

INTEGRAL REVIEW

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**Integral Education,
Women's Spirituality and
Integral Feminist Pedagogies**



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July 2017 Special Issue Introduction

Issue Editor: Bahman A. K. Shirazi¹

The focus of this special issue of *Integral Review* is centered on two principle themes. The first theme is integral education, the educational framework that was first developed by Sri Aurobindo and Mother Mirra Alfassa (a.k.a. The Mother) as part of their integral world view. Sri Aurobindo, who was sent to England at age seven to receive a Western education, returned to India in 1893 and dedicated his early work to the cause of liberation of India from the colonial British rule. His ideas on education had significant implications for the educational system of India, which was dominated by the British at the time. A few decades later, as more and more followers and their families joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram community in Pondicherry, India, The Mother became directly involved with educating the Ashram children and started a school in 1943, which is known today as the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

In *The Modern Knowledge Academy, Vedantic Education and Integral Education*, Debashish Banerji explores how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision of integral education integrated aspects of ancient Vedantic principles with modern knowledge academy. Banerji starts with the early 20th century discussions on education that took place among key intellectual figures of India about the national system of education and the challenge of reconciliation of traditional epistemologies with Western educational values. Among topics discussed were giving priority to native languages, equal valuation of the sciences and humanities, and intellectual understanding versus inner and intuitive sources of wisdom.

Banerji characterizes the modern knowledge academy, which is rooted in scientific and empirical methodology, as being objective and universal in its outlook, thus deemphasizing subjectivity and the role of individual knowledge. At the same time, he maintains, the universal humanism that emerged was important to individual liberation and equality both in the West and for colonized people in contrast to native pedagogy, since indigenous education in India was often based on a patriarchal and authoritarian model. As Banerji puts it "... the critique of national education cuts both ways – finding principles in the modern knowledge academy to correct biases and prejudices of the past, while also contesting the definitions of epistemology and pedagogy based on indigenous knowledge systems." Banerji argues that in the Vedantic approach to knowledge ontology and epistemology are not separate and that Vedantic epistemology aims at overcoming the subject-object split through intuitive approaches and direct non-dual experiences of the Self. He concludes with a discussion on how Sri Aurobindo reconciles epistemologies of modern knowledge and nativist approaches to knowledge and how it can be implemented in a post-secular global society.

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In the next article, *A Complete Integral Education: Five Principal Aspects*, Jeremie Zulaski reviews the five principal aspects of a “complete integral education” envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother using several of their key writings in this area. After a brief critique of the current educational models, the author provides an outline of integral education and concludes that “a complete integral education contributes a potentially corrective alternative to outmoded orthodox methods that privilege intellectual proficiency over the holistic knowledge potentially present, given authentic engagement of learning communities.” Integral education is often referred to as education for the whole person which is typically defined as engaging the mind, body and spirit in recent literature and by certain educational establishments, including CIIS. However, in integral education based on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s teachings the whole person is defined in terms of five major constituents: the physical/somatic, the vital/affective, mental/cognitive as well as the psychic and the spiritual dimensions. Using the available teachings by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the author examines each of these areas in some detail.

The next article by Heidi Fraser Hagerman is an empirical study involving the alumni of the East-West Psychology (EWP) Program at CIIS. This program started in the mid-1970s and has gone through a series of changes in its curriculum. In the 1970s it bridged Asian psychologies such as yoga psychology and Buddhist psychology with the emerging Western schools such as Jungian, existential, humanistic, and transpersonal psychologies. Over time, the East-West dimension was expanded to embrace a more global vision by including indigenous and sacred psychologies, contemplative psychology, and more recently areas such as ecopsychology and consciousness studies. Today the educational vision of the EWP program explicitly aspires towards an integral education that honors intellectual excellence as well as the wisdom of the somatic, vital, emotional, imaginal, and spiritual dimensions of the person in order to foster transformative inquiry and learning and to facilitate psychospiritual development.

The article titled *The Value of an Integral Education: A Mixed-Method Study with Alumni of the East-West Psychology Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies* is a unique and original study to engage graduates of the program to explore the relationship between their integral educational experience and their personal and professional development. According to the author, “The findings revealed that their experience and understanding of integral education in EWP is mostly in alignment with the ideals of CIIS; namely, honoring multiple perspectives, the multidimensionality of being, and multiple ways of knowing ...” The study also uncovers areas that need further development such as more focus on practical and professional development, further support for students’ psychospiritual development, and communication skills to convey the value of an integral education effectively with communities outside of CIIS.

The remaining articles in this issue explore a key aspect of integral education and world view; namely, women’s spirituality and integral feminist pedagogies. Alka Arora’s article titled *Women’s Spirituality at CIIS: Uniting Integral and Feminist Pedagogies* sets the foundations for an educational framework termed integral feminist pedagogy, which is an attempt at uniting the principles and practices of both the integral and feminist traditions. Arora critiques a particular narrow view of integralism that “divorces individuals from their social and political context” and argues for a framework that not only takes into account the unification of mind, body, and spirit, but in addition integrates the social and political context which is the focus of Feminist pedagogy.

This position is in fact resonant with CIIS founders' vision of integration of the personal and psychological dimensions of spiritual practice with social, cultural, and political awareness and transformative action.

The next article by Arisika Razak entitled *The Divine Feminist: A Diversity of Perspectives That Honor Our Mothers' Gardens by Integrating Spirituality and Social Justice* further builds on the theme of integration of spirituality and social justice. Citing a number of key figures in the women's spirituality and related movements, Razak argues that while spirituality has often been separated from feminism, a number of prominent scholars in diverse fields such as Africana and Chicana studies, Indigenous studies, Islamic studies, queer studies and women's spirituality "have all linked empowered roles for women and other oppressed groups to contemporary and historic liberatory spiritual frameworks and culturally specific Indigenous roles for women and other oppressed genders."

Razak defines the contemporary *divine feminist* as "one who walks the contested borderlands between secular feminisms, philosophy and religious studies, and ethnic/indigenous studies" by integrating "diverse spiritual frameworks elaborated by people of color, liberatory theory and praxis supporting the empowerment of women and other oppressed genders with Euro-American academic perspectives, and contemporary disability and embodiment studies" to develop new forms of activism, scholarship and alliance building.

Monica Mody's article, *The Borderlands Feminine: A Feminist, Decolonial Framework for Remembering Motherlines in South Asia/Transnational Culture* is an excellent example of the kind of scholarship embraced in the previous two articles. Mody engages Gloria Anzaldúa's "borderlands framework", an alternative new consciousness and "a profoundly relational, integrative onto-epistemological praxis", to empower the marginalized sacred feminine in the context of South Asian motherlines by offering a radical synthesis of spiritual healing with anti-oppression work. She writes:

[c]reating self-affirming, complex images of female identity, and making revisionist myths—while engaging the self in relation to culture—constitutes a decolonial practice. It enables South Asian women—as the Others of colonial modernity and brahmanical patriarchy—to renew their relation to an episteme of the sacred that liberates their voices, vitality, and authority.

Earlier Banerji argued that the Western "universal humanism ... was important to individual liberation and equality both in the West and for colonized people in contrast to native pedagogy since indigenous education in India was often based on a patriarchal and authoritarian model." Mody argues that neither the patriarchal system in India nor the universal humanism of the West would provide the right solutions and offers a post-secular decolonized recovery at the edges of the postcolonial feminist subjectivity through the borderlines framework that "forefronts the grandmothers, the foremothers, and the experiences of women of color on their own terms."

In the final article, Karabi Sen introduces *Chinmoyee* and *Mrinmoyee*, two different ways of looking at divinity in the feminine form in traditional Indian context. Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee refer to the divine female principle in the context of Hindu philosophy and religion which have

often been interpreted by philosophers and common people alike as opposites, much in the same sense that mind and matter have been held as opposite in dualistic philosophies. In the spirit of non-dual philosophy, Sen proposes that the two aspects of the divine feminine, the transcendent and the embodied, are essentially two aspects of the same unified consciousness. Through various philosophical arguments as well as references to some of the current growing-edge work in science, and Sri Aurobindo's views on the stages evolution of life, Sen creates a platform where "the scientist, the philosopher and the saint join hands" to address the questions about our relationships to the whole, our course of actions and our choices behind our actions if we choose a "*conscious foundation* for our vision of harmony with the whole universe upon the discovered unity and link between our body and the rest of the bodies, our life and the rest of the lives, our values and those of the others."

The essays selected for this special issue of Integral Review represent a small cross-section of current integral scholarship at the California Institute of Integral Studies. We are grateful to *Integral Review* for providing another opportunity to share these ideas with the larger community of integral scholars.

Bahman A.K. Shirazi
San Francisco, July 2017

The Modern Knowledge Academy, Vedantic Education and Integral Education

Debashish Banerji¹

Abstract: The early Upanishads provide a model of education which Sri Aurobindo drew on for his system of education, which has been called "integral education." Yet, having himself been educated in some of the canonical institutions of the modern knowledge academy, Sri Aurobindo's views on education did not adhere to a nativist or essentialist interpretation of indigenous knowledge. This article will consider the critique of both modern knowledge as well as of nativist approaches to knowledge acquisition and dissemination implicit in Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision of integral education; and if or how that can be implemented in a post-secular global society.

Key Words: Integral education, Sri Aurobindo, Vedantic Education

The Modern Knowledge Academy

Questions of restructuring higher education, whether to empower indigenous forms of knowledge or a more integral knowledge (whatever that may mean) require foremost, a critical consideration of the disciplinary boundaries of the modern knowledge academy, within which all such considerations are conducted. What are the assumptions of the academy, from where did they come, who/what owns it and/or is owned by it, and what do they allow or disallow from consideration?

Questions such as these were quite naturally of critical importance at the turn of the 19th/20th century in Kolkata, India, where a native Bengali intelligentsia met to discuss the shape of a national education project. Aurobindo Ghose, later Sri Aurobindo, the philosopher-sage of Pondicherry (and one of the seminal influences on CIIS founder Haridas Chaudhuri), and Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-western Nobel awardee for literature, considered by many

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Banerji has curated a number of exhibitions of Indian and Japanese art. He has edited a book on the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore and is the author of two books: *The Alternate Nation of Abanindranath Tagore* (Sage, 2010) and *Seven Quartets of Becoming: A Transformational Yoga Psychology Based on the Diaries of Sri Aurobindo* (DK Printworld and Nalanda International, 2012). Banerji's articles on South Asian art history, culture studies, consciousness studies and yoga psychology have appeared in various magazines, journals and anthologies.

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Indians as the conscience of the nation, were participants in these discussions. In forwarding their analyses and critiques, they considered the place of language, of whole person education, and of traditional epistemologies in comparison with western education. Many of these debates were conducted around the founding curriculum and pedagogical methods of the National College in Calcutta, which became operational in 1905, with Aurobindo as its first principal. Later, both Tagore and Aurobindo continued to develop the ideas voiced in these meetings, giving a more mature shape to them in their own “ashram” institutions, Shantiniketan and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram respectively.

Both were strongly influenced by Vedantic ideas of epistemology and pedagogy – Tagore put to practice his own creative interpretations of these teachings, while Aurobindo developed what he called “Integral Education” on its basis. Neither, however, rejected the epistemology or pedagogy of the modern knowledge academy, both because such a rejection would be a recipe for marginalization and because there were aspects to the modern knowledge academy that provided salutary corrections to some of the shortcomings of indigenous education. The National College is still operating as one of Kolkata’s (and India’s) major universities, though to what extent it embodies the critiques and suggestions of the National Education Council, is a debatable question.

Principles of National Education

To summarize the ideas of the Council, especially as voiced by Tagore and Aurobindo, we can group them into four major points:

1. Priority given to native languages as the medium of instruction, with the corollary need to advance translation projects of western knowledge into the Indian vernaculars. This idea, strongly advanced by Tagore, had to do with the acculturation of a never-fully-translatable continuous tradition and its engagement, on its own terms, with modernity.
2. Equal importance given to the Humanities and the Sciences/Technologies. This point was emphasized by Tagore, since what was recommended by some was an emphasis on technical education, as the basis for developing equality in manufacturing and industrial management with the colonizer. Unfortunately, in the early implementation of national education, this emphasis on Engineering became predominant for some time, and the National College, later called Jadavpur University, became known as an Engineering school. Fortunately though, today the university is well known for its Humanities as well.
3. Related to point 2, was the question of the educational habitus. Both Tagore and Aurobindo drew on the Vedantic idea of the ashram or gurukula (guru’s family) model of educational habitus, which would allow for informal learning as well whole person pedagogy. The implementation of this aspect was contra-indicated by the modern knowledge academy, and the question of how or if at all it could be implemented, remained unanswered. Later, both Tagore and Aurobindo built ashrams of their own, and conceived of the life of the ashram as a form of “unending education.”
4. The privileging of the mind, in the modern knowledge academy, and consequent reduction of knowledge to “intellectual understanding” was sought to be countered by other forms of legitimate knowledge. In Tagore’s case, one scholar has called it “a feeling-ordered

rationality;”² and in Sri Aurobindo’s case, it was a tapping into inner sources of wisdom that Vedantic knowledge wrote about. In this context, Aurobindo (2003) came up with his “three principles of true teaching,”³ of which the first was that “nothing can be taught” (pp. 384-385).

Critique of Modern Knowledge

Before looking at these suggested revisions in detail, or considering what they drew from Vedantic education or what shape they took in Integral Education, it would benefit us to subject the epistemology and pedagogy of the modern knowledge academy to our own critique, based on sources of understanding which are current. The modern knowledge academy, now a worldwide decentralized universal institution, was born out of the 17th/18th century intellectual revolution known as the European Enlightenment. In brief, as a reaction to the dogmas of the Church, European intellectuals sought an object and method for knowledge production that all humanity could agree on. It is the method here that is more important than the object, since the object could more easily be stated as the totality of knowledge of the cosmos (the “what” of human consideration) and the subject of knowledge, the human being (the “who” of its consideration).

What could be universally agreed upon, if we were to avoid being subject to the rhetoric of invisible epistemic real estate of various unverifiable contentions, was what we could affirm as verifiable empirical knowledge, obtained by the senses (or technical extensions thereof), and operated upon by the rational principles of the mind to arrive at testable hypotheses, inductions and deductions. Thus the scientific method became the ground of modern research and the archiving of the results of this method, in systematic form, became the means of acquisition and furtherance of knowledge. This simply put, is the foundation of the modern knowledge academy.

Knowledge here is not the prerogative of any individual, however intelligent, but a constantly developing archive belonging to all humanity; and dependent on all humanity, yoked with or without consent, as knowledge-workers for its production, distribution and implementation. Individuals here did not count for much, because finite human lives, bounded within a small envelope of space (locality) and time (mortality) could only piece together or handle a small quantum of knowledge, while a decentralized knowledge academy, utilizing large numbers of knowledge workers across space and through history, it was supposed, could eventually arrive at the goal of total knowledge and mastery over all circumstances as a result. The assumption behind this was that, since Nature’s laws were cognizable by the human mind, the mind would eventually arrive at the Law or small complex of Laws, which explain everything. One might see this as a displacement of the earlier Greek idea of the Logos or Mind-of-God. Of course, not all Enlightenment philosophers believed in this, but it was a pervasive idea, particularly among Deists, who were very influential in shaping the Enlightenment. Since nature was “reasonable” (i.e. lent

² See the discussion of Rabindranath Tagore in Esha Niyogi De (2002, p. 42) as quoted in Banerji (2010, p.13).

³ From “A System of National Education” published in 1910 in the nationalist magazine *Karmayogin*. See Sri Aurobindo (2003, p. 384). Later, in his magnum opus on yoga, he reiterates this idea more fully: “Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature” (1999, p. 54).

itself to Reason), human reason would be able to arrive at a total understanding of nature. This could be seen as a kind of “integral” goal.

Modern Knowledge and Humanism

The assumptions of universality in this premise made for some attractive consequences which were tied to the larger Enlightenment project. For one, it rested on and inaugurated a universal humanism. In defining a universal method and a universal scope of knowledge, it simultaneously defined a universal subject which would be the natural instrument for this project – a human being possessed of empirical sensory means and rational logical means of knowledge. This meant that all humans were equal in possessing universally the faculties of sense and logic. This equalization, which helped Europe to emerge from the epistemic dominance of the Church, was in a sense, liberative for colonized peoples as well. It provided them with a principle for claiming equality as human beings, not only in relation to the colonizer but also against dogmas of social inequality instituted and accepted in their own native societies. It also however, stood in contradiction to native pedagogy in this sense, since indigenous education, such as what was conducted in the ashram or *gurukula*, was often based on a severely patriarchal model, where the word of the guru couldn't be questioned. One can see here how the critique of national education cut both ways – finding principles in the modern knowledge academy to correct biases and prejudices of the past, while also contesting the definitions of epistemology and pedagogy based on indigenous knowledge systems.

However, the privileging of Reason as the highest human faculty was an inherent bias, which we can see at work to this day in separating humans in terms of superiority. Moreover, as thinkers like Nietzsche were quick to point out, this noble-seeming knowledge project was entangled with the “power” project of making a “perfect world” (Nietzsche, 2009). In fact, for Nietzsche (and closer to our times, for Nietzschean thinkers such as Michel Foucault), the power motive was primary, driving the quest for knowledge so as to possess and enjoy the world, exploiting those who were disadvantaged in terms of the instruments of knowledge or its application (technology) (Nietzsche, 2009; Foucault, 1984: pp. 76-100). Still, the good that modern applied knowledge has done to our world cannot be overlooked; and the leaders of national education in Kolkata did not wish to overthrow technology only because it was one of the prime instruments of colonialism. The famous debate between Tagore and Gandhi on this issue is a good case in point.⁴

Today, we may articulate the problems with the modern knowledge academy in our own way – first, the “integral” epistemological project of the Enlightenment is faulty in its assumption of piecing together all knowledge through an iterative method. Simply speaking, the whole is greater than its parts and cannot be composed from an addition of its parts. However, so long as we harbor this illusion, even as a general possibility, we will be prey to partial wholes that become ideologies

⁴ Through the 1920s, Gandhi and Tagore corresponded on a variety of topics including Gandhi's national program of boycott of science and technology in native education as well as universal domestic practice of cotton-spinning (*charkha*). Tagore resisted both views. Though he was sorely conscious of the dehumanization contingent on privileging science and technology over the humanities, he felt the solution lay in balancing the priorities, not in boycotting science and technology. In fact he sent his son to study Agricultural Engineering at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, so as to apply its methods for more efficient produce at Shantiniketan (Robinson and Datta, 2007).

laying claim to all of reality. This is the ground for the universalist stridency of modern religions and political ideologies. Faced with a liberal world which champions knowledge acquisition and application as part of a totalistic drive with the assumption of an absolute rational understanding, religious and political ideologies take on a fundamentalist stance in opposition, staking their own universal claims as having global rights. No claim to integrality based in a mentally comprehensive construction, however compelling and inclusive, can encompass the infinite plurality of the cosmos. There will always be something that will escape the “system;” yet driven by the need to claim integrality, there will always be the attempt to close the doors on inconvenient fractions and force a theoretical ideology on the masses – the essence of fascism. It is an understanding of this danger, that made Martin Heidegger open up the method of “destruction” against metaphysics, later continued by Jacques Derrida in the form of deconstruction and by Michel Foucault, through his archaeological and genealogical critiques.

The problems of the drive for “power,” furthered through technology, are even more obvious. Though claiming the goals of betterment and perfection of human life and worldly circumstances, the motives of power are tainted by the impurities of the human ego, and without addressing this, lead inevitably to possessiveness and exploitation, at the foundation of colonialism and capitalism.

Vedantic Knowledge

For an indigenous basis of knowledge, Sri Aurobindo turned to the Upanishads, India’s earliest proto-philosophical wisdom texts. The Upanishads are centrally concerned with knowledge, but they understand this quite differently from the modern definition of knowledge. The question of knowledge is fielded repeatedly in the Upanishads. The most succinct form of this question, raised variously in a number of texts, can be found in the Chandogya Upanishad (VI.1.3) and repeated in the Mundaka Upanishad (I.3): “What is the one thing knowing which all may be known?” Purely based on the question, this sounds almost identical to the Enlightenment’s project of finding the unitary root of all explanation. But the difference between the two lies in the fact that for the Enlightenment, this is an epistemological project, not an ontological one; while for Vedanta epistemology is never separated from ontology, and the question is a matter not of shareable content but of a certain experience of reality, one through which all is understood. While a rational epistemology proceeds on the basis of a subject-object split, Vedantic epistemology aims at overcoming the subject-object split through non-dual experience. This is done through an insistent focus of attention on the Brahman, the One Being in all beings. In terms of its knowledge project, another way of putting this is the discovery of true Subjecthood (the Atman or Self), whose self-experience is this objective world, cognized substantially as itself (Brahman) and through its faculties, as qualitative (*vijnana*) and functional (*karma*) forms of self-knowledge. This Self is the self of all selves and may be approached through “self-enquiry.” Interestingly, this realization has also been termed “Enlightenment,” in the inverse Orientalist sense with respect to the European Enlightenment.

Comparison of Methods

The method to its attainment is no less systematic and rigorous than the knowledge academy’s scientific method. It consists in following a psychological praxis, yoga, guided by a realized teacher (*guru*) in an intimate habitus (*gurukula*, *ashrama*) where both formal and informal

interactions aid the achievement of the realization. The importance of the lived habitus as the site of pursuit of knowledge cannot be over-emphasized in this approach, since knowledge realization is seen here as an existential preoccupation. Yoga is a vast field of experience in India, aiming to realize a variety of goals through a variety of methods and teachings. Of these, the predominating peculiarity of the Upanishads is to privilege the goal of knowledge. The primary method of the Upanishads can be thought of as the four stages of preparation, reception, contemplation and realization. The clearest articulation of this method comes in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (II.iv.5) in the words of the sage Yajnavalkya teaching his wife Maitreyi:

आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यो मैत्रेयि,
आत्मनो व अरे दर्शनेन श्रवणेन मत्या विज्ञानेनेदं सर्वं विदितम् ॥

(The Self, my dear Maitreyi, is to be realized – by hearing of it, cogitating on it and entering into intimate contact with it (or intuiting it); By the realization of the Self, my dear, through hearing, cogitation and intimate relation (intuition), all this is known).⁵

It should be noted that this method is directly related to the goal of Vedantic knowledge⁶ in the second line. Here, what is to be received (or heard) can be variously construed as: (1) the teaching of the guru;⁷ (2) the revelatory (mantric) utterances (*mahavakya*) of the Upanishads; (3) the cognitive and phonetic structure of the Upanishad.⁸

It is also interesting to note that the term *dhyana* (concentration) is not used for the middle term between *shravana* (hearing) and *nidhidhyasana* (identity). Rather *dhyana* is contained in *nidhidhyasana*; it stands for wordless contact by consciousness. This is also intuition, an intimacy with the being. But the middle term is *manana*, which means thinking, cogitation rather than contemplation or intuition. This is a cultural use of thinking as a means to lead to thoughtless contemplation. Storytelling and the performance arts exist to amplify this element of *manana*, thinking about the object of relation. The story of Yajnavalkya and his teaching of Maitreyi is itself such a story attracting our interest and making us think of the characters and their actions. This thinking intensifies the attention on the objective being pursued. From this the object starts becoming real, that is, its presence is sensed in its expressions and attracts us to thoughtless wonder (*adbhuta*), the presence of the infinite in the finite.

Social Benefit of Upanishads

Would this praxis have any social benefit? After all, if there is a noble side to the Enlightenment, this is its central concern – how can we create a perfect world? Though monastic communities of intense practice did not concern themselves with social good, the attention on the One generated its own ethical consciousness. Ethics here was not a goal but a natural consequence of the intimacy

⁵ Translation by the author.

⁶ What is the one thing knowing which all may be known?

⁷ It is possible that this included the initiatory bija mantra; but the Upanishads are ridiculing of blind mantra repetition. However, they privilege the pranava, the syllable Om. So it is possible that something like this was made an occasion to convey the guru's experience, along with recipes for the cogitation and contemplation of the mantra.

⁸ It is surmised that the formally structured Upanishads such as the Mandukya or the Isha are relatively late ones. If this is the case, then we can see this as an example of the evolution of Upanishads.

with the Infinite One. From the post-Enlightenment point of view, if we made practical reason the guide of our actions, we could call this the application of Knowledge for ethical conduct of life through the intuition of unity (dharma). But that would be putting the cart before the horse.

Modernity can level the following critique on the Vedantic knowledge project, since (and ivory chair intellectuals should never forget) modernity is the normalized global episteme within which any other way of being must adapt and participate. Since post-Enlightenment modernity proceeds through the braided discourses of Knowledge and Power, it can level separate critiques on these lines. In terms of Knowledge, the question of the reality of our common world was subjugated to the question of the self or Subject. A subjective science was created and practiced but it remained isolated in sects and lineages in the form of oral knowledge. This is partly why so little of it exists today. The attention to the subjective subordinated the need to archive and disseminate knowledge. The *acharyas* (spiritual teachers) who wrote Vedanta bhashyas (commentaries) came more than a millennium later and produced new interpretations of the Upanishads based on their intuitions; and it is possible that they incorporated in their lineages some of the ancient oral knowledge pertaining to the practical psychology of the Upanishads. Still, it is certain that much is lost due to material inattention. With this loss of oral (or evanescent) traditions, there is also the loss of the history of knowledge production.

The Power aspect of modernity could level the critique that the ideal of perfecting the world through the application of knowledge was not made a social goal here; and perhaps the most serious charge from the viewpoint of modernity is that of an authoritarian basis to the guru-disciple relationship. Though the first of these critiques could be admitted for certain periods and regions, the second can be contested. In modern times, a perusal of Sri Ramakrishna's *Kathamrita* (Ramakrishna, 1942) would provide a very plausible image of a teacher of the Upanishadic age – someone operating as a peer through unpredictable behavior and teaching through stories, actions and locally relevant jokes. Still, the principle of equality which forms the basis of modern relations would not be in place here, keeping open the door to patriarchal domination in the name of an exalted spiritual status.

Post-Secular Integral Education

Sri Aurobindo's mature hermeneutic analysis of the relation between these two epistemologies was given voice by him in the chapter "Knowledge by Identity and Separative Knowledge" in *The Life Divine* (Sri Aurobindo, 2005, pp. 543-572). Here, he draws attention to the fact that what Vedanta calls Ignorance, modern epistemology designates knowledge. This Vedantic understanding proceeds from a psychological view of an indirect and inferred knowledge being an ignorance, the category of "knowledge" being reserved for direct knowledge, viz. knowledge by being. This is in keeping with the lack of separation between ontology and epistemology in Vedanta. One knows because one identifies with the being of that which one knows. Sri Aurobindo was to call this mode of direct knowing knowledge by identity. Our normal mode of knowing, methodized in the modern academy, in which the evidence of the senses is used by the mind to give us a picture of reality, was designated knowledge by external contact by him, a form of indirect knowledge. While knowledge by identity was held out by Indian wisdom texts and yoga traditions to be a possibility, it was taken as a goal only by those few who made a yoga of knowledge their central preoccupation. For Sri Aurobindo however, it assumed the place of a species goal for taking

humanity as a race out of the misery of ignorance into the certitudes of direct knowledge. In fact, he could conceptualize such a goal only under conditions of modernity, based on the ubiquity of the modern knowledge academy, which construes humanity as the universal subject of its methodical systems of knowledge production, archiving, dissemination and pedagogy; and the perfection (by technology) of cosmos and humanity as the universal object of its inquiry.

Modern Knowledge and Invented Realities

A corollary of this is the need of modern knowledge to arrive at a single truth and a single integrated statement of the truth. Indian metaphysics or darshan was not invested in such a goal, since it was subservient to a transformational psychology (yoga). Praxis took precedence over theoria; and theoria existed as techne and poesis of praxis. This meant that theories were invented based on the goals of yoga; so as to provide efficient conceptual handles for dynamics of practice; and development through states of experience. Such theories born as philosophical aspirations (leading to and validated by ontological experiences) invented the realities they set out to realize, under the metaphysical assumption that conscious being was infinite possibility. Not under much compulsion or aspiration to an exclusive epistemology or a perfect society, multiple yogas, yoga-darshans and realizations of reality co-existed under common and more-or-less-fixed material conditions in India.

It is interesting to note that Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze both gravitated towards this inverse (viparit) relation between epistemology and existentialist praxis as a turn from the epistemic hegemony of modern knowledge. Both got there, of course, from Nietzsche (2008) and his definition of the human as a “rope thrown between the beast and the god.”⁹ For Foucault (2010) these are his subject-making exertions of internal power, acquired through truth-telling (parrhesia) in the interests of the ideal one has set oneself. This is not a social ideal, but an individuating ideal.¹⁰ Individuating ideals arise from existential questions which form problematic fields. Since existential questions belong to the class of questions common to existential beings, one may presume commonalities yet differences to the questions sought to be answered by different existential beings.

Beyond affirming the critical tradition of the Enlightenment, Foucault does not much discuss the ontological implications for commonalities, which may extend individual praxis to social praxis; he veers in the direction of radical individualism or romanticism, to the point of equating the disciplines of subject-making with artistic creativity (Foucault, 1988, p. 49). Deleuze and Guattari on the other hand, think both of the individual and the social and (micro)-political that mediates between them (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996). Not that Foucault is not political; he is in a way, nothing but political, but his politics are an uncompromising radical anarchism. Deleuze and Guattari are no less radical in their anarchism, but they think the conditions of polis and episteme that can manifest a subjective radical anarchism (Guattari, 1995). Can we find a typology for the practices of subjectivity and intersubjectivity that would help to make this possible? This thinking leads to his theorizing the place of philosophy as one of inventing concepts and in other terms, the project of establishing a field of consistency on the field of immanence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1996).

⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. (2008). “Zarathustra’s Prologue 4” from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Retrieved from: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1998/1998-h/1998-h.htm#link2H_4_0004

¹⁰ Though not a social ideal per se, Foucault relates this to a social ideal in terms of critique (2010).

The invention of concepts arises from questions which belong to existential beings, and/or the Being of Existence. The solutions sought by the existential beings also apply to the Being of Existence. Hence a bridge may be built between the individual and the universal, through relation of individual beings, forming a collective cosmos-realization.

As observed, this approach, which is similar to premodern Indian metaphysics (darshan), inverts the goals of the Enlightenment, based in faith in the primacy of Rationality (Logos), a displacement of the transcendental Solar Divine. The modern knowledge academy hence comes with the assumption and demand of absolute singularity in terms of cosmos, subject and their relation. The demand of the Enlightenment for a single coherent Law that explains All, and the activation of that Law through technology to create a perfect world, came into contact with the empirical transcendentalism of Indian yoga-darshans at the turn of the 19th/20th century. Sri Aurobindo's yoga darshan follows from this, keeping in front the need for individual freedom and agency, the subjective conditions of anarchism or plural becoming. An absolutism which can have only one description violates the condition of pluralism which it must enable—a cosmos of radical anarchism. Sri Aurobindo posits such an aporetic radically plural singularity as the integral. This is not a co-existence of relatives but a state of being. One can intuit it as a higher dimension of being than ours; naturally one and infinite.

