition back into traditional cultural practices after he had been kidnapped by Jesuit Missionaries as a child. His own initiation ceremony lasted a month. It is not unknown for participants to die during similar rites (Some 1994).

<sup>8</sup> While there was no legal dispute between Roth and the Darling Khans, a painful emotional rift opened between them, apparently in response to the Darling Khans' need to move into a more empowered role around the practices that they had learned from Roth but also extensively taught to thousands of others – an experience that continues (in my view) to be central in their commitment to their followers to organize more democratically.

chapter three has been intimately influenced by the Judeo-Christian story about creators who are often seen as lone heroes or heroines, carving work from a tabula rasa (or ex nihilo, like a transcendent, separate God who exists outside of all relationship). All of which seems somewhat ironical when we consider that shamanism has always been very much about community and ancestral lineage. These comments may obviously read as critical and they certainly touch back into the subject of the marketplace, as well perhaps to an underlying approach that in spite of working with Roth on and off for years I never fully trusted.

After all these years, reading *Esalen – America and the Religion of No Religion*, I have finally been able to fully articulate this. Ichazo, Roth's guru, is described by Kripal as "a highly authoritarian teacher" who illuminated not only spiritual potential and greater personal freedom for some of his students, but also the "ethical dangers and psychological limitations of charismatic teachers" (Kripal 2007: 178). According to Kripal, Ichazo it seems, also on occasion lied, fabricated spiritual information and made what might be seen as outrageous demands (such as asking students to practice the Nazi salute in the form of a non-existent yoga mudra)<sup>9</sup> of those who fell sway to his attraction. Some at Esalen viewed those who studied with him as guilty of giving away their personal authority and Richard Price, one of the founders of Esalen left a retreat run by Ichazo after the mudra incident. Price, as a group leader of Gestalt therapy, had his own philosophy of working with others, which was "maximum availability, minimum coercion" (Kripal 2007: 172). My own experience of Roth, as a participant in large group contexts was actually minimum availability, with availability being in my experience, reserved for her favored inner circle. In this sense Roth's leadership style was most akin to the exercise of what Weber described as charismatic authority particularly in its pure form, where leaders are known to carefully stage manage the impression made on followers through distance (Puttick 1997; see also Grint 2010).

Some psychotherapeutic wisdom suggests that healthy relationships with others, including our leaders, are based on our ability to make realistic assessments of them, neither idealizing nor degrading them (Bradshaw 1988). Roth's work changed my life in many positive ways and I would even go as far

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<sup>9</sup> A mudra is a physical posture similar to a yoga position.

as to say I owe her a large debt of gratitude. In spite of this some things about her *style* never quite sat comfortably for me, including on one occasion witnessing her swearing and throwing a full litre bottle of water across a crowded room at a participant who was clearly annoying her. The woman was admittedly being extremely persistent in a quest for an answer to a particular question. Roth took the view that some ego dismantling was in order. Her coercive behaviours were in my experience generally reserved for behaviour in participants that *she* perceived as detrimental to their spiritual development, but it is undeniable that she could be ferocious in the sacrificing and silencing of anything she labeled as ego. In this sense she was on occasions prone to being very authoritarian, if not embodying the epitome of the sacred leader outlined in Grint's (2010) work.

Arweck (2002) has also commented upon the way in which what she refers to as New Religious Movements, sometimes construct themselves as a spiritual elite. Roth used to refer to followers as '*the*' dancing tribe. Its membership was clearly fairly exclusive, also fitting with Arweck's general profile of membership in NRM's as encompassing the affluent, well-educated middle classes. I always struggled to accept homogeneity being presented as heterogeneity. For as Ellingson (2006) points out, bodies are always political and never neutral. Based in the US the community had very, very few black members, no First Nation Peoples (as far as I was aware at the beginning of the 90's), few old or infirm and no children. Whilst work did and still is spreading into the larger community to include many disadvantaged groups, they were, certainly at that time, further from the centre in a way that made it difficult for me to accept such an inclusive definition as being applicable. Especially as dance is such a universal phenomenon, encompassing such extensive diversity and so many ancient indigenous traditions.

It wasn't until I personally at been at the receiving end of Roth's dark side, however, in a way I felt was both gender biased and lacking in compassion for some of my own wounding, relative to a man I was working with in a highly public context, that I ended my relationship with her as one of her followers (see Lipman-Bluman (2005) for a psycho-analytic treatment of why any of us tolerate such behaviour at all). The point is that this is very much a journey that has travelled the tricky landscapes of leading and following, power and authority in

ways that have provided some of the deepest personal conundrums of my life. Conundrums such as, how we might organize community in ways that get the job done at the same time as enabling both unity, diversity and social justice? How to learn and teach new skills without setting up unhealthy hierarchy? And even whether we can find high quality learning environments without paying lots of money for the privilege of being in them? I left Roth's international community and its practices around 2003, in favor of work with another teacher in another community, working with a different though related modality. This leader was also later involved in a court case over intellectual property, although that, for now, is another story ([Trade Mark Inter-Partes Decision O/164/07 - UK Intellectual Property](#)). Suffice to say that the world of the sacred, as recent child abuse scandals involving the church also demonstrate, is often no less prone to fallible, personality based leadership practices than any other realm, in spite of its aspirations to embody "essence" and transcend the mundane realities of the material realm.

### **Career Burnout and Aspirations Towards More Sustainable**

#### **"Organization"**

So we move now towards the end of this prologue and the beginning of the research that it introduces. I opened this prologue with mention of the fact that amongst all these other biographical experiences I am also a senior woman who left a relatively successful career within a far more mainstream organizational context than The Moving Centre. In my case, this was the National Health Service. I had spent twelve years leading highly complex, specialist therapeutic work with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and child sexual abuse within organizational systems that are subject to increasingly unsustainable demands given the resources being made available to them. Throughout those years, both neo-liberal economic approaches and what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to as "the evidence-based social movement" swept through the health service, as it would later also be put to work transforming a hitherto publically funded and perhaps previously somewhat under scrutinized education system (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3; see also Young 2011). Along with the increasing emphasis on the business model, management and leadership within the public health systems as I experienced it, became increasingly, both top-down and brutal. My attempts to

bring the kind of tempered radicalism discussed by Meyerson and Scully (1995) into an organizational context I felt increasingly at odds with, began to feel more and more lacking in integrity. In addition to that I had been in treatment for cancer and was suffering from what we euphemistically refer to as “burn out”. I desperately needed time to experience life at some distance from the intense suffering involved in working with serious trauma in a systemic context that often rendered me impotent to offer more than superficial remedy. I believe that at least some of this trauma results partly as a by-product of particular sets of cultural mores that devalue the place of what we might describe as the ‘feminine’<sup>10</sup> within that culture. And furthermore, that such tendencies are amplified by socio-cultural models that place the ethics of growth and competition above the value of life. Acknowledging Western’s (2012) skepticism about the employment of the term trauma in an indiscriminate, blanket fashion, my own work as a family therapist leads me to the conclusion that trauma is an appropriate descriptor for what I am discussing here - the existence of which I believe has profound consequences for the well-being and embodiment experienced by both genders and possibly even for the continuation of life on our planet.

At the time I left my career I was also profoundly tired of statutory requirements to wield power over others in ways that often represented precisely the kinds of leadership I abhor. One of my interviewees later observes that “the old, pushing, masculine style” of leadership presents difficulty for both followers and leaders. Keith Grint (2010) has suggested that this kind of leadership is closely related to Western concepts relating to God, or the sacred and is build upon the necessity for leaders and followers to be seen as essentially different from each other, so that leadership can justify sacrificing and silencing recalcitrant or redundant followers. When they themselves fail, their elected role as leader often also implies that they have no right to expect

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<sup>10</sup> “Most feminists now doubt whether ‘femininity’ even exists in such a pure form; to be a woman is to be a hybrid, gendered, but not separate from male dominated society” (Purkiss 1996:93). And Curry suggests that, “the relationship between ‘biological’ sex and ‘cultural’ gender remains difficult. It can posed thus: the latter does not derive directly from the former; nor, however, is it related randomly or arbitrarily” (Curry 2008: 2).

to be discharged compassionately either, a scenario we often witness played out in our media, including in the treatment of career carers involved in high profile child deaths. So-called expertise in mainstream institutions does indeed it seems, often involve separation between those who (supposedly) know and those who do not, alongside punitive sacrifice of anyone who strays too far from sanctioned behaviours as defined by said experts. This kind of sacrifice sometimes involves the removal of children from families by people who are after all only other flawed parents themselves, albeit in roles associated with what is referred to in the business of social work, as care and control. Amidst contexts of enormous resource inequality this can be morally challenging ground to hold in the long term. In addition, never a big fan of the medical model, I came more and more to consider the largely socially de-contextualized treatment of mental, emotional and spiritual 'dis'-ease with drugs (from which the pharmaceutical industry makes enormous profits) as an ethical travesty.

"The 'reductions' described above have the effect of creating a fragmented ontology, dividing, the physical, mental and social aspects of a patient's life (Sherwin 1992). This reflects the dualistic ontology that structures much of western thinking, creating divisions between nature and culture, mind and body (Scott 1998). Yet the health of women and men is deeply influenced by context: the political and economic environment in which they live; the societal relations of which they are a part; and the cultural belief systems that give meaning to their lives (Brems and Griffiths 1993; Doyal 1995). Broader and social environmental issues are rarely incorporated into medical diagnosis and treatment (Doyal 1995; Lee 1998; Sherwin 1992)" (Wiles and Rosenberg 2001).

Also encountering Theodore Roszak's thinking on the subject of the helping professions recently I was particularly struck by its relevance to my own experiences,

"...the shock absorbers of a ramshackle urban-industrial system...they are in charge of...disposing of our society's human refuse...their endless cleanup operation is supposed to be done on mean and shrinking budgets which are the first to feel the pinch whenever the taxpaying public decides it can no longer afford to pamper its misfit millions...in fact, the helping professions are there as an open confession of advanced industrial breakdown, and the only alternative to their presence would be riot (if not revolution)...or the astronomical costs of paramilitary police force in every city...some members of the helping professions...who...must meet the human wreckage of our society face to face, day after day...develop...radical values. They begin to regard their caseloads, not as so many burdensome social statistics, but as unique human beings who deserve a tender, loving care, if not an obvious justice that the system refuses to give...some who have finally been "burned out"...could not continue to sweep the social debris out of sight. They leave their profession, but their experience is still with us in the world..." (Roszak 1978: 21-22).

Clearly my own experiences would not simply vanish either and post-departure

I was still left with the aspiration and the task of attempting to transform existing skills into a new livelihood more congruent with my personal values. Over the next few years my quest to transform a more viable model for empowering self-leadership for well being into what Buddhism refers to as right livelihood led me to train and set up as a shamanic practitioner. As you might imagine however, job advertisements for shamanic healers are non-existent. Taylor (2010) has written about women who leave professions to become alternative health practitioners, seeking greater agency and autonomy, often becoming in the process, financially dependent upon partners. My husband, valiantly supporting my ongoing quest for more sustainable self-leadership was about to become bankrupt and in line with Taylor's observations, I meantime, needed to return to the labour market.

Throughout this time however, in an attempt to transform my relationship with my health, I had made a commitment to follow a combination of what I experience as spiritual guidance and what I would describe as body-based, holistic, intuitive *sensing*, rather than the more usual cerebrally based way of accessing information that our conditioning in Western culture has trained us to believe is the best way to orientate ourselves in the world. I pledged instead, to attempting to follow my sense of what Colquhoun (1996) refers to as communion with the unbroken wholeness of my life, rather than making decisions based upon my cultural conditioning. So that faced with the pressing need for yet more change, I did what I had been doing in response to problems and challenges, both my own and those whom I had treated as clients, for the past several years. I took a shamanic journey. A practice that involves using drumming in order to enter a trance state in which one is able to consciously and deliberately access greater intelligence, that which Kripal (2007) refers to as non-local mind and what shamanism names as our ancestors.

Going outside one evening I lit a fire and began drumming, with the specific intention of asking for guidance from my guides and ancestors, about the way forward. Within the shamanic tradition the ancestors is the name given to those unseen forces of all that has come before us and lives around us, which provides spiritual guidance for those of us in the seen world. The answer was swift and surprisingly prosaic. I was instructed to look on the Internet.

This was not at that time something I had ever done in my life to pursue



employment (neither the drumming nor the internet I might add) but nonetheless, I did as suggested. Imagine my astonishment, when ten minutes later the very same evening I discovered a job description that looked as though it had been written especially (almost) for me. A funded position in a business school to research leadership, spirituality, well-being and embodiment, not only felt like it spoke to my life's work, it had the same sense of synchronicity (or what may also be referred to as serendipity) attached to it that Judi Marshall (1995) describes in relation to her own research process. Coming from an ancestry of Irish peasants, coal miners and those subject to the Scottish Highland Clearances, amongst whom the kind of financial elite I expected to find in a business school were the designated enemy, life really could not however, have suggested a more apparently alien environment than a business school, in which to pursue my inquiries. The opportunity to be paid for three years to write about embodiment and well-being was however, especially in the face of impending bankruptcy, so seductive that I applied anyway. As someone who is, as I have described, innately suspicious of external authority, I tucked the term leadership out of conscious awareness, where like much that we are unwillingly to tackle up front, it would later demand considerable attention. Not something commonly acknowledged within the standard scientific research literature, Romanyshyn (2007) a Jungian analyst and author of *The Wounded Researcher*, writes about just such unconscious processes in the life of research. And as I outline in one of my own early papers he argues that research not only has a life and agency of its own, but that some research actually "hunts the researcher, with a view to finding just the right voice to meet its needs, at the same time as assisting its vehicle to address and heal their own wounding" (Young 2011: 355).

Within a week of being accepted for the research post another synchronicity meant that I returned to visit The School of Movement Medicine, the newly constellated organization, run by Susannah and Ya'acov Darling Khan whom I first engaged with over twenty years earlier. Within the particular community that they lead, following one's innate felt sense of what 'calls' one is seen as the route to embodying one's sacred dream, a process Maslow refers to as self-actualization (Maslow 1943). Just at exactly the time when I needed a spiritual community in which to conduct research, I was re-embarking upon involvement

in a re-constituted version of one I had left several years earlier.

Although I had stayed connected to a more local, somewhat rogue group, I had taken a break from The Moving Centre's international community several years earlier. This had coincided with a number of personal concerns about the leadership (some of which I described in the previous section) and values of the organization itself, including the environmental ethics of international travel; the commoditization of spirituality and exploitation of indigenous wisdom within historical and contemporary contexts that involve colonial imperialism, as well as the potential for alternative spiritualities to inhibit social change due to the fact that they may neglect to locate the causes of 'dis'ease in wider organizational structures. I had in the meantime become aware that Susannah and Ya'acov Darling Khan, two of the leaders within the international community I have previously mentioned here, had left the parent organization, Roth's Moving Centre, setting up a new organization in England close to where I live. Some months prior to applying to begin my PhD thesis I had already made a decision to participate in the foundational workshop that they were now teaching as part of their newly constituted practice – Movement Medicine. There had also been many things I had valued in my previous experience of belonging to a community exploring movement as a spiritual practice. I was curious about whether any of my previous misgivings would be addressed within this new organization. This new school had, unlike the previous organization, quite specifically dedicated itself to promoting the tripartite goals of social justice, environmental sustainability and human fulfillment, rather than simply exploring individual personal growth. Given the personal nature of some of my relationships within the community I would not have considered it a viable proposition to have re-entered it from a place of inherent hostility to the values being espoused. I decided after spending a week within it that I felt sufficient resonance with it, along with still holding the questions I had held about its organizational predecessor, for it to be a viable community for the research I was about to embark upon. My re-search was about to become research.

### **Summary**

I come to this work then as someone with thirty years of personal explorations of counter-cultural spiritualities and therapeutic techniques. A great deal of this has been body-based work aimed at dissolving the presence of external

authority from within, in order to assist in the attempt to generate social change, without. I come from a politically radical family background and have sought to retain the passion for social justice I inherited from my father. At play too however has been my mother's innate artistic spirituality, which in my life has been based in a love of the land and a belief that we are all uniquely creative beings deserving of respect and compassion; rather than some indeterminate mass fit only to be sacrificed and silenced by our collective leadership. Writing in her study of *Women in New Religions – In Search of Community, Sexuality and Spiritual Power*, Puttick (1997) has outlined a number of features associated with members of New Religious Movements. While there are different kinds of groups, those who become involved in the kinds of counter-cultural milieus associated with the HPM tend to be those from middle-class, well-educated, relatively privileged, affluent backgrounds who join groups that affirm their personal values. She describes the ways in which sociology sees them, as an

“active, conscious seeker, pursuing personal development, often through a series of experiments that could be called a ‘conversion career’...a spiritual journey” that often displays ongoing continuity between earlier psychic and spiritual experiences and later spiritual choices...feeling alienated by the...stupidity and sterility of organized religion...they found consolation...through nature or the arts...had suffered a “personal crisis”, has been through mysticism, drugs, politics, feminism and is thirtyish” (Puttick 1997: 26-27).

I am, clearly a fairly typical example of the kind of participant (even if time has moved forwards and we are all a little older) whom Puttick also describes as being at the forefront of a search for democratization, empowerment and feminization of spirituality. And whilst clear that New Religious Movements are both marginal to and deviant from more mainstream organizational forms, she also suggests that, “The margin may be the leading edge, whose experiments create the future” (Puttick 1997: 2).

## **SECTION ONE**

### **LEADERSHIP AND THE SACRED**

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

##### **LEADERSHIP, CRISIS AND SPIRITUAL DIVERSITY**

“Our society is facing a crisis in agriculture, a crisis in education and literacy, a crisis in national security and the arms race, a crisis in the international debt situation, and a crisis in the state of the global environment. For the first time in the modern era, there is widespread agreement that something is very wrong. The assumptions of modernity, the faith in technological “progress” and rapacious industrialism, along with the militarization necessary to support it, have left us very lost indeed. The quintessential malady of the modern era is free-floating anxiety, and it is clear to ecofeminists that the whole culture is free floating – from the lack of grounding in the natural world, from the lack of a sense of belonging in the unfolding story of the universe, from the lack of a healthy relationship between the males and the females of the human species. We are entangled in the hubris of the patriarchal goal of dominating nature and the female” (Spretnak 1990: 9).

“Criticism would not try to judge, but would try to bring...an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea-foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply, not judgments, but signs of existence...I’d like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms” (Foucault 1988: 326).

#### **Introduction**

Continuing my search for the sorts of alternatives that may constitute the kind of leading edge discussed at the end of my prologue, this thesis takes a critical approach to mainstream thinking on leadership and organization. In doing so it also argues that mainstream ways of thinking and the behaviours that emerge from them are, at least partially, responsible for increasing global crisis. This crisis, interestingly, is also one within which there seems to be increasing focus upon both fundamentalist religion and more contemporary, progressive spiritualities. As a number of scholars already writing in these fields have recently noted, the dominant influence of a singular cosmology in Western culture and its ongoing employment in academic studies of leadership often acts to obscure the impact that this self same cosmology continues to exert upon leadership and organization (Bell, Cullen and Taylor 2012; Christo-Baker 2010; Hale and Fields 2007; Prince 2005; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010; Sorensen et al 2012; Taylor 2010; Temple 2012; Tourish and Tourish 2010; Tracey 2012). Such discussions are also consonant with the concerns of those scholars who argue that current interest in the sacred in the field of leadership can be prone to neglect analysis of Western religion’s historical origins and

therefore, of some of its political implications (Bell, Cullen and Taylor 2012; Sorensen et al 2012). All of which suggests that the recent interest in religion and spirituality in the leadership field would benefit from the inclusion of a range of more diverse approaches to the subject. This thesis aims to make just such a contribution. Building on some of the critical research that has already been conducted in the fields of leadership and organization, I aim to do this in part by bringing an ecofeminist perspective to an in depth analysis of Keith Grint's (2010) work on *The Sacred in Leadership* – a paper in which he employs an *implicit* theological foundation in order to propose that separation, sacrifice and silencing are the cornerstones of leadership. Presented in the third chapter of this first section my interrogation of his paper offers what I consider to be the main *theoretical* contribution of my thesis.

Grint's (2010) paper, *The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence* was published shortly after I began my thesis. On a visceral, almost subliminal level I felt immediately that it was somehow *exemplary* of a particular strand of existing approaches to leadership that I found objectionable as I made my initial explorations in the field - though it took me some time to both analyze and articulate the emotional charge I felt on my first reading of it. Although the paper is rooted in the dominant (Judeo-Christian) Western cosmology (Girard 1982) that scholars based in critical management approaches have been offering criticisms of, this fact is never directly acknowledged. Only after researching Girard (1972; 1982) whose work Grint (2010) draws on and which I was at that stage unfamiliar with, did it become obvious to me why the paper upset me so much. As I delved deeper I realized that I had actually had a directly embodied experience of encountering an essentially religious (and precisely because it is *not acknowledged*, what Sorensen and Spoelstra (2010) refer to as *repressed*) discourse being utilized in ways that *naturalize and reinforce a series of socially constructed and discriminatory hierarchies*. These hierarchies are not only rooted in violence, they also function in ways that eclipse the basic humanity and intrinsic value of followers, as well perhaps as also de-humanizing leaders in the process. It is still unclear to me whether Grint (2010) is simply elucidating such hierarchy or is consciously (or unconsciously) committed to its maintenance. Either way, we are, if nothing else, in agreement that the cosmology underlying it continues to have

significant influence upon leadership construction, representation and practice. Grint's (2010) narrative, based in Judeo-Christian cosmology, proposes that the process of leadership is, *of necessity*, embedded in the triple requirements for separation, silencing and sacrifice. Specifically examining these conceptualizations I however, will argue that the model outlined in his paper has seriously deleterious consequences in the terms of social and environmental justice.

My critique of his work has been constructed with the intention of arguing that part of the repression that Sorensen and colleagues (2012) suggest lies at the heart of much organization theory, is not *merely* theological but also emanates from our historical relationship with *patriarchal and hyper-masculine* religious forms, which are themselves so normalized that such dimensions usually go largely unacknowledged altogether. This in turn involves serious limitations to the possibilities that we as scholars either help to make available, or close off, as we offer analyses rooted in hyper-masculine models, which then impact social justice, human fulfillment and environmental sustainability in a complex and challenging world in quiet specific ways. The application of ecofeminism as a lens therefore, enables a particular kind of critical analysis, of the historically and contemporaneously dominant cosmology that it has been suggested lies hidden at the heart of both the analysis and the practice of Western leadership and organization. It also offers alternative perspectives on leadership and organization to those usually promoted by the more dominant discourses in the field.

Aligning myself with Spretnak's (1999) work I adopt what she describes as a constructive postmodern approach. Postmodernism is sometimes associated with the kind of extreme deconstructive approach that typically takes the position that there is no 'reality' beyond narrative. This work, in adopting Spretnak's search for constructive and above all, embedded theory, attempts to ground itself in 'realities'. The realities of body, nature and relationship and the very real effects which ways of thinking may have upon real people, in their bodies, feelings, experiences and the environments they live in. So that, my work is able, in part, to address what Sorensen and Spoelstra describe as the "impact" of repressed theology upon modernist thinking about leadership (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Spretnak 1999; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010). I attempt to

demonstrate that modernity itself emerged from a succession of philosophical and theological viewpoints that were based within the dominant religious discourse of Judeo-Christianity in Western culture. I also argue that religious constructs, albeit secularized over the course of time, infuse many of the mandates of Western leadership and organizational culture. Furthermore that some of the difficulties created by modernity are in need of reconsideration and require the alternatives provided by perspectives outside of these historical influences of the modernist paradigm, some of which we may find within progressive spirituality (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Case et al 2012; Maxwell 2003; Lynch 2007; Spretnak 1999; Taylor 2010).

Such reconsideration clearly recognizes both bodies and emotions, amongst other elements and the groups associated with them, as the inferior, profaned elements within the dualistic ontology of the cosmology I set out to critique. Given that such discriminatory processes still tend to extend into our construction of knowledge, my approach to research also seeks to demonstrate methodological congruence as part of my interest in overcoming such hierarchies. The second section of my thesis, which I will introduce in more depth later, presents insider research in the form of an ethnographic study of one particular community of practice which I have a long-term familiarity with. The community that is the subject of this study is led by an alternative cosmology that shares the commitment to re-valuing the historically depreciated qualities of feeling and embodiment, nature and what is described as the divine feminine. *The School of Movement Medicine*, the spiritual organization responsible for the creation of this community, is also run as a business. This business may be of particular note in terms of leading edges, as it is not only financially profitable, but has successfully gathered a community around it dedicated to the promotion of human fulfillment, environmental sustainability and social justice. My examination of it may therefore, be of special interest to anyone looking for answers to the question of how we might move towards re-constellated organizations based on such interests.

As history itself so often demonstrates, movements from one paradigm to another are rarely smooth processes. During even the preliminary examination of my chosen field in this introductory chapter it quickly becomes apparent that many of our attempts at descriptions of both leadership and religion inevitably

lead to the use of constructions that are themselves products of wider social values. Many of these values have latent conflicts associated with them, whether these emerge from Judeo-Christianity or ecofeminism (Mabey and Morell 2012; Plumwood). Being explicit about our “place” and the subjective embodied experience associated with such constructions may however allow us to contextualize such conflicts, enabling us to address issues associated with power and conflict that may otherwise remain obscured (Sinclair 2010). I therefore specifically see the inclusion of the researcher’s (my) voice in my prologue and throughout my thesis, alongside the exercise of “giving voice” to members of a community based on a marginal cosmology, in chapters three to six in the second half of this thesis, all as further additional contributions to this ongoing process.

I begin this introductory chapter with a brief discussion on the subject of the wide array of challenges currently facing global leaderships. Discussing a variety of positions in relation to these challenges I suggest that their combined magnitude constitutes little short of crisis. I then continue with further introductory explorations of two increasing tendencies within this overall atmosphere – the growing emphasis on leadership development alongside the rising interest in religion and spirituality within the field of leadership itself. Acknowledging the potential for the surfacing of a number of latent conflicts within such trends I argue two things. One is that crisis itself can present an opportunity to re-examine the status quo. The other, is that if the status quo bears at least some responsibility for the crisis in the first place, that it becomes ever more imperative to examine the implications of this. My intention in this introduction therefore, is to cast a critically discerning eye on the existing state of affairs in the world, with a particular focus on the employment of religion and spirituality as leadership and management tools in relation to this status quo. Given religion’s historical role in Western culture, this allows me to begin to look at the question of whether its ongoing employment is likely to represent a ‘positive’ development. To that end I also introduce ecofeminism(s) as the main theoretical basis I use in order to do this. Doing so, I outline it in some of its rich diversity, as well as locating my position within it. I begin this in this next section with a brief discussion of differences of opinion about the environment evident within ecofeminism and deep ecology, before moving on to examine



the subject of some of the many interwoven challenges facing the environment and its inhabitants.

### **Contradictions and Confluences**

In seeking alternatives to some of the difficulties that I will be arguing are associated with the dominant cultural cosmology here in the West, my own narrative draws from a variety of sources. These include, perspectives offered by ecofemism, deep ecology<sup>11</sup>, indigenous wisdoms, and the empirical study of a spiritual business community centered around a cosmology based on a neo-shamanic worldview. Drawing upon this wide range of perspectives together is however, no simple matter on a theoretical basis. Both Plumwood (1993) and Sturgeon's (1997) ecofeminist approaches detail criticisms of male-dominated approaches to the environment, which they suggest that in spite of their attempts to challenge the status quo, remain nonetheless, rooted in the transcendence, universalism and dualism that I critique in this thesis.

Approaches that I will also argue have connections with the religious roots of Western culture. In her book, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Plumwood (1993) evaluates the work of Taylor (1986) and Regan (1986) as typical rationalist accounts that separate out abstract reason as the superior route to developing a universalist (and therefore homogenized by definition) defense of the environment (See also Young 1987; Benhabib 1987). Stripped of both the personal (emotional) and the particular, (placed) she describes such accounts as ethnocentric, gender-biased and in spite of their own aspirations remaining overly human-centred (See also Cheney 1987). Further extending her interrogation to deep ecology, she argues that its focus on dissolving separation and expanding the notion of the small human self to include a bigger, nature-based Self (Naess 1985) serves only to assimilate the environment into the human sphere, therein failing to respect the boundaries and differences of the other in nature. Advocating the transcendence of the "narrow, biographical" ego (Fox 1989:12) its transpersonal approach also inherits the universalist opposition to the particular. A stand that she points out (in spite of their attempted incorporation into a deep ecology perspective) is in direct contrast to

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<sup>11</sup> Deep ecology was first introduced by Arne Naess (1973) as a criticism of human dominance based on the shallow ecology of only extending concern for nature in so far as this serves human-centred agenda's. It has also been developed by, amongst others, Devall and Sessions (1985) and Fox (1989)

many indigenous modalities, which are often based on passion for the placed.

Embracing both passion and bodies, ecofeminism on the other hand, seeks to recognize emotions, the physicality of place, spirituality and rationality, as well as the voices of diverse groups (including the non-human worlds) and individuals as all of *equal, though often differing* importance. Rather than seeing life as a great chain of being, ecofeminists relate to the world as an immanent, interconnected web of life. Whereas the hierarchy that emerges from the great chain metaphor, associated with Judeo-Christainity, often generates frameworks that rationalize and reinforce relationships based on dominance and submission, a web consists of equal participants. Such hierarchy is viewed by ecofeminism as having led to a situation in which the oppressions of gender, race, class and nature are interlinked, with that which is perceived as subordinate (or profane) within the hierarchy being systematically devalued. Nature, for example, is usually most notable by its absence in organizational analysis.<sup>12</sup> And both its life sustaining contributions and those of women often fail to be properly accounted for in what some ecofeminist scholars refer to as “dominant international economic models” (Bullis and Glaser 1992: 52; see also Shrivastava 1994). A patriarchal tendency, referred to elsewhere as the backgrounding of both women and nature, “to a dominant foreground sphere of recognized achievement or causation” (Plumwood 1993: 21). Curry, an environmental ethicist, on the other hand, suggests that we need to recognize the earth as ‘the ultimate source of all value’ (Curry 2011: 2). He also makes a distinction between nature, as subject (s) of an ecocentric philosophy (similar to the shamanic worldview) that views nature as alive, sentient and possessing agency in its own right and the environment of most modernist philosophy based upon ‘its’ objectification as inert (essentially dead) resource that humans have the right to “manage” as they see fit (Curry 2003/2008). The earth and our relationship with ‘it’ is an important focus in this thesis.

My own position recognizes that humans are completely embedded in and dependent upon, rather than set apart from nature. This means that the self does not, indeed literally cannot, exist within the web as either an isolated nor

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<sup>12</sup> Nature’s reappearance within sustainability discourse, as environment, does not however necessarily herald a fundamental paradigm shift (Sullivan 2011).

abstract phenomena, but rather can only be constituted in a network of relationships all of which influence and affect each other. In spite of abstraction, this tends to be *concrete, local and embodied process*. It also seems reasonably obvious that just as in any relationship, non-humans can and do have interests independent of and sometimes contrary to human ones, which is precisely what Plumwood (1993) stresses in her critique of deep ecology assimilation, which she sees as endangering such recognition. Indeed a range of disagreements exist between and amongst the theoretical frames I work with here; including concerns from some ecofeminists that employing the term indigenous runs the risk of perpetuating racist discourses and from others, that images of the Goddess which portray her in association with motherhood, prevalent in feminist spirituality, may ultimately prove regressive in terms of women's empowerment. These will be discussed in due course.

Even as I acknowledge the rich debates amidst many of the disciplines and scholars I have referenced here I attempt nonetheless to present them in a cohesive enough form to present a critique that suggests two main points. One is that the leadership processes outlined in Grint's paper belong to a colonizing historical legacy of both earth and people that is both unjust and toxic. The other is that it is possible to lead and organize in other ways (Deloria 1973; Eisler 1987; Naess and Sessions 1984; Plumwood 1993; Radford Ruether 1992; Spretnak 1999).

### **Crisis as opportunity**

At a time of what many scholars have defined as the increasing global crisis associated with modernity, my intention in offering such criticisms is one of encouraging what I would describe as our *life-affirming* potential to create more environmental sustainability, social justice and fulfillment for more of us (Beck 1982; D'Eubonne 1974; Giddens 1991; Mies and Shiva 1993; O'Reilly et al 2013; Spretnak 1990). Having worked with violence and abuse within families for many years, I am not naive about the inherent difficulties surrounding any need to make changes. Nor does my experience suggest that change is something that happens overnight. It also seems to me that many of our institutions have entrenched belief systems and practices that leave them ill-equipped to generate the kind of changes required in order to create such truly life-affirming societies.

Collinson's (2012) recent paper entitled *Prozac leadership and the limits of positive thinking* suggests the existence of a widespread social addiction to an excessive positivity that diminishes our capacity for critical reflection. It is well understood by those who work with both addiction and family violence that tendencies towards minimizing problems can act as indicators of high-risk situations. Whilst Beck's (1982) discussion of contemporary organization in what he terms, *Risk Society*, argues that in moving through several distinct social formations from pre-modernity to industrial society, modernity first distributes goods and then at its later stage of development what he pithily describes as bads – or increasing risks. In spite of Spretnak's (1990) pronouncements in the quote at the top of this section, the issue of whether or not we face unmitigated planet wide disaster, particularly due to our treatment of the environment, is predominantly still a matter for *debate* rather than unanimity around the global arena. As a subject it generates heated argument and passionate feeling, as well as disengagement and despair and what therapeutic discourse formulates as denial (Bradshaw 1988). And of course, In any discussion about change it is important to walk the delicate line between pessimism and optimism - between a 'grounded assessment' of what is and what may therefore be possible and necessary within given time frames and the 'ungrounded fantasy' that our current difficulties will somehow just take care of themselves.

Writing in *Capitalism As If The World Matters* Jonathon Porritt (2005) outlines three different potential scenarios for our future. These include everything from technological solutions to our problems and continuing economic growth, through painful recovery from present ailments and the revision of fundamental ideologies to total economic and social collapse with no long-term future for humanity (see also Homer-Dixon 2006; Lomborg 2001; Lovelock 2006). Françoise D'Eaubonne (1974), the feminist scholar credited by some as the originator of the term ecofeminism, has argued that the forms of leadership and organization embedded within patriarchy are most likely to end in the total destruction of the global ecosystem (Bullis and Glaser 1992; see also Banerjee 2008; Plumwood 1993 specifically discusses Plato and his philosophy of death; Weber 1904-05/30/76). While somewhat provocatively comparing modernity to syphilis, ecofeminist Glazebrook (2005) has more recently argued that

successful intervention in its life-threatening pathology will only be achieved through proper diagnosis of the disease. Indeed that as long as we fail to connect only apparently unrelated symptoms together as a single etiology, we will be unable to treat the root cause of the malaise she defines as phallic logic.

Clearly then our perspectives, our values and perhaps even the degree of our economic and social privilege, or what Sinclair (2010) refers to as our “place”, influences whether we perceive contemporary global circumstances as representative of a crisis of unprecedented proportions (see also Curry 2008; Grint 2010; Kriger and Seng 2005; Mabey and Morell 2011; Mies and Shiva 1993; O’Reilly et al 2013; Probert and James 2011). This work suggests that if not rapidly moving towards what James Lovelock (2006) has labeled as encroaching environmental catastrophe, then for reasons I discuss below, many of ‘us’, both human and non-humans are in very deep trouble. It also takes the view that such crisis can still be an opportunity for assessment of some of the reasons we may have arrived in our current situation, as well as for a review of future directions. Suggesting that crisis can even be a healthy occurrence, Mabey and Morell comment,

“It can expose the shortcomings of outmoded orthodoxy, paving the way for more radical, more ‘in touch’ ways of working. It can push people to the extreme which has the tendency to surface emotion, uncover latent conflict, reveal true motives and bring out the sacrificial best (in some at least). It can tell us what is important, by stripping away the superfluous and paring down to essentials. It can lay bare unfair, discriminatory, fraudulent practice and point to the root of accountability. It can puncture the pomposity of self-sufficiency, the myth of someone being in charge, the hubris of having all the answers” (Mabey and Morell 2011: 106).

One thing is certain. Leadership in the contemporary arena is conducted amidst a wide range of complex and ever-changing challenges (Banerjee 2003; 2008; Bolden et al 2011; Brookes and Grint 2010; Bullis and Glaser 1992; Curry 2011; Higgins 2010; Marshall 2007; 2011; Marshall and Tams 2011; Parkin 2010; Uhl-Bien et al 2007). Some of the most pressing problems before us on a global scale are climate change; degradation of land; deforestation; loss of biodiversity; species extinction; pollution, including toxic wastes from industrial accidents and production; population growth<sup>13</sup> and accelerating consumption

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<sup>13</sup> Whilst many of us uncritically accept the common framing of global ‘overpopulation’, Shiva points out, “...focus on numbers disguises people’s unequal access to resources...a drastic decrease of population in the poorest areas...would make an environmental impact immeasurably less than a decrease of only five per cent in present consumption levels of the ten richest countries...This is the industrial system’s

drawn from dwindling, finite resources.<sup>14</sup> We might also add poverty, ethnic conflicts, crime, urban decay, militarism, political accountability amidst corporate globalization and social justice issues concerning women, children and indigenous populations (Banerjee 2003; 2008; Curry 2011; Higgins 2010; Marshall 2007; 2011; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005; Shiva 1998; 1999; Shrivastava 1994; Sinclair 2007; Spretnak 1999). Around the world the certainty offered by stable traditions and communities is being dissolved (often forcibly) in the face of the relentless sweep of globalization and its accompanying resource depletion (Banerjee 2003; 2008; Gray 1995; Mies and Shiva 1993). Though this dissolution holds the potential for positive change, it certainly seems as though this will require what Kostera (2012) describes as a much greater commitment to “holistically sustainable management” if it is not to do what may amount to irretrievable environmental damage (Kostera 2012: 15).

In terms of what might also be framed as series of interdependent crises, here in Britain, where I am based, we have had Iraggate and the Chilcott enquiry; the recent banking crises; MP’s expenses scandals and the corruption and involvement of government and police officials with the Murdoch media empire which have come to light as part of the recent Leveson enquiry (Brookes 2011; Kerr and Robinson 2011; Mabey and Morell 2011). We have witnessed the rise of the Occupy movement, riots in the summer of 2011 and a general loss of confidence in leadership in the public services (O’Reilly et al 2013).

Brookes couples this loss of public trust in institutional leadership with an audit culture, that in obsessive measurement of that which *can* be counted fails to measure “what counts” (Brookes 2011: 180; see also Brookes and Grint 2010; McKee 2004). Acknowledging that the kind of innovation required of many new and novel, “wicked” problems has the potential to be revolutionary, his paper also reflects a general (and perhaps all too human) suspicion of change here in the UK (see also Brookes and Grint 2010; Grint 2010). Combined with practical pressures he suggests that this often results in rhetoric and reform rather than

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real dilemma. It does not want to abandon its growth therefore it lays the blame for the damage it causes on its victims; The South’s poor, particularly the women who produce too many children” (Mies and Shiva 1993; 268-279).

<sup>14</sup> Although scholars like White (1967) and Ponting (1991) outline the inevitability of impact upon environment, even in non-human contexts, they also suggest that industrialization involves a different order of things in terms of resource consumption and the degradation and destruction that follows it.

root and branch treatment of what Capra (1997) for one would frame as interconnected, interdependent, systemic problems requiring profound shifts in our thinking and our behaviour (Brookes 2011; see also Capra 1997; Kriger and Seng 2005; Maxwell 2003).

Parkin, who recommends, *Positive Deviance*, as one of the most helpful leadership responses available to all of us, describes our overall situation as “the perversity of a global economic system that is dependent on overdosing on resources and underperforming on basic human rights” (Parkin 2010: 2).

Commenting on the ways in which leadership agenda’s can often be seen to pull in at least two different directions at once, she also remarks,

“Missing too are unambiguous leadership signals from government or workplace. UK cabinet members, like the boards of most firms large and small, are split on a) whether climate change is happening; b) urgent; and c) their responsibility anyway. Bewitched by the pond-skaters of public opinion – the pollsters, focus groups and the twittering media – leadership everywhere seems to have lost its macro-political compass. The poor preparation for and chaotic process at the 2009 Copenhagen UN Climate Change Summit epitomized what is wrong with global leadership” (Parkin 2010: 2).

Indeed a number of the aforementioned activists and scholars hold the question of how we may best relate to our environment as central amongst their concerns. Also arguing in many instances that we are in urgent need of social changes in attitude, culture, economic priorities and law, in order to address the challenges that have been outlined. Polly Higgins, who addressed the 13<sup>th</sup> International Leadership Conference as a keynote speaker, is travelling the globe to petition government leadership for the recognition of the crime of ecocide to be enshrined in law. Her concern, that we will find ourselves in an ever increasingly dangerous downward spiral of conflict and declining resource if we do not move to protect the environment – fast (Higgins 2010).

We may, therefore, be living through a time when many of the problems we face constitute a wide array of adaptive challenges. These challenges may well necessitate not only new thinking, but new learning and creative, flexible responses to the rapid disintegration of the traditional frameworks of the modern industrial era if we are to fulfill the potential to move beyond them (Osborn et al 2002; Uhl-Bien et al 2007; Young forthcoming).

### **Leadership – Problem or solution?**

In spite of, or perhaps because of all the difficulties we face, leadership itself is increasingly propagated as an important element, not only of the origin of but

also the answer to many of our problems (Gemmill and Oakley 1997). Bolden et al (2011) tell us that a google.co.uk search produces 131 million pages under leadership and that Scopus contains 64,873 published articles on the topic. They quote estimates for expenditure on leadership development to run in the tens of billions of pounds and dollars (Fulmer 1997; Raelin 2004). Yet they also note that we have no agreed definition of either the term leadership or development and scant concrete evidence of its impact.

We also seem to be in the midst of a huge upsurge of interest in spirituality and religion, a trend that has even made its way into the disciplines of leadership and management (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Avolio et al 2009; Biberman and Robbins 1999; Bell and Taylor 2001; 2003; 2011; Benefiel 2003; 2005; Bullis and Glaser 1992; Dent et al 2005; Fornaciari and Lund Dean 2001; Fry 2003; Fry et al 2005; Grint 2010; Hicks 2002; 2009; King 2008; Kriger and Seng 2005; LoRusso 2011; Maxwell 2003; Neal and Banner 1999; Parker 2009; Prince 2005; Reave 2005; Sinclair 2007; Sorensen 2010; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010; Sorensen et al 2012; Walsh 2011; Warner and Grint 2006).

One of the questions at the heart of this thesis is whether this interest is likely to be a solution to or to amplify current organizational problems. And like the conclusions I draw about leadership, the answer is, I suggest, that it depends. If leadership, spiritual or otherwise, is to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem, to at least some of the issues outlined above it might be argued that it also becomes increasingly important to at least debate whether leadership in any given context actually contributes to 'positive' ethical value.<sup>15</sup> This of course immediately takes us to the heart of what many leadership scholars have termed the Hitler problem or what we might otherwise name as differences in the values and/or outcomes sought by differing interests (Bolden et al 2011; Burns 1978; Ciulla 2004; Grint 2010).

As I have mentioned already, some scholars have been noting that the contemporary interest in spirituality in particular in the field of leadership has

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<sup>15</sup> Given my critique of monotheism within this thesis, the immensely complex, global nature of the world we live in and my commitment to ecofeminism, I make no pretense of offering absolute, universal explanations. Rather I offer a view from a particular perspective, which is both bodied and placed. It is offered as a series of insights rather than as part of any "overarching programme to replace ambiguity and partiality with putative certainty and security" (Curry 2008: 8; see also Merleau-Ponty 2002).



been guilty of neglecting analysis of Western religion's historical origins and therefore of some of its implications in the realms of social justice (Bell, Cullen and Taylor 2012; Sorensen et al 2012). In addition, a number of critical scholars have been expressing concerns that the apparently revived interest in the sacred that is currently permeating the fields of leadership and organization studies may be flawed by an over-reliance on Judeo-Christian theology, rooted in a singular cosmology (Christo-Baker 2010; Prince 2005; Taylor 2010; Tourish and Tourish 2010; Tracey 2012; Warner and Grint 2006). Much of that which I seek to analyze therefore has arisen from a European context that has combined what Radford Ruether (1992), an ecofeminist Christian theologian, describes as "Classical Western cultural traditions...of which Christianity is a major expression" with extensive colonization. She argues that this culture and the metaphysical systems at its heart have both,

"...shaped and continue to shape, (particularly in its secularized, scientific form) the rest of the world, through imperialist colonialism and neo-colonialism. It is the major culture and system of domination that has pressed humans and the earth into the crises of ecological unsustainability, poverty and militarism we now experience" (Radford Ruether 1992: 3-10; see also Curry 2008; Shiva 1998).

Like Parkin's (2010) work, Radford Ruether's (1992) frame questions the notion that a global system based upon inequality and environmental destruction can also be conceived of as morally defensible (see also Shiva 1998). If as Burns (1978) and Ciulla (2004) contest, 'immoral' goals make for bad or even non-existent leadership, perhaps we may need to reach evermore deeply into our own cultural and social assumptions in order to question some of what is being done (and indeed left undone) and said in the name of leadership. Inevitably of course, such a search if engaged with at all, is likely to involve degrees of subjectivity, to be culturally and politically relative and frequently, contentious (Bolden et al 2011; Curry 2008; Gray 1995; Grint 2010; O'Reilly et al 2013).

Indeed, what we might define as morality is often such a personal issue that it seems appropriate to be wary of its manipulation by both leadership and organizations (Bell and Taylor 2003; 2011; Mabey and Morell 2011; MacIntyre 1985). Yet we may also be seen to suffer from a crisis of meaning, (alongside our material challenges) within our current climate that serves no better than religious or political totalitarianism (Grint 2010; Kriger and Seng 2005; Parkin 2010).

“Whether we call these the consumer society, the circularity of discourse, the more or less cancerous diseases of our ages, the unreliability of words, the end of philosophy, religious despair or regressive religiosity, scientific or technological imperialism that does not take the human subject into account, and so on” (Whitford 1991: 10).

Parkin goes as far as to suggest the need for public debate, or a ‘moral megalogue’ about our shared purposes (assuming we have any) and how we might begin to define at least some of our collective priorities (Etzioni and Carney 1997 quoted in Parkin 2010).

Collectivism and its history as Gray (1995; 2007; see also Grint 2010) has pointed out is a thorny subject here in the West. Given the importance of examining universalism within this thesis I have spent a great deal of time over the last several years wrestling with what it means, both conceptually and practically. Continuing attempts to propagate the universalization of modernization, initially embodied within the European Enlightenment project<sup>16</sup> have led to damaging fragmentation and homogenization. The goals and values that drove the modernization agenda of the Enlightenment may have begun as a noble quest for social improvement. As I will argue however, some of the essentially theological thinking that it grew out of has, ultimately helped to order many of our relationships in ways that are no longer appropriate to the needs of an increasingly environmentally degraded and socially unjust world (Gray 1995/2007; Roszak 1993; Spretnak 1999).

An ecofeminist framework on the other hand implies an embedded network of interconnectedness. This includes nature *and* culture, and leads to the acknowledgment of shared, common human needs, and at least minimally, for uncontaminated water, air and soil.<sup>17</sup> It may also be seen to extend to the protection of the dignity and identity of diverse local expressions, *without* succumbing to a cultural relativism that argues that all culture and value is

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<sup>16</sup> Which as both Grey (2007) and Spretnak (1999) point out have played an equally important role in both communist and capitalist agenda’s.

<sup>17</sup> Mies (1993) outlines a distinction between fundamental human needs, which she suggests are indeed, universal and satisfiers, which are influenced by cultural and historical conditions. Discussing both the need (and the apparent reluctance) to reduce consumption in the North, she comments, “In industrial capitalism the production of economic goods along with the system of allocating them has conditioned the type of satisfiers that predominate...distinction between needs and satisfiers is useful...because it enables us to see that there are different ways to satisfy the same fundamental human needs” (Mies 1993:254-255).

equal (Curry 2008; Mies and Shiva 1993). I approach this, as I mention in my introduction, from what Spretnak (1999) has called a constructive postmodern position. Such a framework simultaneously acknowledges the frailty of absolutes and the importance of local situations, at the same time as holding the premise that humanity (and the many 'non-humans' with whom we share a home) is completely reliant upon its embeddedness in and total dependence upon the Earth (Spretnak 1999; see also Curry 2011). The Earth is therefore also the source of the global commons for the generations who will follow us (Esbjorn-Hargens and Zimmerman 2009). Though as Martinez-Alier points out, "individuals not yet born have ontological difficulties in making their presence felt in today's market for exhaustible resources" (quoted in Banerjee 2003: 152).

In a technology obsessed global economy apparently devoted to the promulgation of the free market the notion that all culture has equal value is clearly not a widely shared or unproblematic view, existing as a common leadership framework (Banerjee 2011). Evidenced on the one hand by, continuing insistence upon rising GDP's, economic growth models and drives to 'develop' at all costs, alongside apparently conflicting or incommensurate suggestions, on the other, about the environmental and species damage that is generated by these ways of attempting to conduct business as usual (Banerjee 2003; Bullis and Glaser 1992; Carson 1962; Meadows et al 1972; Turner 2008; see also Parkin 2010). I take it as given therefore that dissent and differing perspectives are an inevitable aspect of many of the processes by which leadership seeks to influence outcomes (Collinson 2005).

Convinced nonetheless, that both leaders (as individuals) and leadership (as a multiplicity of often mundane, everyday acts of co-creation) will inevitably continue to influence many such outcomes, Mabey and Morell (2011) pose the provocative question of how leadership scholars might encourage us to consider "the moral purpose of the journey and indeed the virtue of the destination (however these might be defined by fellow travelers)" (Mabey and Morell 2011: 109; see also Badarraco 2001; Raelin 2011; Western 2008). They also suggest a number of important areas that we might focus upon. These include contributing to change through countering the neglect of the moral, the relational and the emotional dimensions within the leadership field.

It is one of the major arguments of this thesis that the cultural contexts and ethics of “old leadership patterns and the ways in which they may even have contributed to the crisis, and may be unsuitable for...future...organization, require review” (Probert and James 2011: 146). Whether ethics are consciously acknowledged or not, they are an unavoidable aspect of leadership theory as discursive and embodied practice. As chapter three in particular argues, the origins of extensively employed social values that drive leadership and organization are often hidden in the past (Fairhurst 2009; Temple 2012). Probert and James (2011), like Mabey and Morell, also argue that crisis can provide the perfect impetus for re-thinking unconscious (what Sorensen et al 2012 describe as repressed) assumptions. Which is to suggest that leadership development upon which we spend so much revenue, can be most effective when it tends to cultural contexts beyond the individual, in order to address the factors that have generated the crises in the first place. Addressing the issue of adaptive change within organizational contexts, Mabey and Morell (2011) further suggest that organizational members often need to become aware of maladaptive assumptions about their leadership concepts if they are to move towards the successful resolution of new challenges. This can be done by, “...helping to surface the implicit models of leadership that currently constrain organizational members, to re-evaluate the utility and relevance of these shared assumptions, to work through the associated anxieties of relinquishing outmoded cognitions and start to co-determine a fresh leadership concept. Crisis is the necessary catalyst for this re-appraisal” (Mabey and Morrell 2011: 114).

Osborn et al, also adopt the perspective that,

“...leadership is embedded in the context. It is socially constructed in and from a context where patterns over time must be considered and where history matters. Leadership is not only the incremental influence of a boss toward subordinates, but most important it is the collective incremental influence of leaders in and around the system” (Osborn et al 2002: 798).

This might be seen to imply that leadership effectiveness may need to be at least partially assessed by going back into its historical roots in order to expose some of its unexamined assumptions. Which before moving to the next section of the introduction takes me to a brief explanation of the main way in which I use the word leadership within this first section of my thesis.

Some of the earliest etymological origins of the word leadership suggest that it comes from the prehistoric West and North Germanic word, *laithjan*, derived from *laitho*, meaning way or journey (Ayto 1991). Etymologically then, the

earliest interests associated with the word lead were concerns, not about traits, positions or entitlements to lead but with *that which causes our way or journey*. The ways in which these causes are defined become an inextricable aspect of leadership representations and embodied practices. I am most concerned, therefore, (particularly in chapter three of this first section) with the broad underlying philosophical conditions that I suggest emerge from Western cosmological constructions, rather than initially in leaders as individuals. I take my definition of cosmology from the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) who suggests that a cosmology functions as the overarching cultural narrative on which a society bases its fundamental operating principles and therefore, also its approaches to leadership. For, as I intend to demonstrate, these cosmological beliefs are the most fundamental source of the values from which our leaderships are configured. To this end, analyzing leadership 'effectiveness' becomes at least partly a question of examining the historical values that have generated the assumptions that shaped the journey taken.

### **Leadership and spiritual diversity?**

One rich source in the search for such historical values, which also corresponds to one of Mabey and Morrell's (2011) proposed areas of interest, lies within the realm of religion and spirituality. This interest, as already mentioned, is also one of the most rapidly expanding areas within the study of leadership and management. As an individual with a long-term interest in spiritual practice in my private life as well as a social scientist by training I am fascinated by the potential cultural implications of this apparent collective upsurge of interest in religion and spirituality. As a result of the creative tension between my personal inclinations and my family background as the daughter of a Marxist historian, I have spent much of the last decade pondering similar kinds of questions to those posed by Calas and Smircich when they ask,

"Is the "spirituality and organization" discourse announcing a social movement or the latest managerial fad? Typical of soul searching when centuries turn? Essentially a conservative stance consistent with privatization and globalization? Part of an ethical renewal the world over? Linked to other more fundamental social changes?" (Calas and Smircich 2003: 327).

Extending their questioning we might also ask whether current interest is simply a continuation of what John Gray (2007) has identified as the latest incarnation of a millennialism that has morphed from the ancient times of Christ, through Nazism and Communism, right through to modern day globalization and

Western secularized faith in the power of the free market and democracy to end all the evils of the material world? Is it a homogenous phenomenon? And if not how are we to distinguish one beast from another in the 'postmodern' era of dice and splice?

Writing in their extensive review of "definitions, distinctions, and embedded assumptions" within the literature on leadership and spirituality, Dent et al (2005) highlight the fact that spirituality and religion, like leadership itself, tends to be positively associated with desirable moral and ethical outcomes. Within the leadership and organizational fields spirituality is also being causally linked to both productivity and profitability. This alone locates some of the discourse about it within a very specific worldview (Case et al 2012; Fairhurst 2009; Frank 2000). Indeed it has been remarked that the assumptions about the positive benefits of spirituality "are so pervasive that the more interesting work seemed to be in unearthing areas of difference and/or distinction" (Dent et al 2005: 629). A similar issue is evident in Benefiel's observation that enquiries into spirituality and leadership often "draw upon outdated, discredited or shallow approaches to spirituality...but then don't fully develop them or resolve the conflicts among them..." (Benefiel 2005: 727; see also Hicks 2002).

As we have heard already, a number of scholars working in the field are expressing concerns that the revived interest in religion that is currently permeating the fields of leadership and organization studies is limited by an over-reliance on too narrow a theology rooted too exclusively within a Judeo-Christian cosmology (Christo-Baker 2010; Hale and Fields 2007; Prince 2005; Taylor 2010; Temple 2012; Tourish and Tourish 2010; Warner and Grint 2006). If cosmology itself is inextricably bound with the values upon which we base our social organization, including our leadership, (my core argument presented in chapter three) then it follows that an over-reliance on the study of the belief's associated with a culture's dominant cosmology runs the risk of reinforcing and legitimating the leaderships and organization that already predominate. If a culture contains more than one cosmology, as pluralistic Western culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly does, social science has a responsibility to present such alternative perspectives alongside the dominant viewpoint. This becomes all the more relevant as a subject of research in a organizational climate seeking to employ spirituality as a vehicle of meaning in work contexts, given

the potentially different values and outcomes involved in different spiritual and religious practices and their relationships with different cosmologies.

I have already suggested that the dominant influence of a singular cosmology, or what we may otherwise term, mainstream religious orthodoxy in Western culture, tends to obscure the impact that cosmology may have upon its leaderships and organization. Orthodoxies that I argue still lie, often quite unconsciously, at the heart of the kind of dominant discourses in leadership and organizational studies presented by Grint (2010). Clearly, no religious myth is ever “a singular monolithic entity” (Purkiss 1996: 32). Interpretations of them, whether they are Christian or feminist, are inevitably coloured by the subjectivities and standpoints of the reader. It is, therefore, obviously important to acknowledge the existence and role of various Christian liberation theologies around the world, the stewardship model and the great diversity of Christian thinking, including the role of heresy. I would argue, nonetheless, that these alternatives have not constituted a systematic or widely enough accepted approach successful in replacing the dominant discourse, which is the main thread that I attempt to address (Curry 2011; Fox 1983; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005).

This takes us straight to the issue of latent conflicts discussed by both Mabey and Morell (2011) and others (Hicks 2002). To that end, let me clarify now that this work takes the view that some strands of Judeo-Christianity have been harnessed on a long-term basis to sacralize political relationships of domination that need to be addressed. In this sense I speak to the history of some of the cultural, discursive or narrative and mythological elements associated with the Judeo-Christian religion - suggesting that they have been used to maintain hierarchical and oppressive organizational and leadership structures. Whilst I do not intend wholesale condemnation of Christianity, such elements, which have included a messianic religious ideology and militarist imperialism, require uncoupling and re-evaluation if Christianity as a whole is to provide an ethical framework that serves constructive change, environmental sustainability and social justice (Radford Ruether 2005). In this sense this work is a critique of traditional and conservative, rather than liberal or radical, approaches to Judeo-Christianity, as it argues that they are still one of the most powerful influences upon our understanding of the sacred within Western culture (Christ 1997;

Curry 2011; Fox 1983). Ecofemism, which in fact includes radical Christian voices, provides one of many routes to just such a critique.

### **Ecofeminisms – *Looking through critical, varifocal lenses***

Ecofemism itself is far from being a monolith. A descriptor that may be applied to a variety of written work from,

“Donna Haraway and Mary Daly, Alice Walker and Rachael Carson, Starhawk and Vandana Shiva, ecofeminism is a shifting theoretical and political location that can be defined to serve various intentions...and attempts to combine feminism, environmentalism, antirascism, animal liberation, anticolonialism, antimilitarism, and nontraditional spiritualities...which part of this multivalent politics is emphasized or even included varies widely and remains deeply contested among those that identify as ecofeminists” (Sturgeon 1997:27-28).

Whilst one of their most vociferous critics observes of ecofeminists,

“Some...argue...that there is an innate, even biological “connection” between women and nature, while others avow that this “connection” is really a socially constructed product. Some advocate a belief in a goddess, while others are adamantly secular. Some locate the roots of the ecological crisis in the late Neolithic in Europe, while others locate those roots in Christianity, and still others in the Scientific Revolution. Some assert that “All is One”, while others argue for particularism and multiplicity. Some are influenced by social ecology, while others have ties with deep ecology...Ecofeminists...acknowledge the existence of serious contradictions in their works as a sign of healthy “diversity”...one ecofeminist even rejects the very notion of coherence itself, arguing that coherence is “totalizing” and by inference oppressive” (Biehl 1991: 2-3).

Indeed, displaying just the kind of multiplicity this scholar seems to be critical of, different ecofeminist scholars offer a variety of differing narratives on both its origins as a movement alongside, as intimated by Biehl (1991) in the quote above, divergent definitions of problems, solutions and trajectories (Plumwood 1993; Spretnak 1990; Sturgeon 1997). Indeed, precisely because of its political commitment to honouring diversity, such accounts usually acknowledge that within its very broad church there have been not only varying roads into relationship with it as a political movement, but also a wide range of concerns and approaches within its overall parameters. These incorporate a number of disagreements and conflicts associated with both theory and practice, including concerns about both racism and gender essentialism (Plumwood 1993; Sturgeon 1997; Thomson 2006).

Sturgeon (1997) locates the origins of American ecofeminism in the antimilitarist direct action of the late seventies and eighties. Spretnak’s (1990) narrative meantime identifies a number of other routes into ecofeminism. Her account lists the study of political theory and the feminist rejection of Marxist



ideology that fails to take sufficient notice of gender in analyses that simultaneously neglects the role of both women and nature;<sup>18</sup> discovery of the nature-based religions of paganism, witchcraft, goddess worship and First Nation spiritual traditions and finally, involvement in environmentalism.

In general terms ecofeminism(s) tend to be in agreement that there are important connections between the oppression of women and nature and that addressing one without the other is inadequate. Most also subscribe, at least in theory, to the notion of the relational self, practicing an ethic of care and sensitivity to both difference and place, in contrast to the emotionally detached universalism I critique in this thesis. But as has been observed,

“...an ethic of care speaks not in one voice but in a number of different political voices, both particularized ones of concern for family and immediate others, and more general forms voicing concern for nature and wider groups. These voices will not necessarily be in harmony...they carry widely different political messages...there cannot be a single answer to the question of whether the ethics of care is socially progressive or socially regressive...” (Plumwood 1993: 188).

Indeed Thomson (2006) in highlighting the heterogeneous complexions of women in differing contexts even more pointedly reminds us that,

“...many women are part of groups that oppress other women in intersectional hierarchies of class and nation that cross-cut the question of ecology. Furthermore, the health risks and other costs of environmental degradation are disproportionately borne by those with control of the fewest resources, as the scholarship on environmental racism has so compellingly illustrated. So, no one set of values can be assumed to benefit all women (equally). In addition, the prerogatives of the preservation of nature are often invoked in deeply sexist, racist, and transnationally unjust ways. Particular visions of nature, especially those of a pristine nature, have been used — implicitly and explicitly — in legislation against immigrants and in targeting the childbearing patterns and the survival and labor exigencies of the world’s poor. A nature (not to mention a work and domestic schedule) that allows the stereotypical environmentalist — something like the well-off, *au nature* or survival-equipped, white male “deep ecologist” type familiar from a whole tradition of U.S. nature writing — to encounter “wilderness” with little or no other human company is paid for not just by the kinship web that takes care of his labor of reproduction offstage, but also by the transnational and domestic division of labor that underwrites his economic freedom and the protection of his wilderness. These arguments, if sometimes overstated, make it clear that not all ecological visions are feminist ones and that feminist ones cannot be assumed to apply to all women equally” (Thomson 2006: 510).

One of the most controversial issues within ecofeminism therefore, is that of finding effective ways to challenge the dominant tradition of negative association between women and nature, with all the attendant damage done by

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<sup>18</sup> My reader may also recall my own Marxist family background along with my discussion in the prologue about my embodied life experience of gender and family life.

such inheritance, without eclipsing differences between and amongst women who are placed differently (Kolodny 1975; Merchant 1980; Haraway 1989). Again, there are a number of contested positions within ecofeminist movements. One is, that because patriarchy tends to associate women with nature that disrespect of one is likely to be entwined with disrespect of the other. Where women are constructed as endless sources of nurture, the earth too is likely to be perceived as infinitely exploitable. Though as Huey-li-Li (1993) points out in *A Cross-Cultural Critique of Ecofeminism*, it is perfectly possible to view nature in a positive light without necessarily extending this towards women. Whilst Roach (1991; 2003) has argued that environmentalist moves to encourage the connection between caring for the earth as we would care for our mother, are complex, if not doomed in social contexts in which motherhood itself is undervalued and disrespected.