Looked at in the Deleuzian sense, Sri Aurobindo's "invention" of the ontology of the integral proceeds from intuiting the vanishing point of these perspectives. I use the term "invention" in the empirical sense of an existential life-journey in which experiences provide intuitions of immanent ideas, forming problematic fields with sets of virtual solutions. The dogmatic image of thought accepts the collectively operating field of solutions; but creative thought can break this conditioning and arrive at a new plane of solutions, a new dimension of evolution (Deleuze, 1994, pp. 147-167). Its intuiting of an adequate description of the field of solutions is its "invention of concepts," intimately related to a form of praxis leading to a form of experience. It is thus that Sri Aurobindo came to the idea of the aporetic integral as a philosophic concept (darshan) and aiming for it, developed the conditions, and the praxis (yoga) of the integral yoga.

We can see how the ideas of Deleuze (and in implication, Foucault), who saw the power of epistemes binding an age arising from new fields of consistency invented by philosophers (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 310-350), can lead to a rethinking of the modern academy. It is even more so in the case of Sri Aurobindo, for whom the academy needs to open to a plurality of subjective praxis-concepts (yoga-darshan) and develop the coherence of this field as a universal archive of information and practice along with grammars using which creativity may "invent" meta-realities. Part of this disciplinary field would be the science of categories, media and mechanisms for archiving and accessing subjective experience. Expansion of capacity along this line would lead closer to a mode of thought and experience belonging to forms of cosmic consciousness.

Intuitive Knowledge Consciousness

For the transition from the state of knowledge by external contact to knowledge by identity, Sri Aurobindo (2005) found the need to develop an intermediate intuitive knowledge consciousness, through the discovery and formation of means of "direct contact" (p. 544). This development of an intuitive consciousness thus became for Sri Aurobindo his postcolonial epistemological project,

approached through an inward turn to the intellect and senses, their “purification” (*shuddhi*) and their opening to sources of direct knowledge above or within the human surface consciousness.

In his text on transformational psychology, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo (1999, pp. 799-810) outlines some paths towards the formation of an intuitive mentality. These are related to alternative practices:

- a) Achieving a cessation of thought (nirvana) and keeping that blank, in a state of receptivity to near self-evident (nonduality) experience, presented through the subjective appropriation of the senses, which could be called states of objectified intimacy (pp. 802-803).
- b) As a variation or degree of a), achieving the ability to refer all questions to a transcendental source and receive its answers without distortion (*shuddhi*, purification) (pp. 805-806). Without a panentheistic intuition of consciousness, the notion of a transcendental, on which this practice rests, could not arise.
- c) Once again resting on a panentheistic intuition, the receptivity of a purified (simplified and neutralized, *shuddhi*, and equanimity, *samata*) emotional (heart center, *anahata*) channel to “the immanent Knower/Controller and (universal) Self within” (*jnata purusha*, *antaryamin*, *antaratma*) (pp. 803-805). Sri Aurobindo identifies this immanent intuition with Socrates’ (2005) “daemon” (p. 238), the inner leading, that as Plato avers, Socrates never disobeyed.
- d) The use of thought to go beyond thought into realms of intuition (pp. 806-807). Though Sri Aurobindo does not provide examples for this, this entire area should be of interest to pedagogy in the modern knowledge academy, since it does not violate the latter’s requirement of logical argument.

Examples of Intuitive Mentality in the Academy

Since these are forms of intuitive mentality, we may look for examples within the modern academy, particularly in disciplines which make the most stringent applied use of thought, such as mathematics or the physical or life sciences. The first method requires sustained conscious discipline, such as of a meditation system like raja yoga to arrive at a thoughtless state and spontaneous examples of pure receptivity in a silent mind are not to be expected in normal human mental functioning, at however high a pitch of intelligence or imagination. Still something resembling this operation of intuition, coming unbidden to a genius, can be seen in the case of Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887–1920), who claimed he received “thoughts of God” that were given to him by the goddess Namagiri Lakshmi of Namakkal in dream, through directly revealed mathematical formulae (Ono and Aczel, 2016, p.67). There is little of a method possible in this category, except for the preparation of mental passivity and receptivity, which, indeed, is more specifically addressed by practice b.

An example of a researcher in the sciences experiencing intuition of the kind related to practice b is Friedrich August Kekule (1829-1896), the German Chemist, who discovered the ring structure for Benzene. Having grappled with his data for a long time, Kekule came to an impasse. In his words:

I was sitting writing on my textbook, but the work did not progress; my thoughts were elsewhere. I turned my chair to the fire and dozed. Again the atoms were jumbling before my eyes. This time the smaller groups kept modestly in the background. My mental eye, rendered more acute by the repeated visions of the kind, could now distinguish larger structures of manifold conformation; long rows sometimes more closely fitted together all twining and twisting in snake-like motion. But look! What was that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail, and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes. As if by a flash of lightning I awoke.... (Kekule as quoted in Roberts, 1989, pp. 75-81)

Here a method can be distinguished. One may gather all the information one can on the subject and offer it up to another level of understanding or knowledge not accessible normally (and hence, transcendental), and wait for the answer to come through states of dream, imagination or other form of revelation.

An example from the life sciences that can be adduced for practice c is the discovery of “jumping genes,” DNA sequences that transpose themselves to other positions in a chromosome without external agency. McClintock, in her biography, speaks of studying maize cells under a microscope and experiencing non-verbal communication and identity with the elements of the cells, leading to her discovery of the very unusual behavior of these genes. She attributes her experience to “a feeling for the organism,” a phrase her biographer, Evelyn Fox Keller (1984) used for the title of her biography. In her press statement for the Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine awarded to her for this in 1983, McClintock noted: “It might seem unfair to reward a person for having so much pleasure, over the years, asking the maize plant to solve specific problems and then watching its responses” (McGrayne, 2001, pp. 144-174). This demonstrates the affective dimension of knowledge, which we usually associate with the humanities, operating here in the rigorous domain of science.

An example of method can be seen in the case of Albert Einstein, who made frequent use of what he called “thought experiments.” These were attempts to think of boundary conditions of experience and arrive at hypotheses, which could be worked out theoretically through mathematical physics and practically through empirical observation or experiment. Here we find the use of thought to stretch its capacity to intuit what lies at or beyond the borders of sensible knowledge.

Subjugated Knowledges – Affective, Volitional and Physical Intuition

In Sri Aurobindo’s model of human consciousness, however, the arrival at a mental understanding through intuition is a partial and instrumental use of intuition. Even as instrumental use, there are forms of intuition relating to other modes of consciousness through which we simultaneously experience reality, but which are given less importance (subjugated knowledges) under the post-Enlightenment privileging of mind in modernity. These other independent modes of consciousness include the physical, the affective and the volitional (Sri Aurobindo, 1999, p. 804).¹¹ In practice d for building an intuitive mentality, we came across a use of the affective

¹¹ It is possible to infer different forms of intuition pertaining to each of the chakras in the sevenfold system of Tantra in Sri Aurobindo’s later writings, but in general he worked with these four kinds of consciousness each with their own intuition.

intuition to achieve the goals of the mental understanding. But affective intuition has its own ontological domain, effects and functions. The romantic impulse in poetry or other creative arts, connecting the individual through affective intensity to an intimacy in being with the object of consideration, is identical at its root with the sense of numinous intimacy with all things experienced by mystics in their love-affair with the cosmic Being. The method in developing this intuition would be an affective openness to the cosmos as a conscious Being and all its beings as instances of its expression.

In the west, examples of the above may be found among the romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth or William Blake, who gave voice to the cosmic expansion of space and time in such experience in his first four lines of the poem, *Auguries of Innocence*:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.¹²

And from India, Rabindranath Tagore provides a good example of affective intuition in his nature mysticism (*Gitanjali*, poem 97):

WHEN MY play was with thee I never questioned who thou wert. I knew nor shyness nor fear, my life was boisterous.
In the early morning thou wouldst call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade.
On those days I never cared to know the meaning of songs thou sangest to me. Only my voice took up the tunes, and my heart danced in their cadence.
Now, when the playtime is over, what is this sudden sight that is come upon me? The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars.¹³

This ontological intuition of the cosmic being in each of its manifestations and in itself, arises here from affect. However, affective intuition is not only ontological or epistemological. It may be eminently practical as in the instances of the “daemon” of Socrates referred to by Sri Aurobindo (2005, p. 238). Here, the affect is at work in the trust one has towards the immanent Guide, to whom one can surrender unconditionally (*samarpan*) and receive the direct command (*adesha*, *shruti*) or revelation (*darshan*) on what is to be done (*kartavyam karma*). It is this kind of knowledge of guidance in action that Aurobindo had sought when he approached Vishnu Bhaskar Lele as a yoga guru in 1908. Lele’s meditation instruction gave him the silence of the mind which I have referred to above as the foundation for method a for building an intuitive mentality. But it also gave him the experience of total surrender to Narayana/Krishna as the Supreme Divine and his inner Guide, from whom he received directions from that time.

The knowledge of what is to be done, however, is not merely a directive or revelation received by the inner senses and carried out by the will and body. The energetic (vital) constitution has its

¹² <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43650> (last accessed 12/02/2016)

¹³ <http://tagoreweb.in/render/ShowContent.aspx?ct=Verses&bi=72EE92F5-BE50-40B7-EE6E-0F7410664DA3&ti=72EE92F5-BE50-4B67-0E6E-0F7410664DA3> (last accessed 12/02/2016)

own seeking for the direct control of its impulses by a higher Will, which it can translate to action, with or without (or sometimes before) the mind's understanding or sanction. This is the volitional intuition, which operates as a "hunch" evidencing a relation of will or power between all beings and things. If affective intuition rests on a relation between the individual and other beings or the cosmic/immanent Being, volitional intuition rests on a relation in becoming with all becomings and a participation in the cosmic Becoming. As an energetic intuition, it provides impulsion to the will, both in mind and body and is also dependent on the immanence of the integral principle of Becoming (*Kali, Iccha Shakti*) in all beings.

This is the kind of intuition drawn on by Henri Bergson in his invitation to experience reality as a vitalism of Becoming. Gilles Deleuze, in explicating Bergson's apprehension of vitalism, sees it as a philosophical method, and had titled his Book on Bergson in these terms – *Bergsonism: Intuition as Method* (Deleuze, 1990). In this sense, vitalism is not primarily an energetic intuition, but becomes a philosophical one of methodically divesting oneself from a spatial perception and analysis of "given" objects (actuality) to an apprehension of their pre-individual basis and the dynamic relations of forces that constitute their problematic field (virtuality). An apprehension of this kind is also inventive of the reality it intuits, since it perceives the problem in a certain way which allows for certain outcomes not yet manifest.

Finally, the direct knowledge of the body, evidenced in acts of physical skill belongs to the operation of physical intuition. Picking up accurately without measurement, a predetermined weight in one's hand is an example Sri Aurobindo gives of a translation of mental requirements to the physical intuition. A good example related to the modern academy is the Japanese American architect, George Nakashima, who worked towards marking pieces of lumber directly with his hands, and without using any measuring rule (Nakashima, 2012).

Integration of Intuition

Development of intermediate knowledge resources in the form of varied modes of intuition need, at the same time, to be integrated through the development of the ability to move at will between these forms of consciousness, and enhance the sense of the combined working of all these forms as different instruments of individual knowledge. With the increasing normalization of such intuitive subjective properties, the deeper sense of personhood, belonging to what Sri Aurobindo (2005) calls "the psychic being" (p. 926) will increasingly come to the fore as the integral experiencing subject.

Clearly, all these forms of intuition, however methodically developed, need to be tested and supplemented through standard intellectual measures, until they produce repeatable results. To introduce such goals and methods in the academy, even as experimental possibilities of subjective knowledge, would require existential integration of informal opportunities as part of the learning habitus. This can be implemented officially through residential learning in intentional communities, or through collective cohort formation, flipped learning and/or mentorship models. Agency for learning/realization must be accepted by the student, so that the teacher is minimally involved in conveying content, rather his/her role is to facilitate learning through suggesting resources and methods, generating problems through dialog and leading by example. The learning environment cannot operate on the unequal basis of a gurukula; and egalitarian settings must be

developed for the promotion of these forms of intuition. Validation methods and archives of subjective experience/knowledge need to be developed phenomenologically within the learning environment, towards the constitution of an additional domain of subjective science in the academy.

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A Complete Integral Education: Five Principal Aspects

Jeremie Zulaski¹

Abstract: This article reviews the five principal aspects of a “complete integral education” envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and Mother Mirra Alfassa and elucidated in their writings. This innovative, learner-centered pedagogy encourages holistic development through acknowledgment and cultivation of the five dimensions of a human being—the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic, and the spiritual. The article suggests that a complete integral education contributes a potentially corrective alternative to outmoded orthodox methods that privilege intellectual proficiency over the holistic knowledge potentially present, given authentic engagement of learning communities.

Keywords: Higher education, holistic education, integral education, Mother Mirra Alfassa, Sri Aurobindo.

Introduction

Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth-century, the primary founders of the *integral yoga* tradition, Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo Ghose, 1872-1950) and his spiritual co-partner The Mother (Mirra Alfassa, 1878-1973) offered a visionary and holistic approach to the lived experience. This approach focuses on a progressive advancement of self-realization, recognizing the individual nature, multi-dimensionality, and interrelatedness of human beings. In corresponding these ideals with teaching and learning, they proposed innovative guidelines toward the formulation of a unique branch of whole-person centered progressive education, placing great emphasis on individual, global, and spiritual worldviews that had been and remain largely absent in Western education.

The whole-person perspective at integral education’s core reflects an evolving and expanding awareness toward the complexities and fullness of our own human composition and experience. Integral education contributes a methodical yet adaptive pedagogical framework and competently holds the potential for the development of other subsequent alternative models—such as experiential and transformative learning as well as critical, engaged, liberatory and radical perspectives—and inherently applies embodied, contemplative, and creative modalities throughout praxis. I will be maintaining use of the term “Integralists” (Ryan, 2005) as it pertains to these founders, whose development of an integral or “complete” yoga laid the foundation for

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their theories on whole-person education. Transferring an integrative worldview into a pragmatic discipline such as education and determining how to implement these perspectives into classroom environments will benefit from an overview of some key tenets of the Integralists' writings specific to their theories on pedagogy. The purpose of this paper is to introduce and discuss the five principal aspects of the whole-person learner identified by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. These aspects are interrelated and are intended to be simultaneously honed throughout learner development.

This paper will illustrate that integral education is comprehensive and innovative, establishing guidelines that warrant consideration as a distinct, progressive, and potentially corrective pedagogical model. This is relevant given that over the last few decades, substantive concern has been raised about the overall efficacy, value, and purpose of higher education in the United States. In examining the need for reform, a growing body of educators have begun to concede that on the whole institutions "have stressed the highly instrumental form of learning to the exclusion of personal reflection and integration" (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p. 4). Beginning early in classroom environments, concentration on achieving "successful" outcomes often comes at the expense of "holistic engagement" whereby learners would begin to engage in creative processes, intuitive inquiry, and self-reflectivity. These deficiencies likely contribute to the accruing evidence that illustrates many students enter college "with attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors that are often at odds with academic commitment" (Arum & Roksa, 2011, p. 3). In higher education, value is placed on critical, analytical, and logical thinking, without guiding students in the use of subjective and experiential measures for determining the meaningfulness and relatedness of content. These systematic conditions contribute to poor preparation, lack of commitment, and inadequate knowledge of chosen areas of occupational interest on behalf of students. Additionally, campus cultures are frequently focused on peer development within extracurricular and social activities instead of academic endeavors. Not surprisingly, the industry has been brought under scrutiny from legislators, parents, and policy makers along with classroom educators (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Barbezat & Bush, 2014). The integral model may prove beneficial during what appears a necessary revisioning of a Western educational system that principally utilizes increasingly outmoded practices.

Given the focus of this article, I will not be addressing key contributions by Haridas Chaudhuri (1913-1975), who in significant ways expanded, updated, and implemented integral education with an emphasis on higher education in the West. Readers interested in an introduction to Chaudhuri's developments in this area should refer to his writings on education (Chaudhuri, 1974) and integral consciousness (Chaudhuri, 1977 & 1979) as listed in the references section. Additionally, other prominent perspectives embracing the term "integral" will not be addressed herein. While acknowledging sizable contributions to an integral worldview through models of human consciousness as well as syntheses of major disciplines of human knowledge from Jean Gebser (1905-1973) and Ken Wilber (1949-), in my view it should not be overlooked that the methodology and definitions unfolding from integral yoga and its expanded perspective on whole-personhood precedes these other perspectives by decades. Kaslev (2007) goes so far as to posit that later perspectives and formulations employing the term integral "came about as the result of the former (and not just through superficial and intellectual influence)" (para. 22). Lastly, the integral yoga and subsequent developments in education of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have no direct

connection to Sri Swami Satchidananda, the spiritual teacher who registered the name “Integral Yoga” in the late 1960's before launching the first “Integral Yoga Institute” in 1970.

Potential audiences of interest may include current and future students, teachers, curriculum and policy designers, and other administrators in the discipline as well as those interested in human development and potential. Sources primarily consulted in this paper are three booklets of compiled writings from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother entitled, *Education: General Principles*, *Education: Teaching* and *Education: Learning*, which were all published in 1972.

Integral Education and the Unique Purpose of the Whole Person

The model of integral education offered by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother emerges from a spiritual worldview and proposes a comprehensive whole-person approach, defining the value and purpose of learning as being central to self-fulfillment. An educational process is essential for accompanying learners toward identifying and coming into relation with their *Psychic Being*. The Psychic Being is the embodied divine principle, “the earthly half of the eternal, evolving part of the human soul, manifest as light in the heart of each person” (Julich, 2013, p. 83), serving to guide one toward their highest personal ideals and evolution as a human being. It is this evolutionary aspect of the soul that influences one in realizing one’s *svabhāva*, or the unique and intrinsic state of being, and actualizing the *svadharma*, that individual's own path of purpose, individual life-calling, and true self-unfoldment. These two concepts are key components within the integral vision of pedagogy, providing an expansive scope for orientation, interpretation, and adaptation by educators while valuing personal as well as communal enrichment and fulfillment.

Five Principal Aspects

In *Education: General Principles* (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972 a), the Mother informs us that in order to be “complete”, an integral education must possess “five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic, and the spiritual” (p. 8). These innate human attributes are acknowledged as being fundamentally holistic, humanistic, and divine and must all be addressed to achieve a *complete integral education*. Being interrelated, they require cultivation individually and collectively. The remainder of this section elaborates on and briefly discusses each of these principles in the order cited above.

Education of the physical. In traditional education, a near exclusive prominence has been attributed to the cognitive and intellectual models of acquiring knowledge; “essentially, an exclusively or eminently intellectual approach perpetuates the ‘cognicentrism’ of mainstream Western education in its assumption that the mind’s cognitive capabilities are or should be the paramount masters and players of learning and inquiry” (Ferrer, Albareda, & Romero, 2005, p. 311). As such, recognition and inclusion of the physical body in the learning process, in higher education in particular, has been considered at best recreational and ancillary; playground recess and competitive sports are familiar activities disconnected from learning outcomes present in the classroom. There is a miscomprehension of the essential co-relationship between the mind and body as mutually important vehicles in both acquiring and generating valid knowledge. Thus, the cultivation of a mind-body interrelationship within a whole-person framework is often neglected.

Integral education honors and engages the learner's unique human body and its higher potentials. The Mother dismisses an embodied education as a secondary or recreational consideration for learning in her admission that the physical aspect of learning needs to be rigorous and methodical in its undertaking. She elaborates that an education of one's physical body is comprised of three principal aspects, "(1) control and discipline of functions, (2) a total, methodical and harmonious development of all parts and movements of the body and (3) rectification of defects and deformities..." (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972 a, p. 10). Implementing a consistent and individualized pedagogical approach in response to the recognition that the body is habit-forming in its nature is advocated. According to the Mother, these habits "should be controlled and disciplined yet...supple enough to adapt themselves to the circumstances and the needs of the growth and development of the being" (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972 a, p. 9). Sensitivity to circumstance and creative adaptation is thereby advised for proper development of the physical aspect.

The physical aspect is a necessary and foundational component of the integral model. Somatic, kinesthetic, expressive arts, martial arts, athletics, dance, and other embodied practices can aid in developing realms of knowledge informed by our unique physical intelligences. These intelligences play an essential role in student health, well-being, and creativity which ultimately influence self-efficacy.

Education of the vital. The following aspect is that of the vital, which seems to share some common characteristics with the emotional, instinctual, or libidinal operative processes. The Mother defines one's "vital being" as the "set of impulses and desires, of enthusiasm and violence, of dynamic energy and desperate depression, of passions and revolts" (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 10). It is divided into two distinctive yet equally important categories, varying in both goal and process. The first categorical distinction invites one "to develop and utilize the sense organs", while the second requests the learner "to become conscious and gradually become master of one's character and in the end to achieve its transformation" (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 11). These two categories—sense organs, through which one receives information from the environment, and reflective self-examination, whereby one considers one's reactions, thoughts, and experiences from an internal perspective—provide learners with a spectrum of sensorial, perceptual, and contemplative information. This allows for a more comprehensive, holistic ontology from which to engage in the lived experience. These categories will be revisited and further elaborated on when we discuss the education of the mind.

A vital education is intended to encourage consideration, self-reflection and an honest evaluation of one's internal, energetic, and emotional processes. To provide one example, Mother advises entering "into the heart of your grief: you will find there the light, the truth, the force and the joy which the pain hides" (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972b, p. 4). Prescriptions for how to engage with the vital aspect are meaningful, since she interprets that "with the collaboration of the vital, no realization seems impossible, no transformation impracticable" (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 10). This aspect is considered as that dimension most challenging to entrain, necessitating sincerity, patience, discipline, endurance, and volition. The requisite perseverance and intention are necessary to enter into one's personal vulnerabilities and encounter the transformative authenticity to which they are connected; this is the all-important practice of coming to truly know oneself.

Vital impulses in the form of desires are energies that greatly contribute to shaping and establishing behavior patterns which in turn may eventually solidify into bodily habits. Being so, the Mother advocates for beginning the training of this aspect in the learning process as soon as developmentally possible to best avoid the generation of lesser habits. She elaborates that one is to then “acquire control over one’s movements so that one may achieve perfect mastery and transformation of all the elements that have to be transformed. Now, all will depend upon the ideal which the effort for mastery and transformation seeks to achieve” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 11). Thus, in developing sufficient knowledge of the relationship between vital processes, bodily responses and behaviors, and mental reflectivity, one achieves a fuller capacity for alleviating deficiencies. This capacity is aided and enhanced by the observance or formulation of ideal ways of being.

As mentioned in the introduction, a concern with the development of the Psychic Being as the inner guide on one’s path to realizing their personal ideal is a central component of an integral approach to educating, to drawing out learners’ highest ideals. Having addressed that the vital dimension interrelates with and reinforces one’s physical aspect, I will now consider how these two aspects become necessary for the training of the mind.

Education of the mind. A range of cognitive faculties are detailed in regard to an education of the mind in integral education. These include our instruments for attaining knowledge (here being interpreted more broadly than mental, cognitive, or intellectual attainments), memory, progression from object-based to abstract-concept relations, gestalt, contemplation, inspiration, intuition, and imagination. Sri Aurobindo contributes a considerable and ordered series of insights on these faculties. He declares that the first consideration for the teacher should be to interest the learner in “life, work and knowledge”, instructing in such a way that will be simple and organic, while effectively examining our “instruments of knowledge” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 7). This study of instrumentation is undertaken to assist the student in his or her mental development, “to give him mastery of the medium” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972c, p. 4). As a component of this medium, Aurobindo advises that exceptional training be afforded to memory and that early developmental sharpening of the mental faculties should begin with the observation, comparison and classification of objects, before gradually transitioning to more abstract words, concepts and ideas. This transition toward abstraction naturally entails advancement of the imagination.

Sri Aurobindo is explicit in classifying the imagination as that aspect which is—in addition to self-generating mental imagery and thought-forms—able to acknowledge and admire those emotive and spiritual resonances of existence. He imparts that “Imagination...may be divided into three functions, the forming of mental images, the power of creating thoughts, images and imitations or new combinations of existing thoughts and images, [and] the appreciation of the soul in things...the emotion and spiritual life that pervades the world” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972c, p. 16). He affirms that honing imagination is as crucially important for mental development as guiding the physical senses and comparative analytical faculties. Overall, Sri Aurobindo provides a thorough introduction to how the student may skillfully perceive, classify, and recall the world around him or her, how this pertains to his or her personal understanding, how this comes to inform his or her internal mental generative processes, and finally, what it may reveal about his or her individual purpose, communal responsibility, and spiritual orientation.

Equally as thorough in her written comments on the mental aspect, the Mother lays out five principal phases detailing a comprehensive approach to refinement of the mind that impart a willful, yogic approach to its education. The five phases she identifies include:

1. Development of the power of concentration, the capacity of attention.
2. Development of the capacities of expansion, wideness, complexity and richness.
3. Organisation of ideas around a central idea or a higher ideal or a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life.
4. Thought control, rejection of undesirable thoughts so that one may, in the end, think only what one wants and when one wants.
5. Development of mental silence, perfect calm and a more and more total receptivity to inspirations coming from the higher regions of the being. (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 12)

Despite the above division of phases, the Mother advocates that the goal is a more fully realized overall comprehension. She states that students should endeavor to “understand instead of learning” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972b, p. 7) and discloses that “reason is not the supreme capacity of men, one has to go beyond it” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972b, p. 18) before offering some insights as to how to transcend our reasoning capacities. She submits that through ample development of concentration, the compulsion to think actively is not appropriate in all instances since mental “vibration” can be made to cease and an “almost total silence [is] secured. In this silence one can open gradually to the higher mental regions and learn to record the inspirations that come from there” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972b, p. 11). She further advises that gaining time for effectively completing tasks through developing concentration correlates to one’s will or volition; when this force is added to one’s concentration or focused attention, they possess the recipe for genius, which she determines is an irresistible agency.

In addition to gaining time via concentration and recording inspirations originating in mental stillness, the Mother advocated students learn about history—consequential events in time that have already occurred—as a way to frame the present and begin cultivating the intuitive faculty in preparation “to live for the future” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972c, p. 2); it is in and for the future that learners will make their greatest contributions. The following aspect begins to deal even more directly, deeply, and personally with that future, and by what means the Integralists’ educational model informs it.

Education of the psychic. Albeit more concise than the other aspects outlined prior, the Mother’s written comments on the psychic education provide novel and profound considerations for educators. Revealed in these comments are some insights into the Psychic Being and those related areas of Self and path. She presents a refreshing and progressive view in postulating that “with psychic education we come to the problem of the true motive of life, the reason of our existence on earth...the consecration of the individual to his eternal principle” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 13). Integral education emphasizes comprehension of and concern with a personal and unique contribution that is inherent in each individual. This is an individual’s *svadharma*, introduced earlier.

Accordingly, the Mother also refers to the *svabhāva* by clarifying that “it is through the psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the circumstances of his life” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 13). She determines that to presence the psychic in one’s life, it is contingent upon him or her to eradicate selfishness and beyond this, in progressing toward a spiritual way of life, one must become truly selfless. This focus on a spiritual way of being comprises the final principle of a complete integral education.

Education of the spirit. The spiritual aspect in integral education is designated as being of the utmost importance. Sri Aurobindo states that one’s “highest object, [is] the awakening and development of his spiritual being” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 3). One way in which this awakening is nurtured is through the educational process, which aims to allow one’s spirit eventual full facilitation of his or her mature and multi-faceted self. In the literature, the Mother distinguishes the principal of spiritual education as “an education which gives more importance to the growth of the spirit than to any religious or moral teaching or to the material so-called knowledge” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 3). Furthermore, she determines the highest aim of education is “the manifestation of Truth...[to] make matter ready to manifest the Spirit” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 5).

The development and advancement of the learner’s material embodiment is a necessary component for inviting the spirit into full participation, which is the intended result and encouraged outcome for student learners as they proceed to enter into society-at-large. According to the Mother, a fully realized integral education should endeavor to position the “legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilized” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 4). This level of participation and realization is deeply interrelated with each individual student’s conscience—that inner orientation that provides guidance and morally positions one in their life.

As an educator, assisting students with identifying and coming into relation with their true self-guidance is not a matter of conveying concepts to the mind alone. The Mother states that “there is only one true guide, the inner guide, who does not pass through the mental consciousness” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972c, p. 22). Aurobindo clarifies that at the outset, the approach to offering moral guidance should be to “suggest and invite, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily converse and the books read from day to day” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 20). The few instances provided begin to illuminate behaviors that are appropriate to influence and shape the character of the student so that they may find their own path in alignment with a personal inner truth arrived at in the course of their learning and development.

From Aurobindo’s perspective, each person is ultimately imbued with his or her own individual and unique path and purpose. For integral educators, placing impositions or mandates on the individual student is ineffective and potentially harmful. According to Sri Aurobindo, “to force the [individual] nature to abandon its own dharma is to do permanent harm...” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 18). The role of a complete integral education is bringing this purpose to light; as per Aurobindo, “the task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 18). To be in alignment with an education complete in the five principles then, Mother states that teachers should assist students in coming to greater self-understanding by guiding them to “know themselves and choose their own destiny, the way

they want to follow” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972c, p. 1). To know oneself essentially means, according to the Mother, “to know the motives of one's actions and reactions...To master oneself means to do what one has decided to do, to do nothing but that, not to listen to or follow impulses, desires or fancies” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972c, p. 1). She advises on the appropriate approach to taking steps toward this self-mastery and states in regard to this determination that “if you decide to do something...in life, you must do it honestly, with discipline, regularity and method” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972b, p. 21).

The personal destiny which is to be undertaken by each student can be informed and inspired by a divine agency. This agency is acknowledged as one of the primary five principles of a complete integral education, correlating to the spiritual dimension of human life.

Supramental Education

In the integral yogic tradition, the Supreme evolutionary consciousness of creation is known as the *Supermind*, which Aurobindo has also referred to as *supramental consciousness* or *truth consciousness*. It may be conceived of as an integrated truth-consciousness (or gnosis) and possessing an unlimited transformative power that humanity and all of life has the potential to access. According to Sri Aurobindo: “The supramental consciousness is not a fixed quantity but a power which passes to higher and higher levels of possibility until it reaches supreme consummations of spiritual existence” (Ghose, 1989, p. 539).

This pure plane of consciousness is identified as a concept that will manifest in the field of education, aiding in the advancement of all living beings. The Mother states that the Supramental agency is “the true solution of the problem of suffering” and applies through it reconsiders ignorance, suffering and even death as components of “a transformation, a total transfiguration of matter brought about by the logical continuation of Nature’s ascending march in her progress toward perfection” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 16). This evolutionary thrust of the Supermind emanates as a transcendent phenomenon, progressively infusing both consciousness and material substance with divine creative potential, and it is determined to thereby usher forth “a new species...a new force, a new consciousness and a new power. Then will begin also a new education which can be called the supramental education...” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972a, p. 16).

Considering that all life is undergoing transition in the evolutionary continuum, an integral worldview provides learners with an awareness that informs that search for individual destiny; a complete integral education is in congruence with this search. The Mother clarifies, “If you want to understand the true reason why you are here, you must remember that our aim is to become as perfect an instrument as possible expressing the Divine will in the world” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972b, p. 1). In this way, one allows oneself to receive new evolutionary creative energies so as to participate in their manifestation on all levels of existence, through one’s whole being. The perfection of this individual being is the true purpose of engaging in a meaningful and comprehensive integral education, since according to Mother, “when you want your physical being to be a perfect instrument for manifesting the supramental consciousness, you must then cultivate it, shape it, refine it, add to it what it lacks, perfect what it already possesses” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972b, p. 1). Sri Aurobindo and the Mother affirm that since we are always in the presence of

and derived from the Supreme, all of our actions should be conducted as a reflection and offering to this principle. Aurobindo imparts that “one must keep constantly in mind...that you are a representative of the Supreme Knowledge, the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Law and you must apply it in the most honest way you are capable of...” (Ghose, A. & Alfassa, M., 1972c, p. 10).

That each and every person is an instrumental representative of the Supreme generative force with potential to undergo total self-transformation and contribute to and participate in the transfiguration of all life and matter is a penetrating affirmation. The gravity of this perspective places a sobering responsibility on those educators choosing to be aligned with or informed by this worldview and by the pedagogical approach effected from it.

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo and Mother Mirra Alfassa recognized the breadth and depth of whole-personhood as a fundamental expression in alliance with tenets from a venerable metaphysical philosophy. Out of their modern formulation arose a comprehensive educational model placing priority on each learner’s unique make-up and purpose as it unfolds during self-fulfillment. The alignment and interrelationship between the five principal aspects conceptualized in both frameworks honors personal reflection and integration, as well as adherence to methodology, process, and self-awareness.

Educational communities are rightly questioning the efficacy of reductionist and cognicentric approaches exemplified in traditional pedagogies. These conventional biases begin in early education and remain prevalent on college and university campuses, ultimately inhibiting student engagement. The “complete integral education” as outlined by the “Integralists” precedes other correlative contributions and provides a thorough foundation for advancing alternative methods in education.

Integral education places holistic learner development at the forefront while assisting in self-definitions of personal purpose in accordance with values and ethics enveloped in a sacred, yet inclusive, worldview. This worldview acknowledges both an individually unique and collectively interrelated wholeness, offering a much-needed alternative to antiquated educational paradigms that privilege intellectual proficiency over whole-person wisdom. Even if educators reject a sacred perspective and do not wish to consider learners’ uniqueness as being divine or ensouled, it should hardly discount the need to examine how to adequately engage, enrich, and guide those learners toward their fullest potential. The potentials in holistic wisdom, drawn from a wider wealth of competencies, will prove essential in cultivating students’ responses to dynamic and evolving global crises.

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The Value of an Integral Education: A Mixed-Method Study with Alumni of the East-West Psychology Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies

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Abstract: This sequential mixed methods study examined alumni's perceptions of an integral education in the East-West Psychology (EWP) program at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), and explored how they connected their unique, integral educational experience to personal and professional development. The findings revealed that their experience and understanding of integral education in EWP is mostly in alignment with the ideals of CIIS; namely, honoring multiple perspectives, the multidimensionality of being, and multiple ways of knowing were identified as key aspects of an integral education. The results of the study also point to the areas where the EWP program is doing well in terms of the education students expect and what they actually receive, and to the department's or Institute's learning edges. The most significant findings are the revelations of the need for: (a) more professional development, (b) more practical application opportunities, (c) more community/ mentor support for students' personal psycho-spiritual unfolding, and (d) more training regarding the language and expression needed to communicate the value of an integral education effectively with scholars/employers outside of CIIS.

Keywords: Graduate Education Evaluation, Integral Education, East-West Psychology, Personal Transformation, Nontraditional Curriculum, Spirituality in Higher Education.

Introduction

Almost five decades ago, in conjunction with shifts in collective consciousness like the counterculture and civil rights movements, a small graduate school in San Francisco was founded by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, a Bengali philosopher, and his wife Bina. California Institute of Asian Studies, today known as California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), was unique for the time, and still is to this day. There, an integral approach to education was implemented, a method of educating that (a) meets students where they are and honors each individual psycho-spiritual

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unfolding, (b) honors the multidimensionality of being and encourages simultaneous, balanced development of these aspects (e.g., physical, vital, emotional, intellectual, spiritual), (c) honors multiple ways of knowing (e.g., intuitive, cognitive, somatic), (d) honors multiple perspectives, even those contradictory to one's own, and (e) commits to social and environmental justice. Such a model is inspired by the creative and harmonious living developed and expanded upon by Chaudhuri, derived from principles of Integral Yoga articulated by Aurobindo Ghose and Mirra Alfassa, who were more commonly known as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The integral worldview and philosophical significance of these founding aspirations will not be the focus of this paper, but are written about by other integral educators (e.g., Chaudhuri, 1965, 1974, 1977; Ghose & Alfassa, 2006; Shirazi, 2005, 2011; Ryan, 2005; Subbiondo, 2011; Wexler, 2005, 2011; Fraser Hageman, 2015, etc.); though, they are worth noting here, as this ancestral lineage, along with its founding vision and principles, distinguishes CIIS from all other progressive/alternative models currently in practice in higher education in the United States.

One program in particular, one of the oldest programs at the Institute, East-West Psychology (EWP), sought to explore an integration of Eastern wisdom traditions and Western Psychology and what it would look like to bring these diverse worldviews into dialog with each other; it was a marriage of psychology and spirituality, as it were, when in the mainstream the two had been divorced. Today EWP has evolved from bridge to hub, a meeting place for seekers of truth from all walks of life from all over the world. What would the value of such a degree hold? The present study sought to understand this more deeply.

Description of the Study

This research explores the nature of an integral education, and its personal and professional value, from the vantage point of those who completed an advanced degree in the EWP program at CIIS. Specifically, a sequential mixed-method research design that utilized a mixed-data survey, as well as semi-structured, in-depth interviews, was implemented to gather EWP alumni perspectives on: (a) how alumni perceived the personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal domains of his or her experience while, and since, completing a master's or a doctorate, (b) the characteristics of an integral education, (c) the EWP degree experience and its connection to personal transformation and professional development. These alumni perspectives were collected with the aim of assessing (a) how EWP graduates understood the ideal nature of an integral education, (b) how well they felt the department offered that ideal or not, and if so, to what extent, (c) how alumni felt their graduate education experience in EWP contributed to their personal development, and (d) how alumni felt their experience in EWP contributed to their professional development up until now. The main goal of investigating EWP alumni perspectives on the value of their non-traditional graduate education was to reveal the benefits and pitfalls of such a non-traditional program, from the perspective of those who completed their degree.

Overview of the Research Design

In this sequential mixed-method design, multiple angles were examined concerning the personal and professional value of earning an M.A. or Ph.D. in EWP. In the first phase, a mixed-data survey was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. In the second phase, 10 participants from the first phase volunteered to participate in a qualitative interview, and

were given the opportunity to evaluate their EWP experience in the context of their life before, during, and following the pursuit of a graduate education in EWP at CIIS. The Likert scale in Phase 1 was analyzed using *SurveyMonkey*, and content analysis was used to process both the responses to the open-ended questions in the first phase, as well as the interview transcripts from the second phase. Following the data analysis, participants who were involved with Phase 2 were given the chance to reflect on the findings, and to add or omit anything they deemed necessary, for validity purposes.

Description of Participants and Recruitment Procedures in Phase 1: Quantitative Phase

In the first phase of the research, a mixed-data survey, utilizing both a five-point Likert scale and three open-ended questions, was created using *SurveyMonkey* (See appendix A). Subsequently, a link to the survey, along with a recruitment letter, was distributed through the CIIS Alumni Association. Although the current sample does not reflect the entire EWP alum pool on record ($N > 300$), the Alumni Association had 161 email addresses for EWP alumni. From this sample of convenience, 47 participants completed the survey, yielding a return rate of 29%. The participant population varied in age, ranging from 25 to 74, with 81% being 35 to 64 years old ($N = 38$). 55% of the participants identified themselves as female ($N = 26$) and 40% as male ($N = 19$); two participants chose not to disclose that information. 51% of alumni ($N = 24$) surveyed completed their master's in EWP, while 47% earned a doctorate ($N = 22$); one person did not respond to this inquiry, but indicated the year they graduated from EWP. Forty percent of participants ($N = 19$) came to EWP with a psychology background, 19% studied in the traditional sciences ($N = 9$), and some had backgrounds in English literature ($N = 3$), and philosophy and religion ($N = 6$). Five participants (11%) in the first phase of the study were already CIIS alumni prior to becoming one of EWP as well. The range of participation was broad; the eldest EWP alumni who participated in the survey graduated in 1976, and the most recent in 2013.

Analysis and Interpretation

The first five questions on the scale were demographic in nature. Specifically, participants were asked: (a) whether they identified male or female, (b) their age range, (c) what their studies encompassed prior to commencing their course of study in EWP, (d) and the degree level completed in EWP, and (e) about the nature of their spiritual practice, however each chose to define that. The responses to these five questions were tallied, and the question concerning prior studies and spiritual practice were examined for threads of commonality. Figure 1 is a visual summary of the demographic data collected.

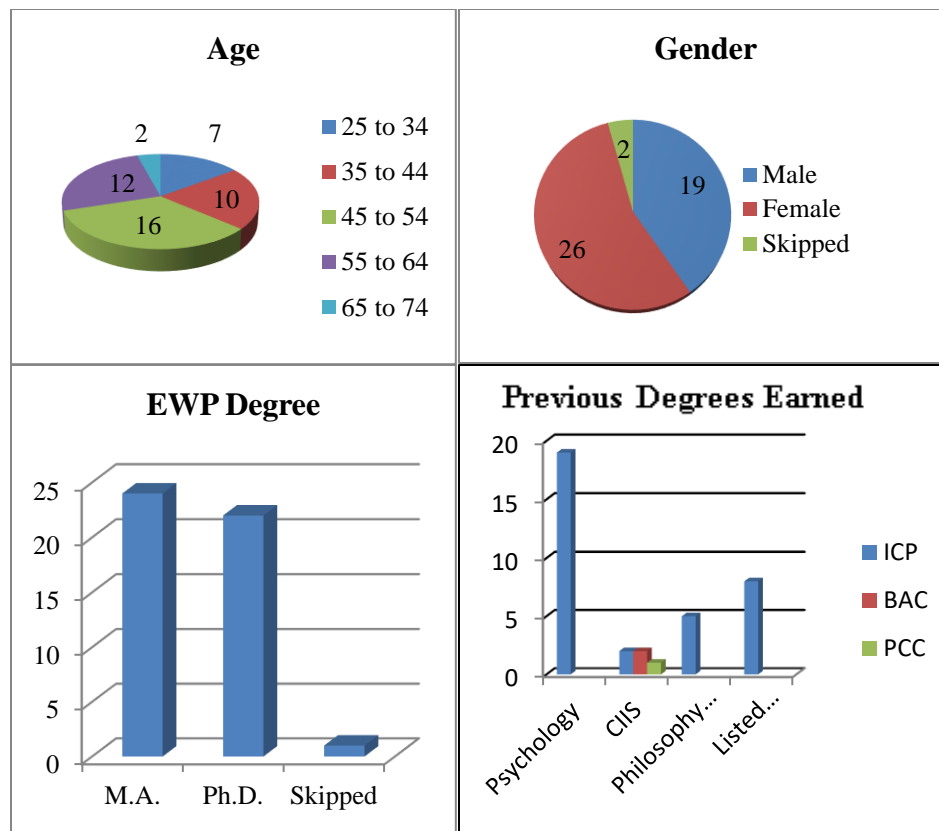


Figure 1: Summary of Demographics.

The Likert scale comprised the quantitative aspect of the first phase of this study. There were 40 statements organized into three categories: transpersonal, interpersonal, and personal. The categorization was used as a means to explore the participants' experiences in the context of the three dimensions of integral psychology as described by Shirazi (2005). The participants were asked to reflect on these statements as alumni, and as such, the time that had passed since they graduated varied among participants. The results of the data collected from the scale were organized into tables, which are reported below. Specifically, the responses were looked at in the order that they appeared in the scale, as separated by category, and by frequency. For example, the statements that respondents agreed with the most, and those that were agreed with the least, were highlighted.

The last three questions on the mixed-data survey were open-ended; this approach was used to give an opportunity for participants to express their experience in their own words. The responses to each of the last three questions were copied from each individual survey and pasted in a separate text document, one document for each question, so that every response to each of the open-ended questions would be all together in one place. Once the document was created with all the individual answers together, the responses were read through in their entirety and a summary of the open-ended responses was created as a way to explicate the threads of commonality that were revealed in participant's open-ended responses. These threads manifested both as repeated words or phrases, and some unique responses were revealed as well. These responses were then organized into different categories (see Table 5 for a summary of the open-ended response results).

Description of Participants and Recruitment Procedures Phase 2: Qualitative Phase

In Phase 2 of the research, the 47 Phase 1 participants were invited to contact the researcher if there was a desire to dig more deeply into the inquiry underway, to schedule a semi-structured, in-depth, qualitative interview. Ten people responded to this call and reached out, willing to share their story. Subsequently, 10 interviews were conducted in-person or via Skype. The participants who availed themselves to the second phase of this project were both M.A. (N = 6), and Ph.D. (N = 4) alumni of the EWP program.

Like in the mixed-data survey, there was a range of alumni participation. The diversity of alumni who were interviewed was synchronistic; in other words, there was a meaningful coincidence concerning the qualitative sample. Although the sample was one of convenience, the pool somewhat reflected the varied and fluctuating focus of the department over the years since its inception. The earliest alumni interviewed graduated in 1986, and the most recent was in the graduating class of 2013. To maintain complete confidentiality and anonymity of participants, particulars will not be disclosed, however, there was an international roster of identities reflected in the pool of interview participants, with folks identifying as both male or female, and having Western or non-Western backgrounds.

Analysis and Interpretation

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions of the interviews were content analyzed for themes. Both the content, such as what is said, and the form, such as plot structure of the story, were taken into consideration. The interview recordings were listened to multiple times to assure accuracy in the transcription, and then read and reread to see into the revelatory patterns. "Topics that stand out are usually characterized by their high frequency of appearance, proportional length, or vividness in the text" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 73). Emergent themes concerning EWP alumni experiences were considered through this interpretive evaluation strategy suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998).

A thick-rich description was the aim in order to further address internal validity (Merriam, 1995). Every pause, um, laugh, and cry was documented. Boldface was used in the transcript to indicate words or phrases emphasized by the participant. Listening to the interview once through, before beginning the transcription process, gave the researcher a chance to reacquaint with the participant prior to the process of transcription. Once the interview had been transcribed, it was read four times. Time was also be taken away from the transcriptions before each subsequent reading, to give space for the development of further insight from the processes of gestation and indwelling, and what would potentially arise from the unconscious and dream states.

Each interview was looked at separately to first see what meaningful statements and phrases showed up for each of the 10 individual participants. "Qualitative coding, the process of defining what the data are all about" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43) was used in the analysis portion of the second phase of this study. "Coding means naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (p. 43). After completing two of the four readings of each interview, the third and fourth readings were specifically geared towards

organizing the participant's words into groups and articulating the codes for each group of data. The data was grouped by looking for similarities or threads in each individual participant's experiences, with consideration for frequency, length, and/or vividness, as previously suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998). The analysis of each participant's interview transcription included a summary of their biographical information, as a way to offer the story of the person behind the data collected. For the sake of allowing interview participants to remain anonymous, these transcripts will not be included here. After each interview was looked at individually, the 10 transcripts were analyzed together, to determine overarching themes across interviews. (See Table 6 for a complete list of major and minor themes).

Phase 1: Quantitative Results Report

The Phase 1 results are comprised of two concurrent components: collection of demographic information and Likert scale, and open-ended questions.

The Quantitative Component of Phase 1: Likert Scale

The 47 participants who completed the survey were asked to rank the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with 40 statements concerning their EWP education. There was also the option for people to respond "Neither agree nor disagree." The following numerical values were used for calculation of each individual response:

Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Agree	4
Strongly agree	5

The rating average for each response was calculated by dividing the total score for each question by the number of responses to that question. The average rating results and the median for each statement on the scale are summarized in Table 1. The list of statements in Table 1 begins at number six because prior to starting the scale, participants were asked to fill in some demographic information for example, age, gender, previous degrees earned, and whether they received an M.A. or Ph.D. in EWP. Also, participants were asked to briefly articulate the nature of their spiritual practice, orientation, and/or discipline, however they defined that. These first five pieces of the survey were optional.

Table 1: Overview of Transformation Evaluation Ranking Scale

<i>Q#</i>	<i>Rating Average</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Question Details</i>
Q06	3.30	3	EWP helped me develop a regular spiritual discipline.
Q07	4.11	3	Since completing my degree in EWP, I embrace an integral worldview.

Q08	4.06	3	The education I received from EWP helped me develop new levels of emotional maturity.
Q09	3.78	3	The education I received from EWP has helped me access my intuition.
Q10	4.22	3	My EWP education engaged the various aspects of my being.
Q11	4.13	3	Since completing my degree in EWP, my sense of self has expanded, allowing for more authentic spiritual expression.
Q12	4.09	3	My education in EWP taught me to support others in their psycho-spiritual transformation process.
Q13	4.02	3	EWP offered me an Integral Education.
Q14	3.81	3	My EWP education made it possible to relate to all beings more authentically.
Q15	3.59	3	Learning about psycho-spiritual disciplines inspired me to develop a personal, regular self-care practice.
Q17	3.62	3	As a result of my education, I actively seek opportunities to grow spiritually.
Q18	3.96	3	As a result of my EWP education, my ability for authentic self-expression improved.
Q19	3.79	3	I became more mindful as a result of my education in EWP.
Q20	4.11	3	My relationship with the sacred (however you define that) deepened throughout the program.
Q21	3.83	3	My education in EWP has inspired me to experience life as an ever-unfolding evolution of consciousness.
Q22	3.41	2	As a result of my education in EWP, I am more mindful of my impact on the environment.
Q23	4.17	3	As a result of my education in EWP, I was taught to honor multiple ways of knowing.
Q24	4.09	3	In my experience, EWP fostered my psycho-spiritual transformation.
Q25	3.62	3	Being emotionally supported while completing my degree contributed to my spiritual/transpersonal development.
Q26	3.55	3	I learned how to experience embodied knowing as a result of my education in EWP.
Q27	3.43	3	My education in the EWP program increased my capacity for genuine intimacy.
Q28	3.60	3	While in the program, I felt part of a spiritual community.
Q29	3.94	3	My education in EWP has helped me actualize my highest potentials.

Q30	4.17	3	The people I met during the program were instrumental to my growth.
Q31	3.70	3	Throughout the program, in general, I felt emotionally supported during class time.
Q32	3.48	3	What I learned in the EWP program catalyzed a significant change in my lifestyle.
Q34	3.77	3	The EWP program catalyzed a significant change in the way I relate to the world.
Q35	3.63	3	My EWP education has been indispensable to my professional development.
Q36	4.02	3	Being a part of EWP, I became part of a community which honors multiple worldviews.
Q37	3.66	3	My EWP experience catalyzed a significant change in the way I relate to others.
Q38	3.96	3	My education in EWP helped me to develop an expanded sense of self.
Q39	3.70	3	My education in EWP fostered the development of interpersonal communication skills.
Q40	3.81	3	I was challenged to become aware of and reassess my worldview assumptions through my EWP education.
Q41	3.72	3	My education in EWP helped me become more aware of the underdeveloped aspects of my personality.
Q42	3.68	2	Through my education in EWP I learned to respect worldviews contradictory to my own.
Q43	3.38	3	My education in EWP awakened in me a sense of global citizenship and responsibility.
Q44	3.91	3	My education in EWP taught me to honor the multidimensionality of existence.
Q45	4.23	3	In retrospect, I had a positive experience of EWP overall.

Of the 40 statements participants were asked to rank, there were 13 designated to address each of the three dimensions of life experience in integral psychology: the personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal (Shirazi, 2005). The final statement on the scale, "In retrospect, I had a positive experience of EWP overall" was categorized as "other," since it is a broad, overarching statement regarding the program itself rather than an inquiry into a specific aforementioned aspect of being.

In Table 2, the questions have been categorized, and presented in the order of average rating from high to low, and the main point of each statement is listed.

Table 2: Categorization of Likert Scale Statements: Personal (P), Interpersonal (I), and Transpersonal (T)

<i>Q#</i>	<i>Rating Average</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Summary of key points in the question</i>
Q10	4.22	P	engaged various aspects of being
Q23	4.17	P	taught to honor multiple ways of knowing
Q08	4.06	P	helped develop new levels of emotional maturity
Q38	3.96	P	helped develop an expanded sense of self
Q29	3.94	P	helped actualize my higher potentials
Q40	3.81	P	challenged to become aware of and reassess my worldview assumptions
Q19	3.79	P	developed mindfulness
Q41	3.72	P	increased awareness of underdeveloped aspects of myself
Q42	3.68	P	learned to respect worldviews contradictory to my own
Q35	3.63	P	indispensible to my professional development
Q26	3.55	P	learned to experience embodied knowing
Q32	3.48	P	learning catalyzed a significant change in my lifestyle
Q30	4.17	I	people I met were instrumental to growth
Q12	4.09	I	learned how to support others psycho-spiritual process
Q36	4.02	I	part of a community that honors multiple worldviews
Q14	3.81	I	authentic relating, support of others psycho-spiritual growth process
Q34	3.77	I	change in relating to the world
Q31	3.70	I	felt emotionally supported in class
Q39	3.70	I	developed communication skills
Q37	3.66	I	catalyzed change in relating to others
Q28	3.60	I	felt part of a spiritual community
Q27	3.43	I	increased capacity for intimacy
Q43	3.38	I	awakened sense of global citizenship
Q16	3.23	I	as an alum, still feels part of community
Q11	4.13	T	sense of self expanded, allowing for more authentic spiritual expression
Q07	4.11	T	now embrace an integral worldview
Q20	4.11	T	deepened relationship with the sacred
Q24	4.09	T	fostered my psycho-spiritual transformation
Q13	4.02	T	offered me an integral education

Q18	3.96	T	ability for authentic self-expression increased
Q44	3.91	T	taught to honor the multidimensionality of existence
Q21	3.83	T	inspired me to experience life as an ever-unfolding evolution of consciousness
Q09	3.78	T	helped access intuition
Q25	3.62	T	emotional support contributed to spiritual development
Q22	3.41	T	more mindful of impact on the environment
Q06	3.30	T	developed a regular spiritual practice
Q45	4.23	OTHER	overall, I had a positive experience

Table 3 shows the 15 statements, out of 40, in which respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with least frequency, while Table 4 reflects the 15 statements that respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the most frequency. These two tables are organized from high to low; in other words, for example, in Table 3, the statement that people agreed with the least was number 22, "as a result of my education in EWP, I am more aware of my impact on the environment." Categorically speaking, participants were least likely to agree or strongly agree with certain statements from each category: Transpersonal (N = 4) Interpersonal (N = 6), Personal (N = 5). Interestingly, all three dimensions were rated somewhat similarly, which indicates that one was not privileged over the other.

Table 3: Statements with the Lowest Agree/Strongly Agree Response Rate

<i>Q#</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed</i>	<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage of Agreement</i>	<i>Question Details</i>
Q28	I	30	47	64%	While in the program I felt part of a spiritual community.
Q25	T	30	47	64%	Being emotionally supported while completing my degree contributed to my spiritual/transpersonal development.
Q42	P	29	47	61%	Through my education in EWP I learned to respect worldviews contradictory to my own.
Q39	I	28	47	60%	My education in EWP fostered the development of interpersonal communication skills.
Q17	T	28	47	60%	As a result of my education, I actively seek opportunities to grow spiritually.

Q15	P	27	46	59%	Learning about psych-spiritual disciplines inspired me to develop a personal, regular self-care practice.
Q26	P	26	47	55%	I learned how to experience embodied knowing as a result of my education in EWP.
Q27	I	25	47	53%	My education in the EWP program increased my capacity for genuine intimacy.
Q35	P	25	46	53%	My EWP education has been indispensable to my professional development.
Q6	T	24	47	51%	EWP helped me develop a regular spiritual discipline.
Q32	P	24	46	52%	What I learned in the EWP program catalyzed a significant change in my lifestyle.
Q16	I	22	47	47%	As an alum, I still feel part of the EWP community.
Q43	I	22	47	47%	My education in EWP awakened in me a sense of global citizenship and responsibility.
Q33	I	21	47	45%	My education had a noticeable positive effect on the quality of my relationships.
Q22	T	20	46	43%	As a result of my education in EWP, I am more mindful of my impact on the environment.

Table 4 shows which of the statements out of 40 participants agreed or strongly agreed with most frequently; the table is in order from high to low. It is interesting to note which categories the statements that were most agreed or strongly agreed with fell into: Transpersonal (N = 6), Personal (N = 5), and Interpersonal (N = 3); here it seems that agreement is more prevalent in both the transpersonal and personal domains. Eighty-nine percent of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the final statement on the scale, "in retrospect, I had a positive experience of EWP overall," which is categorized as "other" because it was included in the scale to serve as a reflection on the overall experience of the education in EWP. Although this is significant, a "positive experience" does not take into account the three different categories, personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal.

Table 4: Statements with the Highest Agree/Strongly Agree Response Rate

<i>Q#</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed</i>	<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage of Agreement</i>	<i>Question Details</i>
Q36	I	42	47	89%	Being a part of EWP, I became part of a community which honors multiple worldviews.
Q45	Other	42	47	89%	In retrospect, I had a positive experience of EWP overall.
Q23	P	41	47	87%	As a result of my education in EWP I was taught to honor multiple ways of knowing.
Q38	P	37	47	79%	My education in EWP helped me develop an expanded sense of self.
Q7	T	36	47	77%	Since completing my degree in EWP, I embrace an integral worldview.
Q19	P	35	47	74%	I became more mindful as a result of my education in EWP.
Q18	T	35	47	74%	As a result of my EWP education, my ability for authentic self-expression improved.

The Qualitative Component of Phase 1: Open-Ended Questions

The participants who completed the Likert scale were also invited to reflect on their EWP learning experience in their own words. At the conclusion of the ranking scale participants were asked to articulate their thoughts concerning the characteristics of an integral education, as well as how their graduate education in East-West Psychology contributed both to personal and professional development, if this was applicable. Forty-six of the 47 participants who completed the scale opted to answer the open-ended questions— one simply said "pass" on all three— and although some themes were revealed, the answers to these questions also reflect a diversity of expressions. A summary of the major themes from the open-ended responses can be found in Table 5, as well as the number of times each occurred (in parentheses).

Table 5: Summary of Open-ended Results

Question Details	Themes
In your view, what characterizes an Integral education?	Theme 1: Honors Multiple Worldviews (13) Theme 2: Honors the Multidimensionality of Being (11) Theme 3: Honors Multiple Ways of Knowing (10) Theme 4: Psycho-spiritual Unfolding (8) Theme 5: Integration (5)

Please describe how your EWP learning experience and degree completion contributed to your personal development (If not applicable simply state that).	Theme 1: Expanded sense of self/Deepened Self-Understanding (23)
	Theme 2: Transformation/Development already in progress (7)
	Theme 3: Encouraged Exploration of Multiple Ways of gaining valid knowledge (7)
	Theme 4: Growth/Maturation (6)
	Theme 5: Not Applicable (5)
	Theme 6: Ph.D. process (4)
Please describe how your EWP learning experience and degree completion contributed to your professional development (If not applicable simply state that).	Theme 1: Not Applicable (14)
	Theme 2: Academic/Scholarly (9)
	Theme 3: Indirect Effect (6)
	Theme 4: Deepened Current Work (5)
	Theme 5: One Step on the Path (4)

Phase 2: Qualitative Results Report

Ten people agreed to go a little deeper into this inquiry into earning a graduate degree in EWP at CIIS and semi-structured interviews, in-person and via Skype, were conducted. Through the interviews, the aim was to have participants tell their EWP story; specifically, the curiosity that drove this work was the exploration of who these EWP alumni were before, during, and after their experience of earning a graduate degree in the program. In addition to this grand-tour question, there were 10 questions prepared to guide participants through this inquiry as well. In the spirit of EWP, all interviewed participants were invited to sit in mindful silence for a few minutes prior to the start of the interview with the researcher, as a way to encourage thoughtful and intentional presence during the interview itself. A summary of individual interview themes follows.

Summary of Interview Themes

There were certain themes that came up in multiple interviews and these are expressed in Table 6. The overarching themes are organized from high to low, with the number of occurrences noted in the table referring to how many times each individual interview theme showed up during the entire qualitative phase of the research. In other words, for example, seeker/self-directed learner was an individual interview theme that was apparent in each participant's transcript, so Table 7 indicates that particular individual theme to have appeared 10 times during the second phase of the project. The themes are categorized as major or minor, depending on how many instances that particular theme arose.