Some ecofeminists argue nonetheless that the feminist struggle to move away from the imposition of passivity and objectification exists parallel to the struggle to free the earth from the same treatment (Sturgeon 1997). Although Heller (1993) in turn, explicitly connects the notion of the ravaged, victimized earth with the medieval cult of romanticism that cast women in roles as (powerless) beloveds in need of chivalrous protection. Such idealized views, as she points out, tend to need considerable distance (what Plumwood 1993 refers to as hyper-separation) from the object of affection to be maintained. A distance that Garb (1990) suggests has found the ultimate, modern expression in the photographic (and according to him pornographic) images of the earth from space, so often employed in contemporary discourses on the state of the planet. Distance which like idealized notions surrounding the term mother, (as becomes very obvious in some of the interviews conducted in the second half of this thesis on the subject of the “divine feminine”) obliterate detail, particularity and embeddedness, as well as visceral and local knowledges.

Focusing nonetheless, on women’s potential role as mothers, some ecofeminists propose that women’s reproductive capacities automatically render them closer to the natural rhythms and cycles of life and death and that both women and nature benefit from embracing such identification with nature. Some such accounts seek to celebrate the differences they argue are inherent between women and men (Gilligan 1982; Irigaray 1993; Ruddick 1989; see also

Thomson 2006). And indeed rather than representing a regressive fundamentalism, arguments like this can instead be aligned with ecofeminist spirituality that seeks to draw on images of female power and divinity found in many nature-based religions, as resources for the empowerment of women (Christ 2003; Eisler 1987; Radford Ruether 1992; Starhawk 1987).

Discussion of political activity that relies on “maternalism” has therefore been vigorously debated between ecofeminists themselves, under the heading of essentialism (Alaimo 2008; MacGregor 2006; Sandilands 2008). Both Biehl (1991) and Purkiss (1996) have extensively criticized the historical validity of much of the myth making (some of which I explore in chapter three) of ecofeminist spirituality. Describing it amongst other things as a, “prelapsarian utopia of originary unity” that seeks amongst other things, to recapture a blissful return to mother-child dyad first experienced in connection with the mother’s body (Purkiss 1996: 42). In a cultural environment that has “industrialized” even childbirth (Liedloff 1975), it is perhaps however arguable, that it is the very *failure* to experience such connection that may be responsible for profound cultural woundings that such mythology is seeking to compensate for. Another somewhat more sympathetic scholar than Biehl (1991) who also talks about the fact that some (academic and professionalized) voices have been represented more than others within ecofeminism comments on the fact that,

“...cosmopolitan academics distanced themselves from the “touchy-feely,” religious, and reproductive celebratory strands; jokes about placenta-eating covens of ex-hippies became (and remain) common” (Thomson 2006: 507; see also Phillips 2014 447).

In light of the costs and demands that tend to be attached to working within patriarchal systems, along with the emergence of what Plumwood (1993) has referred to as a feminism of uncritical equality, such expression does raise the question (for me at least) of whether women who want to be successful within such systems feel a need to distance themselves from that which the cultural labels as profane. If this is the case it might be argued that this has resulted in unhelpful divisions. Divisions, that as Moore (2008) points out have sometimes created the very exclusion that feminism seeks to dissolve. Resulting in a compulsory anti-essentialism, that may at times have acted to close debate over differences within feminism and between women, who may still have other shared interests. Differences that Plumwood (1993) for one would argue are a vital ingredient in moving beyond the homogenizing logic of the master.

I myself first encountered both ecofeminism<sup>19</sup> and its spiritual component in 1984 whilst protesting against nuclear weaponry at Faslane in Scotland. It was also here that I was introduced to the influence of Starhawk (1982; 1987) an American, Goddess worshipping, icon within ecofeminist spirituality circles at this time. So that this became the site where my interest in Goddess based spirituality, (known to me as wicca) coupled with my previous study of indigenous, shamanic traditions and began to grow the roots of a spiritual practice that would later help to sustain me both personally (through three rounds of cancer) and professionally throughout my work in the arena of domestic and sexual abuse.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of my own employment of reference to indigenous perspectives within this work this is perhaps also a useful juncture at which to note the criticism that exists *within* ecofeminism itself of the adoption of such frames of reference. Such critique has rightfully highlighted the potential for racist discourses that participate in the creation of images that idealize tribal peoples, either as noble savages or some kind of “ultimate ecofeminists” (Sturgeon 1997). Indeed Sturgeon’s (1997) work on the intersections between race and gender highlights the danger inherent in this term, of attempting to fix the Western ‘other’ (Plumwood 1993) in a romanticized, unchanging and eternal past. A move that can also include the reification of the wilderness supposedly inhabited by the generic, homogenized indigene. Whilst Haraway (1989) in turn points to the fact that such discourses also often fail to sufficiently identify the forms of power and violence built into non-Western frameworks (Haraway 1989; see also Gaard 1993 for a specific discussion of the romanticizing of First Nation hunting practices in relation to treatment of animals).

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<sup>19</sup> Though in truth I did not encounter the term itself until I began this thesis and was labeled in this way by others seeking to assist me to find a theoretical framework for what I simply regarded at that stage as my integrated life experiences.

<sup>20</sup> As my work in the realms of violence and abuse progressed I became more and more aware of the need for institutional, legal and cultural change. Given that I chose to put my energies into assisting in the creation of concrete changes for individuals in crisis I was mostly too exhausted from these efforts to also engage with the fight for structural changes as well, a fact I often felt guilty about. I had colleagues and friends who occupied those kinds of roles who very clearly perceived us all as contributing to the unified task of dealing with various oppressions relating to class and gender. It was however Joanna Macy’s attribution of equal value to differing roles in the social change process, including our own personal growth work, in her book, *Coming Back to Life* (1998) which enabled me to move to a place of (relative) peace about doing enough.

On a personal level, as a Scot who grew up with a deep love of the land I lived on, I have had several interesting personal experiences of conflict within both personal growth and feminist spirituality communities when attempting to raise issues connecting of my own felt sense of being indigenous to my own lands. During such dialogues I have experienced precisely the kind of dualism that Gaard (1993) describes as (good) connected to the land indigenous woman/ (bad) disconnected from the land Western woman, alongside evasion of discussion about the painful colonial history that exists in the United Kingdom. Such encounters involved either the experience of particular discourses being imposed on me in ways that do not match my spiritually lived experiences or being politically frustrated in my desire for discussion about colonialism at home. I am well aware of the vast disconnects from the land that exist in my cultural contexts since industrialization and in Scotland at least, including The Highland Clearances. In spite of this I still feel that the question of, "If I am not indigenous in my own lands then where do I belong?", is an important one. Within the British Isles I would suggest that such questions are closely entwined with the political issues relating to the historical colonizations that exist in the very complex relationships between and amongst the Scots, the Welsh, the Irish and the various Anglo/Saxon, Norman and Celtic 'English' tribes of my home lands. It is therefore easy for me to resonate with Sturgeon's (1997) observation that identifying difference as residing in the faraway international and less familiar 'other' can serve to eclipse divisions based on class, caste, education, language, cultural and historical experiences, that exist closer to home. Which whilst this may enable the avoidance of short-term conflict, Sturgeon (1997) also suggests may impede thoroughgoing analysis (and change) of politically relevant connections between various exploitations in more localized environments. A suggestion that I would say was well illustrated by the political process that unfolded around the recent vote on Scottish independence, including debates about the oil resources in the North Sea.

Pertinently, Sturgeon's (1997) work also explores the relationships between the criticisms of ecofeminist gender essentialism and its attempts to move away from accusations of racism through its reclamations of its own "indigenous" spiritual traditions. She comments specifically on the three most popular categorization of indigene referenced in the ecofeminist community; the 'Native

Indian', the Indian Chipko movement and prehistoric pagan women. I will return to this last category shortly, but for now take note of Sturgeon's conclusion about the popularity and significance of this first category, which I reference in this work.

"For the most part, Native American tribes have practiced a non-exploitative use of natural resources, and Native American women are often equal partners with men in the construction and maintenance of harmonious relationships between people, soil, animals, trees, wind, water, fire and plants. The figure of the Native American woman as the "ultimate ecofeminist" mediates, for white ecofeminists, the conflict between the critique of the patriarchal connection between women and nature and the desire for a non-patriarchal version of that very connection by representing a living, materially grounded example of such a relationship with nature. Thus, a form of racial essentialism is used in part to avoid the appearance of a form of gender essentialism" (Sturgeon 1997: 119).

I use the word indigenous bearing all such complexities in mind, employing it as a symbolic signifier with some potential to point a way beyond some of the most destructive aspects of modernist organization and gender politics - in the full awareness of the damages done by colonization and the fact that solutions to environmental and social justice problems need to be projected forwards rather than back. I therefore employ this term, as well as that of the divine feminine, which I discuss next, strategically and specifically in order to assist in the task of taking a critical perspective upon mainstream religious orthodoxy and its role in environmental destruction, which I link in chapter three (See also Banerjee 2003; Irigaray 1993; Plumwood 1993).

Returning for now to the subject of the second path into ecofeminism, of exposure to nature-based religion, often involving the figure of the Goddess, Spretnak (1990) comments,

"What was cosmologically wholesome and healing was the discovery of the Divine as immanent in and around us. What was intriguing was the sacred link between the Goddess in her many guises and totemic animals and plants, sacred groves, and womblike caves, in the moon-rhythm blood of menses, the ecstatic dance - the experience of knowing Gaia, her voluptuous contours and fertile plains, her flowing waters that give life, her animal teachers... That period of discovery - which would certainly not have been news to primal peoples, but was utterly earthshaking for us Judeo-Christian women of a thoroughly modern culture, inspired art, music, poetry, and the resurrection of long-forgotten sacred myth and ritual, usually held outdoors, often on the Earth's holy days of cosmic alignment, the solstices and the equinoxes" (Spretnak 1990: 5-6).

As part of this upsurge, feminist archeologists began to interpret archeological evidence in new ways and along with others, began telling stories of ancient cultures extending all across Europe and India which had honoured both nature

and women (Eisler 1987; Gimbutas 1973; 1977; 1980; 1982; 1989; Mellart 1970; 1975; see also Biehl 1991 and Purkiss 1996 for critiques, as well as p.106 and p.117 - p.119 in the following chapters). From this, grew a cultural movement within this “third wave of feminism” (King 1990 personal communication to Sturgeon 1997) that began to explore old myths afresh, as well as creating new religious myths and practices based on both women’s concerns and embodied experiences (Christ 1997; Eisler 1987; Radford Ruether 1983; Starhawk 1987).

In my own life, exploration of these kinds of stories and practices has been a hugely empowering process, enabling what I would suggest has been the transformation of wounds, (including those inflicted by the industrialization of childbirth and land clearances) carried down my ancestral lines on a trans-generational basis. Within such a perspective, what Goddess focused and other nature-based religions refer to as immanence, replaces objectification and personal behaviours, including the kind of strategic small, incremental wins discussed by Meyerson and Scully (1995), alongside more ‘direct action’ are all seen as having equally important contributions to political process and the transformation of assumption about leadership and organization (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Christ 1997; D’Eubonne 1974; Eisler 1987; Mies and Shiva 1993; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005; Spretnak 1999; Starhawk 1987). Because of this I have found ways to integrate my desires to be a parent, along with a need to have power and agency as I make my contribution to the world around me, in ways that that I have been able to experience as more empowering than the situation I witnessed in the previous generation in my family. Of course, it is virtually impossible for any one of us to make a precise assessment of the ‘effectiveness’ or impact of such a contribution. It seems reasonably clear to me that there are many elements of gender that have been not only socially constructed, but imposed in oppressive ways for many, many generations on both sexes. It is impossible to dissolve such constructions overnight. Ecofeminist cultural narratives, spiritual and secular, that attempt to track this process throughout time, whatever time frame they choose, are in my view, part of such a process. I would also suggest that finding ways for both men and women to claim and experience parenting and all its associated tasks and responsibilities as a positive, valued and non-profaned space is a key

component in a fairer and more just and peaceful societies. Just as creating ways for those women who wish to be able to access religious power and spiritual experiences in ways that celebrate their equality with men has been taken on as a vital ingredient of changed culture by feminist spiritualities that span both Christian and pagan narratives. In my own life I view these components as every bit as important as the more overtly political processes associated with the fight for equal pay and sufficient childcare facilities, and legislative changes in family law already won in areas such as rape and divorce. I do not however have an interest in dictating to or judging the choices of others in these highly personal realms. As to the question posed to me recently as to whether I relate to the term Goddess as construction or reality, I refer to the words of Carole Christ (2003),

“Personal relationships are embedded in a web of structural relationships that shape societies and cultures. The world is social through and through...We are closely related to individuals in our own species...Many of us are related to animals we care for and to the plants...in our fields and gardens. Consciously or not, we are intimately related to the cells that make up the food we eat. Consciously or not, we are intimately related to the constellations of minerals and cells and animals that make up the environment in which we live. Landscapes and places as well as people colour and shape our experiences of the world. If the air we breathe is clean, we may breathe more deeply. If it is poisoned, we may gasp for breath, cough, and eventually become ill. Atoms and cells exist in relationships. Atoms touch each other and become rocks or mountains. Cells touch each other and become plants. The web of life is no mere metaphor” (Christ 2003: 70).

The film *Aluna* provides a perfect embodied example of such philosophy. Simultaneously communicating the cosmology of the Kogi dreaming culture in Colombia, it also documents and analyzes their warning to little brother about the environmental damage ‘he’ is doing. Many of those interviewed who are representing the Western scientific perspective also validate the Kogi cosmology in ‘real’ terms. The Kogi, like many shamanic cultures, including the Achuar and the Sapara, other tribal peoples who are also woven into the threads of this thesis, refer to the earth as mother. Although I find this a resonant and empowering way to relate to my world and use this term myself on occasions, I personally do not really believe that Great Mystery is confined by gender. Meantime, however, current industrialized, modern systems are endangering survival of an abundance of species and cultural forms in a multitude of disturbing ways that often seem to involve marginalizing valuable diversity in both the human and the non-human worlds.



The very marginalization of such diversity forms part of what I have suggested in this introductory chapter is an encroaching global crisis. Within the context of the multitude of complex and challenging problems that constitute this crisis, we are seeing a number of trends with Western organization. One is the increasing promotion of leadership as a proposed solution to this crisis. Another is a huge upsurge of interest of religion and spirituality within the fields of leadership, organization and management. Within this increase of interest, analysis is it seems, often still been brought to bear through the employment of the historically dominant Judeo-Christian cosmology that lies at the heart of Western leadership and organization. Given some of the problems associated with this cosmology in terms of social justice and environmental sustainability, this introductory chapter has argued that it is therefore, important to subject the cosmology itself to further enquiry, in order to assess whether these trends are likely to increase or decrease current challenges. Acknowledging that this is likely to be a highly contested subject, I propose nonetheless, that enlisting the perspectives provided by other cosmological narratives, such as ecofeminism(s) and indigenous understandings, may at least provide us with some alternative tools for approaching the challenges ahead.

### **Theoretical, methodological and empirical contexts**

#### **Relevance and contribution**

I begin my second chapter with an examination of some of the current key issues within the sub-field of spirituality and leadership. This chapter enables me to locate my thesis within its wider context. Doing so, I explore some of the common themes and debates. Although research in the field is conducted using quantitative methods, my own work focuses on a qualitative approach, exploring the interfaces between subjectivity and the social, political and cultural intersections that effect embodied experience of the sacred. I therefore employ this chapter, amongst other things, as a way to explore some of the contemporary thinking about measurement of religion and spirituality, en route to a later discussion at the beginning of my empirical section, in which I discuss my own choice of qualitative methodologies in depth.

Chapter three works with Radford Ruether's (1992) argument that cosmology provides the fundamental principles upon which we organize societies. In doing so, it examines two discourses. Each is located within the differing worldview of

two distinct cosmological approaches, representing two very different narratives. The first is offered by Keith Grint (2010) in *The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence*. The other is influenced by ecofeminism and feminist spirituality. Within this theoretical frame I particularly reference the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992) in *Gaia and God - An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* and Raine Eisler in *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987). These are explored in the hope that they may help to clarify the ways in which a particular set of creation stories, or cosmologies, have and still do influence the ways in which organizational leaderships are constructed in Western culture. Seeking to explore the “mythos” behind the “ethos” I suggest that particular elements of the Judeo-Christian Western cosmology have had damaging impacts upon our global ecology. In addition I examine the inherently gendered nature of the ways in which both ‘leading’ and ‘following’ have been historically constructed by Western religious discourse. Exploring the suggestion that many of the leadership and organizational mandates within modernity have been (and still are) based upon a repressed, secularized theology, embedded within a Judeo-Christian cosmology that construes organization as a hierarchy or great chain, I further suggest that such a conceptual framework, as an important social backdrop, has led to a particular set of assumptions about leadership (Maxwell 2003; Parker 2009; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010; Sorensen et al 2012). These contribute to an inheritance in which the dominant paradigm has tended to portray leadership as the almost exclusive province of an all-powerful, heroic male figure, standing outside the material realms as a transcendent, separate and superior being (Grint 2010; O’Reilly et al 2013). Such a figure has been, on a historical basis, within Western society, an integral aspect of the portrayal of God (and man in his image) as a patriarchal (white) male (Christ 1997). Kostera (2012) proposes that profound transformation requires us to understand both the light and shadow of our organizational archetypes. In this sense, along with Keith Grint (2010) I argue that coming to terms with this personification is an important aspect of this task, though I extend his analysis by adding it’s repressed gender dimensions. I conclude this chapter by taking up Grint’s (2010) invitation to explore a radical reconstruction of the sacred aspects of leadership based on ecofeminism and feminist spirituality (Christ 1997; Eisler 1987; Radford Ruether

1992).

In this sense it links with the project suggested by Bell, Cullen and Taylor (2012) of engagement with the analysis of some of the historical and conceptual origins of more contemporary concerns about the role of religion and spirituality in leadership and organization - as well as an attempt to look forwards to alternatives to what has been this major influence in Western culture. In an organizational climate seeking to employ spirituality as a vehicle of meaning in work contexts the connections between (differing) spiritual and religious practices and their relationship with particular (non-universal) cosmologies becomes all the more interesting as a topic for research. I hope it also fulfills the function of helping to address the neglect of the ethical dimensions that Mabey and Morrell (2011) encourage us to examine in greater depth, as well as to prompt further questioning of certain elements of our destination, as they have been plotted within the leadership and organization associated with a modern worldview.

The next chapters, one to six, in the second section of my thesis involve a move from the macro of theory to the micro of practice as I present the data that forms my empirical contribution. I begin by offering an exploration of approaches to epistemology and theory from an ecofeminist perspective on knowledge construction that especially focuses on the subjectivity position associated with insider research. This is conducted with particular reference to what has been termed constructive postmodernism. Charlene Spretnak (1999) describes the contours of a truly postmodern order based on unfolding, as experiential, dynamic, complex, process orientated, community based, ecological, creative and ultimately mysterious. She suggests it involves trust in the body, treating nature as subject and humans as subjects embedded within a community of communities (Spretnak 1999: 73; see also Curry 2008; Maxwell 2003). As I mentioned in my introduction I link my analysis with Spretnak's work, in seeking to ground my theoretical analysis with empirical research into the 'realities' of body, mystery, nature and relationship, in a community dedicated to leadership practices based upon environmental sustainability, social justice and human fulfillment (See also Field 2000). Whilst this community does not directly identify itself as ecofeminist it does nonetheless accord to similar principles. For this reason I would contend that the practices

within this community represent just the kind of alternative “progressive” spirituality that some scholars writing about leadership and spirituality have argued may enable us to gain additional insights and perspectives to those of the dominant paradigm (Taylor 2010; Lynch 2007).

With 7650 (as of May 2013) participants registered in its international database, The School of Movement Medicine, the site of my empirical research, functions as a business organization dedicated to the encouragement of spiritual fulfillment, ecological sustainability and social justice. In this sense it may be seen as part of a wide range of social movements. These include the Human Potential Movement, feminism, ecology and some alternative therapies and spirituality – all movements that express interest in generating some of the changes in attitudes that an ecofeminist perspective suggests may have importance as alternative forms of leadership and organization. Movement Medicine in particular aims to contribute towards its own tripartite goals by disseminating a particular body of spiritual teaching that works with movement as a form of active meditation, in conjunction with the use of ancient shamanic healing techniques, ritual, modern psychotherapy, and social activism.<sup>21</sup> Specifically designed to assist those who engage with it to take responsibility for “responding to the individual, societal and global challenges that lie before us”, it aims, in other words to make leaders out of members (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009: xiii).

As will be particularly obvious in chapter three, I am arguing that the demotion of the body, nature and partnership with the divine feminine has generated profound dysfunction, in leadership and elsewhere, within our contemporary environment. All of these elements play central roles in this business community which views re-embodying the sacred in the material rather than the transcendent realms as a key aspect of moving towards leadership that is based upon environmental sustainability, social justice and human fulfillment.

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<sup>21</sup> [www.bethechange.org.uk](http://www.bethechange.org.uk)

[www.pachamama.org/](http://www.pachamama.org/)

<http://earthdreamers.org/>

<http://cfpeace.org/>

Both members and leaders in this community express various concerns about gender, consumerism, war in the Middle East, environmental sustainability, the Judeo-Christian legacy, appropriate engagement with current problems, as well as concerns about the abuse of the embodied self and the earth as interrelated factors. At the same time as suggesting that this practice offers them one way of moving closer to some experience of harmony and reconciliation and making a constructive contribution to the problems that concern them. Few in this community would suggest that anything other than diversity is required to address the grave social problems we now face. Most are aware that the potential effects of impending ecological crisis require engagement rather than flight from social responsibility. Both the inclusive spiritual approach and practical techniques, which are employed, derive from a very different cosmological construction to the masculine separation from others, which has tended to dominate leadership theory and practice within Western modernity. Taking note of Heelas' (2008) observation that studies of New Age activity often tend to be heavy on theory and light on empirical evidence, I hope that the inclusion of evidence drawn from both my ethnography in a field I have been familiar with for almost thirty years and 23 in-depth interviews, amounting in total to over 200,000 words of raw data will at least go some way to remedy this.

Bringing both my own voice and the voices of others who might be viewed as representing embodied experiences from the "margins" (hooks 1984) is intended therefore both to support the expression of their concerns alongside exposing the diverse perspectives held within this alternative cosmology. In the process, I hope, making it more possible to highlight tensions and power struggles between the positioning of individual subjectivities and institutional narratives. This is I hope a move, that in turn, allows us to re-embed these individuals in wider cultural contexts than those that may normally be represented in mainstream analysis, empowering the process of public reflection on the intersections between embodied experience and political practices. Reflexivity, from the point of view of feminist methodology can then, be located as a valuable tool for leveraging change, so that rather than, as Lasch (1979) argues, being evidence of self-absorption, giving voice to the insights that result from it, can stand as an important contribution to contesting and

resisting unjust exercise of power, both theoretically and practically (Jones and Stablein 2006).

## CHAPTER TWO

### RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

#### Introduction

Given the wide scope of disciplines employed in this thesis I use the next chapter as a specific literature review of the subject of religion and spirituality in contemporary academic writing in the leadership and management field. This helps to locate the research within this thesis within its broader context.

Exploring the general rise of interest in spirituality and religion in these fields I outline some of the various explanations given for this phenomenon. Alongside my acknowledgment of the increasing amount of research into spirituality and the workplace, I also briefly discuss what Glucksmann (1995) refers to as the total social organization of labour. This then functions as a conceptual basis that enables me to frame my empirical field site as a place where there is valuable work taking place. Albeit work, which due to dualistic distinctions between public and private arena's might not always be recognized as 'work', but which feminism would nonetheless suggest has cultural importance and value and an argument that is important to some of my conclusions.

Whether religious or spiritual practices are defined as work or 'play', in the midst of the flurry of academic interest in them, it is most commonly assumed that this rise of interest in religion and spirituality in the business world can automatically be equated with laudable sets of ethics. Given that 82% of the global population apparently hold faith based approaches to life, the ethical positions associated with them, almost undeniably bring important influences to bear in our embodied experiences of both leading and following (Kriger and Seng 2005). Many of these faiths are also embedded in social contexts that have historically been and in many instances continue to be, male-dominated. Perhaps because we so often take our own beliefs for granted, it also seems likely that such beliefs often go unstated, partly because we ourselves, busy living them, are frequently also relatively unaware of them. My own approach therefore, follows on from other scholars who have recently been arguing that most existing theory in the aforementioned fields already involves the employment of what they term, *repressed, secularized theological concepts* (Sorensen et al 2012). Usage of such concepts may well be entwined with social processes that have diminished the obviously religious elements of them

over a period of time. I will be arguing however, that the heart of the values at their core remain more or less intact. Indeed that such values continue to influence the kinds of collective systems discussed in the last chapter by Mabey and Morell (2011) and Osborn et al, (2002) albeit in ways which are now repressed and may be less easy to identify than they would be if we were analyzing the past. Any subject matter that exists in such subliminal realms is almost inevitably challenging to research. Particularly when it comes to religion and spirituality, effective approaches to such a task have tended to become caught up in polarized debates about the relative merits of subjectivity (qualitative approaches) versus objectivity (quantitative). I therefore also give attention to the thorny question of measurement and definitions, before completing this chapter by briefly outlining my own position within the field, in the interests of offering transparency, the absence of which is a central object of critique within this work.

### **“Surveying the landscape” - A literature review of leadership, religion and spirituality**

If there is one general agreement amongst those who study the phenomena and processes of what has come to be described as leadership, it is that there are multiple approaches to the subject. A complex, prolific arena, as already acknowledged in the introductory chapter, it has attracted well over 10,000 authors and an estimated 35,000 definitions (Avolio et al 2009; Badarraco 2001; Bolden et al 2011; Burns 1978; Calas and Smircich 1997; Ford and Harding 2011; Gemmil and Oakley 1997; Grint 1997; 2010; Jackson and Parry 2008; Kriger and Seng 2005; Mabey and Morell 2011; Marshall 2007; Parkin 2010; Pye 2005; Raelin 20011; Sinclair 2007; Turnbull 2006; Western 2008). Anyone encountering the discipline for the first time, as I did myself in 2009, faces the daunting task of navigating his or her way through its many discourses. To complicate matters even further, this review and my thesis relate, as I have already mentioned, not only to leadership, but also to religion and spirituality, yet another vast terrain.

Any account in such a context is never going to accomplish an exhaustive survey of every element of the landscape, but is always going to be ‘a map of the territory’ rather than a definitive description (Korzybski 1933). Although this famous axiom is often attributed to Gregory Bateson (1972) the anthropologist,



it actually originated with Korzybski, a philosopher with an interest in semantics. It refers to the fact that because a *map* is not the whole *territory* it will always be a mere *representation* bearing varying degrees of similarity to that which it purports to describe. Its accuracy will inevitably be assessed in terms of the perceptions of the assessor. It also suggests that life is, ultimately, partially unknowable and liable to subjective interpretation. Maps, as descriptions will therefore, inevitably arise from the epistemology and ontological assumptions of the mapmaker. Words can never convey totality. Acknowledging this, Montuori suggests that we “come clean, fess up to it, take responsibility for what we’re doing and be creative with it” (Montuori 2005; 375). Construing literature review as entry into one’s community of dialogue, he takes a non-reified perspective of the generation of knowledge, seeing it as constructed from within and between members of any given community, who influence and are influenced by a multitude of factors, including culture, disciplinary perspectives and biases as well as overriding paradigmatic assumptions.

Critical of the notion that any knowledge can arise in isolation and even questioning whether originality as such exists, he frames literature review as a process of landscape surveillance and acknowledgement of those who have travelled in and shaped the contours of the lands through which the researcher travels. Montuori refers to such predecessors as our intellectual ancestors. Literature review therefore becomes one’s vehicle for entering into discussion with one’s ancestors and one’s contemporaries and like everything we say, cannot help but reveal our values and attitudes, as well as help to shape the paths we walk upon in our search for meaning (Tulku 1987).

I have focused initially upon broad-brush strokes of key themes in this particular sub-discipline in the field as this formed part of my own initial explorations in the landscapes of leadership, religion and spirituality. They are offered en route to a discussion of issues relating to methodology, which I revisit in even more depth in the second and empirical section of my thesis.

### **Leaps of (interest in) faith in both the Private and Public Domains**

Over the last couple of decades, interest in religion and spirituality within the Western world seems to have increased exponentially - in organizational life, the scholarly disciplines that study it and the private domains (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Biberman and Robbins 1999; Bell and Taylor 2001; 2003; 2011;

Benefiel 2003; 2005; Bullis and Glaser 1992; Dent et al 2005; Fornaciari and Lund Dean 2001; Fry 2003; Fry et al 2005; Grint 2010; Hicks 2002; King 2008; Kriger and Seng 2005; LoRusso 2011; Maxwell 2003; Neal and Banner 1999; Parker 2009; Prince 2005; Reave 2005; Sinclair 2007; Sorensen 2010; Sorensen et al 2012; Walsh 2011; Warner and Grint 2006). As Benefiel and others point out, there is an increasing proliferation of websites, conferences, business programmes, books, articles and papers, on the subject, “most of them written from the perspective of managers and consultants who have discovered a spiritual path and want to introduce others to the benefits of integrating spirituality into the workplace” (Benefiel 2003: 386). In the last few years however, more and more scholars have adopted a critical perspective on this phenomenon, with a recent special edition of *Organization* pointing out that really, such theological influences are nothing new. Indeed that they have always exerted a far-reaching influence upon the ways in which our thinking about both leadership and organization are structured on the most foundational level (Sorensen et al 2012).

So from those who wish to promote its benefits, to those who vigorously oppose such ideas, a vast diversity of perspective is represented across a very broad spectrum of research into spirituality and religion, in leadership, management and organization. And as Montuori frames such situations,

“...like any community, or any family, there are alliances, friendships, arguments, long-standing feuds, and so on. Some of the members of our community may have views we believe to be deeply misguided, whereas some we may be in complete agreement with. It is worth keeping in mind the inspirational potential of views we disagree with. Sometimes it is precisely an author whose work we detest and are in complete and utter disagreement with who may motivate us to go deeper into an issue...” (Montuori 2005: 376).

Explanations for the supposed increase of interest in religion and spirituality tend to fall into one of three broad categories. It can be seen as a response to an increasingly unstable and insecure social environment, in which people struggle to create personal depth and meaning amidst the alienation and fragmentation of contemporary culture, particularly as it manifests within our places of work (Brandt 1996; Conger 1994 as cited in Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Sinclair 2007). Some scholars see this as something that needs to be sympathetically accommodated (Mitroff and Denton 1999). Some approve but advise caution (Sinclair 2007).

Associated with such accommodations are notions such as self-actualization and authenticity (Avolio and Gardner 2005; Avolio et al 2004; Blausten 2009; Duignan and Bhindi 1997; Ford and Harding 2011; Gardner et al 2005; Maslow 1943; Sparrowe 2005). Factors that *might* be seen to relate primarily to those who have already achieved some measure of financial stability, have the luxury of seeking to function beyond mere survival and therefore, have the time and energy to ponder a sense of service, personal growth and uniqueness as part of their life experience. This is of course, something that in and of itself might raise questions about equity in a world of desperate inequality (Hawley 1993; DiPadova 1998 quoted in Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003). Some of the emotional needs underlying such quests may also be seen to stem from the decline of traditional communities and structures as a source of support and belonging and to the increasingly 'fluid' nature of life within contemporary culture - as well as the increased importance which work organizations play or fail to play in generating a stable sense of identity and place (Bauman 2008; Bell and Taylor 2001; Conger 1994; Skelley 1996 quoted in Bell and Taylor 2001; Dent et al 2005; Sinclair 2007).

Others see the apparently increasing interest in spirituality, not only as something to be accommodated but as evidence of a fundamental systemic shift, towards greater social responsibility and declining interest in the pursuit of the material. Some even see it as part of a paradigm shift with the potential to fuse the best of both science and spirituality at a level of higher functioning (Kriger and Seng 2005; Wilber 2000a; 2000b). Although once again this would seem to be from the vantage point of those living in the so-called developed countries of Western industrialized society (Neal 1998; Inglehart 1997). Yet another view suggests that it is a consequence of a technologically connected, globally interconnected melting pot, which has created the opportunity to access diverse beliefs from cultures other than our own and to begin the process of assimilation and adaptation which a planet wide environment affords (King 1996; Zinmeister 1997). Those who might be defined as having a more critical perspective argue that this is potentially shallow and in danger of repeating, or continuing, patterns of cultural imperialism and appropriation, viewing the propagation of workplace spirituality in particular, as just another gambit in the drive to keep profits up in an environment of fierce competition

(Frank 2000). The overall 'reality' in any given location at a specific time, is likely to be a complex and unique blend of factors, which will tend to be perceived and presented from within a multitude of differing perspectives (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Drath 2001; Wilber 2000a; 2000b). Analysis of the variety of perspectives being presented needs to bear this in mind.

Whatever the reasons for the explosion of interest, spirituality and religion within the broad field of leadership and organization are most typically examined in conjunction with self-actualization, purpose and meaning, wellbeing, the workplace and leadership. Analyzing eighty-seven academic papers on the subject of workplace spirituality, including the connections between leadership and spirituality, Dent and colleagues (2005) identify eight common themes. These were, the issue of definition, which as yet remains highly elusive; the relationship or otherwise between spirituality and religion; the question of epiphany or what is often termed "awakening" within many of today's Western spiritual sub-cultures; the enquiry into whether spirituality can be taught; issues relating to the hotly contested arena of measurement; the relationships between profitability, productivity, commitment and spirituality and finally, what exactly is spirituality anyway, on a phenomenological level (Dent et al 2005).

My own empirical research, contained in the second section of this thesis, does not deal directly with a conventional work place, though it does involve a business that generates income. Rather it takes up the much broader definition of 'work' adopted by Costley et al (2010) as learning of social significance that reflects the interests of a wide range of people (Young 2010). A perspective that is also supported by Glucksmann's (1995) feminist conceptualization of the total social organization of labour (TSOL), when she comments that,

"The market sphere of industrial society is probably one of the few sites where 'working' has been structurally differentiated out from other activities and conducted in specialized institutions. But in all other circumstances, throughout time and space, and also in many of the other spheres of industrial society itself, work is embedded in, entangled with, conducted and expressed through other activities and relations which may be social, political, kinship, sexual or familial" (Glucksmann 1995: 65).

Focusing on an approach to work that rejects what it names as a false dichotomy, such feminist theory seeks to overcome the distinctions between categorizations such public/private; work/leisure; home/work; paid/unpaid; production/consumption and commodity and non-commodity. Such a

positioning has several aims. One is to be able to overcome the limitations associated with the reification of the term work (as Glucksmann suggests the discipline of economics does) as only applicable to paid labour carried out in the market economy for money.<sup>22</sup> Re-focusing attention on the definition of work, allows for the ascription of value to activities conducted in spheres such as the so-called private and/or domestic, which often conducted by women, have, on a historical basis also often been viewed as less important than activity in the public/market place. It may therefore also simultaneously becomes easier to analyze connections between spheres that may otherwise be seen as independent of each other, as well as to explore the relationships, interconnections and interdependencies between work conducted at different and what may be only apparently disparate sites. TSOL is, above all, Glucksmann informs us, a concept based on relationality, arguing for “the interconnectedness of all institutions as they stand in relation to each other” (Glucksmann 1995: 68). This is a subject I will return to in my conclusions, along with the issues of learning, definition and the relationship between religion and spirituality. Meantime, whilst Dent and colleagues (2005) overview represents more mainstream definitions of work, it does provide nonetheless, a useful orientation to the most commonly examined subjects in the leadership and spirituality field.

As I intimated in my introduction spirituality and religion within the leadership field tend to be predominantly associated with desirable moral and ethical outcomes (Benefiel 2005; Dent et al 2005). In spite of comments upon the folly of “trying to factor analyze God” it is also often linked to increased productivity and profit, reduced absenteeism, improved morale and well-being and ethicality (Fornciari and Lund Dean 2001: 336; see also Case et al 2012). It is held up as something that can improve the learning process in organizations, create and sustain community, assist us in connecting with others and with work itself. It is also seen as a way to transcend both ego and sociocentric cultural forms and to instill meaning and purpose (Bierly, Kessler and Christensen 2000; Cavanaugh et al 2001; Khanna and Srinivas 2000 quoted in Dent et al 2005; Maxwell 2003). More specifically, at the ontological level of being, rather than doing or

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<sup>22</sup> Though she does also argues against a deconstructionist position that seeks to collapse all activity into the one grand category of work.

having, it is defined as beauty, creativity, insight, openness, union, play, joy and awareness (Kriger and Seng 2005; Khanna and Srinivas 2000; Levine 1994; Sperry 1997; Mason and Welsh 1994; Lichtenstein 1997; Freshman 1999; Konz and Ryan 1999; Krishnakumar and Neck 2002 quoted in Dent et al 2005).

There are at least as many definitions as researchers, if not more of the former (Mohamed et al 2001). And as has been pointed out, given

“The fact that 82% of the people in the world espouse and hold spiritual or religious views...one can argue...that it is highly likely that those who exercise leadership roles in organizations, and who believe in spiritual or religious belief systems, will have their leadership behaviour shaped by the underlying values and attitudes of those worldviews. This is clearly an area for likely future empirical research” (Kriger and Seng 2005:801; see also King 2008).

Such beliefs and experiences, whilst they may be seen from a secular point of view as non-rational, will still influence the way in which we relate to the world around us. They are therefore, an important and legitimate source of inquiry.

### **For god, economy and country?**

#### **The question of whether the public sphere has ever been a secular arena**

Kriger and Seng’s (2005) observation about the extensive nature of religious belief is also yet another challenge to what Douglas Hicks (2002) describes as the taken for granted intellectual assumption that the public sphere is, (or ever has been) a wholly secular one. Indeed, as writers like Biberman and Altman (2004) point out, managerial discourse from Frederick Taylor’s puritan origins to Steven Covey’s evangelism has been profoundly shaped by the religious beliefs held by its progenitors. Whilst meantime in the contemporary arena, some scholar’s are propagating their work on spiritual leadership as a tool for the transformation and well being of the US military and business bottom lines (Fry et al 2005). Given Fry’s particular emphasis on spiritual survival, ethical well-being and altruism, this is just one of many projects I would suggest is riven with internal contradiction and questionable claims to represent a “new paradigm” (Fry et al 2005: 836; see also Case et al 2012).

Indeed Case and colleagues (2012) specifically critique the associated Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT) for losing the contemplative element of what they describe as *theoria*. This they suggest has been lost in favour of the more disenchanting and instrumental theory that they argue amounts to a highly reduced, performance orientated, shadow of the “prayer of loving attention” (Case et al 2012: 348). Given Fry’s work within the military, it is hard not to

observe that the re-instatement of such attention within Fry's et al's (2005) study on spiritual leadership in the army might lead to far reaching questions about the merits of spiritual survival without healthy embodiment. Something that Case and his colleagues refer to as the "corporeal enactment of ethics over rational and cognitive theorization associated with Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophy" (Case et al 2012: 358). Or in other words, the limits to our 'real'<sup>23</sup> interest in the well being of those we designate as enemy or those we send to fight them. Case et al (2012) name one aspect of what they term disenchantment, as the separation of our lived and felt, that is to say embodied understandings, from the facts and figures of managerial science. And another as the loss of value given to more receptive states of being, or what they describe as the knowledge of direct experience. Interestingly the raw data (along with declining enlistment and early retirement in the US army) collected in Fry's et al's 2005 study probably speaks (relatively silent) volumes about the actual lived experiences of army recruits. Concerned about the wider implications of these kinds of extreme separations, of embodied experience from managerial strategy, Case et al also remark,

"This has allowed modern selves to forget their vulnerability and dependence, asserting themselves within the world, believing that there is nothing that they cannot achieve if only they apply themselves with sufficient vigour and dedication. Developments since the Middle Ages have demonstrated the power of theories to subdue creation, increase our prosperity and improve health. However, ours is also a world under strain and out of balance and deeply in need of more ethical forms of leadership. Struggles and debates continue over what this might mean – if not an ethics of utility — let alone how it might be achieved" (Case et al 2012: 357).

It is on this kind of basis that scholars like Case et al (2012) and others take up their critical position. Some of them suggest that spirituality may in some instances be being employed as a method of imposing greater managerial control, involving organizations in attempts to access realms that have traditionally been considered private concerns (Bell and Taylor 2011: 6; see also Bell 2008; Bell and Taylor 2003; Sorensen et al 2012; Tourish and Pinnington 2002).

In their special edition of *Organization on Theology and Organization*, Sorensen et al (2012) further point out that many of our central concepts within modern Western organizational structures are not only seamlessly and invisibly

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<sup>23</sup> Conceptualization of the term real is something I give attention to in my methodology chapter in section two.

entwined with theology but that they also form elements of discourses which have become naturalized and universalizing (see also Agamben 2007; 2011; Schmidt 1985). This, as already suggested, delimits the boundaries and potentials available to our theorizing about leadership and organization. Taking this as a starting point suggests that we need to adopt a questioning stance in order to fully understand how such foundations influence both our thinking and our embodied behaviours in the contemporary environment. Sorensen et al (2012), further suggest that we may therefore assess conceptual understandings from the premise that they are already “secularized theological concepts”, often either relatively unchanged in their passage through time, or in common with the view presented by Case et al (2012) stripped of some vital, generative element in order that they may be adapted to more instrumental, managerial concerns. Proposing a neo-disciplinary theology of organization as an appropriate vehicle for engaging in analysis of such concepts, may therefore, assist both in resisting some of the ways in which leadership and organization are currently constructed, challenging the given nature of certain constructs and of recovering valuable losses (Sorensen et al 2012). Indeed within organizational studies in particular it has been the gradual if increasing challenge to both the concept and the supposed practice of the public domain as a secular one that has led to wide-ranging and potentially very fertile debate about the role of spirituality and religion as a crucially important element of analysis (Bell and Taylor 2001; 2003; 2011; Case et al 2012; Parker 2009; Sorensen 2010; Sorensen et al 2012).

Viewed as an emergent concept by some scholars in the leadership field, (albeit one which has a special interest group within the Academy of Management, assisting in its legitimization as a topic of study) the whole subject of spirituality is still afflicted by lack of agreement, ill-defined boundaries and considerable controversy (Academy of Management 2004; Forniciari and Lund Dean 2001; Reichers and Schneider 1990 quoted in Dent et al 2005). Some scholars perceive the lack of a swift closure on a common definition of spirituality as a weakness (Gibbons 2000). Others argue for the need for more robust and sophisticated understanding of the spiritual aspect of spiritual leadership and for tolerance of an ongoing search for “richer and richer definition” (Benefiel 2005: 724; Forniciari and Lund Dean 2001).



Attempts to find unified definitions and interest in validating relationships between significant variables, as well as the frustration inherent in such an undertaking are consistent with research within the wider field of leadership and cultural studies in general (King 2008; Schien 1992). In common with organizational phenomena such as, “culture change, diversity awareness, leadership improvement...causal relationships have the same set of issues; and, coupled with additional issues such as the anti-materialist nature of the phenomenon, poses significant challenges in.... scientific inquiry” (Dent et al 2005: 640; see also Case et al 2012). Indeed, it is to the important issue of science and measurement that we will now turn.

### **Measurement, science and subjectivity**

The two disciplines that have been most concerned with the assessment of religion and spirituality have been, on the one hand theology and on the other the sociology of religion. Sorensen et al (2012) suggest that both disciplines involve faith, one in God and the other in science. One is based upon the knowledge of lived experience, often arguing for its “privileged access to a higher truth”, the other on a supposed disinterested objectivity, which it argues is “free of ideological presumptions” (Sorensen et al 2012: 270). Both positions inevitably raise the question of how we know what we know.

Distinguishing between apophasis or embodied spiritual experience and kataphasis, or *speaking of God*, and that which inevitably gets lost in translation in the process, a number of scholars suggest that leadership, particularly when it emerges from such an ineffable realm as spirituality is often based upon the recognition of the limits to knowledge (Case et al 2012; French and Simpson 2006; Kriger and Seng 2005). My own work attempts to offer a position, somewhere between subjective knowledge and objective ‘facts’. I propose to do this by calling upon my own lived experience of spiritual practice and connections as an apprentice leader within one specific spiritual community. I make no claim to privilege, but rather offer one particular perspective, gained through long-standing study and familiarity, which whilst acknowledging the cultural, historical specificity of this experience still suggests that it may nonetheless yield insights of social scientific interest. The following section explores some of the debates on measurement in the field as well as functioning as an initial justification for the methodologies that will be applied

within the later empirical sections of this thesis.

In the growing literature on spirituality in the workplace where there are concerns to explain, describe and quantify beyond apophasis or unknowingness, there is evidence of an emerging consensus on which spiritual values are primary or core to such kinds of analysis. The emerging consensus is summarized in the following list:

- \*Forgiveness
- \*Kindness
- \*Integrity
- \*Compassion/empathy
- \*Honesty/truthfulness
- \*Patience
- \*Courage/inner strength
- \*Trust
- \*Humility
- \*Loving Kindness
- \*Peacefulness
- \*Thankfulness
- \*Service to others
- \*Guidance
- \*Joy
- \*Equanimity
- \*Stillness/inner peace

(Kriger and Seng 2005: 792; see also Kriger and Hanson 1999; Fry 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003).

Given the almost exhaustive lists that can be summoned in praise of spirituality Benefiel rightly raises the question of what we might need to exclude (Benefiel 2003). If one refers to Kriger and Seng's list above it appears as though the only quality upon it which it may prove difficult to separate from "the higher power" (the inclusive term Fry employs as a generic definition of God) is what they term "Guidance", as this might be seen to imply relationship with something beyond the self (Kriger and Seng 2005; Fry 2003). Crucial to the whole discussion however, Kriger and Seng also refer to that which others call God, Allah, Jehovah, Shakti, Shiva, Great Spirit, Goddess and so on, as the

latent variable of ?. They see it simultaneously as the source or cause of the qualities they define as representing “it”. At the same time as being something that evades strict causality, as it is itself, what Hindu’s call the “Uncaused Cause that is both the origin and the result of Itself” (Kriger and Seng 2005: 799). They acknowledge that, “Obviously, from a normal science research perspective this ? becomes highly problematic to anyone who is a researcher, especially from a structural functionalist paradigm (Burrell and Morgan 1979; see also Wilber 1995; 2000a; 2000b) since it is not even strictly nameable – and certainly not a variable which is controllable in any normal sense” (Kriger and Seng 2005: 791).

Discussing the “irreconcilable” differences between science and spirituality in the past, Brian Swimme comments that,

“Even though science’s violent rejection of every cultural and tribal tradition has been deleterious in the extreme, and even though one can appreciate the vehemence with which fundamentalist religions around the planet reject any compromise with modern scientific culture, the opportunity of our time is to integrate science’s understanding of the universe with more ancient intuitions concerning the meaning and destiny of the human. The promise of this work is that through such an enterprise the human species as a whole will begin to embrace a common meaning and a coherent plan of action” (Swimme 2009: 3; see also Benefiel 2003).

Without this reconciliation of discourses, alongside the ability to create a shared and common language amongst differing spiritual and religious traditions, some scholars predict an increase in global conflict (Smith 2001; Kriger and Seng 2005).

Tracing the roots of some of this conflict back to the Enlightenment’s rejection of both religion and the subjectivity associated with it, in favour of so-called objectivity, Benefiel suggests that we need a language that does justice to the concerns of both communities. Referencing the work of feminist philosopher, Sara Ruddick, she suggests that the dominance of,

“Western philosophy (dominated by ‘Reason’) contributes to a hierarchy of bodies of knowledge which devalues ‘softer’ fields. Because ‘Reason’ views itself as superior, it justifies the superiority and dominance of the ‘hard’ sciences over fields like literature and spirituality. As a result, science looks down on the ‘softer’ fields, believing it has a right to judge them by its methods instead of respecting the integrity of the ‘softer’ fields in their own right (or even considering that it might have something to learn from them)” (Benefiel 2003: 386; see also Ruddick 1989).

Based on an overarching myth of the world as a machine that can be broken down into its component parts, the kind of reductionism promoted by the Cartesian view values only what it can measure and quantify. This tends to

promulgate hierarchy, encouraging a fragmentation within our overall approach to the world. It may also be argued that neither is it alone adequate to the task of dealing with the 'adaptive challenges' it has participated in creating (Maxwell 2003; Drath 2001).

### **Moving beyond science – Subjectivity and Holistic Perspectives**

Today, many scholars and scientists, working within a more expansive and inclusive paradigmatic approach are well aware of the need to develop and apply, re-integrative, systemic and trans-disciplinary ways of addressing “the major problems facing humanity – overpopulation, poverty, inequality, resource depletion, biodiversity loss, ethnic conflicts, environmental degradation, crime, and social decay – (as) interconnected and interdependent issues” (Maxwell 2003: 258; see also Banerjee 2003; Bohm 1982; Capra 1982; 1997; Costanza 1989). Although this integration continues to be a gradual process the discoveries of modern physics contained within the twin revolutions of relativity and quantum theory heralded a highly significant challenge to scientific materialism based upon separation, fragmentation and separation. The pioneers, who include Einstein and Schrodinger, began to unite in the understanding that “at the most fundamental level, the basic substance of the cosmos is not material particles but a form of mind or spirit that includes consciousness as an elemental attribute” (Wilber 1984 quoted in Maxwell 2003: 261). In other words, that the way in which we internally construct the world shapes what we perceive, create and experience in the exterior, both individually and collectively. In addition, scientists began to develop the view that the universe is inextricably unified, that nothing can be separated from anything else and that each element emerges from a vast, 'unmanifest whole', which is what many humans in attempting to comprehend the incomprehensible, call God, by one of many names. So that from the quantum science perspective, the concept of separation is itself a myth belonging to the Cartesian era, suggesting that it is literally impossible to gain an objective “view from nowhere” (Curry 2011; 30). It is a perspective that sits very comfortably within the frameworks of quantitative research methodology (Brewer 2000; see also Dey 1993; Hammersley 1990; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Nandhakumar and Jones 1997; van Maanen 1988).

In the light of the scientific understanding in this new paradigm it is proposed

that non-material reality cannot be entirely understood using the tools of the physical world, which would suggest that collecting data through “acts of communion with the whole” may yield understanding that will otherwise remain occluded (Kafatos and Nadeau 2000: 159). This does not mean that science does not have a role to play, as groundbreaking work amongst a number of scientists testifies. Indeed use of PET scans and MRI techniques are increasingly being used to explore neurophenomenology, but without the inclusion of the voice of the individual who is having the experience, it may be more difficult to make holistic sense of that which is observed (Davidson et al 2003; Dali Lama and Goleman 2003; Kriger and Seng 2005).

A number of scholars have therefore suggested the need to begin developing different ontological and epistemological levels at which experience can be examined (Kriger and Seng 2005; Wilber 2000a; 2000b). Indeed although it is possible to “find proxy measures for the presence of nondual awareness in individuals” via the use of scientific technology, it also seems likely that one way to assist in the understanding of such states may be found within the experiences of the individuals engaging in the ‘acts of communion’. If even pioneering scientists agree that the unmanifest whole “cannot be a direct object of scientific enquiry” it stands to reason that we may need to employ “transrational modes of knowing” alongside other frameworks of enquiry (Maxwell 2003: 264-265; Purkiss 1996). Within this thesis I use ethnography, the inclusion of my own voice and interviews of ‘subjects’ who are consciously engaged in ‘acts of communion’ in a particular ethnographic field (Brewer 2000; Coffey 1999; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Geertz 1975; Giddens 1996; Hammersley 1990; Kondo 1990; Schwartz and Jacobs 1979; Sinclair 2010). I propose discussing these methodologies in depth in the second empirical section of my thesis, which contains a separate, specific literature review. Along with these last sections on measurement and the following sections on definitions, I hope that this will assist even further in illuminating some of the methodological choices employed within my research, alongside making a theoretical contribution to the overall subject of knowledge construction. Now though, before summarizing this chapter, we take a short excursion into debates about definitions of religion and spirituality.

## **Is it really spirituality or is it religion in disguise?**

The careful analysis provided by Dent et al (2005) reveals that the majority of researchers conjoin religion and spirituality. Not all scholars agree however and it is yet another dichotomy which represents one of the many debates within the field (Dent et al 2005; Ali and Gibbs 1998; Gibbons 2000; Korac-Kaabadse et al 2002; Dehler and Welsh 1994). As these authors remark about those who believe that spirituality can be defined separately from religion,

“Those who believe it can, point out that people can participate in activities of a religious institution without having a spiritual experience, and that it is possible to have a spiritual experience outside an environment of religion...By religion, though, we are not restricting our comments to large, institutional religions such as Islam or Catholicism. The various twelve-step programmes, for example, represent a codified set of beliefs. Those articles that contend that spirituality can be developed independent of a system of beliefs (e.g., religion and values) have not taken the time to make explicit the many beliefs implicit in how they define spirituality” (Dent et al 2005: 635; see also Luhrmann 1989).

Within this view is the suggestion that agents undergoing religious/spiritual experience tend to exist within rather than without, contexts of a social and cultural nature, which as anthropological and sociological studies indicate are likely to influence and shape such experience (Barker 1999; Eliade 1964; Halifax 1982; Hanegraaff 1996; Harner 1980; Heelas 1996; Kriger and Seng 2005; Lapidus 1984; Lewis 1986; Luhrmann 1989; Morris 2006; Saladin D'Anglure 1996). Any such experience of what Hick (1982) refers to as Divine Ground, whilst it may be felt to unfold in realms which are transculturally homogenous (universal) will later, come be expressed through both the personal and cultural filters of the individual having the experience. Whilst the homogeneity inclines us to intuit some kind of underlying unity it may be useful to remember that as soon as we begin to codify and conceptualize in order to communicate, 'transcendent' experience becomes both culturally relative and prone to subjectivity (Hick 1982; see also Maxwell 2003; Forman 1990). And as I suggest in later chapters, gender, power and historical specificity have had enormous influence upon how, what begins as raw experience, is filtered through language and culture to become rule and code (which often replicate rather than challenge pre-existing and oppressive frameworks). All theological doctrine begins life as an interpretative process that attempts to express and communicate the base data of the spiritual quest (Maxwell 2003; see also Barbour 1990; Case et al 2012). But as history has demonstrated upon so

many occasions such a dynamic process of communication is inevitably prone to the “political and cultural intersections” within which it is produced (Butler 1999: 6). Conflict in the community that I myself have researched suggests that this is an all too common experience.

Discussions within the field about the role of mysticism within religious and spiritual experience can perhaps assist and further our understanding of such debates. Mysticism has been described as the great spiritual current underlying all religions (Underhill 1956; Maxwell 2003). In its widest sense it may be defined as the consciousness of the One Reality – be it called Wisdom, Light, Love or Nothing” (Schimmel 1975: 4 quoted in Kriger and Seng 2005; Case et al 2012). Many of those who write about spirituality tend to identify it as a unifying force and yet even a cursory glance at the world around us would suggest that religion per se can act as a divisive, conflict inducing and even oppressive social structure (Cavanaugh 1999). Both history and contemporary environments are replete with examples of espoused religious (and other) beliefs that fail to be integrated and acted upon in daily life, at work or home, in public and private and which lack the demonstrations of love, compassion or care recommended by the Dali Lama (Heelas 2008). They also, as I suggest above, become subject to what we might term political process.

Mysticism as spiritual journey, process and experience involves both travels within and mapping out of what Maxwell refers to as the features of the spiritual world, often reported in creative forms, from the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke to the music and writings of Hildegard of Bingen (Maxwell 2003: 265). Mystical episodes often move from the realm of the embodied to become attempts to share the felt benefit of such experience with others (Benefiel 2003). As Kriger and Seng comment in their analysis of the teachings of what they call the five natural experiments in sense making and social action represented by Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism,

“A striking similarity for all of these founder-leaders is that their oral messages were not written down by them but by others, often decades or hundreds of years later, yet their messages significantly infused the value structures and behaviours of billions of people for 1400 to over 3000 years” (Kriger and Seng 2005: 787).

Acknowledging that assessment of whether such leaders “actually embodied a nondual level of being and awareness” is outside the scope of their work it is nonetheless clear that over time what were at one stage the embodied

experiences of human men (the fact that all our major religions are mainly based upon the experiences of one gender alone is viewed as significant in itself within my own ecofeminist framework of analysis) underwent a process of interpretation and codification (Kriger and Seng 2005: 797). This then is the human tendency to create symbolic culture and to sanctify, often through religious dogma, our assumptions, worldview and social relations (Durkheim 1996; Grint 2010; Radford-Reuther 1992; 2005; Sorensen et al 2012).

Even the concept of transcendence is steeped in traditions that represent the “dominant official philosophy of the large part of civilized mankind through most of its history” (Lovejoy 1936/1964: 26; see also Maxwell 2003). A number of feminist scholars have been at pains to point out that whilst dominant to the point of being normative the worldview represented in such philosophy is far from ‘natural’ to many of the indigenous people who resist the annihilation and assimilation of their experience and expression of spirituality which tends to be based on concepts of embeddedness within nature and immanence, rather than the ‘great chain of being’ as their stairway to heaven (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Spretnak 1999; Sturgeon 1997). And as Maxwell highlights, whether located in the North or the South, “any conceptual formulation will necessarily be an incomplete and distorted map of Reality” (Maxwell 2003: 264-267; see also Huxley 1945).

Other scholars are keen to focus upon the importance of the way in which such distortions can become part of an overall geography of political and social oppression, though I will as I explain be seeking to analyze distortions from within my own, rather than anyone else’s cultural context. In particular, the way that Western culture has construed the idea of the male monotheistic God, and the relation of this God to the cosmos as its Creator. A narrative that I argue has both symbolically and materially reinforced the relations of domination of men over women, masters over slaves, and humans over animals and over the earth. Further suggesting that the domination of women provides a key link, both socially, metaphorically and practically to the domination of the earth. Accompanied by the tendency within patriarchal cultures, to link women with earth, matter, and nature, while identifying males with sky, intellect and transcendent spirit (Radford-Reuther 1992; see also Merchant 1980/1990).

Statements like this inevitably take us into the heart of deep social and cultural



conflicts. Douglas Hicks (2002) addresses some of the conflicts involved in religion and spirituality, amidst his examination of the important issue of diversity in the highly pluralistic culture of the US. Citing and seeking to build upon the work of Harvey (2001) he argues that the tendency within scholarship to evade conflict, by setting up a false dichotomy between religion and spirituality, is both simplistic and unhelpful (Hicks 2002: 380). Discussing the replacement of the word God with the more vague terms spirit and community he contends that this represents an evasion of issues that may induce conflict rather than unity. He then argues that rather than avoiding such conflict that effective leadership promotes the successful negotiation of difference rather than the emphasized commonality.

The increasingly accepted position within the spirituality at work movement is that moving beyond fragmentation requires the freedom to express our spiritual selves within supposedly secular public arena's including work (Ashmos and Duchon 2000). Hicks (2002) suggests that leadership which truly supports spirituality will be able to provide environments in which political, cultural and both spiritual and religious differences can be successfully negotiated. It is interesting to compare this view with what Spretnak (1999) refers to as the modern nation states, (which both historically and currently are often also entwined with state religions) "sweeping contempt for all deeply rooted cultures of spirit and place", which have left five thousand nations (a total that includes all the indigenous peoples) without either *legitimate* political leadership or in many cases, spiritual/religious representation (Spretnak 1999: 4-30). This process has, as she points out, occurred (and continues to occur) within both capitalist and communist organization, emphasizing the role of a supposedly rationally oriented and androcratic, modernity rather than simply one or other side of the political spectrum.

### **Conclusions**

This chapter began with the acknowledgement of the proposition that there has been a sudden increase of interest in the subjects of spirituality and religion within the academic fields of leadership and management. At the same time I contextualized this within particular sets of social circumstances here in the West. I also suggested that far from being a new phenomenon, it follows on from a particular historical trajectory in which the influence of the Judeo-

Christian religion in particular, has had a huge influence on the shaping of our cultural narratives and political organization. Current interest has been equated with everything from the need to create meaning in increasingly alienated modernity and a decline in materialism to a manipulative tool being employed by business to increase productivity and profit. It seems likely that there is at least some truth, somewhere, in most of the explanations proffered.

Assessment of quite what is going on almost inevitably then, returns us to the subject of place (Sinclair 2010). Although Western culture has a tendency to impose division and separations such as the public/private distinction, which may be hard to 'legislate', the fact that 82% of the world declare themselves to have some kind of faith, suggests that these faiths will almost inevitably play a part in our organizational lives, whether we make this explicit to each other or not. Religion and spirituality seem therefore, to be key features upon our global stage, whether this is consciously acknowledged or not. Indeed it is just such a recognition that has increasingly been percolating into study of leadership and organization.

If we accept the ecofeminist, or indeed the simply systemic perspective, that everything is interconnected and influences everything else it stands to reason that people's religious beliefs will affect their behaviours as organizational members. At the same time as we tend to associate religion and spirituality with ethical frameworks intended to result in generally beneficial outcomes, this chapter has also discussed the way in which what begins as 'embodied' experience comes to be communicated through others through the filters of our cultural positionings. Within my own cultural framework I suggest that these intersections have led to religious expressions that are responsible for progressively accumulating harm to those aspects of the culture that our religious constructs have cast in inferior roles. The chapter that follows this literature review will examine the roots of the Judeo-Christian constructs that I argue have been influential in generating the many crises that have emerged from a model of modernist leadership rooted within a religious discourse that has privileged hierarchy, transcendence and separation.

I am not suggesting that any one belief system or tradition is either entirely to blame, nor that any another has an all-encompassing solution. Nor am I proposing a new monotheism to replace the old. Rather my work is intimation

that the ways in which we conceive of the sacred have a profound influence upon how we view the world. All ecological sensibility suggests that, “stability is grounded in variety” (Roszak 1993: 313). Generative, or even regenerative change in current contexts requires healthy diversity. This suggests the requirement for a distribution of power assembled in leadership and organizational structures that dismantle the pyramidal edifices that have been the legacy of an oppressive theology and politics. It calls for the inclusion and acknowledgement of, rather than the silencing of multi-cultural voice, perspective and experience. It suggests that remembering the old may assist us to understand the present in new ways and to reassemble the future with greater regard for social justice and environmental sustainability within the greater interdependent whole. Recognizing myself therefore, as firmly placed (Sinclair 2010) within a hypermodern society, I aspire nonetheless to inhabit the wilder corridors of a postmodern paradigm, as one that represents tolerance, respect for differences and organizational structures that emerge from cosmologies based upon both greater equality and creative unknowing. For now, though, we turn to my re-constellation of the sacred based on my ecofeminist reading of Keith Grint’s (2010) work on *The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence*.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RE-CONSTELLATING LEADERSHIP THROUGH RE-EXAMINING THE SACRED. AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK?**

“I was flooded by images and feelings of the unity among the caesars, the popes, metropolitans, ayatollahs, generals and party chairmen, all blurring into one another: old men and their sycophants, detached from sensuous life and fascinated by power which was rationalized by complex, abstract ideas, contemptuous of the earth-based spiritual practices of native peoples, served by tame women” (Don Hanlon Johnson 1994: 133).