Table 6: Overarching major and minor themes from all interviews

Major themes	Theme 1. Seeker/Self-directed Learner (10)
	Theme 2. Positive Aspects of EWP (7)
	Theme 3. Takeaways (7)
	Theme 4. Synchronistic Unfolding (6)
	Theme 5. Spiritual Emergence/Emergency (4)
	Theme 6. Critiques (4)
Minor themes	Theme 1. Integral Worldview Foundation (3)
	Theme 2. What EWP Lacked (2)

Theme 3. No Bridge (2)
Theme 4. Shadow Side of Spirituality (2)
Theme 5. Double Life (2)

Seeker/self-directed learner. A person who displayed a strong will to learn through an ongoing seeking to satisfy a passionate curiosity to know thyself was considered in light of the first major theme, seeker/self-directed learner. This theme also is considered as a characteristic of one's lifestyle, a characteristic that became apparent in all 10 participants' stories when asked about their life before their EWP graduate education experience. For example, all 10 interview participants spoke to the time prior to EWP and CIIS in a particular way. As each described life before EWP, the tendency to have a thirst for self-knowledge became evident, and a thread of commonality concerning previous studies and interests was present: all could be related to the intentional search for psycho-spiritual growth. Jean worked full time, yet on her own, she was taking various classes from all kinds of traditions from the Enneagram to grief work, to mythology. Susan was a nun who was deep into self-study through spiritual practice; she noted exploring many different wisdom traditions simultaneously, and while completing her master's in counseling psychology, she was reading humanistic and transpersonal psychology on her own. Charles said that his home country held education in high regard, and these times of learning were significant and meaningful to him; for example, many a night in college he would stay up until the wee hours and talk with his friends about their aspirations and what social justice projects they sought to implement. Ariel reported a spontaneous spiritual awakening and how she was very broken down by it; however, she also noted that it was "not in a bad way, just you know what happens when you start seeking" (Ariel's Transcript, p. 1). At the undergraduate level, Duncan declared two majors, in sociology and philosophy, and he was deeply embedded in the local music scene while he pursued his traditional studies. He also noted reading one or two books a week once he discovered Fields Bookstore, a shop in San Francisco that specializes in esoteric and spiritual wisdom traditions. Grace went to a non-traditional high school, in order to interweave her academic work with her love of theatre. Psychology and spirituality have long been interests of Lily, and she was studying Jung and Wilber on her own, a pursuit that actually led her to find CIIS. Phoenix had a regular *Vipassana* practice for nearly a decade, worked with plant teachers, as well as studied in the PCC department at CIIS for his master's. Holden traveled extensively in Asia and Europe, a venture that began when he was 29 and "feeling antsy" (Holden's transcript, p. 2). Theodore reports being a seeker all his life, and that seeking transformation is part of his recovery; "it is vitally necessary in order to actually escape from your addiction" (Theodore's transcript, p. 1). This tendency to search for opportunities to gain self-knowledge and experience psycho-spiritual growth is also apparent in each of the participant's decisions to embark on the journey and complete the course to earning a graduate degree in EWP.

Positive aspects of EWP. The positive aspects of earning a degree in EWP refers to the highlights and how people described what they valued most about their experience while in the program. Grace, for example, found it valuable that her teachers engaged with her, and she felt fully supported in following whatever she was passionate about. She also loved the flexibility to take courses in other departments, and felt that the program truly honored each student's individuality. Lily echoed Grace's feeling of being supported, and Theodore too, was just thrilled to find a beloved community, a flock of birds of his own feather, one in an "accepting, nurturing, familial kind of environment" (Theodore's transcript, p. 12). Ariel appreciated the "gentleness and

receptivity...[and the] soft welcoming and reassuring" atmosphere of the department that she discovered upon her arrival, and it is this initial vibe of the program that even allowed her to even begin her graduate education in the first place (Ariel's transcript, p. 6). Like Grace, Ariel also appreciated the flexibility to take courses from across departments within the Institute while working towards her degree in EWP. Jean and Holden spoke highly of certain courses; specifically, Jean mentioned Spiritual Counseling Skills, and Holden noted Integral Approaches to Dreams, Comparative Mysticism, and Eastern Theories of Self, Mind, and Nature as highly influential. Phoenix and Grace expressed gratitude for the foundational grounding gained in the Eastern theories course as well.

Takeaways. The takeaways are participants' reports of what they feel they received from earning a degree in EWP. There were seven participants who reflected on the takeaways. Holden felt that he broadened and deepened his understanding of the history of Eastern religions and how they connect with the nascent field of transpersonalism, and "things that used to be sort of loose and floating out there, now...a much stronger foundation from a theoretical and religious standpoint" (Holden's transcript, p. 12). He also spoke of an expanded awareness of the distinctness and inseparable inner and outer realms of experience, and was able to use the knowledge he gained in the course *Cosmos and Psyche* to critically reflect on non-dual experiences that he had prior to studying in EWP. Also, Duncan reported that he was able to take away a more logical and analytical approach to studying traditions that are often dubbed "just new age" (Duncan's transcript, p. 5), and are at risk of nebulousness. Theodore asserts that completing the program allowed for a deepened self-maturation. Grace said that since completing a degree in EWP she now has the ability to hold perspectives that may be new or contrary to her own, as well as an increased engagement with and integration of her wounds and the shadow aspects of her personality. Lily had the realization of being out of touch with her body, and after coming to CIIS and enrolling in EWP she began to actively come into contact with this disconnection, as well as other blind spots that she had. Besides increased somatic and emotional awareness, Lily also felt that her EWP experience helped her to connect with and better articulate one of her biggest passions: human development. Further, she deepened her understanding of what she envisions as her livelihood. She also reported a greater understanding of her intuition. Phoenix too emphasized that one of the gifts EWP gave him was a greater somatic awareness, which helped him to recognize that his mind tends to dominate his experience. He began to really value the body and its wisdom after the embodied spiritual work he completed while earning a Ph.D. in EWP. These are some of the examples of how people described what they received from the educational experience of earning a degree in EWP, which is distinct from the positive aspects of EWP because of its deeper specificity.

Synchronistic unfolding. Synchronistic unfolding refers to the particular way in which some participants described meaningful coincidences that occurred in and throughout their lives, as well as the capacity to see an interconnection and a larger picture through making meaning of these events. Some participants even used the term synchronicity when talking about certain moments in their life. For example, Lily recalled a time when she signed up for a class, and right at the last minute she could not attend; she ended up taking another class, the only class left, and she mentioned that "there was something bigger" at work orchestrating that shift in coursework during her final semester in the EWP master's. Ariel said that she was brought to CIIS "synchronistically" (Ariel's transcript, p. 1). Additionally, it was through her work at the café that she just happened

to hear about another job opening of interest from a friend who was leaving his position, and she soon after gained employment on a farm, which aligned with her passion to promote awareness of non-GMO and pro-organic movement. Jean told a story about how just after she had begun taking classes focused on personal development in her hopeful home country she returned to the place of her birth to work on getting her visa. While she was visiting, there happened to be a high school reunion. This was very odd; she said "we never ever meet up again...we don't care, you just leave school" (Jean's transcript, pp. 6-7). She felt that it was extremely ironic that her favorite teacher from high school, "the first person who actually saw me as a human being," mentioned her current teacher's name and was well acquainted with them. Additionally, she described that upon returning home from the school reunion, she enrolled in and was accepted into a course that usually has a 6-month waiting period, and instead she was able to attend the following weekend, since there was one space that mysteriously opened up, and her grandmother had just given her a birthday gift for the exact amount of the course. Susan also described certain stories of her life in a particular way, in a way that she described as unfolding meaningfully. She was admitted into the EWP program in less than a week's time; she also asserted that she had no idea where she would complete her internship hours and somehow received the grace of being awarded a teacher's assistant position, which then led to a co-teaching/adjunct faculty role in the subsequent semester, and in turn paved the way to her teaching her own courses at that school, eventually leading to her becoming a program chair and creating her own integral degree program. Phoenix said that when he was in Asia, he ran into some CIIS professors who let him know about certain mentorship opportunities, which then led him to study in EWP with his eventual dissertation chair. He also said that he "happened to move close to one of the best massage schools in the country after graduation" and that his fruitless pursuit of a job in academia was a blessing because it showed him what his calling really was (Phoenix's transcript, pp. 9-10). Duncan's responses also reflected a synchronistic unfolding; for example, he moved to California to pursue music, but discovered CIIS while he was living in San Francisco, and decided to go back to school there. Additionally, he had been reading Stan Grof on his own time, and found out that he happened to be teaching two blocks from where he worked. The instances noted here may seem insignificant to some, but it is the way in which the participants made meaning of them as they told their stories is what makes them stand out in this research as the theme synchronistic unfolding.

Spiritual emergence/emergency. Spiritual emergence/emergency denotes non-ordinary states that participants reported experiencing, states that were spontaneous and not substance-induced. Holden recalls a time that he was hiking in the Himalayas and he felt a sense of oneness with the land and all that surrounded him; he said he felt "permeable as though I was connected to the animals, the mountains everything, it was just this wonderful sense of interconnectedness" (Holden's transcript, p. 3). He reported a similar experience in Scotland when encountering huge monoliths at the Ring of Brodgar; it was like "a psychic merging with one of the stones" (p. 4). Lily mentioned two instances where she was having a "peak experience," although she said one was "extremely ungrounded...I didn't really sleep or eat properly...it got really scary, like everything was so on all the time. I couldn't leave my house...stand bright colors or strong smells" (Lily's transcript, p. 5). Ariel experienced a similar intensity in her experience of emergence; she said she "had a big...spontaneous spiritual awakening *kundalini* episode" that left her "broken down" (Ariel's transcript, p. 1). Phoenix's spiritual emergence experiences were more subtle; he said "I started having these spiritual experiences...basically massive encounters in the dream state, and some synchronicities with entities that I would later define as my guides" (Phoenix's transcript,

p. 1). Although the quality of participants' spiritual emergence varied from positive to challenging, all these reports indicate encounters with a domain that is beyond ego understanding.

Critiques. Another overarching theme in the qualitative interview phase was critiques of EWP, and these often came with a disappointed or dissatisfied undertone. Duncan cited his surprise with the student body, stating that it "was kind of confusing and shocking...it was a lot more kind of Northern-Californian well-to-do...middle-aged people" and furthermore "the student body was very mixed...in the sense that there was a wide range of rigor" (Duncan's transcript, p. 3). The hefty student loans were also mentioned as a downside, although that has more to do with the Institute than the department. Jean felt that the master's was "an unfinished product" and "it wasn't an academic experience" but a "concentrated form of inner work" (Jean's transcript, pp. 16-17). She also said that it did not provide her anything for a "professional basis" (p. 17), and she was troubled by the inappropriateness on the part of some of the faculty members in relation to students. Charles had much to say about EWP in terms of critique. He found "the climate anti-intellectual and...it did not address spirituality in [a] very systematic and detailed manner" (Charles' transcript, p. 3). Additionally, he felt that some of the professors "have taken a slice of their study and made it the end all be all... [and he] personally feels that they have basically killed the dream of Dr. Chaudhuri" (p. 3). Charles was also discouraged that the school openly advertises allegiance to the integral educational vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, yet he came here is did not find that allegiance present, and he noted this "lurking as a huge shadow of CIIS" (p. 5).

In contrast to other participants who noted the EWP community in a positive light, Ariel felt this is where the department could further develop, stating outright "EWP was not very good at community" (Ariel's transcript, p. 3). Additionally, she noted "there were a few people with whom I entered [that] transferred out of EWP because of issues about: what am I going to do with this?" (p. 3). Here, there is a hint pointing toward the uncertainty of what comes next professionally after earning a degree in EWP. She also said "I don't feel that EWP at the time was really teaching to race or gender or class awareness or social justice issues on a kind of practical...pedal to the medal kind of way" (p. 3). The aforementioned critiques theme concludes the summary of the major themes from the qualitative interview phase and a review of the minor themes from Phase 2 follows. These themes were categorized as minor because the number of times they manifested in participants' interviews was three or less (see Table 6 for complete list).

Integral worldview foundation. Three participants displayed characteristics that show an integral worldview foundation in their life; in other words, there are particular ways in which the three following participants show up in the world that can be linked to having adopted an integral worldview as their ontology and epistemology. Susan was very much influenced integral theory; not only by the work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, but Ken Wilber as well. Above all, how she communicates with herself, and her active seeking to know her calling, is very much aligned with the way integral yoga honors the unique unfolding of each individual soul. She spoke about how she sought self-knowledge in this way: "I just sat in meditation, and I said my sacred intention for this life is to be a vehicle for spirit" (Susan's transcript, p. 7). She also asserted that "integral is probably the most profound teaching that I got at CIIS, and integral within an evolutionary movement" and she went on to further elaborate, saying "so everything I've done in my life, both personally and professionally since then, has had an integral, evolutionary, unfolding foundation, perspective, emphasis...it's the container through which I seem to experience and feel

everything...and everything I teach" (p. 7). Charles also depicts a lifestyle and teaching philosophy aligned with the integral vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother specifically. He said "I am very respectful to all spiritual teachers...across traditions...the way I see [it] is that they [have] access to a particular truth and that truth is important because it came from their own experience of pursuing the divine" (Charles' transcript, p. 6). The integral worldview foundation also showed up in his description of his approach to teaching students: "it is like truly honoring their inner constitution and giving them what would really benefit them...which will actually...help them walk a path which is in accordance with the seekings of their inner being" (p. 9). Duncan also mentioned that his work in EWP affected everything he does in life, which includes teaching and mentoring, as well as engagement within his music community. For example, although he is deeply involved with his music nowadays, he recently wrote a book about music production. Interestingly, he included a philosophical and historical context for the reader, and connected the emergence of electronic music to what certain musicians were reading at the time, which included the works Sri Aurobindo, and D.T. Suzuki.

What EWP lacked. What EWP lacked was named a distinct theme from critiques because two participants specifically pointed to what was missing from their graduate experience in EWP rather than speaking indirectly about what they did not like, or what the program could do better, as with those classified as critiques of EWP. For example, Susan felt that the social dimension was underrepresented in the program; in other words, there was a lack of connection between the work being done at CIIS and how it could connect or be implemented in the world at large to address social issues. She mentioned that "they really didn't do much with the social, but it was sort of implied that...as we went up the ladder of integration, it would go towards social issues eventually [but] it didn't integrate it as much as I would want" (Susan's transcript, p. 7). Also, Lily noted that there was a lack of professional and practical skill development during the time she completed a master's degree in EWP. She would have benefitted from learning about "marketing and business tools" because "just because you have a passion and you think you're aligning with the universe's purpose for yourself doesn't mean shits going to happen" (Lily's transcript, p. 9). Moreover she said "the gap I was sensing in EWP was that we're not sensing that development needs to be within your space wherever you are" and she cites the example of attempting to teach students about nonduality when they do not even know what it is like to be in their body; "it's a huge huge very dangerous spiritual bypass" (p. 6). Two other participants cited that EWP lacked a bridge from graduate school back to the mainstream, work-a-day world, however this warrants distinction as its own theme because of the intriguing specificity.

No bridge. A bridge may also be something that EWP lacked, but this theme was distinguished because of how two participants specifically spoke of their experience of trying to become gainfully employed upon graduating with a Ph.D. in EWP in a specific way wherein they both describe no clear cut path from graduate school to working professional. Both Holden and Phoenix also mentioned the difficult transition from their EWP graduation to the mainstream workforce. Specifically, Holden said that although his degree is "reputable," it has not been "very applicable in a mainstream sense" (p. 1) as of yet. He describes his job search since graduation in this way: "if you're spending your time chasing things, like a job in transpersonal psychology... [you're] susceptible to pent up frustration which inhibits the flow of the passion and inspiration" (p. 13). Similarly, Phoenix noted of his EWP experience that "there was something of it being like a womb-like container...and I feel there has been sort of a shock of coming out of there...coming out of

EWP there was not a bridge to the world" (Phoenix's transcript, p. 8). Additionally, he said "the nature of the work that we do in EWP is, it is very unlikely that you're going to have somebody knocking on your door saying whatever it is you do, I heard you're good, here's 60 dollars, just do your EWP thing for an hour" (p. 9). It is apparent here that not only does Phoenix feel there is a lack of a bridge, but, he is even unsure of how to describe what he can offer to the world after completing a degree in EWP.

Shadow of spirituality in higher education. Another minor theme could also be a subtheme of the overarching critiques theme that emerged concerning EWP; two participants specifically pointed to the shadow side of spirituality in higher education when they expressed certain aspects of their experience of the program. Holden said, "sometimes the ideals that are espoused at CIIS, the images people try to portray just don't match up...I think that's the shadow of CIIS. I think that people tend to forget their basic humanity sometimes in the process of espousing basic humanity" (Holden's transcript, p. 7). He noted several instances with different professors to support this point. Additionally, he said "when you go to a place like CIIS there are such high ideals and such high hopes and I think that [for] a lot of people it also brings out weird shit...I think there is a lot of unresolved angst at our school" (p. 11); he also mentions the pettiness and self-promoting nature of some faculty members, which is contradictory to spiritual and integral values of the Institute. Lily also noted a shadow side of spirituality in higher education. As previously mentioned, she talked about the danger of spiritual bypass, which could occur if you try to teach people about nonduality when they first have not even been able to experience their body first. She also said "when you don't deal with trauma through grounding, it is easy to go off into a bliss state and ignore your body" (Lily's transcript, p. 5), and she felt that this was not made explicit during her time in the program.

Double life. There were two participants who alluded to a disconnection between their career or work, and their pursuit of self-knowledge and personal growth through exploring psychological and spiritual traditions, a disconnection between their passion and how they made a living. Thus double life was used to describe this phenomenon articulated in their stories. Jean was deeply embedded in the world of finance; this route was very practical for her and she was making a great living. Yet she longed to study "other ways of seeing the world" (Jean's transcript, p. 5) and she did this often on her own time, reading and taking workshops on a wide variety of topics "from death and dying to grief counseling to healthy relationships to Reiki, anything alternative" (p. 6). Grace too spoke about a split between what she loved to do and how she made money. From a young age she reports "I've always had a double life" (Grace's transcript, p. 4) because as a theatre kid, she would go to school by day and "crew shows" (p. 4) by night. This way of being in the world continued when she was acting post-Julliard; she "had to work 9-5 to pay for acting," (p. 4) and most recently, all the while she worked on her degree in EWP she worked as a web consultant from home.

Results Summary and Discussion

The first phase of the present work gave a glimpse into the diverse perspectives of alumni who completed a degree in East-West Psychology in regard to the nature of their experience in the program on multiple levels (i.e., personal, interpersonal, and transpersonal); self-reports regarding the understanding of "integral education," as well as to what degree did the M.A. or Ph.D. in EWP

contribute to personal and professional development were also collected. The demographic information gathered reflected a wide array of identities and the ranking scale revealed that participants for the most part agreed with the statements on the scale. The open-ended questions complemented the ranking scale data, since participants were invited to speak to aspects of the scale in their own words.

The second phase of the project enriched the first. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews allowed 10 participants the space to more deeply articulate the value of their degree in EWP, and explore who they were before, during, and after their degree completion. Of the 10 interviews, there were 23 individual interview themes that became apparent, and 11 overarching: six major and five minor themes. In a latter section, some of the major themes identified, the positive aspects of EWP, takeaways, and critiques of EWP, are further categorized, since individual participant responses varied concerning these three themes.

Quantitative Phase: Likert Scale

In the first phase, there were two data collection strategies used simultaneously. Initially, participants were asked to offer some demographic information, and complete a ranking scale, which included 40 statements. Each of the 40 statements on the scale following the demographic information was categorized as personal, interpersonal, or transpersonal; this was purposeful. The categories were used as a way to gauge alumni experiences concerning multiple dimensions of their experience in the context of their graduate education in the EWP program.

As evidenced in the results of the scale, EWP alumni were largely in agreement with all of the statements and an overwhelming 89% (N = 42) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that overall they had a positive experience in EWP. For example, even statement 22, "my education in EWP taught me how to support others in their psycho-spiritual transformation process," which had the lowest agree/strongly agree response rate of all the statements on the scale, still yielded a 44% (N = 20) agreement response rate, and this low agreement response rate was not highly disagreed with. However, 46% of participants (N = 21) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement "as a result of my education in EWP, I am more mindful of my impact on the environment." This begs the question of clarity regarding the phrasing of the statement itself in regard to the exploration of the outcomes of earning a graduate degree in EWP, since more responses indicated participants were neither in agreement or disagreement, than disagreement or strong disagreement. There were however, a few statements that revealed some disagreement worth noting. Table 7 shows the percentage of neutral response rates and the disagree/strongly disagree response rates alongside the percentage of agreement rates for the 15 statements that participants agreed with least. Statements for which the disagree or strongly disagree responses exceeded the neutral response will be discussed in detail.

Table 7: Categorized Statements with the Lowest Agree/Strongly Agree Response Rate Alongside the Corresponding Neutral Response Rate Percentage and Disagree/Strongly Disagree Percentage

<i>Q#</i>	<i>Cate- gory</i>	<i>A/ SA RR</i>	<i>DA/SDA RR</i>	<i>Neutral RR</i>	<i>Total # of Responses</i>	<i>% A/SA Responses</i>	<i>% of Neutral Response</i>	<i>% of D/SDA Response</i>
Q28	I	30	9	8	47	64%	17%	19%
Q25	T	30	7	10	47	64%	21%	15%
Q42	P	29	3	15	47	62%	32%	6%
Q39	I	28	2	17	47	60%	36%	4%
Q17	T	28	5	14	47	60%	30%	10%
Q15	P	27	7	12	46	59%	26%	15%
Q26	P	26	8	13	47	55%	28%	17%
Q27	I	25	6	16	47	53%	34%	13%
Q35	P	25	8	13	46	54%	28%	18%
Q6	T	24	12	11	47	51%	23%	26%
Q32	P	24	6	16	46	52%	35%	13%
Q16	I	22	14	11	47	47%	23%	30%
Q43	I	22	6	19	47	47%	40%	13%
Q33	I	21	3	23	47	45%	49%	6%
Q22	T	20	5	21	46	44%	46%	10%

There were three statements participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with that are worth noting here, since the percentage of participant disagreement exceeded the neutral response rate. Statement 16, "As an alum, I still feel part of the EWP community," was the statement participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the most: 30% of participants reported they did not feel part of the community as alumni ($N = 14$), when 47% agreed or strongly agree that they did. Although CIIS has an active alumni association, and EWP itself has bi-annual gatherings for all in the community, past and present, as evidenced in the response results of this statement on the scale, some people do not feel part of the community once they graduate.

Statement 6, "EWP helped me to develop a regular spiritual discipline," was another statement of interest, since it yielded a disagree/strongly disagree response rate of 26% ($N = 12$). Again, it would interest me to speak with these participants further; did they already have a spiritual practice developed prior to commencing their studies in EWP, or has EWP failed to support the development of a spiritual practice? In future studies, a clearer expression of what was initially attempted here may come in the form of two distinct questions, one inquiring into participants

experience of the spiritually based, community-oriented nature of the program, and the other asking participants more directly about the connection between studying in EWP and its connection to each individual's spiritual practice.

Additionally, when asked statement 27, "while in the program, I felt part of a spiritual community," 19% (N = 9) of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed, more than those who were neutral, or in agreement. This is interesting to note since the two statements just mentioned both inquired into a similar area of exploration: to what degree the course of study EWP impacted the development of a spiritual discipline, and to what degree did participants feel they were learning within a spiritual community? To have such response rates of disagreement indicates perhaps a point to consider in program evaluation and one avenue of future research, focused on the construct of a spiritual educational community, since CIIS asserts that the integral education they offer "affirms spirituality" and that they are "committed to the study and practice of multiple spiritual traditions and to their expression and embodiment throughout all areas and activities of the Institute community" (CIIS, 2014a, para. 2). Furthermore, I would be curious to know more about how respondents applied their studies to daily life during them, and since graduating, if applicable.

Quantitative Phase: Open-ended Questions

After participants completed the scale, the inquiry then shifted to explore how each characterized an integral education, and to what degree they felt that earning an advanced degree in EWP influenced their personal and professional development. The objective here was to offer participants the space to articulate in their own words the nature of their experiences and understandings of earning a graduate degree in EWP. Table 8 shows a summary of the major themes from the open-ended responses, and seven or more occurrences constituted the item as a major theme.

Table 8: Summary of the Major Themes from the Open-ended Results

Question Details	Major Themes
In your view, what characterizes an Integral education?	Theme 1: Multiple Worldviews (13) Theme 2: Multidimensionality of Being (11) Theme 3: Multiple Ways of Knowing (10)
Please describe how your EWP learning experience and degree completion contributed to your personal development (If not applicable simply state that).	Theme 1: Expanded sense of self/Deepened Self-Understanding (23) Theme 2: Transformation/Development already in progress (7) Theme 3: Encouraged Exploration of Multiple Ways of Gaining Valid Knowledge (7)

Please describe how your EWP learning experience and degree completion contributed to your professional development (If not applicable simply state that).	Theme 1: Not Applicable (14)
	Theme 2: Academic/Scholarly (9)
	Theme 3: Indirect Effect (7)

Analysis of the survey data collected from the open-ended questions was most revealing. There were three themes that presented in the responses gathered regarding the initial question "in your view, what characterizes an integral education?" (1) multiple worldviews, (2) multidimensionality of being, and (3) multiple ways of knowing.

The first question is interesting because it does not directly inquire into the nature of the EWP program or CIIS per se, since it simply asks for the participant's view of how they characterize a particular educational method. Thus, one cannot assume that the responses are descriptors for the EWP department's educational offering. However, there was one participant who took it upon herself to add her thoughts concerning the lack of an integral education in the EWP program, stating "whatever it is I do not believe I received it in 2003."

At first glance, these themes generally correlate with the integral education espoused by CIIS today. Reflecting on the educational philosophy of the Institute, which affirms that the integral education at CIIS "encompass[es] all aspects of learning: the intellectual, the experiential and the applied" (CIIS, 2014b, para. 2), "values cultural diversity, multiple ways of knowing, spirituality, a sense of community... [and, by] exploring the interplay of mind, body, and spirit, integral education connects the spiritual and practical dimensions of intellectual life" (CIIS, 2014b, para. 3), the degree of correlation becomes more apparent.

At the time of this study, on the Institute's EWP website, the program's most up to date educational vision is reported as follows:

- To create a learning community focused on the exploration of Western, Eastern, and Indigenous psychologies and spiritualities in the spirit of integral inquiry and open-ended dialogue.
- To offer an integral education that honors not only intellectual excellence, but also the voice and wisdom of the somatic, vital, emotional, imaginal, and spiritual dimensions of the person.
- To bring spirituality into academia and explore the transformative elements of inquiry, learning, and writing.
- To foster the psycho-spiritual development of students, as well as their unique individual gifts and potentials. (CIIS, 2014d, para. 7)

Moreover, EWP today maintains that "through its unique combination of cognitive and experiential offerings, the department grounds academic excellence and the acquisition of professional skills in both the personal transformation of students and the cultivation of a spiritually informed scholarship" (CIIS, 2014a, para. 1).

Quantitative Phase Open-ended Questions: Personal and Professional Impact

The last two open-ended questions in Phase 1 of the present research sought to collect information about the personal and professional impact of participating in an integral education and earning a degree in EWP; this was intentional because the EWP department has historically offered a program that strives to nurture students ability to balance and integrate the many human dimensions, body, mind, spirit, alongside the development of professional skills, and a ground in practical application (see CIIS course catalogs from 1975-present). EWP's educational vision today maintains the heart of the original intent, and this study examined to what extent the vision holds true by collecting alumni perspectives of the personal and professional value they attribute to EWP since completing their advanced degree.

There were six themes present in participants' responses to the open-ended question, "Please describe how your EWP learning experience and degree completion contributed to your personal development (If not applicable simply state that)": (1) expanded sense of self/deepened self-understanding, (2) transformation/development already in progress, (3) encouraged exploration of multiple ways of gaining valid knowledge, (4) growth/maturation, (5) not applicable. The other open-ended question was similar, but professional is substituted for personal. "Please describe how your EWP learning experience and degree completion contributed to your professional development (If not applicable simply state that)"; there were five themes revealed as a result: (1) not applicable, (2) academic/scholarly, (3) indirect effect, (4) deepened current work, (5) one step on the path. Further analysis of each individual theme regarding participants' personal and professional development in light of the contemporary educational vision of the EWP department follows.

To summarize, the main characteristics of an integral education that were noted by participants were the honoring of the multidimensionality of being, or simultaneous development along multiple lines of intelligence, and the valuing of multiple ways of gaining valid knowledge. In regard to personal development, participants emphasized an expanded sense of self, and transformation in connection to their education in EWP. Professionally speaking, participants mostly reported no effect or an indirect effect, but others reported that their academic development while in pursuit of a Ph.D. was linked to their professional development post-graduation.

Qualitative Phase

In the second phase of the study, 10 of those who participated in the first phase volunteered their time for a qualitative interview. Each of the 10 interview transcripts revealed individual themes, and some overarching themes. There were 21 individual interview themes in total, and 11 overarching themes. As noted previously, Table 6 showed the major and minor overarching themes across the collection of interviews. The major themes were seeker/self-directed learner (10), positive aspects of EWP (7), takeaways (7), synchronistic unfolding (6), spiritual emergence/emergency (4), and critiques (4).

Participants used certain language to describe their experience, as if they were constantly engaged intentionally seeking out the next steps in their own psycho-spiritual unfolding. Thus, everyone interviewed showed characteristics of being a seeker/self-directed learner. Synchronistic

unfolding and spiritual emergence/emergency also lend themselves to this major theme, since this type of descriptive language is only used by a certain kind of person, a seeker. Positive aspects of EWP, and takeaways shed light on what alumni perceive as the benefits of a course of study in EWP. Participants who shared the highlights of their time in EWP or spoke to what they gained personally and professionally from earning a degree in EWP fell into these categories. Interestingly, some of the major and minor themes are so related, they could be combined, and thus constitute another major theme. Specifically, critiques (4), what EWP lacked (2), no bridge (2) shadow side of spirituality (2), all indicate the learning edges of the EWP department. In other words, these themes could be a major theme, such as zone of proximal development, in which case, would have occurred 10 times in the second phase. However, in order to preserve the words of participants as best as possible, these minor themes were designated instead.

I would like to bring the reader's attention to the relationship between some of the themes. Specifically, both spiritual emergence/emergency and synchronistic unfolding could be a way to describe certain characteristics of the life of a seeker. Additionally, takeaways could be a more specific way to describe a positive aspect of EWP, and what EWP lacked could be a form of critique. No bridge, as well as shadow side of spirituality could also fit into the realm of critique. The point here is that the themes procured from the data collection are very much interrelated, and some could be cross-listed. They have been articulated as such in service of greater clarity and acknowledgement of certain participants' original wording.

The forthcoming paragraphs will focus on deepening the reader's understanding of the more ambiguous themes: positives of EWP, critiques of EWP, what EWP lacked, and takeaways. Note: some individuals offered more than one example of any given particular theme; this becomes evident when reflecting on the number of times the theme occurred across interviews and the number of specific responses below. Table 9 shows the distinctness of responses concerning each of the aforementioned themes.