#### **Introduction**

Debate and discussion about leadership, religion and spirituality, as already acknowledged in the previous chapters, is on the increase in a number of journals and books in recent years (Christo-Baker 2010; Hale and Fields 2007; Prince 2005; Taylor 2010; Temple 2012; Tourish and Tourish 2010; Warner and Grint 2006; see also Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Biberman and Robbins 1999; Bell and Taylor 2003; 2004; Benefiel 2003; 2005; Dent et al 2005; Fry 2003; Fry et al 2005; Grint 2010; Hicks 2002; 2009; King 1996; Maxwell 2003; Parker 2009). At its most fundamental level this chapter attempts to examine the ‘constructed’ nature of the sacred discussed in the last chapter, within differing cosmological approaches and to assess some of their impacts upon various realms of leadership and organizational experience within modernity. In this sense it concerns itself at least partially with the area of definition, although I do not approach this from the kind of quantitative approach that Case et al (2012) quoted in the previous chapter have criticized. Instead, I seek to explore issues relating to the ways in which beliefs, as the constructed meanings associated with religion and spirituality, impact upon the discourses, practices and experience of leadership. Doing so, I seek to problematize the idea that common leadership and organizational constructs have emerged from a secular backdrop (Sorensen et al 2012; Schmidt 1985). An argument that also provides further in-depth development of one of the questions posed in the last chapter of whether in fact the public sphere has ever been a secular arena.

#### **Leadership Discourse. Black and White? Or Technicolor?**

##### **Dominance and Diversity**

Amongst those writing on the subject of religion and spirituality, Christo-Baker expresses concern that “leadership has largely been studied from a Eurocentric or White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) perspective” (Christo-Baker 2010:

461). Taylor suggests that over-focusing analysis on the dominant religious belief systems is likely to limit our study of leadership and that we may well harvest important insights from the inclusion of “progressive spiritualities” (Taylor 2010: 464; see also Lynch 2007). Other authors allude to the ways in which “imperialist foundations” interpreted the pre-existing leaderships and spiritual beliefs of those they colonized, often viewing them as inferior and leaving behind a legacy of displacement and cultural destruction, which in many instances continues to the present day (Warner and Grint 2006: 226; see also Griffith 2007). Warner and Grint have suggested that reviewing First Nation leadership has the potential to “open up the study of leadership to alternative models and understandings” (Warner and Grint 2006: 226). Interestingly from the ecofeminist perspective adopted in this thesis, they also point out that while some of the First Nation tribes were matriarchal, that the imposed governance that accompanied European contact led to a predominance of male representation on councils that had not existed previously.

Alongside Warner and Grint (2006) other scholars writing in *Leadership* also outline the different value systems of cultures and religions based on the collective values of serving the good of family and society rather than the individualized emphasis in Western models (Hale and Fields 2007; Holmes 2007; Temple 2012; Warner and Grint 2006). Prince (2005) writes about the way that theology has shaped Western conceptualizations of leadership in such a way as to reflect a cosmology based upon separation and control rather than connection and interrelationship. Other scholars voice reservations about the way in which the current propagation of spirituality at work (particularly in the context of inequality between leaders and followers) runs the risk of serving “the advancement of a more controlling and oppressive leadership agenda than is normally acknowledged or may be intended” (Tourish and Tourish 2010: 209). It is on this kind of basis that some scholars take a critical position on the benefits of conflating religion and leadership in public arenas, suggesting that in some instances it may be being employed as a “normative managerial control strategy” which involves increasing “colonization of individual subjectivity by organizations” (Bell and Taylor 2011: 6; Case et al 2012; Tourish and Tourish 2010). Though of course, as I discussed in my previous chapter it is nonetheless, a discourse with many enthusiastic adherents, not all of whom

may have colonization of any kind as an intention, conscious or otherwise.

In a variety of ways then, most of the scholars mentioned suggest that the revived interest in the sacred that is currently permeating the fields of leadership and organization studies is flawed by an over-reliance on a narrow theology rooted within a Judeo-Christian cosmology. I seek to build upon and extend this critique even further by suggesting that some of the values embedded within this particular cosmology bear at least some responsibility in the unfolding and linked crises relating to environmental sustainability and social justice.

With this chapter I take my lead from Keith Grint's (2010) work in *The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Silence and Sacrifice*. In this paper, Grint (2010) suggests that the performance of leadership is intrinsically dependent upon its relationship with the sacred. Whilst he acknowledges calls for post-heroic leadership (Badarraco 2001; Turnbull 2006) he concludes that achieving it is likely to be virtually impossible. The reason for this proposed difficulty he tells us lies in the relationship between leadership and the sacred. Grint's work in this paper, whilst it acknowledges the way in which societies sacralize their "political community", is rooted within a Judeo-Christian cosmology that is only indirectly acknowledged (Grint 2010: 91; see also Girard 1972; 1982). In an essay on the sacred, it is perplexing in its lack of attention to its broader theological context, which it draws upon - without acknowledging the wider truth – which is that any notion of the sacred is intimately bound up with the very specific cosmology of the society in which it is located.

Although the Grint essay presents a wide range of historical and cultural examples it seems nonetheless, firmly located within the paradigm of the imposed order and control of the rational approach that owes so much to the Enlightenment. And as Richard Tarnas observes, in *The Passion of the Western Mind*,

"Unless we are able to perceive and articulate...certain powerful beliefs and assumptions that we no longer consider valid or defensible...then we will fail to understand the intellectual and cultural foundations of our own thought" (Tarnas 1991: 1; see also Mabey and Morell 2011; Osborn et al 2002; Probert and James 2011).

My analysis of Grint's (2010) paper is therefore embedded in the post-heroic framework of eco-feminism and feminist spirituality (Christ 1997; Eisler 1987; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005; Spretnak 1999; see also White 1967). I begin by

referencing the work of Rosemary Radford Ruether, a Christian feminist theologian (1992), in *Gaia and God - An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* in the hope that it may help to clarify the ways in which the three particular creation stories, or cosmologies, that she suggests lie at the heart of Western culture, have and still do influence the ways in which organizational leaderships are constructed in said culture. Some of the deep ecology influencing Radford Ruether's work concerns itself with the "symbolic, psychological and ethical patterns of destructive relations" (Devall & Sessions 1985 quoted in Radford Ruether 1992: 2). Set however overall, within an ecofeminist framework, which also focuses on critique of mainstream ethics, it explores the ways in which the domination of women, nature and 'other' have been interconnected and sanctioned by the religious institutions of the 'ruling class male' (Radford Ruether 1992: 5; see also Merchant 1980). It provides a painstaking archeological excavation of the sacralization and successive transformations of political relationships into religious narratives and philosophical theory, as they moved through Babylonian and Hebrew society to classical Greek Platonic thought. This results in an extensive analysis of their ongoing (and she argues, disastrous) influence within modernity. Casting a highly critical eye over her own heritage, she states,

"Classical western cultural traditions, which were codified between 500 B.C.E. and 800 B.C.E., and of which Christianity is a major expression, have justified and sacralized these relationships of domination. Thus we inherit not only a legacy of systems of domination, but also cultures that teach us to see such relationships as the "natural order" and the will of God" (Radford Ruether 1992: 3).

Based upon an examination of these specific and I argue, central, cosmological constructions I explore the influence of the Western Judeo-Christian discourse upon both ecological crisis and the historical relationships between leaders and followers which I suggest still influence some of the contemporary inequalities between them. Openly acknowledging the inherently gendered nature of the ways in which both 'leading' and 'following' have been historically constructed by Western religious discourse will I hope continue the ongoing process of encouraging their reconsideration. Reconsideration of gender is already at work in the diverse work of a number of leadership and management scholars (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Collinson 2005; Ford 2006; Hawkins 2008; 2013; Marshall 2007; 2011; Phillips 2014; Sinclair 2007). I hope that building upon the alternative and "progressive" perspectives of feminist spirituality and eco-

feminism, (particularly in a climate where there is an increasing interest in religion in the field) may make a contribution to the field by answering some of the calls of previous work to broaden representation, as well as helping to enrich leadership theory and practice in ways that may generate greater social justice and environmental sustainability (Lynch 2007).

I begin with a short outline of Grint's (2010) thesis. I follow this with a brief examination of the links between cosmology, ethics and social construction, before offering an excavation and an eco-feminist analysis of the cosmologies that lie hidden at the heart of the construction in Grint's paper. I continue by including the work of Raine Eisler's (1987) work in *The Chalice and the Blade* in order to present an alternative constellation of the sacred, which some feminist theory argues pre-dates the mythoi discussed by Radford Ruether (1992). I then use an eco-feminist lens to analyse the implications of Grint's cosmology in terms of some of its effects upon leadership construction and organizational dynamics. I complete my critique in referencing the work of a number of the leadership scholars already mentioned. This synthesizes my historical excavation with contemporary concerns being expressed in the leadership and organizational fields, including the critiques of the Spirituality at Work movement and work focusing on gender and corporate social responsibility (Tourish and Tourish 2010; Marshall 2007; 2011). I offer concrete, specific examples in order to illustrate the ways in which the repressed religious mandates I attempt to outline may be seen to be at work in present day leadership and organizational interactions. I focus particularly upon the potential for the change rather than the maintenance of a status quo that I have argued is both damaging and socially unjust. For as Collinson suggests in *the Dialectics of Leadership*, whilst leaders undoubtedly wield the considerable power that Grint suggests they do, "...their control is often shifting, paradoxical and contradictory...followers' practices are frequently proactive, knowledgeable and oppositional...gender crucially shapes control/resistance/consent dialectics and leaders themselves may engage in workplace dissent" (Collinson 2005:1419).

Black and white imagery possesses an undeniable elegant simplicity. It may however fail to do full justice to nuance and shading. In other words,

"...there is a growing concern that such traditional dualisms and unitary identities are no longer sustainable" (Collinson 2005:1436).

Finally I conclude this chapter by offering an alternative constellation of the



sacred based upon the kind of perspective that can be found within ecofeminism and feminist spirituality.

### **Living by the sword**

“Then Yeshua said to him, “Return the sword to its place, for all of those who take up swords will die by swords” Matthew 26.

Writing in *The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence*, Keith Grint begins by challenging the notion that either economics or politics are in crisis. Environmental degradation, poverty and social injustice, dwindling resources, globalized asset stripping, overpopulation and multiple sites of military conflict, all are absent from analysis of an environment framed as only “allegedly besieged...by financial crises, terrorism and political scandals (Grint 2010: 89). Suggesting that we need to acknowledge and engage with, rather than deny, the sacred element of leadership, he then offers us a description that includes three very specific elements, which he argues, both epitomize the sacred and actually enable leadership itself, to take place.

The bedrock of his argument is provided by an etymological approach, to elucidate both the constitution of that which is sacred and the way in which leadership itself is contingent upon this very specific construction of the sacred. The word sacred he tells us “comes from the Latin sacer, meaning sacred or holy or untouchable, which itself came from the Latin sancire - ‘consecrate, dedicated to a religious purpose, revered as holy, secured against violation; to set apart” (Grint 2010: 91). Sacred therefore denotes that which is remote from the ungodly, who within this construction, are the followers. The sacred (leader) is intrinsically different from the profane (follower). Sacrilege, coming from a Latin compound, sacra and legere, means ‘to steal holy things’ -; it involves the contamination of the holy, wherein the boundary of something or someone considered untouchable is breached.

Hierarchy, a word composed of the Hellenic vocables - hieros and arkhos, refers to the sacral ranking of the Holy Sovereign. Hierarchy is the sacred organizational space that facilitates the leadership of God and his priesthood. The Latin term sacerdos means priest. Sacrifice, for its part, is derived from a Latin compound, sacrificare denoting ‘to make holy’; It is thus demonstrated that, “ a second element of the sacred relates to the essential issue of sacrifice by those deemed closest to god - the priesthood; sacrifice is what makes

something sacred - it performs leadership” (Grint 2010: 91). To conclude, the third component of the sacred refers to the appropriate attitude or stance whilst in the presence of the divine, which is described as awe or silence. For Grint this silence implies two things, namely, the silencing of fear and existential anxiety as followers place their trust in God and his representatives. When all else fails there is always the suppression of opposition, “as non-believers and heretics are silenced” (Grint 2010: 92; see also Heifetz and Laurie 1997).

He concludes therefore that, “attempts to displace leadership through desacralized collective endeavours without individual leaders appear extraordinarily difficult to procure, for they would need to ensure the removal of separation between leaders and led - in essence to make all followers the leaders and thus remove the conventional inequality of decision-making, the abolition of sacrifice; and the abandonment of silencing by those in authority so that followers demonstrated responsibility but exhibited no anxiety or dissent. Of course, this is different from attempts to dilute or redistribute leadership away from heroic individuals, but even the latter will require the retention or a radical reconstruction of these sacred aspects to enable leadership” (Grint 2010: 92).

### **Cosmology as value, ethical principle and social construction**

Many scholars agree that assessing alternatives to historically dominant models of leadership and organization must tackle the issue of the sacred (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Case et al 2012; Eisler 1987; Parker 2009; Radford Ruether 1992; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010; Sorensen et al 2012). Radford Ruether (1992) reminds us that all cosmologies function as stories about the sacred that,

“...reflect the assumptions about how the divine and the mortal, the mental and the physical, humans and other humans, male and female, plants, animals, land, waters, and stars are related to each other. They both reflect the worldview of the culture and mandate that worldview to their ongoing heirs” (Radford Ruether 1992:15).

Cosmology as narrative tells us about what we ought to value and how to go about our daily business. It provides, in other words, the fundamental principles upon which we base our leadership and our organization.

Temple (2012) in writing about what he terms the “metaphysical challenges” of many African leaders suggests that all belief systems reflect our view of what we think constitutes ultimate reality, which in turn shape the values or ethics by which we live. Suggesting that ethics are the “crucial bricks within the pillars of leadership” he raises a number of questions which he argues go to the heart of

what he terms “moral leadership”. These are the relationship between leaders and followers, (including the level of coercion involved in the relationship) whose goals are represented by leadership and the question of how dissent is related to by leadership (Temple 2012: 50).

Rather than being any kind of ultimate or absolute truth however, as opposed to an interpretation or construction, I suggest that any cosmology, or metaphysical conceptualization is representative of “experiments in sense making and social action, which have evolved” or grown over time, as part of historical process (Kriger & Seng 2005: 772; see also Mabey and Morell 2011; Pye 2005; Weick 1995). And as some feminist and other scholars attempt to demonstrate, they are often imposed, using brute force, and/or ideological controls, when one group’s view of what makes sense differs from another’s (Eisler 1987; Lear 2006; Marx 1999; Radford Ruether 1992).

This chapter therefore proposes that the portrayal of leadership provided in Grint’s (2010) paper represents a particular kind of ethic, emerging from, amongst other influences, the (albeit widespread) social experiment that materialised from the theological legacy he outlines. This ethic delineates a form that Eisler (1987) associates with androcratic, or male-dominated leadership (Collinson 2005; Ford 2006). Leadership within such cultures is,

“...characterized not only by the rule of men within family and society, but also by central organization, hierarchy, class division and slavery. Frequent and organized warfare is characteristic of patriarchy and patriarchal societies are most usually ruled by men who are warriors or who control the military” (Christ 1997: 59).

Eisler’s (1987) work within *The Chalice and the Blade* outlines what she refers to as Cultural Transformation theory as a way of delineating two very different models of organization. One is referred to as a dominator model and the other as the partnership model, though of course, these kinds of polarized descriptors may be seen to fall into the self same dualism I critique in later sections of this chapter (Plumwood 1993). Eisler (1987) also links the ways in which the sacred is constructed to the ways in which society is organized, where organization is employed to mean, “a concept that refers generally to any sort of patterning, a fairly durable set of relations between people and things...not...as a facsimile for management, and hierarchy and even capitalism” (Parker 2009: 1282). Indeed, it supports Parker in his insistence that, “There are other accounts and practices of organization that assume that hierarchy is not inevitable -

anarchism, feminism, environmentalism and communitarianism (Marshall 1993; Feree and Martin 1995; Naess 1989; Lovink and Scholz 2007). There are...a multitude of intentional communities, and many, many utopia's that imagine worlds in which power is not concentrated at the top of a chain of beings" (Parker 2009: 1297; Parker 2002; Parker et al 2007).

I do not necessarily disagree with Grint's (2010) assessment of the level of difficulty we have with displacing the construction he outlines. This thesis however, addresses its existence as a practical commitment to particular ways of being in the world, often based upon the *willingness* to employ violence or sacrifice. Far from embodying the will of God however, it identifies this willingness as very clearly emerging from the human and material realms. Locating it in the material realms also relocates the responsibility there, which may in turn also open up new possibilities in terms of how we construct our commitments both to the environment and each other.

We turn now, using an eco-feminist lens, in order to examine the three specific cosmologies, or mythoi, which Radford Ruether (1992) suggests have had most influence upon the modern world. They are also the cosmologies that I suggest form the basis for the kind of repressed secular theology that I propose lies at the heart of Grint's (2010) thesis on the sacred in leadership. In examining these we become able to see the ways in which God (the leader) became a transcendent phenomenon, he who is 'set apart', rather than having always or even universally being so. We see also how sacrifice (of followers and leaders) was transformed from the sacrifice involved in birth and rebirth to being that associated instead with death and violence. And finally in Radford Ruether's (1992) work we witness how a divinity that symbolically balanced both life and death bearing aspects comes to be replaced by a God (leader) who is to be feared (by followers) more than celebrated and who has violent death as one of his most elevated aspects.

These are, in chronological order, the Babylonian creation story, circa, early part of the second millennium B.C.E. 2, the Hebrew creation story and Plato's Greek creation myth, *Timaeus*. *Genesis*, the Christian story of how God created the world was originally derived from the Judaic Hebrew bible written in Babylon circa 5th or 6th century B.C.E., taken in turn from the Babylonian story, *the Enuma Elish*.

## **From primordial mother to monstrous chaos**

The *Enuma Elish* was read every New Year as an offering to renewal and continuation (Mendelsohn 1955; Mould 1951; Radford Ruether 1992). The Babylonian story has its own origins in an earlier Sumerian story, which begins not with God but with a primal Mother as the creator of both the Universe and the Gods and Goddesses that populated it. Within this version the world is not created by the word of God but born of the mother. Her sacrifice is one based upon life-affirming creativity. She births successive generations of divinities; the primal parents, Heaven and Earth, followed by water, air and plants, and only finally by the Gods and Goddesses, whom Radford Ruether (1992) suggests to us represent the ruling class of the Babylonian city states. Throughout the nineteenth to sixteenth centuries B.C.E. these metropolitan elites struggled to control both their own 'working classes' and invaders from neighbouring states, migrant itinerants, and the elemental chaos which arose from droughts and floods all endangering their sovereignty.

One story begat another and in due course *The Enuma Elish* was rewritten so that the ancient Mother Tiamat, comes to represent the forces of chaos that challenge order and control. One of the younger Gods, Ea, kills Apsu, one of Tiamat's consorts, crowning himself king. Along with Damkina his wife, Ea, this younger god then has a son, Marduk, who in turn kills Tiamat. Marduk then (re) creates both Heaven and Earth from Tiamat's corpse, making humans from the blood of her other consort Kingu, whom Marduk also kills. Given the dubious origin of humanity in this myth, human enslavement (of followers) is thus legitimated freeing the Gods (leaders) to pursue pleasure. In other words, hierarchy is given a religious mandate (Parker 2009). Leisure is acquired for the aristocracies of temple and palace through the appropriated labour of the serfs and slaves whose co-operation is ensured through the "hieratic power of ritual and law and the military power of armies and weapons" (Radford Ruether 1992: 19).

Over the course of one generation the Babylonian dynasty replaces an earlier matriarchal world in which women maintained autonomy and creation is seen to occur naturally and organically through parthenogenetic means. Gods nor Goddesses exist in isolation from the world but rather arise out of it, as begotten and gestated beings that were generated from what came before rather than

magically appearing *ex nihilo*. The sacred is embedded within and as a part of, rather than separated from, the world of human affairs.

With the rise of Marduk however origin is linked both with death and violence, akin to Grint's (2010) conceptualization of sacrifice. Consideration of this conceptual shift offers a different lens through which to view the kinds of organizational processes discussed by Grint (2010), that he argues, are of *necessity* based on the principle of violent (especially when we recognize that violence is also a continuum) sacrifice:

"Marduk extinguishes the life from Tiamat's body, reducing it to dead "stuff" from which he then fashions the cosmos...This transition from reproductive to artisan metaphors for cosmogenesis indicates a deeper confidence in the appropriation of "matter" by the new ruling class. Life begotten and gestated has its own autonomous principle of life. Dead matter, fashioned into artefacts, makes the cosmos the private possession of its "creators".

Even though the new lords remember that they once gestated out of the living body of the mother, they now stand astride her dead body and take possession of it as an object of their ownership and control" (Radford Ruether 1992:18).

As Irigaray observes "All of western culture rests on the murder of the mother" (Irigaray 1981: 81; see also Whitford 1991).

In the process divinity comes to be constructed as something separate from the earthly realms and the organic and natural processes of creation. Thus the sacred and the profane become distinct, separated entities. Most importantly, we can see how this is a construction rather than an absolute. It is however a change in cosmology, or guiding story, that I suggest has profound implication for any realm, in this case the earth, which comes to be seen as profane, or non-sacred. A cosmology propagating the belief that the earth is somehow a mere resource is likely to produce very different leadership and organizational mandates to one which relates to 'it' as a source of immanent divinity. The demotion of the Goddess as a source of divinity may also be seen to pave the way for the hierarchy based on gender.

### **In the name of the father**

The Hebrew creation story, which I examine next, authored by those of a cognoscente priestly class well aware of the Babylonian predecessor retained some features while changing others in ways more reflective of their own "cultic system" (Radford Ruether 1992: 17). All conflict between Mother and Father has already been erased. God alone creates this Universe, like Marduk, out of pliable matter. Mirrored after the priestly class rather than a warrior one, at

least in *Genesis*, he makes it through the act of ritual declaration, “Let there be...”. Like Marduk he creates in stages with humans coming last, made in God’s image and appointed dominion over the earth and all her other creatures, which according to some scholars establishes the roots of today’s ecological crisis (Bauman 2011; Radford Ruether 1992; White 1967).

Discussing the historical roots of our current ecological crisis, White comments, “human ecology is deeply conditioned by our beliefs about nature and destiny - that is, by religion” (White 1967: 1205). Assessing the impact of the same creation story outlined by Radford Ruether (1992) he continues,

“The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture...Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purpose...Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen” (White 1967: 1205; see also Abram 1997; Curry 2008).

Examining the triumph of the concept of dominion over animism he describes the removal of the need to placate the genius loci, or spirit of the place, that exists within cultures which see spirit as inherent in the world. “The spirits in natural objects, which formerly had protected nature from man evaporated. Man’s effective monopoly on spirit in this world was confirmed and the old inhibitions to the exploitation of nature crumbled” (White 1967: 1205). Though he does qualify, by saying,

“When one speaks in such sweeping terms, a note of caution is in order. Christianity is a complex faith, and its consequences differ in differing contexts. What I have said may well apply to the medieval West, where in fact technology made spectacular advances. But the Greek East, a highly civilized realm of equal Christian devotion, seems to have produced no marked technological innovation after the late 7th century, when Greek fire was invented. The key to the contrast may perhaps be found in a difference in the tonality of piety and thought which students of comparative theology find between the Greek and the Latin Churches. The Greeks believed that sin was intellectual blindness, and that salvation was found in illumination, orthodoxy - that is, clear thinking. The Latins, on the other hand, felt that sin was moral evil, and that salvation was to be found in right conduct. Eastern theology has been intellectualist. Western theology has been voluntarist. The Greek saint contemplates; the Western saint acts. The implications of Christianity for the conquest of nature would emerge more easily in the Western atmosphere” (White 1967: 1206).

Although hierarchy is established between man and nature there is no obvious hierarchy amongst men within the Genesis creation story. The use of male pronouns to describe God and Adam, as well as the fact that Eve is created after Adam, however, clearly sanctions women’s position as subordinate. But as Eisler (1987) details, the story of Eve really only makes sense when placed

within its historical context in which the snake is “an ancient prophetic or oracular symbol of the Goddess”, from which peoples were accustomed to take counsel (Eisler, 1987: 87). Sacred tree groves, as the sites of outdoor worship also had a central role in some of the older religions. So that forbidding Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge was effectively an order from a new, upstart God. Itself a form of exactly the kind of sacrilege Grint (2010) names when he describes the process whereby that which has been sacred and untouchable becomes profaned.

“For like the later transformation of the horned bull (another ancient symbol associated with the worship of the Goddess) into the horned and hoofed devil of Christian iconography, the transformation of the ancient symbol of oracular wisdom into a symbol of satanic evil and the blaming of woman for all the misfortunes of humanity were political expedients. They were deliberate reversals of reality as it had formerly been perceived” (Eisler 1987: 87).

Here again we can see the way in which religious belief, myth or cosmology acts to assemble and re-assemble social organization and to shape belief about whom is fit to lead. Given the ubiquitous imagery associated with the Goddess for millennia beforehand which continued well into the medieval Christian era, along with the image of the Goddess as the Madonna this process of the subordination of women was to be ongoing. And as one feminist scholar points out, was also to include the much later rationalizing of religion which occurred during the Reformation, when even,

“The high esteem accorded by the medieval Church to the Virgin Mary - a version of the divine Mother symbol, with roots in European consciousness that can be traced to 25,000 B.C.E. – was abruptly curtailed. Her role of compassionate intercessor with Christ was transferred to Christ himself, portrayed in the new theology as a loving intercessor with God the Father. Both the devaluing of the sacred womb of the female and the denial of the larger sense of the female as an honoured site of divine presence cleared the way for the masculine character of the modern worldview” (Spretnak 1999: 50).

### **The sins of the flesh**

We move now to look at the influence of the Platonic cosmology represented by *Timaeus* written early fourth century B.C.E., regarded, absurd though it may now seem, as scientific, until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As classically educated men, the authors of *Genesis*, whilst they took the Hebrew creation story, as their patent, were also influenced by the milieu of the day in their interpretative (sic, subjective) endeavours and, “...for 1,500 years read it with the cosmology of *Timaeus* in the back of their mind ” (Radford Ruether



1992: 16).

Plato begins by establishing the dualism that has had such far-reaching influence upon Western scientific thought. Thought, which he sees as the pure, invisible eternal realm is separated out from the material, visible domain of the body. Between the two realms, the Demiurgos makes the cosmos from the four elements, a cosmos, in which the Earth is seen as the centre of the Universe. Successful souls, (where the term soul is associated exclusively with masculinity in Plato's work) earn the right to ascend to their rightful place among the stars should they manage the primary task of incarnation which is conquering the passions of the bodily state.

Creating homes (bodies) for the souls is seen as too corrupting for the Demiurgos who assigns this task to delegate Gods. Souls are schooled in the celestial sphere, prior to incarnation. Once embodied, provided they can transcend the depravity of the mortal and sinful flesh, they will be rewarded with a return to this "first and better" state...as a (ruling class) male human, winning finally his return to his original disincarnate state in his star above" (Radford Ruether 1992: 24; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010; Spretnak 1999). Failure to prevail over the unruly passions of body and emotion will result in demotion in the next return to the flesh, as a woman, with further devolution to an animal if this failure to transcend 'evil' continues. The hierarchy of mind over body, replicated in the superior/inferior dichotomy also applies to 'heaven' over earth, and male over female and animal. Although the hierarchy of rulers over workers is not detailed in this work, Plato returns to it in *The Republic*. In all three categories that he then offers, philosopher-rulers, guardian warriors and manual workers, women are uniformly subordinate. Alongside the legitimization of hierarchy imposed by the previous cosmologies, Plato includes the profoundly important element of reinforcing the relegation of the earth and adding the body, alongside women, workers and beasts, to the status of the 'fallen' (Radford Ruether 1992).

### **Imagining 'other' ways**

The construction of *The Sacred in Leadership* offered within the Grint (2010) paper and examined above is located within a very specific cosmological framework, belonging to the patriarchal, monotheistic traditions of Judeo-Christianity, in which divinity is seen as the almost exclusive province of an all-

powerful father figure who stands outside the material realms. Not all cultures or cosmologies, view the divine as something that is separate from the world we inhabit (Abram 1997; Eisler 1987; Gimbutas 1989; Griffith 2006; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005; Starhawk 1982; 1987; Stone 1976; Spretnak 1999; Swimme and Berry 1992; Swimme 2009). Nor do all mythologies or cosmologies define the sacred as something that is viewed predominantly as the province of masculinity, though many of our mainstream contemporary religions clearly do (Gaylor 2002).

Writing in *The Chalice and the Blade*, Eisler (1987) suggests that all societies fall into one of two basic 'systems configurations', which she describes as either dominator or partnership social organization. Dominator cultures are characterized by rigid male-dominance, "...hierarchic and authoritarian social structure and a high degree of social violence, particularly warfare" (Eisler 1987: xix). For Eisler, Grint's comment that "...very often it is women who are sacrificed to maintain the leadership of men..." would be seen as key to the whole issue of, not just leadership, but what she terms as androcratic, or male dominated, leadership (Grint 2010: 98; see also Kristeva 1998).

Using what she refers to as Cultural Transformation theory, she argues that the way in which we structure relations between the sexes is the crucial variable in the kind of society we live in, including its leadership and organization. For according to Eisler what Marx and Engels refer to as the "woman question" is *the* pivotal issue in terms of partnership forms of organization. And drawing clear linkages between male dominance, warfare and authoritarianism, (Crawford 1980; see also Eisler 1983/1987; Engels 1942; Gross 1980; Marx 1999) she suggests that,

"...the failure...to perceive the logical impossibility of creating a just and equal society as long as a dominator-dominated model of human relations remains in place. To the extent that we still fail to see that an equalitarian society and inequality between the two halves of humanity are contradictory, reason, indeed seems to have failed us" (Eisler 1987:168).

There is little doubt that she would see the sacrifice of women all over the world, (including the so-called developed countries) in their greater exposure to poverty, rape and wife beating, the continuing refusal to allow all women control over their own reproductive systems, unequal pay, the undervaluing of women's ways of knowing the world and their invisibility in both history and contemporary data collection as endemic within androcentric societies. It is a perspective that

also leads to a much deeper questioning of Grint's assertion,

"That the inequality at the heart of leadership needs to be legitimated - while equality is often regarded as legitimate in and through itself - might also explain why we seem to have such a sacred regard for leadership - because it has to be treated as sacred to maintain its legitimacy" (Grint 2010: 95).

Much of Eisler's (1987) thesis attempts to narrate some of the 'pre-historical' processes through which she suggests that partnership models of society were slowly but inexorably replaced by a dominator model. If her effort assists us in loosening "maladaptive assumptions" we might be led to question the ways in which this sacralization of a very specific and particular kind of leadership has achieved the cultural ascendancy that Grint (2010) so accurately identifies (Mabey and Morell 2011). It might also lead us to question whom this leadership actually serves and whether it continues to be of benefit to perpetuate a sacralization or mythology based upon damaging and unethical (for those of us with a different set of ethics) hierarchy (Eisler 1987; Grint 2010). Although Eisler does provide archeological evidence to support her arguments, Diane Purkiss (1996), in particular, although feminist, takes a very critical approach to the kind of accounts offered by feminists like Eisler (1987), Starhawk (1987) and Daly (1986) whom she sees as suffering from lack of adequate historical validation, offering therefore a form of political counter ideology seeking to challenge patriarchal religious mythology (See also Biehl 1991). I am perfectly happy to acknowledge Eisler's work as an alternative myth rather than a replacement absolute. I offer it as no more than a faltering attempt in service of what Whitford describes as an,

"...attempt to consider the possibility of a maternal genealogy and the symbolic and institutional forms it may take...not to be a reversal, the simple replacement of patriarchy with matriarchy, but rather the coexistence of two genealogies" (Whitford 1991: 23).

Indeed Irigaray, about whom Whitford (1991) is writing, cautions against the postmodern project to dispense with binary categories before women are fully awarded identity and subjectivity.

Feminist work of this kind is at the very least a contribution to what Purkiss (1996) describes in terms of an effort to make more space for the untrammelled contribution of women. Though perhaps in a sense, any feminism unmediated by mindfulness of its own oppressive capacity is indeed also guilty of attempts to colonize discourse. Acknowledging all this I still suggest that the work of

scholars such as Gimbutas (1982), Eisler (1987) and others has value and importance. Eisler's work in particular is concerned with the construction of the sacred in terms of the way in which partnership cultures tend to have Goddesses as the central deity. She comments

"In the Neolithic, the head of the holy family was a woman: the Great Mother, the Queen of Heaven, or the Goddess in her various aspects and forms. The male members of the pantheon - her consort, brother, and/or son - were also divine. By contrast, the head of the Christian holy family is an all-powerful Father. The second male in the pantheon - Jesus Christ - is another aspect of the godhead. But though father and son are immortal and divine, Mary the only woman in this religious facsimile of patriarchal family organization, is merely mortal - clearly, like her earthly counterparts, of an inferior order" (Eisler 1987: 24).

Many feminist (and actual archeological excavations) (Eisler 1987; Gimbutas 1982; Mellaart 1975; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005; Stone 1976) providing descriptions of the extensive existence of Goddess based cultures in Asia, Europe, the America's and the Middle East, intimate ways of ordering and structuring reality which were very different from what was to come after. Nor is this a short time frame we are discussing. Unlike today's historical units of centuries, prehistory is measured in millennia, with the Paleolithic and Neolithic era's, both of which incorporated the Goddess as the central deity, dating back 30,000 and 10,000 years respectively.

Evidence in Old Europe, Eisler contends, which includes Vinca, Butmir, Petresti, Cucuteni, Catul Huyuk and Hacilar, depicts an essentially peaceful people who build their homes on sites of aesthetic rather than defensive value, without fortification or evidence of war induced damage to settlements over a period of 1500 years (Eisler 1987: 13-14). Artwork is notable for the absence of the idealization of violence. Rather it tends to depict generative, life affirming imagery, replete with sun, water, nature and birth. Even wearing what Eisler refers to as her 'chthonic' face, the death bearing Goddess is a part of the natural order, rather than a thunderbolt from a wrathful male deity.

"Indeed, this theme of the unity of all things in nature, as personified by the Goddess, seems to permeate Neolithic art. For here the supreme power governing the universe is a divine Mother who gives her people life, provides them with material and spiritual nurturance, and who even in death can be counted on to take her children back into her cosmic womb" (Eisler 1987:19).

Gimbutas', an archeologist, employing a feminist lens, also suggests that whilst women played a prominent role, functioning as heads of the family and priestesses in what seems likely to have been matrilinear societies, there was

little inequality or stratification in terms of sex or class, evident in both the similarity of dwelling spaces and the absence of chieftain burials which were to come later (Gimbutas 1980; Mellaart 1975).

Eisler's work proceeds to outline what "Mellaart calls a pattern of disruption" in the Neolithic cultures (Mellaart 1975: 280). Contrary to a more conventional view of history which reports evolution as a linear movement which progresses in ever advancing moves onwards and upwards, her work and that of other feminists, details, "a process punctuated by massive regressions", in the case of the Neolithic cultures, typified by the extensive invasions by people referred to as the Kurgens by Eisler, Gimbutas and others. Of key importance is the suggestion that these were people with a very different ideology and social structure. Gimbutas reports,

"The Old European belief system focused on the agricultural cycle of birth, death and regeneration, embodied in the feminine principle, as Mother Creatrix. The Kurgan ideology...exalted virile, heroic warrior gods of the shining and thunderous sky. Weapons are nonexistent in Old European imagery; whereas the dagger and battle-axe are dominant symbols of the Kurgens, who...glorified the lethal power of the sharp blade."(Gimbutas 1977 quoted in Eisler 1987: 48).

A period of tremendous destruction, it involved the appropriation of the symbolism previously associated with the Goddess, the obliteration of "magnificent painted pottery, shrines, frescoes, sculptures, symbols and script" and as the Kurgens established dominance, we find their warrior graves with their human and animal sacrifices and their glorification, even in death, of the weaponry of war (Gimbutas 1973 quoted in Eisler 1987: 51). Fortified dwelling appears everywhere, the Goddess is demoted to wife, and people everywhere are enslaved. Although the process of social and ideological transformation has changed shape, the dominator model is one that continues even today, visited upon the kinds of still existing animistic societies evidenced by Griffith (Griffith 2006). And as Eisler remarks upon the transition from partnership cultures, "the story of civilization...now becomes the more familiar bloody span from Sumer to ourselves: the story of violence and domination" (Eisler 1987: 54).

### **Disconnection, subordination and coercion**

Radford Ruether's (1992) archaeological analysis highlights a number of key elements for consideration when examining Grint's (2010) definitions of the sacred in leadership. The etymological approach used in his paper offers very

specific linguistic interpretations of the word sacred, as amongst other things that which is “set apart”. Conceptualizing the divine in terms of separation it echoes the Babylonian and the Hebrew cosmologies, as well as the Platonic one, with their male Gods, who exist outside of nature, people and even the world itself. Such separation, as we saw in these cosmologies, served to remove goodness and value as inherent in all beings. It simultaneously enabled the establishment of an instrumental approach to the other and the legitimation of slavery, servitude and domination, originally by the aristocratic and priestly classes in Babylonian society, over serfs and slaves. This would later include the subordination of all women, earth and animals, within the Hebrew and Platonic versions. This in turn generates organizational structures and leaderships modeled on a patriarchal divinity who demands fear, conciliation and submission, as embedded in Grint’s version of awe. His inherent superiority as wholly independent creator, rather than a being embedded in and therefore also of creation, then acts as the ultimate justification for the exercise of what many feminists call power-over (Starhawk 1987; see also Durkheim 1996).

It is essentially part of the same, continuing process described by Parker in his similar excavation of the later writings of Pseudo-Dionysius in the 5th century. In arranging different kinds of angels into a hierarchical ordering, Pseudo-Dionysius then moves to transpose this ordering from heaven onto earth. And as Parker comments,

“Here it also becomes clear that the older term ‘hierarch’, a high priest or leader (etymologically, *heiros* and *arche*, or holy rule), is being appropriated. Hierarchy is no longer merely about a single charismatic leader, but is a generalized organizational relation in which we are all embedded, whether we like it or not” (Parker 2009: 1286).

Where divinity becomes separated off and seen to exist only in specific places, people and elements, such as heaven, masculinity and mind, this leads inevitably to the establishment of hierarchy. Such separation functions to generate and maintain the superior value of those qualities and/or people deemed sacred. This in turn confers an inferior status on those states viewed as profane. The subjugation of earth, female, animal, body and emotions is thus legitimated and paves the way for all of them to be treated as the superior (divine) leadership deems appropriate. The earth becomes a resource, or capital and neither the body, nor its feelings, need be listened to or given equal

status to that which is viewed as sacred, in this case heaven and mind. Divine (and frequently masculine) leadership has a mandate to “silence” lesser men, women, children and others labeled as profane and therefore, inherently more disposable beings.

In distinguishing between three different kinds of power, feminist activist Starhawk (1987) names *power over* as the fundamental control structure associated with male dominated, androcratic cultures. Based upon domination it functions through the subordination of those regarded as inferior in interconnected and inter-related patterns of gender, race, class and ethnicity. Such relationships may be seen to function on different but nonetheless related levels, from the ideological and cultural narrative level to the socio-economic level (Radford Ruether 2005). And as Sullivan notes “ ‘global ordering’ is made not only at macro and formal institutional levels, but also ‘through more quotidian forms of power, constituted around gender [and sexuality] but also intersecting with hierarchies of race and class’ ” (Sullivan 2011: 219). Within such embedded systems of power-over, violence, ownership, superiority and control become so pervasive that they are all but invisible, representing taken-for-granted organizational norms. Those belonging to the inferior, profane classes are viewed as lacking the characteristics that would enable them to lead. Thereby providing the justification for their exclusion from forums of power and decision-making and their ordering as ‘other’ (Ford and Harding 2011). Theology as Radford Ruether points out, becomes the “master narrative” or “logic of domination” that defines the normative human in terms of this male ruling group” (2005: 92).

The exercise of such power over not only forms part of the embodied process which upholds the mystique of the ruling elite as those inherently suited to lead and organize, but is actively required by hierarchical social forms. Such a use of power based upon hierarchy and supposedly innate superiority simultaneously offers rational justification for the neutralizing, if not elimination, of feeling and experience that offers challenge to those exercising power in this way. Grint’s conceptualization of the sacred element in leadership outlines the links between these kinds of processes and religious constructs in a number of ways. As evidenced for example, in his construction of hierarchy as the “sacred organizational space that facilitates...priesthood’s leadership” and his

observation that “the inequality at the heart of leadership needs to be justified.” We see it again in the notion that it is the divine right of the leadership to silence others and that “followers choose to follow” (Grint 2010: 91-100).

His conceptualization is less illuminating about the ways in which the exercise of power over may severely restrict our ability to exercise choice and responsibility. Grint construes reluctance to lead as based in existential anxiety. I would suggest that varying abilities to take up such challenge, may well at least partially, reflect the limitations which have been placed upon us by our experiences of cultural norms and expectations. The influence of the socially constructed nature of race, class and gender function as perfect examples of strictures which are, from the point of view of the ‘faithless’, far from existential, especially when they can be seen to effect the “othered” in such predictable and patterned ways. It is of course not difficult to see the ways in which these may be “mutually reinforcing”, but taking account of “deep-seated asymmetrical power relations” should at least enlighten us to the suggestion that this is rarely fully consensual for those who function as the sacrifices (Collinson 2005: 1434-35).

### **So just what does all this have to do with the real world?**

One example in the contemporary Western arena emerges from Fry and colleagues (2005) work on promoting spiritual leadership (SLT) as a tool for the promotion of business bottom lines and ‘wellbeing’ in the US military. Case et al (2012) specifically critique contemporary SLT (Spiritual Leadership Theory) for what they describe as its performative focus. In this particular instance, the potential limits to well-being in armed combat situations for soldiers and their appointed ‘other’ (Case et al 2012: 358; see also Plumwood 1993; Tourish and Tourish 2010). Referring to the suggestion that “all significant concepts relating to the modern theory of work and organization are secularized theological concepts” they seem to propose that it is the secularization process itself that is responsible for the increasing predominance of ‘rationality’ (Case et al 2012; see also Sorensen et al 2012). Whilst there may have been acceleration in the process of what we term rationality, as the religious elements of theory have become less visible, Judeo-Christian religious discourse has as Grint (2010) points out long involved the rationalization of the sacrifice of those that its



hierarchy deems profane.<sup>24</sup>

The raw data collected in the Fry et al (2005) study being critiqued by Case et al (2012) also speaks volumes about the embodied experiences of army recruits, who reported lack of commitment; low morale; feeling undervalued; inequality; hypocrisy and feeling as though they were merely numbers that could be easily replaced (Fry et al 2005: 850; see also Prince 1998). Perhaps, declining enlistment and early retirement in the US army represent some of the follower's own solutions to the problems they face, in spite of the leaderships proposed solutions to the improvement of their sense of well being. For as Collinson reminds us, "Even in the most totalitarian of power regimes, cleavages and contradictions arise that provide opportunities for resistance, especially in the form of localized acts of defiance" (Collinson 2005: 1426; see also Foucault 1979).

We move finally to consider the area of gender and corporate social responsibility. Here we find examples of individuals whom although we may construe them as being located in leadership positions they seek nonetheless to make "radical revision...of the wider ideological and institutional environments" through their engagement with what Marshall and Tams (2011) conceptualize as "responsible careers" and systemic reflexivity. They do not readily fit into the reified dualisms offered in Grint's (2010) conceptualization. These kinds of leaders fit more closely with Mabey and Morell's (2011) notion that whilst adopting a leadership position can mean abuse of power (silencing), it does not have to, as many leaders, from Emily Pankhurst, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi to Wangiri Maathai, have demonstrated. These kinds of leaders of social movements may also be seen as leaders of ideas whose time had come, so that far from being *separate from* the collective they actually represent and embody it. O'Toole et al (2003) also point out that even leaders like Gandhi and King were supported by other, highly impressive leaders, effectively constituting teams who were equally committed to the goals these more prominent figures embodied. Taking these kinds of factors into account makes it more possible to conceive of leadership models that are not based on the separation of the inherently superior leader.

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<sup>24</sup> See Roper (1994) for a historical evaluation of the role of religion in the coming of modernity and critique of the assumption that modernity has ever been build on rational principles.

Indeed, Sinclair (2007) suggests that these sorts of leaders know that change emerges from the collective in ways that are often unpredictable. Such unpredictability includes the inevitable and constant societal conflict over differing values and perceptions, or what Collinson refers to as the control/resistance dialectic (Collinson 2005; Parkin 2010).

Grint argues that the differentiation or difference between leaders and followers enables “followers to escape the blame for the catastrophe it faces and to heap all the blame upon the (headless) shoulders of the leader” (Grint 2010: 96). In an increasingly environmentally challenged world, not only does this seem like cold comfort, but many grassroots activists (and others interested in empowering themselves) are in the process of taking steps to counter blame of others, instead calling for accountability, through the exercise of their own power as active agents (Higgins 2012; Marshall 2007; Swimme and Berry 1992). Grint also seems to suggest that “financial crises, terrorism and political scandals” are not sufficient grounds for the fundamental questioning of leadership construction and representation and that in any case changing our current global regime is virtually impossible. Both environmental issues and what Sinclair refers to as “place” are significant by their absence in this aspect of his analysis (Sinclair 2010; see also Banerjee 2003; Irigaray 1993). But as Plumwood points out, “While privilege confers some remoteness from ecological damage it is a short-term solution. Remoteness from the consequences of destroying nature is the ultimate illusion. If the world of nature dies, Wall Street dies too” (Plumwood 2002: 236).

Writing about corporate social responsibility Marshall is nonetheless highly pragmatic about both the institutional constraints and the gender shaped nature of the obstacles that influence those who cast themselves as change agents, or what she refers to as “tempered radicals” (Marshall 2007; Marshall 2011; see also Meyerson and Scully 1995). Examining the ways in which gender influences meaning making in the leadership around corporate social responsibility, one of the business responses to the kinds of environmental issues discussed in her paper, Marshall makes a number of conclusions.

She acknowledges that masculinity itself “helps to confer these credentials of persuasion” and that male voices do tend to predominate (Marshall 2007: 169). In an arena grappling with the thorny issues relating to reform versus radical

revisions, Marshall acknowledges that it is still often the case that women are seen to lack the gravitas within the dominant power structures to be accepted as credible advocates for change. Again though, this does not amount to consent, or followers choosing to follow and we can easily conceptualize this in terms of the way in which the hierarchies that have previously been outlined confer a superior/inferior or sacred/profane status.

The women Marshall (2007) cites, including Vandana Shiva, Annita Roddick and Margaret Wheatley, are she suggests, more likely to be marginalized, seen as over-emotional and going too far, but are nonetheless, still escaping the totalizing silencing process that Grint suggests is an inevitable product of certain kinds of leadership constructions. These women are leaders who are refusing their consent to either being silenced or silencing and sacrificing followers. Rather than silencing anxiety they work in such a way as to bring environmental and social justice issues to the surface, a process that often undoubtedly, increases (and makes louder) anxiety in the short and medium term. The beliefs they express acknowledge that separation from nature is the ultimate delusion and that many common interests run amongst humanity as a whole, whether they are leaders or followers.

Marshall also shares the perspective that anxieties associated with environmental damage and social justice issues interweave with the gender status quo in very distinctive ways, so that,

“...associated desires for control, influence the nature of leadership in this field. I suspect that they favour those who can enact authority and containment in some way. This has traditionally been associated with masculine forms of heroic leadership and apparent rationality” (Marshall 2007: 172).

In spite of this however she still advocates the need to consider the *textured* nature of what various influential men in the field are achieving. Citing a variety of examples from Ray Anderson the CEO of Interface to James Lovelock, she concludes that whilst these kinds of leaders within the CSR field are well placed to present persuasive arguments for change, they themselves are also subject to the need to conform to the “appropriate norms of masculinity” (Marshall 2007: 177). This might be seen to imply, as the men’s movement has begun to, that men do not necessarily benefit unambiguously from the power conferred upon them by their gender (Diamond 1994). Perhaps the kind of dualisms that we saw at work in Plato’s cosmology and which are often replicated in theory

unconsciously derived from it, quite simply provides too impoverished a framework with which to assess the vast complexity of relationships within the leadership process in contemporary societies.

### **The power and the glory, forever and ever?**

This same impoverishment is also seen at work in the lack of widespread, profound critique of and the inability to even imagine the creation of something different from the dominant paradigm. And has been cited as evidence of a deeply disturbing sickness at the heart of our society that produces passivity, depression and a lack of engagement with our need (as so called followers) to find solutions for ourselves (Seligman 1977). Indeed the whole idea that leadership holds the power, the exclusive ability and the responsibility for generating change, is not fact but mythology for Gemmill and Oakley (1997), in their commentary upon leadership as a social construction leading to alienation. Mythology, just like cosmology, as the stories which are told over and over again, nonetheless, becomes the bricks and mortar of reality construction, to the extent that it is eventually rendered invisible, unconscious and beyond question (Anthony 1977; Neumann 1989; Campbell 1977 quoted in Gemmill and Oakley 1997). Whilst Gemmill and Oakley argue that we have been trained not to be aware, (rather than as Grint suggests that we are exercising our preference not to look) the price paid for our gaze avoidance, is a profound sense of alienation. This, they suggest, arises from the powerlessness created by the kind of mythology, that places dynamic responsibility in the hands of a minority. Reminiscent of the kind of approach taken by Thomas Szasz (1972) whose own groundbreaking work challenged the myth of mental illness, Gemmill and Oakley (1997) outline the essentially constructed nature of leadership and its use as a tool of political and social oppression. Seeking to deconstruct it they conceptualize it as a “sign of social pathology...a special case of iatrogenic social myth that induces massive learned helplessness amongst members of a social system” (Gemmill and Oakley 1997: 273; Szasz 1972). Describing the mainstream, contemporary approach to leadership essentially as a kind of ‘psychic prison’ that robs people of their opportunity to exercise a fuller range of skills, participation and intelligent contribution, Gemmill and Oakley (1997) suggest that leadership needs to be re-constructed, or to employ my own term, re-constellated, in new ways in order to free

ourselves from its current limitations.

### **Restoration of value through a re-constellation of the sacred**

It is not difficult to see the influences of past religious discourses that framed society in terms of strict hierarchical ordering as still very much alive and well in the present. What is often less obvious is the way in which having become so naturalized (and partly subject to a secularization process) within Western culture the constructs associated with them are often taken as such a given, that they come to be seen as impossible to change. We are currently living in the midst of a nest of complex and interconnected problems including climate change, loss of biodiversity, species extinction, pollution and accelerating consumption drawn from dwindling, finite resources (Higgins 2010; Parkin 2010). The kind of systemic perspective discussed by Marshall (2007; 2011; see also Spretnak 1999; Marshall and Tams, 2011) informs us that initial attempted solutions to problems are often generated from within the same kind of mindset that caused the difficulty in the first place – a phenomenon Schoeneman (1975) refers to as regressive innovation. Like Grint (2010) I wholeheartedly agree that socially assembled views on the sacred have had a profound influence upon both the construction and the practice of leadership within modern organization. Given the illumination of just what some of these constructions hold as value I would suggest a need to be circumspect and reflective about them, lest their increased application become what is known in systemic thinking as a failed attempted solution. This brings us directly back to the thorny matter of diversity and the conflict associated with varying ethical positions.

A mythos, or mythology is, as has been suggested in previous sections, a socially constructed phenomenon, consisting of many interwoven symbols, narratives and ritual enactments, constituting a culture's ethical system (Irigaray 1990). In spite of much of modern leadership's insistence that it represents the ultimate in rationality, the mythos that it represents is far more than just a cerebral system of values. Symbols influence both the conscious and the unconscious worlds, as repetitive ritual enactments act to define what is and is not of value. This is knowledge that also becomes deeply embodied. For as one feminist writes, "that which is not celebrated, that which is not ritualized, goes unnoticed, and in the long run...will be devalued" (Budapest 1989: xxi).

Restoration of value, in turn, requires the ground of a new mythos as the seedbed in which a new ethos can be grown. We turn finally in this chapter to pose the question of what besides simply critique, feminist spirituality and deep ecology may offer us in our search for alternative constellations of the sacred in leadership.

As has already been acknowledged both feminist spirituality and ecofeminism embrace a wide diversity. Although many of the scholars representing these viewpoints are critical of patriarchal religion not all employ the symbolism and imagery associated with the Goddess in their work (Plumwood 1993; Radford Ruether 1992). Amongst those that do there are still areas of disagreement as to the precise meanings that they attach to this word. Some believe categorically that archeology provides extensive evidence of cultures during the Paleolithic and Neolithic era's that incorporated the Goddess as the central deity and organized reality very differently from what was to come after (Eisler 1987; Gimbutas 1977; 1980; 1982; 1989). Others problematize what they see as a mythology based on a "patriarchal paradise and the fall into patriarchy" (Radford Ruether, 1992: 8; Purkiss 1996). In a world with complex problems, increasingly sophisticated technology and apparently intractable moral dilemmas, it may be suggested that there are many environmental and cultural wounds that need tending. Clearly, there can be no return to the past (Maxwell 2003). I choose nonetheless, to explore the metaphor of the Goddess in this section. Suggesting that to do so provides a useful, alternative lens (as only one among many) with which to examine some of the assumptions within the Judeo-Christian cosmology that I have argued has influenced the construction of leadership and organization in Western culture.

The God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is not only male he is also transcendent, separate and effectively disembodied. If leaderships are based upon man in God's image it may therefore be argued that this in turn results in leadership practices that are equally disembodied from the material consequences they generate. Often represented as heavenly light he symbolically illuminates the darkness of the profane, earthly world. The Goddess is female, earth, nature and body, in ways that include the wisdom of emotion, rather than the need for its suppression, an alternative construction suggesting that, emotional responses to the world have the capacity to enrich

leadership (Orbach 1994; Starhawk 1982). The Goddess also balances both light and dark, through associations such as sun and moon, night and day, life and death and summer and winter. This suggests that even emotions such as anxiety and anger may have valid roles to play in generating adaptive leadership behaviours (Christ 1997). The addiction to positivity discussed by Collinson (2012) in my introduction to this thesis can therefore be mitigated by a more realistic assessment of circumstances that in an environmentally and socially challenged landscape often induce what can then be framed as useful anger, guilt and fear.

Such holistic constructions do not however, only offer invitations to experience our darker aspects. The earth as imminent divinity is not an abstraction that we experience as separate from the world, but is, as our home and our mother, the source of all life. Awe within such an imminent constellation may then be reviewed to mean both respect and reverence and even love for that which brings forth and sustains life. Re-constellating awe to mean a grounded and simple respect, then means that women, earth and the multitude of daily acts that both genders perform in order to support life may then be seen to provide leaderships - which can then be relocated, symbolically and literally (not as fear) but as the capacity to nurture life.

It has been suggested to me that such formulation valorizes the feminine (Young et al 2012). There is also (the more feminist) criticism that such identifications may objectify women even further by portraying them as passive recipients of male culture (Eller 2000; Heller 1993; Roach 1991). Both Irigaray (1981) and Purkiss (1996) suggest that conceptualizations such as these hint at the suppressed cultural desire for the mother. Purkiss (1996) sees notions of originary and revived matriarchy as potentially disabling and infantile, hinting at a desire for a blissful, if unrealistic, return to the mother-child dyad and prescriptive to boot. Irigaray (1981) on the other hand, would no doubt see this as repressed psychic material, that both women and men carry, based on what she calls the bodily encounter with the mother, which needs to be brought to the light of consciousness. My own position in a globally disempowering culture for women is that equity will require acknowledgement of such re/su/pressions. As a woman I have found deep healing of both cultural and personal woundings in embracing the archetype of the Great Mother, who just like embodied human

mothers has both 'light' and 'dark' aspects and is far from passive. And as Purkiss (1996) points out stories repress, express and manage conflicts which whilst social in origin become internal (embodied) in the narrator, such that our personal, (micro) experiences, if they are not to be silenced and sacrificed a la Grint, still require acknowledgment and in-corporation (See also Whitford 1991; Kostera 2012).

Addressing the issue of the macro level of the shared planetary body, Carole Christ (1997) meantime, points out the fact that the earth encompasses all nations and peoples also means that no one group is enabled to claim exclusive access. Indeed if the divine is seen as immanent within all of the material realms, anything we do to damage the earth, or the body, also harms the divine.<sup>25</sup> Bodies are not seen as inferior, corrupt or in need of transcendence. They and all their processes and feelings, including sexuality, birth and even their death, are then embraced as a source of wisdom (Christ 1997). Allowed to be, they do not need to be kept under control or silenced. This in turn means that spiritual expression requires care and repair, rather than brutal or martyred sacrifice. The earth and all her relations, including nature, women, children and the colonized can then be re-sacralized within this framework. Value is restored, requiring a different ethos to be expressed. Relationships between equal subjects call for different behavior (Curry 2011). Salvation becomes a profoundly embedded, practical activity, grounded in the here and now, calling for the demonstration of respect for difference and diversity.

As a symbolic representation of the web of life the Goddess also stands for unity – with all of life. Recognizing that we all come from one source there is no basis for the superior/inferior dichotomy, either amongst humans or between humans and non-humans. This does not mean that conflict is absent, but when difference is perceived as part of immanence, it is recognized that violence that damages the integrity of the one also injures the many (Christ 1997). We

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<sup>25</sup> Roszak (1993) offers a convincing argument derived from the most up to date science that suggests that no 'real' divide exists in any case. Maxwell also points out, "In the eyes of the vast majority of the dozen or so scientific pioneers responsible for the twin revolutions of relativity and quantum theory, modern physics dealt a death blow to the sensate worldview (i.e., scientific materialism)" (Maxwell 2003: 261; see also Sorokin 1941; Wilber 1984). This too implies that consciousness (or what we might call ideation) cannot be separated from flesh.



cannot harm another without also harming self. This does not of course mean that harm does not occur, sometimes unavoidably, but there is an inherent recognition that consequences reverberate beyond the act itself. Amongst some indigenous people this is stated in the concept that our behavior will effect the next seven generations. Given these insights, helping or harming become the pragmatic alternatives to good and evil, as embodied and daily choices. Constructive choice within this ethos arises from the feeling of being connected, wherein the individual is inextricably linked to community (Maxwell 2003).

In many ways the philosophy at the heart of feminist spirituality, ecofeminism, deep ecology and many of the mythoi expressed by many of the indigenous peoples who have been colonized and exterminated, have a great deal in common. Often expressing an ecological sensibility that has much to offer the world. Writing in *God is Red*, Vine Deloria (1973) explains that while Christianity has conceptualized creation as a specific event, First Nation tribal religions tend to view creation as an ecosystem present in a specific area. Similar connections are drawn together in Charlene Spretnak's (1991) work, *States of Grace*, examining a variety of wisdom traditions. Commenting upon the difference in attitude between what she describes as primal traditional cultures and modernity she outlines the variety of different but interconnected ways in which native culture, ecofeminists, deep ecologists and bioregionalists all call for our collective need to develop our awareness of our place in the greater web (see also Bullis and Glaser 1992; Curry 2008; Plumwood 1993). Each of these traditions recognizes our inherent dependence upon a web of interrelatedness, which is also seen as worthy of being viewed as equally deserving of respect in its own right and not merely as a cipher.

Environmental ethicist, Patrick Curry (2011) highlights the fact that the energy and motivations for the implementation of change, often emerge from sources that are far from rational or secular. He argues that emotion, if not in fact love, has a crucial role to play in changing our attitude to the environment, identifying both religion and spirituality as sources of support for constructive change (see also Maxwell 2003; White 1967). The distinction between the spiritual and the material is framed as the fatal flaw in the cosmological systems that I have critiqued here. Curry (2011) is also very clear about the sort of 'spiritual' and religious qualities he views as being helpful to the world (some of which we

might choose to extend to leadership values and practices) at this time, suggesting a need for inclusive pluralism; a sense of place (local); the recognition of ultimate mystery whilst maintaining involvement in the material; the celebration of the everyday and a social rather than individualistic bias.

“What is needed is to encourage and strengthen people’s awareness and appreciation – which already exists, although it is rarely articulated – of the Earth and all its life as sacred: not an abstract Life, but one that is embodied and embedded in specific relationships, communities and places” (Curry 2011: 143).

### **“Forgive them Father”**

Espousing a similar outlook, the leaders within the business community in which I have conducted the empirical research for this thesis, presented in the following section, comment, “It is no longer a matter of being alternative. It is a matter of there being no alternative” (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009: xiii). There are alternatives, but should we choose to exercise them, we will all pay the price in increasing environmental degradation, warfare, suffering and irretrievable loss. For as Curry observes, “...life...is entirely relational – so the entities related are constituted by those relations – and reflexive, so that it is impossible to stand outside and observe or manipulate it, either as a whole, or in part, without...being affected by it” (Curry 2011: 8; see also Higgins 2010; Parkin 2010).

Writing in *Gaia and God, an Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, Radford Ruether (1992) has suggested that a society’s cosmology provides the fundamental operating principles for its organizational structures and values. As an account of the origin of the universe, as well as humanity’s place within it, cosmology functions as the legitimating myth of a culture. It offers, in other words, a story, or a narrative, concerning the nature of the divine or sacred within the culture, with that which is defined as sacred being that which is constructed as worthy of respect and veneration. Throughout this last chapter I sought to interrogate a conceptualization of the sacred offered by Keith Grint (2010) in his paper, *The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence*. Exploring the taken for granted nature of the sacred within Western and Euro-centric culture I argued that Grint (2010) provides an illuminating account of the connections between such taken for granted conceptualizations and contemporary dominant discourses on both leadership and organization. I further argued that both this construction of the sacred and dominant discourse

involve privileging hierarchy and violence as well as the systematic 'othering' of that which is excluded from the elite positions in such hierarchy, based on what Plumwood (1993) describes as the logic of the master. Within such constructions leadership is seen as the exclusive province of an all-powerful male figure standing outside the material realms - transcendent, separate and (unless he falls from grace and is himself profaned) usually superior. This dominant discourse has at least on a historical basis, as Grint (2010) highlights, been located within the very specific cosmology of Judeo-Christianity. As such it constitutes part of a process of the largely unacknowledged employment of "secularized theological concepts" within organizational studies (Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010: 8; see also Schmidt 1888/1985).

Attempting to trace the historical nature of these processes of domination back to some of their origins, the last chapter has outlined three of the cosmologies that Radford Ruether (1992) identifies as having shaped both Judeo-Christian culture and modernity. Examining the Babylonian creation story, second millennium B.C.E., the Hebrew creation story and Plato's Greek creation myth, *Timaeus* and their implications within secularized theology, I argued that their influence still permeates organizational and leadership theory in a number of influential ways (Radford Ruether 1992; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010). Indeed I argued that these cosmologies have historically been employed to sacralize very specific sets of political relationships, in which leadership often comes to be modeled upon the very particular construction of divinity described above.

In doing so, I also suggested that the representation of leadership provided in Grint's (2010) paper, which he proposes is likely to be impossible to replace, is not only typical of the dominant discourse in managerial, organizational and leadership theory, but that it delineates a very specific form. Eisler (1987) refers to this form as the androcratic or male dominated leadership typical of dominator as opposed to partnership cultural organization. Whilst Plumwood (1993) names the organization it is part of, as a system of domination based on the logic of a master subject, "who inferiorises women, both individually and culturally, backgrounds and devalues their works, and defines them as peripheries to the master's centre" (Plumwood 1993: 63). I also argued therefore, that although such systems have (over a very long period of time) come to be accepted as the natural order, that recognizing them as

constructions *and* mounting effective challenge to them is vital to the collective well being of life on earth. Such a conceptualization of collective wellbeing is based on the understanding of humanity's total dependence upon the material grounding of our globally interconnected ecosystems, at the same time as it simultaneously recognizes the uneven dispersal of resources and power (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Curry 2011; Plumwood 1993).

### **Leaderships For An Age of Re-embodiment**

The alternative to destructive relationships based upon the suicidal fallacy of separation is to engage with the seemingly overwhelming task of re-constellating many central aspects of the ideology and practices that have organized our world and our ways of being embodied for hundreds of years. Whilst this may be hugely challenging, its impossibility is yet to be judged by the passage of time. This includes our approach to a model of leadership that this last chapter has argued has been based on a heroic individualism, that has often been disembedded from connections with environment and relationship, that has in turn, been modeled upon a transcendent male God.

Re-constellation from an eco-feminist point of view does not suggest the replacement of the dominant paradigm with another one size fits all model. Ecofeminism is deeply committed to pluralism and diversity. Many religious traditions are currently in the process of revision<sup>26</sup> and of course, there will always be those of a more secular persuasion who make deep and valuable contributions to our contemporary problems (Radford Ruether 2005).

Attempting to avoid a situation in which any approach becomes 'written in stone' Carole Christ suggests nine ethical principles that she calls touchstones. I suggest that incorporating them could be of assistance in moving beyond the dominator ethos towards re-embodied (as opposed to what I have described here as disembodied) leaderships. An ethical framework that resonates with some of the indigenous wisdoms already discussed, includes the following: to care for life; to walk in beauty; to trust body knowledge; to be honest about conflict and suffering; to take only what we need; to consider consequences for

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<sup>26</sup> Christian feminism takes sexual equality for granted; women's ordination is gradually underway; indigenous people are very slowly being recognized for wisdom traditions that encourage sustainability and so on (See Radford Ruether 2005 in her chapter on "The Greening of the World's Religions).

seven generations; to take life only after great consideration; to practice generosity and to work to repair the web of life (Christ 1997).

I propose therefore that, "...leadership should be aimed at helping to free people from oppressive structures, practices and habits encountered in societies and institutions, as well as within the shady recesses of ourselves" (Sinclair, 2007: 322). I argue that an ethos based upon the dualism of inferiority and superiority has created a worldwide crisis that has emerged from leaderships based upon the violence associated with a disembodied philosophical position. This raises the question of an alternative ethic, which could be based upon the willingness to heal the damage done by such violence.

Such an ethic values the body and feelings as well as the mind and rationality, leading to a renewed respect for them. Leadership, based upon emergent process, located within us all, based upon these kinds of ethics works to nurture and honor all aspects of being human, without elevating certain qualities as superior. Suggesting that there is no inherent separation between the spiritual and the material it accepts the diversity of ways humans choose to live their lives, including those who prefer a secular path. It accepts that people are likely to continue to use words like sacred and divine in order to describe and share their experiences and understanding of the ineffable. Nonetheless, it recognizes that the ways in which we construct the sacred are of pivotal importance in how we relate to leadership, following, organization and the many different ways in which we all go about making our contribution to the world.

The kind of organization we mandate is of fundamental importance. Leadership that is unable to perceive immanent, inherent value in that which surrounds it is likely to sanction very different behaviors to that which does. If 'salvation' exists outside the realm of the material (where this means body and earth) we may be less inclined to care for that which is after all, only finite. If the act of creation itself and the possibility of the notions of salvation that lie at the heart of Judeo-Christian cultures are disembedded from the material realm, this, it seems, has profound implications, for all life and all leaderships.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **MOVEMENT MEDICINE - AN ETHNOGRAPHY**

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

##### **Approaches to Epistemology, Theory and Methodology**

“Living as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both...Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing private acknowledgment that we were a necessary vital part of that whole...This sense of wholeness, impressed upon our consciousness by the structure of our daily lives, provided us with an oppositional worldview – a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors, that sustained us...These statements identify marginality as much more than a site of deprivation - in fact...that it is a site of... possibility, a space of resistance...It offers one...perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternative new worlds” (hooks1984).

“To the master, residing at what he takes to be the centre, differences among those of lesser status at the periphery are of little interest or importance, and might undermine comfortable stereotypes of superiority. To the master, all the rest are just that: ‘the rest’, the Others, the background to his achievements and the resources for his needs. Diversity and multiplicity which are surplus to his desires need not be acknowledged” (Plumwood 1993).

##### **Introduction**

The last chapter clearly acknowledged both bodies and emotions as the inferior, profaned elements within the dualistic ontology of the cosmology it set out to critique. Given that such discriminatory processes still tend to extend into our construction of knowledge, my approach to my empirical research seeks to embody congruence in my attempt to overcome such hierarchies, at the same time as re-valuing historically depreciated qualities like feeling and embodiment. This second section of my thesis presents an ethnographic study of a community of practice led by and organized around an alternative cosmology that shares this commitment. I begin the first chapter on approaches to epistemology, theory and methodology, looking at the construction of knowledge from a feminist perspective consistent with the aforementioned aims. Next, I offer a brief exploration of ethnography with particular reference to the work of Franz Boas (Boas 1887/1922; Moore 2009); this is followed by a consideration of insider research reflecting my positioning as a researcher in this thesis – framed with specific reference to postmodernist approaches to knowledge; I also discuss my other main tool, interviewing, described here as communion, a form that I feel is congruent with a feminist approach to research in a spiritual community (Ezzy 2010). I end my methodology section with

reference to Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) technique for sharing written representations that they have named Creative Analytic Process.

There are a further five chapters of ethnography. I begin by contextualizing my ethnographic field, The School of Movement Medicine, in terms of its place within the overall realm of New Religious Movements (Arweck 2002). I introduce it as a spiritual organizational system arranged mainly around immanent (as opposed to transcendent) concerns, an area which is in itself, an important one for debate with the current field of sociology of religion (Heelas 2008). This chapter also encompasses broad-brush stroke descriptions of some of the organizational beliefs, structures and practices associated with the school. Chapters three through to six present data<sup>27</sup> and analysis on what I consider to be the four major themes of interest that emerged for me throughout the writing of this thesis. This includes highlights from twenty-three in depth interviews examining the following; gender and the question of the empowerment of women and the 'feminine' more generally within this community; the inclusion and 'enlightenment' of the body, as an aspect 'othered', excluded and inferiorized by the cosmology under examination in the first section; the community's relationship with nature (which I also argued is a profaned element in Judeo-Christian cosmology) and its implications for sustainability and well-being; finally, chapter six ends by investigating approaches to and experiences of the leadership that emerges in this particular community from a cosmology located within the shamanic paradigm, also constellated around active commitments to include the feminine, the body and nature as sacred.

### **Self, Other and Community – Attempting to Embody Coherence**

Indeed it was my own personal long-term commitments to what I experience as the sacred associated with all three of these elements that have generated this thesis. As I first explain in my prologue, I felt from the beginning that both this research project and the field site itself, somehow both chose me as their researcher just as much as I chose them. This experience is, I would suggest, a classic example of a process described by Jungian analyst Romanyshyn (2007) who talks about the way that some "research hunts the researcher, with a view to finding just the right voice to meet its needs, at the same time as

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<sup>27</sup> The nuts and bolts of data collection are included in Appendix One.

assisting its vehicle to address and heal their own wounding (Young 2011: 355). The shamanic belief systems which in my own life are interwoven with this feeling, as with Jungian analysis (Jung 1938/1959; Kostera 2012) are of course, based on very different conceptualizations of the relationships between environment and self to that of most modern Western scientific thought, certainly in the Newtonian paradigm. Some early colonial anthropologists even viewed the practices that emerged from shamanic consciousness as evidence of psychosis (Eliade 1964). Eliade (1964) and Halifax (1982) both stress however, that the shamanic reality is one that involves particular sets of technical skills and perspectives which rather than indicative of any kind of pathology actually require considerable social competence to master. Luhrmann's (1989) writing (on equivalent contemporary practices in our midst in modern England) further validates the idea that interpretation of the kind found in shamanism depends upon a progressive series of embodied experiences that gradually change the way in which practitioners of such beliefs rationalize and experience the world around them. In this sense it is a specific form of reality construction and is even something that may be learned. Such knowledge systems<sup>28</sup> may even have a great deal to contribute to what I have proposed in my first section is a collective need to re-think our relationships with leadership, nature, culture, self and other.

I have shared some of my own journey in the realms of shamanic beliefs in my prologue in auto-ethnographic form in order to assist my readers to understand some of the kinds of embodied life experiences that have influenced some of the motivations that ground this research. In this way I hope to have already provided some of the empirical evidence underlying my perspectives, albeit in the form of the kind of "wild empiricism" advocated by William James (1902/1916). We are fortunate in any case to live in an era in which both qualitative and specifically feminist research, for all the challenges they may face, have nonetheless opened up considerably more space for the acknowledgement of different approaches to rationalizing and understanding the world than may have been demonstrated in the early days of some colonial

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<sup>28</sup> Glazebrook (2005) suggests that while we might describe such systems as alternative epistemologies, that the feminist project of challenging the universalism of phallic logic, requires us to acknowledge all epistemologies as alternatives - to each other.



anthropological studies. Extending across a multitude of paradigms, theoretical frameworks and life worlds, such approaches have helped to generate many new possibilities of learning from a wide range of knowledge systems (Lincoln 2010). Bringing in its wake amongst many other benefits the potential explored in this section of my thesis, of learning what a shamanic perspective, treated as a valuable knowledge system rather than an exotic curiosity, may have to bring to some of our contemporary problems, both in leadership and other fields.

Within the related perspectives represented by feminist spirituality,<sup>29</sup> another one of the theoretical sources I have employed to help construct this work, life and all its processes are seen as part of an ultimately mysterious cosmological unfolding. From such a vantage point, while meaning making may be seen as an inevitable aspect of the human need for understanding, explanation, organization and predictability, life is nonetheless viewed as unknowable in any reductive, universal, definitive sense. In common with many shamanic indigenous wisdom systems, feminist spirituality and other ecologically minded feminisms also provide both practical and theoretical frameworks in which subjective experiencing, the emotional, intuitive realms and knowledge derived from bodily and life experience, are seen as perfectly valid, valued and valuable forms of knowledge (Christ 2003; Starhawk 1987; Plumwood 1993; Young 1987). Indeed many of the voices within ecofeminist approaches simultaneously support different forms of knowing *and* an approach to the world that suggests that much of it may quite simply be unknowable, especially in a universal, fixed form. We may wish for the comfort of the eternal predictability and control that Western scientific systems (much of which emerged in the first instance from the Platonic logic of timeless forms) tend to aspire to (Heidegger 1959; Glazebrook 2005; Plumwood 1993). Situated, embedded and embodied epistemologies of the kind recommended by many ecofeminists on the other hand, recommend approaches that acknowledge the historical and often geographically contextual nature of much knowledge (see also Heidegger 1982). Whilst I personally find Glazebrook's use of highly feminized language, in describing gynocentric eco-logics, counter-productive to an agenda that aims to be inclusive of masculinity, I nonetheless fully support her view on the

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<sup>29</sup> Some feminist spirituality is in my view, closely related to certain elements of shamanism and often also overlaps with the Wiccan practices discussed by Luhrmann (1989).

pressing need for embodied epistemologies.

“Gynocentric eco-logics are situated epistemologies. They are grounded in nature, not in the abstract reasoning of disembodied Cartesian subjectivity, but in the body. Resisting “somatophobia” (as Elizabeth Spelman calls it (1988, 126-130), they likewise reject materialism. In overcoming the dualisms of mind/body, spirit/matter, reason/emotion, their practitioners are engaged in what Judith Plant has called “thinking feelingly” (Plant 1990, 155), and Carol Bigwood, “feelingful thoughts” (Bigwood 1993, 2). Linda Holler calls it “thinking with the weight of the earth” (Holler 1990) in distinction from meta-physical abstraction. Overcoming hierarchical dualisms means reinstating value in the second, devalued term... Refusal to denigrate emotion is simultaneous with embracing embodiment... Gynocentric logics prefer embodiment to immortality... recognize that differences are not subject to but in play with sameness, and celebrate the wisdom of different ways of thinking... They balance phallic logic with the reminder that we are bodies, organic and hence mortal, that we love in interaction, no matter how seductive the philosophic practice of universal and eternal apotheosis for the isolated Cartesian subject. Gyno-centric eco-logics know that even knowledge moves bodily, mortally, in time.

In the presence of such fragile mortality and the kind of dangers that many ecofeminists argue lies at the heart of such Cartesian logic my own aspirations involve embracing the embodied world to create a piece of empirical research which I hope will have impact and relevance beyond more than my own subjectivities (Bullis and Glaser 1992; D’Eubonne 1974; Hartstock 1985; Plumwood 1993). And in doing so to make some aspects of my research community and what it offers to participants and some of the communities that surround it, more *known*. Commitments to the expression of diversity and *partial, local*, knowing espoused within my feminist practice as well as my research also makes it a stance that seems to me to be wholly compatible with Bell and Taylor’s (2013) recommendation to hold any such ambition lightly and to practice a modest “methodological agnosticism” in doing so (see also Berger 1967; Smart 1973). Enabling simultaneously, avoidance of what many qualitative researchers, feminist and otherwise, view as the “questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity” at the same time as it makes it possible to explore and share situated knowledge from “subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it” (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005: 961). Critical of what she describes as the masculine gaze of objectifying science, Glazebrook (2005) also focuses on a particularly appropriate metaphor for research in a community organized around dance.

“...gynocentric eco-logics...are about listening for rhythms and movements that cannot be fully brought to light for the eye. They hear attentively the voices of others...In what comes, I am listening for resonance, not attacking or defending views” (Glazebrook 2005: 90).

Elaborating on the specific subject of research involved in sharing the resonances of subjective narratives and the kinds of problems rife in such interpretative research, Jules-Rosetta (1978) meantime, refers to the kind of complex cross boundary communication required of qualitative insider researchers that often needs to accommodate a number of different audiences simultaneously. For such researchers, their

“...full community is not just the bounded group of scholars to which the objectivist returns but, instead, a community that includes those from whom he is translating, those encountered in experience. The idioms of circular theory are no longer adequate for a system where mutual feedback must take place. Alfred Schutz (1964) points toward this process of mutual communication when he suggests that the theorist's terms must be translated into layman's language and must be acceptable to him” (Jules Rosetta 1978: 566).

Part of my own “full community” is of course, the academic one that has supported the writing of the thesis and from whom I seek professional endorsement. The other part concerns my lengthy involvement, of some twenty-three years, within a community centered on a cosmology, positioned here as an alternative to both Western theological systems *and* modern secularism. This community, some of which currently exists under the banner of The School of Movement Medicine, seemed like the obvious (for reasons I also discuss in my prologue) place to expand what had, until 2009, when I embarked on a PhD thesis, been very private studies. These studies have related intimately to the subject matter covered in the first section of this thesis, of the ways in which our conceptualization of the sacred influences our experiences of embodiment, gender, well being, relationship with nature and leadership practices.

From the beginning then, I was clear that ethnography as a choice of methodology would enable me to access the wealth of tacit knowledge and life experience I already had of what would become my official research field site (Polyani 1966). It also seemed obvious that I would be similarly able to draw practically from my years as an experienced interviewer in my previous roles as a systemic psychotherapist and a shamanic practitioner. It would only become equally clear to me much later that I have in fact also been in the habit of using writing itself as a form of enquiry and discovery for many years. This was a realization that would eventually become key in the problem of how to present my data in ways that nurtured and supported both my own voice and the voices

of members in my community in a way that honours the deeply personal material that people were willing to share with me, enabling an ethical stance around knowing that is compatible with my personal politics. And at the end of the day produces writing that combines analysis, communication and creativity in a way that I hope is also reasonably enjoyable and interesting to read (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005). Bearing all this in mind I endeavor to navigate at least some of these complexities without undermining my academic credibility, compromising the integrity of those I have researched or manifesting the fragmentation of a “split identity” requiring the denial of my personal experience (Bell and Taylor 2013: 9).

What follows represents my attempt to cohere these concerns, along with an epistemology and theory that may function together as a working methodological framework. I begin with a discussion on ethnography, insider research and postmodernism. This is followed with a section on interviewing as a form of communion with the interviewee - an approach aligned to the feminist notion of reciprocity. For in attempting “to challenge hegemonic practices of traditional, hierarchical research” feminists adopt the position that both researcher and researched come to their encounter as equal participants and that such a meeting should ideally benefit both parties, rather than function as any kind of exercise in colonial exploitation (Huisman 2008: 374; Oakley 1981). I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of writing for what Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St Pierre (2005) describe as (CAP) creative, analytical process, ethnography.

### **Ethnography - learning from, standing with**

The roots of ethnographic research are commonly traced back to two distinct and separate traditions. These are, the ‘classical’ tradition of anthropology represented by Evans-Pritchard, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown in Britain and Boas in America and the work of the Chicago School in sociology.<sup>30</sup> The founding leaders of my research community, one of whom originally trained as an anthropologist herself, were apprenticed to Gabrielle Roth for eighteen years. Roth who was first a professional dancer, worked closely with

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<sup>30</sup> “Shulamit Reinharz (1992) however, documents the earlier contributions of women such as Harriet Martineau, Alice Fletcher, Helen Merrell Lynd, and Faith Williams to the advent of fieldwork and the foundations of ethnographic method” (Buch and Staller 2007: 189).

anthropologist Gregory Bateson at the Esalen Institute in California in the 1970's. Bateson was married to Margaret Mead, who in turn, was one of Boas' most renowned students. Within shamanism, part of the practice disseminated by Roth, ancestral lineage is often viewed as the root system to the tree, or the grandparents and parents to the child (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009). It has therefore, been interesting for me to discover more about the intellectual (and practical) lineage that connects some of the practices within my research community with the research process of this thesis.

As an impassioned advocate of equality, Boas himself opposed both the scientific racism and evolutionary theories of culture prevalent in his day that promoted the superiority of both the white man and the organizational systems associated with colonialism. The job of the anthropologist for Boas was neither to rank other cultures nor assist in their domination (Boas 1887/1922; Moore 2009; Stocking 1974). Rather, he believed that by relating to them as potential teachers, anthropology might enrich our understanding of how culture in general, including our own, conditions its members to relate to and interact with the world around them. This is a commitment I follow in my own approach to ethnographic work, which I hope will also complement the cultural analysis of the sacred offered in the first section of this thesis.

While Boas may not have begun his research as a political act perhaps his own experiences of discrimination as a Jew sensitized him to prejudice. A German Jewish immigrant based in America, he spent a great deal of energy creating extensive, painstaking ethnography of some of the Alaskan Inuit and Canadian First Nation tribes, as well as later in his career, studies of immigrants to America. In both instances advocating racial respect and equality, in an atmosphere far from sympathetic to such a viewpoint (Boas 1928/62; Stocking 1974). Whatever else Boas was not a flagrant representative of colonial supremacy. The respectful attitude towards life worlds very different from his own, evident in his ethnographic work, has much to recommend it to other endeavors to generate "critical conversations about democracy, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3).

Acknowledging that the subjects of both colonization and anthropological endeavors are immensely complex arena's, researching Boas suggested to me that at least some of his inheritance has been disseminated, or seeded if you

like, in the fields of at least some of those even loosely associated with him. Indeed, I see similar commitments to Boas' to uphold the value of cultural organization that lies outside modernity within the community I am researching. Evidenced for example, in the financial and political engagement of the Movement Medicine community to work with the Achuar and Sapara people in South America in their ongoing struggle to protect their forests and way of life. The Movement Medicine community, of course, like most, if not all contemporary communities, does not stand outside of the many contradictions of a globalized cultural and the financial markets associated with it. I have shared some of my own criticisms of Roth herself and her organization in my prologue, which I saw at the time as too rooted in the 'market' for personal growth and too little in social responsibility, just as I also attempt to explore similar complexities evident in the data I have collected. Nor do I intend to imply that there is any kind of inevitable linear causality at work, or straight through line from Boas to my research community, writing in any case from within the framework provided by a feminist spirituality that looks for interconnection rather than causal chains. I suggested in my introduction to this thesis that modern organizational systems and the leaderships associated with them have been and are responsible for enormous environmental devastation and significant social injustice. The community at the heart of this ethnography is, for me, an attempt to translate certain aspects of organizational systems from pre-modern cultures in ways that hold some potential to lead us towards newly constellated symbolic and practical organizational systems and narratives. This is very much a work in progress within one specific community, rife, as interviewees point out, with political, economic and social complexities and contradictions. It exists as an example of what I would describe as a progressive New Religious Movement. Nor realistically, is it likely, at least in the immediate future, to have universal application (Puttick 1997). This work stands, nevertheless, as an ethnographic enquiry into what might be learned from an academic study of it.

### **Home and Abroad**

What anthropologists such as Boas name as ethnographic exploration, social scientists tend to label as field research. Whilst the first was, as already alluded to, often conducted against a colonial backdrop that required information about

those it had conquered, the second has tended to be more focused upon marginal social groups at home - also as a way of studying the ways in which social structure and environments, both physical and cultural, influence human behaviour (Aull Davies 1998; Brewer 2000). Environments, which, as Van Maanen remarks, in *Tales of the Field*, "...display the intricate ways individuals and groups, understand, accommodate, and resist a presumably stable order" (Van Maanen 1988; xiv). Perhaps even holding the capacity "to denaturalize taken-for-granted aspects of their own social world, often revealing the unseen workings of power or shared social norms" (Buch and Staller 2007: 189).

Such power structures often mean that the framing of what constitutes a problem or an appropriate subject of research is, in and of itself a political issue and researchers may well be influenced by their own subjective experience of problems. Not all experiences, or attributes, for example, have been or are accorded equal status in either the public and private arenas. Devalued as the profane, women, body and nature are examples discussed at some length in chapter three. I seek in a very small way to address this within this work. And indeed a number of those whose words are woven into this ethnography directly named having their voice heard as a motivation for volunteering to be interviewed (Clark 2010). This investigation of what might otherwise be regarded as marginal or peripheral experiences involving gender, body, nature and the sacred, in relation to leadership, is therefore, intended to be a contribution to encouraging reflexive process about change on a collective level. As an approach that reveals just some of the ways that social processes are nested within a multitude of interconnected contexts, it also has the potential to develop some understanding, particularly on the level of subjective experience, of how agency and structure are inextricably interwoven (Hammersley 2003; Potter 2003). For in documenting these experiences we may discover that the "most unremarkable, banal and taken-for-granted features of existence often mask the deepest and most pervasive presence of society" (Pollner 1991:379). Indeed in discussing the colonial history of research (one example of which would be the ways in which shamanic realities have sometimes been seen in the past) Denzin and Lincoln (2005) are at pains to point out that one of the distinct advantages of qualitative approaches to research is its potential to encourage the inclusion of democratic dialogue with

research participants, as a way of giving voice to precisely those kinds of experiences that may otherwise be silenced.

### **Intimacy, insiders and reflexivity**

Whether ethnographic interpretation and field research are produced through the observations and voice of the researcher, the voices of those in the field sites, or a combination of the two, as is common, both advocate that intimate acquaintance with the community to be studied is the way to provide such a study. Hammersley (1990) has defined ethnography as research typified by an avoidance of unnatural, experimental circumstances created by the researcher; characterized by flexible and unstructured data collection, mainly based on first-hand observation and participation in order to encourage openness to what the researcher actually experiences; small scale study often of one setting or group, (as is offered here) and the attribution of meaning based on the interaction between researcher and researched (Hammersley 1990: 1-2). While Ortner points out that ethnography “has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self - as much of it as possible - as the instrument of knowing” (Ortner 1995: 173).

Knowledge gained through the use of the self in this way, variously described as ‘subjective soaking’, ‘written representation of culture’ or an ‘emic perspective’, generally involving the ability to develop an insider perspective, is seen as key (Ellen 1984; van Maanen 1988; Fetterman 1998; see also Brewer 2000). Taking an aesthetic stance which emphasizes the sensory, intuitive realms, Schwartz and Jacobs suggest that “there is something vital that one does not know if one has no access to the inside – that is, if (we are) unable to reconstruct the world as it looks, sounds, and smells to those within it” (Schwartz and Jacobs 1979:2).

Ethnographic researchers often report having to work very hard to develop the levels of knowledge which allow them to understand and reconstruct the cultural environments encountered in their field sites, as evidenced by the another quote from Schwartz and Jacobs who refer to the “messy, tortuous business of learning to see the world of an individual or group from the inside” (Schwartz and Jacobs 1979: 2). Writing about the emotional stresses associated with ethnography Coffey (1999) comments that isolation and marginality are often named as potential pitfalls for ethnographers, who also need to ensure that they



maintain their critical perspective upon their research subject (See also Kenny 2008).

I was however, what one scholar refers to as an intimate insider or native ethnographer from the very beginning of my research process (Taylor 2011; see also Buch and Staller 2007). Costley, Elliot and Gibbs suggest that there can be distinct advantages to being in such a position. “As an insider, you have expertise and experience that gives you an advanced level of knowledge of issues in your area of practice” (Costley, Elliot and Gibbs 2010: 6; see also Taylor 2011; Young 2010). Indeed,

“...the advantages of conducting research from this position have been well documented...Such advantages include: deeper levels of understanding afforded by prior knowledge; knowing the lingo or native speak of field participants and thus being ‘empirically literate’ (Roseneil, 1993); closer and more regular contact with the field; more detailed consideration of the social actors at the centre of the cultural phenomenon making access to, and selection of, research participants easier and better informed; quicker establishment of rapport and trust between researcher and participants; and more open and readily accessible lines of communication between researchers and informants due to the researcher’s continuing contact with the field” (Taylor 2011; see also Clark 2010).

Bell and Taylor (2013) much of whose work focuses specifically on spirituality and organization, take the alternate view, that insider research in the particular context of faith communities does not necessarily make for better research.

Writing in, “*Uncertainty in the study of belief: the risks and benefits of methodological agnosticism*”, they argue that it has a number of pitfalls attached to it, not least of which is the valorization of research conducted from a believer’s perspective (Fornaciari and Lund-Dean 2001; Lips-Wiersma 2003). They make the point that it is perfectly possible to engage in valid study of religion and spirituality solely in terms of its social, material practices, as the work of sociologists like Weber (1965) demonstrates. In addition they suggest that insufficient reflexivity on behalf of insiders runs the very real danger of “leaving researchers open to the charge that they are seeking to smuggle their commitment to religiosity or spirituality into their scholarship” (Bell and Taylor 2013: 8; see also Segal, 1999). Conversely however, they comment that a secular (as opposed to a sacred) philosophy of knowledge merely flips the coin by insisting that an outsider (truly scientific and objective) position is the only one with credible intellectual authority.

The statement within this particular one of their papers that has most potency for me however, is their challenge to the construction of “a binary division

between belief and non-belief" (Bell and Taylor 2013; 7). My own lived experience of many of my own beliefs is one of changing, changeable ambiguity (Meyerson and Scully 1995). Sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes maybe. This also corresponds to ideas in process philosophy and employed by Christ (2003) in her work on a feminist re-imagining of the sacred. Which is the suggestion that there is nothing static or fixed in a universe that is in any case essentially unknowable in its entirety, especially across time. An idea that also equates with Glazebrook's (2000) notion that all knowledge is historically situated and therefore constantly evolving and changing, rather than universally fixed and unchanging (See also Heidigger 1959; 1982). At any given point in time and space knowledge is only ever partial and fragmented, which she views as of particular relevance in the light of Western science's and technology's failures to address increasing environmental crisis (see also Frodeman 2000).

As someone who initially began inquiring into spiritual belief systems outside the frames of Western scientific rationality, in response to puzzling embodied experiences, I have (over some thirty years) collected what I personally consider to be an considerable (anecdotal and tacit) body of "evidence" that there may well be more going on in the world than Western science currently understands or is able to explain, even partially. As Jules Rosetta (1978) points out in her study of the African science of prophecy, some of these same kinds of experiences are much more explicable within other frames of reference. Is such explanation of interest to me? Absolutely. Have I constructed meaning out of my own personal experiences? Again, absolutely. Am I unreflective about my own meaning making. Sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes maybe. Awareness of the fallibility of any meaning making, including my own has been considerably deepened through my practice as a therapist. Many years of access to the inner worlds of those engaging with psychotherapy, an effort in which crisis tends to highlight uncertainty, have led me to the understanding that this inability to grasp the totality, or what psycho-therapy refers to as the unconscious, in any situation, is an inescapable aspect of being human, whether we are in roles designated expert (researcher/therapist/leader/scientist) at any given moment or not (Kostera 2012). As well as it being unlikely that any individual, organization, system or

society will have access to a fully comprehensive awareness of the world that surrounds it, our relationships to what we consider that we do know is also perhaps far more fluid and even obscure than we may be willing to acknowledge. Luhmann (1998) even goes as far as suggesting that all meaning making, successful or otherwise, might be seen as our attempts to deal effectively with events and experiences that we might otherwise experience as random.

Comparing Western and African science, Jules-Rosetta (1978) suggests that objective conventional Western scientific methods, in seeking after the ability to gain prediction of and control over its surroundings, hopes to avoid being at the mercy of a random world. Whilst simultaneously sharing the inability to possess all-encompassing knowledge, she suggests, that they actually exist in a similar frame to any other system also interested in divining, prophesying or predicting the future. In other words, that all knowledge systems and beliefs, be they personal or institutional, scientific or spiritual, are attempts to organize ourselves in ways that we hope will provide some form of stability for us. Jules-Rosetta (1978) who bridges both Western and African scientific systems, suggests that in advertising itself as purely conceptual and unemotional, Western science is guilty of both failing to examine its own unconscious assumptions and perhaps even of refusing to acknowledge the limits to its own embodied (rather than transcendent and universal) knowledge. For researchers interested in legitimizing the contributions to be made by engagement with a multiplicity of knowledge systems, her argument is particularly persuasive. For all that it too, may be engaged in the pursuit of prediction, the African science she describes seems nonetheless to demonstrate more open and less dismissive approaches to the world than many modern Western scientific approaches. Just as she also points out that even Western science is not,

“...free of the communal enforcement which was indicated as an aspect of divination and prophecy. What we take for granted in our mundane reasoning about events is often learned so subtly that we hardly realize that preconceptions are there. These very preconceptions are expanded and transformed into grounds of inference.

The circle of proof expands and is able to embrace commonly known facts as the kernel of unconditional truths. The theories embracing these facts are established and reinforced by a community of scholars who, like the diviner's village and the prophet's congregation, censure taboos and transgressions. This community sustains its own faith in objectivism by referring to it as evidenced in such "virtues" as open-mindedness, neutrality, validity, and logical proof. These attributes mask a theory that

is not potent enough to reach the stage of evaluation, afraid to attempt a return to its own preconceptions, and too weak to approach other forms of thought without the threat of chaos once the logical circle is broken” (Jules-Rosetta 1978: 564; see also Lugones and Spelman 1993).

Which suggests, that to be human, no matter what belief or knowledge systems we employ to organize our thinking, feeling and social structures, we are all still subject to the limits of those self-same beliefs and systems, all of which have their own taboos and rules, some conscious and some unconscious, where the unconscious quite simply represents those aspects of life of which we are unaware or even unwilling to accept (Kostera 2012). Each of us sees a combination of that which we have been conditioned to see by our communities and a blend of beliefs we have chosen to adopt from those we have encountered in our various communities. Distancing itself from universalism, much qualitative research for its part is quite comfortable with embracing such partiality, contingency and instability, arguing that such an approach even helps to guard against the kind of totalizing arrogance that may accompany universalism. Indeed the process philosophy<sup>31</sup> outlined in Christ’s (2003) work argues that any “belief in infallible revelation is incompatible with the fragmentariness of all knowledge that comes through human bodies” (Christ 2003: 43; see also Cobb 1965; Hartsthorne 1984; North Whitehead 1971). As someone who has developed the habit of traveling between the worlds (of Western rationality and the shamanic paradigm) over a considerable number of years I have become well-accustomed to both the emotional and cognitive chaos involved in having both life and my own choices, challenge, deconstruct and reconstruct my own preconceptions and assumptions on a regular basis. I explain in my prologue that at least some of this was, at the beginning of my journey, largely unintended, at least consciously, but rather the result of a set of disconcerting life experiences that I needed to find ways to make sense of. Bell

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<sup>31</sup> It may be noted that Plumwood (1993) in particular has criticized process philosophy on the grounds that in its moves to restore value to both human and non-human (all) bodies, it is guilty of a reductionism that erases important differences, when part of the feminist project is an in-depth commitment to diversity. She is similarly critical of the brand of Goddess pantheism embraced in Christ’s (2003) work. Suggesting that simply reversing the gender of divinity and making it immanent is still not sufficient to prevent the way in which such a model is still predominantly based on humanness, anthropomorphically stripping the ‘other’ of agency, value, independence and self-possession.

and Taylor (2013) discuss agnosticism as a position associated with personal risk in the research process. The laboratory of my own life seems to be quite insistent that emotional risk, as well as changes and challenges to our personal identities and the meaning making processes that accompany this, are unavoidable aspects of being alive, quite regardless of whether one is atheist, agnostic or believer (Bell and Taylor 2013; Christ 2003). Life happens. Change is a constant. We tell stories as we move through it.

One aspect of my current identity is that I am an insider researcher of a faith community. Another is my own perpetual reluctance to erase the ambivalence that I experience as part of being a questioning and critical thinker in all of the contexts in which I find myself (Meyerson and Scully 1995). This also sits alongside my own awareness of the essentially fragmentary nature of so much of what we describe as reality (Glazebrook 2000). This embodied experience is, I think most methodologically compatible with a postmodern commitment to scrutinize all knowledge claims (Richardson and St Pierre 2005). Meantime, researcher or not, I am a human being with my own needs for conceptual stability and a set of beliefs that will at the very least enable me to function day to day, even with limits and false assumptions. This as, I have already suggested is, I believe, a shared human condition. Jules-Rosetta describes the task of ethnographic communication as one that requires a “translucent vocabulary through which all the layers of experience and thought become visible...” (Jules-Rosetta 1978: 555). Debates about authenticity in the interview process (and beyond) aside, many of my interviewees seemed willing to attempt this communication, often employed in narratives about very personal and sometimes difficult subjects (Atkinson and Silverman 1997; Gardner et al 2005). I also often feel a deep frustration in reading texts in which I feel that much that is of interest to me, in terms of researchers motivations, has been obscured from view by the canons of Western science, so that arguments clearly (to me) fueled by emotive beliefs come to pass as so-called scientific truth. Where my own arguments may be fueled in such a way I commit myself to Jules-Rosetta’s (1978) call for translucence. Can I promise to succeed in fulfilling such a commitment? Sometimes, yes. Sometimes, no. Sometimes, maybe.

## Orthodox science and the postmodern challenge

“Objectivity is a logic of reduction, homogenization, manipulation, domination and control, that undermines the possibility of self-criticism on the basis of situated human experience...a philosophy “impregnated with maleness” is falsely influential if it is ‘putting about as universal and absolute what is only male and relative (Boddington 1998: 205-206)...There is a place for the logic of science and technology in our world, but it must share the space with other ways of thinking, and other practices of human engagement with, and as part of nature...Logics that embrace diversity do not articulate themselves in eternal, unchanging truth...they are on the way, evolving, open to revision, in a word, organic” (Glazebrook 2005: 84-89).

I am well aware that qualities such as transparency and intimacy have an inherent tendency to prove challenging to what Giddens (1996) refers to as the “orthodox consensus” that social science should follow in the footsteps of natural science (Giddens 1996: 65-68). In the context of qualitative research in which relationship and interpersonal skill are central to data collection, such qualities can indeed easily be seen as the antithesis of hard science. For as some previous researchers have observed, “real men don’t collect soft data” (Gherardi and Turner 1987 quoted in Phillips et al 2014). I have discussed what I consider to be some of the gender elements of such a challenge in my paper, *Walking between the worlds: from shamanic practice to academic practice in one giant leap* (Young 2011). The very application of the term science to the study of social phenomenon is attributed to the Marquis de Condorcet, writing in the 18th century, who argued that precise language was the key to accessing reliable, valid truth (Levine 1985; see also Richardson and St. Pierre 2005). And indeed, the modern period, which produced this view, has often been characterized by a distinct separation between literature and science, both with very different approaches to the use of language and truth claims.

Part of the opposition to absolutist truth claims and an overall expansion into a multitude of methods and theoretical commitments in research has undoubtedly been represented by what Brewer (2000) refers to as the aggressive assertion of the humanistic model. Within such a view humans are seen as uniquely creative, mysterious and fundamentally different from the subject matter of natural science. Possessing discursive and interpretative ability, people<sup>32</sup> are seen as having the potential to transcend social causality through the exercise

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<sup>32</sup> See Plumwood (1993) for a philosophical discussion of agency and intentionality in the non-human world.

of personal agency, in ways that may be wholly unpredictable within scientific models which preference prediction and control (Lincoln 2010; see also Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Though Plumwood (1993) has offered extensive critique of such hierarchical negation of the 'other', arguing that this kind of viewpoint is, in itself, a product of the master logic, inherent in dualistic frameworks built upon what she terms 'radical exclusion'.

In addition the view that human behaviour is one particular area that may defy such attempts at categorization and control, along with concern to offer respect to its informants, has sometimes led to the valorization of the subjective meanings of informants on their own terms (see also Blumer 1969; Filstead 1970; Hughes 1990; Holstein and Gubrium 1998). Perhaps even more controversially, humanistic 'naturalism' has also been premised on the understanding that an ethnographer is able to present or represent the subjectivity of research participants in an unproblematic way. Such representations or 'reality constructions' have not even always been seen as a prelude to explanation but have often been viewed as the ultimate end project, in and of themselves.

Whether generated by an insider or a visitor attempting to develop an understanding of insider's subjective perspectives, the whole concept of such so-called privileged, "thick description" or what Hammersley (1990) refers to as the naïve realism, produced by the ethnographic approach, has come under sustained criticism from yet another angle, at the hands of postmodernism, a movement which has also witnessed a considerable blurring of writing genres (Hammersley 1990: 5; see also Geertz 1975). Postmodernism, in common with the argument I mounted in my previous section, also posits that since all methodology and methods arise from personal and cultural concepts they can only ever represent partial, contingent accounts of fluid, rather than immutable 'reality'.

"As Dey (1993: 15) argues, all data, regardless of method, is 'produced' by researchers, who are not distant or detached, since they make various choices about research design, location and approach which help to 'create' the data they end up collecting. Thus, it is claimed, all research is subjective, in that it is personal and cultural, including science" (Brewer 2000: 23; Dey 1993; Hammersley 1990; Hammersley & Atkinson 1983).

Laced with what van Maanen refers to as the "personal bias, political goals or moral judgments" of the researchers any claims to definitive accounts are highly

questionable (van Maanen 1988: 23; see also Nandhakumar & Jones 1997). In social contexts in which multiple perspectives and multivocality prevail, based on basic factors such as gender, age, class, race, sexual orientation and religion, to name but a few distinguishing features, there can be no “Immaculate perception” or innocent texts (van Maanen 1988; see also Richardson and St. Pierre 2005). All knowledge is “grounded in human society, situated, partial, local, temporal and historically specific” (Coffey 1999: 11; see also Deetz 2003; Glazebrook 2005). It is produced, as previously observed through the emotional, sexual, embodied, gendered experience of human beings, all of which inevitably influences the end product of a written representation. Clearly associated with challenges to the totalizing and essentialist stance of modernist science and the privileging of fragmented identity, over the concept of an integrated personality, Crotty (1998) nonetheless highlights the fact that such positions exist even in modernity, particularly in the work of Adorno and James. He suggests that far from signifying the end of modernism however, the term postmodernism may rather be seen simply as a theoretical successor of modernism, displaying significant intellectual continuity with what had preceded it. Modernist art and literature too, he points out, simultaneously accepted the arrival of and protested the limitations and constraints of the so-called rational order of industrialized society, begging the question of what attributes may be seen as unique to postmodernism. He argues that the answer is to be found in the context of a globalization and massification of culture that has led to an intellectual elite who are no longer able to maintain faith in their own ability to make an effective contribution to solving the world’s problems.

“The very setting prevents us from launching ourselves into challenging, subversive innovations with anything like a messianic vision for the future or any hope of redeeming the situation. Modernism, Huyssen reminds us, ‘always upheld a vision of a redemption of modern life through culture’. In other words it always offered an alternative. Postmodernism upholds no such vision and offers no such alternative... What, then, of positions that claim to be postmodernist but continue to hold out hope of redemption?” (Crotty 1989:194; see also Milner 1991).

### **Beyond paralysis and despair - local knowledge and the productive embrace of limitation**

What then, indeed? Should we simply succumb to despair, pragmatic paralysis or theoretical solipsism? Or might it be possible to engage in local, contingent approaches which can celebrate generative change without becoming inflated



by totalitarian fervor, or an inflated arrogance about our ability to know on behalf of others, either in text or action? In her defense of what she describes as the real, Spretnak (1999) has argued that much radical (deconstructive) postmodern theory is based on precisely the same set of destructive discontinuities as modernism, which separates nature and humans, body and mind and self and world (See also Field 2000). Her antidote like Glazebrook's (2005) and Turner's (2000) is the transformation of our relationship with the ecological as the foundation of that which is real. Theory based on ecological postmodernism not only recognizes the role of social construction and the difficulties associated with applying generic truth to all human experience, it nonetheless, simultaneously grounds itself in that which we all share. That is, the ultimate recognition and action derived from it, that all human endeavor is utterly dependent on soil, air, and water, along with all the other inhabitants of the Earth communities<sup>33</sup> in which we are irretrievably embedded, for good or ill, in what Bauman (2011) refers to as a post-human environment, in which humanity ceases to be the top of the chain and cannot be exempt from dependency on nature (Plumwood 1993; Stevens 2012; Western 2010). Within a theoretical framework based upon such understanding, grand catch-all narrative is replaced by the notion of ever-changing cosmological unfolding; truth by experience; the world as object by a community of subjects; reality by dynamic relationship; the universal by the particular; a mechanistic universe by cosmological process; nature as opponent by nature as subject; control over the body by trust in it as participant in the web of life; reductionism by complexity; corporate economics by community-based concerns; nation states by a community of communities; God the Father with ultimate mystery and mechanics with ecology (Spretnak 1999). Referring variously to it as constructive or harmonious postmodernism, Spretnak (1999) further suggests that it holds the potential to overcome what she refers to as the ongoing attempts to colonize and control, nature, women and the resources of many indigenous peoples that are simultaneously responsible for so much environmental destruction and social inequity. "Hence to be truly postmodern is

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<sup>33</sup> Though, it ought to be noted that in emphasizing similarities, Plumwood (1993), in particular draws attention to the need to make sure that common cause does not amount to the erasure of difference, or the anthropomorphizing by humans of the non-human worlds.

to be, among other things, *ecological and feminist* - a calling open to all” (Spretnak 1999: 79).

In adopting such a framework I hope to avoid the fundamentalism of a postmodern position that seeks to dismiss all empirical science or a positivism that rejects the importance of hermeneutics (Deetz 2000; Stephens and Guignard 2000; Stevens 2012; Weiss 2000). I suggest instead that both interpretation and attempted definition of causal explanation (meaning making) are inevitable and have something to offer our understanding of the world (Morris 2006; see also Morris 1997). I take the view that there are powerful social, structural influences at work in our lives. Whilst discourse has an enormous influence upon shaping those realities the viewpoint that discourse is all that exists in my view “undervalues the natural world and bypasses economic and political realities” (Morris 2006: 9). In practice, differences associated with the attribution of meaning become the places where diversity, negotiation, conflict and change take place on an embodied, situated level. In addition, any work in the realm of culture and meaning that incorporates the notion of narrative, as my work does, also needs to address some of the problems associated with the overlap between how discourses, or narratives do or do not translate into action and end up being performed within the embodied world. For as Sturdy and Fleming observe, “we cannot simply talk up new worlds” (Sturdy and Fleming 2003: 759; see also Alvesson and Kärreman 2000, 2011). For example, within the community being researched in this section of the thesis, a great deal of attention is given to the language with which we describe our worlds, as well as to the belief that it is possible to change what the Achuar people involved in the community refer to as “The Dream of the North” (environmentally destructive modernity). This is seen as possible through an inseparable and ultimately uncontrollable combination of the embodiment of new symbolic and cultural systems and practical action, designed to lead to greater well-being for all. Clearly, just praying for the safety of the rainforest is unlikely to yield any miracles if, on a daily basis, corporate business activity and government legislation, as is currently the case in Ecuador, outlaws activist opposition.<sup>34</sup> Not only does the community participate

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<sup>34</sup> See <http://amazonwatch.org/>

in spiritual gatherings where such prayers are made, it also embodies its commitments through campaigning politically and raising money for legal representation and struggle.

Awareness of the political and often, very conflict ridden dimensions of such struggles, therefore means that I take the view that we are still living within the constructions and organizational forms known as modernity, albeit in a hypermodern form (Banerjee 2008). Given the modern (and highly ongoing) obsession with the latest saleable commodity, continually throwing away yesterday's outdated invention, we might do well to ask what we might conserve from some of postmodernism's attempts to critique its 'predecessor'. We might even use it to further the goal of accountability, choosing then, to recycle the term 'post' as part of an endeavor to re-imagine leadership, embodiment and the sacred. We might use it to pose the most important question in our shared planetary existence of just what does come after modernity? Indeed as I will argue, the whole issue of who wins the arguments over spirituality and religion, the sacred and the secular, a question also posed by Puttick (1997) in her work on *Women and New Religions*, may well be central in how leadership and well being within the global community looks in the future. If as I have suggested in the first section of this thesis, cosmology as narrative exerts a huge influence on the ways organizational practices are structured, in depth examination of the sacred/secular debates that have become so popular in leadership and organization studies and the sociology of religion in recent years, have an important contribution to our understanding of that future (Heelas 2008; Sorensen et al 2012).

However local and contingent, human and flawed, the ethnographic study that follows in the coming chapters, is, it seems to me a description of a community experimenting with planting seeds out of which some new stories are being grown. Stories that enable re-visioning and therefore experimentation with embodying alternative cultural narratives - simultaneously ancient and contemporary - about renewed relationships to the web of life within which we (leaders, followers, agnostics, atheists or fervent believers) are all, irretrievably and unavoidably embedded. Like any stories they will be appeal to some and be anathema to others.

## **Interview as communion**

I turn now to an examination of one of the most commonly employed tools in qualitative research - the one I use alongside ethnography in this thesis – the interview (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Enosh and Buchbinder 2005; Ezzy 2010; Hesse-Biber and Levy 2007; Jarvinen 2000). As an ex-psychotherapist and sometime ‘alternative healer’ I have spent years of my life ‘interviewing’ people about ‘problems’. As I intimated in the prologue to this thesis, I did not leave these experiences behind when I began to work as a researcher but rather see myself as transferring learning and experience from one context into another. In my past I leaned towards what is referred to as a person-centered view of therapeutic work based on the belief that expertise resides with the ‘clients’ and that ‘learning’ within the interview context is one of mutual exchange (Casement 1985). Writing in *Narratives in Social Science Research*, Czarniawska (2004), following Kvale (1996) has suggested that such dialogue form has the potential to become an ideal model in a shared search for knowledge and understanding. Particularly in the earlier phases of my interviews, as I simultaneously engaged in processing some of my previous experiences in an earlier incarnation of an organization I had left and then returned to, many of my interviews naturally followed this course.

Historically I have tended to be interested in the embodied and emotional experience of interviewees, alongside their social circumstances. My focus, on how we might develop a relationship in which, together, we might attempt to change that which the interviewee reports as causing suffering or problems. For me, this implies co-construction, dynamic process and an understanding that I will both influence and be influenced by the meaning making process at hand, often on an emotional level (Glazebrook 2005; Goethe 1981). Such perspective also suggests that ‘truth’ and knowledge construction are both emergent, dynamic and subjective processes, as well as, sometimes, conflict ridden (Ferguson 1994).

It has been my lived experience (Heron and Reason 2001; Gagliardi 1996; Taylor and Hansen 2005) that the stories we tell others and ourselves, both on the micro, personal level and the macro, social level, (which are in any case deeply interwoven) matter profoundly in terms of what we experience, both individually and collectively (Palmer 1992). I work from the understanding that

either as therapists and 'healers' (amongst whom I would include the medical profession) or researchers and producers of text we are 'deeply implicated' in the stories, which we help to weave (Rhodes 2000: 511; see also Langellier 1989). In this sense then we do not so much unearth the truth but help to write it. "Meaning" as Ferguson remarks,

"...is not something that waits to be found, but is the outcome of negotiations among various interpretative codes" (Ferguson 1994: 87).

Taking this into account we might see interviews as stories that arise from a uniquely situated network, encompassing interviewer and interviewee as well as their wider context. If we accept that context will always shape that which emerges from it we may be more able to accept that storylines are at least "partially predetermined" by the beliefs and frameworks of all participants (Gubrium and Holstein 1998: 175; see also Silverman 1993). Specifically in the context of this thesis, storylines simultaneously influenced by both modernity and a learning environment engaged in teaching shamanic practices.

Of course the roles of therapist and client, or researcher and interview participant, can also be perceived as abounding with asymmetrical power. Historically I have aspired to the kind of model provided by one of Freud's little known students, Ferenczi, who suggested that the analyst should aspire to be an empathic co-participant, rather than a neutral observer, a position that led to his break with Freudian principles (Masson 1992). It is not my experience either as a recipient or a giver of what I would describe as therapeutic attention that "empathy is a conceit" (Czarniawska 1998: 275). Rather I take the view that understanding and explaining are one and that understanding is at least partly an emotional activity (Bourdieu 1999: 613). This is similar to Glazebrook's (2005) account of Ravindra's (1991; 2000) work on scientific enquiry as a path of spiritual transformation which rather than calling for the abandonment of science suggests its re-balancing in ways that would move us closer to a practical ethic of care.

"Ravindra calls for science and technology themselves to be transformed from destructive forces into spiritual paths that lead towards wholeness, harmony and acceptance in accord with the principle of non-violation (*ahimsa*), toward spiritual healing through a reconciliation with nature that overcomes the need for subjugation and control" (Glazebrook 2005: 78).

Such an approach is also echoed in Ezzy's work on interviewing as an embodied emotional performance in which the interviewer attempts to

commune with, rather than conquer the interviewee (Ezzy 2010). Whilst Bourdieu (1999) describes a 'successful' process at this level as involving a two-way communication in which the interviewer must be emotionally present and actively listening to the cues provided by the interviewee.

"These signs of feedback, which E. A. Schegloff calls "response tokens", such as "yes", "right", "of course", "oh!", as well as the approving nods, looks, smiles and all the "information receipts", that are bodily or verbal signs of attention, interest, approval, encouragement and recognition, are the conditions for a continuing exchange that flows well...Placed at the right moment, they signal the interviewer's intellectual and emotional participation" (Bourdieu 1999: 610).

Indeed he goes as far as suggesting that interviewing may be approached as a kind of meditative, spiritual exercise in which we attempt to move beyond our habitual ways of half listening to others, in which we attempt to forget our self and offer loving understanding to our interviewee. Although, as both he and other scholars also point out this is often dependent upon a symmetry of assumptions, which are not always available, as in examples offered by the interviewees of perpetrators of domestic violence and members of fascist groups (Bourdieu 1999; Enosh and Buchbinder 2005).

Within my own interviewing career there have been (from a dualistic perspective) successes and failures in this endeavor to generate fluid and empathic exchanges with others. My own beliefs, influenced by the same kind of feminist spirituality that I discussed earlier, tend towards the view that life is inherently mysterious, suggesting therefore that it is nigh on impossible for us to truly discern what might constitute failure and what success (see also Kriger and Seng 2005). Nonetheless most of us tend to have preferences for some experiences over others and we usually decide how to label our experiences using the medium of our body and feelings (Yaklef 2010). In practice it often seems fairly clear whether I have adopted an attitude of conquest or communion, though of course, there are grey areas and unknowns whenever we are in interaction with others. Sometimes, though, we 'know' because we perceive, the movements, tones and faces of others and are able to make meaning without recourse to conscious interpretative process because it is often visible and accessible through the others body, as well as immediately accessible to us through the emotional realms<sup>35</sup> (Engelsrud 2005; Gallagher

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<sup>35</sup> See also Steven Johnstone's, (2004) *Mind Wide Open*, for a scientific treatment of human communication

2005). The body and everything around it may be seen as already existing in a state of intimacy that dissolves the notion of a rigid subject/object boundary (Yakhlef 2010; see also Bigwood 1991; Field 2000; Young 1990). Indeed the very notion of subject and object might be seen to form the foundation stones of patriarchal science, based upon autonomy and separation rather than connection and interdependence (Gomes and Kanner 1995; see also Plumwood 1993; Warren 1987).

“To sustain its sense of independence, such a subject is always liberating itself from its bonds as though from bondage. Intimacy, emotions, and the influence of the Other arouse its worst anxieties, for somehow it must keep relation external to its own being, its “self”. However much the ego feels single and apart, this feeling may represent not truth but denial. It is less precise to call this ego separate than separative, implying an activity or intention rather than any fundamental state of being” (Keller 1986: 8-9).

Feminist research aims to acknowledge dependence, interdependence and reciprocity as innate aspects of all life (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Glazebrook 2005 Plumwood 1993), in which the interviewing process may be constituted as a relational process based upon equality and connectedness. In the attempt to avoid the domination which might be seen to lie at the heart of more hierarchical methods and concepts such an approach is seen as having the capacity to increase power and vitality for all participants, both in the present embodied time in which it is performed, as well as in the larger web, as it contributes to more extended conversations. And whilst it brings awareness of power dynamics as an inherent commitment to the responsible use of power it also seeks to make ‘access’ to information a two way process which benefits the larger project of change and social justice, rather than simply being about the extraction of information.

So I arrived in my role as researcher with a lengthy relationship with interviews as a way in which to explore and indeed, potentially change, meanings for all parties involved and in assessing those processes through my corporeality as well as my cognition. Stepping into a role as a research interviewer would involve bringing old skills and learning new ones. Within this research process, just as in the past, sometimes I felt like I had communed with a co-participant in a shared process. At other times I wrestled with my own inability to explain what I meant or to comprehend what was being said to me. I also experienced a whole gamut of emotional response ranging from feeling profoundly moved to occasionally feeling irritated and judgmental as well as feeling concern for and

about the well being of interviewees (Enosh and Buchbinder 2005; see also Jarvinen 2000). I acknowledge this at least partly to attempt to incorporate the messiness and shadows of real human interaction, rather than presenting a sanitized version which attempts to present interview transcriptions as a mirror for reality rather than a construction which the interviewer both influences and is influenced by (Kostera 2012; Rhodes 2000).

As I shared in my prologue, partly via Theodore Roszak's (1978) words in *Person/Planet – The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society*, a career of interviewing has seen me bear witness to a great many of the ways in which people experience harm in our world. This has undeniably constructed my view of modernity in very particular ways. Working with the social problems of domestic violence and child sexual abuse, as well as many other forms of what Roszak describes as "pathology", for over a decade has indeed been a rich source of tacit knowledge about the society in which I live (Polanyi 1966/83; Strati 1992; Young 2010). It has also had a number of consequences. It has deepened my commitment to try to embody working practices like those I describe above, in the hope of helping to generate mutual empowerment with others which, in turn, contains the potential to create a constructive ripple effect. It has also strengthened the view that we are in need of far-reaching change as a culture, if we are to have any hope of addressing wider issues relating to social justice, environmental sustainability and human fulfillment. Training as a systemic therapist I was originally excited by the idea that the lenses we use to view pathology could be widened in ways that include the context of the individual who is identified as owning the problem. Systemic (family) therapy seeks to analyze family communication patterns and circumstances, as well as some of the wider systems that people may be involved with, such as social services, schools, judiciary and police. In the end I grew intensely frustrated by a therapeutic method, which is itself located within systems of social control and finds it hard to address the more 'meta' levels of gender inequality, law, economy, consumerism, technology, community and environment. In many ways this is the sociocultural level that Yakhlef identifies with Marxist analysis when he suggests that,

"...self-consciousness arises in relationship with others and with artifacts, in desire, in opposition, conflict, struggle for power and identity" (Yakhlef 2010).

Indeed it has been my own growing awareness of what I perceive (in both this



context and others) as a growing crisis in well being that led to the desire to share what I have learned in the broader realms of writing and publication.

Ultimately however, if I am wholly truthful, it was my emotional world, as an embodied experience, which led to my need to explore a different context for 'interviewing' and the generative change that interests me, although as I explained in the opening to this chapter, this did not unfold as a rational plan (Todes 2001). Merleau-Ponty (1962/2005) has described our ability to respond to life in a generative way, as 'skillful coping', rooted in an innate bodily desire to experience harmony. Yakhlef suggests that we are "led to act, know and learn merely thanks to the body's tendency to achieve equilibrium, which...temporary though it may be, functions as a...ground for further exploration" (Yakhlef 2010: 417; see also Rouse 2005). In truth I was searching for a way of exploring well-being on a more equal and harmonious ground with participants than would ever be possible within a legal statutory role, in which I also functioned as an agent of social control. Having worked in an environment which demanded the routine employment of what Starhawk (1987) calls 'power-over', (i.e. having a legal obligation to take certain actions in some circumstances, whether I agreed on a personal level with that course of action or not) I looked forward to experiencing a way of being in a different kind of relationship with interviewees as colleagues.

### **Written Representations as Creative, Analytical Process**

I intend to describe some of the practical details of data collection in appendix one, whilst the chapter that follows offers some contextualization of the field in which my empirical research was conducted. For now though, as I close this first chapter I propose to discuss the written representation of the data that I have collected. From well before embarking on my Ph.D. thesis, whenever the world has troubled me I have written about and through the problems I need to engage with. Far from being a technical exercise, writing often functions as witness to the deepest recesses of my personal identity. Launching myself into academia as a mature student, in spite of a family background steeped in academia, writers and writing, I felt, initially, deeply intimidated by the demands I found placed on me. The textual world I encountered often seemed to me designed to obscure rather than illuminate. I struggled with the politics associated with the privatization of higher education underway during my early

arrival and the general academic environment in which I now found myself (Young 2011). I felt most resonance with the writers who included their emotional world in their writing and presentations, as this often felt closest to my lived experience and reduced my own sense of alienation. I was attracted to the work of those who seemed intent on breaking creative ground in academic writing and simultaneously aware of an academic hierarchy that often seemed to jealously guard such freedoms as privileges to be dispensed by those at the upper reaches of the profession (Gray and Sinclair 2006; Kenny 2008; Phillips 2014; Sparkes 2007; Sullivan 2005).

I was also deeply gratified in 2013 in the midst of agonizing over how to present my data to encounter the work of Richardson and St. Pierre (2005). This was on account of two factors. The first was my own desire to write in ways that were readable and emotionally engaging, as well as enabling space for my own creative process. The second was that I found validation in their work for how my own relationship to writing actually is rather than how I felt it and I *should be* in order to conform to external set of rules which feel counter-intuitive to my lived, embodied experience and to the way I want to experience writing (Phillips et al 2014). That is, writing as thinking aloud, as analysis on the hoof, as a messy, entangled and sometimes painful process of discovery, in and of itself. Writing about what matters to me and that I feel is socially relevant, personally and collectively. Indeed reading Richardson's (2005) affirmation of the need to demystify academic writing led me to thinking about how I have actually experienced the process of writing this thesis. First drafts of chapters as the basis for discussion, disagreement and inspirational educational input. The co-creative process of work with supervisors that means that this work inevitably contains voices other than mine, or my interview participants and has been a process of being changed and influenced as well, I hope, of bringing my own influences to bear. The painful, frustrating, emotions associated with this, as well as what I have sometimes experienced as the demand for conformity to disciplinary procedures, alongside feelings of exhilaration, satisfaction and fulfillment. Political conflict, as re-writes and editorial commentary become the site of struggles between different world-views and understandings, products of the process that unfolds (not always harmoniously) where there are two or more (writers) gathered together. Fear of

the exercise of power in ways that may not benefit me, in the awareness of PhD's as creations that incur community blessing or censure, as was the case with Irigaray, who was fired from her job at the Lacan Institute the day after her second doctorate, *Speculum* was published (Whitford 1991).

Indeed, the same kind of postmodern challenges to all method which opens them up to scrutiny and critique also validates writing (and language) itself as a site of struggle, wherein language means different things to different audiences, and can, never, quite close off meanings once and for all. Within such a framework interpretation is seen as inevitably influenced by power struggles and competing discourses. The very belief that "noise-free rational communication...that can lead to consensus is possible, or even desirable, since consensus often erases difference" is undermined on a foundational level (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005: 968). Discussing the issue of multi-vocality and diversity, Richardson further suggests that the use of two lenses, science and art, simultaneously and the blurring of genres, generates new potentials and possibilities for academia, including, academic writing that is less excluding, more accessible and engaging. Advocating a social science art form that supports writing as both creative and analytical expression has, she argues, the additional advantage of enabling academic writing to become a more democratic vehicle of expression for individuals and communities who have, historically been excluded. Given that research concerns itself with expanding our understanding, lenses such as class, race and gender offer us specific opportunities to look at the world from those particular vantage points. And as Richardson points out,

"The more this happens, the more everyone will profit. The implications of race and gender would be stressed, not because it would be "politically correct" but rather because race and gender are axes through which symbolic and actual worlds have been constructed. Members of non-dominant worlds know that...The blurring of humanities and the social sciences would be welcomed...because the blurring coheres more...with the life sense and learning style of so many. This new qualitative community could, through its theory, analytical practices, and diverse membership, reach beyond academia and teach us all about social injustice and methods for alleviating it" (Richardson and St Pierre 2005: 964-65).

Creative analytic ethnography then is a form that replaces universal, disembodied narratives with work that acknowledges its role in exercising power and actively constructing contested meaning. Richardson (2005) suggests that readers may assess such work in terms of substantive contribution; aesthetic

merit; reflexivity and impact. Does it contribute to our understanding of social life? Is it grounded in perspectives from social science? Is it credible? On an aesthetic level does it invite interpretative responses? Is it complex? Is it artistically pleasing? Does it demonstrate self-awareness and ethical accountability to those it has studied? Does it communicate - emotionally and intellectually? Does it move the readers to further reflection, research or action? Does it lead us to question why some meanings prevail over others or how such meanings may be changed? In this sense it seeks to move beyond a narrowly defined definition of relevance, as “a self-serving enclosure to preserve the rationale sustaining a central core of privileges” in service of overcoming the potential inertia of research methods that may act to reinforce the marginalization of “knowledge that may be required for managing within changing ideological conditions in a global economy” (Contardo and Wesley 2004: 225-226).