Table 9: Distinctness of Participant Experience Regarding Ambiguous Themes

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Specific Responses</i>
Positive Aspects of EWP (7)	(a) EWP 7793 <i>East-West Spiritual Counseling Skills</i> (b) grateful for the learning experience (c) newfound curiosity for the field of Psychology (d) concentrated inner work (e) soul work "I'm a more congruent person...we've all grown immeasurably" (f) professional/academic preparation (g) development of critical thinking skills (h) development of analytical thinking skills (i) 500 hours of internship (j) receptive (k) non-judgmental (l) freedom/flexibility to co-create one's curriculum (2) (m) faculty support (n) nurturance of each individual student's psycho-spiritual unfolding (o) EWP 6150 <i>Eastern Theories of Self, Mind, and Nature</i> (3) (p) opportunity to be a spiritual innovator

	(q) constant challenge of engaging with a community of scholars (r) full support from faculty mentors to follow passion/curiosity
Critiques (4)	(a) expected professional development/preparation; not delivered (b) inappropriateness of some faculty members (c) unsupported, concentrated form of inner work (d) anti-intellectual climate (e) systematic and detailed approach to spirituality not present (f) dogmatization of specialty (g) the dept. killed the dream of Dr. Chaudhuri (h) allegiance to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was marketed, yet not practiced/delivered (i) privileged/entitled student body (2) (j) hefty student loan debt (k) indefinable degree
What EWP Lacked	(a) lack of connection and applicability of studies to social issues (b) strong sense of community not present (2) (c) race/gender/class/social justice issues absent from the curriculum (d) professional development (2) (e) community/interpersonal support (f) more grounded approach to inner work and psycho-spiritual Development

Looking at the myriad of responses under each theme exposes a wealth of information regarding to what degree student learning outcomes match up with the educational vision set forth by CIIS and the EWP department. Student satisfaction levels were also indicated in the data collected, both in the sense of positive aspects of the program and what students report they are taking away from their time studying in EWP, as well as regarding more critical feedback and when students attest to feeling dissatisfied. Interestingly, one participant noted the professional and academic preparation in a positive light, and two others noted that was one aspect that was lacking in EWP. Sense can be made of this divergent perspective if one refers back to the CIIS course catalog literature from 1975-present. The participant who reported strong professional and academic preparation was an alumna of the EWP program back in the 1980s, whereas the two participants who mentioned this was an area of lack with EWP had been more recent, having graduated in the last five years. I would be curious to further explore the distinct iterations of EWP through alumni experience, using the course catalogs as a way to guide the organization of the sample. Also interesting to note is the evidence of correlation between the phases of research.

In the first phase of the study, 49% participants reported a deepened sense of self/expanded self-understanding when asked about their personal development in correlation to their EWP educational experience in the open-ended response data. The second phase also presented evidence of expanded self-understanding is present in the transcript data, and this was expressed in some of the responses categorized as takeaways. For example, interview participants reported increased somatic and emotional awareness, deepened self-understanding and self-knowledge, expanded awareness of shadow and increased integration capacity, as well as stronger sense of identity and passion as takeaways from their EWP educational experience. These examples warrant more exploration to be determined as qualities of deepened self-understanding, and they could prove useful in guiding future lines of inquiry.

The responses coded as "what EWP lacked," the "critiques," as well as "no bridge," and "shadow side of spirituality in education" were less present in the first phase of the research. However, interview participants did mention the lack of professional development, and two more reflected on the lack of a bridge from studying at CIIS to transitioning into meaningful contributor to society. These interview responses were akin to the most prevalent response regarding the open-ended question which inquired into the nature of alumni professional development and its connection to their course of study and degree completion in EWP; 30% (N = 14) reported "not applicable."

Findings Summary and Conclusion

Considering all the responses from both phases, there is evidence of some correlation. The major themes revealed from the open-ended questions were validated in some ways through the qualitative interviews. Specifically, participants' responses in regard to personal and professional development in the first phase were shown in more detail in the second phase. For example, the most prevalent theme in the second phase, seeker/self-directed learner, was also present in the open-ended responses in regard to personal development. When asked about their EWP education and its connection to personal development, seven reported that their transformation and/or development was already in progress and would be a quality of their lives, whether they studied in EWP at CIIS or not. Both phases thus offer some information concerning the character, or personality of the students who decide to enroll and complete a graduate degree in EWP.

Overall the results of this mixed-method study point to the areas where the EWP program is doing well in terms of what students expect and what they actually get, and also to the areas that could use improvement if the department was to offer an education that better reflects the ideals of the Institute, as espoused by the program description and advertisement. The most significant findings are the revelations of the need for (a) more professional development for students completing a degree in EWP, (b) more practical application opportunities, for example, internships, teaching assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, and connection of studies to social and global issues, (c) more community/mentor support for students' personal psycho-spiritual unfolding, and (d) more training regarding the language and articulation needed to communicate the value of an integral education effectively with scholars/employers outside of CIIS.

There was also evidence in both phases that EWP is offering an educational experience that honors (a) multiple worldviews and perspectives, (b) the multidimensionality of experience, for example, physical, emotional, mental/intellectual, spiritual, relational, and (c) multiple ways of gaining valid knowledge, not just through the mind. Participants also reported across phases that they experienced (a) an expanded sense of self, (b) deepened self-awareness and/or knowledge, and (c) a new ability to hold multiple perspectives, even those contradictory to their own. Thus, there is evidence indicating that what CIIS aspires to is actualized according to some alumni reports.

The findings of this mixed methods study reveal perhaps more questions than answers; however, they are relevant to the EWP program, CIIS, and the field of higher education assessment research in general. Alumni perspectives on the personal and professional value of earning a non-traditional graduate degree helped to articulate what the Institute does well in regard to the practice

of integral education, what could be better implemented, and where the Institute could grow. These findings suggest best practices, critical reflections, as well as recommendations to improve the integral education model in practice at CIIS, thus inviting further refinement of the practice of integral education, and movement towards greater alignment with the educational values CIIS strives to uphold.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONS – TRANSFORMATION EVALUATION SCALE

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project exploring your educational experience in the East-West Psychology Program. Please read each of the following statements carefully. Reflect on your overall EWP experience as you consider each statement and then, using the following rating scale, please choose one of the five options listed below.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Agree
- (3) Neither agree nor disagree
- (2) Disagree
- (1) Strongly Disagree

1. Throughout the program, in general, I felt emotionally supported during class time.
2. My education in EWP helped me develop an expanded sense of self.
3. Learning about psycho-spiritual disciplines inspired me to develop a personal, regular self care practice.
4. The education I received from EWP helped me develop new levels of emotional maturity.
5. As a result of my education in EWP I was taught to honor multiple ways of knowing.
6. I became more mindful as a result of my education in EWP.
7. I learned how to experience embodied knowing as a result of my education in EWP.
8. I was challenged to become aware of and reassess my worldview assumptions through my EWP education.
9. My education in EWP awakened in me a sense of global citizenship and responsibility.
10. EWP offered me an Integral Education.
11. What I learned in the EWP program catalyzed a significant change in my lifestyle.
12. As an alum I still feel I am part of the EWP community.
13. My education in EWP helped me become more aware of the underdeveloped aspects of my personality.
14. As a result of my EWP education, my ability for authentic self-expression improved.

15. My EWP education has been indispensable to my professional development.
16. My education in EWP has helped me actualize my higher potentials.
17. My education in EWP fostered the development of interpersonal communication skills.
18. My EWP education made it possible to relate to all beings more authentically.
19. Through my education in EWP I learned to respect worldviews contradictory to my own.
20. The people I met during the program were instrumental to my growth.
21. My EWP education catalyzed a significant change in the way I relate to others.
22. My education in EWP taught me how to support others in their psycho-spiritual transformation process.
23. My EWP education had a noticeable positive effect on the quality of my relationships.
24. My education in the EWP program increased my capacity for genuine intimacy.
25. Being emotionally supported while completing my degree contributed to my spiritual/transpersonal development.
26. My relationship with the sacred (however you define that) deepened throughout the program.
27. While in the program, I felt part of a spiritual community.
28. EWP helped me develop a regular spiritual discipline.
29. As a result of my education in EWP, I am more mindful of my impact on the environment.
30. Being a part of EWP, I became part of a community which honors multiple worldviews.
31. My EWP education engaged the various aspects of my being.
32. The EWP program catalyzed a significant change in the way I relate to the world.
33. My education in EWP taught me to honor the multidimensionality of existence
34. Since completing my degree in EWP, my sense of self has expanded, allowing for more authentic spiritual expression.
35. My education in EWP has inspired me to experience life as an ever-unfolding evolution of consciousness.

36. Since completing my degree in EWP, I embrace an integral worldview.

37. As a result of my education, I actively seek opportunities to grow spiritually.

38. The education I received from EWP has helped me access greater understanding of my intuition.

39. In my experience, EWP fostered my psycho-spiritual transformation.

40. In retrospect, I had a positive experience of EWP overall.

The following three questions are open-ended

41. In your view, what characterizes integral education?

42. How has your EWP learning experience and degree completion contributed to your personal development?

43. How has your EWP learning and degree completion contributed to your professional development and current pursuits?

Women's Spirituality at CIIS: Uniting Integral and Feminist Pedagogies

Alka Arora¹

Abstract: This paper articulates an educational framework termed integral feminist pedagogy, based on the author's experience teaching in the Women's Spirituality program at the California Institute of Integral Studies. Integral feminist pedagogy unites the principles and practices of both the integral and feminist traditions. The strength of integral pedagogy lies in its focus on the inseparability of an individual's mind, body, and spirit. However, integral pedagogy is often understood today in a way that divorces individuals from their social and political context. Feminist pedagogy, on the other hand, excels in raising students' awareness of social and political context, but may neglect individuals' psychospiritual realities. This paper argues that integrating the two traditions helps each better fulfill its vision of social transformation. In order to illuminate the core premises of integral feminist pedagogy, specific examples from classrooms in the Women's Spirituality program are explored.

Keywords: Integral education, diversity, feminism, social justice, spirituality.

Education at its best—these profound human transactions called knowing, teaching, and learning—are not just about information, and they're not just about getting jobs. They are about healing. They are about wholeness. They are about empowerment, liberation, transcendence. They are about reclaiming the vitality of life. Parker Palmer (1997, p.3)

Introduction

How do we as educators hold our students as whole, embodied beings navigating a world of immense oppression but also of immense beauty? How do we engage them in thinking critically about power and privilege while also honoring and encouraging their self-expression and personal growth? How do we foster both “liberation,” and “transcendence,” as Palmer (1997) suggests the best education can do?

In this paper I attempt to answer these questions by articulating a model of integral feminist pedagogy that is based on my experience teaching in the Women's Spirituality program at the

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California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). This model marries two distinct pedagogical traditions that have each profoundly shaped my educational philosophy and practice. The integral tradition emphasizes the interrelatedness of mind, body, and spirit; feminist education, meanwhile, focuses on the connection between the personal and the political. To bring them together is to recognize that our “selves” – our minds, bodies, and spirits – are embedded within a system of social and political relations. We are multidimensional beings, possessing both interior depth and social breadth. An integral feminist pedagogy can engage students on these multiple levels at once, and thus provide a deeper level of transformation than is possible via either tradition alone.

I enter this conversation as a woman of color educator who has been teaching at the university level for seventeen years. I began my university teaching career as a graduate student at the University of Washington (UW), where I worked with undergraduate students in Women Studies classrooms. My experience of feminist education at the UW, as both a student and instructor, was powerful. The breadth and nuance of feminist politics came alive for me in these classrooms. However, I also experienced an internal dissonance as my spiritual self was left out of the discussions. I longed for a place to talk about my inner, spiritual life and how it was being influenced by what I was learning politically. In every class that I taught, I noticed at least a few students who seemed to share a similar longing.

Coming to teach at CIIS thus felt like a breath of fresh air. Finally, it seemed, I could be my “whole self” and find a welcoming space for the discussion of intuitions, dreams, encounters with the sacred, or intrapsychic realities. However, I soon came to see that many spaces at CIIS were absent of discussion of political structures and of gendered and racialized experiences, despite the founder's vision of spiritual and social integration. My “whole self” was not welcome, after all. Many CIIS students (and faculty) tended to gravitate toward either spiritual or political realms, reproducing the dichotomy found in the culture at large. While my own program, Women's Spirituality, explicitly strove to challenge this dichotomy, we had to do so against the grain of cultural conditioning that views spiritual and political liberation as wholly separate.

Despite the challenges, I believe that the Women's Spirituality program has been able to offer a uniquely transformative education by consciously bridging the spiritual and political. As core faculty in the program, I have had the opportunity to reflect deeply upon how to interweave the two realms in the classroom. My articulation of integral feminist pedagogy is grounded in some of these everyday classroom experiences.

In the following sections, I examine the histories and core tenets of both integral pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. I then reflect upon the history and evolution of the Women's Spirituality program at CIIS, highlighting the pedagogical challenges and opportunities the program has faced. In the final section, I share four core premises of the integral feminist pedagogical model I use in my own teaching.

Integral Pedagogy

At the very heart of integral pedagogy is the belief that education should engage not just the intellect, but also the inner dimensions of the person such that deeper levels of learning and transformation are made possible. While the tradition of integral education is rooted in the works

of multiple philosophers, including Rudolf Steiner, Jean Gebser, and Ken Wilber (Esbjörn-Hargens, S., Reams, J., & Gunnlaugson, O., 2010) it is the work of Sri Aurobindo as explicated and implemented by Haridas Chaudhuri that has been so pivotal to the development of CIIS and of my own understanding of integral pedagogy.

Born in 1872 in British-controlled India, Aurobindo came of age at a time when rote, mechanical education was the norm. His belief that learning should be centered on the student, while commonplace today was radical for his time (Subbiondo, 2005, p. 20). In many ways, his focus on liberating students to discover their own truths prefigured the work of Paulo Freire (2008), whose critique of the “banking” model of education has had global influence.

Aurobindo, well ahead of his time, also advocated ideas that would later be associated with movements such as feminism and postmodernism. For instance, he asserted a belief in multiple truths and multiple ways of knowing. According to Reams (2010), Aurobindo valued “an integration of what were previously considered as paradoxes, a capacity to see previously disparate perspectives as interconnected” (p. 8). Unlike most of today’s postmodern thinkers, however, for Aurobindo these truths went beyond socially-constructed perspectives to also include the truths of the body and the spirit.

Integral education, sparked by Aurobindo’s philosophy, has from its outset recognized and honored the spiritual dimensions of the individual. It is based on the belief that “there is a mode of consciousness available to us that is qualitatively different from our common, ordinary, rational, everyday consciousness” (Reams, 2010, p. 8). By accessing this mode of consciousness—through meditation, art, or reflective writing, for instance—students and faculty tap into another source of knowledge that complements and enriches academic learning. Teachers who use integral methods might, for instance, interweave scholarly analysis with contemplative reflection; lectures with movement practices; or classroom discussion with sacred ritual. Such integrative practices support students’ capacity for deeper learning and transformation.

Aurobindo's emphasis on an individual's potential for transformation did not negate the importance of our social worlds. As Wexler (2005) notes, “since the nondualistic view [of integral philosophy] did not separate the Divine from the material world, there was also an emphasis on action in this world as an expression of our inherent spiritual nature” (p. 31). Indeed, Aurobindo's integral philosophy included a belief in cultural evolution driven by psychologically and spiritually mature persons who would herald a new, harmonious society.

As I mentioned above, numerous other thinkers have taken up the concept of “integral” education since Aurobindo’s time. While the integral tradition has become vast, I would like to summarize here what I see as the core practices of integral educators, who strive to:

- Create spaces where the numinous dimension of existence can be explored without forwarding any particular religious or philosophical dogma.
- Engage students’ inner lives in a way that supports their psychological and spiritual drive toward wholeness.
- Embrace multiplicity, paradox, and uncertainty while encouraging their students to do the same.

- Foster hope in the possibility of both individual and social transformation.
- Provide tools for students to explore deeper questions about the meaning and purpose of their lives.

Notably, this list includes an emphasis on the cultivation of social as well as individual growth. Indeed, Aurobindo was an anti-colonial revolutionary who fought for India's independence from British rule. His teachings were not apolitical. However, as they made their way to the US, integral ideas became practiced in a way that has generally privileged an individualistic perspective over a collective one. This stems in large part from the relatively privileged social status of early adopters of this framework, as well as the individualism inherent in Western capitalist society. It also derives from the fact that integral education was taken up with great zest by psychologists, who are primarily trained to look at individuals in the context of their family and interpersonal dynamics, rather than at macro-systems. Wexler (2005), Academic Vice President at CIIS, has acknowledged this danger in integral education:

Another risk is that the emphasis on the personal may create the illusion that everything is personal and individual, with little recognition given to the impact of society, social roles, or power dynamics. Thus, for example, the discussion of diversity in this environment faces particular challenges related to the emphasis on personal development. We hear white students talk of their spiritual work as having enabled them “to move past diversity” without recognizing the cultural and social constraints that make such transformation impossible in terms of life in contemporary society. (p. 32)

Wexler's comment affirms my own experience with students at CIIS, particularly those from privileged racial or class backgrounds. Given the tendency toward privatized notions of psycho-spiritual growth in the West, I assert that educators must actively bring in a social and political analysis to remain true to the vision of integral pedagogy. The insights and strategies emerging from feminist pedagogy can be invaluable here, and I turn now to an overview of this tradition.

Feminist Pedagogy

In contrast to the self-focused idea of “transformation” that is espoused in many integral classrooms, the feminist pedagogical vision is one of widespread social transformation. Such transformation involves a restructuring of the relationship between the genders, at minimum; more and more feminist educators today hold a wider vision that involves a radical transformation of gender, sexuality, race, our economic system, and relationship to the earth. Feminist educators view the classroom as a site where students can become critical thinkers who question the status-quo and who develop deeper insights about social and political relations. With an expanded understanding of the world and their place in it, students can develop the necessary agency to change it.

The history of feminist pedagogy is rooted in the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. While women were entering the halls of higher education in ever-increasing numbers, they realized that the content they were learning continued to be developed and taught by men – predominantly white men. Examining higher education curricula of that era, feminists “observed that sometimes women were missing altogether, sometimes women appeared only in images that

reflected men's perspectives, and sometimes women's activities and everything considered feminine were devalued" (Boxer, 1998, p. 52).

Feminists developed alternative sites of knowledge production, coming together in "consciousness raising" groups where they discussed their experiences of sexism and developed shared analyses of patriarchal oppression. These leaderless groups, where women sat in a circle to share their lived experiences, came to emblemize feminist education and greatly influenced the structure of women's studies classes. Podiums and formal lectures were supplanted by students sitting face to face, engaging with each other and with course texts in a dialogical manner. The teacher's role morphed from "expert" to guide and facilitator; students were invited to view themselves as co-creators of knowledge (Boxer, 1998; Fisher, 2001).

Feminist pedagogy evolved in conversation with critical pedagogy, a tradition based in a critique of capitalist power relations. Critical pedagogy challenges the class based inequalities that have been perpetuated through mainstream education. Paulo Freire is widely considered the father of critical pedagogy; here, Shaull (2000) summarizes Freire's perspective on education:

Education [for Freire] either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

The critical tradition brought to feminist pedagogy an expanded focus on class and political economy. Meanwhile, feminists of color stressed the importance of racialized power relations, and helped move feminist pedagogy away from universalizing women's experiences.

All of these influences helped bolster the feminist insight that that one's social location and access to power profoundly shape what one knows and how one sees the world. Feminist educators challenge the concept of academic "objectivity," "see[ing] it instead as a mask for bias" (Boxer, 1998, p. 73). Suspicious of androcentric and Eurocentric biases in scholarship, feminist teachers seek to uncover the stories and realities of women, people of color, and others who have been marginalized or oppressed.

As issues of race, class, and sexuality came more to the fore in feminist classrooms, female students could no longer see themselves as simply targets of patriarchal oppression. White, middle-class, and heterosexual students had to reckon with their privilege in a complex system of power-laden identities. The feminist educators' job, then, became not only one of empowering women students but also of challenging them to recognize their privileges.

Even as feminist pedagogy has evolved over time, what remains distinctive about it is its recognition that matters previously considered purely "personal," are, in fact, collective and political concerns:

Topics that had been considered strictly "personal," such as how a woman felt about her body, how sexual violence or sexual pleasure affected her, the consequences of marrying and having

children, what it meant to become educated, how to deal with problems at work, at home or outside it, all became the focus of intense discussion [in consciousness raising groups, and later in feminist classrooms]. (Fisher, 2001, 29)

Such “personal” concerns become a central focus point for feminist organizing because they reveal broad social patterns such as gender-based violence, economic inequities, and limiting gender roles. The first-person narratives of women help illuminate systematic and institutionalized imbalance of power structured by gender, race, and class. Historical and political context is integrated with narratives of lived experience to develop feminist theory and praxis.

To sum, feminist educators:

- Believe that education can and should inspire social transformation and the undoing of patriarchal systems.
- Engage students in historically situated analyses of power and privilege.
- Embrace narratives of personal experiences as sources of knowledge and alliance building.
- Support students in unlearning internalized oppression and internalized privilege.

Like integral educators, feminist teachers ask students to bring their whole selves into the classroom—but this “whole self” is understood not as “mind/body/spirit” but rather as a socially and politically situated self. Whereas the integral educator’s goal may be to examine patterns in the human psyche or in spiritual experience, the feminist educator’s is to do so in the context of social and political patterns.

However, in my view, feminist pedagogy in the secular academy has suffered from being steeped so deeply in a materialist analysis of oppression that the numinous dimensions of life have been marginalized. Helen LaKelly Hunt (2004) points out the irony that many feminist sites that welcome discussion about some of the most intimate aspects of our lives—sexuality, for instance—still consider spirituality a taboo topic. Thus, while inviting students to bring their embodied experiences into the classroom while negating their spirits, feminist educators may inadvertently reproduce the split between the “private” and the “political” that they decry. Bringing an integral lens to bear on feminist education can, therefore, help feminist pedagogy better fulfill its vision.

Women's Spirituality at CIIS

While women's spiritual experiences remained marginal to feminist discourse at large, they were centered in the emerging women's spirituality movement of the 1980s. Spiritual feminism grew out of the same mix of consciousness-raising and political activism that motivated secular feminisms. But while many secular feminists adopted the Marxist view of religion as simply the “opiate of the masses,” spiritual feminists looked deeper. They agreed with secular feminists that patriarchal religions upheld women's oppression. However, rather than casting out religion altogether, spiritual feminists insisted that the spiritual impulse preceded patriarchy, and that the practice of woman-affirming spirituality held the key to transforming it.

The Women's Spirituality program at CIIS, founded in 1992, grew out of this women's spirituality movement. Scholars and practitioners took the feminist query "what happens when women ask the questions?" (Boxer, 1998, title page) to the realms of religion and spirituality. What they found was that the world's historical religions have been preponderantly developed for and by men, and specifically the elite men of any given society. Moreover, these religions have sustained the structural oppression of women and as well as women's own internalized oppression.

Many of these scholars focused on uncovering suppressed knowledge about ancient Goddess and mother-centered societies around the world. Others reclaimed female spiritual leaders and woman-affirming teachings within the existing traditions. Regardless of their approach, what united them was the conviction that transforming symbol systems and religious worldviews were key to women's liberation.

Pedagogically, Women's Spirituality at CIIS shared with women's studies a focus on linking the personal and political, bolstering women's agency, and transforming androcentric curricula. However, the focus on interior, spiritual experiences made this program distinct from women's studies programs and is why it found a home at CIIS. Though Women's Spirituality had different intellectual roots than the integral tradition, both shared the belief in the interrelatedness of mind, body, and spirit.

Students in our program have been supported in excavating their own relationships to patriarchal symbols and tropes, and in exploring an alternative, embodied, and relational sense of the female Divine. At the same time, they have increasingly been challenged to analyze the complex social and political systems that affect the concrete lived experiences of women—and of all genders—today.

Integrating these two modes—the spiritual and the political—has been a creative challenge. Even as faculty in the program strive to break down the binary between the two, we are embedded within a wider discursive terrain where the spiritual and political are split. The texts we rely upon often stress one domain over the other, as do many of our academic associations. Given this cultural splitting, it is perhaps unsurprising that different students come to the program with interests more strongly in one realm or the other. Some of our students have expressed a desire to study women's spirituality without having to study feminism, unaware how the two have always been intertwined. Others, meanwhile, have been drawn to us primarily because of our focus on social justice, and enter the spiritual discourse more tentatively.

In addition, the program itself has gone through a significant evolution over the years. The original program was focused more on women recovering their agency as those who had been oppressed through patriarchy. Primarily Euro-American, these women held significant racial and class privilege despite having experienced significant sexism in their lives; such privilege allowed them to focus primarily on healing from oppression. As more working-class women and women of color joined the program, the recognition that women, far from being innocent victims of an undifferentiated patriarchy, also colluded in the oppression of other women, came to the fore. Thus, finding ways to raise students' awareness of their own privilege or oppressive attitudes became increasingly important.

Meeting these pedagogical challenges has led me to reflect on how to best integrate the interior and psycho-spiritual dimension of integral teaching with the relational and political dimension of feminist teaching. By uniting these two traditions, we can foster deeper transformation than is possible with either alone. In the following section, I outline some of the core premises of this integral feminist pedagogy.

Integral Feminist Pedagogy

The first premise of integral feminist pedagogy is that both educators and learners are multidimensional beings who must be engaged as both spiritual and political agents. As feminist and critical perspectives have demonstrated, we are each situated within specific social, historical, and political locations that shape our experiences and our standpoints. However, an integral feminist perspective suggests that we are each also situated within a specific metaphysical worldview that both reflects our sociopolitical location and shapes how we respond to it. In this view, even atheism has its own set of metaphysical presuppositions and is culturally and historically specific.

In the Women's Spirituality program, for instance, we discuss how exclusively or predominantly male images of the Divine have helped create a social system that privileges male experience. We also examine how spiritual practices that help individuals tap into their own inner wisdom may support liberation from patriarchal conditioning and authority. In some classes, we might explore differing beliefs on how metaphysical tools such as prayer or ritual might influence material reality and social conditions.

This engagement with students as spiritual and political beings leads to my second premise, which is that social justice education must address students' inner worlds. Coming into consciousness about systems of oppression brings with it a multitude of emotions as well as deep questions. Students' grief, anger, and shame about the violence and oppression in our world often lead to questions about meaning and purpose. For instance, they may strive to make meaning of collective suffering and reflect on their desires to be agents of change. Some students wonder what they can believe in when they came to realize that so much of what they have been taught is based in oppressive ideologies. By providing a space in which students can have an open dialogue about these types of questions, educators can help foster students' ability to access their own inner wisdom as they struggle to make meaning.

The third premise of an integral feminist pedagogy is that psychospiritual maturity requires one to awaken to issues of oppression and injustice. Esborn-Hargens et al. (2010) note that integral education includes "shadow work". They write:

We also have learned the importance of students and teachers become more self-reflective and increasingly aware of their trigger points - what makes us reactive, dismissive, or shut down to ideas and other people. By learning to look at what we do not want to see in ourselves (and others) we become more compassionate and open to learning. This is an ongoing process of owning our projections, minimizing idealization, avoiding the tendency to split things into good and bad, catching ourselves when we are rationalizing away our responsibility and so forth. (p. 6)

Much of the discussion of shadow work in this type of literature focuses on our projections within interpersonal relationships; while valuable, this literature has yet to attend to the role of relationships of oppression and dominance that also comprise our “shadows.” By creating a space wherein students can openly explore how systemic oppression has become steeped in all our psyches, we can develop non-shaming ways of decolonizing attitudes.

A specific example from one of my classes can help illuminate this point. I teach a course titled *Building Conscious Allyship*, which introduces students to a broad scope of social justice issues in a way designed to build empathy, reflection, and the desire to foster change. While the content of the class is primarily on understanding how oppressions from racism to ableism operate on both macro and micro levels, the process involves deep inquiry work and dialogue. At the end of the term, a thirtysomething year old white student, whom I'll call Jennifer, wrote the following:

So, my own internalized shame story about being white in a racist society can be an entry point for consciousness, or, without awareness, it can serve to generate reactions that numb me into reproducing the very conditions that create the feeling ... What one discovers about consciousness, however, is it's not just the bright light shining; the light reveals all that has heretofore been concealed. The shadows. The unseen. The pushed away. In our desire to be allies to one another, we will invariably and inevitably butt up against those places in ourselves (be it our privilege, our complicity, our own victimization, our silence, our betrayals of self and other, etc.) that we might rather not meet. (unpublished manuscript, n.d.)

She continues with a reflection on how her spiritual life necessitates the work of unlearning oppression:

If my primary spiritual task includes remembering myself as whole, divine, and holy, and thus to re-member (bring into the body and into membership/ community) the divine Source in all beings, then it is also my task to explore where (and how and why) I am resisting that truth through participation (unconscious as well as conscious) in and the recreation of structures that oppress anyone or anything in my name. (unpublished manuscript, n.d.)

As Jennifer's reflections so beautifully capture, psychospiritual transformation and social transformation are not separate spheres; they can be one and the same. By refusing to privilege politics over inner spiritual work, or vice versa, integral feminist educators can facilitate students' processes of making their own connections between these entwined dimensions.

The fourth premise of my integral feminist model, which follows from the first three, is that we must understand the human drive toward healing and wholeness as a collective rather than purely private endeavor. When understood in collective terms, healing and wholeness are no different than justice and liberation. As Cornel West has famously stated “justice is what love looks like in public.” Too often, students are asked to engage issues of oppression in a disembodied, academic way that leaves little room for the creativity of their spirits. When we open up the possibility for them to see that their own spiritual well-being is intricately tied to the well-being of all, West's statement becomes an embodied truth.

Conclusion

This paper put forth a vision of an integral feminist pedagogy that interweaves the best practices of integral pedagogy with those of feminist pedagogy. The histories of both traditions reveal a focus on multiple truths, embodied experience, and social transformation. However, the integral tradition as understood in the contemporary West has too often been apolitical, while the feminist tradition has been “aspiritual.” In the Women's Spirituality program at CIIS, we challenge the split between the political and spiritual and we encourage students to recognize how the two realms have always had mutual influence. Based on my experience teaching in this program, I articulate four key pedagogical premises of an integral feminist paradigm. I contend that this paradigm can support a process of deep psycho-spiritual and political transformation.

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The Divine Feminist: A Diversity of Perspectives That Honor Our Mothers' Gardens by Integrating Spirituality and Social Justice

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Abstract: While spirituality has often been separated from feminism, this essay suggests that a number of prominent theorists in the diverse fields of Africana Studies (Amadiume, 1998; Badjo, 1996; Teish, 1994); Chicano Studies (Anzaldúa, 2007/1987); Indigenous Studies (Harjo, 1991; Mehesuah, 2003); Islamic Studies (Wadud, 2006); Queer Studies (Grahn, 2009); and Women's Spirituality/Women and Gender Studies (Brooten, 2010; Walker, 1983) have all linked empowered roles for women and other oppressed groups to contemporary and historic liberatory spiritual frameworks and culturally specific Indigenous roles for women and other oppressed genders. The contemporary *divine feminist*, (a term coined by Professor Alka Arora) is one who walks the contested borderlands between secular feminisms, philosophy and religious studies, and ethnic/indigenous studies. They integrate diverse spiritual frameworks elaborated by people of color, liberatory theory and praxis supporting the empowerment of women and other oppressed genders with Euro-American academic perspectives, and contemporary disability and embodiment studies to develop new forms of activism, scholarship and alliance building that benefits the Earth and all sentient life.

Keywords: African Diasporic Spiritualities, African women, Alice Walker, Amina Wadud, borderlands frameworks, divine feminine; divine feminist, Gloria Anzaldúa, Indigenous Studies, Luisah Teish, *nepantiera*, Oshun, Women's Studies, womanism, Women's Spirituality.