In acknowledging the complexity that accompanies language, narratives and communication, as embodied, emotional process, Richardson (2005) also proposes that we dispense with the conventional notion of triangulation altogether, offering instead the metaphor of a crystal, so that what we see depends upon the angle of our approach. With this in mind, we are liberated to play and to take pleasure, in our writing. If we take her challenge to value becoming as much as being (a something or someone) we might even begin to re-balance the relationship between process and product. That said, we continue now with the business of generating product – in a chapter seeking to contextualize The School of Movement Medicine within the wider field of the New Religious Movements that have emerged in Europe over the last few decades.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The School of Movement Medicine**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter opens with a brief discussion of the connections between religion and society. I then specifically set out to contextualize The School of Movement Medicine within the sphere of New Religious Movements that have arisen since the Second World War. Acknowledging the diversity involved in these realms, I explore some of the values it holds as one group within a larger constellation of those practicing neo-pagan and ne-shamanic religions. In particular these include gender equality and interest in immanence rather than transcendence. I then discuss the role of the shaman as a leader in traditional settings, before fast forwarding to the contemporary role of the founders of The School, in relation to modern challenges, facing their followers. This is followed, by a section describing the overall culture of the organization, before concluding with the inclusion of the specific importance of the role of the body in motion in the spiritual practices of the community.

Morris (2006) has suggested that study of religion needs, above all else, to embed it within just such specific community contexts - because first and foremost a socio-cultural system, it must therefore, be examined bearing this in mind. Offering a useful definition of religion in general, he describes it variously as, “ a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life – problems relating to human mortality, suffering and injustice; the need to infuse human life with meaning and intellectual coherence; and the crucial importance of upholding moral precepts...” (Morris 2006: 1; see also Yinger 1970). He also elaborates on the significant attributes which mark out religious activity as including, ritual practices, an ethical code, a body of doctrines, beliefs, scriptures or oral tradition, patterns of social interaction focused around a ritual congregation, church or community; a hierarchy of religious specialists; a tendency to create a dichotomy between the sacred and the profane and a culture which generates spiritual mystical experiences (see also Moss Kantor 1968).

Whilst certain artifacts and practices may be viewed as separate/sacred in the kinds of ways I have discussed in the first section of this thesis, religion itself can never be separate from its cultural context. It is therefore intrinsically linked

to wellbeing, gender and leadership, as well as economics and politics (Grint 2010; Taylor 2009). A point that is also made in *Religion and Organization: A Critical Review of Current Trends and Future Directions*, discussing the Marxist perspective that views engagement with religion as a form of alienation and argues that, "it is not possible to understand the religious dimension of social life as separate from the economic" (Tracey 2012: 4). Whilst this argument undoubtedly has validity, Tracey (2012) also points out however, that Marxism has historically tended to marginalize religion's role in resisting social estrangement and oppression, as evidenced in a range of contexts from Poland to South Africa. It is its potential for resisting the kind of oppressive leadership constructions already outlined in the first section that I will be exploring in the ethnography of The School of Movement Medicine that follows.

### **New Religious Movements and Counter-Cultural Motions**

Expressed at its simplest level The School of Movement Medicine is an entrepreneurial education establishment, run as a business, which is dedicated to teaching movement as a form of spiritual practice. As mentioned elsewhere, the school was founded by Susannah and Ya'acov Darling Khan, who are a husband and wife team exercising leadership on an equal footing. This fact alone makes them a rare phenomenon in religious and spiritual organization (Puttick 1997). I will return to the subject of its entrepreneurial elements in another section. I want to begin though by locating the school's position within a spectrum of wider trends relating to more general social changes within Western culture in patterns of religious adherence, or what we might otherwise describe as society's relationship with the sacred.

Rooted as it is in a combination of contemporary paganism and ancient indigenous shamanic practices transposed from traditional cultures, the school may also be viewed as one of many New Religious Movements (NRM's) or what Beckford (1984) has referred to as a New Religious and Healing Movements (NRHM's) that have emerged in Western Europe and North America since the last world war (Arweck 2002; Morris 2006). It has been estimated that over 400 NRM's have emerged in Britain alone since 1945 - the figure is higher for America and post-war Japan (Clarke 1988: 149). Barker (1999) suggests that there are around 2000 NRM's in the West and somewhere in the lower tens of thousands across the globe.

Notwithstanding Bell, Taylor and Driscoll's point (2011) that the new rarely emerges without some connection to our past, these NRM's represent a wide range of very differing belief systems, including a number of fundamentalist Christian organizations. Christian organization, reflecting the cosmology discussed in the previous section of my thesis, tends to be focused on salvation in the hereafter. It is also often characterized by very traditional attitudes towards gender and hierarchy, that one scholar, enquiring into women's empowerment in NRM's suggests "may be summarized as a chain of command from God to man to woman to nature" (Puttick 1997: 153). Acknowledging women's subordinate role in most religious organization, Puttick's (1997) work informs us that comparative research on gender roles in NRM's has found the continuation of this pattern, even when stated ideology might indicate otherwise. In other words that women continue to be associated with powerlessness, profanity and the secular domains - the state of being female generally and specifically of motherhood, having traditionally (as explored in the chapter three) tended to be seen as obstacles to enlightenment for, or leadership (spiritual and otherwise) by women. Exceptions to this tend to be the ecofeminist spirituality movement, as well as neo-paganism more generally, where priests (in mixed gender communities) and priestesses, theoretically at least<sup>36</sup>, have equal status and there is a strong emphasis on the sacralization of both women and motherhood. Though Puttick (1997) points out that Goddess worship per se does not automatically raise either the spiritual or social status of the women involved in such worship, as evidenced in a wide range of religions, including Hinduism, Tantric Buddhism and the Mormons.

Neo-paganism meantime, is seen by many of its practitioners as the continuation, or revival of ancient traditions, albeit in highly adapted forms, though, as mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, there is also lively debate about the historical validity of some of the mythology associated with it. Mythology, which suggests the existence of a golden era of pre-patriarchal organization in which men and women lived together in peace and equality (Biehl 1991; Eisler 1987; Purkiss 1996; Roper 1994). Practices tend to be diverse, reflecting both

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<sup>36</sup> "Paganism is the only religion to have developed theology that not only perceives the Goddess as equal or superior to the God, but follows through by giving women equal or superior spiritual status. It is also contains a specifically, conscious feminist branch: feminist witchcraft" (Puttick 1997: 245).

a variety of lineages and living, evolving, constantly “reshaped and redefined” practices in de-centralized and often somewhat anti-authoritarian cultures (Iolana and Hope 2011: 9; see also Luhmann 1989). There tend to be general principles rather than formal dogmas, which include ideas also common to ecofeminism of deity (polytheistic or monistic) immanent in creation, as an interconnected unity in which all life has equal value (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Christ 2003). Although the feminine continues to be identified in traditional gender terms such as being relational, feeling, intuitive and nurturing, there is also permission for strength, aggression, sexuality, independence and power in women. And while the masculine *principles* continue to be associated with decisive action, both genders are seen as equally capable of and indeed encouraged to develop the entire spectrum of what it is to be human, rather than any quality being seen as specifically belonging to either the male or female gender per se (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009; Starhawk 1987).

Amidst the influence of the feminism that has helped shape such changes in attitudes towards gender; the ecological movements; the rise of counter-cultural shifts and the human potential movement that began in the 1960's (Roszak 1968; 1978) alongside, the increasing interest in non-Western religions, combined with a simultaneous decline in support for Christian beliefs, Heelas and Woodhead (2005) suggest that, we in the West are in the midst of a revolution. This revolution, according to their research at The Kendal Project is typified by the decline of religious obedience, moving not towards atheism, as the secularization thesis proposes, but towards spirituality characterized by an emphasis on direct knowledge of the personal interior - a description that is certainly applicable to many neo-pagan and neo-shamanic forms. I would suggest that hierarchy tends to be viewed with suspicion within some of these kinds of communities, although as with the whole subject of NRM's, as I have already intimated, this is variable (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Christ 1997; Morris 2006; Radford Ruether 1992; Starhawk 1987). Certainly in keeping with Heelas' and Woodhead's (2005) proposition about the gradual move away from reliance on external authority, many of these groups emphasize direct, personal spiritual experience (as opposed to having an intermediary) and the individual authority that derives from this personal 'knowing'. The aim of any leadership involved is therefore, often intended to facilitate and strengthen this subjective



(what Hanegraaff (2002) calls gnosis) knowledge, though Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) research shows that this in and of itself does not necessarily result in an increase in conventionally defined political activity. And indeed, scholars Carette and King (2005) express the concern that this focus on individual subjectivity may simply lead to the accelerating privatization of concerns that need to be dealt with on a collective basis.

Whilst many *in* (including myself) these communities balk at the term New Age, Hanegraaff (1996), using this label, identifies five major trends within them (see also Arweck 2002). These are holism, an evolutionary perspective, the combining of psychology with religion, or sacralization of psychology, a focus on this world and the belief in a coming or potential New Age, or paradigm shift (Beckford 1984; Kuhn 1962; see also Biberman and Whitty 1997 for a discussion of how this paradigm shift may be seen to influence organization). All of these are descriptive of the community being researched here.

York (1995) on the other hand has concluded that there are distinct differences between the New Age per se and neo-paganism. These include different emphases on transcendence and immanence, the non-material and the ecological, hierarchy and egalitarianism, individualist and communal approaches and even millennialism and revivalism. And as has been remarked of NRM's in general, even,

"...within these broad categories they present an enormous range and variety of belief, practice, social structure and style of expression - a complexity that defies classification yet within which trends and patterns may be discerned" (Puttick 1997: 3).

It may even be argued as Carette and King (2005) do that differing strands actually represent very different sites in what amounts to the essentially contested field of differing religions with very different ethics. As a long-term student of mysticism within the women's spirituality movement (which was intimately interwoven with my involvement in anti-nuclear protests at the start) and various neo-pagan and neo-shamanic communities in a contemporary Western context, in a wide variety of settings over thirty years, I think of them as worldviews. These particular worldviews also include sets of spiritual practices, techniques and rituals, or what Puttick (1997) has referred to as methodologies for the inner quest absent in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Though of course, the transmission and expression is always highly influenced by the particular contexts (and personalities) of those teaching and practicing it, both in terms of

the leaders and the followers (Castaneda 1968; Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009; Roth 1989; Starhawk 1987). And as both Puttick (1997) and Tracey (2012) point out, people looking for religious and spiritual belonging tend to gravitate towards organizations that meet whatever needs and belief systems they are already sympathetic towards, with both radicals and conservatives alike calibrating themselves accordingly. Certainly in the context of some Western culture, with a growing market place of choice for religious 'consumption' and decreasing social pressure and/or sanctions attached (in some quarters) to worship within family of origin dictates perhaps such choices might even be perceived to fall within the kind of framework offered by rational choice theory.

"In particular, a central idea is that "within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes, humans attempt to make rational choices" (Stark & Finke, 2000, p. 65). These choices are framed in terms of rewards and compensators (Stark & Bainbridge, 1987). Rewards are things that individuals want and are prepared to accept costs in order to obtain them. These include the legitimacy and networking benefits of church membership and attendance. Compensators are a kind of reward, the benefits of which are not easily perceptible, such as immortality or forgiveness. In making decisions with respect to religion, RCT assumes that individuals seek to maximize rewards while minimizing costs...More broadly, RCT conceptualizes religion in the context of a market with a focus on the supply side. Religious preferences are assumed to be quite stable, with changes therefore driven by suppliers in the form of entrepreneurial religious organizations that cater for previously untapped religious preferences. Thus, a central assumption of RCT is that religious organizations compete with one another for adherents, and that greater choice and competition will lead to higher levels of religious activity because it will increase the likelihood that the preferences of religious consumers will be satisfied. In this regard, RCT "turns conventional theory on its head" (Hamilton, 2011, p. 120); rather than assuming that religious competition undermines the legitimacy of religion and results in a process of secularization, as Durkheim suggested, RCT assumes that religious competition is the most effective way to ensure a vibrant "market" for religion" (Tracey 2012: 94).

Such a suggestion is, as Tracey (2012) acknowledges, difficult to subject to statistical analysis. But following on from Puttick's argument that women who have themselves internalized conservative values in the realms of sexuality, status, work and motherhood are more likely to gravitate to religious settings that mirror those values, it also follows that those with alternative values will look to maximize gains and minimize losses in different ways. As criticisms of RCT indicate this may in turn correspond (in both directions) with socialization processes that such theory has little comment on, though I have made some indirect comment on this area in my prologue. And of course to describe it thus as a rational process very much depends, like ethics, on how one in turn

defines such a state. Nonetheless, at the risk of committing the old Marxist sin of accusing others of false consciousness, certainly from within my own choices it seems all too rational that at least some women, as the largest consumers of religions, who have historically, also been “so badly served, disparaged and oppressed” by them, might take the opportunities offered by an increasingly liberalized social sphere (and market place) to vote with their feet (Puttick 1997: 1). A very different situation from one in which the local priest or mullah must be obeyed, come what may and perhaps one of the advantages of the Enlightenment separation of church and state, albeit one also, as Mies and Shiva (1995) point out, steeped in colonialism. A separation that nonetheless, both Kripal (2007) and Puttick (1997) have suggested may well have important ramifications for gender democracy and increasing spiritual power for women.

It is of course the case that much traditional shamanism, as well as some of its contemporary recapitulations, including my own early experiences with Roth (and indeed later ones with the British wing of The Foundation for Shamanic Studies) have often followed very traditional models of leadership. Models in which the charismatic leader, as the sacred authority, behaves very much like the figure described by Grint (2012). Most of those emerging from the Human Potential Movement have also subscribed to sets of values that would at least superficially suggest that something different would be on offer in such quarters. The question of whether these values are found reflected in the leadership practices of the community being researched here, will be further explored in following sections, incorporating interview data, on both gender and leadership.

Paganism, women’s spirituality and shamanic beliefs and practices also tend to emphasize immanence. In the light of the very well established and long adhered to Western cultural preference for constructing the divine in transcendent terms, interest in immanence alone might be seen to qualify as a belief worthy of attention. Amongst those searching for immanence (which is how I define the community being researched here) it has been estimated that there are about 50,000 neo-pagans in Britain and double that in the States. Accurate calculation is difficult due to the syncretic nature of many of these loose organizations and the fact that being ‘out’ as a ‘witch’ in an officially Christian country still carries social stigma (Arweck 2002; Hanegraaff 2002; Iolana and Hope 2011; Puttick 1997; Rozak 1978). Paganism is, nonetheless

viewed in some quarters as the fastest growing new religious movement (Adler 1979: 455; Hardman and Harvey 1996; Puttick 1997). Surveys conducted by New Age magazines and organizations indicate that most of those practicing as pagans are middle class professionals (York 1995) – a suggestion born out by Luhmann’s (1989) pioneering ethnography, *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft – Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*, on the practice of modern magic. Whilst another scholar comments that the New Age may well be the “secret religion of the middle classes” (Heelas 1996: 124). This is certainly a finding that is reflected in the demography of the community I researched (and of other similar communities I have personally been involved in over the years), perhaps at least partly because participation requires a certain level of material affluence.

Such pagan professionals undoubtedly still exist, in some ways, mainly at the margins. Puttick’s work suggests nonetheless, that many of the alternative, counter-cultural values and practices of the Human Potential Movement and the NRM’s associated with it have very quietly and gradually begun to percolate even the most mainstream institutions (as I discuss in my prologue) including the marketplace, where critics like Currence and King (2005) and Lau (2000) suggest that many of them have in the meantime, been co-opted by capitalism. Tracking the kind of repetitive process involved in such phenomenon, Tracey references church-sect theory as a way of explaining the kinds of changes that occur when accepted institutional practices fail to meet the needs of those involved in them, leading to the emergence of sects that reject dominant values and embrace more radical ways of doing things than the established churches, until those sects themselves come to represent the new establishment. A comparison, which has coincidentally been made in relation to the critical management community by Parker and Thomas (2011). Whilst,

“Robbins and Lucas (2007, p. 239) neatly summarize this dialectical dynamic at the heart of church-sect theory in the following way: “Through the process of institutionalization and accommodation yesterday’s deviant sects. . . have been seen to become tomorrow’s conventional, respectable (but less dynamic) churches” (Tracey 2012: 92; see also Troeltsch<sup>37</sup> 1911/1976).

Indeed, it is with one of these more deviant, sect like movements, as opposed to conservative NRM’s that this portion of my thesis concerns itself, as I present

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<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, Troeltsch predicted in 1931 that mystical religion would flourish in the modern world (Puttick 1997).

an empirical exploration of an model for leadership based on a different constellation of the sacred than that offered in Grint's (2010) proposition. In doing so, setting out to pose the question of whether it may be seen to be meeting a different and new set of cultural needs than those met by the more institutional, established model discussed in chapter three. If so, how it is doing this and what implications does this have?

### **Shamanism – Spiritual Leadership for Immanent Concerns**

Specific interest in and practice of neo-shamanism or contemporary re-creations of traditional indigenous religious practices and beliefs, in particular, within North America and Europe is something that is generally regarded as having emerged over the last three decades (Morris 2006; Townsend 1988). Writing specifically about shamanism in his critical account of religion and anthropology, Morris (2006) posits that this once disparaged subject amongst anthropologists themselves has now become an important area of study (Morris 2006; see also Geertz 1975). The significant upsurge of interest was originally led by anthropologists and academics, before moving into what he refers to as New Age circles, as a form of spiritual practice (Harner 1980; Starhawk 1987). Amongst shamanism's major proponents in the contemporary environment have been Carlos Castaneda (1970), Michael Harner (1980) and Joan Halifax (1982). Harner in particular, after engaging in his own anthropological fieldwork, established The Foundation for Shamanic Studies; an educational establishment dedicated to propagating what Harner refers to as core shamanism, a set of practices I myself am also trained in. Given the role of anthropology in cultivating awareness of difference it is perhaps unsurprising that much of that which has emerged from its explorations stands as a direct challenge to the values and beliefs of the more mainstream Western religion and culture, often, as already intimated, with an interest in emancipation from suffering in the here and now, rather than salvation in the hereafter (Morris 2006; Puttick 2004). Neo-shamanism has thus become established as one of the major strands within what is sometimes referred to as New Age spirituality, something that could be classified as an emergent social movement in its own right.

The word shaman originates with the Tungus or Evenki people from Siberia, who used the term saman to describe their spirit-mediums, or specialized

priests (Harner 1980). Various thought to relate to one who 'knows' or 'sees in the dark', shamana is also a term for a Buddhist monk (Morris 2006). Mainly due to Eliade's (1964) seminal work on shamanism, shamans have been viewed as those who enter a trance state, thus enabling them to *leave* the body and engage in 'magical flight' in the upper, lower or middle worlds, in order to gather information and cures for those who request their assistance. This would certainly seem to describe the ability to *transcend* certain everyday limitations. During such a trance state the shaman is viewed as having the ability to communicate with 'tutelary' (helping) spirits who assist them in effecting cures, or divining for their 'patients'. The shaman has also been variously described as an inspired prophet or leader, a charismatic religious figure and someone who acts to solve the many problems presented to them, specifically through the control of spirits (Morris 2006; Lewis 1986). Indeed it is this very contact with spirits which introduces the notion of a dual reality consisting of the everyday realm and the realm of the spirits.

Amongst anthropologists there are varying opinions on the subject. Some suggest a clear distinction between the material and the spiritual realms while others take the view that the two are fully integrated (Townsend 1997; Hutton 2001). Puttick (2004) points out that while shamans believe that the spirits of the unseen realm are real, psychologists tend to relate to the same experiences as originating within the psyche, or collective unconscious in the form of archetypes (Kostera 2012). All such technical discussions aside, the main purpose of the shaman is to act as a bridge between the 'unseen' worlds and the material realm of what is referred to as ordinary or everyday reality (Harner 1980). Indeed the main function of the shaman is to assist the community to deal with pragmatic, practical issues, such as illness and mental and emotional disease, relationship difficulties. Although more traditionally, this also involved where to find food, correcting misfortune, or other matters of meaning, all of which ultimately relate to health, well being and in some contexts, survival. In other words shamans deal with the typical terrain of leadership. This, just as clearly involves the immanent, or embodied realm, as the transcendent. "The entire *raison d'être* of shamanism," wrote Joan Townsend, "is to interact with the spirit world for the benefit of those in the material world" (Morris 2006: 17; see also Townsend 1997). The ultimate goal of shamanic practice remains

then, that of bringing personal *and* community integration and harmony on a material level (Morris 2006: 14).

Perhaps key, especially in a study of leadership, is that the shaman is seen as having spiritual authority. Levi-Strauss, who worked within the structuralist tradition, concerned with religion as symbol and communication, suggested that this authority derives (as much leadership may be perceived to be) from the investment of the followers/patients in the role. He comments, “Quesalid did not become a great shaman because he cured his patients, he cured his patients because he had become a great shaman” (Levi-Strauss 1963). Leaving aside the chicken or the egg conundrum at the heart of this statement, we may note that he also compares the shamanic role to that of a psychoanalyst, suggesting that the shaman provides a myth or a narrative that confers meaning to the individual ‘patient’ or community situation. In order to be in a position to offer such meaning to others in the first place, individual shamans need to establish a position for themselves in the communities they serve. Like leaders of any kind it is important to remember that they do not simply manifest “ex nihilo” but emerge through a complex of unique circumstances, dependent on the individual shaman and the community, often over time and embedded in past circumstances, and including present as well as future concerns.

Moving into leadership positions began with being students or followers themselves in the late 1980’s, within The Moving Centre, (the organization established by Gabrielle Roth) for Susannah and Ya’acov Darling Khan, the founders of The School of Movement Medicine. Later going on to train as teachers or leaders of her work, eventually bringing many other people into her movement practices through their business, they functioned as part of the core staff team within her organization for around eighteen years. Ten of these years were spent as co-directors of the UK Moving Centre School, representing the 5 Rhythms (itself based in the US) practice across Europe. Both organizations, whilst they started from nothing, eventually involved extensive networks of teachers, students, administrators and organizers, venues around the globe and varying curricular activity. Approximately 1 million people are estimated to have been involved with the 5 Rhythms practice (Kieft unpublished thesis). This customer base was built from scratch.

Many of these networks were of course, very well established when the

Darling Khan's set up The School of Movement Medicine in 2007, though they had as I indicate been instrumental in building them. By the time their new business had been running for two years, they had already had contact with 4000 participants who had come to engage with their new work. They currently have around 7000 students on their database, 5000 that receive their electronic newsletter and are estimated to have worked with 12,000 people from all over the world in their twenty-year career. Their Facebook community currently has 3121 members. As well as practicing widely within Europe, they have students from Australia, Japan and India, also working in South Africa and Israel, where they have an ongoing commitment to try to contribute to peace through working conjointly with students from both sides of the religious and political divide there.

The School of Movement Medicine, which is a business, the community around it and its independent professional body all express explicit commitments, both to raising awareness of the need to change behaviours that are destructive of environmental sustainability and social justice and offering practical support to some of those who may need financial assistance in their attempts to engage with such issues. I describe some of these direct efforts in my data collection section that can be found in Appendix 1. Followers support a modest redistribution of income through a sponsorship fund, run by community members to offer financial assistance to those who wish to study and teach Movement Medicine work, but who come from disadvantaged contexts – whilst the School financially subsidizes the Long Dance. Not only has the school engaged in the kinds of risks involved in running one's own business, the product they offer, provides a creative opportunity to participants to bring potentially innovative organizational practices into a variety of different contexts, with a number of members specifically trained and training to bring the practices taught in the school into the many wider (secular) organizational contexts of which they are a part. That is, it has been specifically designed to assist those who engage with it to connect with their "full potential", seeking to meet the original intent of the Human Potential Movement, at the same time as encouraging members to take responsibility for "responding to the individual, societal and global challenges that lie before us" (Darling Khan & Darling Khan 2009: xiii). These kinds of concerns then, seem to provide an up-dated, revised



version of the path of traditional shamanism in providing narratives, practices and attempted solutions to the problems and challenges faced by many of us in everyday life in contemporary society.

**So, just what is it you all do when you get there?**

First contact with the organization, for participants, will usually occur either after having been introduced to the work by a friend or colleague, reading the book written about it or coming in contact with publicity of some kind. After paying a financial deposit to secure a place upon their chosen workshop, participants are usually communicated with by the professional administrators of The School of Movement Medicine, one of whom has been with the business almost since its inception. He works with his partner, also associated with the business for a lengthy period, with additional paid support being employed from time to time, generally from amongst practitioners within the community. In this sense the School functions very much like a small family business, with graphic design and travel arrangements run by the daughter of one of the previous administrators, who retired due to ill health.

Administration takes responsibility for communicating with participants about venue locations, accommodation and payments - effectively tending to all the practical details involved in workshops. In this sense the spiritual leadership is very much separate from the more mundane realities of everyday organization. A number of scholars, including Grint (2010) and Puttick (1997) have written about the way in which distancing, using a variety of devices, including personnel, clothing and rituals, as a way of separating leaders from followers, is an important mechanism in the staged creation of charismatic leadership. While the kind of extremes I witnessed in The Moving Centre community, which included Roth's employment of designer clothing and entrances and exits in limousine like vehicles are absent, it is nonetheless note-able that the spiritual (sacred) and financial (profane) realms are (generally) clearly separated. The founders of the School may however communicate with participants before they convene in order to ask them to make special preparations before the group comes together. This can be anything from writing exercises, to making a piece of art work, visualizing the group being together, taking a specially focused day long (medicine) walk before the group meets together, focusing intention before work begins or being encouraged to detoxify the body before intense

ceremonies which involve fasting, sometimes for several days.

Venues vary, dependent upon the length of the workshop, encompassing everything from church halls to dance studios for shorter two-day workshops, to fairly up-market conference centres for longer 5-9 day workshops. These are usually set in beautiful rural environments, though many participants live in cities. Such venues tend to be very beautiful and aesthetically pleasing places to spend a week. Most of them have saunas, hot tubs and even swimming pools, though whatever bars may be available are kept closed. Use of alcohol or non-prescription drugs is prohibited whilst workshops are in progress, as they are viewed as counter-productive to the personal transformation process. Food is vegetarian and usually as organic as possible, with stated attitudes towards it also reflecting the contemporary spiritual discourses conflating the need to take care of the body, as well as the larger earth body and her other inhabitants (Lau 2000; see also Bell et al 2012). Participants generally have to create space within the rest of their lives in order to be able to step away for a while, including taking time off work and for some, arranging childcare, so that there is often a strong sense of people taking time out from whatever their usual circumstances are. In this sense the workshops may well be viewed as a kind of pilgrimage or retreat. Non-residential, weekend workshops tend to have a different, somewhat less intense flavor to them, as residential settings involve total immersion within the community, with all that this brings with it in terms of relationship.

People travel from all over Europe to participate, as well as South Africa, (where a budding community has been emerging) India, Australia and Japan. The green ethos of the business is promoted by encouraging participants to travel by train and to lift share, though this is obviously not possible for all and does raise contradictions that one of my interviewees discusses in a section looking at efforts geared towards environmental sustainability, which very much illustrates the messiness of many such current efforts. The initial change in this community encouraging rail travel was largely facilitated a number of years back, by the example offered by two participants within the previous Moving Centre community who helped prompt change within the community by leading by example. One of them is now a teacher/leader within the community in his own right and also responsible for setting up a non-profit making collective

(Earthdreamers) that engages in actions geared towards environmental sustainability and social justice. It may be inferred from this that change within the community is influenced by founders, leaders, apprentices and followers and the emergence of processes we engage in together. Although the founders try to minimize air travel by going to their European venues by train, it is nonetheless the case that flying is a part of modern transportation and perhaps one of the inherent contradictions that some of us in the Western world concerned about sustainability have to wrestle with.

On arrival at workshops, participants are greeted by administrators, who tend to any final financial details, allocate rooms and so on, functioning very much like hotel reception. There are normally a couple of hours dedicated to registration and settling in. Work usually commences with a short dance session before the whole group convenes for dinner. During this initial stage participants will also be familiarized with any rules or safety arrangements pertaining to the centre they are working in, as well as being reminded about basic rules and boundaries that the community as a whole adheres to.

Both explicit and implicit within the practice is a responsibility to demonstrate a fundamental respect towards others. Of course, the ability to offer this varies a great deal, but the principle is in place nonetheless. This means taking responsibility for oneself and one's feelings both on and off the dance floor – both in terms of non-violence and direct responsibility for not aiming any anger that arises in cathartic processes, at others, as well as making sure, as far as possible, that you take responsibility for keeping your own personal physical boundary in place in order to keep yourself and others safe. In other words that one takes responsibility for not crashing into others during vigorous movement sessions. This sensitivity is also seen as a practice that can be transferred to other areas of our lives off the dance floor in terms of extending courtesy and sensitivity to others as we move about our daily lives. Participants are also required to respect the confidentiality of others, by maintaining people's personal process within the time and space parameters of the workshop, to desist from gossiping and increasingly as the community has developed, to engage in conflict resolution processes as and when required.

The professional body, known as The Movement Medicine Association, that has emerged in the community in the last two years is currently running a pilot

project on conflict mediation, which I have myself participated in fairly successfully. Indeed it seems to me that such conflict resolution structures could make an enormous difference in many organizational contexts were they to become standard practice. Although of course, asymmetrical power and authority dynamics play a role in many organizational contexts, including spiritual and religious communities, as I believe I intimated in my prologue and need to be explicitly accounted for. Perhaps at least partly as a result of lessons learned from conflicts that occurred when The School of Movement Medicine separated from The Moving Centre there has been a desire to acknowledge the reality of and need to find equitable ways to address conflicts from the early days of this organization. As well as offering a mediation service to anyone who comes in contact with the extended leadership of the community, the conflict resolution project is also currently looking at how the founders may be included in such processes so that they do not stand outside accountability for their ethical behaviours.

The leader of the previous organization did not seem to have this kind of commitment, taking a far more traditional shamanic approach, far more akin, in fact to Grint's (2010) conceptualization of leadership as one in which the leader has the right, if not even the duty to impose sacrifice on the follower. Within such a traditional ethos, trainee shamans were sometimes subject to sustained ill treatment, by teachers, as a device intended to break down the ego, much like EST training where participants were subject to long hours and isolation as part of a 'transformational' training process (Eliade 1964;). One of the founders of the Movement Medicine community, (like all of the staff and many of the teachers), is a trained psychotherapist, a fact I feel has had significant influence on the levels of what I would describe as the emotional safety available in their work. This fits not only with the sacralization of psychological principles discussed earlier, but perhaps also with the spread of the kind of "softer", more emotionally literate principles associated with the wider cultural dissemination of the kind of Human Potential Movement values that I discussed in my prologue. The result, according to one scholar being,

"...an increasing emphasis on ethics, human values and personal development, including teamwork rather than hierarchy; co-operation rather than competition; relationship as against status; sharing, mentoring, helping and supporting colleagues and junior staff for mutual benefit rather than personal gain. These changes are encouraging a more caring, collaborative style of management within flatter

structures...sometimes termed the feminization of work” (Puttick 1997: 151).

Indeed one of the active discussions taking place in the leadership levels of community at this time is the consideration that the highly charismatic, even egoic leadership styles which are framed as having been more appropriate to the tasks in hand (of dismantling rigid socially conditioned cultural states) at the end of the 1950's are not appropriate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which in a highly driven, industrialized environment in which the misuse of resources, including human ones, may call for a 'softer' and much more considered approach.

In this vein, as well as having conflict resolution services available within the community, within the initial period of a workshop participants are allocated a support group. This group comes together regularly throughout the time the larger group is convened (and considerably longer for apprentices and apprentice teachers) with the intention of supporting each other through their emergent experiences. This can be facilitated in a very structured way with people all being allocated the same amount of time to speak and strict educative processes in place about the need to learn to listen without interruption or attempts to 'fix' the other. At other times this process can be very much more free form, being far more conversational in approach. Having experienced a 5 Rhythms context where this support network was absent, and I gather continues to be, even at the level of professional training, my own personal experience is that it is an invaluable mechanism.

That said even support groups are not always emotionally smooth, or conflict free processes, though there is a general ethos in the community, that whomever we come together with has something to teach us. In my experience this ethos also has the potential to become gradually embedded in relationships outside of the workshop setting and therefore (albeit slowly – given our mainstream conditioning) to radically transform ones attitude towards both relationship and conflict, which no longer requires silencing, a la Grint (2010) but can come to be seen as a vehicle for learning, communicating about difference and therefore, of potentially fruitful change.

After the initial meeting, participants then spend anything from 2 to 9 days together, engaging with dancing, voice-work and ceremony. They variously work individually (mostly within the larger group), in pairs, in the whole group, or in smaller, support groups of four. Time is also allocated to being 'in circle',

where every voice is given the same amount of time and space and in which deep attention to each other is encouraged. This is modeled upon American First Nation Council Circles, using a talking stick, bone or antler, representing the practice of speaking and listening from the heart. Within this practice every voice is regarded as equal and as having something to contribute to the whole. This perspective suggests that without each unique voice, we do not have access to all the information we require in order to make successful decisions or understand the big picture, a practice that reflects the holism held to be central to the “New Age” perspective (Beckford 1984; Hanegraaff 1996; see also Heelas 2008). With no one at the head, the sharing and decision making practices associated with the circle, are one of the most deeply empowering and democratic practices I have ever been party to, also tending to be a structure and practice common in many feminist and activist organizations. An interesting example perhaps of what Western (2010) says about the way in which form follows function. That said, at early stages of the work with newer participants, at all levels of the organization, much of the introduction to these kinds of ways of organizing and relating are facilitated by teacher/leaders. As the community has begun to produce newly qualified teachers/leaders, facilitation tends to be increasingly shared, with increasing input from members at various levels of leadership and now including community meetings. 2012 also saw the community set up the Movement Medicine Association (mentioned above), a body intended to over-see continuing professional development standards and ethics of those registered as apprentice teacher/leaders and leaders. As some of the interviews show, the business, known as The School of Movement Medicine, or original business component in the organization, is in an increasingly interesting dialogue with the growing community of leaders emerging from its teaching, formalized in the newly formed Association. In spite of the emergent nature of this process over time, much of my research focuses on the community experiences, practices, symbolic and spiritual systems and relationships between the two founder-leaders and their followers which took place in the early, formative days of the organization. The changing nature of an increasingly democratized and jointly run organization does come through the second set of interviews, but is not the main focus of my research, quite simply due to the time frames involved in what continues to be an evolving

community in the relatively early days of its existence.

### **Moving Towards Here and Now Empowerment?**

Regardless of the stage of its organizational development, the school differs from most other contemporary establishments that teach neo-shamanism in so far as it places dance and specifically, engagement with the body at the very heart of its teaching practices. Described by the founders as encompassing “the ancient and the modern, the psychotherapeutic and the shamanic, the devotional and the traditional, the scientific and the mystical”, it employs movement as a form of embodied spiritual practice as its central tool, or technique (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009: xxiii). Enacted as the physical act of dancing, this is the movement element of its name. Another PhD researcher in the community has this to say about the more extensive implications of the word movement, employed within this context.

“...dance emerges as a *moving* spirituality in four different ways. A spirituality that is firstly experienced through movement, as opposed to more static forms, which secondly has the capacity to be emotionally moving, i.e. touching. Thirdly it has the capacity to move a practitioner from one state to another, for example from perceived disconnection, within self (body and mind for example), and/or between self and the world around to an experience of connection; from isolation to unity; from duality to oneness. And finally, we can understand moving in the sense of changing, both the internal ‘landscape’ and perceptions of the practitioner and externally in their choices and actions for a different life style” (Kieft 2014: 11).

Medicine, as the other half of the name Movement Medicine, is a shamanic term referring to something, either an object or a ritual practice, that is viewed as having the power to assist, support or even heal, the person who employs it. In some ways the work has much in common with other practices that focus attention on breath and breathing and the body, like yoga, qigong or tai chi (Sinclair 2007). Whilst it involves considerably freer self-expression than these movement forms, participants are still required to exhibit considerable discipline in working with a whole variety of ‘forms’, used as what we may view as metaphorical vehicles for participants to explore and experience their embodied, emotional, mental and spiritual processes. There are times as described in a previous section, when participants work together as a whole group, in pairs, small groups and even occasionally with choreographed movement. In this way people come to experience the whole spectrum of connection, from individual expression, through to interconnectedness with one or more other, the whole group and aspects such as the four elements of earth,

air, fire and water, yin and yang, self, other, environment, ancestors, descendents and the divine. Within both traditional and contemporary forms of shamanism, lineage or ancestry is a key concept. The term ancestors, as I also mention in chapter three, can be used in a variety of ways - to denote those who came before and who made the present possible; as a source of received wisdom or as a description of our embedded position amongst all our relations, including the non-human world (Abram 1997). Again this is something of a combination of a psychological worldview that views the influence of previous generations as important with a shamanic perspective on the sacred. Within the kind of worldview that privileges such ancestry as a source of sacred wisdom it becomes important to develop and maintain relationships with them that enable us to relate to them as a place of nurture and strength. This kind of narrative fulfills the function of weaving us into a web of unbroken continuity and as such represents both a more sacred traditional approach and the kind of viewpoint represented by much contemporary ecology and ecofeminism (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Spretnak 1991). Such acknowledgment is also a fundamental challenge to more modernist mythology, which like Grint's (2010) cosmology is based upon separation. Something seen as an erroneous perception by the founders of the school when they say that they, "...long ago let go of the myth of independence in favor of the reality of interdependence" (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009: xxii).

The aims of both the practices and the narratives at work in the teachings of this community are to enable participants to feel comfortable with the expression of their unique individuality and centered within their own being. From this place (a central tenet within much of the Human Potential Movement) it is suggested that it becomes more possible to witness and allow the same for others, as well as to find one's unique place in and authentic contribution to the groups of which we are a part of in the wider society or interconnected web (Puttick 2004).

The founders of the school, Susannah and Ya'acov Darling Khan, have been self-employed and self-financed for most of their adult life, finding it difficult to obtain any kind of financial support from banks in the early days of their business. Asking them whether they viewed themselves as entrepreneurial, their response was,



“We have never applied for or received funding of any kind. We wanted to maintain our independence and freedom to follow the unfolding of our work without having to shape it to fit external requirements for funding. So in that sense, we have had to be entrepreneurial in the way we have gone about making our ethos work as a business. We have done this through grass roots networking and we have been successful in this practice for 25 years” (Darling Khan – personal communication 2014).

Entrepreneurs are generally viewed as those who transform new ideas into new products. In this sense the founders initially took their lead from Roth, although strictly speaking Roth transformed some of the ancient methods of shamanism into neo-shamanic forms that both suited and reflected more contemporary cultures. Indeed this has been part of a much wider trend associated with the sacralization of psychology and the body, in environments such as Esalen, where spiritual practices from a wide range of cultures were being blended with therapeutic techniques in a diverse series of social experiments associated with the Human Potential Movement (Kripal 2007; Puttick 1997). The rationale for more physically dynamic spiritual practices, like those introduced by people like Roth and Osho, that included both dance and emotional catharsis, being that, “the complexity and stress of contemporary life, with its frenzied activity and emotional repression, makes it hard for Westerners to sit in meditation for long periods” (Puttick 1997: 18; see also Roth 1989). Including positive attitudes towards women, the body and sexuality, such work is not only innovative but may also be seen, again, as intimated earlier, as what Shrivastava (1994) describes as radical rather than reformist, certainly in its original intentions (Kripal 2007). Whilst it might be possible to interpret this as a simple reversal of more commonly accepted Durkheimian categories of the sacred and the profane, within Movement Medicine practices, the body is not elevated at the expense of rationality (mind) or emotions (heart), nor unlike the sannyassin movement written about by Puttick (1997) are women viewed as superior spiritual disciplines to men. Rather balance between body, heart and mind and between so-called masculine and feminine qualities are what are sought after and promoted, with both women and men being perceived as equally capable of balancing a range of qualities that are often ascribed as belonging predominantly to one gender of another.

In this sense it may be seen simultaneously as entrepreneurial and as part of a wide range of social movements that express interest in generating change, (including the Human Potential Movement) through direct engagement with

social, economic and political issues, in causes such as feminism, ecology and even some alternative therapies and spirituality, which may focus on similar areas on a more inner, personal level. Certainly the kind of symbolic systems involved in The School of Movement Medicine seem, at least on the surface, to reflect very different political commitments to the narrative of the sacred described in chapter three of this thesis, (Grint 2010). These differences and their possible ramifications became central areas of enquiry within my interview process. In the next sections of my thesis I turn to the direct exploration of these factors with participants of the community being researched here. Having an embodied experience in this community of a cosmology very different to that which I grew up with around me as the official state religion, which I have also deconstructed in the first section of this thesis, I became most interested in questions pertaining to the role of what is referred to within feminist spirituality as the divine feminine; the body; relationships with the land, both spiritually and practically and leadership itself. I pursued this interest in a series of twenty-three interviews, portions of which are arranged thematically and presented in four sections. I often found these interviews a deeply profound process and regret in many ways that it did not ultimately feel appropriate within the confines of this piece of work to present them in the narrative forms that I began with - which included amongst them a highly moving account of the some of the life experience of someone whose grandparents were in a concentration camp during World War Two. I hope that my interviewees will forgive me for what may sometimes be only a partial representation of their truths, but suggest nonetheless that many of them provided what were, for me at least, very valuable insights into our shared cultural context and the struggles we share. I had full permission from each interview to identify them publically. In the end I felt that the data has more power without being assigned any of the associations (and limitations in the form of assumptions) that can arise from identifying things like the profession, nationality or gender of the speaker, though it is true that in some sections the gender of the speaker is self-evident. I interviewed (more or less) an equal number of men and women. The geographical demographic includes Europe and South Africa. I begin with the question of how people experience the role of the divine feminine within the practices promoted by The School of Movement Medicine.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Gender Democracy and Empowering the Feminine?



*Fig 1. Altar depicting divine feminine*

#### **Introduction**

Within the community being researched there is considerable emphasis placed upon the belief that the human species is at a tipping or choice point, in relation to its dependence upon and treatment of our eco-system (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009). Within its cosmology, the phoenix sitting in the tree of life, symbolizes the transformative power of creation itself. Intended to be a representation of the life force within each of us that enables participation in the co-creative processes that we are part of every day - personally, relationally and environmentally - the phoenix is a metaphor for our capacity to engage in the creation of life affirming, generative change in our daily lives. Or in other words, the potential power, or agency, we all have to be both responsive to and active in, how creation manifests around us, from the micro of our own habits to the macro of how we relate to the wider environment, both of which are perceived as interconnected. In both these senses the community mirrors what has been described as,

“...the optimistic voluntarism which characterizes the ethos of many NRHMs. Untold

benefits for mankind are said to follow from the conscious decision to cultivate the self's potential for harmonious relations with the natural world.

Running alongside the voluntarism in some NRHMs, however, is an emphasis on the critical, if not apocalyptic character of the present time. There is a widespread fear that the 'natural balance' between humans and the world of nature is on the point of being irreperably damaged" (Beckford 1984: 262).

Considering this, is of course, a good moment to recall Lasch's (1979) criticism of the potential for narcissism in an over optimistic assessment of the benefits of what might be seen as an individualistic approach to change. Whilst Bell, Taylor and Driscoll's (2012) caution of the pitfalls of failing to link the ideational realms with the material ones is also highly pertinent here. On the other hand however, I would suggest that here we also have a spiritual community that in its own language is willing to open to accepting *what is*, as a realistic basis for working for change, with both the pay-offs and the problems associated with such a commitment, as suggested below.

"Those able to embrace the unethical potential of humanity or society and come to terms with this experience a more mature form of belief, as their action is characterized by a 'willingness to be' despite negative or damaging realities" (Bell, Taylor and Driscoll 2012: 433)

Perhaps most importantly in this section on gender, this very ability and the creative forces embodied in the symbolism of the phoenix are seen to derive from the *relationship* between the archetypal energies of yin and yang. Terms employed within Taoism, yin is seen as the more receptive energy of acceptance and the yang is seen as the doing state associated with acting upon our intentions (Biberman et al 1999). These states are fundamentally seen by the founders and their cosmology, as existing beyond all limited description, including gender. The yin energy associated with this deep state of acceptance is nonetheless, also often equated with archetypal mother energy, the *divine feminine*, the Goddess or the earth, though the description below is fairly neutral on the gender level.

"Accepting who we are also entails accepting what is. When we stop fighting reality, a simplicity and ease appear in our lives. What is, is. Whether we accept it and let it be or accept it and decide to do something to change it, our capacity to see things as they are gives us a sure ground, a ground of being (Darling Khan & Darling Khan 2009: 11).

According to the beliefs of Movement Medicine it is only when any movement takes place from this initial state of acceptance that the yang aspect has a genuine capacity and strength to bring healthy, desirable change.

Intention, drive, desire, direction and action then are seen as qualities that derive from the active, yang, often alternatively described as the *divine masculine* principle. This is the aspect associated with the strength to take action but also very much encompasses the belief that everything arises from and returns to the yin or feminine principle. Once practitioners are experientially familiar with the two energies of creation it is considered that they will be better able to build relationships, both within and without, in which these qualities can support and strengthen, rather than oppose or undermine each other. Within the framework of Movement Medicine both men and women are viewed as possessing and being capable of expressing both qualities and as in my previous descriptions of neo-pagan philosophy, balance of both sets of qualities within each individual is what is being sought after (Biberman et al 1999).

Offering their perspective on what happens when either energy is out of balance the Darling Khan's, the founders of the practice, have this to say,

“What happens in an individual or a collective where the yang principle has become unbalanced and lost its connection to the yin? Take a look around – the answers are everywhere to be seen. In our culture, yang energy has become disconnected from the roots, acceptance and knowledge of the cyclical nature of life. It is therefore ungrounded, full of tension and driven in a never-ending spiral of onward and upward achievement...If we look at the cycle of the year, we see that nature makes use of all the different seasons...in the winter it looks as if very little is growing at all, there is a lot going on deep down in the roots of the trees as they prepare themselves for another cycle of growth. What would happen if the tree lost touch with this natural cycle and decided that constant growth was the way? It might shoot up very fast in a fine display of yang expression, but would topple soon enough, due to lack of strong roots...” (Darling Khan & Darling Khan 2009: 13-14).

### **Reflections on the “feminine”**

Although the cosmology of the community is based on an equal relationship between the yin and the yang, divine feminine and the divine masculine, the very presence of the feminine being construed as sacred at all, is fairly uncommon on a cultural level. Each section of these interviews therefore began with the question of how participants experience the role of the divine feminine.

#### ***The most exquisite medicine***

“It's the ultimate holding, it's the original nurturing force and I'm only really beginning to feel the extraordinary depth that's available with that in relation to this work...this is the place that we start, with the divine feminine...It is the most exquisite medicine...it's the core healing power that we call in, that allows the growth of anything and everything that we do in the work...What I've learned more recently along the path is that, that

begins with the divine feminine, because I didn't always realize that, I didn't understand that. I thought that was the end point but actually it's the beginning."

### ***All about balance***

"For me it's all about balance. It's about the feminine and the masculine, the equality of both. I'm not sure how I would describe the role of the feminine, only that it is so much part of the work that we're doing. Sometimes we call these practices feminine but for me they're so not, they are masculine and feminine and it's really about finding a balance. The feminine for me is very much about the earth, the earthiness of our work and really finding a connection to the earth, seeing the earth as the great feminine. I'm not that comfortable with anything that's a bit New Age feminine, anything that doesn't include that real earthiness, that real primal connection to nature. I see it as a very strong force, a very powerful force and I see it being totally and absolutely included in Movement Medicine, in the practice. Without it there's no ground. So when you talk about the divine feminine I would want to know what exactly you mean by that? To me the divine feminine is the earth, nature, and the embodiment of that in ourselves, the flesh and the bone of our dance...I'm curious about what the divine feminine is for you?

What underlies that question for me really relates to having spent part of the last three years looking at the Judeo-Christian narrative and the way in which the feminine and women in general have been given a profane, or non sacred, non-divine role in that narrative - the feminine has been separated from any notion of the sacred. The concept of the sacred in that narrative is not only that it is masculine but it is also transcendent and not of this world. So what I've been arguing is that because the feminine has been made profane and the divine has been seen as existing outside of the world, that has profound consequences for how we relate to women, how men and women relate to the body and the body of the earth which we are embedded in because they're not seen as sacred...so when I talk about the divine feminine I'm talking about the opposite of the abstract and the transcendent, I'm talking about everyday life being sacred.

It's interesting, because we went to Glastonbury after the Long Dance yesterday and there's a Goddess temple there...It was interesting for me, because...it lacked the everyday, which is exactly what you're saying...there was something very lovely about it, but the question that came to me was where's the washing up, where's the washing up bowl? It was too beautiful. It was too unlike real life and I just thought if we're always going to look at this kind of imagery, this kind of new age stuff, which is very lovely, we're just distancing ourselves from embracing the sacred in everyday life, saying, well actually me in my kitchen with my daughters baking bread is absolutely sacred, standing at the kitchen sink washing the plates and cups after our evening meal, going for a walk. For me the sacred has to lie in the ordinary, it has to, so for me everything I do is spiritual practice, I don't separate them out. When I see a lot of that kind of divine feminine, the Goddess, this, that and the other, I say hey, I'm a mum here with six kids, I've had to raise them mostly on my own, I've had to really work hard...what we're trying to identify with as the sacred is out of reach for normal, everyday people. So how do you make it more sacred and more real, so that they can say I'm changing my baby's nappy, this is a sacred moment, when I'm bathing them, when I'm taking them to the school gate and letting them go, that's a sacred moment. When I stand up for my child and go and say, hey Mr Teacher I don't think you've treated my child very fairly, that is a sacred moment, that's the feminine stepping out and saying I'm looking after my kid here, I'm using my voice. When a woman goes to her work place and it's not all she wants it be and she's having to go because she's got to help pay the mortgage and she's surrendering one step at a time because she's got to do this for her family...got to make sacrifices, I've no other way, I'm surrendering to this process, that is sacred.

And yes, of course there are other things, on different levels of awareness but lets focus on the root chakra, let's focus on the basics, so that we can then grow the sacred from there rather than trying to bring it down from the heavens."

### ***A healthy and balanced feminine***

"Well the first thing is that the divine feminine...is a big thing, but in a way, in Movement Medicine, the divine feminine and the divine masculine are really in the place of equilibrium and balance you know...neither is more emphasised. They are of equal importance, so it's important to relate to the divine feminine and to divine masculine to develop the characteristics and virtues in us of both of those pairs of polarities. A lot of our culture is really masculine and then a lot of our counter-culture has been extremely feminine to the point of men forgetting that they are men, really trying to renounce all the bad that the masculine has given to this culture, renouncing that, renouncing their own masculinity. In a sort of a way I really find this exquisite balance of the masculine and the feminine in Movement Medicine. It's not either/or, but it's both/and. When we dance we are encouraged to dance both...one is surrender and the other is engaging and being active and controlling - well controlling is not a good word, but more, not just going with the flow, but making a choice and decision and moving in the direction that you want to move in...I think the divine feminine is really important and dance somehow is really feminine and really helps us reconnect to that more feeling, more holistic, more environmental part of us that is not just about progress and getting more money and being more macho and better than everybody else, the part of us that's more concerned with life and continuation of life and with the happiness and joy that this life brings to us than with being on the top of some kind of pyramid and so on. So in a way it really promotes a healthy and balanced feminine."

### ***Infinitely lovely, soft touch...she would never do thunderbolts***

"That's not so easy for me to answer. I feel as if that's something that I need to learn more rather than that's something that I've really got...I think that in my own personal psyche they got muddled a bit because in my family of origin my mother held the yang energy and my father was much more yin and receptive, a gentle and calm force, whereas my mother was much more volatile and expressive. That had a very positive quality to it but it also had its shadow because she was also very controlling. So there's something a little bent out of shape for me...when you say the words divine feminine what arises for me is a really powerful and soft energy and yet my own experience of powerful women is that they tend not to be that soft...the Virgin Mary is there for me as a very big figure. I grew up with Catholicism, with the Virgin Mary being there and the Virgin Mary was an infinitely lovely, soft touch...you know the idea was that you'd pray to the woman and she would go and tell the man and he would do the thing that needed to be done. I mean it was just SO SEXIST I can't tell you. She was all-forgiving, all loving, whereas he...could just do thunderbolts...she would never do thunderbolts, so it's all a bit of a muddle for me."

People have said all sorts of things. It's interesting in a way that those kinds of concepts buy into quite stereotyped ideas about how gender functions and yet you're describing your life experience as actually being something quite different. I see that difference operating with Susannah and Ya'acov at times and I think it functions in our household too. So it's interesting to think about yin and yang as qualities and the masculine and feminine as qualities that are not necessarily expressed within sex or gender...in a dualistic way.

Yes, yes, yeah. I think that for myself, the leading without leading, the being there with the softness is something that I aspire to. When I start feeling responsible for something I can move into being too yang quite quickly and if I'm not in yang I'm a bit muddled. I would love to be able to hold that space of not knowing and trusting what's

happening, but really holding and trusting, rather than leading in a quite articulate and so and so forth sort of a way, or else thinking, oh fuck, I've completely lost the plot here. I'd like to develop that more in myself. I feel as if I'm beginning to do it a bit more with my teaching and just really being awed and delighted with what people do which is not what I had expected them to do but it's exactly what they need to do. That holding the space for them to do what they want to do and need to do which is way beyond what I might have thought they wanted to do... I think also politically I have an anxiety about it being seen as a woman thing rather than a yin thing because I can't help thinking about people like Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May, there's just so many of these woman in politics who are just completely and utterly wedded to being men, or being very, very yang and know it all. Having women in power doesn't necessarily mean that we will have this divine feminine in power."

### ***Cultural restrictions, gender and history***

"Central. Underpinning. For me, coming from Western, European, patriarchal religion, I found it particularly refreshing to find that divine masculine and divine feminine were more than treated equally actually. It meant a lot to me, to hear Ya'acov, a man, describe the idea...that the masculine comes from the feminine and is supported by it and this idea that to go straight into masculine, yang, without the feminine supporting it can be very unhealthy. That wasn't quite your question, so go back to the role of the divine feminine in Movement Medicine..."

As a woman who doesn't also fit within the human, feminine stereotype there's something about understanding what the energy of divine feminine is and having a strong relationship with it and struggling with the name and that crossover with gender and gender roles and all that sticky stuff, which through my time in Movement Medicine has been quite a challenge. This idea of aligning with feminine, feminine earth, divine feminine, aligning with yin, with this idea of receptivity, that doesn't quite sit right with me. To give an example, I was at a workshop with Susannah...I was saying that I understood the receptive aspect of feminine but for me feminine energy is also very powerful. I was thinking about a mother defending her young, that aspect of feminine energy, that says, absolutely not, that fierce femininity...It then came into the dance, Susannah invoked that fierce feminine and it was fucking amazing...my perception was that it was easier for many of the men present to engage with that fierce feminine energy and it was really refreshing to break out of that feminine is receptive mould and embody all of it. So there's a big language thing for me and the mixture of cultural restrictions and history and gender and all of that. But the role of divine feminine in Movement Medicine, absolutely central...I think it's as much about the overlap of language, that this group of qualities that have historically been ascribed to the feminine are generally present in both genders. For me it's not helpful to use the word feminine, which relates to female, which happens to be my gender and then to use the Chinese ideas of yin and yang, with yin as receptivity and again there's how do I as a woman relate to that concept...we all carry so-called masculine and feminine traits in different blends AND men and women are different. That's quite refreshing. That melting of the boundaries without losing that we are different...and allowing all the places in between."

### ***Radical change in relationships***

"That for me was the hardest question when I read all your questions and I've been thinking about it. Just focusing on the feminine aspect really helps me. Doing this work has changed my relationships radically - my relationship with my partner which was very tumultuous and often at a point of almost separating. Now we're engaged to be married, there's been a real change there. And when I think about this work, I think about my mum...My belief really is that the divine is within us and within everything around us, so I guess it's made me closer to the divine feminine by making me closer to the women in my life. My mum has passed away now but I feel a love for her and almost a closeness that I didn't feel when she was alive, so those relationships are



strengthening, with my partner, with my daughter which is sometimes difficult and really one I want to work on more but even just that awareness is important for me...And without doubt, 100%, I can say that my relationship with that is improving and has a huge amount of work to do at the same time because I'm full of nonsense."

### **"A long, ongoing struggle"**

We hear in at least two of the accounts, the socio-religious Judeo-Christian backdrop that I analyzed in chapter three in my thesis. The gender discrimination discussed there is clearly something that these interviewees who are both women, are fully conscious and critical of, even angry about and view as motivation for seeking alternative forms of worship (King 1993).

Interviewees also talked about the fact that neither the men nor the women in their lives, including themselves, parents, and public figures tended to conform to stereotyped definitions of what it is to be masculine and/or feminine. We might all be familiar with the kinds of attributes commonly ascribed to the two genders. Nonetheless, a number of interviewees talked about the ambiguity and anger they feel around the way in which gender roles are constructed, both within the cosmology of the community and within the wider society. Whilst some the women specifically named their gender role as women as something that has come with social pressures to conform to stereotypes they do not relate to. Most interviewees also both experience and described the feminine as variously powerful, strong and even fierce, with women in particular, connecting it with a sense of their own power, power, that far from being passive, acts on the world, sometimes, to protect.

My reader may also recall the discussion in the opening chapter of this thesis referencing the popular association with First Nation cultural frames within communities like the one under investigation here, partly because of their positive associations between women and nature. Although there are the occasional Quakers amongst the dancers attracted to Movement Medicine, it is more common to encounter those embracing a more animist path to worship. Although I did not specifically question interviewee's about their attitudes towards Christianity, anger towards the sexism inherent within it, arose spontaneously during discussion on the divine feminine. It does not therefore seem unreasonable to conclude that the church's attitudes towards woman, from it's historic refusal to allow women to interpret scripture to it's contemporary exclusion of women priests and the papal sanction against birth

control, as well as much of the dogma contained within the bible itself, continues to perpetuate an oppression of women, that quite simply makes it a non-viable path for some people. In a religious context in which even its own mystics have struggled to find a welcoming home within its confines, for those in search of either equality between the sexes, or spiritual power for women, Christianity may not provide a particularly appealing option. There may well be similarities in mystical experiences such as shamanic dismemberment and the dark night of the soul which suggest the underlying unity first discussed in chapter two (Underhill 1911). Sadly though, the Christian Church's responses to and treatment of even its own female mystics, exemplified by women such as Joan of Arc, whom the church burned and Julian of Norwich<sup>38</sup>, whom it refused either to canonize or beautify, may be small recommendation to those women seeking a mystical path on equal terms with men, or which embraces sexuality, body and world. It is of course undeniably true that there are dangers in romanticizing the exotic other (Gaard 1993; Haraway 1989; Lau 2000) contained in the figure of the aboriginal, some of which I also discussed in my introduction. Many of the members of this community nonetheless, seem to find the kind of spiritual and cultural resources they are looking for, more readily available to them, in cultural frames that recognize women, bodies and the earth as sources of strength, power and creativity (Sturgeon 1997). And although this is not specifically in evidence in interviews, it is also the case that at least some of us recognize the violence that has been both historically and contemporaneously inflicted on aboriginal communities by the church (Griffith 2006; Shiva 1998). In doing so, also choosing to stand with such communities, against the contemporary religious and corporate interests that continue to decimate the very understandings about interconnectedness that we would argue the world so desperately needs (Young and Taylor forthcoming; see also Griffith 2006).

In spite of the search for a favourable relationship with the 'feminine', although both men and women in this community are looking to exercise power in life-affirming ways, interviewees did not either romanticize women or create a universally positive category from the female gender, very much indicating the

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<sup>38</sup> This, in spite of the fact that she may well have been the first woman in England to write a book (Norwich 1978).

kind of grounded assessment that comes from embodied experience. Rather, in keeping with Puttick's (1997) research on the community that converged around Osho (formerly Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh) and was mainly run by women, power exercised by women was seen by some interviewees as just as easily used to negative and even abusive ends.

Feminine power was also associated by a couple of the interviewees with sacrifice and surrender, in one instance to challenging material circumstances – or as the kind of devotion Puttick (1997) suggests encouraging in women in particular, can be a dangerous replication of already well-established gender roles and expectations. Though interviewees also associated it with softness, gentleness, more feeling, “leading without leading”, holding, joy and happiness, trusting that others know for themselves what they need, a holistic perspective that is more concerned with the environment and continuation of life, as well as an increased tolerance for emergence in ways that were seen as positive.

It was acknowledged, as it is in the quote by the founders above, that masculine/yang energy tends to dominate the world and involved precisely the kind of pyramidal social arrangements discussed in chapter three. Nonetheless a number of interviewees talked about the way in which the practices of Movement Medicine encourage the development of both sets of characteristics equally in both sexes and that this balance is preferable to either loss of the more yang qualities or a predominance of the feminine, Goddess or yin, without its polarity or complement. Indeed because it seemed clear to interviewees that women, particularly in positions of worldly power, are just as capable of expressing an excess of yang energies that do harm to others, it was suggested that separating set of characteristics from their gender associations was a solution to the dangers of valorizing women as automatically better equipped to exercise power in more ‘beneficial’ ways. This was also seen as a way of creating more freedom for women to express fiercer, more aggressive energies that may be more present in the ‘constitutional’ make-up of individual women than may be socially permissible. Though conversely and perhaps even somewhat paradoxically, the feminine was also seen as having been culturally rejected, as is also in evidence in theoretical debates amongst ecofeminists, so that viewing it positively helped to revalue it. The encouragement to hold these qualities as not only valuable but also sacred, even for women interviewees

who expressed a feeling of being alienated from them, was also experienced as a life-enhancing phenomenon, enabling, amongst other things for the everyday tasks of domesticity and childcare to move out of the realm of the profane and to be re-sacralized.

Meantime, some of the male interviewees named a stronger connection to 'feminine' energy, as directly relevant to improvements in their relationships with the women in their lives, as well as increased understanding of and appreciation for the capacities of support, nurturing and holding that can be provided by such yin energy, described by one interviewee as the power that "allows the growth of anything and everything". What seemed to be crucial to the whole discussion was that neither set of characteristics was promoted at the expense of the other. And as one male interviewee points out, "It's not either/or, it's both/and".

Members of the community seem to clearly describe experiences of value, in the attempts to both re-balance the masculine and the feminine and re-sacralize the feminine. These efforts would seem to bring positive benefits in a whole number of ways, from generating more freedom for both men and women to express a wider range of behaviours in their lives; improving relationships between the sexes and bringing greater respect for areas that have traditionally been held to be profane. Women are equally free to adopt positions of leadership as men in the community without in any way diminishing the contributions of men. Alongside this however, the cosmology of the community, does appear, on some levels, to symbolically replicate the social organization of the hetero-sexual coupling of the nuclear family - with the yin and yang, associated with what may well be seen as fairly neat and essentialist views associated with gender stereo-types of mother and father. These do not however, seem to mirror the mess and disorder of participants lived experiences, which ultimately refuse to conform to such dualistic or polarized descriptions of gender. It seems relatively clear to most of those I interviewed that qualities such as acceptance, nurture, trust in process and their polarities, can be demonstrated by either gender. The very fact that specific qualities have (on a historical basis) tended to be so strongly divided along gender lines seems to suggest that in the meantime, re-valuing that which has been viewed as inferior in these dualistic couplings, provides at least one route towards re-

balancing our relationship with the spectrum of what it means to be human. In this sense the cosmology of the community may be seen simultaneously, on the one hand, to maintain some of the stability of our historical notions of gender, at the same time as employing an imaginative capacity for generating change in our relationship with them. It would also appear as though community members are very much engaged in ongoing assessment of the categories and practices in question and that so long as any institutionalization process is avoided that they can continue to be areas of exploration for members rather than unchallengeable truths.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Enlightenment of the Body, as well as the Mind



*Figure 2 Participant with decoration for sweat lodge*

#### **Introduction**

Within the practices of Movement Medicine the body is variously described as the source of one's whole history, an encyclopedia and a library of wisdom, which taking up Jung's (1959/1991) thesis on the collective unconscious, may even extend to include knowledge held by our ancestors. The body, in other words, rather than being seen as a superfluous nuisance is fully engaged and integrated into spiritual practice - an approach that avoids the traditional dichotomy between the body and spirit, as the opposing domains of the profane and the sacred (Durkheim 1912/1995; Tracey 2012). Instead, engagement with both body and emotions are seen as valuable and equal ground for spiritual insight rather than as the inferior areas best relegated to the feminine, described in the Judeo-Christian cosmology, (Christ 1997; Grint 2010; Starhawk 1982). As well as connecting us to each other and the collective, the body is also seen as metaphorically and physically connected to the earth body that moves throughout the cycles of night and day and the seasons (Deloria 1973; Spretnak 1991). Movement (in the form of dance) is employed as an overarching metaphor for life – the aware movement of the body, in combination with the attempt to be equally conscious of the 'workings' of mind and heart, being the central aspects of the practice (Kieft 2014). Lack of movement, whether emotional, physical or mental is construed as leading to

stagnation, which in turn then requires clearing the blockages that cause the stagnation, often linked with the metaphor of clearing polluted waters. This last is a good example of the sacralization of psychological principles, by embedding them within a earth-based spirituality, albeit it one whose function is to re-integrate the body with it's environment and diminish the separation of the human and the non-human worlds (Hanegraaff 1996; Roszak 1995; Stevens 2012).

Another suggestion within this practice, as opposed to Buddhism (Kriger and Seng 2005) for example, which teaches us to observe and detach from our thoughts and feelings, is that each emotion has a function and a wisdom of its own that needs to be listened to. In cultural settings and organizations in which feelings have often been seen as either obstacle to, or commodities enabling productivity (Gardner et al 2009), many of us have been systematically educated into ignoring both the body and our feelings (Young 2012). When this behavior becomes habitual some would argue that this even reduces rather than enhancing our capacity for effectiveness (Johnson et al 2000; Orbach 1994; see also Young 2012).

Within Movement Medicine the body is also sometimes referred to as a piece of land, or Earth, which participants are encouraged to take possession of, as the ultimate authority (the king or queen) of their own land (Roszak 1978). Interestingly, I have witnessed the obstacles to this accomplishment being raised by a participant whilst I was first in the community as a researcher. This participant very clearly linked the difficulty we might have in claiming self-authority with a feudal history that saw such power as a function of a divine right reserved only for the king, (with his obvious relationship to ownership of the peasantry) a linkage also made in Grint's (2010) thesis on the sacred in leadership, referring to a historical hierarchy viewed as inviolate. The participant in the community was also connecting our relationship with power and authority to our ancestral history, making clear links between the personal and the political, cultural and historical realms, enabling us to see the very practical way in which the micro (of personal experience) links to the macro, embedded in social relationships across time (see Emirbayer and Miche 1998 for a discussion of agency and time). The leader of the group, one of the founders readily acknowledged this suggestion. Both founders in the

community also extend their comments upon our disconnection from our bodies to include our cultural and religious history, as well as that of institutionalized organizational structures.

“One of the deep wounds of our culture is the broken relationship we have with our bodies. The history of western thought has led us to separate spirit from Earth, as we have been told that our heavenly Father is way up in an unreachable, celestial paradise and the body and its desires are temptations which have to be overcome in order to gain eternal life... This focus on subjugating the body's feelings and desires in order to perfect oneself continues... in the modern era. Now we try to control our bodies in deference to a physical ideal rather than a spiritual one...

To shift our awareness... to inviting the dancer to show us, from the inside, how the body feels... today, is, for most of us, a radical meditation in itself... the way we treat our physical body is a mirror of the cultural belief system... the 'modality of the time' has led us to ignore the subtle language of the body and only to listen when a crisis looms in the form of pain or disease. Movement Medicine gives us the experience and the tools to learn to listen” (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009: 87-88).

We might even see connections between the inability to even listen to the intimate realm of our own body to a difficulty in listening and hearing other signs of crisis in the world around us. Indeed in common with the beliefs promoted within the HPM, practices within this community suggest that if we are too busy numbing ourselves it is unlikely that we will be able to fully exercise responsiveness to the many difficulties manifesting outside our immediate sphere (Puttick 1997). Precisely because the body/heart/mind are all viewed as interconnected (to each other and the larger environment) and fundamentally indivisible within this practice, attention given to the body also means giving attention to the full spectrum of our feelings. This includes fear, anger, grief and joy as well as their many shades and hues. Alongside the view of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in general, this work adopts the position that our feelings, which are both rooted in our personal history and our bodies, need acknowledgement, in order for us to experience health and wellbeing, both individually and collectively (Orbach 1994). Construing this same process as part of the struggle to free ourselves from the many false roles and identities that our society and culture may have imposed upon us, Roszak (1978) argues that this is a moment in time when we simultaneously seek to free the Earth from a false identity (see also Swimme and Berry 1992). Our mechanistic dualism is construed as having harmed both equally. Destiny of person and planet, as I discussed in my prologue, are therefore seen as being irrevocably entwined.



The mind meantime, whilst not given primacy within the cosmology of the community is conceived of as an important influence in shaping our lived experience of reality. This may be through the repetition of our habitual, conditioned thought patterns (what we might otherwise refer to as our unconscious) or through the active choice of ways of thinking about the world that benefit both others and us. It is clearly acknowledged that patterns of thought are also often cultural, as well as familial, though as Bell, Taylor and Driscoll (2012) point out these patterns exist at the very real, material and structural level, as well as just the ideational.

A good example of this would be one of the discourses on the way in which many Westerners live within a cultural milieu that fosters discontent via the emphasis upon consumerism. Furthermore that this is a life style that it has become increasingly clear will, if continued, exhaust all ecological limitations. Based as it is on the economic growth model that is not viable for the entire planet this also means, as Mies points out, a need for “new visions and ways” (Mies and Shiva 1993: 253). Mies (1993) further suggests that one way to address this is for those in the industrialized West to embrace voluntary simplicity and to take responsibility for changing their consumption patterns, within what she describes as a consumer liberation movement. And while Bauman (2008) writes of the dangers of individualizing the ethical issues attached to such a conundrum, it seems likely that both individual and collective responses will be required to solve the ecological problems facing the increasingly interconnected globe. Within the Movement Medicine community one of the daily spiritual practices that I use to counter the Western compulsion to constantly acquire more things, involves the daily contemplation of the non-material aspects of my life that I am already grateful for. This is of course, addressing the psychological level of a cultural addiction to accumulation at a micro rather than a macro collective level - as such it is only one strategy (an individualized one at that) but one that I have found to have value. In my own life I also link it to campaigning on a political level, as my embodied experience suggests that both the micro and macro are levels that will need to be addressed if we are to change current consumption patterns.

Within the more general set of spiritual beliefs of the community, addressing the level of mind, beyond the specific subject of consumerism, it is further

proposed that clarity of perception is often unavailable to us, due to cultural filters that cloud our ability to see clearly what is in front of us and that our socially conditioned expectations have an enormous influence upon what actually occurs in our lives. Indeed in common with the view adopted by psychotherapy, but also with many other spiritual traditions, the beliefs within the community propose that we are often unconscious of the expectations or filters that shape what we perceive as going on around us and to us. The long term 'stories' that we tell are seen as having developed for good reasons, sometimes also involving very strong emotions at the point at which they were seeded. The mind, meantime, is conceived of as the medium with which we create our narratives, personally, culturally and globally. Becoming aware of what they are is seen as the first step to being in a more active relationship with them, seeing them and their effects and then changing them where necessary. This awareness, the self-same reflexivity that Emirbayer and Mische (1998) have suggested is the basis for problematizing the present order, in order to enable new and different imaginative capacities for the future. And as Sinclair comments on the individual level, "The narrative going on in my head – about me, my identity and history, my needs and desires – is mistaken for my entire self...Eastern thinkers suggest that we can create space between ourselves and our ego's..." (Sinclair 2009: 171). Within this community these processes are seen as functioning at both the individual (micro) level and the collective (macro) level. Giving value, or sacredness, if you will, to each cell in the body that goes to make the whole, not only reflects the holistic philosophy of the HPM and deep ecology approaches it is also intended to empower the individual as a potential change agent (Puttick 1997).

Writing very specifically from the perspective of leadership theory Sinclair (2009) refers to this kind of approach to working with the mind as generating more possibility for what she refers to as less-ego leadership, suggesting that reflection upon the self can open space that liberates both the self and others. And interestingly, in exploring transformation in human systems in their paper upon Advanced Change Theory, other scholars also make the interesting observation that successful organizational change generally requires leaders to change along with followers (Quinn et al 2000).

Leaders in the Movement Medicine community are very clear that we do not

have ultimate and total power to 'create our own reality', even through the application of the kinds of techniques being described, as all change occurs in embedded contexts, with an array of complex (structural) influences. They do however teach that we have choice about the meanings we give to what happens in our lives. They also openly acknowledge that making these kinds of adaptive changes can be threatening, painful and slow, as they came into being in the first place as a result of repeated application, just as many of our organizational and cultural habits did. Once in place of course, like the narratives discussed in chapter three, they often become 'taken for granted' or naturalized, even when harmful. Like the leaders in Quinn et al's (2000) study however, the leaders, in the Movement Medicine community, involved in engaging with the adaptive change process, often share the difficulty and vulnerability of this, openly, with followers. This is in direct contrast to Grint's model of a leadership that separates self and feelings from followers (Grint 2000; Quinn et al 2000; see also Gardner et al 2009 for a discussion on emotional expression, leadership and authenticity).

Within the Movement Medicine community, movement as a meditation is one of the main tools seen to enable practitioners to engage with this process of changing damaging narratives. Along with movement, this is accompanied by a variety of methods, including, conscious breathing, the compassionate tracking of how the mind works and focusing upon the present moment.

"In most Western traditions of thinking, breathing is a bodily by-product, with little relevance to the conscious self or its reasoning. In Eastern traditions, the breath is a gateway to the mind, a link which connects and unifies that which westerners so often dichotomise...I explore how breathing in a more conscious way can bring composure and attentiveness into leadership. Because breathing encourages us to become more aware of ourselves and our bodies in the here and now...conscious breathing can profoundly change what happens in many leadership situations" (Sinclair 2007: 112; see also Irigaray 2002; Gardner et al 2009).

The state of being referred to by Sinclair is fundamentally what Buddhism refers to as mindfulness (Kriger and Seng 2005). Bringing the kind of conscious awareness to witnessing the patterned, repetitive and often rather counter-productive habits within our thinking is also seen within this community as having the potential to assist us in moving towards Sinclair's "less-ego" state (Sinclair 2009: 166). My own embodied experiences of such practices over thirty years leads me to the conclusion that few who engage in such practices would suggest that this is anything other than a lifetime commitment, but they

do nonetheless indicate that there are considerable benefits to be gained from them (Benefiel 2005). In other words, that changing anything on an embodied level, be it self, organization or cultural narratives, takes time and a willingness to learn and to let go of the past. Sinclair (2009) includes the benefits of the kind of change being discussed here as, learning to really listen to others; realizing that others may have something to teach us (no matter what our formal position); respect; being willing to and developing awareness of our effect upon others; valuing process and relationships within the here and now and cultivating an awareness that achievement is often a team accomplishment. This is indeed very similar to what Kriger and Seng (2005) write about in their theory on leadership with inner meaning and the benefits to be gained through the cultivation of the four immeasurable states of mind, known as the Brahmavihara's,

“Said to grow in strength daily if one practices them, and that eventually they will come to encompass a person's entire being as well as the being of those around them...Here we see a truly dynamic, moment-by-moment, contingency theory of leadership based on on-going inner spiritual practice of love, compassion, heart-felt joy and equanimity...in everyday life” (Kriger and Seng 2005: 786).

### **What difference is 'conscious' embodiment felt to make?**

The next section highlights what practitioners of and followers with the Movement Medicine community have to say about their experiences of working with body, heart and mind with these kinds of intentions. The question posed to them was how they saw the practices employed in the community as impacting on their embodiment?

#### ***Remembering that we have a body***

“I think actually remembering that we do have a body. A lot of our culture, where there has been abuse, where there's been trauma, anything like that, people have a tendency to leave the body, so they're living from the neck upwards, thinking mind, maybe spiritual mind, maybe very, very connected in that way, but having lost a sense of the physical body, so any kind of movement practice that people are doing will start to put us more and more in touch with the body...getting to know the physicality of the body and what it's wounds are, what it carries, what it needs. I believe that you can't do any kind of spiritual practice or any kind of work outside of yourself, fully and successfully, without knowing what's going on the body...by really using the physicality of the body, the muscle, the bone, the flesh, really getting to know it, we are making a stronger and stronger connection to the earth. A lot of us, though you might not think it, are not actually on the earth, we haven't got our feet on the ground, we're floating and holding ourselves up away from the earth. The practice helps us feel the body, feel the weight of the body, not just the physical weight of the body, but what we actually carry as human beings, the stories, the personality, the habits, all that kind of thing, to feel the weight of that and to allow that to drop through the body and connect us to the ground, so we become more and more earthed...so that then we can really do the work of spirit, of emotion. If we start to feel emotions... which is what happens

when we start to dance... if we're not in our body those emotions will be too much for us, overwhelming, overpowering and out we go, don't want to feel it, it's too scary. We have to have that container of roots, earth, groundedness, physical body, so that we can dance with whatever arises. If we're out of our body we disconnect from the emotion, if the emotion isn't felt... we carry on doing the same old patterns, the same old habits, not ever fully engaging with who we really are. The same goes for mind, all the thoughts that go on in our lives, if they're not earthed, they're not connected to the body, if they are not rooted and grounded, it's a head trip...I've...got to be here and then I can think more clearly and know exactly what my body needs first, what my relationships need, what the bigger picture needs of me, it's coming from the gut and the belly, coming from the roots, the earth is connected, considering the earth in everything I do. So...if we don't do the practice of embodiment we may as well be out in space floating around. If you want to manifest something in life and you don't bring it to earth, it's just a dream. So we use the body as that connection to the earth, to the present, to our homes, to our work places, to what's around us. Without it, nothing that will really fulfill us will happen..."

### ***A whole new relationship with our bodies***

"I've seen a lot of people discover a whole new relationship with their bodies, a whole opening up of being in their body, experiencing themselves in the physical, which is a beautiful gift really. In a way one of the core teachings of Movement Medicine is that embodiment is a pre-requisite for conscious practice...and I think in our world and in our culture, that's of very high benefit. I see a lot of people having that effect from the practice ripple out into their lives."

### ***Becoming present***

"One of my revelations of late...was that I realize how un-present I am because I'm in my mind all the time. My mind is constantly planning things for the future or running through things that happened in the past or trying to control and make everything fit nicely in little boxes so that life's sorted and understandable and actually it's a tool that doesn't work. And really when I get into my body...with the dance, I can really see clearly how my mind is being overactive. It's not a thing I noticed before, so even that realization is very powerful for me at the moment. I think at other times in my life I've probably been more embodied than I am now because of high levels of stress at the moment but just that knowledge, that insight, ok, you're mind is, you're struggling to stay embodied, slow the dance down...It's not only in the dance, you know, it's in my interactions with people at the traffic lights; my interactions with business people; with my builder at the moment, who is really a source of a lot of stress; my partner, my relationship, all those things...That's a big part of embodiment for me is a real slowing down and doing the practice daily, brings that, it really brings it. I noticed in my dance over the last couple of days how different it is to how it was a couple of months ago and...it feels so wonderful when I can just be slow and just be in my body. I think with stress I jump straight out of my body..."

### ***Conscious from the head up***

"...It's like for much of the time we're walking around conscious from the head upwards and the practice allows people to discover the whole of their bodies and the absolute joy and delight and wisdom of the body...the body has as much memory as the mind does...there are undiscovered galaxies within us, pockets of emotion and all kinds of things waiting to be explored and released and discovered. The practice is designed to facilitate that discovery.

That can be a challenging and painful journey at times too, yes? It's not always joyful.

Absolutely...it allows you to move into the shadows, as well as the light and to go through them...It allows people to become curious about that so that rather than

wanting to transcend the shadows or avoid them there's an interest and a way forward and a way to move through them rather than stopping and trying to get rid of them."

### ***Feeling instead of abusing***

"I think you become more aware of the body but...I didn't look for this practice because of that...but because of other people...feeling connected and just also to see how they use their bodies, slightly different or very different has an effect actually...the senses are getting stronger through this practice, you sense much more who is behind you and how does it feel...after not even two years, you get a better sense of what's around you and maybe also what's inside you, that you really use your body in a different way. I was very much used to abuse, to go a little bit too much, too high, too fast, as I told you before all the time on the exaggeration and I think the more and more I dance I come to a point where I... learn to live peacefully together and to accept everyone's opinions and difference generally...And also to search in yourself and not all the time project. I discover so many things...you get to know your own story from another angle...better feeling what was really going on in your history...its no longer a problem which you want to get rid of...it gets kinds of clear...your body...your psychic system is just released...you don't have to carry theses kind of old stories with you...also for the others, the stiff ones, the ones who don't want to move, literally and physically...I'm much more like, soft with them, to allow the time they need...It gives you a lot of patience."

### ***Curious about communication***

"What you immediately experience in the dance is that you feel that you have a body and that your body works with you if you let it and so you become more aware of your body and maybe also of the signals that the body is sending...your awareness for the body increases..."

I think there is also another level of embodiment of the self in a way that you become more and more of the person that you can be...more encouraged to really live what you would like to live, not being stopped by things other people may think or tell you to do or whatever, conventions about what should be done or should not be done..."

I feel that the dance has really changed my way of communication with people. I am more self-confident, I am more open now and this is because I learned in the dance to stay in the situation...go on with the other person...go on and see what's happening...in the beginning...in real life I would have tried to quit the situation and get out in some way, so the dance was a way...for me to try to find out what could happen if I stay in the situation, without having the real environment...so now my general attitude really changed and I feel that it also works in my real life, so I'm more curious about what will happen in a communication situation than I have been let's say two years ago and I am able to stay in the situation and to see what is going on for a longer time and then decide what to do, so I'm more trusting of myself rather than following things, or rules that people say what should be done..."

### ***Greater openness and connection***

"The embodiment of the essential self...is at the heart of the work...Movement Medicine enables you to do that by giving you tools and processes that enable you to look at what's happened in the past and put it in it's place so that it doesn't have the same impact on you in the here and now, or in the future, so that you are able to live your life more fully. So for example, through something like the SEER process that Ya'acov has just introduced, that enables you to become more and more fully in touch with your intrinsic essential nature, your soul essence and allow yourself to become more and be more fully present and have a greater openness to others and an ability to touch people and thereby have a much deeper connection."

Can you say something about how you experience that process actually working? I'm

very well versed in what you're saying. I'm just thinking if we were to try and explain it to people who have no reference points how would you explain how it works?

It's quite a complex process...through a process of looking at...where energy and aspects of yourself become fragmented and left in the past or left somewhere...the SEER process enables you to explore, things that are in the here and now that are not fully engaged in and explore what it might have been that has happened at some stage in your own past, or even in the past of your ancestors, or things that have an impact on you from your family history and so therefore be able to look at those, explore them and then be able to re-integrate them...so you will have a greater energy available to you and therefore are able to live more fully.

Ya'acov talks about the ancestors becoming a source of support rather than a drain or a weakness, doesn't he?

Yes. Sometimes it's very difficult to know what it is in your past or what's happened...I suppose things like the Jewish people where there's been such a lot of oppression of them throughout history...they have a huge amount of soul work to do in order to be able to put that to one side, so that they can live more fully and they're not always kind of hindered by those things that have happened in the past....And other things in terms of history as well. I think the German people have a lot to get over as well, in terms of the impact that Nazism has, which has been so pervasive and carries on to this day in many ways...I think that the way the SEER process enables you to look at trauma is that it facilitates a process within a safe container, that you don't have to re-visit what happened and therefore get further traumatized by it...that the whole way the SEER process is undertaken enables you to explore it and feel safe to do so, so that you can then re-integrate those aspects of self that have been lost and therefore move forward in a more whole way, as a more whole person...

And what specific role do you think the body plays in that?

The role the body plays within that? It's very well know that trauma can have an impact on the body and that illness can occur as a result of trauma and so the way that you're engaged in movement you work through some of that trauma through movement and release aspects of what's happened. I find that for myself that being able to dance through past hurts, it really is beneficial to me. I don't always find that using words is actually as powerful as moving through things."

### ***Meeting others in a new way***

"The environment that I grew up in was an environment where, certainly my mother and I think probably my father as well, placed a great deal of emphasis on thinking, being intelligent, being able to think effectively, being able to think one's way out of a problem...Now basically I'm a very feeling kind of person...my feelings didn't get recognition...there didn't seem to me to be adequate space for the feelings that I had...and so being aware of the unconscious tensions that I have built up becomes an important way of recognizing how I'm feeling and recognizing what's going on and what I need to do...becoming more aware of what's going on in my body and loosening it up and being able to move more freely and being able to stand more erect, that's one of the things that's happened or is happening.

So what's important about being able to move more freely and stand more erect?

You know I meet the other person in a different way. I can stand my ground more clearly. I can be more aware of what's going on with the other person, if I'm not struggling with an internal conflict, or an internal split between one thing and other...I

can't think of the exact word I wanted. If...I feel that I'm solid and grounded and boundaried and ok with myself...then I can pay attention to the other person, so the more I untangle the knots which have built up over a long period of time in the way that I relate to myself physically the freer I am to move...the physical freedom is paralleled by...a mindfulness that would enable me to make a more appropriate response to whatever is happening at that moment, rather than the rigid, the ossified response that, oh yes, I know what this is and this is how I deal with it...

So where there is physical freedom there's mental freedom?

There's more flow of energy, it releases the energy so the energy has more chance to come out in a way that is appropriate...I used to be in a place where I was out of touch with my own emotions...everything was a struggle and I didn't know how to avoid it, how to stop it, to change it...for 28 years I was a teacher and I turned up everyday in school and I got through the day and sometimes it wasn't too bad, some of the things that happened weren't particularly good...but it was really astonishing one day when I went to an interview for starting a counseling course, a therapy course in Bath and by the middle of the day I suddenly thought this is what I want to do...a light went on...but prior to that, the ignorance, the lack of understanding, the lack of awareness of what was going on meant that I didn't have any room to move...

Lack of awareness about yourself?

Yes, because...it's a paradoxical sort of a thing because if you've just got to turn up every day it may be that you can't afford to think too much about what you're feeling because that might make you think well I don't want to turn up, you know I'd much rather be doing something else and well what would you rather be doing, well there's nothing else to be doing, so therefore you've got to turn up so therefore you've got to not pay attention to what you're feeling, but there does come a point where it became possible to look at my feelings and then suddenly it's a bit like a see-saw when it tips, there's a whole different possibility..."

### **Re-sacralizing the material realm?**

A number of feminist scholars (Bednarowski 1992; King 1989; Radford Ruether 1983; 1992) have discussed the ways in which the Judeo-Christian cosmology discussed in the third chapter of my thesis has promoted not only the association of sex with sin, but generally misogynistic and body-negative attitudes – a state of affairs which continues even in many new religious movements. In spite of this,

“There are a few minority traditions, reformist movements and NRM's that attempt to create a holistic, body-positive, pro-female spirituality, with some success (Puttick 1997: 104).

It seems reasonably clear from listening to followers within the Movement Medicine community, that this is certainly experienced as one of them. Interviewees, both male and female were generally agreed that movement as a spiritual practice assisted them to come into a renewed relationship with their bodies and their physicality, in a cultural context in which, it was suggested by



several interviewees, many of us privilege the mind and become cut off from the needs and pleasures of the body. This emphasis on mind was, in itself, linked to traumatic experiences that it was further suggested can make it challenging for people to actually experience their own physicality due to emotional wounds, memory of which is carried in and by the body. One interviewee said she believed that complete success, whether spiritually or otherwise, was quite simply not achievable without being aware of what is actually going on for the body - indeed that ignorance of its communications is also potentially catastrophic. This same interviewee, herself a leader within the community and one of the pathfinders in the process of beginning to train leaders within the community, said that she believed that connecting with and employing our bodies in a physical way was the key to being able to tolerate strong emotion, accept ourselves and avoid being overly focused on our mental patterns, or mind. Listening to ones own body therefore was seen as the key to really being present on earth and being able to respond what is unfolding in and around us, for ourselves, in relationship and to the environment in general.

This was seen as being achievable within the context of this community's practices through learning to Awaken the Dancer, a metaphor for a practice employed with the intention to bring the kind of awareness that Sinclair (2009) talks about, not just to the breath but to the whole body. Such experience was variously acknowledged as something with the capacity to gift followers with joy, delight and revelation, in terms of connecting with their own inner wisdom. But also as something with the potential to reveal what Kostera (2012), after Jung (1959/1991; 1921/1977), refers to as the shadow, or 'negative' aspects of self, integration of which can bring challenges as well as rewards. Some of the shadows brought into the light of consciousness, mentioned by interviewees included, attempts to exert control over life in general and the people around them; abusing the body; projection of the shadow onto others; compartmentalizing; having an overactive mind in an unhelpful way; recognizing high stress levels; being inhibited and limited by social convention; avoidance of conflict; feeling fragmented by past experiences including things that occurred trans-generationally (something which was very specifically discussed was the ongoing the impact of the second world war); being out of touch with feelings and imprisoned by occupational demands.

Kostera's work in *Organizations and Archetypes* intimates that developing awareness of the shadow is part of the initial process of beginning the work of integrating and perhaps even changing it.

"Certainly, the Shadow is difficult to accept and its acceptance is not an act but a long-lasting process, demanding significant conscious effort and an openness to people, their faults and weaknesses, and indeed, one's own. The effort is worth making, however, since the Shadow is dangerous precisely because it is unconscious and unaccepted (Jung, (1959) 1990). An important step towards the integration of the Shadow is the realization of its existence, and an acceptance of the Shadow as part of one's self...As a result, the Shadow releases frozen life energy that can literally heal the person or the organization, breathe new life into them. A person or an organization balanced in this way will be more open to people and more likely to use their energy to achieve positive objectives" (Kostera 2012: 79).

And although Kostera's (2012) book is written primarily about organizational process, if we also incorporate the notion that everything is interconnected, it seems obvious that the health and well-being of larger systems is profoundly influenced by the health and well-being of the all the cells (individuals) of the larger bodies of which they are a part. Though of course as Bell and Taylor (2004) point out, there are inherent dangers in what we might call privatizing organizational stresses and strains, in terms of the kind of isolation that may derive from it, when spirituality is harnessed to any kind of managerialism that seeks to hold the individual wholly responsible for elements that may be highly contextual. Running the risk therein of becoming, "transformed from a potentially enlightening into a potentially repressive project" (Bell and Taylor 2004: 439). It seems quite clear to me that this work is not the kind of undertaking that can ever be imposed from the top down and that any attempts to do so would constitute precisely the form of totalitarianism that Grint (2010) alludes to in closing his own treatise on the sacred in leadership.

Nonetheless interviewees talk about insights from their movement practice not only having wider application in their lives, but actually also gradually changing their lives off the dance floor too. This includes the recognition of the need to slow down in order to address stress and interactions with others in general; an increased sensitivity and ability to respond to the outside environment, including a greater ability to tolerate and accept difference and diversity, based it sometimes seems, on an increased capacity to feel comfortable with self. One interviewee talked about having a strengthened capacity to be true to what she experiences as her core self (Kostera 2012; Maslow 1962) which in turn

increased her confidence and openness in relationship with others, even enabling a deeper tolerance for conflict. This was echoed in a number of the interviews alongside the view that increased physical freedom was something that becomes mirrored in the mental and emotional realms - leading to stated improvements in well-being for both the individual and those around them. It certainly seems as though engaging and involving the body and the emotions as part of spiritual practice not only has a number of benefits to well-being, but that this well-being, experienced on an individual level also has the potential to percolate outwards from the individual into the wider collective. Wheatley's (2005) systemic frame on *Leadership for Uncertain Times* suggests that we need new stories that can help to unleash the inherent, underlying capacity for healthy and creative self-organization at the heart of all living systems.

If we also recall Kostera's (2012) notion that it is precisely those qualities that we reject, whether, individually or collectively which often hold the key to our increased vitality and health, perhaps it is indeed time to create new plot lines that return the body and the emotions, as both archetypes and embodied, embedded realities, with as much wisdom to contribute to finding our way forward, as the mind. In doing so we may be also be able to change our relationships to the realms that have traditionally been associated with them and a way of relating to both the feminine and the earth which has de-valued both to everyone's detriment. Before examining leadership in the final section of interviews, we look at the last of these realms in the form of exploration of the role of nature and the relationships that the community sees itself as having with the subject and practice of sustainability.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Sustainability, Eco-psychology, Sanity and Well-being.

“As embodied beings, we can only fully understand who we are by having an awareness of our physical nature; as embedded beings, self-understanding can only come if we are equally aware of our physical environment (Stevens, 2009). By extension, we need a concept of embedment (Stevens, 2010): that our inclusion in the environment is an essential part or characteristic of our selves, meaning that who we are is intimately connected to where we are, as individuals and as societies” (Stevens 2012)



*Figure 3 Digging a 'grave' for ceremonial burial*

#### Introduction

Shrivastava (1994) connects the kind of ecological strands at work within the Human Potential Movement, to the liberal impulses of liberty, freedom and democracy at the heart of the American Revolution. A relationship with nature that is very different to that of industrialized cultures is however, also an integral aspect of traditional shamanism, as well as other indigenous wisdom traditions (Abram 1997; Halifax 1982; Eliade 1964; Spretnak 1991). And certainly within the kind of worldview represented by neo-shamanism, unlike that described as typical of most approaches to organizational studies by Shrivastava (1994), the acknowledgement of the ecological interconnectedness of the whole web of life and human dependence upon its environment are usually seen as central

(Bullis and Glaser 1992; Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009).

There tend to be considerable crossovers between those who express interest in and practice neo-shamanism and neo-pagans, wiccans and others, such as druids, following earth-based spiritualities (although as my interviews show, there are also those from Quaker and others who originally came from Christian backgrounds involved in Movement Medicine per se). All such earth-based practices emphasize nature as sacred and sentient. Many of them are critical of the worldview that views the earth as a dead, or what Shrivastava (1994) refers to as a CASTRATED<sup>39</sup> resource existing exclusively for human use (see also Curry 2011; Plumwood 1993; Radford Ruether 1992). Rituals conducted from within a worldview based on belief in the sentience of the earth and all her inhabitants often includes acknowledgement of seasonal and natural processes. And, in my experience, when performed repeatedly over time, hold the potential to change the perceptions conditioned by the more predominant views of modern, industrialized society (Budapest 1989; Luhrmann 1989). Indeed research conducted for Greenpeace by Macnaghten (2003) suggests that the discourses about a globally threatened environment in need of saving by an amorphous global community tended to be too abstract for most of us, leading ultimately to further disconnection and disengagement. Rather, that if we want to engage people in meaningful change in this area that it is important to provide embodied access points that are both meaningful and valuable in tangible ways in the here and now.

Earth-based spirituality here in the West, which provides just that, is often strongly influenced by and actively involved in feminism and ecological movements (Christ 1997; Starhawk 1982,1987; Radford Ruether 1992). And although they are polytheistic and animistic, there tends to be a focus on this world rather than the 'next' due to the philosophy of immanence, so that concerns with the fulfillment of personal potentials can also be accompanied with a wider, more altruistic focus on environmental and social justice issues of the kind described in my section on data collection (Arweck 2002; Maslow 1943; Morris 2006; Roszak 1968, 1978; Starhawk 1987).

Tracey (2012) suggests that religious organization with a this-world theological

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<sup>39</sup> A mnemonic which he suggests reflects organizational theories based on - Competition; Abstraction; Shallowness; Theoretical Immaturity; Reification; Anthropocentric; Time (dependent or ahistorical); Exploitable and Denaturalized.

orientation (which certainly describes The School of Movement Medicine) towards the redemption of society as well as soul may often play prominent, if unacknowledged roles in social change. A view also validated by an analysis of shareholder activism with respect to key global social issues spanning 35 years, conducted by Proffitt and Spicer (2006) which demonstrates that

“...religious organizations were behind around 60% of the more than 2000 shareholder proposals in the US on topics relating to international human rights and labor standards. It was only when religious organizations had successfully legitimated these issues that public pension funds began to take them seriously. This is consistent with insights from the sociology of religion, which has shown that religious groups and organizations may be “crucibles of social movements” (Tracey 2012: 18).

Within the cosmology of Movement Medicine, activism of this kind is directly linked to the symbolism and cosmology of the practices, which are constantly employed as encouragements to embody our embedded interconnections with the web of life. Within the mandala, or spiritual map of the practice, the four sets of three lines around the edge of the mandala represent the four elements of earth, fire, water, and air. Each element is related to as a real physical presence, both inside us and out, as well as a symbolic system that describes differing aspects of being human. These also correspond to what are referred to as the four directions within many cosmologies, including the ancient First Nation traditions and Wiccan practices of neo-paganism (Morris 2006; Starhawk 1987).

The element of earth is related to as a guardian, teacher or living spirit of the earth, often conceived of as feminine in some way, as mother or grandmother or one of the archetypal faces of the divine mother, Mother Earth, Pacha Mama, or Shekinah. Leaders in the community make clear linkages in their teaching, between the way in which the western culture treats both the earth and the body as aspects that are viewed as resources that exist for exploitation or as subjects of control and domination, rather than as sources of wisdom.

Developing a deeper awareness of the body is seen as a way of coming back in contact with our own roots and meditation often involves focusing attention upon the earth and our own body in relation to the earth. The earth is consciously cultivated as a ‘place’ of support and nourishment, both literally and metaphorically. In attempting to change the disassociation that most Westerners have from the earth and increase respect, we are encouraged to relate to ‘her’ as a sentient, conscious, communicative being. Whilst this clearly

goes against the dominant rational paradigm in industrialized culture, it is seen as way to generate healing and repair of the damage that is caused by the rationalist worldview (Darling Khan and Darling Khan 2009; see also Buechler 1995; Curry 2011).

A variety of practices, some of them directly imported from indigenous traditions, such as burial ceremonies and vision quests, seek to strengthen this relationship. Dance meditations, rituals and altars also incorporate the earth element very directly and practices seek to encourage a different cultural attitude to the Western norm. The extracts below deal first with what interviewees have to say about their experiences of engaging with spiritual practices that focus on developing an embodied relationship with nature. In being asked what part they feel that nature plays in the work of Movement Medicine, this is what interviewees had to say. These are followed by a section enquiring into the question of what kind of contribution participants feel that the work has to make towards a more sustainable future?

#### ***Cranking up connection***

“Massive...obviously, earth and fire, air and water are massively strong...And of course, Earth images and had a huge Gaia thing going on, so a huge amount of natural imagery...Since then I think as I said earlier, walking around the Spring and seeing buds and then this might sound mad, but it probably won't sound mad to you. So I get dropped off last week for a walk on the beach and three deer appear, almost like walking alongside me as I'm walking up the beach and I find myself really enjoying that, loving that, really enjoying it but then looking for symbolism in that as well. There was something about me having three children and looking at their energy, looking at a little bit of vulnerability of the three deer but then the energy and the fun and the flight that they did when they jumped over the fence, so I think it's opened me up. I would always have said that I was somebody who loved nature, I love the sea, I love the mountains...I worked pretty much in the outdoors for 5 years, but I think it's enhanced that again, you know, it's cranked it up a notch...”

#### ***We are the flesh of the earth***

“... Ultimately that is the source of the work, our connection to nature. We're working with the elements; they're always brought into every dance. Every workshop that we do is geared towards learning to live with respect, to engage with the elements more, to look after nature, a lot of our work involves going out into nature, to go and be there amongst it, to communicate with it and to bring it into our lives. To make it more part of our lives, really. For those of us who maybe live in the city or don't have that strong connection it doesn't take long before you're really learning about it and finding ways to be there. Obviously, it's not possible for everybody to suddenly move out to the countryside...I've ended up living in Brighton, in the city for a while and having my own struggles with that, having always been someone who's lived very rurally and trying to work out how do we do this? How do we bring nature more to us if you like? My house is full of plants, full of looking after animals in a smaller way, communicating with them, just being conscious of the seagulls above me, living by the sea. What are their needs? It's all very well to get angry with them because they tear your rubbish up and throw it all over the pavements but what is your rubbish doing there in the first place?

What are the seagulls trying to tell you? And also living there to know, I've got to consider nature in everything that I do. I can't just go to the supermarket and fill my trolley with plastic and I can't just buy meat from here, there and everywhere, I've got to live very consciously. It's harder to do that in the city, I think. There's so much availability to everybody in the shops, in the supermarkets, so there's a complete blindness to it. Some of the little projects I see happening, like little areas being turned into vegetable patches or communities starting to teach their children about where their lettuces and tomatoes that are in the shop come from, a little bit more awareness in schools, things like that, which are all possible projects that any Apprentice Movement Medicine Teacher who is living in the city, could turn into a project, just touching into, nature is still here...to try and help people change their awareness. It's a very big topic, especially when you think of some of the big cities. In many ways it feels impossible but I don't think it is and it's just about starting in a very small way. And as I said before the more we connect to our bodies the less able we are to abuse the nature around us because we start to recognize that nature is us. We are nature. We are the bones of the earth. We are the flesh of the earth. There's no separation, so however we treat the earth we treat ourselves. The more we look after ourselves, the more we can't help but want to look after the earth. It's a two-way relationship. What can we do wherever we live to serve?"

### ***Bringing people back to their fundamental nature***

"On the immediate level nature is one of the core languages of Movement Medicine. We work with the elements. We work with this thing called the Tree of Life. It's kind of nature, not nature. As a practice, it does explicitly encourage people to reconnect directly with nature, even if a lot of the time when we're practicing we're not working directly in nature...Sometimes in the past I've been frustrated by this slightly bizarre thing of dancing the elements indoors in a dance room at the Rill Centre when it's all out there...so I think there's a paradox in there. There's room to make is less abstract. At the same time there's this extraordinary thing that on some level this is a shamanic practice and in the dance we're kind of connecting with the spirit of the elements. Experientially, my experience at least, it's very extraordinary what happens in those situations when we call those elements, that for me there is something that happens, something that arrives, an energy that comes into the space which comes from somewhere else. So I think there's quite an interesting thing there about nature, the physicality of nature and the spirit of nature. I think that the use of nature in the Movement Medicine language is a very key part of bringing people back to their own fundamental nature, that's a kind of an unintended pun, but for me, Movement Medicine is a lot about remembering who and what we are and that is part of nature..."

### ***Giving back***

"I think that nature and the environment are a really big inspiration for the work. The work comes from the nature, we use the animals, we use the elements, we use a lot of things from the natural world to inspire us and to find our own authenticity and we ARE part of nature, as human beings we're not separate from nature, we are part of that nature and so it's natural that we use that sort of imagery and symbolism and energies to work with. And in another way, it's really focused on what we have to give back to nature, not just to take from nature but to take care of nature and to give back to nature. And in the Movement Medicine community there have been a lot of initiatives to help save and preserve nature. The community has worked closely with a lot of NGO's that are dedicated to protecting the planet and to taking care of nature. It's become I think a huge, huge, part of the work."

### ***Considering our footprints***

"I think the place of nature is important...the philosophy of Movement Medicine is that you have a lot to gain from nature. Things like walking in nature or even moving in



nature are beneficial to your soul and for myself I know that when I'm feeling stressed for example, if I take a walk in nature, it's very beneficial to me. And then there are other aspects to it as well, in terms of what's important. Some of the things that Ya'acov and Susannah are involved in would be similar to concepts of the footprint that we have on the earth, that we need to consider ways of diminishing that, because currently, we're using up our resources at far too great a rate and we can have much less of an impact, negatively, in the world, if we consider a bit more about how we live and what we're doing in terms of sustainable living and eco-friendly use of resources.

Do you think that the way that nature is related to within the Movement Medicine work actually translates into solid action for people outside of workshops?

For myself I think it does. I can't speak for others but I think the focus on the elements means that, for me, for example, on a daily basis, whilst I'm taking my shower, I'm also considering water and what happens to it throughout the world and so when I'm doing just my daily maintenance things within my life I tend to make linkages to other things and I think that has come through Movement Medicine. Things like the earth, as you go through the elements, I have a tendency to bring things together, so walking on the earth, what does that mean and how does my walk on the earth impact on those around me and the society in which I live."

### **Sustaining Nature?**

Whilst dialogues about nature had, on the whole, a fairly upbeat positive tone, introducing the concept of sustainability into the interview conversations revealed a more ambiguous and complex layer, where some of the difficulties and struggles associated with any change process became more evident. Carroll's (2004) work on *Sustainability and Spirituality* contends that moving beyond merely cosmetic ideas of sustainability is currently so counterculture that it is really only being engaged with by communities based on spiritual beliefs that extend beyond technology, efficiency and economics. This suggests that such communities may well provide rich resources for further studies of what the actual mechanisms of leadership geared towards changing attitudes towards the environment may be. Bearing this in mind this next section asks interviewees, what kind of contribution they felt that the community and its practices has to make towards a more sustainable future. This is some of what they had to say.

#### ***It's a big mess***

"Well I think I'm really sitting with that as a dilemma actually. On one level I think it has masses to contribute because we try...to exemplify that connection with all of life and everything being connected...For months now I've been sitting with this, I'm not sure that it translates into everyday practices as well as maybe they would like it to. And I think there are just so many challenges for everybody on so many levels, in how to live our lives and how to, there's a massive contradiction right in the middle of it all around money and how much money everybody needs to do the work and how we need to live

our lives in order to make that money and how we have to travel and then how accountable we feel both to ourselves individually and each other in the way we go away from the group and live our lives – the stuff we do, where we chuck out our rubbish, the way we drive our cars, are we really being very honest about that. So I suppose that at the very hard end of the wedge I feel really quite worried about it all. There seems to be this beautiful thing like the Long Dance at one end of the extreme of what's possible and yet I just don't know how rooted that is in reality, so that it translates back into everyday life...and realizing as I've tried to make changes myself how really fucking difficult it is, you know, to give up the car, consume consciously all the time, or consume much less. At the same time I'm commuting to London... Listening to Susannah and Ya'acov describing their new life, being custodians of this land and how wonderful that is and everything. I think that's an amazing aspiration and at the same time...A very cynical part of me says we're enabling the leaders of the movement to demonstrate a sustainable lifestyle of one kind at our expense and that throws me into a really weird place, so I struggle with quite a lot of these things actually. We would all like to live that way. Should we be flying round the world to do this work together but then if you don't how do you create the community? I don't know. It's a big mess...

One of the interesting examples of that is I feel I need to be involved in terms of getting involved with activism. There was the big demonstration leading up to the G8 around tackling hunger and it was in Hyde Park the same day as Ya'acov's workshop in London and I felt really torn because actually where I really wanted to be was in Hyde Park, I didn't really want to be in the workshop pretending that we were living a beautiful life when actually there was this real hard edged reality that I wanted to be engaged with and my heart was there really. I'd put quite a lot of energy into supporting that leading up to that day, so I felt quite weird not actually being there and it grated with me a bit because I was overhearing conversations by people at the workshops who weren't part of our Apprenticeship, this was an open weekend. There were lots of conversations in the corridors and in the toilets by people just going, "Oh wow, this so amazing man, really hippy, new age, oh I'm feeling so this...." and I was just thinking this is such crap, just get out there and do something...it's me and my big struggle and I know that is where I come back to. I've had that conversation with Ya'acov many a time really, how to manage all that? We were in Israel together several years ago. I just found it very, very difficult because I was going into very hard places and talking to people about really hard stuff and then trying to come back to the dance floor and feel that what we were doing there was meaningful...

In terms of the peace process in the Middle East?

Yeah. And he was just telling me to get out of my head and into my feet more and I got that because I know that my tendency is to go out more and not look after myself, so I do get that. There's always the big but hovering though, BUT. Actually we're running out of fucking time and how much time can I spend wafting about going Ah I feel good. I'm struggling with it at the moment. I thought that the Apprenticeship was going really well until the last module and then I've had a crisis of faith really.

Are you able or willing to say a bit more about that? What triggered it?

It's just all about the same stuff really, the dilemmas and it's coincided with me trying to change my life, to downsize, to try and really live a more sustainable life and to contribute in the way that I can use my strengths. So there are a lot of things around. I need to find that path, to find that way in the communities that I'm connected to and I feel it's less easy to do in the Movement Medicine community as a whole. Maybe it

just needs to be more local, more rooted, maybe that's why. So I'm having to think quite carefully about where I go from here with all of this. I'm not sure."

### ***Power of community***

"I think...the more grounded you are, the more connected to the earth you are, then the more consciously awake you are. When you do something like throw a piece of rubbish away that you could have re-cycled the guilt is too strong, you're too awake, you're too conscious. It's just no longer possible to do some of the things that we might have been able to do so freely years ago without even thinking about it. Now out of a place of integrity, it's not possible. Being grounded changes your whole perception on life. Like saying that there is no such place as 'away'<sup>40</sup>, you can't throw something away. Basically you're putting it in another countries back yard or you're putting fumes into the atmosphere, there's no such thing as away. On just a very simple level in your own home you become more conscious. You want to live with more awareness of your environment around you. Then on the big scale, the other scale, you've got things like the Long Dance where people are coming together to raise money; we've just raised another £40,000 for The Pachamama Alliance to help with protecting the rainforest...Because we're all doing it together, because it's such a community thing and we all have a place in that, we're not just handing over some money, we're actually doing something very physical, very supportive, very connected, with each other, there's much more power in that, there's much more support for us in that. It's sometimes easy and sometimes not, depending upon your circumstances to put a bit of money in an envelope or a jar and say, "Ok that's my contribution" but in this way we're not just giving the money, we're making the whole situation more conscious, in the world. We made a little film at the Long Dance that Ben has filmed and photographed and recorded, a song for the Achuar tribe, to say, "We're here, this is what we're doing, this is what we're offering to you, our support, so massive connection there from one community to another, to say, "Hey, we're here for you". So you've got the little pod groups in the Long Dance, supporting each other, witnessing each other, helping each other out and then on the wider scale, the same thing, we see you, tribe, we're here and we're really supporting you and we really want you to know that, keep fighting for your rights. And yet there's such joy in that...It's feels so much stronger to do it that way, with your community than to do it by yourself.

Then there's the compassion people learn to feel for others, through this work, the understanding that people have, the lack of judgment. Then also bringing the animal kingdom into our work, shamanically, teaching people about their connection to spirit animals but also through that, through really connecting with the animal kingdom themselves. So consciously whether we're eating meat, is it ok? Where has that animal come from? What does your own spirit animal feel about that and how can you learn to do things a little bit more ethically with regards that? We're always encouraged as teachers, when we go to another country, to do our best to go on the train rather than to fly. Practical things like that. If we absolutely have to fly, get out there and plant some trees to help with your carbon footprint. There's constant little reminders and if you find something difficult to do there is a community there to support you and say, "Hey, here's a way to do that", or we can advise you on easier ways to manage travel or whatever, you're not doing it alone and that feels really helpful. People who know your struggles, who know what it's like to deal with this stuff. I think that's the collective energy that's behind it that's beneficial and so many more messages getting out there into the world because of it, the writing that people do, the stories people tell, the manifestations of people's dreams. You can't go through a Teacher Training without having a project to do as part of your training. If you're going for your graduation from your teacher training you have to show the project that you are offering to the world, whether it's looking after a forest of trees which was David's

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<sup>40</sup> Julia Butterfly Hill, an environmental activist, suggests that there is no such place on the planet as "away" in which we can just tuck our rubbish out of sight.

contribution in Ireland, making something, performing something, going into some organization where there's a need for support, maybe in the community like women who have been sexually abused for instance, children's organizations, working with the disabled or mentally ill, you've got to be engaged with something like that. You can't go through the Apprenticeship and the Teacher Training for your career, there's got to be more to it."

### ***Connections to the natural world***

"Huge, potentially because the work is all about increasing our awareness and our consciousness of our environment, our connection with the natural world. Somewhere down the line that means we have to take stock of our consumption of resources. I think that on all sorts of levels it promotes sustainable practice. I would say that there are some paradoxes in the sense that at the highest level of possibility the work is a real catalyst for the creation of more sustainable ways of living and there's a shadow side to it where people quite happily get on airplanes several times a year to come and do workshops and do their own personal healing, which is a shadow of the commercial, new age movement as a whole. Even our leaders quite happily get on planes to the Amazon, you know, every winter, in order to protect the Amazon. I'm not saying that's wrong but there is a paradox there, which is simply a mirror of the wider situation. We are all, to a certain degree, hypocrites. I mean that in the best possible way, without judgment, but we are in a situation where we're challenged every day and every step of our lives in the choices we make and Movement Medicine is no exception to that...a lot of the work that's around personal history and collective history is not about getting rid of it or pretending it's not there, it's about actually really going into it, transforming it, so that challenges become resource and so that wounds become wisdom and all that kind of stuff. So I think that this is something that relates to your question which is that there's a particular perspective that I think is really useful, in that there's a realism in Movement Medicine, if it's applied consciously and in a down to earth way, there's a realism about, well this is where we are, we want to change that, this is where we think we might want to get to, we don't really know, we might well end up over here, so there's a step by step. And again that relates partly to the inclusion of yin, feminine energy, as a way of just following what happens, rather than making a plan that's abcdef and we've got to get to f and we've got to go through, you know, in a similar way to when you and I were working on the Earth Dreamers project we never knew what was coming next...but each step seemed to just grow very naturally and organically out of the previous one. I think that the very word sustainable has to a certain extent been hi-jacked, so that even when we use that word we start thinking in terms of quite masculine plans, "Well here's the sustainable future. How are we going to get there? And actually sustainability is just being here and taking the next step."

### ***Empowering communities***

"I think they're making it already. Part of it is empowering people in the Movement Medicine community and the style of leadership we've talked about, I think that's a huge part of sustainability, empowerment of individual communities. You know the kind of example of leadership and power that we've experienced, I've experienced in my life, with school headmasters, army, being in the army in South Africa, very briefly but, government in South Africa. Power corrupts in most examples. It's not used in a responsible way at all in most examples I can see. I think that the way Movement Medicine empowers the members of its community to really stand up with integrity, as one of the qualities, is the only way we can sustain seven billion people on the planet. It cannot be any more every man for himself or stand on others to get ahead, that whole philosophy is unsustainable. So I think that Movement Medicine has got a hell of a lot to offer, just by the example that is set. It's phenomenal, the way they lead, the way they run the Long Dance. Really this is not about me, this is about my community and what I can offer to my community.

There's such power in that. I'm really learning that for myself. It's quite a new thing. It's so beautiful to give. I haven't been a very generous person in my life I realize and to give is such a gift. It's like wow I'm useful, I have something to give. I am of use to the world, to my community, to my family, the greater community. It's such a beautiful feeling. I think that Movement Medicine has really inspired me to live more like that.

How do you see the connection between gifting and sustainability then?

A very strong link for me. I see the world operating very much on each man for himself, survival of the fittest, you know. And to be the biggest, the strongest, to get ahead I need to stand on other people and I've lived like that, I've run businesses like that. I've changed my philosophy in the last short while and really, to give, to gift is such a beautiful feeling. If communities operated like that, in a its not about me, its about my community, I think every small pocket of community becomes much more sustainable because we're working together, you know, it's not about the individual anymore. I feel that shift in me. I see it out there in the world as well and I think there has been a shift more towards that kind of thinking. I spent a lot of my business life in advertising and the film industry and I even hear about that shift there. In advertising. Wow, what a place to shift in that way. It's not about the bottom line, it's not about profit, advertising was always about that, I'm starting to hear that sort of speak in the advertising world so I definitely see it out there in the world and I feel it in myself.

So when you say you've adopted a new philosophy can you say something about what the motivation for that kind of change was in your life?

I think the main thing that motivated me was an ill feeling in my body, a horrible feeling in my body, a grumpiness when I got home from work. I was unhappy...It's not a nice feeling to only look after oneself. It didn't make me feel very good. Change is a slow process for me. It's not a quick thing but I've definitely built it in. In a business sense I've got close relationships with a few people I work with, like a real brotherhood, like I love these people and I want to look after them. Working with them is joyous, where before it wasn't, because I know I'm looking after them, empowering them. The salaries I pay I know I'm fair, I know I'm not conniving and scamming and trying to make myself extra money. I don't operate like that and I used to. I feel more openhearted. I feel like I came from a place of fear, you know, closed, fearful, there's not enough and I need to gather and be selfish and keep for myself and I feel like I'm slowly moving away from that into a place of love. I mean what's the point if I've got a lot and it's all mine. I want to share it; it's about sharing it. So probably a closed heart and a grumpy demeanor was my main motivation."

### ***Dealing with the emotional response to what's happening...***

"...I think there's a link between personal evolution and getting to a place where you just have to do something different...not tolerating things that aren't working. And there's a sense of empowerment in terms of actual tools for making change. So I'm thinking there are things like incantations, being able to step back into one's ancestry and forward into the future, that sense of having a relationship with people and the planet in the future, a sense of being a citizen of the world – that lateral axis of self, other, environment. For me these are all things that make it harder to behave in an unsustainable way...on one of the modules someone came from one of the organizations that we were fund-raising for at the Long Dance and gave a talk on aluminum foil and what effect the mining of aluminum has on the earth. I kind of knew about aluminum and that it's not great but there was something about hearing about it first hand. It was particularly about the people on the land where the mining was taking place and that sense of that could be me. These people are people just as I'm a person. Is it right that my having a take away in a foil box means that they have nowhere to live or that the place where they live is hugely polluted?

There's something too about developing the skills to process the emotion that brings up. I ought to say that I haven't done the Pachamama Alliance, Be the Change symposium and I mention that because I know that part of that is very much about dealing with the emotional response to what's happening to the environment. So that capacity to be with the emotion that thinking about sustainability brings up. For me, it's guilt. If I'm to accept that some of the things that I do are not sustainable then I feel guilty about all the times that I've done it before and having the capacity, rather than being overwhelmed or paralyzed, to actually feel that and let that be the spur to do something different.

Practically...having the aims of environmental sustainability, social justice and human fulfillment stated explicitly as part of the organization...It's another one of these all-inclusive things. As I dance for myself, I am also the other and I dance for the other. I'm also the earth and I dance for the earth. But...that on its own isn't enough, it also requires the action that changes what's happening. It's not perfect and it's tricky. I'm remembering back to huge long arguments about whether we should include not using plastic bottles as part of the ethical commitment of Movement Medicine teachers and how some people felt very strongly that it was an important thing to include and other people said well that's not going to make any difference at all and there are much more important things we can do. Actually, that's a strength too, this idea of micro steps. I may not be able to save the earth tomorrow but I can choose to carry my water in a reusable bottle and I'm making a step. So that sense of micro-practice and small steps, setting the big intention but again that thing of it coming from where I am. I'm not going to turn into an eco-warrior overnight...A sustainable future, how the fuck are we going to do that? But it's my belief that when I choose to have that intention then life presents the little ways that I can do that. Tolerating the discomfort, I suppose that's part of it too. To know actually that we've messed up royally and I'm part of that.

### ***Mad Dream***

"Well I think that for me that's at several different levels. There's the explicit strand in Movement Medicine, where it's talked about and it's valued...And then at a deeper level, I think that the mess that the world is in, from where I'm sitting, is mostly to do with that Dream of the North. That dream of if I buy another thing or if I have another expensive whatever then my life will be better. That dream is so utterly fucked and so utterly not the truth. It IS a mad dream. And I think that the deep thing about the work is that what it keeps doing is bringing us back into what's really truly true, which is that relationships and love of one's self and what you're wearing and what you look like and what you sit on and all of that is really kind of unimportant, that really the other stuff is what matters and this work, along with many other practices like meditation or whatever, but this practice, for me, is just so rich in terms of enabling us to come to that place of self love and come to that place of realness with what's actually true rather than buying into the things and stuff.

One of the things I like looking around the dance floor are that there are quite a lot of older, wrinkly, overweight people who are right in there at the heart of it. Susannah and Ya'acov themselves...are body beautiful and I'm not saying there aren't any body-beautiful people because there definitely are but somehow there is a real support for people not to get caught up in if you do this practice then you will become something which is very, very connected to that mad dream, that buying into the superficial, buying into the idea that the only worthwhile lives are those that are lived by those that have certain things and look certain ways...there is the explicit talk about the planet but that third thing about spiritual fulfillment, for me, if people can really follow that path deeply, that's the thing will take us way from fucking up our planet. So, all these different levels. There's the definite message and then there's the fact that the work itself takes us away from the mad dream."

### *No separation*

“When people are present and in touch with their bodies and how they move in the world...as people come home to themselves, it generates right action in terms of how they are in the world. Paradoxically, the more people come into their own bodies the more aware they are of the impact that those bodies make, for themselves, for other people and for the planet. So people may find that they can no longer live unconsciously. Whether that’s how they are in their own lives and their personal carbon foot print to projects that they generate or supporting the world. It’s also about community and generating community rather than being alone and desperate.

What do you think the importance of community is?

Community? Well, we are intimately connected. You know there is no separation between all of us and everything, we’re all made of the same stuff, but mostly people feel lonely and alone and therefore feel that they don’t make any difference. Whereas community is about support and not about competition. It’s really so that each individual can offer what they have to give in a way that makes a world that works for everyone, whether that’s a community of two or a community of millions. We’re programmed to be social beings. I think also through movement people do discover that when they harm other beings, whether those be people or animals or living things, they are harming themselves.”

### **“A sustainable future, how the fuck are we going to do that?”**

Any reader coming to the interview sections on the importance of nature in the cosmology of the community will surely be struck by the unanimous agreement that it is key. Interviewees variously describe it as massive, strong, ever present, core, a really big inspiration, important and something that all teachers/leaders work with. Recalling Spretnak’s (1999) conceptualization of constructive postmodernism as being a framework that attempts to ground itself in the real, it seems as though the cosmology, as the conceptual framework of this community, does indeed lead to attempts to engage in just that.

At least two of the interviewees however comment on the contradiction, described by one as “nature, not nature”, they experience in the fact that much of the practice within The School itself, actually takes place indoors. If one bears in mind that all Movement Medicine workshops take place in relative social isolation, this in itself does not mean that learning experiences that occur on them are not later taken back to benefit the wider collective. Indeed interviewee accounts suggest that they are, as imagery embedded in altars, discourses and practices become something that are described as becoming fully embodied experiences that percolate life outside of workshops.

One interviewee, (having been encouraged to attend by his wife and who elsewhere also identifies with the position of previous cynicism about the

practices in the community) describes the healing of psychological conflict taking place for him through the inner experience of such imagery. It is notable that this interviewee also recounts developing a more enhanced connection with the real (both Spring and deer) as a result of his spiritual experience. Though as some ecofeminist critique points out, “Although pleasure in nature’s aesthetic and sensual qualities may help to develop a deeper ecological awareness, this is by no means guaranteed” (Field 2000). Another interviewee, in talking about the somewhat paradoxical and frustrating experience of engaging in spiritual practices geared towards enhancing the connection with ‘nature’, indoors, invokes a distinction between the spiritual and the physical dimensions of elemental nature. It is a differentiation that in some ways might be seen to run counter to Spretnak’s (1999) call for the real as more reminiscent of transcendent (and therefore potentially solipsistic) than of immanent approaches. On the other hand the spiritual experience seems connected to efforts on the part of the interviewee to build bridges between the indoor, spiritual experience and more outdoor, physical practices at other times. And all of that said, some of the practices of the community, including burial ceremonies, vision quests and sweat lodges, do take place outdoors, while there are second and third generation leaders, including myself, who are very much in the process of developing basic practices further in outdoor environments.





Figure 4 *Community labyrinth for fundraising project*

One indicator of the efficacy of increasing and encouraging such connection with our outdoor environment is highlighted by one of the few cross-sectional surveys done (a study of 1413 Norwegian adults) which found that even short, positive experiences in natural environments may promote ecological behavior, something I intend to feedback into the community itself (Hartig et al 2007: 291; see also Hartel and Pearman 2010). Although within an ecofeminist framework the spiritual and the physical would be perceived as indivisible in any case, whilst Curry (2011) has been at pains to argue that emotional connections of the kind that these two interviews suggest have been increased are important resources in the journey to develop a new ethic towards our natural environment, regardless of where they first arise (Bullis and Glaser 1992).

Most interviewees talked about the employment of nature imagery within the work, including the elements, the tree of life, animals and so on, equating the linkage between their own bodies and the basic substance of life as constitutive of a relationship in which they were more inspired to look after both themselves and the world around them, as indivisible elements of an interconnected whole. As one interviewee said in a portion of interview, not included above, said,

“It’s also really helped me to see myself as a work of nature. I am fire, I am the air...It’s more true than you can possibly imagine that you ARE the elements, embodied, moving about, air, fire, water and there you are, the bones of you, the earth of you. That connection with my elemental self has been massively deepened by this practice” (Interview).

Indeed the very fact that these spiritual practices were being experienced in an embodied context, which people often referred to as being “grounded” seemed key in terms of people doing what one interviewee described as “coming home to themselves”. So that the more people actually felt their own bodies, the more they also actually felt everything around them and the harder they said it was to be unresponsive to what was around them, including environmental damage. Discussing the vital role that such embodied experience has to play in re-embedding us in the eco-systems of which we are an integral part, Stevens (2012) links the willingness to engage in such activities at all as part of an effort to resist the other forms of socialization that people may be subject to elsewhere. He states,

“...realization of interconnectedness with the natural world only comes from direct, lived, and sensual experience (Diamond and Orenstein, 1990); the personal is also ecological. More generally, Blackman et al. (2008) describe how direct experience played a vital role in the creation not only of feminist politics but also anti-racist movements, various formations of cultural politics and many post 1960s urban movements. As Heckert (2010: 192) puts it: ‘listening to one’s own body, to sensations and desires, to pleasure and pain’ can itself be ‘a counter-practise to a culture in which many of us have learned to doubt ourselves’ (Stevens 2012: 584).