I begin by honoring “our mothers’ gardens,” a phrase taken from the essay, *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens* by Alice Walker (1983). In her essay, Walker honored the many poor and working class Black women who were denied the time and leisure to create what the Western world deems as ‘art’ – but whose work in designing quilts, making songs, or growing large “ambitious (flower) gardens” (p. 241) reflected their need to create beauty and art *regardless* of their circumstances. Her loving tribute to those who came before her reflects indigenous protocols of respect, which are embedded in many traditional spiritual practices of Africa and the Americas.

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In these traditions, before any ceremony begins, the human community must acknowledge those who came before us, on whose shoulders we stand. In many holistic, embodied indigenous religions, those whom the West designates as ‘human beings’ include the dead, the living, and the yet to be born. They include those who have recently died, the older yet still remembered ancestors, and those ancestors born so long ago that they are seen as spiritual entities, who stand as intermediaries between human life and the primal powers of the universe. These primal powers include elemental forces of wind, water, earth, fire, metal and air. They include the life-giving and life guiding presences of the sun, the moon, the mountains, and the stars. They include rivers, deserts, oceans and streams as well as herbs, plants, and forests. Finally, they include the spirits that animate all our human and non-human kin and the deities who preside over the entire web of life—those who have guided the life and work of our ancestors in the past, who continue to inform the life and work of our kin today, and who will – Spirit willing – continue to inform the lives of our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Following this tradition, I begin by acknowledging the many artists, activists, teachers, and scholars who have not only contributed to my thinking, but who have made the world a better place through their thinking, their courage, their generosity and their work. Some of the women I wish to acknowledge are established scholars, whose written works are published and well known. Others, less well known, are community activists, healers, and religious practitioners. Some, nameless, and unknown, are mothers, community mothers, other-mothers² and elders. They include the unknown ancestors who endured the unspeakable, in hopes that life would be better for the children. I am their descendant and I honor them with a poem by Luisah Teish³ entitled “Mother of the Night.”

I am the Mother of the Night.
 The Great Dark Depth, the Bringer of Light.
 All that was, that is, that ever shall be,
 All that could or should can only come from me.
 High above and far below. I am the ebb, I am the flow. The
 stars in the sky, the fish in the sea. Every seed, every
 stone, every critter is me.
 I am the Center, the Beginning the End. I am without and
 I am within. I am the lair, the nest and the den. I am
 the Earth, the Water and Wind.
 The Horned Cow, the many-teated Sow, the Queen bee,
 the Mothertree, the Pregnant Womb, the Grain-seed

² This term arises out of the African American notions of extended family and *fictive kin* which recognize biological motherhood as well as extended “family” relatives who take in, care for, and shelter the young of the community when their own parents are unable or unwilling to do so. While they may be called “mother” “aunt,” “uncle,” “cousin,” etc. *fictive kin* may or may not be related by blood; sometimes they are related only by ties of affection. See Collins, P.H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2nd Ed.) New York: Routledge, pp. 179-183.

³ Luisah Teish, Woman Chief, initiated elder and *Iyanifa*, is an internationally known scholar and healer. Her works include: Teish, L. (1985). *Jambalaya: The natural woman's book of personal charms and practical rituals*. New York: HarperCollins. Teish, L. (1994). *Carnival of the spirit: Seasonal celebrations and rites of passage*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco.

broom, the candle's wick, the Matrix, and woman,
 you are my daughter.
 Praise and Love to the Mothers of the World.
 Praise and Love to the Sisters of the World.
 Praise and Love to the Women of the World.
 Praise and Love to my daughters.
 To the women in the fields, who plow and plant and turn
 mill wheels. To those who spin and weave at looms
 who make the mats, the cloth and brooms. To those
 who sew the royal robes, to those who pierce the
 child's earlobes. To those who rub and oil and braid.
 To all the Queens and all the Maids.
 Praise and Love to my daughters.
 To those who nurse babes on their breasts, who carry on
 without due rest. Then rise up early as the dawn to
 mend the fence and mow the lawn. To those who mix
 and stir the pot, to those who bake and clean and
 mop, to those who have and who have not.
 Praise and Love to my daughters.
 Praise and Love to those who seek, to those who know and
 those who speak. To those who smile with tender eyes,
 whose wisdom penetrates the lies. To those who sing
 and those who cry. For those who fight for right and
 die! To those who live to ripe old age, to great-grandma
 the family sage. Praise and Love to my daughters.
 To those unborn and yet to come, we bid you on with
 song and hum. From other worlds and through birth
 water. Come forth child, beloved daughter.
 Praise and Love to the Mothers of the World.
 Praise and Love to the Sisters of the World.
 Praise and Love to the Women of the World.
 Praise and Love to my daughters. (Teish, 1994, pp. 22-23)

In this poem, Luisah Teish who is an initiated elder, an *Iyanifa*⁴ and a woman-chief, offers honor and praise not only to the Goddess, and her daughters of the natural world, but to the many ordinary and extraordinary human women who are Her living embodiments.⁵ The common tasks that she names are works that sustain, heal and enrich the world, making life possible and enjoyable for millions of people locally and globally. Even today, this work is carried out by millions of women throughout the world.

⁴ *Iyanifa* is a priestly title in the Yoruba religious system that is granted to women who are considered "mothers of wisdom" or full diviners. See : Badejo, D. (1996b). *Osun Seegesi: The elegant deity of wealth, power and femininity* (pp. 90-93). Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

⁵ While I have no desire to *essentialize* that work that women do as mothers, and child rearers, or to limit our capacities to work that is pre-industrial in nature (thus denying our intellectual, scientific, and scholarly abilities), the work that Teish names is still done by a majority of working class women all over the world.

I know that for some, the term, ‘Divine Feminist’⁶ is quite confusing. I want to acknowledge Dr. Alka Arora, faculty member of the CIIS Women’s Spirituality Program for first coining this term. In what is commonly called the Western worldview – and I acknowledge that there are currently a variety of ‘Western’ worldviews – the sacred and secular realms, if not opposed, are at least separate. The term, ‘divine feminist’ represents my attempts to bridge these two very distinct and conflicting world views.

However, if we explore the work of borderlands/*nepantlera* theorist, Gloria Anzaldua (2007/1987, pp. 99-120) we find a discussion of the contested areas of conflict and convergence, which frame the diverse and opposing paradigms in which many of us live. In an essay titled “La Conciencia de la Mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness” (Anzaldua, 2007/1987, pp. 100) , Anzaldua refers to the theories of Mexican philosopher Jose Vasconcelos regarding *La Raza*, the multi-ethnic, bicultural people who emerged from the forced encounters between the Spanish conquistadores, and the Indigenous inhabitants of Latin America:

Opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the politics of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity. At the confluence of two or more genetic streams ...this mixture of races rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable ... species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an ‘alien’ consciousness is presently in the making – a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands. (Anzaldua, 2007/1987, P. 99)
Developing this theory further, Anzaldua continues:

Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision. (Anzaldua, 2007/1987, P. 100)

While all of us do not (and should not) claim a *mestiza* identity, I would argue that many of us straddle traditional, non-traditional, and modern world views. We are trying to walk a path of integrity that honors and integrates older more holistic practices, while remaining within the framework of the modern techno-industrial West in which we have been raised.

A *divine feminist* is one who walks the contested borderlands between secular feminisms, religious studies, and ethnic/indigenous studies. We stand at the crossroads where goddess studies, feminist studies in religion, and newer spiritual frameworks elaborated by people of color and others involved in the reclamation and renewal of women and other oppressed gender’s ancient and contemporary roles, rights and powers meet. We weave together Euro-centric perspectives on philosophy and religion with older frameworks drawn from goddess studies, ethnic/indigenous

⁶ This paper by Dr. Alka Arora, titled: *The Divine Feminist*, was part of a panel at 2016 Founders Symposium at CIIS and is included in this special issue of Integral Review (Vol. 13, No. 1, 2017).

studies and new paradigms in women, gender and disability studies, to name a few of the transdisciplinary areas that women's spirituality touches upon. We are claiming and reclaiming ancestral traditions. We are using our knowledge, and the knowledge and spirituality of our ancestors to inform our activism. We are uncovering the original women-honoring traditions buried in frameworks labeled patriarchal; we are making alliances across difference and continually interrogating and challenging our work and the work of others.

While the terrain that the divine feminist walks is contradictory and perplexing, its breadth allows us to be more fully inclusive of our human lives and our human struggles. The term, 'divine feminist', is related to, but not synonymous with, the term 'Divine Feminine'. The Divine Feminine is often used to describe female divinities. However, when we imagine female divinity, we all too often imagine a 'Divine Feminine', which is perfect: healthy, able-bodied, symmetrical and *perfectly* beautiful. All too often, we fall into a trap in which we choose the unattainable 'ideal', rather than the material, the real, and the mundane in order to represent what is spiritual and 'beautiful'.

I've been studying women's visionary art for a long time – and I finally understand what some of my students who reject the term 'Divine Feminine' have been telling me. If we talk about a 'Divine Feminine'; surely she's different from the fat, imperfect, female body that sweats besides us at the gym, or who squats, ragged, smelly and homeless on the street. The slender, full-breasted, long-haired, narrow-waisted, full-hipped 'Divine Feminine' that is celebrated in contemporary artistic depictions of female divinity all too often looks like a white, brown, or golden-skinned Barbie doll, or even worse, a Playboy pinup⁷.

Even in women's goddess circles, we rarely see or imagine the Divine Feminine as embodied by the gender queer youth or the middle aged butch; she's not the disabled woman with cerebral palsy or an elderly woman of color living with dementia in a nursing home. In the dominant culture worldview, which confines us to binary boxes – i.e. good versus evil, beautiful versus ugly, white versus non-white, young versus old, able-bodied versus disabled, cis-gender male versus cis-gender female – we only count if we are able to successfully present as embodying the qualities deemed most worthy by the dominant culture.

In addition, dominant culture values may be as embedded in the alternative movements we create, as they are in the systems we struggle against. All too often, the Goddess – who in some traditions is a primary spiritual icon of liberation – is embodied by images reflecting the values of the dominant culture, rather than images that reflect our actual cis-or-trans-gendered bodies.

Fortunately, all of us have roots in indigenous traditions that valorized the 'real' or material world as well as the spiritual realm. In many 'traditional' indigenous world views, everything is part of Creation – and everything is sacred. In a poem written by Native American (Mvskoke Nation) Joy Harjo titled "Remember," the poet states:

⁷ While some readers may view Barbie dolls and Playboy pinups as positive, I see them as representing unrealistic and/or unattainable templates of female embodiment, since the form they present is rarely seen naturally, and many women and girls experience mental, physical and emotional suffering in their attempts to attain this ideal.

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.
Remember the moon, know who she is. I met her
in a bar once in Iowa City.
Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.
Remember your father. He is your life, also.
Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth,
brown earth, we are earth.
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of the universe. I heard her singing Kiowa war
dance songs at the corner of Fourth and Central once.
Remember that you are all people and that all people
are you.
Remember that you are this universe and that this
universe is you.
Remember that all is motion, is growing, is you.
Remember that language comes from this.
Remember the dance that language is, that life is.
Remember. (Harjo, 1991, p. 234)

This poem reminds us that in the indigenous world, *everything* is sacred. Intellectually, I had been aware of this for decades, but its true meaning eluded me. The good, the bad, the human, and the non-human – are all part of the Indigenous circle of life. My friend, teacher, and colleague, Angelita Borbon, states that indigenous thought is based on the three R's: respect, relationship and reciprocity. We live, she says, in an embodied universe in which there are numerous living entities, many of whom are not human. Our life is conducted in *relationship* to these entities, which include – but are not limited to – the elements of earth, air, fire, water, metal and rock; the life forms which share the earth with us – represented by plants, animals, birds, insects, microbes, and fish – and the mountains, rivers, caves, trees or oceans which embody sacred sites.

According to San Francisco elder, healer, and Indigenous spiritual teacher, Dr. Concha Saucedo-Martinez, co-founder of Instituto De La Raza in San Francisco, we owe these powers *respect*, since they are the forces that make life possible. The Four Directions are not compass directions, metaphors or psychological archetypes – they are the spiritual powers and sacred entities that enable human beings to live on this planet.

In private conversations with me when we were doing diversity trainings together in the 1980s, Borbon explained the concept of reciprocity to me. Reciprocity, according to Borbon (personal communication, n.d.), means that what we do as humans, comes back to us. It's no surprise to indigenous peoples that if we pollute the land and the waters, that this act will affect our lives – and the lives of our children and grandchildren. All things are connected and the acts we take or don't take have real repercussions in the world.

In this world of sacred sentient life, we are all sacred because that's how we were born. We're not less sacred because we're disabled or different; the drunken woman who has abandoned her child has lost her way, but she's still a sacred being. She needs help and healing – and if she persists in following a particular road, certain consequences will occur. However she's still a child of Creator and a manifestation of the Divine. And in some Indigenous traditions, which understand and accept the many roads that humans travel, there may be a special deity for the thief or the prostitute or the one who's lost their way. *All* are part of the circle of life. The idealized Divine Feminine may not live in this realm, but the divine feminist transverses it. She knows that roads can change, and that light follows darkness and that darkness follows light. Braided together like life and death, suffering and ease, the divine feminist is the common woman that Judy Grahn writes about.

She's a copper headed waitress,
tired and sharp-worded, she hides
her bad brown tooth behind a wicked
smile, and flicks her ass
out of habit, to fend off the pass
that passes for affection.
She keeps her mind the way men
keep a knife – keen to strip the game
down to her size. She has a thin spine,
swallows her eggs cold, and tells lies.
She slaps a wet rag at the truck drivers
if they should complain. She understands
the necessity for pain, turns away
the smaller tips, out of pride, and
keeps a flask under the counter. Once,
she shot a lover who misused her child.
Before she got out of jail, the courts had pounced
and given the child away. Like some isolated lake,
her flat blue eyes take care of their own stark
bottoms. Her hands are nervous, curled, ready
to scrape.
The common woman is as common
as a rattlesnake. (Grahn, 2009, pp. 10-11)

She's the resister, the survivor, the teacher, the healer. She's the abused woman leading other women out of brothels; the acid burned woman who walks with her scars publically and tells others

to resist. She's Lora Jo Foo⁸, the daughter of a Chinatown sweatshop worker – and a garment worker, herself at 11 – who grew up to become a labor organizer and attorney – and who broke the silence about her family's life in a memoir of photographs that document her healing. She's Dorothy Allison (1994), the lesbian organizer of battered women's shelters who was kicked out of the feminist movement because of her alternative sexual practices. She's Amina Wadud, African-American Qur'anic theologian who proudly asserts:

As a descent of African slave women, I have carried the awareness that my ancestors were not given any choice to determine how much of their bodies would be exposed at the auction block or in their living conditions. So, I chose intentionally to cover my body as a means of reflecting my historical identity, personal dignity and sexual integrity. (Wadud, 2006, p. 221)

She's Doris Davis, an orthodox Jewish teacher from Long Island whose husband refused to grant her a divorce – effectively preventing her from being able to re-marry within her community. With help from the Organization for the Resolution of Agunot⁹, she led rallies outside of her husband's home and posted his photo in synagogues in Brooklyn – protests which eventually led to his granting her a divorce (Brooten, 2010).

She's you and me and women we'll never see – and yes she's divine because what's more spiritual than our liberty and freedom? What's more spiritual than struggling to stay alive and make a better world for those you love – your family, your children, your community?

The issue of spirituality can also be problematic. The linkage of social oppression with dominant culture religious traditions has a long and multicultural history. That legacy is very much alive today. Many feminist scholars are acutely aware of how women, LGBTQIQASGLP¹⁰ people, and queer/third gender communities are oppressed by fundamentalist religious traditions both here and abroad. Christianity taught to enslaved Africans by their Euro-American owners justified slavery and encouraged the slaves to be content with their lot. The ill treatment of Dalit people in India was justified by certain strands of Hindu religion. And at different points in time, all three Abrahamic religions accepted the fact that female captives could become the sexual slaves of men who owned them. This means, and let me be explicit, that these women could be raped at will.

That said, religion has also been used to support resistance. The verse *Osa Meji*, is one of the Yoruba *odu* found in *Odu Ifa*, the compendium of stories, proverbs, divinations and moral and ethical guidelines, which form the body of the sacred oral 'texts' of traditional Yoruba religion. There we find that even when sexism is postulated to exist at the time of Creation, it turns out not to be sanctioned by the Supreme Being. According to *Osa Meji*, when the original (17 in some versions and 401 in others) orishas, or deities, came to the earth to make the world habitable, they

⁸ Foo, L. J. (2008). *Earth passages: Journeys through childhood*. Castro Valley, CA: Earth Passages Nature Photography.

⁹ The Organization for the Resolution of Agunot is a non-profit organization based in New York whose mission is to "eliminate the infliction of abuse within the Jewish divorce process." <http://www.getora.org/#!/about-us/cxeg> accessed 6/28/2016.

¹⁰ LGBTQIQASGLP or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning, asexual, same gender loving pansexual.

excluded Oshun, the only female deity who travelled with them, from their deliberations. In his modern translation of the Yoruba text, Maulana Karenga writes:

This is the teaching of Ifa for Odu
Obarisa and Ogun,
When they were coming from heaven to earth.
Odu asked: "O Olodumare, *Lord of Heaven*,
this earth where we are going,
What will happen when we arrive there"
Olodumare said that they were going to make
the world
So that the world will be good.
He also said that everything that they were
going to do there,
He would give them the ase, power and authority,
to accomplish it,
So that it would be done well.
Odu said "O Olodumare this earth where
we are going,
Ogun has the power to wage war.
And Obarisa has the ase to do anything
He wishes to do.
What is my power?"
Olodumare said: "you will be their mother forever.
And you will also sustain the world."
Olodumare, then gave her the power
And when he gave her power, he gave her
the *spirit* power of the bird.
It was then that he gave women the power
and authority so that anything men
wished to do,
They could not dare to do it successfully
without women.
Odu said that everything that people would
want to do,
If they do not include women,
It will not be possible.
Obarisa said that people should always respect
women greatly.
For if they always respect women greatly, the world
will be in right order
Pay homage; give respect to women.
Indeed, it is woman who brought us into being
Before we became recognized as human beings.
The wisdom of the world belongs to women.
Give respect to women then.

Indeed it was a woman who brought
us into being.

Before we became recognized as human beings. (Karenga, 1999, pp. 72-74)

Women and other oppressed genders are certainly at the heart of feminism as an activist enterprise. This verse, which is as old as the Yoruba creation story, helps us understand how long sexism has existed even in (some) non-western cultures. However the fact that sexism has existed for millennia, does not mean that it has always existed¹¹ – nor does it mean that women have always accepted it.

If we review the term, ‘womanist’, which was coined by Alice Walker¹², I believe we can better understand the term, ‘divine feminist’. While Walker had used the term *womanism* before, it is in the book, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* (Walker, 1983), that she first fully defined the term, *womanist*.¹³ Walker developed this term to differentiate between the feminist (or liberatory) activism of Black women and the feminist activism of Euro-American women.

¹¹ A number of Women’s Spirituality scholars: Eisler, R. (1988). *The chalice and the blade*. New York: HarperCollins; Eisler, R. (1995). *Sacred pleasures: Sex, myth, and the politics of the body*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco ; Gadon, E. (1991). *The once and future goddess: A sweeping visual chronicle of the sacred female and her reemergence in the cultural mythology of our time*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers; Gimbutas, M. (1991). *The civilization of the goddess: The world of old Europe*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco; Stone, M. (1976). *When god was a woman*. New York: Harvest/HBJ, have all challenged the notion of the continuous existence of sexism/patriarchy, arguing that Neolithic/Paleolithic artifacts suggest a veneration of the feminine, resulting in egalitarian/partnership/gynocratic societies. Other indigenous scholars: Allen, P. G. (1992) *The sacred hoop: Recovering the feminine in American Indian traditions* (2nd Ed). Boston: Beacon Press; Talamantez, I. (1991). Images of the feminine in Apache religious tradition. In Cooley, P. M., William R. E., and McDaniel, J.B. (Eds.), *After patriarchy: Feminist transformations of the world religions* (pp.131-144). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, have suggested that some American Indian societies never adopted patriarchal structures and are matrilineal, matriarchal, or gynocratic.

¹² According to Layli Phillips (now Maparyan), the term, *womanism*, was independently coined by three separate writers during the 80’s: Alice Walker, Chikwenye Ogunyemi, and Clenora Hudson-Weems (who was very specific about using the term *Africana womanism*). See: Phillips, L. (2006). Introduction: Womanist on its own. In *The womanist reader* (pp. xix-xx), Layli Phillips (Ed.). New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

¹³ “Womanist: 1. From *womanish*. (Opp. of “girlish,” i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “You acting womanish,” i.e. like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. *Serious*. 2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white beige, and black?” Ans.: “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.” 3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and

According to Karla Simcikova (2007), “This definition . . . was in many ways a response to the white feminist movement of the time and its agenda, which was not particularly inclusive of, or sensitive to black women’s issues” (p. 11).

Beginning with the statement that a *womanist* was a Black feminist or feminist of color (p. 11), Walker’s four part definition focused attention on Black women’s historic and contemporary ability to take leadership in liberation struggles benefiting *all* members of the African American community. However, a womanist, for Walker, was not only a social activist. Walker’s concept of womanism validated Black women’s ability to love, support and nurture women and men “sexually and non-sexually” (p. 11). She honored the diversity, beauty and ‘*roundness*’ (p. 12) of Black women’s physical forms, and proclaimed the importance of rest, healing, and self-care. She listed music, dance, Spirit, and the Folk among the elements loved by womanists.

Walker’s holistic definition of womanism is also inclusive of people of many colors and ethnicities. She defines a womanist as a “universalist,” (p. 10) rather than a separatist, and she uses the metaphors of a garden of flowers and a family of many colors.

While some Black women of diverse identities have embraced the term, ‘womanism’, others have rejected it. Some Black women prefer to be called Black feminists. Some indigenous women prefer the term *tribalists* (Mehesuah, 2003, pp. 159-171) and there are others who support or reject Walker’s definition of “womanist” either in whole or in part.¹⁴

While these controversies continue, the work of supporting, improving, or reclaiming culturally appropriate rights of women and other genders is alive and well in a multitude of Indigenous and African societies. Writing of Africa, Filomina Steady (1981) states:

The birthplace of human life must also be the birthplace of human struggles, and feminist consciousness must in some way be related to the earliest divisions of labor according to sex on the continent. But even more significant is the fact that the forms of social organization which approach sexual equality, in addition to matrilineal societies where women are central, can be found on the African continent . . . Above all, true feminism is impossible without intensive involvement in production. All over the African diaspora, but in particular on the continent, the black woman’s role in this regard is paramount. It can therefore be stated with much justification that the black woman is to a large extent the original feminist. (pp. 35-36)

If we review women’s roles in selected areas of West Africa, we see that even in the patriarchal societies of the Yoruba and the Ibo women: 1) held social and political roles of authority, 2) worked outside the home, 3) had the right to engage in money-making commercial activities and, 4) held roles of spiritual authority in their culture’s religious institutions. The term ‘mother’ which in the

roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*. 4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mothers’ gardens: Womanist prose* (pp. xi-xii). San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

¹⁴ See: Phillips, L. (2006). Introduction: Womanist on its own. In *The womanist reader* (pp. xix-xx), Layli Phillips (Ed.). New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group. See, also: Hudson-Weems, C. (2006). African womanism. In *The Womanist Reader* (pp. 44-54), Layli Phillips (Ed.). New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

west connotes a lack of power in the ‘outside world’ of politics, economics, and religion, is a term of authority and agency within many African societies. The Yoruba even have a term, *iyalode*, “mother of the outside” (Badejo, 1996a, p.8), which is used as a title for the women who hold authoritative roles in the political, economic and spiritual realms – e.g. the woman chief of the market place, the chief of the women’s military organization, or the senior priestess who is involved with politics of the land. According to Oyewumi, kingship was not denied to Yoruba women, and she argues that several of the “kings” in Yoruba history were actually female.¹⁵ Childbirth was neither unimportant nor secular; in a culture where the goal of existence was to be reborn again and again, it reflected spiritual harmony, social balance and **empowerment** (Badejo, 1996a, pp. 67-101).

Rejected by many modern day feminists as essentialist, the powers of birth giving and/or life making were – and in some cases still are – seen as magical, mysterious and **empowering** in many African socio-spiritual contexts (Badejo, 1996a). The figure of a woman kneeling in the traditional (active) stance of giving birth was often depicted in pre-colonial and/or “traditional” Yoruba sculptures. Stripping naked and exposing their vulvas was an act of women’s power in many areas of pre-colonial Africa – especially when done by married or elderly women – and this has been repeatedly employed by African women of the 20th century in protests against government taxation, ecological depredations by oil companies and in support of peacemaking efforts¹⁶.

Even in patriarchal settings, Nigeria’s Ibo women could (collectively) go on sex strikes and “sit on a man” – e.g. go to war against an individual or a group who aroused their anger. Judith Van Allen, writes:

"Sitting on a man" or a woman, boycotts and strikes were the women's main weapons. To "sit on" or "make war on" a man involved gathering at his compound, sometimes late at night, dancing, singing scurrilous songs which detailed the women's grievances against him and often called his manhood into question, banging on his hut with the pestles women used for pounding yams, and perhaps demolishing his hut or plastering it with mud and roughing him up a bit. A man might be sanctioned in this way for mistreating his wife, for violating the women's market rules, or for letting his cows eat the women's crops. . . . In tackling men as a group, women used boycotts and strikes. Harris describes a case in which, after repeated requests by the women for the paths to the market to be cleared (a male responsibility), all the women refused to cook for their husbands until the request was carried out. For this

¹⁵ According to Oyewumi, the list of Yoruba rulers – termed as ‘kings’ after colonial encounters with the West – actually includes several female rulers. See: Oyewumi, O. (2005). Making history, creating gender: Some methodological and interpretive questions in the writing of Oyo oral traditions. In Oyewumi, Oyeronke. (Ed.). *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (pp. 169-205). New York: Palgrave McMillan.

¹⁶ See: Disney, A. E. and Gini R. (2008). *Pray the devil back to hell*. Fork Films LLC and RO*CO Films International (<http://www.rocofilms.com/>). Also:

<https://www.africanexponent.com/post/the-rise-of-naked-female-protests-in-africa-3031>, accessed 6/29/2016;

<http://exhibitions.globalfundforwomen.org/exhibitions/women-power-and-politics/biology/curse-of-nakedness>

accessed 6/29/2016; <http://www.okayafrica.com/culture-2/naked-protest-and-african-feminism/> accessed 6/29/2016.

boycott to be effective, all women had to cooperate so that men could not go and eat with their brothers. (Van Allen, 1972, p. 170)

I've cited these examples to make clear that women in Africa were not waiting to learn about their oppression from Euro-American feminists. It is true that sexism existed in Africa prior to contact with Islam, Christianity and European colonialism, but many cultures in Africa, while not based on a model of gender *equity*, were based on the principle of *complementarity* in gender relationships. In such cultures, the powers of men were believed to be *balanced* by the power of women, ensuring that social, spiritual and ecologic harmony prevailed.

Women often had power not as individuals but as part of a collectivity of women. Among the Nnobi of Nigeria, for example, there was a Women's Council that was responsible for the welfare of all Nnobi women: it set rules to regulate or protect women against physical abuse (Amadiume, 1998, p. 66), regulated the market, and independently acted to support the welfare of the town (Amadiume, 1998). The *Agba Ekwe*, or most highly titled woman, was considered to be a representative of the Goddess Idemili herself, and only she and the shrine priest could consult with the Goddess directly. Under Christianity and colonization, however, the authority and titles of men were readily translated into male norms of the colonial administration, while the authority and responsibilities of powerful women were seen as "pagan" and discontinued.

Most of us understand that the struggle of women for justice and empowerment is a global one. My description of the precolonial power of African women is meant to help us understand that the issue of women's rights and powers in selected patriarchal non-Western societies is more complex than many of us have considered. However while most of us would support political systems that provide justice and equality for women, many of us don't make the connection between liberation struggles and the practice of spirituality. For many of us, religion has created a divide between social justice and spirituality, for we have been raised either in an entirely secular world, or one in which the material and spiritual realms are seen as separate.

We all know the world needs to change. How we do it, with whom we do it, and with what tools, are some of the important questions we need to ask. While we often contrast contemplative spiritual traditions with socially engaged or activist ones, I believe that a closer examination of diverse, traditional, contemporary and/or indigenous spiritual traditions from around the world reveal that the questions we face today were not unknown to peoples of the past, nor to their colonized and oppressed descendants.

In some contemplative religious traditions, the material world, while beautiful, is not divine. Divinity and sacredness – belong to a realm outside of our material reality. If in some traditions we suffer in the physical world, it is because of our transgressions in a previous life. In others, our suffering is merely the reality of our life on earth. Only after our death and release to a heavenly realm, or our rebirth as a member of a different caste or gender, will our earthly suffering come to an end and be redeemed.

In still other traditions, some of which are branches of the same contemplative religions that see suffering as a normal part of life, we are called to take action to relieve the suffering of all sentient beings. The Bodhisattva Vow of Mahayana Buddhist tradition has been interpreted as

meaning that we vow to return again and again to the world until all sentient beings have attained enlightenment. The engaged Buddhism of Vietnamese Buddhist monks led some to burn themselves to death to protest the Vietnam war, and it encouraged others to provide healing to wounded soldiers and civilians on both sides of the war. In many Jewish traditions one, is expected to engage in *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world, which has been interpreted by some as meaning that one is obligated to take righteous *social action* to foster the creation of a peaceful and egalitarian world that honors all races, ethnicities, spiritualities, orientations, genders, and abilities.

Many of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas understand that their spirituality is intrinsically linked to liberation from oppression. The ability to practice many Indigenous religions is often linked to particular landscapes which shelter the sacred sites, plants and other items that are necessary for the proper spiritual practices of particular First Nations peoples (McLeod, 2001). The right of access to their traditional lands, along with the right to speak the languages in which their spiritual traditions are embedded, and the right to have custody of their children and to train them in their ancestral ways, were rights that were denied to many Indigenous inhabitants of the USA for centuries. The reclaiming of these rights – and they have not yet been granted to all First Nations peoples of the USA – has only come about because of political, spiritual and activist struggles.

Whether we accept the notion of a spiritual or ensouled universe or find ourselves moved by legacies of human activism for liberation, our profound human connection to the natural world remains. I'd like to close with a poem by Alice Walker that invokes the union of spirituality and social justice – and that reminds us of the natural world's ability not only to sustain our bodies but to feed our souls. It's called "Torture":

When they torture your mother / Plant a tree
 When they torture your father / Plant a tree
 When they torture your brother/ and your sister
 When they assassinate your leaders/ and lovers/ Plant a tree
 When they torture you/ too bad / to talk/ Plant a tree
 When they begin to torture / The trees / And cut down the forest
 they have made
 Start another. (Walker, 1989, p. 63)

May we remember and follow this ancient and indigenous wisdom in the days to come.