Ultimately much of this amounts to attempted moves towards dissolving the kind of nature/culture divide that has been propagated since the Enlightenment and is far more reminiscent of the kind of indigenous view that sees humans as an intrinsic part of the environment (Deloria 1973; Stevens 2012). Nature then, was seen by interviewees as both as a positive source of psychological and emotional wellbeing and the underpinning of all life in a way that requires us to consider how we might change the relationships embedded within it into more sustainable forms.<sup>41</sup> This was, perhaps unsurprisingly, talked about at least partly in terms of changing patterns and habits of consumption, which given the relative (and enormous) inequity in patterns of consumption between the minority and majority world is something needing tended to on a much wider scale in any case (Mies and Shiva 1993). Speaking about the pressure to consume as the mad Dream of the North, one interviewee said that the

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<sup>41</sup> Though for me at least it was notable that language employed in some instances might be seen to reflect more of a dominion mentality, or what Stevens defines in sociological terms as the nature/culture divide in terms of words like “use”, “gain” and “resource” being applied to describe relationship with our natural environment. Bearing in mind of course, that English was not the mother tongue of all interviewees, which may also need to be taken into account (Stevens 2012).

practices in general helped her to focus on what was most important in her life, which for her was relationships and love as opposed to being seduced by external consumer goods and the importance given to status objects. This woman, another leader in the community expressed the belief that spiritual fulfillment was the key to assisting people to move away from needing lots of non-essential things to feel good about themselves and their lives. More specifically the role of nature in the cosmology was also spoken about as increasing the responsibility towards and feelings of care for the earth, something that participants talked about being translated into practical actions in acts of service, including small acts of recycling and larger projects such as the annual Long Dance. This includes, as was pointed out by one interviewee, working in partnership with NGO's, a factor that has indeed emerged in the community in terms of its involvement with the Achuar in Ecuador. This is unfolding in a political context, as one in which the government in Ecuador shut down the offices of the Fundación Pachamama, (which organizes activity relating to indigenous landrights) at the end of 2013, just weeks before a plan to open some 2.6 million hectares of rainforest to new oil drilling (<http://www.pachamama.org/advocacy/defend-the-amazon>). A state of affairs that might be seen to confirm the view expressed in the following deep ecology perspective,

“Governments in Third World countries (with the exception of Costa Rica and a few others) are uninterested in deep ecological issues...Given this situation, support for global action through nongovernmental international organizations becomes increasingly important. Many of these organizations are able to act from “grassroots to grassroots” thus avoiding negative governmental interference” (Naess and Sessions 1984: 5).

This is a view very much in line with that of Mies and Shiva (1995) who have also suggested that alternatives to a globally exploitative system are not emerging from research, the UN or governmental organizations but rather from grassroots intent on preserving subsistence cultures. And interestingly, Stern's (1992) enquiry into the connections between climate change, adaptation and mitigation, wherein communities take steps to prevent damage before it is done, suggests that the role of individuals in determining what firms, communities and governments end up doing has been a neglected area in research. His more recent work (Stern 2006) indicates that policy implementation is partially shaped by a combination of public attitudes, access to information and perceptions

about how trustworthy governments are, suggesting in turn the optimistic view that the relationship between individuals, communities and governance is inter-dependent rather than top-down, with influence running in both directions. Though, as Tjernstrom and Tietenberg (2008) also point out education, communication and government transparency are also crucial factors in the process of generating appropriate responses to the kind of climate change likely to be interlinked to the ongoing destruction of the rainforests.

Alongside attempts to foster its spiritual connections with the natural world around it and perhaps offering some further validation for Hartig and colleagues (2007) argument that even small experiences of nature, in nature, encourage active care for 'it', the community has also raised well over £200,000 in the last five years for what is perceived as the shared task with the Achuar people of Ecuador, of resisting the destruction of the rainforest. Though even this event is described by one interviewee, talking specifically about sustainability, as one end of a community spectrum, which also includes a considerable amount of international travel. This is clearly seen by several interviewees as riddled with paradox and contradiction. Named by one interviewee, a well-established leader in the community, as a "shadow of the new age movement as a whole" which presents (along with other factors) areas that are experienced by a number of interviewees as ethical dilemma's and behaviour which it is openly acknowledged can easily be named as hypocritical.

These other factors included commuting and car use; waste production from Western lifestyles; the economic privilege required to engage with this community in the first place and the observation that the founders sustainable lifestyle is only achievable because of the profit margins provided by followers; criticisms of insufficient political engagement and narcissism on the part of some of those in the community at less involved layers; insufficient time left to engage in mitigation of climate change effects. The up-side, if there can be seen to be one, was the awareness that existed about these issues and that these criticisms were generally made in the knowledge that they both reflect and are embedded in much wider systemic issues. And critique, in keeping with community practices, I would suggest, was on the whole offered as part of accepting what is, from an observational rather than a judgmental position, as

part of the struggle to assess what can then be engaged with in ongoing change processes.

Several interviewees talked about the issues of urban and rural living, with some of them having moved from the city to be in closer communion with the rural environment since taking up this practice and another talking about the struggles of living in an urban environs after living rurally where she experiences increased consumer pressures – though she also added that she felt that urban projects with a focus on nature were on the increase.

Whilst this kind of scenario very clearly reflects the realm of the real, interview dialogues on the subject of sustainability revealed some of the more ambiguous and challenging issues that not only this community, but all privileged Western communities face. One interviewee names the kind of grassroots connection discussed by Naess and Sessions (1984) above, very directly proposing that there is support to be had for both the community here and the community “there” in the shared endeavor to help the Achuar protect the rainforest. She also suggests that the “power of community” can be enlisted to help people struggle to make the changes that need to be made amongst others who understand the challenges involved, at the same time as she points out that to become a leader within this particular community means that one has to commit to being in service to the wider collective in a variety of ways.

Another interviewee makes the link between a leadership that seeks to empower its community to behave with integrity and the capacity to actually address the issues raised by sustainable practices. He suggests that altering focus from the individual to the community not only has the capacity to generate greater personal satisfaction but may well also contain exactly the kinds of shift in ethics and social norms away from an individualized towards more of the commons approach. An approach that Hartell and Pearman (2010) argue will be necessary for leadership to implement if we are to be successful in addressing climate change on the global levels that are necessary. As someone who by his own admission functioned as a business owner very much as “the idealized Western subject as motivated by individual interest”, (Hartell and Pearman 2010: 42) he also talks about his own (unsatisfactory) emotional experiences as being one of his main motivations for changing both himself and his approach to the running of his own business. Indeed the power of

community was mentioned by several interviews as the location where it becomes possible to begin to feel like 'we' have the power to make some kind of difference, not only to experience the joy of sharing, giving and supporting those others who need our support, but also as a mechanism for dissolving isolation and alienation and therefore beginning to experience increased potentials for change. Indeed this may also be perceived as the kind of community of reference that Meyerson and Scully (1995) have suggested that tempered radicals can plug into for the kind of emotional and psychological support that they need to bolster efforts that they may also be engaged with in more mainstream organizational involvements.

Actually having tools to deal with the kinds of difficult emotions that might be felt when we focus any significant attention on the environmental damage that is currently underway is also discussed as a strength within the embodied spiritual practices of the community. In relation to this, another interviewee specifically named her feelings of guilt and discomfort over knowing that, "we've royally messed up", as something with the capacity to either overwhelm or paralyze her - an experience that many of us in a Western context are increasingly familiar with (Bell, Cullen and Taylor 2012). Alongside this however she also explained that the embodied approach of the practices enabled her to be able to tolerate and transform her feelings into positive action. The cosmological connection with both ancestors and descendents was also named as something that increased the sense of responsibility to the future. And though Steven's (2012) work is critical of the human tendency to see sustainability in terms of human needs, there are many in this varied and diverse community who are very deeply emotionally connected to the devastation being done to the non-human worlds and what that means for our shared future. This same interviewee also identified the extent of difficulties we face in changing unsustainable organization, naming the community practice of moving from where one is and then taking a step at a time. She also talked about direct contact with the people and stories her own unsustainable lifestyle were affecting directly, an experience provided by the leaders in the community, as a motivation for changing her behaviour.

One eco-psychologist's work on the importance of reconnecting with nature in our virtual age proposes that well being in the future is most likely to be

experienced by those who develop the sensitivity and humility to connect with nature (Louv 2013: 18; see also Roszak, Gomes and Kanner 1995). Though, of course, no individual is an island. And as both Bauman's work on ethics and consumption (2008) and Lau's (2000) on New Age Capitalism point out, we increasingly exist in a context in which our global fates are entwined, and where attempts to sell individualized consumption as political action may well run the risk of representing a dangerous co-opting of the very real concerns that people hold. Neither the business researched here, the community around it, nor any of the individuals associated with it, exist either outside the global market place or our shared environments. Nor are they unaware of the damage being wrought by many of our contemporary modern lifestyles. Without doubt most of those involved are actively wrestling with all the conundrums, complexities, challenges and even outright contradictions involved in the commitment to engage with environmental sustainability and social justice issues in ways that might make some kind of positive differences in the web of life.

In spite of all that it would nonetheless seem that a cosmology that defines the natural world as both sacred and sentient seems to provide a greater access to more psychological well being as a result. This improved relationship with nature within and without, also appears to inspire at least some level of ongoing commitment to engage with the demands of ethical actions explicitly intended to bring improvements to the well-being of self, other and environment. At the same time part of this well-being is represented by the honest grappling with the deep emotional pain that many of us appear to feel in the face of the end of an era. It seems to me that this grappling, far from being evidence of the supposed narcissism that Lasch (1979) is so critical of, may well have crucial social value in cultural contexts that so often seem to encourage us to use consumerism as a distraction from the real. Occurring as it does within the totalizing system represented by capitalism it is undeniably taking place within the context of consumerism. Perhaps however, all forms of consumption, like differing spiritual and religious systems are not entirely akin. And while it may well transpire that using consumer choice to face and engage with pain and suffering may not be nearly enough to turn the tides of destruction and inequality, I am, nonetheless inclined to agree with the view expressed in the following paper on organizational soul, that

“...the individual’s inability to experience the negative aspects of human life makes them less able to interpret its meaning or act in socially responsible ways. Sick souls are more insightful; their melancholy concerning loss of meaning, fear, personal sin, and inequitable social structures provides the basis for strenuous activity through which a more sophisticated ethical sensibility can be achieved (Taylor, 2002)” (Bell, Taylor and Driscoll 2012: 433).



## **Leaderships for new priorities Social justice, environmental sustainability and human fulfillment**



*Fig 5 Image from the “Be The Change” symposium on hand*

### **Introduction**

This section begins with two interviews with the founders of The School of Movement Medicine. These were conducted at the beginning of my research in 2009 when the organization was in its infancy and also in a state of a transition that had included considerable conflict with Roth, the founder of The Moving Centre. Some of the effects of this transition were evident in both these and other interviews with participants. I then go on to incorporate a series of interviews conducted between 2009 and 2013. Interviewees included two members of staff from the school; two of the leaders referred to as pathfinders;<sup>42</sup> other apprentice leaders who were themselves stepping into leadership positions in the evolving organization and beyond and participants. Interviews explored both the leadership they experience in relation to the founders, alongside some of their own experiences of being followers and/or

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<sup>42</sup> There are three people in the community who had trained within The Moving Centre and were already very experienced and successful in their own right who wished to become involved with Movement Medicine in a leadership capacity. The term pathfinder was used to acknowledge both their previous positions and the unique role they played in the process of developing new practices. The three staff in the community have retained their roles as leaders of the practices evolved in the Moving Centre (5 Rhythms), although they also play mentoring and teaching roles (or in other words, leadership positions) in The School of Movement Medicine, bridging both organizations in the process.

fledgling leaders themselves. My voice begins the first of the two dialogues as they are recorded here with the same question being posed to both founders.

### *The danger of power*

"I'd like to start off by asking you about your own relationship with leaders.

I guess like all of us I've had loads of leaders or teachers...much of my life...has been in the context of senior people passing something on and then the Peace Movement, which is where Ya'acov and I met, where that's an attempt at non-hierarchical learning and working...

Basically, I feel like I've had a very benign experience of being led, being taught by some very empowering and benevolent teachers...the differential that's implicit in that relationship has often been, there's a thorny moment when that changes, when one or other party wants or needs that to change, that was our experience with one of our main teachers...a friend of ours who is a very politically astute and does a lot at the interface between politics and the world, real politics, with our government and other governments and personal growth...he's working at an amazing intersection of bringing personal awareness to conversations in civil services, police forces all over the world, anyway he says that in his experience, nobody gives up power willingly. Apparently the guy that set up the Co-op, who was a very, very visionary guy, you know how the Co-op works...every worker in the Co-op is a part owner of the Co-op. He said, "When it's time for me to go and hand over to the next lot, I'll go, I'll let go, that's totally my commitment. When it came time he couldn't let go and it had to be wrested off him. I guess his idea about the timing was different...he thought he should still be there and they thought it was time for him to go. Anyway, him with all that visionary idealism and practice couldn't let go and our friend Jake uses that as an example...

Anyway our experience with our very central teacher who were with for 18 years was that there was a real strong soul commitment to letting go and letting evolution happen and letting the next generation come up, very deep and when it came to it, it's like the soul and the ego division, the ego was what came up, the fears came up. It was like one part of us was at peace and the other part was at war and the difference between the soul part that did want to let go and the biographical, our own personal, our stuff, our fears, our un-worked out stuff, our difficulty with communication, our misunderstandings, just the human stuff of life. It's been very, very humbling. So one of the things I've gleaned from that is don't underestimate the power of the fearful heart in everybody, however evolved we may be in some ways and you can be very potent and very spiritual and very conscious and very enlightened without necessarily being aware of all areas of you own shadow, how strong the shadow is. Not the shadow as in something evil, but just in the Jungian sense of the unknown, the unconscious, that which we don't know about ourselves and is still operative...

The other thing that we learnt from that and are trying very hard to apply in our role now as we've become leaders of our little thing is the danger of being surrounded by yes people and the danger of power...it's very easy to be surrounded by people who agree with you and if they have a vested interest in you staying where you are, in the powerful place because you give something, you lend status or something, there's a kind of circuit, it can be very unconscious. It was the same with us we realized...we had a privileged place in an organization so we had an investment in maintaining the privileged status of those who gave us status...when you're part of the in group, you have a commitment to maintaining the status quo and maintaining where the out group is and where the in group is...and looking back we were like, oh gosh, we were part of that, we colluded with stuff that really our better selves wouldn't, because we were gaining from it and so that has now made us have a commitment to make sure that we have some people close to us who have no investment in our success, who are independent, they're our friends and they love us and they want us to do well but they

have no need of us.

So they're not part of the organization?

They're not part of the organization. They have no need for the organization to go on in any way, exactly. They're not dependent in any way and who aren't afraid to call a spade a spade...

So you're identifying the importance of non-invested feedback there.

Exactly. And to go on putting oneself in contexts where one's status, one's apparent status, one's little label is completely irrelevant and nobody even knows about it or if they do it doesn't matter...like if you're learning to sail...the story of Movement Medicine is neither here nor there...

So in terms of how you see leadership functioning in our world, the world around you, how are you positioning yourself in relation to that?

Well I think in the world as a whole there's a huge problem in that, this is the generic, not even just the Western world, I think it's more or less the world now unfortunately...but let's take it to Europe now and particularly Britain...that's a bit more manageable. I think that one of the big problems in our society is that...most people have devolved leadership onto the apparent leaders and don't regard themselves as having the authority or therefore the responsibility...Those two things go together in my opinion, totally, to effect the world that we're creating for tomorrow...the wonderful thing about top down leadership is that it's fast. It's simple and straightforward. You can just do stuff...we learned in the peace movement that consensus is very, very clunky and arduous and can so easily be hi-jacked by anyone's need for attention or for power...the power of the veto is huge. So there's light and shadow, there are good things and difficult things on both sides.

But I think that the kind of leadership which we aspire to is one that empowers everyone to become a leader...and I think a lot of the time we actually manage that...it seems like we're just telling people what to do when they're on the dance floor, actually when it's really working, we're listening to what's there, following the movement of a kind of natural healthy evolution that wants to come...but because the people aren't quite aware of it or don't quite know how to let things flower all the way through because that's just not been our experience in life, it's almost like you're giving permission for what wants to happen anyway...thinking about a plant growing, needing some support for a while...then a plant is strong enough to stand on its own...I think that what the world needs, politics needs and organizations need are... structure and people that are fluid enough to be able to be followers...open, self-organizing community where everybody's listening to the field and everybody's empowered to be potentially a leader and everybody's humble enough to be a follower, such a joyous amazing thing when that starts to happen. That's my vision of what's possible...Nothing happens without some structure and then structure tends to imply hierarchy of some sort or at least fixed roles or clear roles and then the fluidity of adaptability and change...that's the kind of organization...that I think we're certainly intent on evolving and we're in this paradoxical position of being the leaders of it and therefore having to do what I've just said Jake says nobody does...but anyway to come back to the question...the advantages of top down leadership is that are that you don't sit round talking for ages...having to deal with everybody's personality...you can actually get into practice...non-verbal practice and the other sort of practice...you know

consensus working...a very profound practice in itself...it just takes a lot of time...what I haven't ever been part of and I would love to be and my background is Quaker and you know that the way that the Quakers do things is that they sit in silence waiting for decisions to become clear...so they're all actually, when if they're on, I guess they're listening to the field really, all of them, so they're all acting as leaders...asking what is needed here? Not what do I want? Or what do I need? But we are evolving in the Apprenticeship, we're evolving ways of working with the community...the community working with itself...it's not we, Ya'acov and I who are evolving...we as a community are evolving ways of working in small groups and a lot of stuff that we used to do in the Peace Movement, people having representatives come in and fish bowling...

On the Apprenticeship currently?

Yes, it's fantastic...it's beautiful to see people really flourishing in some expected ways and some unexpected ways...stepping up for different roles...chairing discussions and the power of small groups.... focusing on one issue or another for the whole group, rather than fifty people having to talk through something...people self selecting or sometimes being suggested...you have a lot to say about this...maybe you should join that group and sometimes small groups thinking something through in depth and then feeding back to the large group and getting feed back from them, so that then the whole circle is taking it back..."

### ***Eyeball to eyeball with leadership***

"...when I was studying visual communication I did a whole project on leadership where I got local leaders from the community I was in, like The Chief of Police, Head of the Local Army Section, Heads of Schools, the top social workers and...I managed to persuade them all to come into the studio...I did two photographs of each one of them. The one where they were in full uniform I photographed looking right down on them from a very high ladder...so I photographed with a wide angled lens...so it was a bit like a cartoon that looked faintly ridiculous...very big shoulders, big head, tiny feet. The reason I did it was I was looking at photographs of leaders in newspapers and...the camera was always looking slightly up and I wondered what would happen if you just turned that round? Clearly I had a point of view about it, just to climb up on a ladder and photograph the Chief of Police...Then I got them to dress in civvies and I did... a lovely portrait of them, nicely lit and I...juxtaposed these together, so the uniform looking from above and looking straight at, eye to eye in their ordinary clothes. On a personal level clearly that I didn't know at the time, that was my own process about dealing with authority...very interesting seeing those photo's next to each other and what I was able to perceive...they were all invited to come and see them...some didn't like it, some liked it of course, some thought it was funny, some had a sense of humor, some really didn't...I did say to them I was looking at qualities of leadership, so clearly for me there's something about being able to look people in authority in the eye, eye to eye and to recognize that there is on the most basic level of existence, equality between all beings and that's my basic understanding of leadership, that we have roles...and it's not that there isn't hierarchy, there clearly is hierarchy in situations where somebody comes to a course and they pay us to hold the space. It's not a democracy, we're thinking about doing this, shall we have a vote on it? In a way people they lend us their authority and I see it very much in that way, as a role...it's not something that is mine to take, or mine to give back, but people lend it, for a purpose, in order to learn something, so that for me can exist side by side with the reality that we sit in circle and the reason we sit in circle is every point in a circle is equidistant from the centre, so both of those things are true for me and my experience of leadership is that it's very difficult to live that balance between that hierarchical structure that our culture is based on and the culture of the circle, which in a workshop is exploring quite deeply what it is to sit in circle...more like the Iroquois Confederacy and that kind of

approach where leadership is about serving the community and it doesn't just include the short-term good - the leader or the members of the group consider the future and everything that is connected to the circle...so those are the qualities that I aspire to. But I'm a human being and I grew up in this culture and I've met in many, many places, people trying to live up to those ideals and actually, not quite managing. I've worked in situations where people have denied that there's any hierarchy and actually this is a circle and everyone's equal, when clearly it's not true...that there isn't a hierarchy...

I went with it myself for a long time because I was in it and because it suited me to do so but as soon as I was able to step out of it I saw just how seditious that is actually. I don't think it's conscious. I don't think somebody is trying to pull the wool over somebody's eyes for their own benefit. I think they genuinely see it like there isn't a hierarchy, so sometimes there's a problem. Any concept can be used as a rule or dogma...the dogma in that circle was there is no hierarchy and that means even though you can't challenge what's going on here it's because other kinds of reasons. So those things I've seen working in nobody's favor, well one or two people's favor, but not the favor of the whole. I've also seen that power corrupts. I don't know how we are going to continue to deal with that, but hopefully our style of leadership and the people that we have around us, whom we've asked specifically to do that, that feels very important to have elders who are very happy to take the piss out of us and help us to learn and see if we are pumping ourselves up in any kind of inappropriate way or not looking at certain issues or falling into the 100's of traps that as a leader it's very easy to fall into...also because we live in such a disempowered culture, people want to give you their power all the time...

Well I noticed when you said people lend it to you and it's not yours to give back...it was making me think about the sense in which people might be giving it to you...they lend it but they don't actually collect it at the end of the workshop...

...yes that's right and for me that's part of the process....I can do my best to make sure that they know how I see it in some way and certainly if somebody is actively doing that with me they'll know about it...I learnt a lot from a colleague who once told me, look if someone needs you to be, this, that or the other for them for a while, as long as you don't take it seriously...why not just let them...it's part of their process...and you don't have to just throw it back at them, sometimes people need an authority figure or a loving father figure or a loving shaman, or whatever it is they need, that gives them a bit of strength in their own psyche until they are able to go, oh, that's me it's not them, or it's them too, but it's actually me too, so that's just the process of learning and growing up, there's not much to be done about it really, except to let people have their journey with it and make sure that if somebody is really being inappropriate with it...I feel I'm very fortunate because I don't like people throwing their power at me, it makes me very uncomfortable....I was really protected for years by my own naivety...I had no idea that people were giving their power to me. It never occurred to me that would be going on...I was completely blind to it...and then suddenly I did notice and I was like Oh my God, no wonder I didn't want to notice...it's painful actually, but it's part of the process...

Part of our culture?

Yeah, you can't ignore the effect of the time and modality that we're living in you know, how we grew up and what we're brought up with...I'm just thinking because it's the election coming up...I think leaders also get a hard time, sometimes, I'm not really talking about myself, I don't feel I do get given a hard time...leaders in our culture, you know there's...but also in the British culture there's, if you stand up bright and shiny, you're likely to be shot down in our culture. At the same time, if you're willing to take

on the role of being a leader, you know we have a very particular kind of media in Britain, that's very put you up, put you down, kind of story, let's create a hero one day and then let's find all the shit on them the next day, it's like sport for our media to do that...

It must say something about our collective psyche.

Very much so...it's our collective unconscious at work and I think that leaders often get a hard time for...we give leaders too much responsibility rather than recognizing that they're there to carry out our will collectively...it's...there's a radical rethink needs to happen for sure...If I start thinking about it...that's centuries of certain kind of tradition, political tradition as well...

It reminds me...about somebody who has written a paper which really seems to represent the dominant discourse on leadership and particularly the sacred in leadership and it seems to me that he has very much modeled what he's saying on the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Judeo-Christian God. One of the things that he talks about is that in order for leadership to function there needs to be a separation between leaders and followers and that there's a sacrificial element to being a leader, that the leader either has to be prepared to sacrifice the followers or indeed prepared to be sacrificed himself.

...For me its about learning to see the value in all things, so...there's a value in hierarchy...if you want to get something done and somebody is a natural leader...they should be encouraged to lead and then be encouraged in other situations to follow, so that they don't think that's what they are, all that they are...and if somebody is a follower, they're not a natural leader they shouldn't be asked to lead...

So people have natural propensities?

Yes...and the problem in our culture is that those different skills are given different value.... I don't have to go into that with you...you know what I mean...

...Difference and inequality?

Different economic states, social states, different status...

So how do you see your role at the helm of Movement Medicine?

I see it very much like the way I see parenting...an organization has a life...and at present our organization is 3 and a bit, so it's toddling and it needs a certain amount of mothering and fathering so it's our responsibility to do that. Ultimately...we are already including other people in that, so that we're already beginning to share that responsibility because that feels very important, so that it doesn't become about me and Susannah, it becomes about holding this child, a bit like, a community is really responsible for bringing up a child and so I feel like the Movement Medicine community is supporting us to bring up this child and there are different people who have different roles in that community, who are stepping into those roles and I'm very happy about that because like a child at a certain moment it will be grown up and will not need us to be at the helm making decisions for it as an organization...

It's like guiding a child and learning from that child how to parent it, what it needs and bringing other people in who have different points of view and give it completely different inputs and see it all in a different way so that it can stand on its own two feet and do what it's most supposed to do...and it's not just the School of Movement Medicine either, there's two things. The School of Movement Medicine is a business that belongs to us. I expect that until we decide to do something else that will be the case. However the authority of what Movement Medicine is and how Movement Medicine goes into the world through other teachers and through other people, that's something that will be shared and we see that there will be an Association of teachers that will be responsible for looking after the ethics and making sure people are respectful of each other and respectful of their students, dealing with those types of organizational issues, so that it's not all us...that's going to be an Association that's independent...because actually Movement Medicine isn't ours, in the same way that Reuben isn't ours. It's ridiculous to say he belongs to me and it's ridiculous to say that that belongs to me...the mandala...or to us...it doesn't...I'm sure people will look at it, work with it and see things that I've never even considered and it will evolve and grow and become, hopefully lots of different things...that's how I see our role...

Do you have any concerns.....we have actually just talked about plans to distribute power in the organization...but can you say something about whether you have any concerns about the dangers that there are in having very clear leadership roles in terms of disempowering followers. You've alighted on it a little bit...

...If telling the truth means that you're likely to lose something of great value to you and you're not willing to lose it then that's a huge danger...there was a certain point where I made a choice that I couldn't speak up, that I had to keep quiet about certain things, that I had to clip my wings in a certain way in order to fit...I did it with as much consciousness as I could in order to serve something that I felt was worthwhile serving, which was the essence of that work...but there was a certain point where that became untenable. You know we'd reached the glass ceiling, actually we'd been pressing against it for years and it was very uncomfortable and...either the organization had to change and give us more responsibility in it and...what was happening at that time was that the leader was wanting to hold onto more and more responsibility and give less and less away and was really reclaiming, like this is mine...and so it was very, very clear to us that there was no way forward within that organization...so there's no black and white rule about it...sometimes one has to sacrifice things for a bigger picture and one can do that consciously for a bigger picture but it's very important to monitor the cost of that and to recognize when the cost outweighs the value of that choice...so the danger is, very, very charismatic leaders, and also founders particularly...I think there's something call founders syndrome isn't there...the dangers are either you do what Bert Hellinger did, which is, "Here's my work, do what you want with it...just remember that cows are calves before they're cows", that's all he said...

What was he associated with?

Constellations work...family constellations work...consequently family constellations work in Germany got a very bad name because there were all kinds of people without very much training running around, doing all kinds of things in the name of family constellations, causing all kinds of havoc, so then he took it all back...I don't know how he did it...I only know other people who were affected by that choice and that created a big split...on the other hand you can say, "This belongs to me, I'm in charge, I'm gong to say what happens to it and that's that" ...in which case...there's all kinds of problems associated with that, which we've already talked about or you can say actually what's really important is to take the goodness of all of these values. Joanna Macy's another one...The Work That Reconnects..."Here's my book, here's the exercises, do what you

want” and some people do fantastic stuff with it and other people do crap with it...so there’s always a thing about quality...so if I think about Movement Medicine and wanting that to have a good name and to be able to be good quality then there’s a necessity to create some boundaries and rules and expectations of people in terms of what’s ok and what’s not ok, in terms of what they can do in the name of Movement Medicine. At the same time it’s not up to Susannah and me to decide what that is...we need lots of opinion, including from the people who we train...that their voice should be heard.

Well you’ve made a decision that it’s not just up to the two of you...because, potentially it could be....

Yeah, it could be....but actually we want a consultative process which involves all the people for whom those choices matter..

Why have you made that decision?

I don’t trust myself...

The human ego...

I can get the bit between my teeth and run for a thousand miles before I recognize that I’m standing on a hill and there’s nobody else there...that’s on the one hand...

There’s a wisdom in that recognition..

Yes....on the other hand I think it’s ridiculous to expect that I should know how it should be...I have my place and I have a certain kind of knowledge...unless I ask the people that we’re going to train...well what do you think, or that I’m going to say, whatever you think it’s going to be so, but it’s very important for us to listen....

So you’re talking about an empowering parenting model then really rather than a patriarchal, conventional parenting model...

But again, not throwing the baby out with the bath water, like it’s not like you say to a child, “It’s dinner time do you want to eat now?”...or “Do you want to go to bed now ‘cos it’s late?” There’s a certain time for saying, “Listen you’re going to bed and you can either wear these pyjama’s or these pyjama’s!”...We might make an executive decision...thank you very much but we can’t and these are the reasons because we don’t live in our little community where people are bringing us out food and blankets...”

### **Question for members of the community**

Can you say something about the kind of leadership that you see being exercised in the School of Movement Medicine?

#### ***The ability to empathize***

“Ya’acov and Susannah...I think they are outstanding in their skill...the ability to



empathize with the group is fairly critical, while at the same time having a clear vision of what they are trying to accomplish...they do seem to have both an extremely clear idea of what's necessary to accomplish and to be able to tie in with the group...I suppose...one of the very difficult aspects with all questions of leadership is that I think the leader needs to be part of the group but at the same time to remain completely separate from it, because of the nature of leading, you need to be able to say, the group is trying to go that way, but we need to go this way and to take some action to bring it onto the right lines according to the leaders vision...this applies to business management and military officers just the same as it applies to teachers of any sort.

What do you think might be the consequences if a leader didn't stay separate?

I think that one of the things that happens in a group is that various emotions come to the surface and if the leader were not separate from the group to some extent then they would become enmeshed in these emotions and might end up trying to service all these emotions at the expense of the path along which the group was trying to travel...I was thinking of, where...the plan was diverted by us having to stop and go off into small discussion groups to discuss the departure of a member...a lot of us, going on the basis of my own discussion group and talking to other people, a lot of us felt that to stop and suspend activity was totally unnecessary on the basis of what had happened but at the same time there was a significant proportion of the group felt that it was desperately necessary and although they were, I think a minority, it was actually necessary that their voice be listened to, so that they could feel that they had been heard...Susannah recognized that and I think that's where the ability to empathize with, not just the group as a whole, the group field, but to empathize with individual members and to recognize...the feelings of individual members, I think that's where it really is necessary in a leader, which implies that the leader has...to be able to identify with individuals."

### ***Sharing the struggle***

"Both of them are able to admit when they are wrong and have done it in public...They're just as capable as dancing with the group as an equal as they are of standing at the DJ desk and leading the group. They're open about being in their own process. I saw this with Susannah, in the second ongoing group I did with her, it was a 5 Rhythms group, but Movement Medicine had already begun and it was clear that it was quite a struggle for her...she clearly felt an internal conflict in terms of having made a commitment to teach us 5 Rhythms, but now being Movement Medicine and what she did was very clearly stated, she said to us, "I need to tell you that I'm struggling with this" and she asked us, she said, "I've made a commitment to teach you 5 Rhythms and I find myself in a place of moving to Movement Medicine and wanting to teach you Movement Medicine. How is that for you? Do you want me to include Movement Medicine, is that ok?"

Because that would be a change of contract?

Yes. And she spoke and she was clear about it and she got our response, including the staff.

So she got the group's permission to do that?

Yes. Also allowed us to see her grieving."

### ***Honouring others***

"I think he worked really hard but...I feel like he did it with such grace and such intelligence and you really feel like, he not only contained me but I could see him containing other people...you know the process was very powerful for me and I really couldn't have guessed, estimated, how powerful that would be...it blew me away...something that came very strongly for me was working with a very fractured, difficult relationship with my Dad, so a couple of my soul retrievals were about that...what you've got is a really powerful tool here and you've put it across amazingly well...I've been able to access it and just the packaging around that from him as a person was really first class...I felt very held...in terms of leadership he honored the contributions of Sian and of David, the assistants, very much honored them, but you know there was no doubt who was in charge and who was leading it..."

### ***A kind of feminine openness***

"...for me actually I can't see them as leaders, because I'm very used to particular kinds of leaders because I was very much in this kind of process, where on stage all the time there are kind of leading persons telling you what to do and here I've found myself much more in a process involved where leadership is not really necessary for growing and I think that I'm very attracted to it because otherwise I would have stopped again if there would be too much leadership in the old form, in the old style, in the old, pushing, masculine version.

So they offer a different version?

They offer a complete different version...I took my sister to a seminary for a weekend and after she said, "Well I can't cope with her because she's not really a teacher", and I said, "YES, of course she isn't..."

What do you think your sister meant?

Well my sister just wanted to have this kind of masculine, outstanding star, which she can admire which tells her the way how she could manage her life...

What do you think Susannah does?

I think Susannah is just managing to create a kind of space where you yourself discover how you come along and how you manage to do that, so much more easy for both sides and at ease, much more creative and coming to the real deep roots...

What makes you say that you think it's easier for both sides?

What made me think it...because that old kind of leadership means also a kind of stiffness and a kind of this is my way of how I am doing it and you should try it...so it's a kind of, and I KNOW what I am talking about because I have half of a life of this kind of...collapse, I don't know how you call that, so I think it's completely different and in a way it's more difficult to be really open in this kind of feminine openness of, yes, everything welcome, I mean not really everything, but most of the things are welcome as long as they lead to the good, or I mean a process you really need at the moment...she has a lot of experience and you can feel that, so I don't really need the

teacher because I want to work for myself and when I want to work for myself I don't need really a teacher because I just...I'm on the road...

Given that you're contesting the description of leader or teacher, what do you think might be a better description?

I mean it doesn't sound very nice...space holder, or the growing person, it's difficult to say, because we haven't found a word for this new knowledge of growing...I just find myself in the same space with kids...we mustn't be the leaders for the kids any longer and the kids don't really need it any longer because they have so much...different power than we had when I grew up...I feel the same with Susannah...being a child in her group there is no leadership needed, so in that way, I don't really admire her or something, because she just...gives the opportunity for lots of people, which is very rare in our community...to really meet and to shake the different energies together, to blend it and to exchange it...which is actually a kind of experiencing the microcosm of your body...this is the magic, very important point, the same now I feel now when I come out and do my work and talk with the children and have a quarrel with someone and I think this is a very rare thing....I have done lots of work to clear my mind, or clear my personality and whatever and never, ever have I found something which was so whole, like pick me up on every part and got me so much to what I'm longing to be like and I feel I could be...

I think the principle which is being learned in Movement Medicine is this kind of trust in your own movement, where it's going to bring you and suddenly I sit in a station...in former days I would have said, "What is he doing? What kind of skirt is she wearing?" ...now there's much more acceptance for every movement and I think that's the point. Also if you are in a struggle you get the easy feeling that this is ok and also if you are in a hurry and you are angry, this is also ok...we all have different orbits and colors and energies and speeds and I can...be in a way, more soft with the outer world. I mean I've also prayed for becoming more soft, because I think it's also because I have understood in my mind how it works, how we work and how everything is working together in the universe and this understanding is very nice because I can just sit and watch the world outside without judging all the time..."

### ***Freedom to...lead my own things***

What for me is important is what I said in the beginning, that they are very open...that they support me in my processes, that I have the feeling that I can trust them. So maybe that they have a bigger picture than I have but with all my teachers that I really respected and trusted, with all of them I still have situations where I say No, and I think it's also important that the teachers respect these things and don't just say "Oh you need to do this otherwise you are not a good follower or not a good pupil, so yeah what I like to have is a safe place, where I have the feeling that there is enough space that I'm accepted anyway..."

Whether you obey or not, whether you do as you are told or not?

Yeah and that anything can happen what needs to be happen, what needs to happen from my processes so that everything is OK...but I also need to have the freedom to decide and to lead my own things, my own development, to say yes or no at certain points and to have the feeling that this is respected as well...

What do you think it is in Ya'acov and Susannah that leads to that trust for you?

Interesting question. Difficult to tell. I think it's a mixture of hearing what other people say, what they teach, how they say it, is important and then there is a lot more on the heart level which cannot be described that precisely..."

### ***Helping others find their own authority***

"...the leadership that is exercised in Movement Medicine workshops is really delicate and powerful. It's not an authoritarian sort of leadership in which you get pushed or in which you get manipulated. For me this leadership is really about respect. About leaders giving respect to the participants, and through this, giving respect to each and every person individually and as a collective, they start receiving respect from the community. There is never command, there is never demand, there is always a suggestion that you are free to take or not to take. In the end you are your own authority and nobody is taking that authority from you. So leadership is really just in service of helping us find our own authority and finding our own power...It's not about giving power to somebody else, but just having somebody who facilitates the taking back of our own power and authority. It's hugely different from cults where really the power and authority is taken from the people and just one person is deciding everything – this is the complete opposite. You are encouraged to take your own decisions and to take your own authority and to take your own power. Even when the community needs to decide something for itself, it's left up to the community to decide those things, it's not the leaders that decide for the community, it's the community that decide those things and the leaders step back and let that happen and that's really a powerful thing."

### ***Facilitating a sense of purpose***

"Leadership? Leadership's an interesting concept, as far as I'm concerned. I kind of feel that there are different paradigms of leadership. For me, what's important is a concept of networked leadership. Margaret Wheatley, I don't know if you've heard of her, who writes a lot about facilitative leadership, leadership that enables, not necessarily a leadership that's from the front and that is the kind of style of leadership that I feel is important, for me...Facilitation to me is important because it can help people that you're working with find the resources that they have within themselves, that are there for them to utilize, that they don't necessarily realize, whereas the current mode is that you have to be seen to be dynamic and forceful and have your own point of view and tell others what they need to do and that can be a harsh form of being..."

In the light of all that could you just comment on the role that you see Ya'acov playing in this community, because he's obviously in a leadership role.

Yes. What I feel he does is enable people to find a sense of their own self and therefore the resources that you already have within you...the different tools that he shares with you gives you the possibility of doing things in different ways and then if you are able to share those with others as well, it means that there is a possibility that those ways of doing things, which are not necessarily completely conventional, have a chance to be a little seed and then grow into something larger than something it was first conceived as. And so the way I see Ya'acov is, he's a leader, but he's also a steward, because he doesn't give you a sense that he's superior, he sees people as being equal and that he shows you a way of being and of doing things within the world which makes you realize that it's not just take, it's give as well, that we're here to care for the Earth, not just remove things from the Earth.

So part of what you're describing there is that he brings some kind of environmental awareness to what he does...

He brings an environmental awareness...”

### ***A vision of service***

“I see Susannah and Ya’acov as leaders in the sense that they have their vision, they manifest their vision and the vision is not only for themselves but it’s a vision for serving and contributing to this world in many, many ways. They are leaders in that they wake a lot of people and a lot of people are, by their practices and their inspiration and their love, their caring and their energy, lifted up and in that aspect they truly are leaders for me. But the most important part is that they, through being the example, through being a leader, giving who and what they are, they challenge everybody that comes to their classes and their workshops and their work, to be their own leader...in that aspect there is no following, there’s no following, like you follow a guru. No I think the essence of their work and their leadership is to awake the master in everybody they meet, that comes in their path and that’s true leadership.

...Interestingly enough in the session that we had this morning Susannah was talking about people crowning themselves in their own land, was the way she described it and that no one can do that for you...we have to take our own authority...

She’s teaching that you can take your own authority and there are tools in which you can feel your own authority...strengthen your own authority, but the decision is still always yours and they are very keen, both Ya’acov and Susannah, not to put their authority onto another one. They are not asking for followers and they are asking for help to manifest world leaders.

### ***Supporting the underlying wish for wholeness***

“I very much appreciate the mischievousness that I sometimes see in Ya’acov. I like that because there is a part of me that relates to that and also I appreciate at times his clarity. I mean he said at one time when stuff was going on for me when I was doing Initiation, “I can’t support you in this place Rob” and actually that was very helpful. So I think there’s a willingness to take on a challenge, which I appreciate, and an openness to the experience that is happening here and now, so that it’s not just this is the way we do things. I mean I think Susannah, I like the fact that she often says, “I don’t know what we’re doing. I haven’t got a prearranged plan that says this is what we’re doing now, and so there is the opportunity for something to evolve and develop and something can beat them or something can shift in a different direction. At the same time it’s very difficult when you’ve got 40 people each with their own process...I have felt very well held by this group of people and I suppose very much in the way of a supportive family, much more so than, here are the teachers and here are the assistants, and here are the people who are doing the work...it’s much more, very clearly, this is a process that all of us, including Susannah and Ya’acov are engaged in and it’s a bit like...well I was talking to you about when I was saying about the rules, that if you take the rules as being, these are the rules that have to be obeyed, you exclude the behavior that’s outside the rules, whereas if the rules are a framework and Susannah was talking about a framework today, within which something can happen, there’s much more possibility of being able to accommodate things. So there’s flexibility, I don’t know if flexibility is the wrong word, suppleness perhaps, yes, together with a strength, that I think, yeah, you know, so how does that relate to leadership? Well, I think that what it exemplifies is the idea that sometimes you lead by following. I think there’s a willingness at times to follow process, in other words to let the process lead and there are other times when it’s very necessary to say “I’m in charge and this is where it stops, or this is what’s going to happen”...so that flow between leading and following is what inspires confidence, gives me confidence...

And of course, the thing that then comes to me is the sense that there is what we call disorder but the trick is to see progressively if we can understand, if we can, if we can

be aware of the order that is inherent in the disorder. Because as soon as you start saying this is order and this is disorder, then all the chaos that is happening, well we've got to put it away, we've got to put it somewhere else because we don't want it to effect us. We don't want any terrorists in our back yard...where as I think this idea of structure...it's a little bit like there is an...underlying wish for wholeness, that's how I would express it, for health or for wholeness and if you can tap into that, if you can go with the flow of that I think all lot of things become possible, or become much simpler and when you're fighting it they're not possible..."

### ***Releasing control***

"Let me start off by saying that's one of the things I've always struggled with in my life is leadership. I've always butted heads with leadership. I'm a rebel. There's a huge rebel archetype that lives inside of me, hence I've never had a job 9-5, I've always been the kind of person that's free-lanced or started my own businesses, worked for myself, because that relationship with leadership is very difficult, or has been in the past.

I am so wowed at...the community gathering for the Long Dance last year, what I witnessed there was unbelievable. I mean I couldn't believe how...Ya'acov and Susannah had passed on to the Council, how they were passing on and really not holding, just released control. They have one seat on the Council. Just the whole way it was done. I sat there with a lot of fear and a lot of agitation initially, like, "Oh my God, this is gonna drive me crazy", 'cos of the kind of person that I am but when I saw it my jaw just dropped. "Like, wow, man, these are really some kind of leaders!" What I experienced, more specific to answering your question was so little need to control, so much room in leadership to let people, other people grow into that leadership position, is really the style that I see Ya'acov and Susannah passing on. Even in their training, it's not this is how it's done, it's SO open, it actually encourages me to really step into my power. That's what I find it gives me as a gift, woah, Clive, to be in this community you must step into your power, that's the role you have to play. And really done gently, at times, but very sternly at times. Ya'acov of late has been quite direct with me in such a beautiful way. I'm completely blown away. I haven't seen it anywhere else...I bow down to Ya'acov and Susannah at the way they've done it. I'm really wowed. A lot of respect there."

### ***They walk their talk***

"I find both Susannah and Ya'acov very inspirational...They walk their talk, they say a lot about how to be in life and almost always it resonates for me around my own aspirations. Sometimes it doesn't but almost always it does and I think, oh yes, oh yes and it's not that I'm already doing that, it's oh yes, absolutely. I feel very comfortable with them as leaders. I'm not somebody who surrenders easily to big leaders. I kind of feel, I have my own life to lead thank you and I will take what I want from this, but I do notice that I surrender a lot to them as leaders...they walk their talk, which I really admire, mostly, obviously, they are human and sometimes they don't quite but in the main they absolutely do. I notice them being very brave, very authentic, very open to what is and I love them very much, as leaders. So that's on an overarching level.

Could you give me an example do you think? When you talk about them being inspirational and inspiring you...

Yes, I think, for me the whole thing around developing the Movement Medicine Association and their desire to empower the group. Right from the get go with us as apprentices they wanted to do that and so they would then sit in the group and say we're not leading this, it's all between us. It's been such a bumpy ride and their commitment to it is total, their desire not to be the leaders of the Association, their

desire to step back from that but also it's not like, well go and do it then. Like at a certain point in the first year with the steering group we realized that we needed more support from them, so the handing over has been really organic, they've kind of worked with it and my sense now is, it's by no means there, but it's getting there.

For me, that willingness to sit in the not knowing, the not known, the not knowing, the not having a clue how to do this, but knowing that we want to do it and we're all in it together. It's a big thing when you've got forty people who pay a vast amount of money to sit at your feet and then you come down and you say well I'm just going to get down off my pedestal and sit alongside you and we're going to do something together and we're going to fuck up. So that I found inspirational, that's what I feel is them walking their talk, one of the things. Their commitment to excellence is written throughout everything they do...They want you to do things 100 percent and then they do things 100 percent, so those kinds of things...as leaders of dance they are consummate artists, they are just breathtaking in their capacity to hold and lead space...Their leadership style around that is creative, imaginative, allowing, spacious and for me there's also plenty of holding. It's a style I really like...I also find their willingness to see each of us as individuals, they lead us as a group, but they are very personal, they do know that each of us has invested a lot of time and a lot of money and you get met back."

### ***Highest potential...is to invite everybody into their own leadership***

"What I would say is that that's a complex, multi-layered question. I'm happy to explore it and I'm also aware that I might not be able to put my finger on the whole thing, in part because there are a lot of paradoxes for me which are playing themselves just now in terms of leadership. Paradoxes and occasionally, contradictions..."

I think that the highest potential of the practice is to invite everybody into their own leadership, the leadership of their own field and to be in their own leadership across the five dimensions, in themselves, in one-to-one relationships, in the community and going even further out. Really that's a big reason why I'm here, because I really see that potential and feel it manifest a lot. I think it does that in a number of ways, through opening up the possibility of balance in leadership, between the more yang models and the more yin models, the more active and the more receptive.

I think that what's happening at the moment in the evolution of the community is that there's this quite interesting situation, where the School of Movement Medicine as the initial leader of the practice, if you like, and as a commercial enterprise, now, has willingly and deliberately invited the creation of the Movement Medicine Association and is inviting that to step into its own leadership. And what we're experiencing is this relatively rapid expansion of the circles that are involved with Movement Medicine and through which leadership is held. So there's this really interesting process of leadership being offered and at the same time being retained. On one level there's quite a clear hierarchy and Ya'acov and Susannah are the leaders of the practice and they make the decisions. And I have a lot of faith in their desire to devolve power and at the same time it's complex isn't it? It's very complex.

Going beyond that, there is space for people to offer leadership from their own medicine if you like, to use our language, from within their own specialism. The last Long Dance was an exquisite example of that working where I really felt like the whole community took a quantum leap forward into its own leadership, self-leadership and ability for self-responsibility, which I think is really important and I'd like to say that as well, leadership for me necessitates a high degree of self-responsibility. That's something that there's quite a good degree of consciousness and exploration of in the Movement Medicine world. And so, what happened at the Long Dance was that were lots of people really stepping into a new level of leadership in ways that were appropriate to where they're at in themselves and with the practice. So, Ya'acov and Susannah were holding the space, they were leading the ceremony and then Mark was facilitating this extraordinary, now successful experiment in embodied, anarchist community. I wish you'd been there to see it Ali. It was a whole new shift, because

everybody was involved, so for the first time there were no hosts and guests, everybody was working, everybody did a shift, everybody had some kind of a role and the shift in energy with that was just extraordinary because a whole load of the neurosis of people with nothing to do vanished, it gave people a connection into the ceremony. Everybody was part of it and it facilitated a much higher degree of self-responsibility. It wasn't perfect and there's still tweaking to be done but it was a quantum leap in terms of people being able to offer what they specialize in, so Mark was holding this whole system. He's come through as a pathfinder, with this slightly uncertain status that we have as three pathfinders, but he was really offering that. I was holding the role of DJ co-coordinator and DJ support and I felt like I was able to step into a whole new level of what that was and how I could support the DJ's to work and how I could work shamanically with the DJ's as a kind of bridge between the DJ's and the ceremony leaders to create the space using the medicine of the music. David Mooney was co-coordinating with me and he was stepping into a whole new level of what he was offering in that role, both as a DJ and as a co-coordinator. Caroline was in charge of the healing team and had a whole new place I guess, and energy in terms of what that space was offering to the ceremony and what she was bridging between the healing space and the main ceremony. Just in terms of us three, it's a reflection that there is space for leaders to come through and that's all credit to Ya'acov and Susannah, even though there were times during that ceremony that they were doing stuff that I completely disagreed with. But we had a conversation about it and that was good...in terms of the question about leadership, that's an interesting one where there are differences of perspectives on how things are done, then that's when it gets juicy. How do decisions get made and what's the process to discuss and deliberate and in what times and in what places is it completely appropriate for one person to be making a decision without consultation? I think it is appropriate at times to have that. I'm not a fundamentalist anarchist in that sense, by any means."

### **The cutting edge of what's needed at this time**

"I think some people just have a lot of charisma, they have a lot of capacity to put out the message, whatever they're into in a way that really benefits and catalyzes people and I think those two are masters at that. They really get behind what they teach and put it out in a very accessible and human way with a lot of heart and a lot of charisma. And I think they have pretty good formulas...that come out of their experience, their own training and their experiences of connecting to soul and spirit and getting specific information about what they need to teach, about what needs to go out there into the world and that level of interconnectedness through movement and through dreaming and through action and through prayer is I think, on the cutting edge of what's needed at this time...there are many ways to do it and Movement Medicine is just one...."

I think there's a change in paradigm happening and I think there's a time of transition and change on lots of different levels and I think we need other systems of functioning from the patriarchal, capitalist paradigm that we're in, in order to negotiate our way through the transitions that are going to happen in my opinion and I don't know what they're going to be or how fast they're going to happen or what that means even. It's very unknown. But I do feel instinctively that we need to open the doors to different ways of thinking and different ways of being and different ways of connecting that aren't so self-centered and so top down centered and that connect us back to fundamental ways of being and seeing things that are more yin, feminine Mother Earth focused, instinctually focused. And also balance that with another way of dealing with the kind of yang energy which isn't so focused on me and you and focused on the separation between I and thou, that more has a co-operative or interconnected feel."



### ***A balance of masculine and feminine***

"I think it's many things. I would say the main leadership is really in facilitating each participants ability to go beyond where they think they can, both in terms of movement and in terms of how they express themselves in their lives. And I see it very much as being within each individual's zone of proximal development, so that people aren't given goals that are unachievable and yet are inspired to become more present and within that presence, discover maybe possibilities that weren't there before. Within that, I think that the teachers lead by example. They walk their talk, so it's not like they're different when they're teaching than they are when they're in their lives.

So there's congruence and integrity?

Exactly. So I think the leadership is a real mixture of holding and support and challenge and inspiration, yeah, so a balance of masculine and feminine within that, or yin and yang in terms of style."

### **"Shifting focus" – employing charisma to encourage social responsibility?**

"While Eco-leadership emerges from environmental social activism it is not a woolly, feel-good approach to leadership, it is rather a serious and radical approach that challenges the very coordinates of current theory and practice, and includes a critique of power relations. Structure, power and authority *do not* disappear in some utopian dream when we move towards Eco-leadership, environmental awareness, and social responsibility. One of the deficits in current systems theory, complexity theory and environmental thinking about organizations is a lack of critical theory particularly in relation to power. Coopey claims for example that Peter Senge's work idealizes community and over-plays the importance of dialogue without adequately addressing power...Eco-leadership shifts the focus from individual leaders to leadership – a radically distributed leadership – in an attempt to harness the energy and creativity in a whole system. Learning from new social movements, it recognizes that new forms of organizing will only be possible if spaces are created for leadership to emerge from within, and this cannot be planned. Eco-systems can be nurtured but not controlled" (Western 2010: 86-87).

Writing in *Leadership – A Critical Text*, composed prior to the above work, Western (2008) has also previously outlined three major narratives, or discourses, that he suggests have dominated organizational thinking about leadership over the course of the twentieth century. These are, Leader as Controller, wherein the leader is seen as holding all the responsibility for generating change, behaviour that can be accompanied by the shadow of de-humanizing "followers" and epitomized, in my view, by Grint's (2010) exposition on *The Sacred in Leadership* (see also Sinclair 2007). The Leader as Therapist discourse emerged at a later date amidst the post war environment. Linked to the kinds of self-development associated with the Human Potential Movement and currently sometimes disseminated partly within the Spirituality at Work Movement, it has been critiqued particularly in employment contexts by amongst others, Bell and Taylor (2004), Tourish and Tourish (2010) and

Western himself (2008; 2012) for its capacity to function as part of normative environments that manipulate and regulate workers to their detriment. Finally the Leader as Messiah (Burns 1978) narrative arose out of an environment in which Western organization faced both downturn and increasing competition from the improved performance of the Asian tiger economies and returned to stressing the vision and charisma of transformational leaders. More recently Western (2012) has outlined what he refers to as a newly emerging leadership paradigm that he terms Eco-leadership.

“The three earlier leadership discourses have their place: we need some leadership control over our use of resources, some motivational and psychological support, and some transformative vision, but they must operate within the *zeitgeist*, acknowledging that we live in a fragile eco-system and are all part of the “web of life” (Western 2012: 90).

The traces of all four discourses are very much in evidence in the interviews sections conducted on leadership, perhaps demonstrating, amongst other things, that both conceptualizations and embodied understandings and performance of “leadership” are processes unfolding over time, which encompass both the past as well perhaps, as our attempts to reach into the future. Indeed, what is appropriate in one historical context does not necessarily serve another. Perhaps also even illustrating Kupers and Weibler’s (2008) argument, that differing paradigms are not necessarily either isolated or mutually exclusive. Indeed the first interview with a participant spans both the Leader as Controller and the Leader as Messiah discourse, in suggesting that, “...the leader needs to be part of the group but at the same time to remain completely separate from it, because of the nature of leading, you need to be able to say, the group is trying to go that way, but we need to go this way and to take some action to bring it onto the right lines according to the leaders vision...” (Interview with participant).

Interestingly this interviewee also seems to express a hybrid form of both the Controller discourse and the Leader as Therapist discourse when he suggests that one of the reasons that leaders need to stay separate from followers is so that the group as a whole is not subverted from their course due to emotional processes.<sup>43</sup> He then identifies the “outstanding skill” of the leadership in this community as lying in the ability to empathize with feelings that arise in

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<sup>43</sup> Though it also seems obvious that political leadership in particular often capitalizes on the interface between emotional “process” and public affairs at the cultural level, as the recent elections for the European parliament in Britain might be seen to suggest.

individuals within the group and make a place for them to be voiced and acknowledged even when these individuals are in a minority, which we might interpret as the ability to honour diversity.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in a community based on Human Potential Movement values the Leader as Therapist discourse is highly prevalent in many of the interviews. Interviewees talk about the founders as open about their own emotional process particularly in relation to the grief and stress of the transitional phase in the organization; behaving in general in ways that help to “contain” (accept in a non-judgmental fashion) followers immersed in a wide range of emotional processes associated with events elsewhere in their lives; allowing; facilitative; heartfelt; offering a mixture of support and challenge to participants in order to encourage them to “go beyond where they are now”, so as to facilitate the potential for personal change and becoming, as well as the strong leadership encouragement for their followers to offer more of a contribution to environmental sustainability and social justice.

Leadership qualities, or ways of being in relationship that are seen to support this are named variously as grace, intelligence, clarity, being inspirational, brave, creative and imaginative; flexibility and suppleness; offering respect to and honouring the contributions of all those around them; the public admission of fallibility; the willingness and ability to tolerate both disorder and the unknown in order to allow process to emerge; as well as displaying charisma, congruence, flexibility, clarity about limitations, integrity and authenticity. Many interviewees talk about the issue of trust, indicating that it is something they feel it in relation to the founders. And as Gardner and colleagues observe,

“...research by Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth (2002, 2006) and Pescosolido (2002) indicated that perceptions of members' emotional abilities (i.e., empathy, the ability to identify others' emotions, and the ability to express one's own emotions) among work groups were related to leader emergence. Together, these studies demonstrate that leader and follower emotions and emotional displays are important factors to consider in the leadership process (George, 2000; Humphrey, 2002; Humphrey et al., 2008) (Gardner et al 2009: 467).

Indeed some research indicates that trust of leaders among followers is based on a perceived combination of ability, benevolence and integrity or authenticity (Mayer, Davis and Shoolman 1995; see also Macnaghten 2003). Although more in-depth examination of Gardner and colleagues (2009) work also suggests that the kinds of emotional expression that are ‘allowed’ in any given

organizational context very much depend on the “display rules”, (what Kuper and Weibler (2008) refer to as the organizational community and culture) social expectations and group norms of the specific context involved (Ashfoth and Humphrey 1995; Hochschild 1983). Based on my own experience, as well as some of the things interviewees actually said which are not included here, few of us would really have an expectation of the kinds of leadership being described by interviewees, in an employment context, though that is not to say that managerial training and performance would not benefit from the incorporation of some of the kinds of values associated with a higher degree of emotional literacy (Orbach 1994). Indeed I personally have often found that this community has functioned as something of an oasis in the desert of the rest of my working life, in these terms. And yet, it also seems that much of our contemporary political and business leadership suffers from a loss of credibility and legitimacy when the public perceives a lack of basic integrity and honesty in evidence (Brookes 2011; Macnaghten 2003). Indeed, discussing leadership qualities that promote such honesty and authenticity Gardner et al (2009) suggest that they are particularly based on the following capacities,

“self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalized moral perspective. Self-awareness is a process of reflecting on “one's unique values, identity, emotions, goals, knowledge, talents and/or capabilities” to develop an enhanced understanding of the self (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans et al., 2005, p. 349). Thus, authentic leaders are persons who work to understand their strengths and weaknesses and their leadership should reflect an awareness of their inner motives, emotions, values, and goals. Relational transparency involves presenting one's true self as opposed to a fake or distorted self to others as the “leader displays high levels of openness, self-disclosure and trust in close relationships” (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans et al., 2005, p. 347). Balanced processing involves making accurate and balanced self-assessments and social comparisons (Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2003) in a fashion that is relatively free from ego-biased defense mechanisms. Finally, an internalized moral perspective refers to an internalized and integrated form of self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2003) that is guided by internal moral values and standards as opposed to external social norms or pressures” (Gardner et al 2009: 468).

Walton (2005) has been keen to point out that some of the toxicity and failures associated with the absence of such reflexive capability is something that can be at least partially attended to via educative processes, an idea I would certainly validate through my own embodied experiences within this community, at the same time as cautioning that this is a life-long commitment rather than a quick managerial fix of any kind.<sup>44</sup> The educative approach has of course, been

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<sup>44</sup> See Appendix 2

subject to critique in other quarters and any discussion of ethics needs in addition to acknowledge the infamous leadership conundrum that one leader's ethics represent another's totalitarianism (Bryman 1996; Grint 2010 Yukl 2006). It is also notable that all of these descriptions focus on qualities seen as inherent within the leaders, focusing mainly on them rather than the followers or even context much, which as Kupers and Weibler (2008)<sup>45</sup> also point out are, on their own, far too simplistic an approach and one which might even be in danger of falling into what they describe as the heroic stereotype. Whilst Rost (1991) joins their position in proposing that any kind of stand alone trait theory is an inadequate approach to understanding leadership (See also Turnbull 2006).

Implicitly interwoven through many of the descriptions above may also be the process that a Leader as Therapist discourse might describe as a projective process, wherein participants at various levels of any organization bring their own undigested relationship with authority figures (including parents) into their relationship with individuals in organizational hierarchy who occupy roles associated with power and authority. Writing in *The Charismatic Leader as Narcissist: Understanding the Abuse of Power*, Sankowsky (1995) has written about the predisposition for followers to internally and psychologically construct leaders as parent figures, according them what he describes as symbolic status. "The power of symbolic status, rooted in powerful, unconscious drives, enhances a leader's potential to fundamentally alter followers' perceptions, emotions, and thoughts" (Sankowsky 1995: 59). Indeed one of the founders talks about this process in which participants may at times give their own power away to them as leaders and that although he suggests that this may very well represent a valid aspect of their personal journey with leaders and power and authority in general, it is something to try to remain conscious of and reflexive about, a viewpoint also affirmed by Sankowsky (1995). While the transfer of symbolic status discussed by him may well be seen as both a valid and even a necessary aspect of coming to terms with one's relationship with wider power and authority issues, it is also clear that, when charisma is combined with a

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<sup>45</sup> Ultimately the integral approach proposed by Kupers and Weibler (2008) allows for an inclusivity that means that a whole variety of theories and approaches can all find their place within a multi-paradigmatic theoretical frame.

narcissist lack of awareness on the part of leaders it can lead to abuse of power. Both founders are aware of some of the ways such dynamics can become problematic – in both directions. Both of them acknowledge the predominant modality of our historical and cultural context, echoing in some ways Grint's (2010) view of the current, sacrificial function of leaders of who are often given too much responsibility and then pilloried for perceived failures. Indeed one of the founders even talks about having been willing to make such sacrifices during his involvement in Roth's organization, in the service of an ideal, even to the point of psychological collusion, at the same time as cautioning of the need to monitor the potential costs attached to such sacrifice. Whilst the other founder, very much in keeping with Gemmill and Oakley's (1997) proposition, talks about a cultural context in which most of us are not culturally educated in such a way as to see ourselves as having neither the authority nor much of the responsibility for what occurs in the world of organization around us.

A number of Interviewees did however talk about the process of leadership in this community from the perspective of being a follower, particularly in terms of the way in which authenticity is viewed as available to all, via engagement with the spiritual practices being shared and used in the community. Indeed, as Alegra and Lips-Wiersma (2009) point out in their critique of much of the conventional literature on authenticity, the existential theory that provides the foundation for it, suggests that authenticity is a shared human potential. Not only that, but that no-one can make anyone else authentic. And that in addition, we must each *ultimately* take responsibility for the development of our own potentials, whatever our relationship with leadership, or whether or not we are able to, or indeed do so. Interviewees focusing on the development of such authenticity talked about the ways in which the leadership exercised was offered in service to the ultimate goal of enabling "followers" to become their own leaders, following their own unique sense of purpose and being empowered to both retain, or find, own and exercise their own personal authority in relation to serving something greater than the self. One of them even suggests that the willingness to really step into personal power and responsibility is in fact imperative for membership of this community. People talked about this empowerment being achieved through the founders ability to

lead by following the process of the group; alongside a general climate of respect for individuals, the group itself and the contributions of those who are engaged in work processes that support the business and the community.

They also mentioned retaining the ability to say no, never feeling commanded and even that the term leadership would be better replaced by the terms like facilitator or space holder. One interviewee describes it thus when he says,

“...the leadership that is exercised in Movement Medicine workshops is really delicate and powerful. It’s not an authoritarian sort of leadership in which you get pushed or in which you get manipulated. For me this leadership is really about respect. About leaders giving respect to the participants, and through this giving respect to each and every person individually and as a collective they start receiving respect from the community. There is never command, there is never demand, there is always a suggestion that you are free to take or not to take. In the end you are your own authority and nobody is taking that authority from you. So leadership is really just in service of helping us find our own authority and finding our own power...It’s not about giving power to somebody else, but just having somebody who facilitates the taking back of our own power and authority” (Interview with Apprentice Leader).