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The Borderlands Feminine: A Feminist, Decolonial Framework for Re-membering Motherlines in South Asia/Transnational Culture

Monica Mody¹

Abstract: This paper uses Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands framework to resignify and recover the marginalized, forgotten sacred feminine and, thereby, South Asian motherlines. The borderlands is conceived of as a new consciousness, an alternative to that which is written in history. It offers a radical synthesis of spiritual healing with anti-oppression work. Creating self-affirming, complex images of female identity, and making revisionist myths—while engaging the self in relation to culture—constitutes a decolonial practice. It enables South Asian women—as the Others of colonial modernity and brahmanical patriarchy—to renew their relation to an episteme of the sacred that liberates their voices, vitality, and authority. The post-secular sacred locates as essential a critical interrogation of all forms of oppression. The researcher enacts her decolonial recovery at the edges of her South Asian/brown postcolonial feminist subjectivity. The borderlands framework makes possible a profoundly relational, integrative onto-epistemological praxis that forefronts the grandmothers, the foremothers, and the experiences of women of color on their own terms.

Key Words: Borderlands Framework, Decolonization, Female Identity, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sacred Feminine, South Asian Motherlines.

Introduction

Chicana cultural theorist and feminist Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands framework offers a radical synthesis of spiritual healing with anti-oppression work. By refusing to prioritize one over the other, she creates a multimodal, living, organic theory that offers an interstitial home for postmodern, postnational, postcolonial identities. Borderlands consciousness makes possible reconciliation and integration by moving "toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 79). This is a profoundly relational and integrative onto-

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epistemological praxis. In this paper, I examine how the borderlands framework constructs bridges between the past and the present, the old and the new, myth and imagination and reality, post-colonial and pre-colonial. These structures and flows are not readily visible in Western modernity. Creating self-affirming, complex images of the feminine and of South Asian motherlines makes it possible for South Asian women—the Others of colonial modernity and brahmanical patriarchy—to renew their relation to an episteme of the sacred that liberates their voices, vitality, and authority. It further enables transcultural, transnational interventions that acknowledge my South Asian/brown postcolonial feminist subjectivity.

For Anzaldúa (1987), the *borderlands* refer to a consciousness at the confluence of two or more cultural, racial, ideological, or spiritual values that makes “crossing over” (p. 77) possible. The metaphor of borderlands does not narrowly connote mere geopolitical borders (Anzaldúa’s theory was specifically informed by the U.S./Mexico border), but invokes the psychic, emotional, and sexual dimensions of the terrain of intermingling (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2000, p. 176). Feminist and comparative politics scholar Leela Fernandes (2013) writes that it is the borders of her psyche that provide, for Anzaldúa, the psychic/political/cultural space to move beyond the violence of the territorialized borders she was confronted with (p. 106).

Anzaldúa (1987) considers the task of breaking down of dualisms one of innovation, after chemist Ilya Prigogine’s work on “dissipative structures” as a new source of order (p. 120). Further, this is a task of healing:

At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. (Anzaldúa, 1987, pp.78–79)

This overlapping consciousness makes possible reconciliation and integration. Decolonial theorist Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2012) writes that this self “is not a continent or a separate island, but, rather, a border, a point of encounter, an intersection, or even an archipelago, understood as a point of relation with other selves” (p. 198). In her movement “toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 79), the border dweller changes and heals the split at the root of consciousness. This is the opus, the great alchemical work—what Anzaldúa (1987) also terms spiritual *mestizaje* (p. 103).

Anzaldúa’s (1987) other names for the both/and consciousness of the borderlands—*new mestiza* or *mestiza consciousness*—reflect her Chicana positionality. She writes:

The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problems between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our language, our thoughts. (p. 80)

Like other Chicana/o scholars and activists, Anzaldúa was engaged in a reimagining and reformulating of the ancestral traditions of the indigenous Aztec and Toltec people. Laura Perez (1998) reminds us that this was a politics of memory. In drawing from indigenous cultures that are

politically oppositional to (neo)colonizing cultural and religious systems, and then recoding them, cultural agents enact a spirituality that can help redefine worldviews and identities at the borderlands. In an attempt to establish a common worldview that is “at odds with the reigning capitalist culture of extreme exploitation of the planet and human beings” (Perez, 1998, ‘Membering the Spirit’ section, para. 3), the *mestiza* borrows from and synthesizes diverse beliefs and practices. This is a decolonial gesture when practiced by the “marginalized, the mutable, and the unarticulated” (Perez, 1998, *Beyond the Susto of Nepantla* section, para. 6), and allows the borderlands to become for them a full and central, ever-shifting, place of knowing and being. Its seeking of resonance prevents the borderlands from being invoked as “yet another . . . peripheral resource in the center’s production of meaning” (Perez, 1998, *Beyond the Susto of Nepantla* section, para. 6). The bridge that is constructed through memory between the past and the present, the old and the new, enables transcultural affirmations of the feminine, the queer, the colored, the colonized, the indigenous. It reclaims and reconstructs for them the fullness of their humanity.

Throughout her writings, Anzaldúa repeatedly underscores the need for new forms of alliances between women, genders, cultures, races and other social positions, material and nonmaterial worlds, humans and nonhumans. Instead of monolithic, oppositional identities, her framework foregrounds alliance-making and forging commonalities from a holistic, relational perspective.

Anzaldúa’s activism embodies what womanist/feminist scholar AnaLouise Keating calls her metaphysics of interconnectedness (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2000, p. 11). Her risk-taking not only opens the door for other scholars to invent new forms of alliances and identities where they may bring in spiritual realities, imaginal realities, and their inner subjective life, but also empowers them to discuss these on an equal footing with issues such as race, class, age, and ethnicity (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2000, p. 144). In the serpent movement of spiritual *mestizaje*, justice and healing are envisioned hand in hand.

I turn to Anzaldúan thought as a framework for its inerrant capturing of my own lived experiences of borders, taking into account the effects of psychic, political, ideological, and gender borders on my own embodied belonging and efficaciousness in the world. As Cathryn Merla-Watson (2013) writes, “The domain of theory...should be a collective enterprise of suturing multiple constituent elements of identity and lived experience” (p. 226). India—just as the other colonies of Europe—was subjected to the more repressive aspects of Enlightenment rationality, expressing the colonial state’s anxieties about order and control (Siddiqi, 2002). This paper seeks to connect the parts of my identity that were gradually split off under the governing ideologies of rational secular colonialist modernism: ancestral, nonwestern, fierce, female, sexual. It is an attempt to reconstruct a consciousness of the prepatriarchal feminine while living under patriarchy’s gaze. It is an attempt to reconcile the oppressor in me with the oppressed in me. It is an attempt to be in integrity both as a scholar and as an artist—for I realize that unless I do this work, I cannot show up in my fullness in either scholarship or art; nor can I do the work of countering the logic of domination.

Historian and Ethnic Studies scholar Emma Pérez (1999) envisions the decolonial imaginary as “a rupturing space, the alternative to that which is written in history” (p. 6), and the apparatus that allows the move between the colonial and the postcolonial. The Anzaldúan notion of borderlands demands a similar willingness to be re-membered. The dismembered parts come together to

synthesize a new being. We do not stop at critiquing standards of Western rationality and objectivity; we create new patterns of rationality and objectivity informed by the heretofore suppressed feminine and “primitive.” Accessing these parts in ourselves, we gradually decolonize our being. We de-link from Western modernity and open up to what Partha Chatterjee terms “our modernity” (as cited in Mignolo, 2012, p. 27), locating possibilities of other temporalities.

The excavation of meanings and practices that are non-Eurocentric and non-androcentric is a slow, layered process that unfolds in a spiralic fashion. The circle or spiral is the pattern or “means-by-which” the eternal cycle of birth-death-and-rebirth—in which all forms of creation are eternally turning and evolving—can be experienced (Wilshire, 1989, p. 102). Writing that follows a cyclical pattern rather than a linear form is able to return to ideas or themes “at intervals with different levels of understanding” (Wilson, 2008, p. 42). Anzaldúa (2002) sees developing a new consciousness as a cyclical, ceaseless process (p. 562). In the spiral, time is not a linear construct. What happens here can affect the past, present, and future—it can enliven the body, and heal ancestral and future generations. The spiral connects the center and the periphery, the inner and the outer. This intimate connection means that as the spiral moves outward, individual and collective actions of spiritual *mestizaje* contain the possibility of renewing the sacred.

Borders and Vitality: A Personal Account

Stories, memories, voices, and energies of other kind can get trapped in the liminal state between borders, if the borders are not permeable enough to allow movements or crossovers. This became vividly clear to me when—during a vision in early 2016—I found my female ancestors immured in a tunnel-like underworld.

Their life spark and vitality had been suppressed or stolen away, they said, by the heavy mantle of patriarchy. The term *patriarchy* rightly elicits much debate and critique in feminist and other scholarship. For example, scholars caution that systems of male dominance be analyzed with attention to power differentials in their cultural, temporal, spatial, and other intersectional dimensions, rather than be conceived of as universally monolithic, homogenous, ahistorical hierarchies (Kandiyoti, 1988; Patil, 2013). I have come to understand patriarchy not only as the institution that patrols the borders of gender roles and the sexuality of individuals of all genders. It is also a metonym for the experience of smallness, fear, rejection, shame, and lack of inner authority that accompanies many women on an ongoing basis—that for them is the only way in which they have experienced being women. It is the feeling of being cut off from something vital in themselves; of powerlessness at not having been able to change the tide. Based on evidence of pre-patriarchal, non-patriarchal, and matriarchal alternatives in early as well as living history, it has been theorized that patriarchal power structures are a cross-cultural historic development, linked with diminishment of the role and status of women (Gimbutas, 1991; Göttner-Abendroth, 2012; Sanday, 2002).

In the vision, I was in that dark space with my female ancestors, and they were asking me to write so they would—riding on the stream of the vital force living in words—come out.

Vitality, then, was for my ancestresses the key to liberating themselves from a history of institutional, structural oppression—and from history itself, which is often the oppressor’s account

made authoritative because of an imbalance in power. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes the critique of history as a project of Western Enlightenment that has developed alongside imperial beliefs about the Other, assembled around totalizing, universalizing, evolutionist, and progressivist ideas (pp. 29–32). Feminist thinkers have further called out much of history as male-stream and noted that such accounts erase or sideline women's roles, and relegate their often complex enactions of agency to a simplistically conceptualized victimhood. Feminist theorist and political philosopher Mary Hawkesworth (2007) points to the “pervasiveness of the mistakes about the nature of women and their roles in history, politics, and society and the imperviousness of mistaken views to refutation” in androcentric scholarship (p. 95). Theologian Mary Daly (1978), creative spinster, suggests “hag-ography” and “hag-ology” as models women can adopt to uncover hidden histories of women—of Hags: “Hag-ographers perceive the hilarious hypocrisy of ‘his’ history.” (p. 17).

The ancestresses' bidding of words as a means of introducing vitality made immediate sense to me as a writer. In poetry, I am deeply familiar with something moving in language that is beyond language—something that wells up from the pools of words and finds its way in us to animate or, as the case may be, to dishearten. The ancestresses were asking me to remember something further about the role *women* can play, in particular in their capacity as artists. My intuitive understandings found confirmation in the study of gynocentric American Indian cultures by Laguna Pueblo/Metis poet and scholar Paula Gunn Allen (1986). She writes:

Pre-Conquest American Indian women valued their role as vitalizers. Through their bodies they could bring vital bodies into the world—a miraculous power whose potency does not diminish with industrial sophistication or time. They were mothers, and that word did not imply slaves, drudges, drones who are required to live only for others rather than for themselves as it does so tragically for many modern women. The ancient ones were empowered by their certain knowledge that the power to make life is the source of all power and that no other power can gainsay it. Nor is that power simply of biology, as modernists contentiously believe. When Thought Woman brought to life the twin sisters, she did not give birth to them in the biological sense. She sang over the medicine bundles that contained their potentials. With her singing and shaking she infused them with vitality. (p. 27)

Here, the power of generativity is not, as Gunn Allen makes clear, merely biological. Functioning in a ritual manner, using their bodies to bring vitality into the world, is what awards women the status of mothers. Creating embodied language is as much a sacred activity as giving human birth.

Motherlines

As soon as the ancestral behest was made, I realized it intended to secure healing and freedom for my ancestresses as much as the liberation of my own voice, life energy, and inner authority. I sensed for the first time the unbroken chain connecting me with my ancestresses, despite and through the trauma and the violence and the rupture. Poet and Jungian analyst Naomi Ruth Lowinsky (2009) gives the name *Motherline* to this sense of female continuity and interrelatedness.

The Motherline links generations of women to their future and their past—it honors the life stories, lore, and wisdom of their mothers and their grandmothers as the source of their own stories and wisdom. Lowinsky (2009) writes that the Motherline lies in the background of modern, patriarchal consciousness, and women (and men) are often unaware of their connection to it (p. 13). Which is why, she says, its very image “seems to evoke its absence, its loss, the pain we feel in the feminine” (p. 34). The feminine—like the masculine—is not a rigid gender category, but a vital concept: “the realm of mystery, the cyclical nature of life, the realm of women’s bodies” (Lowinsky, 2009, p. 30).

An absence of the vital feminine was etched yet unmourned in my early experience of reality. Colonization and coloniality not only have shaped my personal history and the collective history of my people, they also created circumstances that disrupted and impaired motherlines. However, the process of erosion of motherlines in South Asia went on for centuries before the arrival of the European colonizers. Brahmanization in South Asia gradually changed the political, social, and cultural landscape, grafting itself onto autochthonous, folk traditions that worshipped the great mother (Göttner-Abendroth, 2012, p. 70). This prefiguration is not that of the self-sacrificial mother of a patriarchal consciousness:

Mother-goddess can be interpreted as expressing ideas of power, autonomy, and primacy in the widest sense of the term. She conveys not so much the idea of physical motherhood but a worldview in which the creative power of femininity is central; the goddess mediates between life and death and contains in herself the possibility of regeneration. (Ganesh, 1990, p. 58).

Under the impact of Brahmanization, the mother goddess turned into a subservient spouse of the male deity relinquishing her autonomy. Baron Omar Rolf von Ehrenfels (as cited in Krishnaraj, 2010, p. 17) notes that strong mother-right elements persisted in India to a degree and extent more than elsewhere in the world. Yet gradually there was a sidelining of ways of living based on female-centered, earth-centered practices where knowledges were transmitted down the female lineages. These included lifeways founded on a knowledge of the woman as a medium for regulating the energies of the household, community, and the cosmos. Women had been custodians of ways of contacting the energy sources so as to initiate rites of auspiciousness (see Jayakar, 1990; Nagarajan, 2007), but the patriarchal hierarchy that permeated India via the Vedic caste system cut off many of these lineages and these knowledges.

Once superiority was established—of men over women, and of the upper castes especially Brahmins over the lower castes and the outside-caste/indigenous people—these Others of the Vedic caste patriarchy were relegated to the margins of history and of religious participation.

Ironically, even as India is known for its worship of the goddess and for its symbolic honoring of women, its women are penalized for going against tradition. They are simultaneously “made repositories of tradition but do not have access to their own tradition” (Krishnaraj, 2010, p. 17). There are exceptions that have kept nature-based, women-led rituals alive among folk and non-Vedic traditions such as Tantra (Jayakar, 1990; Khanna, 2000; Mookerjee & Khanna, 1996), but the overwhelmingly patriarchal, and increasingly nationalistic and xenophobic interpellation of

religion in India has had a disastrous impact on the rights and sense of agency of its non-Brahmin, non-cisgender male Others.

Clearly, my ancestresses believe that the “female memories of power and energy” (Jayakar, 1990, p. xiii) can be reclaimed from the margins, at the borderlands. Female-bodied feminists who take on the challenge of engaging their discomfort with the primitive and the feminine—itsself stemming from a modern rational, Western feminist interpretation of this notion—will find themselves recuperating the wholeness of their female, borderland selves. They may find themselves resuscitating their Motherline, and through this work learning—as I am—to be “open to others in relations of hospitality and generosity, and...commit ethically and politically to and for [an Other]” (Maldonado-Torres, 2012, p. 197). For, living at the borderlands and enacting a borderlands consciousness in contact with the ancestral, the premodern, the feminine, the embodied is as much about epistemic and ontological justice as it is about recovering the sacred in our post-secular narratives.

Women in the New Modernity of India

Goddesses in the religious life of the Indian subcontinent are attributed with power, autonomy, and primacy, while Indian women often remain subject to norms and violence regulating their social roles and conduct. Partha Chatterjee (1989) argues that a “new patriarchy” emerged in India with the origin of an anti-colonial nationalism (p. 627). The nationalist discourse, during its struggle against colonialism, invested the home and the world with polarized values (spiritual versus material). The home/world dichotomy came to be represented by gender roles, and women were assigned the responsibility for ensuring that the purity and superiority of India’s inner identity—its spiritual culture—remained intact. This purity was asserted as superior not only in opposition to westernization, but also in opposition to the “barbarism” and “irrationality” of the common, lower classes. The new modernity of India conferred upon women the dubious honor of becoming the bearers of a nationalistic morality, which, while claiming to revere woman as goddess or as mother, ironically narrows the primacy, scope, and sphere of her spiritual participation (Chatterjee, 1989, pp. 629–630).

Colonization made India an unbidden subject at the table of Western modernity and its offspring, Enlightenment rationality and secularism. Just as in the West, ontologies and epistemologies emerging from the province of tradition were seen as non-modern. This included “nature, the past, women, the feminine, the household, ‘the primitive,’ and loyalty to kin and tribe” (Harding, 2008, p. 8). The invention of religion itself was a by-product of colonialism, creating an arbitrary partition between the sacred and secular (Sen, 2013, p. 9). The brahmanical forms of practice were what came to be codified as Hinduism (King, 1999, p. 102).

According to Ashis Nandy (1995), there is a local meaning of secularism in India that does not place religion as outside politics, but connotes multireligious coexistence and equal respect for all religions. This notion of secularism draws its rationale from the broader traditions of religious practice in South Asia. This non-modern understanding has been losing ground to the Western model, especially with the continuing influence of nationalist ideologies in contemporary Indian polity. Nandy (1995) suggests that the religions, cultures and visions that have become silenced or marginalized in the dominant postcolonial narratives of secularism may hold the keys necessary

to bringing in the transformations necessary to bring inter-communal harmony (p. 37). Lata Mani (2009) too advocates reexamining the meanings conferred by modernity upon the terms sacred and secular in order to carry out the work of social and personal transformation (p. 9).

Decolonizing the Feminine

The cooption of femininity by nationalistic morality in India has created the need for memory work where the feminine can be written in transcultural yet culturally specific, open-ended, fluid ways. The convergence of colonial rationality and brahmanical patriarchy has produced a condition where women struggle to remember their own sovereignty and authority. I seek to actively access and source non-brahmanical traditions for their possibilities of alternative, non-dominant spiritual knowledge and leadership for women. The call is for no mere romanticization of tradition, but for a participation in its reconstruction from the inside out so that it becomes a place of liberation for the Others of modernity, including women. This is a deeply self-willed, self-authorizing, feminist, decolonial act of reclaiming. It is a transformational practice that is about moving away from the epistemic hegemony of the West to knowledge making that privileges the non-West, the non-male, the non-white, and the non-European. Decolonization values the past as part of the present, not as something to reject. The past continues to “frame what becomes actuality from a horizon of possibilities” (Isasi-Díaz & Mendieta, 2012, p. 6). By decolonizing “spaces of belonging, sites of dispossession, claimed interstices, erased memories, and hushed stories” (Isasi-Díaz & Mendieta, 2012, p. 6), we create alternatives to that which is written in history.

Anzaldúa’s own work exemplifies this. As a Chicana and Mexicana, she invokes the indigenous sacred feminine to muddy the waters of the singular cultural identity, which is the subject of a Chicano Movement dominated by a masculinist and heterosexist cultural nationalism (Yarbro-Bejarano, 1994, p. 12). Reconstructed, the indigenous feminine figures are able to converge the past and the present, the cultural and the autobiographical psyche. Re-membered, they do not stay in the past—but claim the past, the present, and other temporal structures and flows that may not be recognizable in Western modernity. The border-crossing Coatlicue in Anzaldúa’s narrative, for example, reclaims her all-encompassing, multigendered aspects from the patriarchal, male-centered narratives that had split them off and cast them underground—claims Anzaldúa—and redefines the very contours of autonomy:

And someone in me takes matters into our own hands... Mine. Ours. ...And suddenly I feel everything rushing to a center, a nucleus. All the lost pieces of myself come flying from the deserts and the mountains and the valleys, magnetized towards that center. *Completa*. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 51)

Again, by reconnecting Guadalupe to indigenous goddesses, Anzaldúa recuperates the former’s capacity to include “the impure, mestizo/a, queer women and men for whom there is no room in dominant religious traditions” (Delgadillo, 2011, p. 26). Memory work becomes, for Anzaldúa, a relational exercise that connects individual and collective worlds at the borderlands: the displacements, pain, suffering, resistance, and empowerment therein. It enables her to formulate her complex, shifting subjectivity amidst a newly emerging collective identity. Her revisionist mythmaking is, further, a decolonial exercise: it enacts self-affirming images of female identity that create a rupture in the status-quo. These, Keating (2013) writes, are fluid, transcultural

universals that “open up psychic spaces where alterations in consciousness can occur” (p. 118). Even as living on the borders is borne out of the necessity to survive, these multiple voicings of myth at the borderlands are necessary for women that do not identify with dominant Western heteropatriarchal tellings of the feminine to survive.

The current of nationalism in South Asia, like Chicano nationalism, is predicated upon an oppressive patriarchal and colonial gender structure. Nationalists have repeatedly attempted to wipe out India’s other, indigenous modernities since the latter do not produce the univocal, homogenous subject of the nation-state. This loss of plurality narrows the space available to women in the public and spiritual spheres. Cultural life, in private and public, continues to be framed within a discourse defined by masculine norms. Reflective of the power structures, goddesses become consorts of male gods, and women become subservient wives, mothers, and daughters of men who are the chief functionaries in the religious and sacred realms.

My situatedness within a transnational space gives me a sense of the ways in which national and transnational processes of oppression of the feminine overlap. Women’s experiences within the transnational empire are often imbricated, and the Anzaldúan model of reconstruction of the sacred feminine—and, via that, renewal of a post-secular sacred—gives me one strategy through which I may enact my interventions in the transnational/postcolonial imaginary of South Asia. By taking into account the Others of modernity so as to restructure our very understanding of the contours of modernity, the borderlands framework makes possible a meeting of the goals of social, political, epistemic, and ontological justice.

At the borderlands, it is not the dominant but the “other” ways of knowing that are valued (see Denzin et al., 2008). Other ways of knowing include those associated with women, nature, indigenous peoples, and people of color—and posit interests, feelings, passions, and the body as valid and authoritative sources of knowledge. They are able to connect the historically colonized Others to their own epistemology, ontology, and axiology—in other words, to their own autonomy, struggles, and resistance. I will end this paper with a proposal that poetry and autoethnography be considered as emergent integrative research strategies at the borderlands.

Both poetry and autoethnography disrupt inheritances of colonialism, imperialism, and androcentrism in the academy by making space for the epistemologies, ontologies, and interventions of feminist, non-European, indigenous scholars and scholars of color. Both enable nontraditional scholars to engage with knowledge production in the fullness of their sensory and social dimensions. They help nontraditional scholars make sense of their lives, by making possible integral discourses and helping them explore the “total complex of knowing”(McNiff, 2008, p. 34). Both offer “new ways to see” (Leavy, 2009, p. 254). The research methodologies of poetry and autoethnography embrace vulnerability, and demonstrate that emotional and psychological aspects are integral to social research. Likewise, they allow for a synthesis of the intellectual and aesthetic dimensions of research.

Through a process of analytic and creative reconstruction of the past and the present—the autobiographical and the cultural psyche—a transnational borderlands feminist can participate in the transformation not only of her own identity, but also of the collective identities of the communities she engages in. Here she stands in the limen, continually reaching for wholeness, a

full participant in the unfolding of her own spiritual knowing. She puts herself back together again, in writing, in her anticolonial struggle—and she restores to her ancestresses their autonomy and vitality.

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Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee

Karabi Sen¹

Abstract: Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee are two different ways of looking at divinity in a feminine form. Chinmoyee emphasizes the attainment or realization or manifestation of higher consciousness as being divine while Mrinmoyee hugs the earth and brings home the deliberation that mrit or the earth is the mother of all being, including all forms of consciousness and deserves to be acclaimed as the deity. Mrit means earthen in Sanskrit and the earth is what all living creatures are made of. It is the spring, the sustenance of all life and also that to which life reverts back after a particular form of it ceases to function, to be regenerated as another form of life when the necessary conditions appear. Mrit, also called Mrittika in Sanskrit and "mati" in Bengali, is the mother of all life. It is etymologically connected to "matter," "matre," "madder" of the Indo-Iranian-European group of languages. Matter has been contemplated to be a lifeless substance by some philosophers but the term is essentially expressive of what we know to be the mother of us all---that from which we sprung, that in the womb of which we all came to be, slept and grew until we evolved further and that to which we return in final embrace until we transform into another being. Matter and mrit are viewed as lifeless by philosophers who try to preach ultimate divisions and the purpose of this paper is to overthrow such absolute dichotomies as false. The paper purports to establish that consciousness and matter are one and inseparable and hence Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee are an identical entity.

Keywords: Chinmoyee, Feminine Divine, Indian Mythology, Mrinmoyee.

Chinmoyee and *Mrinmoyee* are both terms that refer to the divine understood as a female principle in the context of Hindu philosophy and religion. Chinmoyee represents the divinity in the feminine as being pure consciousness or *chit* while Mrinmoyee upholds *mrit*(dirt) or the mortal frame of flesh and blood of an everyday woman as the seat of goddesshood. Chinmoy was how the Vedanta represented Brahman and the devotional sects of the Hindu religion, particularly the Shaktas and the Vaishnavas, used the linguistically feminine version of the term or Chinmoyee to contemplate the feminine aspects of divinity. The concepts of *chit* and *mrit* have often been interpreted by philosophers and common people alike as opposites, much in the same sense that mind and matter are thought to be very different. Chinmoyee, being rooted in consciousness, has sometimes been seen as more thoroughly spiritual in comparison to Mrinmoyee, the mortal one, sprung from her origin in matter, in earth. It is my contention that such a division and the associated qualitative ranking between the two versions of the deity are untenable and consequently, unworthy of being pursued.

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To many philosophers and devotees Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee are one and the same deity, each term simply emphasizing two different aspects of the same divine principle. However, the belief systems underlying the two terms are entrenched in philosophies that have historically been quite apart. Time after time, the unresolved differences have found expression in controversies over the nature of Reality. Issues like change and permanence, appearances and reality, form and matter, monism and pluralism, the finite and the infinite, mind and matter, immanence and transcendence, creation and evolution, the divine and the human, the spiritual and the earthly are all different ways of pointing at a deep divide between minds trying to understand the source of all being and how they are related. Great religious wars have been fought and continue to be fought over these different belief systems. Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee have not been reconciled for good yet. That does not mean, however, that they cannot be seen differently, as being related in a harmony that is not just possible, but inevitable.

Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899 – 1976), a 20th century Bengali poet noted for composing several moving devotional songs dedicated to Goddess Kali and Lord Krishna, is caught in one of his songs struggling to fathom the gap between Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee. He beseeches the divine mother to come to him in her Chinmoyee form. He thinks our woes are attributable to the worship of the mother in her Mrinmoyee form. He then proceeds to describe the great divine energy or Shakti as that which can never be submerged, that which is ever manifest within us and in the world outside us, that which cannot be kept confined in temples or fortresses. Clearly, he is not seeing the spirit as residing in the image of the goddess and his whole being yearns for a rendezvous with a different kind of being, a spiritual entity that is beyond the goddess as enshrined in a material, finite form. Deprived of the devotion placed in her by the devotee, the image turns into a lifeless, meaningless idol. Mrinmoyee becomes a mere clay toy, finite, mortal, impermanent, subject to time, with a beginning and an end, unable to deliver spiritual fulfillment. Chinmoyee on the other hand, is consciousness pure and simple, infinite, eternal, a source of bliss and power that never fades. Nazrul is trying to make some ultimate distinctions in order to bring order into his house put into disarray by conflicting, undefined thoughts. He feels the need to classify, categorize and arrange things according to their types—clothes in the closet, books in the shelf, food in the pantry etc. It is hard to comprehend the world and our place in it without making an effort to settle the dust raised by confusion in understanding. The first step towards sanity would appear to lie in making distinctions and understanding the nature of such distinctions (Kazi Nazrul Islam, 1996).

In this context I would like to discuss some notions with which the philosopher G.E. Moore played in his book *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (Moore, 1966). In the first chapter of his book Moore begins by offering a definition of philosophy as “a general description of the *whole* of the universe” (p.13). Philosophers, he maintains, must mention all the significant things they *know* are in it and also how these are related to one another. He then proceeds cautiously by trying to compare philosophy with “Common Sense”, mentioning that philosophers venture beyond the opinions of Common Sense, sometimes even contradicting Common Sense. Common Sense believes there are ultimately two different kinds of being in the universe, namely, material objects, which have no consciousness, and minds, which can perform conscious acts. All material objects are thought to be in space and can be understood to be related to one another by means of directions and measurements. Common Sense further tends to believe that all minds or acts of consciousness are related to some material objects in the sense of being rooted in or “attached to” them in the

sense that when we engage in mental activities, those acts occur “*in the same places* in which our bodies are” (p. 19).

Material objects, however, can exist independently of consciousness. There was a time long, long ago, when there were only material objects and such a time can come again in the future with conscious acts wiped away from the scene in the course of Nature. This underlines the fact that Common Sense believes both material objects and conscious acts to be in time as well as in space. Past, present and future are legitimate terms in which they can be understood. Common Sense does not usually deny that theories about facts can change, can be proven to be wrong or right as time progresses. But these are only admitting changes in our “knowledge” of things. How far is Common Sense willing to go to admit changes in the things themselves? Will it admit that matter can evolve into consciousness and that this can happen due to an inward unstoppable force in matter to become something else? Common Sense is reluctant to venture into the world of “possibilities”. But in all good faith, it cannot deny that there is a world of possibilities. Common Sense, however, does not have to go into such a world because it is not committed to give a description of the “whole universe”. That is the philosopher’s task. Common Sense is content to maintain the orderliness of its house as a more or less closed square of solid lines in which there are basically two residents, mind and matter, with mind dependent on matter and matter capable of existing independently of mind.