In some interviews this was quite specifically linked to the gender dimensions of the embodied practices associated with the yin, or receptive, holding quality that all community members, including the founders, seek to embody, in balance with the more yang, or action directed way of being. Interestingly professional training within the community places a considerable emphasis on the balance between the yin and the yang of leadership. This exercise of yin leadership was in turn associated with being less self-centred and top-down, more Earth focused, co-operative and interconnected, more open and less separate and disconnected from relationship with others. Though in line with much feminist critique (Bullis and Glaser 1992; Eisler 1987; Gilligan 1982; Glucksmann 1995 Irigaray 1993) on the devaluation of the feminine, it is interesting that perhaps when it is functioning at its most powerful and effective, it is virtually invisible, as is perhaps evidenced in the following statement from an interviewee,

““...for me actually I can’t see them as leaders...here I’ve found myself much more in a process involved where leadership is not really necessary for growing... I took my sister to a seminary for a weekend and after she said, “Well I can’t cope with her because she’s not really a teacher”...my sister just wanted to have this kind of masculine, outstanding star, which she can admire which tells her the way how she could manage her life...so I think it’s completely different...this kind of feminine openness of, yes, everything welcome, I mean not really everything, but most of the things are welcome as long as they lead to the good, or I mean a process you really need at the moment...I think the principle which is being learned in Movement Medicine is this kind of trust in your own movement, where it’s going to bring you”

Also discernible in the interviews are both the stories of an organization, as well as those who people it, which has been through a fairly turbulent transitional phase as it moved from one phase of leadership to another – from an organization led by a charismatic leader focused primarily on the personal fulfillment of followers to an organization employing the charisma of its leaders to shift the focus towards service of the world around it - with all the accompanying emotions that tend to accompany such transitions.

One of the interesting dichotomies that are discussed is the fact that within this new organizational constellation the founders are simultaneously intent on devolving and distributing organizational power, at the same time as maintaining economic control over the for profit business which functions as the foundation of the community. This existed alongside a clarity that the organization as a whole is indeed being run on a hierarchical basis which means that in many ways its founders currently retain a high level of control over decision-making processes on both a micro level and on a broader more macro level of organization, partly in order to retain quality control over their product. As one interviewee comments, "...there was no doubt who was in charge and who was leading."

In a context in which participation is voluntary and participants pay for the benefits they experience in the community as a saleable product, the power dynamics as discussed by both founders are complex. These complexities involve what the founders describe as the loan of authority, or investment in a role, so that the community can engage in the learning process and performance of shared and agreed agenda's. This is, as I mentioned previously, acknowledged to exist within a context in which the wider culture is perceived to dis-empower those we refer to as followers, which not only leads to people failing to see themselves as having power and or responsibility, but also leads to the tendency to place disproportionate responsibilities on those in leadership roles and to disowning the power and authority we do have (Gemil and Oakley 1997). It also seemed to me that the use of the term "natural leader" by one of the founders, displays a failure to bring an analysis of class and gender to the wider discussion of those who end up in leadership positions in society at large, though there was acknowledgement of the inequality associated with the disproportionate rewards that leadership positions can



accrue.

As power is being devolved within the organization as a whole, the aspiration being expressed by the founders is one of the potential for the empowerment of both the individuals within it to take up the mantle of a leadership that dedicates itself to act in service of the well-being of the whole, rather than smaller individual needs and wants, as well as for the community itself to self-organize in precisely the kind of way recommended by Western (2012) at the beginning of this section - a process which is already beginning to emerge, with the establishment of community meetings and a professional association.

### **Being and Becoming**

I have just returned from the last module of my own professional training as a leader in the community as I sit down in order to write up these last sections on leadership. I find as a result that I am very much with, what one of the pathfinder leaders, (an activist with strong anarchist sympathies and with whom I was also involved in the Earthdreamers collective), described in his interview as the “complex, multi-layered...paradoxes and occasional contradictions” on display at this stage of the organizations development. For me this was encapsulated in a presentation offered to those of us coming to the end of a five-year training process within The School. Most of this presentation, on power and authority, was offered to us by a man mentioned at the beginning of one of the founder interviews, who also works with the upper echelons of social and political organization, including government, policing and the civil service, both in the UK and elsewhere. The presentation, also I believe, given at the aforementioned interfaces, had five essential messages to convey. First was that EVERYBODY has what were described as power issues. Second, that as a leader it is your responsibility to take the power that a group gives you, use it wisely and be willing to give it back in the full knowledge that having it does not make you special in any way, only, in role. Third, that the misuse or abuse of power tends to be based in not owning it sufficiently in the first place, or in other words failing to be conscious of its effects and implications. Fourth, everyone has the capacity for further empowerment. And fifth, with more power comes more responsibility and along with it the need for even more awareness and reflexivity.

If we return to the interviews with the founders it is obvious that they have both

learnt and taken very particular lessons from their time as Roth's followers, albeit in fairly elevated positions in her organization. The view expressed in the interviews (as well as being able to validate their perspectives from my own experiences) with the founders, is that The Moving Centre, in spite of its aspirations to "transcend" linear hierarchy, was not only hierarchical, but that individuals, including the founders of Movement Medicine, were also operating from a certain level of denial or unconsciousness about this hierarchy; as well as participant in the in group/out group phenomena (Young, Advares-Yorno and Taylor 2012). Perhaps the kind of disappointment over the apparent failure to exercise a sufficient amount of reflexivity to evade outright conflict is even harder to integrate in a spiritual community in which the focus on a conscious level at least, is geared towards the embodiment of the kind of less-ego leadership discussed by Sinclair (2007). It is perhaps notable however, especially given current legal action over intellectual property that is reportedly unfolding in the US in the aftermath of Roth's death, that while the "shadow" (Kostera 2012) of this hierarchy is described in terms of ego, as opposed to soul, or the material versus the spiritual, it is not overtly discussed in financial terms or the context of either consumption or the market place (Heelas 2008; Lau 2000).

The lesson that seems to have been taken by the founders is that it is very easy within group and/or organizational process in general for those who are benefitting most in terms of power and status to begin unconsciously colluding with the maintenance of ways of being that maintain that power, which in any case, is not something that most people wish to relinquish once in possession of it. The founders answer to this conundrum, has been three fold. One is to enlist consultants external to the organization who have been appointed for their willingness to disagree with and challenge the founders about any blind spots that may arise. Another is to willingly continue placing themselves in contexts in which their own organizational status is irrelevant. And finally, in spite of having asserted that "top-down" leadership is "fast...simple and straightforward" and that the consensus decision-making structures that we used within the peace movement in the 1980's, are often time-consuming and clumsy, they have committed themselves to the process of beginning to develop the use of just such structures in their newly founded organization.

Within such structures the community can begin to form “open, self-organizing systems, where everybody is empowered to be a leader and humble enough to be a follower” and it is possible to begin to distribute leadership in exactly the kinds of ways that Western (2010) suggests is required in order to harness “the energy and creativity” in the whole system. These processes are as yet however only being employed at the more mature layers of the organization with those displaying the levels of commitment involved in being apprenticed to the School. Beyond that, the role of leader and with it the hierarchy of both authority and responsibility implicit in it is seen as a valuable tool for facilitating joint learning (working) processes that participants are signed up to. Ultimately the tripartite goals of both the School and the community that has constellated around it are to attempt to serve both social justice and environmental sustainability in ways that do not sacrifice human fulfillment en route. Each individual engaging with the school, the community and the practices at their heart, is offered the opportunity to engage in a learning process aimed to empower them to find out what this looks like for them as well as to connect with others with whom they begin to experiment with co-creating new organizational forms that reflect what matters to them. In other words, to begin exercising leadership intended to benefit the world around them. Quite what the outcomes of all this are to be, is very much a matter for future research.

## **Conclusions**

### **Leaderships. “Taking altitude.” Coming back to earth.**

Writing in *A Green History of the World*, Clive Ponting's (1991) work on the history of civilization suggests that humanity's relationship with environmental destruction is nothing new. Far from following an unimpeded linear trajectory, ever onwards and upwards, even the most culturally sophisticated societies are embedded in a natural resource base that if exhausted, leads inevitably to cycles of limitation, decline and even collapse. It is a story, perhaps even a life cycle, from ancient Sumeria to the present day, that Spinoza for one, recognized as one of the constants of human existence (Gray 2007). This kind of long view could easily support skepticism about the notion of an ultimate environmental crisis. Ponting (1991) argues nonetheless, that the contemporary circumstances associated with industrialization, constitute a new order of things representing a potentially annihilating set of circumstances attached to our global resource base<sup>46</sup> (See also Bullis and Glaser 1992; Giddens 1991; Lovelock 2006; Porritt 2005). Adaptation and responses to these circumstances are then, easily seen as one of the most pressing issues facing all leaderships.

Moving forwards in ways that are geared towards halting such destruction may well require new sets of priorities and perhaps even new leaderships. Leadership and the organizational practices within which it is embedded, as has already been indicated, can be viewed from a multitude of differing perspectives. The first section of my thesis suggested however, that more often than not many of the approaches to leadership within the contemporary arena have more commonalities than differences and are often deeply rooted in androcratic ethics and narratives originating from very different cultural settings and global circumstances to those we now face.

It should also be clear by now that, along with Giddens (1991), Spretnak (1999) and Radford Ruether (1992) my work suggests that we are far from being residents of (postmodern) contexts in which the leadership emerging from those dominant (originally religious) narratives has dissolved. Rather, I have taken the view that the globalized, capitalist, industrial and 'rationalized'

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<sup>46</sup> Indeed this is already the case for the multitudes of species that have departed our world forever as part of what has been referred to as a sixth extinction (Marshall 2007).

phenomenon of much of the contemporary environment constitutes a type of “hypermodernity” in a form which Giddens refers to as “more radicalized and universalized than before” (Giddens 1991: 1- 3).

Giddens (1991) identifies this form as having originated from within European (Western) culture about the seventeenth century on and having become increasingly influential on a global basis. Describing three separate stages of colonization, beginning in the late fifteenth centuries and continuing into the present, Radford Ruether (2005) goes as far as to equate the term “globalization” (another way of describing hypermodernity) not only with increased networks for communication and cultural exchange but as the latest phase of Western imperialism (Banerjee 2003; 2008; Banerjee and Linstead 2001; Mies and Shiva 1993; Said 1994). She also argues that what is often referred to as post-colonialism is more accurately represented by acknowledgement that political decolonization was merely replaced, in many instances, by the economic domination of former colonizers (See also Said 1994). Critiquing such forms of neocolonial leadership she seeks to link a number of different features as consequences of the particular kind of global order linked to hyper-modernity. She outlines these as the increasing impoverishment of earth and people; pollution and climate change; the systematic undermining of local sustainable food production; privatization of water; the commoditization of the gene pool and the battle for control of women’s reproductive rights by conservative religion (Radford Ruether 2005: 1; see also Mies and Shiva 1993; Spretnak 1999).

Spretnak (1999) equates this same modernity as characterized by a focus upon the economic realm above all others, industrialism, objectivism, rationalism, scientism, the pursuit of control and efficiency, bureaucratization, compartmentalization and hyper-masculinity, as well as suffering from a mechanistic and anthropomorphic approach to the communities of life within which it is embedded. Indeed these are the organizational structures that I would suggest constitute the foundations of global crisis. All such interwoven scenario’s clearly contain, not only the opportunity for re-assessment and re-adjustment of leadership practices that I have also suggested is important, but potential for further exploitation and the intensification of both global and local conflicts (Higgins 2010; Gray 2007; Klein 2008; Mabey and Morell 2011;

Maxwell 2003; Osborn et al 2002; Probert and James 2011).

As Shiva (1998) has pointed out, Western leadership has a significant history of justifying its exploitative behaviours as the will of God. This alone is an important ethical reason, from some perspectives, to examine the historical and cultural origins of the religion being promoted in the leadership and organizational fields and the spirituality at work movement (Bell, Cullen and Taylor 2012; Sorensen et al 2012). Indeed far from being newly incorporated and in spite of the recent public revival of interest in religion and spirituality in the fields of leadership, management and organization, religion as I have shown, has had a long-standing relationship with the dominant values upon which much Western leadership and organization has been and is based.

In seeking to analyze Grint's (2010) conceptualization of the relationship between leadership and the sacred I followed Radford Ruether, (1992) Sorensen et al (2012) and others, in arguing that many of the practices that emerge from leadership and organizational injunctions have been (and still are) based upon a repressed, secularized theology, embedded within a Judeo-Christian cosmology that construes organizational leadership as a hierarchy, or great chain (Maxwell 2003; Parker 2009; Sorensen and Spoelstra 2010). These contribute to the portrayal of leadership as the almost exclusive province of an all-powerful, heroic male figure, standing outside the material realms as a transcendent, separate and superior being (Christ 1997; Grint 2010). This in turn involves the de-valuation of women, body, emotions, earth and many indigenous peoples in the inter-connected patterns associated with this particular narrative (Curry 2010; Merchant 1980; Radford Ruether 1992; White 1967). Kostera (2012) proposes that profound transformation requires us to understand both the light and shadow of our organizational archetypes. I contend that this personification of God in man's image is the repressed shadow of the Western masculinities associated with traditional religion and that sufficient acknowledgement of the implications of this is an important aspect of such a transformation (Jung 1959/1991; Connell 1995).

Giving consideration to other future transformations, Giddens (1991) envisions the potential for increased democratic participation, which he sees as just one such possibility amongst others associated with new technologies; demilitarization; the humanization of technology and a post-scarcity system,

including a system of planetary care and socialized economic organization, all as possible outcomes for our shared future. Pressure upon resources within current high-risk organizational systems may just as easily result in totalitarian political systems, the collapse of economy, ecological decay or the nuclear conflict he describes as other potential outcomes of hypermodernity (Beck 1992; see also Porritt 2005; see also Homer-Dixon 2006; Lomborg 2001; Lovelock 2006).

If leadership and organizational studies are to assist in the creation of positive futures, perhaps we need take a much more critical approach to leadership's contribution, to drop excessive and unwarranted positivity and to engage much more thoroughly in the task of imagining the unimaginable (Bauman 1989; Collinson 2012). Perhaps we also need to make much more thorough ethical assessments about the total cost of an ideological system, rooted in what were originally androcratic religious values, that have encouraged us to turn a blind eye to routine requirements for blood sacrifice, repetitive demands for the silencing of diversity and difference and the construction of leadership and organization based upon the positively pathological notion that humanity can ever effectively separate itself from nature.

Whilst highly critical of the Western Enlightenment project that has formed part of this trajectory, Gray (2007) is, nonetheless sympathetic to religion, as what he describes as "a primary human need" (Gray 2007: 295). Indeed he suggests that both faith and its close cousin fanaticism grow from the inherently human quest for meaning and purpose, alongside the perfectly legitimate desire to experience our lives and our suffering as somehow significant. This has a poignant relevance in a world in which faith is all too often accompanied by violence and injustice.

Approaches such as ecofeminism and deep ecology both offer routes to the reduction of such violence and injustice and the creation of meaning based on respect for the inherent value of much of that which has been de-valued in the world over hundreds of years. They also offer potential to re-establish partnership and co-operation with the divine feminine and nature. Of course, some such suggestions are, as Roszak (1993) observes, still non-negotiable within fundamentalist religious approaches, while I suspect that the resolutions (or otherwise) to these pressing problems, that leadership helps to generate as

we move forward, will have a large part in determining the quality of future for us all (Puttick 1997). Benefiel (2003), Hicks (2003) and Swimme (2009) all highlight the importance of finding equitable ways through such conflicts. Quite how this does, or does not emerge, will undeniably continue to vary from location to location, as it currently does, but it seems to me, unlikely that the psycho-social and environmental crises that Roszak et al (1995), Curry (2011) and others outline, will see much improvement without significant change in how we relate to both women and nature.

“Tempered radicals” have been described as those who fail to find an easy fit in the organizations they join precisely because of their interest in promoting just such kinds of change (Meyerson and Scully 1995). Sensitized as they are to inequality and injustice, certain aspects of their experience and identity, (whether these are gender, race, class, sexuality or political conviction) act to fuel them with ongoing reluctance to simply accept leadership and organizations as they are. Rather they seek to help social organization to expand into its greater potential for life-affirming well-being, social justice and truly sustainable organizational structures. Although Meyerson and Scully (1995) who coined the term, are not explicit about what Sinclair (2010) has described as the “vulnerabilities”, attached to these embodied experiences, the end product is nonetheless, a strengthened (tempered) commitment to the attempt to address injustice and inequality in the said organizations. Unwillingly to accept the status quo (indeed to feel their temper rise in relation to it) they seek strategic ways to engage with change (tempered solutions). Just this week, as scientists are expressing considerable alarm about the immanent collapse of several large glaciers in Antarctica due to human activity and the likely displacement of millions of people worldwide as a consequence ([www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) › Opinion › Antarctica) Jones and Stablein’s (2006) question of whether tempered radicalism is actually working is all too apposite.

Ecofeminism, which as we have seen, is committed to the dissolution of unjust hierarchies, views the contribution of even small, localized, everyday personal behaviours, which do after all, constitute the warp and weft of our existence, as every bit as important as more directly political action (Bullis and Glaser 1992). A standpoint, very much encompassed in the phrase, “the personal is political,” it also views, the physical, the intellectual, the emotional and the spiritual



aspects of life as equally valuable and important. Within ecofeminist spiritualities, this commitment emerges partly from their rootedness in specific cosmological narratives. These stories replace the great chain of being story with a male godhead (who created the world without any assistance in seven days) with stories of a divinity that exists and is expressed within the web of life, sometimes personified as Mother Earth. The intention behind this is not to create a reverse hierarchy but rather to re-value through their re-sacralizing, that which has been made profane by Judeo-Christianity, including, women and all the 'othered' of the earth, in *partnership* with all that is already viewed as sacred, including for many feminists, both masculinity and mind. The potentials attached to such perspectives include the democratization and feminization of traditional religious forms and the empowerment of what Heelas (2008) describes as an expressive and humanistic spirituality of life that supports well-being across the interconnected web of life. Examination of the repressed cosmologies at the heart of Grint's (2010) thesis on *The Sacred in Leadership* quite clearly reveals a different ethic. Indeed, as already discussed at length, it is the very legacy attached to these cosmologies that devalues the embedded, embodied, emotional realms in favour of transcendence, grand narratives and heroic gestures, valuing some labour, people and qualities, more highly than others (Glucksmann 1995). Whilst simultaneously encouraging the idea that the sacred is disembedded and somewhere other than here and now, equally present in 'everything' and everyone.

Grint's model of the sacred proposes separation, silencing and sacrifice as the cornerstones of leadership. Having subjected these ideas to intense scrutiny over the last five years, immersed on both a theoretical level and within a community of practice, it has been my conclusion that all of these elements are indeed present in leadership (Cousin and Deepwell 2005). That they may even be required in some forms, as expressions of the light rather than of the shadow of both, what have been referred to in my ethnography, as the yang, or masculine principle and the yin, or feminine principle. Sometimes leaders (whether they are male or female) who are holding responsibilities for organizational structures do indeed require, as one of my interviewees observed, distance from circumstances and or others, in order to assess needs and trajectories on behalf of those they are leading. Indeed this is surely a form

of leadership that we all exercise at times, when we stop to receive information and ask, what is needed here and now in this moment? And as this interviewee also pointed out this is sometimes about tending to a wide range of diverse needs held by followers. Both of which might even be viewed as the yin characteristics associated with leading. We momentarily step back, and separate ourselves from the group, so as to look at our situation from a different angle, in order to express an ethic of care for followers. This is however, very different from the chronic and lethal disembedding and disconnection associated with the nature/culture divide, that even eminent scientists now agree, threatens our very survival (Lovelock 2006).

Silencing too has a place, as leadership does of course, at times, require a platform, or a solo, as counterpoint to the orchestra. I would however suggest that there are many ways that such silence can be negotiated and that as one of the founders of the community researched in this thesis suggests, power and authority is something that can be lent to leaders for the purposes of completing shared tasks and agenda's. Such shared agenda's can even involve offering members of the collective, support for 'giving voice' to what Grint (2010) describes as the existential anxieties that normally prevent those designated as followers from stepping up into leadership positions. Which, when we actually have an opportunity to hear them from an embodied position, often reveal themselves, certainly in my experience as both a therapist and a leader and a follower within my research community, as cultural restrictions often associated with "place". As well as fairly often relating to concerns that may well be highly divergent from those of our established, institutional leaderships. In addition when we consciously choose to step away from the heroic model based on masculine power, we make new possibilities for those who begin as 'followers' to learn to lead. Becoming, in the process, part of what was described earlier as " the collective incremental influence of leaders in and around the system", albeit a more diverse one (Osborn et al 2002). Again it is not too difficult to couple these kinds of behaviours with the concept of yin, explored in chapter three of this section, though I am not for a moment suggesting that only women are capable of these kinds of actions. Rather, that leaderships incorporating a more 'balanced' way of dealing with silencing will generate very different outcomes from those that do not, almost inevitably evoking different responses

from followers, as revolutions throughout history have demonstrated (Grint 2010). For, as Schweigert (2007) observes,

“Community deliberations are...marked by a kind of sober pragmatism that sifts rhetoric for truth and authenticity. While this is certainly not operative in every instance in which communities gather, it is persistent and self-renewing. Community members retain their sense of autonomy and beliefs about reality, and they resonate with leaders who respect this autonomy and tap into their beliefs. At their best, community leaders create the social space in which citizens can recognize their own interests, assess the community’s needs and opportunities, share their beliefs and ideas, and create a pathway to put shared beliefs into action in pursuing the good. This understanding of leadership signals a ‘Copernican turn’ from leadership revolving around the superiority of leaders to leadership revolving around the authoritative action of followers – in the exercise of their freedom and power. In community settings especially, power and authority flow horizontally to leaders who can articulate and coordinate the common will, increasing the autonomy of citizens, rather than flowing downward from a position of dominance and limiting the autonomy of subordinates...By this definition, leadership is dispersed throughout the community, among leaders and followers. The leader’s authority and power arise from the autonomy of followers as they choose to participate and take responsibility to act (Coleman, 1997), aligning their power in a common purpose...

Multiple leaders play complementary roles. Some create space for action by their courage in facing the issue, thereby galvanizing the courage of others. Others have a knack for naming the issue and values at stake, transforming chaos or helpless frustration into a problem that can be addressed. Some act as the architects of social action, framing the response into which citizens can pour their energy for the good of the community, while others obtain the resources for common action, attracting financial capital, providing tools or training to increase effectiveness, or lessening burdens on volunteers by subsidizing day care or providing transportation. Some leaders are prophets, who call others to action by summoning their strengths, sounding the alarm to rise up and meet the needs at hand, and challenging others to live up to and act upon their espoused values...

Through consistency and respect, leaders affirm the relational ties of affection, obligation, and interdependence that are central to community. Citizens are more able to see the good and to act upon it when leaders show integrity in their own positions, act generously toward opponents, and affirm the relational ties upon which the citizen’s life depends. Leading-and-following is a dynamic set of relations in which some individuals see and engage their own paths in the qualities and actions of others” (Schweigert 2007; see also Gordon 2002; Hale and Field 2007; Holmes 2007).

We also see here a model in which the emotion associated with the feminine side of the gender pairing associated with Western dualism, is a whole community resource. And in which the expression of diversity (Hicks 2002) and even some of the conflict associated with it, can become a source of valuable learning. Even in my research community, in the extreme contexts of something like the relationship between Israel and Palestine.

Sacrifice too has a place in leaderships of all kinds and indeed when we frame it as service in the name of ‘social good living’, (Heelas 2008: 17) it may even be seen as a necessary prerequisite in leadership geared towards life-affirming principles. Perhaps even, another example, given by one of my (male)

interviewees, of the expression of qualities more traditionally associated with the yin,

“...that more feeling, more holistic, more environmental part of us that is not just about progress and getting more money and being more macho and better than everybody else, the part of us that’s more concerned with life and continuation of life and with the happiness and joy that this life brings to us than with being on the top of some kind of pyramid” (Interview quoted in Chapter 3).

This is not the same however as what one of the founders describes in his interview as the media sport of putting leaders on pedestals one month in order to tear them down for entertainment, in the following one, or using them as lambs on the altar of dysfunctional systems. Nor, does it have to mean putting the needs of the “in groups”, or those representing valued (sacred) qualities in a social structure above the needs of the “out groups”, or profaned, as Schweigert’s (2007) work also illustrates. Again though, we return to the issue of perspective, “place”, ethics and values and the complex arena of political negotiation, contestation and resistance. For what someone in one cultural context sees is not necessarily the same as what another will see (Hale and Fields 2007; Holmes 2007; Temple 2012; Warner and Grint 2006). A feature also illustrated within the involvement of the community examined here, as it joins with the current struggle of the Achuar people in Ecuador, against their own government, in their desire to protect a way of life rooted in coherent community and a truly sustainable relationship with the environment.

Whilst those of us in modern cultures cannot travel back in time to our pre-industrial roots, this does not mean that it is not important (if not crucial) to learn from such cultures, as well as to preserve the land in which they are embedded, for the benefit of all future generations (Martinez-Alier 1987). Something else, that highlights the need to name and explore the context of the discussion before attempting to analyze the role of the sacred as a tool that is employed to colonize (Tracey 2012). As, for the Achuar, a dreaming culture, similar to the Australian aboriginals in this sense, completely embedded in a very different cosmology to those of the West, their relationship with the sacred both informs and infuses what has become a political struggle to preserve and defend their way of life from the rapacious interests of modern leadership systems. As it does for the research community represented here, seeking to support this endeavor. What may amount to colonization in one context, represents a complete corollary in another (Tourish and Tourish 2010).

The questions of where “service” morphs into exploitation and whether sacrifice affirms or denies life, as critics of the spirituality at work movement are rightfully intent on reminding us, looks likely to be an enduring conundrum for the foreseeable future (Tourish and Pinnington 2002). Definition, as has been observed of corporate discourses on diversity, is crucial, as

“...feminists are become increasingly aware of the fact that, ‘nothing is innocent, that apparently “liberatory” ideals can only too easily be recuperated or undermined by that which against they seem to be struggling’ (Grimshaw 1993: 68-69). It is not a simple matter to distinguish when and how such recuperation is occurring” (Jones and Sablein 2006: 159).

Jones and Stablein discuss this issue in the context of diversity. As I have argued throughout in this thesis, the model presented by Grint (2010) is representative of Western cosmological constructions that emerged from patriarchal cultural assemblages, initially devised in historical circumstances that were not especially tolerant of the notion of diversity (Eisler 1987; Radford Ruether 1992). Or in other words, that they emerge from a set of concepts based upon the dominance of a masculine divinity, leading, to the profanation of the feminine and all associated with what lies on the other side of the false dichotomies promoted by the cosmologies we examined earlier, including body, emotions, nature and indigenous peoples. If we return to the cosmology embodied within the practices of the research community contained in the ethnography, as just one example, of a localized social experiment, we might remember that it seems to promote a different kind of relationship with leadership, as well as a different kind of model for the sacred in leadership. Whilst it may very well perform specific acts of separation, silencing and sacrifice at times, albeit from a different stance to their hyper-masculine exercise, it also adds inter-relatedness with each other and the environment, giving voice as an fundamental equal right for all, including the feminine and the enabling of healing and empowerment, rather than the inflicting of wounding, and even trauma that comes with extreme forms of sacrifice (Klein 2007). A kind of leadership described by Raelin (2003) as both collaborative and compassionate (See also Dunn 2005; Gronn 2003; Uhl- Bien et al 2007).

Based in a *balance* between the “masculine”, or what is named as yang, and “feminine”, named as yin, (whilst always holding in mind the complex nature of such terms) we found a cosmology embracing the indigenous wisdom

perspective of connection, an emotional approach that fosters not only the breaking of silences, by giving voice to feelings, but also a support for the empowerment of individuals, (including women seeking to express traditionally male qualities and vice versa) to join with community in order to move beyond cultural repressions. It seems almost inevitable that opposition to increasing empowerment for women, along with attempts to manifest change in the domains of gender politics, will continue to exist in some quarters (Crawford 1980; Spretnak 1999). Though offering reassurance to any potentially undecided allies of the ecofeminist project, even from a feminist positioning, Plumwood (1993) has described the pitfalls of what she describes as attempts at an uncritical reversal of dualism wherein, that previously viewed as subordinate, is unconsciously, placed in the position of value, or even superior value. For as she points out,

“...dualism is a process in which power forms identity, one which distorts both sides of what it splits apart, the master *and* the slave, the colonizer *and* the colonized, the sadist *and* the masochist, the egoist *and* the self-abnegating altruist, the masculine *and* the feminine, human *and* nature...if this is so, clearly we cannot resolve the problem by a simple strategy of reversal, affirming the slave’s character or culture, for this character as it stands is not an independently constituted nature, but equally represents a distortion...Thus, for example, to the extent that women’s ‘closeness to nature’ is mainly a product of their powerlessness in and exclusion from culture...affirmation of these qualities...will not provide a genuine liberatory alternative” (Plumwood 1993: 32).

Equality and liberation from these kinds of distortions, discussed at length in this thesis still, nonetheless, leave the task of creating what Irigaray has described as the creation of two genealogies (and possibly even more as we incorporate the narratives of the LBGT communities), as opposed to just one (Whitford 1991). My reader may remember her caution in chapter three to be wary of dispensing with binary categories before women gain recognition for their identities and subjectivities on the same status level as men. Or as Thomson (2006) describes it, the political danger inherent in the theoretical deconstruction of agency before it has been successfully embodied. Within the community under discussion here, the answer to this conundrum is to embody acceptance of ‘what is’ as a stopping point en route to the changes we then choose to make. Far from being a passive strategy or even one associated with one gender in practice, this approach is embraced as the grounds of what Spretnak (1991) names as the “real”. It is also *frequently* connected to that which has been culturally (and personally) repressed (Sorensen et al 2012) and

needs to be brought into the full light of awareness as part of its transformation (Kostera 2012). One of my male interviewees uses the example of community practices enabling him to recognize the value of an emotionality rejected in his family of origin, which then led to a career change reflective of this recognition. It is I would argue, effectively, an embodied, rather than a theoretical version, of what Irigaray (1993) and Spivak (1988; 1999) have described as strategic essentialism, embracing the essence of experience (whether this experience is a product of conditioning or not) without judgment, as one aspect of the processes involved in taking action for change. In highlighting the need to reunite 'masculine' and 'feminine' as allies, rather than opponents locked into destructive dualisms, Plumwood (1993) also has the following to say.

“...an anti-dualist approach reveals a third way which does not force women into the choice of uncritical participation in the masculine-biased and dualised construction of culture or into accepting an old and oppressive identity as ‘earth mothers’: outside of culture, opposed to culture, not fully human. In this alternative, women are not seen as purely part of nature any more than men are; both men and women are both part of nature and culture (Warren 1987; Ynestra King 1989). Both men and women can stand with nature (Ynestra King 1989) and work for breaking down the dualistic construction of culture, but in doing so they will come from different historical place and have different things to contribute to the process” (Plumwood 1993: 36; see also Glazebrook 2005).

### **Personal AND Political – Seeing Connections**

This process is of course, very much continuing to emerge, with the modern Western family probably one of the most central sites of contested changes (Giddens 1993). In the closing arguments in his paper on *The Sacred in Leadership*, Grint (2010) mentions the fact that the communes of the 1960's and 70's not only failed to catch on as a dominant form of social re-organization but also failed to inspire the masses to change. He also poses the following question of whether leadership remains,

“...closed off from radical alternatives not because of its relationship to capitalism, or patriarchy, or ethnicity or any other variable but because it is so closely related to the realm of the sacred?” (Grint 2010: 103).

I would suggest that it entirely depends on where you look for change. Communes may not have taken on, but the structure and character of the modern family, and in particular its power relations with traditional masculine authority, continues to morph - often way beyond the comfort zones of previous generations. This is, I would suggest, evident in gay, inter-racial and open marriage and the soaring numbers of divorce rates, serial co-habitation and

single parent families, as well as ongoing changes in our social relationship with traditionally expressed, masculine, power and authority. Change that Giddens (1993) has argued has led to the radical democratization of the so-called private sphere. It is also of note that in spite of Grint's comments on the failure of the communal movement of the 1960's and 1970's that many of the members of the community researched here are motivated to participate in it precisely because of their experiences within the nuclear family unit of modernity. So that whilst communal living may be too far a stretch for many of us socialized within such organization, this does not mean that age-old institutional forms are, albeit gradually, not in the process of being forever altered (Giddens 1993). The forms outlined by Grint (2010) have been prevalent for centuries and are unlikely to dissolve overnight but that is different from believing that change is unlikely, impossible or indeed not already well underway.

Meantime, for all that Grint (2010) dubs the kinds of crises described in my opening chapter as alleged, 'followers' it seems, disagree. This year, witnessed the largest trans-global appeal to governments to respond to climate change, ever seen ([peoplesclimate.org/](http://peoplesclimate.org/)). Spanning 162 countries, it was the largest demonstration of its kind in history. Information from the Pachamama Alliance's "Be The Change" symposium suggests that there are at least 130,000 groups networked around the globe, working towards environmental and social justice, though they suggest that they may even number as many as 250,000 or 500,000 groups. Whilst the social and environmental justice online campaigning group, Avaaz has 40 million members ([www.avaaz.org/](http://www.avaaz.org/)). Paul Hawken (2008) author of *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History is Restoring Grace, Justice and Beauty To The World*, had this to say to people gathered for the Bioneer Conference in 2004 ([www.bioneers.org/](http://www.bioneers.org/)).

"There is another super-power here on earth, that is an unnamed movement. It is far different and bigger and more unique than anything we have ever seen. It flies under the radar of the media by and large. It is non-violent. It is grassroots. It has no cluster bombs, no armies and no helicopters. It has no central ideology. A male vertebrate is not in charge. This unnamed movement is the most averse movement the world has ever seen. The very word movement is too small to describe it. No-one started this world view. No-one is in charge of it. There is no orthodoxy. It is global, classless, unquenchable and tireless. The shared understanding is arising spontaneously from different economic sectors, cultures, regions and cohorts. It is growing and spreading worldwide with no exception. It has many roots, but primarily the origins are indigenous culture, the environment and social justice movements. This movement is humanity's immune response to resist and heal political disease, economic infection and ecological corruption caused by ideologies. This is fundamentally a civil rights



movement, a human rights movement, this is a democracy movement. It IS the coming world” ([www.bethechange.org.uk](http://www.bethechange.org.uk) symposium material).

Whether or not such a movement is as influential as Hawken’s suggests or is a portent of better things to come, it is clearly too soon to say. What he describes certainly seems to represent something very different from Grint’s (2010) conclusions and indeed it may be its relative invisibility and nebulous constitution that is exactly where its strength and “unquenchable” nature lie. It is perhaps also of interest that Hawken’s identifies some of its roots in its connections with indigenous traditions that tend to represent the kind of “resacralized collective” leadership which Grint (2010) equates with militancy, rather than spirituality. In this sense it is, I would argue, here in the West in particular, also typical of many of the leaderships emerging from ecofeminist practices, many of which as Puttick (1997) has highlighted, have been gradually, quietly, very modestly and far from militantly, making their way from the margins into the centre of many mainstream organizational contexts. Even, Heelas (2008) suggests sometimes, influencing government policy-making, in sectors as varied as care for the homeless and the elderly, schools, universities and organizational management. These kinds of changes also run in tandem with the kinds of values held at the core of the HPM, many of which seek the re-balance the (yin) attributes traditionally associated with the feminine, alongside more masculine (yang) qualities.

Of course, the forces of neo-liberal economics do not appear to be on the wane for the time being, a fact that whatever our position on this, means that we, particularly in the West, must find ways to accommodate its “iron cage” until the organic moves into a different place in the cycle of global existence, whether that be “post-apocalyptically” or otherwise (Weber1904-05/30/76). But here too we may take the view, that if expressive spirituality is not currently winning the cultural war against the repressive, resulting in any kind of ultimate paradigm shift, that at least, it stands as some form of resistance to “regulatory imperialism” (Heelas 2008: 219; see also Puttick 1997). And can in the meantime make significant contributions. For as I suggested in my prologue, economics alone, are not enough for us to experience well-being. The situation in which its contribution is so often dismissed can of course, be looked at from any number of angles.

## **Working for well-being. A women's work is never done?**

Many of the central beliefs, values and commitments at the heart of ecofeminism in the US and Europe were initially born amidst an array of counter-cultural emergences that began in the 1960's and 70's. They have often, as already intimated, been closely aligned and interwoven with a variety of allied social movements, including feminist spirituality, deep ecology and environmentalism, some forms of neo-paganism and the Human Potential Movement born at Esalen. Some of which also involved the synthesis of modern, contemporary psychological perspectives with forms of religion and spirituality from both the East and other 'indigenous' contexts. In some communities, it became popularized as part of protest against the nuclear threat or environmental disasters, so that many of the values and principles outlined by Mies and Shiva (1995) have also been at the heart of *non-dominant* movements, experiments and explorations within Western (Northern) cultures as well as in the regions that the dominant systems in the West have also been responsible for colonizing. Many of these Western experiments and explorations have in turn however, also gradually percolated out from sites of specialist (sometimes originally academic) interests into practice, eventually becoming packaged and sold as commodities as part of a globalized market place (Carette and King 2005; Harner 1980; Kripal 2007; Lau 2005; Puttick 1997; 2004; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005; Roszak 1968; 1978; 1993; 1995; Spretnak 1991; 1999; Starhawk 1982; 1987). It is precisely within this process that the kind of spirituality associated with counter-cultural activities and the Human Potential Movement has often been extensively criticized.

Looking at the gender dimensions of the Human Potential Movement as just one example of women's activism<sup>47</sup>, populated, as Kripal (2008) reminds us by double the amount of women than men, we may wonder if this too may actually represent part of what Purkiss (1996) has described as the effort (albeit one supported by many men) to make more space for the untrammelled contributions of women. Here are, among many others, as Kripal (2007), Heelas (2008), Puttick (1996) and my own empirical work implies, sites where

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<sup>47</sup> These are far from being isolated, part of a multitude of such contributions going back to at least the 1980's, as collections by Caldecott and Leland (1983); Ferree and Martin (1995); King (1993) and Mies and Shiva (1993), as well as a forthcoming book edited by Phillips, M. and Rumens, N., elucidate.

women are carving out just such spaces to ritualize their own concerns, concerns which are then, also embodied as an (often very modest and non-heroic) ethic of care for both others and the earth. It is interesting that certainly within the kinds of realms associated with the Human Potential Movement and the New Age, many of these efforts, emerging from feminist conceptualizations of the sacred, are subject, as I outlined in my prologue, to sometimes vicious critique from *both* the more conservative sectors of the culture and the (also traditionally) male-dominated left wing. Indeed the way in which this masculine subjectivity intersects with the subjects of market place, body, the sacred and place is especially relevant here (Bell and King 2010; Connell 1995)

Much of the critique of the so called New Age movement is made on the grounds that it is located within consumptive capitalism, which is, as is also true of most publishing endeavors these days, undeniably true. It is also accused of being selfish, narcissist and shallow. Heelas (2008) has this to say on the subject,

“...to reduce...the ethic of humanity and authenticity...to consumption is...ridiculous...Whatever other contributions inner-life spirituality might make to life...the importance of the values, assumptions and expressions of expressive humanism means that they are sacralized...And even if ‘the sacred’ could be shown to be some kind of false consciousness, the values of expressive humanism are surely considerably less open to this criticism, if at all...The accusation of selfishness – putting oneself first and last by not contributing to others...*hardly* applies to many holistic participants – possibly the least likely of all sectors of the population to deserve this accusation...To think in terms of John Donne’s famous lines, “No man is an island, entire of itself”, neither is ‘inner’ wellbeing. Wellbeing is *not* easily hidden. Activities devoted to the nurturing of spirituality typically bring much in their wake; the expression of wellbeing in the workplace, with one’s children, for instance...what one’s life expresses normally is for others. To experience the sacred in nature, in the spirit of the Romantics, can make a difference to the well-being of the natural realm. Basically, we are talking about the non-theistic (as transcendent), holistic aspect of what Gordon Lynch (2007) calls ‘progressive spirituality’ (Heelas 2008: 217-218).

Indeed Heelas’ notion that inner life spirituality is something that far from being simply consumed for the individual, is something that then flows out to benefit others, seems to me to be very much validated by the interview data I collected, in what I would describe as a community representative of the kind of progressive spirituality discussed by he, Lynch (2007) and Kripal (2008). Whilst his conclusion (based on his extensive research over many years) that political will seems unlikely to be sapped by such practice of spirituality for life, is not only validated, but considerably elaborated on within the evidence that emerges from my own ethnographic study. As we are able to see, the evidence

suggests that coming in contact with those from 'other' cultures (albeit second hand for many of those within the Movement Medicine community) and given information by the leadership in the community, about some of those who are being harmed by modernist practices, has positively galvanized this particular community into forms of practical service. Whether we view this as political does of course depend on perspective, but in terms of the potential for ordinary people to take action to protect the environment it does seem to be good news. Especially when we recall the research presented by a number of scholars in my section on nature and the environment (Hartig et al 2007; Macnagten 2003; Proffit and Spicer 2006; Stern 2006; Tjernstrom and Tietenberg 2008) about the importance of accessible access points as important vehicles for motivating change. Mies and Shiva's (1995) observations that alternatives to globally exploitative systems are emerging from the grassroots rather than from governments, may also be seen to be exemplified in this particular community. It may also be a form of what Schweigert's (2007) discussion above, referred to, as a form of community leadership based on the authoritative action of citizens on behalf of the public good (See also Coleman 1997). If we are also constructing the yin aspect as the nurturing one, as a state of being, encouraged in balance with the yang aspect related to action, it may be interesting to consider Paulo Friere (1970) observations of liberatory education. Observation, in which he suggests, that if models based on domination are all that are available, followers, coming to power, will assume the model they have been taught. Whether we call it yin and associate it with the feminine or not, there certainly seems to be some evidence in this community that models of being that literally seek to in-cor-porate care and co-operation, lead to grounded actions that percolate outwards from such models in non-militant (non-violent) forms. The fact that much of this action is taken by women, as well as men, may also, somewhat paradoxically, dismantle the notion that action is the preserve of masculinity as it is conventionally constructed. It may also be, that the encouragement to connect to the emotions associated with our care for and distress over the treatment of a far away "other", also being embodied and enacted by men in the community, in its very embrace of 'what already is' simultaneously undermines the cultural association between the feminine and ethics of care.

Returning to the subject of the some of the other critique leveled at the “New Age” Kripal describes the consequences of stepping outside the confines of traditional religious and patriarchal organizational structures, to inhabit what he calls “the religion of no religion”, usually leaving those who do so without the back up of,

“...intricate webs of wealth and prestige built up over centuries, usually within hierarchical social systems that have systematically silenced and suppressed female voices” (Kripal 2008: 401).

Pointing out that livelihoods must be made, regardless, he also queries just who the criticisms of the relationships between the market and the Human Potential Movement actually serves, suggesting that it echoes criticisms throughout history, exemplified by attacks on both medieval female mystics and nineteenth century spiritualists, continuing into the contemporary era with polemics against the spiritual marketplace and the New Age, frequently leveled by empowered men at self-empowering women (See also Hess 1993).<sup>48</sup> None of this is meant, as I hope will be obvious from the rest of this thesis, to suggest that there are not very real dangers associated with both globalization and consumer culture.

Typical commentary on the kinds of socio-economic developments associated with the New Age, suggests that engagement in this movement from within the material economic comforts of Europe or the US, is easily criticized as an act of individualism. Amongst other effects, often reinforcing the commoditization of nature and its steady rationalization into processes of production/consumption (Carrette & King, 2005). Lau points out with some very obvious justification the ways in which bodily practices (such as aromatherapy, yoga, tai-chi and macrobiotics) transposed from their original cultural contexts into the market place as commodities, run the risk of repeating the sins of a Western orientalism that romanticizes nature, the past and ‘other’ cultural forms, an argument that is just as easily made against the kind of contemporary form of shamanism taught and sold by Roth (See also Sturgeon 1997). Lau (2000)

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<sup>48</sup> An experience taking place not just across time but also around the world in the present, as is demonstrated by the example of Shiva’s account of the way in which the leadership offered by the women in the Indian Chipko, tree-hugging movement was opposed by local men, who argued that industrialization rather than subsistence was the way forward, in opposition to the women who understood the importance of preserving the land (Mies and Shiva 1995).

further argues that in correlating the benefits to personal well-being that may be gained from engaging with such practices with planetary well-being, through the use of co-opted symbolism and associations, the market place successfully transforms what is essentially product for profit into pseudo-political action. Whilst Carrette and King (2005) also take a critical look at spirituality as a contested site in which capitalism seeks to both individualize issues, like well-being, which they argue are essentially collective, at the same time as it moves to colonize the most intimate realms of human experience. Though addressing the question of whether the body is essential for ecofeminism another scholar conversely argues that, “a holistic approach to body and health can help to heal the somatophobic attitudes we have inherited from our culture, which are in turn tied to our alienation from nature” (Field 2000).

It seems much more uncommon for scholars to take non-critical approaches to organization which place both body and emotion in positions of central importance – arguing instead, for the potentially positive social merit of the kind of interest in personal growth, as a site for transforming relationships, that has often gone hand in hand with feminism, ecopsychology, the Human Potential Movement and the rise of associated new spiritualities in the West. Beckford (1984) in looking at the emphasis on healing and life affirming renewal, (also typical of ecofeminist narratives and metaphors) associated with the Human Potential Movement and the New Religious and Healing Movements that continue to emerge from it, suggests that some of the more positive potentials might include; improvements in both individual and collective life; a renewal of religious imagination; a value framework that encourages a shared ethical stance and a renewed populism (see also Wuthnow 1978).

Whilst Lau as one of the few female scholars engaging in this debate outside the explicitly stated confines of feminism, locates some of her criticism in the wider concerns surrounding gender and the body image and control, few others address the issue of gender directly at all. Meantime, Kripal’s (2007) assessment of the ways in which democracy, capitalism and religion and inequality were interconnected at Esalen, reputed to be the birthplace of the Human Potential Movement, results in some rare conclusions. Readily acknowledging the validity of criticisms of alternative spirituality for its involvement in the marketplace, he also notes that most alternative religious

movements are dominated by women. And whilst Kripal (2007) acknowledges that the early days in the Human Potential Movement at Esalen were no model of gender equality (as well as undeniably middle class in orientation), he also notes that where gender at least was concerned,

“This would all change at Esalen, but only gradually. In time, strong female voices, real institutional empowerment, and above all, more reciprocal child-rearing practices would appear. Men would rear and raise children. Women would lead, teach and administer...Such an egalitarianism is never perfect...gender imbalances, socioeconomic injustices, and essentialist assumptions of all sorts remain...Still, the ideal remains, and ideals matter: the enlightenment of the body is the enlightenment of every body, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, class, or religion” (Kripal 2007: 462).

### **TSOL - Re-newing Concerns about Chronically De-valued Labour**

Interest in the kinds of synergistic approaches to problems typical of feminist approaches to problems, provided for example, in Glucksmann’s (1995) conceptualization of the total social organization of labour, may I suggest, provide some last final clues as to why such social experiments, flawed as they may be, can be so easily dismissed. She comments,

“The market sphere of industrial society is probably one of the few sites where ‘working’ has been structurally differentiated out from other activities and conducted in specialized institutions. But in all other circumstances, throughout time and space, and also in many of the other spheres of industrial society itself, work is embedded in, entangled with, conducted and expressed through other activities and relations which may be social, political, kinship, sexual or familial” (Glucksmann 1995: 65).

Focusing on an approach to work that rejects what it names as a false dichotomy, such feminist theory seeks to overcome the distinctions between categorizations such public/private; work/leisure; home/work; paid/unpaid; production/consumption and commodity and non-commodity. Such a positioning has several aims. One is to be able to overcome the limitations associated with the reification of the term work (as Glucksmann suggests the discipline of economics does) as only applicable to paid labour carried out in the market economy for money. Re-focusing attention on the definition of work, allows for the ascription of value to activities conducted in spheres such as the so-called private and/or domestic, which often conducted by women, have, on a historical basis also often been viewed as less important than activity in the public/market place. It may therefore also simultaneously becomes easier to analyze connections between spheres that may otherwise be seen as independent of each other, as well as to explore the relationships, interconnections and interdependencies between work conducted at different

and what may be only apparently disparate sites. TSOL is, above all, Glucksmann informs us, a concept based on relationality, arguing for “the interconnectedness of all institutions as they stand in relation to each other” (Glucksmann 1995: 68). Though the term connection, in and of itself, does not equate to either functional unity or harmony, which TSOL may help us to identify more clearly (Young and Taylor forthcoming).

### **Retrieving a lost past, alongside caring for the future in the present**

Indeed the colonialisms and exploitations of the North (West) in relation to the South can hardly be described as representative of harmonious or respectful relations. Even if we take an approach that views political struggles in the North and South to have women’s contributions to society valued, as equal yet different, immanence in the context of the subsistence production of the majority world’s women is still obviously very different in some ways from those in the North. Indeed it is currently much more often engaged with the struggles to prevent the material, survival base in the South from being subject to the destructive processes associated with imposed colonialisms - as evident in the Chipko Movement in India, the work of the now deceased Wangiri Maathai in Kenya, Fundación Pachamama in Ecuador, as well as countless other indigenous movements to protect the very fabric of existence (Banerjee 2003; Mies and Shiva 1993). With the North already having been subject to great waves of cultural and material destruction in its own industrialization processes there is often a hunger for what has been lost. What this loss has called for in many instances are precisely the kinds of creative solutions and cultural re-weavings typical of ecofeminism and feminist spirituality, intent on finding new narratives and practices that can support the ongoing struggles to restore value to both the earth, the feminine and all people of the earth (Christ 1997; 2003; Eisler 1987; Radford Ruether 1992; Starhawk 1987).

So that whilst it is possible to see cultural adoption of practices from outside the West as a form of colonial appropriation, I would argue as I have already suggested, that it may depend on the context, with all efforts towards supporting co-operation and re-valuing the profaned, part of a conjoined network of wider shared concerns to encourage an ethic of care rather than one of violence (Carrette and King 2005; Mies and Shiva 1995).

Writing in their book entitled *Ecofeminism*, Mies and Shiva (1993) begin it by



acknowledging their own very different (to each other) places in the world as,

“...divided yet also united by the world market system, that affords privileges to people in the North at the expense of those in the South...in the South, many women’s movements see feminism as a Western/Northern import and accuse white (European and North American) feminists of sharing men’s privileges in their countries...these differences aside, we share common concerns...One is to make visible the ‘other’ global processes that are becoming increasingly invisible as a new world order emerges based on the control of people and resources worldwide for the sake of capital accumulation. Another is the optimistic belief that search for identity and difference will become more significant as a platform for resistance against the dominant forces of capitalist patriarchy, which simultaneously homogenizes and fragments...if the final outcome of the present world system is a general threat to life on planet earth, then it is crucial to resuscitate and nurture the impulse and determination to survive, inherent in all living things ” (Mies and Shiva 1993: 1-3).

The debates about the socio-cultural significance of movements that I am suggesting may be unified by the same basic desires, for health, happiness and well-being, regardless of the market distortions that may become interwoven with them, will no doubt continue. Indeed these debates highlight what I referred to in my introduction as the problems and conflicts associated with the whole area of definitions, as well as the role of the subjectivities, which I have in many ways privileged, throughout this thesis. On a fundamental level the processes involved, may well be quite simply, emergent, rather than quantifiable, especially on the global scale (Christ 2003). A point that returns us to another pre-occupation within the thought leadership provided by feminism, of the importance of the local. There can be little doubt that the ongoing economic and political implications of hyper-modernity, with all that it encompasses, will continue to be fraught with complication. In the midst of such complexity and uncertainty I for one intend to continue to employ my relationship with spirituality in order to hold onto a sense of “radical hope” (Lear 2006). For in the face of such devastating environmental damage and social injustice as we witness on a weekly basis, there can be little more radical than insisting on the hope that the leaderships provided by millions of those ordinary people, so often conceived of as followers, can preserve life on earth for those still to come. Before concluding with a short section on my contribution to current researches, I share the words sent out from Avaaz recently,

“In myself and in the world, I feel things are fragile, poised on the edge, between deepest dreams and oldest fears. The world hasn’t seen this many refugees since World War 2. The politics of fear is rising. We’re decimating our planet -- 95% of the mammals we’ve left alive are us, and the animals we breed to eat! And climate change threatens our very survival. And yet, never has the status and power of women been

greater. Never before has more than half the human race lived in democracies. And we've cut global poverty in half in the last generation, and are on track to end it in this one. Never before has our human potential been so unleashed to decide our own fate. Maybe that's how it goes. When you're closest to your dreams, on the edge of grasping them, that's when your worst demons come. And we face a choice and challenge -- to rise with our best to this fateful moment, or let it fall.

Will humanity rise? I believe it might depend partly on Avaaz. There are 40 million of us now, the largest campaigning community ever. This fall, millions of us changed the game on climate change with a profound shift in political momentum on the issue. It was magical. As inspiring as the thousands of us who put our hands up to risk our lives on the front line of the Ebola fight. And the millions of us who took action to protect our oceans and defeat a Monsanto mega-project. From politicians, media and people, I'm hearing the same thing - we're bringing hope. And hope is exactly what our world is desperate for. It's the game changer. Hope, is how we rise" (Communication from Avaaz December 2014. [www.avaaz.org/](http://www.avaaz.org/)).

### **Contributing to hope, avoiding excessive positivity.**

Throughout the five years it has taken to complete this thesis, I have dealt with more criticism than ever before in my entire life. Sometimes for being too much of a romantic idealist. On other occasions, for bringing information to the table, which others have received as too pessimistic and overly critical. That was just in the subject of the environment. I have also been seen as angry and as someone guilty of valorizing my own gender, which on a personal level could not be further from the truth. Though it is true that I have felt intense emotions towards many of those I have encountered along the road, *including* love, compassion *and* red-hot fury (Meyerson and Scully 1995). During its writing I have certainly not only sat with, but also faced some of my deepest despair. Over time however something in me has begun to move. Discovering the work of Paul Hawken's (2007), *Blessed Unrest*, has seemed somehow like a material manifestation of this shift, as his work is so full of grounded optimism. Already quoted above, he has this to say on the subject of his own quest for balance.

"Over the past fifteen years...I have felt like a tightrope performer struggling to maintain perfect balance. To be sure, people are curious to know what is happening in their world, but no speaker wants to leave an auditorium depressed, however dark and frightening a tomorrow is predicted by the science that studies the rate of environmental loss. To be sanguine about the future, however, requires a plausible basis for constructive action: you cannot describe possibilities for the future unless the present problem is accurately defined. Bridging the chasm between the two was always a challenge, but audiences kindly ignored my intellectual vertigo and over time provided a rare perspective indeed..."

Clearly then, Hawken cannot be accused of the kind of prozac mentality discussed by Collinson (2012) in my opening chapter and I don't image that I

will be either, which leaves me feeling satisfied. The basis for my own hope throughout has been, and remains, the community that I have researched here as an insider. It, very much like myself, and my research, is far from perfect. And very much like the kind of approach to knowledge construction discussed in my chapter on methodology, represents an embedded, placed, incomplete, ongoing work in progress (Glazebrook 2005).

Throughout this research I have built upon much of the fine work already conducted within critical management studies, following in particular, on other contributions made by Bell and Taylor and others (2001; 2003; 2004; 2011; 2012; 2013), as well as Sorensen and Spoelstra (2010). I have particularly sought to build on this work by introducing ecofeminism (Eisler 1987; Plumwood 1993; Radford Ruether 1992; 2005; Spretnak 1999) as a resource for a critical analysis of some of the gender dimensions of this previous work. In doing so I have argued that far from religion being a newly discovered aspect of leadership, that our cultural relationship with it has been strongly influenced here in the West, by our Judeo-Christian history. I have also suggested that this history has been dominated by masculine forms of power organized around narrative configurations that in privileging some elements over others are responsible for taking us into increasing crisis. Whilst I have not especially focused on the psycho-dynamic aspects of the repressions I have named, a la Irigaray (1981), I do propose that the repressions associated with these masculine forms need to be addressed in order for institutions and organizations to move towards a state of greater social justice and well-being. In part I sought to do this by bringing a feminist approach to my methodology and approach to the construction of knowledge, which I am also aware has been provocative for some who have read my work. A response I am well familiar with as a psychotherapist. This approach, I also intend, in turn, to contribute something to the field of qualitative methodologies, particularly in terms of insights into insider research. In providing a detailed ethnographic study of what may in some quarters be referred to as one particular field site engaging in "New Age" pursuits, I also hope to have filled in some of the empirical blanks which exist in an area that Heelas (2005) has suggested is short on empirical evidence. Doing so, I intend to have made some small openings in discussions about embodiment, gender and the environment,

particularly in ways that focus on place (Sinclair 2010), as opposed to abstract concerns. Really, above all else, I am interested in questions of what might enable us to make truly sustainable changes that may serve people and planet equally (Plumwood 1993). Rather than discussing this by adopting the currently rather masculine term impact, I will content myself with expressing the desire that my work makes some differences in some places – because I believe that what I have been researching, matters.

## **Appendix One**

### **Data Collection**

Due to my insider status, discussing a time frame for the data collection of this ethnography is more complex than it would normally be within a more standard research process that both begins and ends within the same parameters as the thesis. As I mentioned in my prologue I initially met Ya'acov Darling Khan, one of the founders of the community in which the ethnography for this research was conducted, in the 1980's when we were peers involved in peace activism. This was some years before he stepped into a role as a leader of either The Moving Centre or The School of Movement Medicine. I then encountered him again in 1991, accompanied by his wife this time, when I became one of their participants/followers<sup>49</sup> in their capacity as the UK directors of The Moving Centre (based in the United States), a spiritual community organized around a particular set of spiritual practices, also functioning as a business. I was an active participant and consumer in this community from 1991 until around 2004 when I stepped back from it for a period of time. I mentioned briefly some of the reasons for this in the prologue. I am currently training, as an apprentice teacher/leader with The School of Movement Medicine, set up by the Darling Khan's when they left The Moving Centre. My involvement with the organization I have been researching here will therefore extend beyond the completion of my thesis.

On a more formal level I conducted research for my PhD thesis during a period of time that extended between 2009 and 2013. This involved spending time in a dual role as a researcher/participant in residential settings within the business/community that was being researched. Two of those days were spent alone, without food and only minimal shelter, in the wilderness of Dartmoor

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<sup>49</sup> Participants are generally referred to and refer to themselves as students and the two (and others in leadership positions) founder/leaders as teachers; the organization has an educational hierarchy similar to that which exists in university education, which starts with participant, shifts to apprentice, then apprentice teacher, teacher, pathfinders, staff (with these last two positions only occupied at the invitation of the founders) and founders. Please find further footnotes in the interview section on leadership. Because this is a thesis on leadership I have taken the liberty of using the term participant and follower interchangeably suspecting that this is a description that many said participants would resist.

while I undertook what is known as a Vision Quest.<sup>50</sup> One night was spent in a grave, as part of a burial ceremony in which I metaphorically met my own death as an ally. This experience led to the setting up of The EarthDreamers Collective, a non-profit making environmental and social activist organization with a spiritually motivated base in which I was an organizer throughout 2012 and 2013.

I also spent additional time within the community purely as a participant. Some of this time was spent at the annual, ceremonial Long Dance in which community members dance for 72 hours, partly in order to raise money for charity. In 2009, most of the £30,000 collected went to Survival International, an organization which campaigns for the land rights of indigenous people around the globe ([www.survivalinternational.org/](http://www.survivalinternational.org/)).<sup>51</sup> The decision about where to donate the money was taken by the apprentice teacher tier of the organization, also allowing for flexible responses from individuals. I sent my own contribution that year to Lakota people on Pine Ridge in America who run an organization known as Owe Aku, or Bring Back The Way, which is dedicated to preserving the Lakota way of life. I met someone at the Long Dance that year who moved me a great deal by sharing her story of how difficult life on the reservations is and how the community at Pine Ridge were in the process of fundraising money in order to mount legal action against a uranium mine which was polluting their fresh water source ([www.bringbacktheway.com/](http://www.bringbacktheway.com/)).

Alongside such practical action I also conducted an initial set of semi-structured interviews with the two founders and eleven of the participants/followers and apprentices in my first year as a researcher. I followed this up with a further set of ten interviews, with people functioning at a variety of different levels, including pathfinders and staff, in 2013.<sup>52</sup> By this stage in a fairly new organization the first batch of new apprentice

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<sup>50</sup> For further information see *The Book Of The Vision Quest – Personal Transformation In The Wilderness* by Steven Foster and Meredith Little (1992).

<sup>51</sup> In 2013 the community associated with The School of Movement Medicine became very directly involved in political process when Theresa May, the Home Secretary was petitioned concerning visa processes that refused to allow Achuar shamans permission to attend the Long Dance ceremony as guests. I continue to be actively involved in annual fund raising for the Achuar through an initiative called Land Matters, run by my husband and myself.

<sup>52</sup> I collected 120,699 words in interview data alone.

teacher/leaders were out sharing the community practices in the wider world. I was keen to begin capturing data from this newly emergent layer in the organization. Research data has also been compiled using field notes collected during this time; photographs; the website and newsletters of the business being researched; a book written by its founders; interviews with them on YouTube and the thesis and publication of another PhD researcher within the community (Kieft 2012).

I was able to negotiate access to the field site fairly easily, on the basis that, as I have said, I had already undertaken in-depth study with the founders associated with it over a prolonged period of time. Both of them were open and generous in enabling me to renew my relationship with them and the community they have helped to create, as a researcher. While I was expected to sell my project to the administrator of the commercial business that also runs as part of this community, in terms of potential value to them (we agreed that I would write articles for the monthly newsletter in exchange for being allowed access) it is also the case that access has been relatively unproblematic. Having just begun teaching a body of work at that time, called “Awakening The Dreamer”, which focuses upon the attempt to increase awareness of environmental destruction, the leaders see contemporary circumstances as calling for both action and co-operation in solving the problems we face ([www.pachamama.org/](http://www.pachamama.org/)).

Turn over of participants within the community is both stable and ongoing, though after a five-year gap in my own involvement, I knew very few of the regular participants in the international community when I returned in 2009. Introduction to participants, as a long-term practitioner of movement work made the establishment of trust and rapport a fairly smooth process. I conclude this on the basis that many people approached me to both enquire further about my research and to offer support in a variety of ways, including volunteering to be interviewed, expressing interest in having their voices heard and asserting that they felt that conducting such research from within a University Business School was important work (Tierney). I introduced myself as researcher, both on paper and verbally and had a continuous presence as such in the community’s monthly newsletter for the first two years of my research. Clark (2010) refers to this as pitching the project. I was often spotted with a tape-recorder, sometimes recording teaching sessions in progress or interviewing participants, but to all

intents and purposes I was also a full participant for six of the modules run by the School whilst I was there as a researcher. The specific modules I chose to research were chosen for the ease of access offered by the fact that they all took place close to my home, meaning that there was less financial expense involved in traveling to them. The modules tend to run as a rolling programme similar to that offered in a conventional education establishment. Three of these same modules occurred abroad the year after I researched them which would have made the process much more expensive. Knowing this in advance due to the business' well planned and publicly advertised schedule enabled me to factor this in and arrange the research timetable in such a way as to keep travel costs and carbon footprint to the minimum.

As I write, I have as I mention above, just recently embarked on embracing my own new role as an apprentice leader within the community - an experience that I am aware has the potential to generate even more research material in future. Perhaps what is most important to my reader in this moment, is that both the ethnographic and interview material which are generated here come from a lengthy involvement and an ongoing commitment to engagement with both the practices taught by the founders of the School and the community and organizational processes associated with them.



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