The philosopher’s square, on the other hand, is made up of dotted lines. This square has to be ready to admit the “possibles” to freely go in and out of the realm of the world it is trying to give shape to. If philosophers have to go with the two ultimate distinctions in the universe as being matter and mind, then in order to treat this picture as a general description of the whole universe, the philosopher will have to say that all that there is must be either matter or mind, or else the modified statement will have to be that all that we *know* to be in the Universe is either an act of consciousness or a material object, though “there *may* be in the Universe other things which we do not know to be in it.” (Moore, 1966, p. 27) There are many other kinds of things in the universe that are unknown to us and may possibly never be known. The limits of our knowledge are *known* to us and therefore have to be included in a general description of all the significant things in the universe. It would be unphilosophical, a-logical and unscientific to exclude the realm of the possibles from a general description of the whole universe, both theoretically and empirically. Moore feels that besides the entities in the unknown worlds, there are things within our known world that cannot properly be described as either material objects or acts of consciousness, for instance, space and time or a divine being and how it is related to material objects and conscious objects. A philosopher must therefore always maintain an open outlook and not give in to the urge to arrive at ultimate and irreducible distinctions between kinds of things, thus allowing for transitions from one kind to another, imperceptible and catastrophic change, gradual growth, manifestation of pre-existing conditions and emergence of novelties in the universe. Seeing fixed order and neatness where there is constant change and transformation is being untrue to the self that is seeking knowledge. There may very well be something that survives change or maintains continuity throughout the change, is fashioned and refashioned as a rejuvenated being. During the process, however, there are blurs, losses, gains that are in play. The path of nature proceeds through apparent confusions and demolition of set lines of distinctions to a continuous process of creations. Chinmoyee and Mrinmoyee may not be two distinct ways to contemplate the creative energy. The two may mingle, separate, and reunite endlessly in the world of thought as well as in nature. Not

admitting this may have been the reason behind Nazrul's woes, not the preoccupation with Mrinmoyee as opposed to Chinmoyee.

A discussion of the feasibility of ultimate distinctions between beings cannot be undertaken without trying to understand what indeed is being. What exactly do we mean when we say that something has being, that it *is*?

Does it mean that it is out there, to be seen, to be talked about or experienced in some way? But then is it not there even when we do not relate to it in any way? Some may think that that indeed is what being is, that it is there even when it is not entertained by us in any way. That we can come back and find it as it was confirms and verifies its being-hood. What if we find it altered in some way upon return? It still is, differently, but has not lost its 'isness'. What if we find it missing? It may still be somewhere else? It can definitely be in my mind, my memory, my imagination. What if it has been trashed, smashed, thrown out, removed, altered beyond recognition? Like a junkyard car or the ashes of a cremated dead body scattered into the air or the oceans? It still is somewhere, in some shape or form. It has lost its specific form, structure or chemical formula that enabled it to perform specific functions, but it has acquired newer such things and is performing different functions. Perhaps that is the best way to understand being, in terms of what it can do, do better or do differently; in terms of what it is no longer and what it is now or can become. Being is best understood in the context of non-being and becoming. Becoming does not have to deny the existence of continuity. Even if that which changes itself undergoes change it may still be possible that the outcome of the change was contained in that which gave birth to the new. In the acorn and the oak tree or the chicken and the egg controversy, the oak and the chicken are there first to make the acorn and the egg possible.

Thus, not only is continuity of being possible amidst change and new birth, not only can being not be understood apart from change, but being is impossible to comprehend without reference to its form, its structure, its function, its connection to other beings serving other functions, its interconnected operativeness in space and time.

At this point it becomes imperative to take a look at Aristotle. For the purpose of bringing in Aristotle, I will use the text *Aristotle*, by John H. Randall (1960). Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which started out as being the Science of Divine Things, later became his First Philosophy, in which he explored the nature of anything that is. He endeavored to figure out what is involved in just being. In the world of logic, to be means it can be made the subject of some kind of discourse. We should be able to ask questions about it and be able to get answers to those questions. In the existential world, to be means to be part of a process. A process is going from one state to another state, but the passage does not occur from a sheer absence of something to becoming another thing. The journey from A to B means that A had the capacity to acquire the properties of B and achieve them in the end. Things sort of have a "career" to develop. They are always trying to attain what they are potentially capable of. Aristotle talks about three factors at play in all processes of change that are going on in nature. First there is the subject which changes or the material that changes. Second, there is that, what it is changed from, carrying within it the absence and yet the potentiality of that into which it is going to change. Third, there is the form that the thing acquires as it changes. Things that are said to happen by chance may appear to be unpredictable, but they are not inexplicable. They may appear unrelated in a causal chain, but each one of the minute links

between the events that are apparently unrelated but yet together can produce a startling impact or event, are actually propelled by reasons of their own and their combined interaction goes forth to produce an effect that may look like a significant event which came about by sheer chance or accident. When the generation of the new is achieved, the old still continues to live in the new, but not in the same ratio and proportion as the formula for the emergence of the new needs. They continue there as further potentialities.

Aristotle thus saw Nature as a great dynamic process in which things were continually passing from the power to be to the actualization of the power, to the actual functioning of that power. He further believed that each thing had its own specific function determined by its own structure. He did not think that matter could exist in an indeterminate, generalized form. To be was to be in form and to strive to bring into further form all that it was capable of generating, given the specific circumstances in the environment, in the other things surrounding it with which it was in constant, inevitable interaction. Everything harbored within it a bubbling energy, an inherent tendency to spill out in action and give rise to newer forms with newer functions. The powers contained within each thing, as determined by its material and form must find expression, must move forward in Nature's process of creation. Aristotle called this bursting, impelling energy *horme*. Everything continually moves towards becoming different. Being is never static, never indeterminate.

Also of significance is Aristotle's notion that beings are active not just due to their own inherent and unstoppable principle of motion surging within them. They are also in motion because of the impact they cause on each other in the environment. It is as though if we learned to the fullest depth possible in knowledge about any one particular thing, we would thereby come to know about the existence and nature of all other entities in the world. Each thing is thus a mirror of the world. Aristotle was a pluralist, a dynamicist, against any ultimate distinction possible between matter and consciousness, against the possibility of matter without form and the actual being of form without matter in a realm outside of logic. In the existential world what we encounter is always matter in conjunction with particularized form, endowed with specific powers to realize itself further, in constant action, forging ahead in the creative activity that is Nature. Chinmoyee thus could exist in Aristotle's view only as a cognitive principle, simply as a noun that referred to the idea of consciousness. The moment it laid claim to have being that we can actively interact with, it acquired form. In fact, it is not intelligible why even logical principles can be said to be untrapped in some kind of form. A noun is a form of understanding. After all, are they not constructs or presuppositions that are born in the human brain due to the way the brain is programmed to think? Is logic not a product or way of functioning of our brain and are these cognitive principles not applied to understand the existential world? It is understandable that they may be differentiated from the world of form and matter, but do they have any ontological claims beyond their place in the world of human discourse?

One must also reckon that Aristotle further believed that to be is not simply becoming something different and new, but that to be is also to pass away. The 'this-object dies when it becomes the that-object' in the sense that its form becomes different, its functions become different. The elements remain in the next object, but combined in a different formula, performing different functions. In this sense, there is immortality in being. The new tides carry along in their waters the same water but each sprawl of the water, each one of its waves, each one of their sea-borne treasures are different. The ashes of our cremated bodies sink to the river-bed and bear

aquatic plants that feed the fish that feed us. The air carries the ashes to distant mountains and deserts, to fertile valleys, become a part of their landscapes and their specific operations. The same thing happens when we bury the body. In time it becomes a part of mother earth, a source of nutrition for Nature's wealth of plant and insect life, ultimately becoming a part of us. So being never becomes nothingness. It changes form and function, emerging from one motion to another. There never was a time when there was no motion. Motion never began, nor will it ever cease. Therefore, if to be is to be in motion, then there never was a time when there was no being and there never will be a time when being will cease to be. There is no other eternity than the ceaselessness of motion and being.

Is all this unceasing generation of the new a change towards the *better*? Change does not necessarily mean progress.

First of all, when we try to interpret change as progress or the opposite of it, we have to use standards that are relevant to the specific judges or the subjects that we judge. What is a mark of progress for the human world may be destructive for the survival of other species and the environment. Since Nature is an intricate web of mutually dependent organisms and all other natural processes or beings, no single change can be ultimately voted to be progressive without reservations, without being very tentative and cautious. Keeping this possibility in mind, can we still discern in the processes of nature a direction towards something better, not just something different?

It would appear that what would be judged better for any being would be its ability to survive and thrive, to perform its function more and more perfectly. Reproduction by two parents opens up this path. Reproduction and survival of the young become the main thrust of all physical-chemical-biological processes. Responses to stimuli are geared towards these ends of survival. Unsuccessful responses get discarded and those that promote survival stay on and get drawn into the game.

So is nature teleological? Aristotle's natural philosophy has been described as a theory of internal teleology in the sense that every object is internally propelled to fulfill the potential into the actual being. Is this inherent necessity behind motion to become different purely mechanical? Or does what goes on within a being during the processes of becoming have the basic building blocks of activities that attain goals or ends by the following some means? Aristotle is well-known for his four causes. The formal cause or the vision of the thing to be, the end for the actualization of which the process is in place, is the purpose which guides the entire process of production. This formal cause operates in a capacity that can have a great range. In some cases it can be described as unconscious, but consciousness itself is a matter of degree. What goes on inside a seed is different from what goes on behind the formation of a canyon, but how different and in what ways different? Even some of our most significant decisions may be arrived at without exercising much intelligent deliberations. We all know about the instinctive activities of birds and bees that are performed in the middle range between the totally unconscious and fully conscious. The exercise of consciousness is not a necessary condition of processes that achieve ends. All machines, whether hand-driven or automatic, achieve ends by means. Hence Aristotle can without difficulty say that all processes of nature are purposive. They show the marks of certain means being used to achieve certain ends as directed by their specific structure. The fact that in each set of activity

the operation of these means and ends follows a *regular* pattern, as though one step is leading to the next, is what prompts Aristotle to suggest that nature moves with a purpose.

The temporal order of sequences between these steps is such that those steps must be followed in order for the outcome to be achieved. In Nature, the succession of events is not such that any moment in time can be followed by any other moment. Moments are connected by an internal connection of necessity in order to become the next thing in the process. This is the Aristotelian necessity. It can be viewed as blind or fully conscious depending upon the field of operation or the stages in the life of a being. Wherever the presence of what we understand as the rudiments of life and consciousness are detected, the change is easily observed and understood to be mostly productive, for the better, boosting the survival value of the thing. As for the energies in motion in what for the lack of a better word, I would say, the pool of potential energies, the upheaval and succession of steps is not accidental at all either. Each emergent is conditioned to arise in order to proceed to the next step in an endless series of experimentations to try out and bring forth newer and newer forms which will allow more and more perfected operations of their functions. Life and consciousness are born and set on a survival mode as a result of these ceaseless changes going on in the energy filled core of being. To understand their emergence may be we need to rethink life and mind.

In a public release made on January 4, 2016, by the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, the release item entitled *The Origins of Abiotic Species* published in the journal Nature Chemistry (Sadownik, J. W., Mattia, E., Nowak, P. and Otto, S., 2016) report some very interesting research work done on how life may have evolved from chemical processes. Experiments were done to determine if the two basic processes of living organisms, namely, replication or autocatalysis and self-organization whereby organisms spontaneously develop themselves into higher order structures, can be detected at the molecular level. Sijbren Otto, the university's chemistry professor and his research group not only developed self-replicating molecules but also observed diversification powers in the replicator mutants, with a second set branching off spontaneously from an ancestral set of replicator mutants. Otto reports that first they had found that some small peptides could arrange themselves into rings. They then found that these rings could form stacks. Once the stack formation began, it would continue to grow and then break into two smaller stacks. Then the smaller stacks would both grow and further break into smaller stacks. The process would continue, with the stacks stimulating the formation of rings that compose them. These rings and stacks have been designated replicators as they are basically making copies of themselves.

Following this, Jan Sadownik, a researcher in the group, discovered that if the replicators are fed two different types of building blocks, A and B, then a set of replicator mutants will emerge that specialized in A and also contain some B. A few days later a second set of mutants emerged that specialized in B but also tolerated some A. This second set descended from the first set, and thus was like a grandchild to the original mutant group. The diversification process was displaying the structures of heredity or ancestral lineage. This was also akin to how new species form out of existing species, the process underlying biological diversity in nature, the exception being these processes were all occurring not at the full-fledged biological level but at the molecular level instead. Hence the process has been aptly described as *molecular speciation*.

The researchers experimented with the death of these sets as well. They channeled a stream of building blocks into the system to feed the sets while at the same time draining the contents of the reaction container. Only those replicators survived whose growth rate surpassed the removal rate. If the environment was changed by introducing another solvent, that would impact the fitness of the different replicator mutants differently. The mutants would then move towards those that are best at replicating themselves.

It is certainly possible to see some of Darwin's natural selection at work here. However, the mutants appear to be working less out of chance, but more as driven by some kind of inner necessity towards survival and attainment of the higher order promoting survival. Aristotle would have been delighted to participate in this research which brings us face to face with processes of evolution, baring the palpitations of life in molecules and advancing towards greater and greater complexity. The links between Mrinmoyee and Chinmoyee, the earthen and the pinnacle of consciousness are also found here.

Tim Requarth who has his PhD in neuroscience from Columbia University, where he also taught biology, chemistry, and science writing and who currently directs NeuWrite (<http://www.neuwrite.org/>), a national network of collaborative working groups for scientists and writers, writes in the article Our Chemical Eden (Requarth, 2016), about the discoveries of the famed geologist Mike Russell or Professor Michael J Russell of NASA, JPL (Jet Propulsion Lab.), Pasadena, California. He writes that Russell's first intuition into how life came to be occurred when he happened to inspect a shattered toy of his son. It was a tank which was like a chemical garden in which tendrils of rocks grew in a chemical solution. When the tank broke Russell found that these rocks were really hollow in the inside, like a bunch of drinking straws. Russell was working at the time at similar rock formations as part of his geological work. When he saw the formations in his son's toy, the thought suddenly flashed in his mind that his rocks too may have formed in some such unusual chemical solution. He struck the hypothesis that undersea hydrothermal hot-springs through which mineral rich water ejected out of the earth's belly, subsequently precipitating in the cool ocean waters, gave rise to the chemical gardens of the hollow rocks. From this hypothesis he took his second intuitive leap by positing that life originated in the wombs of these hollow rocks, in the warm chemical pools they cradled. Behind Russell's intuitive conviction was his belief that he had found the energy that life mobilizes to grow and replicate. To him, the energy and the life using the energy no longer appeared to be two different things, but one and the same force. It did not take his geologist's mind long to realize that such undersea chemical gardens would be sources of plentiful material energy trapped locally and fit for the emergence of self-replicating systems. In fact, given the set of conditions there, Russell believed that the emergence of self-replicating systems was not just possible, but inevitable. Life appeared following the same principles as galaxies were formed or tornadoes happen: Given the set of necessary conditions as they exist in the chemical garden, life will invariably emerge.

Russell thinks that the chemical gardens provide a natural environment for the emergence of what is known as chemiosmosis which is an essential process for the generation of energy needed for the living body. The mitochondria of the cells draw the chemical energy from food and convert it into the molecule ATP with the help of oxygen. ATP is the molecule of life. It is the energy we use every moment of our lives in whatever we do, consuming about 10 million molecules of ATP every single second. Energy flows through the mitochondria through a chain of proteins consisting

of thousands of atoms. The protein chain traps the high energy electrons and passes them down the chain. The movement of the electrons creates an electric current which in turn traps a great many number of protons between the inner and outer membranes of the mitochondria. These protons can escape only through what is called ATP synthase, a special protein. This intricate machine spins like a water-wheel hundreds of times per second and protons fall through it as in a waterfall. Russell thinks that the early oceans were likely acidic with a high concentration of protons. However, the water coming up through the hydrothermal vents is alkaline with fewer protons.

Russell conjectures that this difference created a natural proton waterfall from the ocean to the undersea rocks which were thus filled with these protons. The proton flow and the electron transfers created simple reactions. Then as proteins evolved, some cells produced a primitive form of ATP synthase. While the ATP synthase is the same in every organism that is, the protein chain that traps protons is not so. This means that the first organisms used an existing proton gradient before they developed the means to create their own. In the rocks of the chemical gardens the proton gradients took shape. Life did not just happen. In the nooks and crannies of the rocks the carbon dioxide in the ocean reacted with the hydrogen from the earth's vents. This reaction took place due to the minerals iron and sulfur in the rock's walls. Small organic molecules came into being as a result of these reactions, such as the acetyl-CoA, one of the oldest. The molecules linked up to each other in the temperature gradient with cooler temperature on the outside and a warmer one on the inside. This created the connective process known as *thermophoresis*, which traps the molecules in compartments and leads to the formation of sugars, amino-acids, lipids and nucleotides which are the building blocks of life. Russell concludes that given the conditions of intense temperature and pressure under the seas, the building blocks were inevitably produced and further connected to bring into being more complex molecules. Genetic structures began to take shape and passed from one rock nook to another through micropores, thus colonizing stretches of rock territories and giving birth to the first cells.

In 2000, the vessel Argo II was lowered into the Atlantic to survey an underwater mountain range. It went past the depths reached by sunlight, past the half-mile mark of the gauge. Then came the startling revelation by the vessel's lamps. Peaks of rocks as tall as buildings twenty stories high rose out of the ocean bed. Heated water boomed out of them in gleaming spouts. A host of aquatic life flooded the region nourished by microbes that can convert raw elements from the inner earth without the sun's rays. The field was named The Lost City and it confirmed Russell's prediction of the chemical garden.

Do these theories of the origin of life go against the Second Law of Thermodynamics or Entropy which state that the universe is headed towards disorder from order? First of all, order and disorder are perceived by just human beings and they may not exist in anyone else's world. So this description of the trip is to be understood with expressed modesty. We can see the "this" or "that" in the path of the universe as conditioned by the equipment we are endowed with; or this or that principle is a logically necessary supposition to explain our observations or to put things in place coherently but we should be very cautious before we claim that the way we explain the world, whether empirically or logically, has any meaning beyond human discourse. This acknowledgement of relativity is the minimum humility required of any thinker. However, being who we are, our adventures into knowledge must continue. Theories must abide in coherence with

each other and must be supported by newer knowledge gained. This is what Moore affirmed when he contended that the *whole* universe must allow room for possibles. Aristotle tried to explain generation by both theory (by positing an Unmoved Mover and *horme*) and practical observations of inner necessity between means and ends making what is potential into an actual being. Otto, Sadownik and Michael J. Russell's work shed light on how life may be understood as a stage in the life of the flow/cycle of energy we know the universe to be.

If we are content to say that the stages that mark the appearance or presence of life and consciousness show more complexity, more necessary connection, more means and ends kind of relationship, more self-replication and self-organization capabilities than are observable in the preceding stages, then we can come forward to share our belief that as far as we know, nature shows signs of orderly development, where one step leads to the next, where things do not happen by chance.

If life is understood as flow of energy then the story of life goes as far back as the Big Bang. Russell felt that the Big Bang generated a stress so great that it could be dissipated only by forming structured systems that came to be and then passed on to become something else. If the Big Bang led to an even distribution of matter and energy then nothing further could have happened. No further dynamism would have been noticed. But things are understood to have happened differently. It is likely that quantum fluctuations in the structure of space made a balanced distribution of matter and energy not possible. Instead structures arose, particles grouped together and were bound by gravity, leaving vast expanses of space that remained somewhat empty. Collapsing structures formed stars, gas and star-dust formed into planets with red-hot bellies given to tectonic shifts and volcanic activities. Hydrothermal vent structures opened up, creating in our earth the requisite temperature gradient in the chemical garden that further translated into life. Such a sequence of events cannot be ruled out elsewhere in the universe, now or before or in the future, given the limited scope of our knowledge and the limitlessness of what is out there. But the important thing is that we *know* of this situation.

Thus Russell² combats the view that his theory of the origin of life contradicted Entropy by asserting that the appearance of life is not a disorder to order movement but rather an "order from

² Note: Russell was the 2009 Award Recipient of the William Smith Medal of the Geological society of London. Here is an introduction to Russell at the Award Ceremony:

William Smith Medal – Prof. Michael J Russell (NASA; JPL)

The medal named for the Father of English Geology, William Smith, was first awarded in 1977 and is given in recognition of excellent contributions to applied and economic aspects of geology. It is therefore particularly apt that this year the medal goes to Professor Michael John Russell, now of the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena. For over 20 years, Mike Russell was Professor of Applied Geology, first at the University of Strathclyde, then at the University of Glasgow. As befits someone whose original contribution has lain mainly in our understanding of mineral deposit geology, Mike began his career working in industry and surveys across the world; but his subsequent research concentrated on the giant Irish Carboniferous-hosted base metal ore field – still Europe's biggest zinc producer and the world's most concentrated zinc source. In a period when the demands on metal resources are increasing and stocks being depleted, Mike's work is all the more important. In addition to developing the use of trace-element haloes as an exploration method, Mike linked ore genesis to the emerging theory of plate tectonics, developing original theories about north-south geo fractures that continue to tantalize explorationists. Mike Russell is one of our science's truly original

order” process. Without the presence (or perception thereof) of an initial order, no further organization can take place. Geological complexity is the necessary precedent of biological complexity. To him, life is best defined not in terms of what it is but what it does. It is a way of being in constant passing from this to that while yet maintaining ancestral link.

In Chapter XXI of *Life Divine*, philosopher Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (2005) dwells on the Ascent of Life. He tries to distinguish between four stages in the evolution of life much of which appears to fall in line with the works of Sadownik et. al. (2016). In the first stage, matter expresses itself as moving towards life by means of division. In the second stage comes aggregation. In the third stage comes mind or the desire to unite with fellow beings to make aggregation a reality, to preserve and make permanent, by heredity on the physical level and aggregate memory on the socio-cultural level, what the processes of division and fusion have achieved, what the individual being has experienced in its life-span and what will otherwise, but for the emergence of this level, be lost forever. The survival value of this third stage is enormous. But for Aurobindo, the fourth stage, which is the emergence of a higher form of mind, is even more important. The fourth stage consists in laying a *conscious foundation* for our vision of harmony with the whole universe upon the discovered unity and link between our body and the rest of the bodies, our life and the rest of the lives, our values and those of the others (Sri Aurobindo, 2015). This is the point where the scientist, the philosopher and the saint join hands. Neither the scientist nor the philosopher, nor even the saintly person can choose to ignore this question: How am I going to conduct myself in relation to all that is, was and will be and what is the reason behind my choice? To answer this question satisfactorily one must know how life came to be, how it diversifies, how it is preserved and how it progresses further.

This makes it necessary for me to examine what Bertrand Russell (1963) had proposed in his book *Mysticism and Logic* regarding the use of the scientific method in philosophy. The noted mathematical logician who is also acclaimed as a great philosopher of modern times had his own model for philosophy. He believed that meddling in ethics and religion have largely been not beneficial for philosophy, that it should turn to science instead for successful pursuit. In Chapter VI (entitled On Scientific Method in Philosophy) of his above referenced book, he says that philosophy can find science useful in its domain in two different ways. It can either base itself on the results of science, or it can apply the methods of science in its own investigations. Next he gives his considered opinion that philosophy can gain more from employing the scientific method than from the specific results arrived at by the different scientific researches. He says that philosophers, particularly evolutionary philosophers, often tend to give an air of absoluteness to empirical generalizations based upon observations and proceed thenceforward to describe evolutionary change as “progress” whereas decay is as much a phenomenon of nature as growth. The essence of the scientific mindset, according to Bertrand Russell, is to remain receptive to facts. While philosophers may remain cognizant of the results of the specific sciences in order to stay educated, these results do not impact the essential nature of the philosopher’s business. He gives two reasons for this. He says that a philosophical proposition must not be regarding such properties of things that just happen to be. They should be such that they are true of any possible world

thinkers. His work on ore body generation led him into the debate over where life originated. His idea about hot deep spring environments as a hatchery for the first proto-living organisms has now moved centre stage, and its clear astrobiological implications are what led to his current appointment at JPL.

independently of verification by the senses. This leads Bertrand Russell to his second statement that a philosophical proposition must be a priori or “such that can be neither proved nor disproved by empirical evidence” (Russell, 1963, p. 84). He proceeds to characterize philosophy as “the science of the possible” and hence as indistinguishable from logic. Analysis, and not synthesis is the job of philosophy. When philosophers veer from this role and start interpreting the results of science and offering rosy and optimistic pictures of the universe and evolution, they are guilty of giving “legislative force to their own wishes” (p. 82).

In Chapter I of *Mysticism and Logic*, Bertrand Russell comes down hard upon the tendency of the philosopher to anthropomorphize and be a preacher of “pleasing dreams” (p. 29). The philosopher, he says, needs to maintain “ethical neutrality” (p. 29). A philosopher should have nothing to say about pessimism or optimism, good or bad, love or hate. There is not enough abstract difference between these ethical opposites. There is not much difference that is substantial between them, not any difference of form or structure, the opposites being very similar to each other in being simply states of mind. Philosophers should be more interested in knowledge for its own sake and

acquire the disinterested intellectual curiosity which characterizes the genuine man of science. Philosophy is not a short cut to the same kind of results as those of the other sciences: if it is to be a genuine study, it must have a province of its own, and aim at results which the other sciences can neither prove nor disprove. (p. 25)

It appears that Bertrand Russell has taken upon himself the task of defining philosophy. By adopting his definition, we would have to exclude many great philosophers from their entitlements. I agree that anthropomorphism is always a lurking danger for us, but would consider that even Bertrand Russell is guilty of that slip when he states that a philosophical proposition has to be true of all possible worlds. Logic is but a tool of the human mind. Its propositions are but *our* ways of understanding. The only way to avoid being anthropomorphic is to remain aware that our knowledge is always going to be through the human lenses but I refuse to narrow down philosophy to this single statement of the relativity of human knowledge. Socrates was humble but that did not stop him from raising crucial social, moral, political and epistemological questions. Philosophers must not quit interpretation of data and sharing their pursuits with scientists and moral, political and religious philosophers. They are all philosophers in their own rights inasmuch as they are all trying to fit pieces of puzzles which cannot be put together without mutual corroboration. It is true that knowledge is increasingly becoming specialized but no one can dictate that they must remain compartmentalized, that the findings of one branch cannot be shared with another, commented upon and absorbed in a common field. Philosophy is what it etymologically is: love of wisdom. Knowledge becomes wisdom only by interpretation and wisdom becomes enshrined in us only through internalization and constant practice. Philosophy has to be what we deeply believe in, and as such it holds hands with religion, ethics and politics. It must not be forgotten that Socrates, Christ, Meerabai, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., all five of them gave their lives for what they *knew* and *believed* in, and there have been many others who go unnamed, here and in history books. The five named here lived their lives by their *philosophies* which they arrived at by intense cognitive and living soul searches, by means of countless interactions with other beings. If they are not to be admitted as philosophers, the claim of Bertrand Russell to be counted as one will remain in the shadow. Ethical neutrality is a most unbecoming feature in any

human being, and more so than tendencies to hasty generalizations and forgetting to submit to facts. The latter two can be more readily corrected while the first represents an attitude, a conviction, much harder to overcome. While it is good to rein in baseless optimism, it is important to have faith and the nurturing of faith is sustained by the admission of the world of possibles. Faith generates hope and courage. However, if it does not make us love and teach us to live in harmony, then such knowledge of possibles is of no use. We can be logicians only when we have learned to live and survive. It is my philosophy that a prosperous garden can be cultivated by scientists and philosophers of all shades when they draw upon each other.

Not only are abstractions envisioned and formulated by human beings, they are derived from our experience of particulars, fed by our interactions with and thoughts about particulars and are seen as applicable to particulars. The first question that is put to a suspect in a murder case is: Where were you at the time of the murder? The implication is that someone cannot be in two places at the same time. If the suspect was at a restaurant at the time the murder took place in a home, then the district attorney has a problem. Anybody who is trying to shear the bond between the universal and the particular, the abstract and the concrete, change and continuity, the one and the many, spirit and matter, the divine and the earthly, consciousness and the life and energy flowing through the world is doing us a big disservice. If we cannot see these supposed opposites as residing in each other, if we fail to recognize Chinmoyee in Mrinmoyee and Mrinmoyee in Chinmoyee, we will continue to hurt the earthly woman while singing praises to the goddess's divine nature; or ignore a child's well-being while putting the child Krishna and baby Jesus on pedestals. This is my opinion, based upon knowledge derived from the humanities and sciences, and yes, I am philosophizing when I am saying this. My philosophy is my belief system and network of actions *consciously founded* upon my knowledge as it is today. This conscious foundation-laying is what makes me and anyone else a citizen of what Aurobindo referred to as the world of the Supermind. It is also what determines my path, helps me stay on the path and serves as justification for why I do what I do.

It is important to understand that divisions, distinctions, and contrasts are useful mostly for analytical and artistic purposes. If they make us blind to fusions and create in us the inability to see the whole picture, then we are being deprived of seeing the way Nature works. There are no clear-cut distinctions in Nature. The living is in the dead, the dead is in the living. Spirit is in the dust and dust is in the spirit. Resistance to see ourselves in each other is what leads to wars; obliviousness to our ties to Nature, animate and inanimate, is what leads to cruelty to animals and environmental disregard. Likewise, failing to see Chinmoyee in Mrinmoyee is what leads to the ridicule of images as idols, to hate wars against image-worshippers.

To further understand Mrinmoyee it is imperative that we gain an insight into what is involved in the process of image worshipping. An image can be understood in different ways. It can mean a reflection, as in a mirror or in water. In such circumstances it is easy to bear in mind that the image is not real in the same sense as the object casting its reflection. When Sultan Alauddin Khilji³ was allowed to behold queen Padmini's image in the mirror by her husband, the sultan

³ Alauddin Khilji was the second ruler of the Khilji dynasty in India reigning from 1296 to 1316. A tale of his attack on Chittor in 1303 CE to capture the queen of Chittor, Rani Padmini, the wife of Rawal Ratan Singh and the subsequent story have been recounted in the epic poem Padmavat, written by Malik Muhammad Jayasi in 1540.

knew the difference. The situation was different with the lion in the Aesop's Fables. The lion jumped to its death in rage upon seeing its image in well water because it took the image to be real. Similarly, the men in the allegory of the cave in Plato's Republic thought the reflections cast on the cave wall to be the real objects because they were forever enchained and could never turn back to cast their eyes on the real things that were casting the shadows, exemplifying the classic principle of *maya* or ignorance rooted in the human condition which can be undone only by conscious effort or divine grace resulting in enlightened perception. In worshipping an image, the worshipper does not consider the image to be a reflection of something else that is more real as in the case of Padmini and her image. Nor is the devotee trapped in a state of ignorance or illusion from which there is need of deliverance. The worship is offered not to an appearance but to what is considered to be the real thing by the devotee.

Image worship is also significantly different from belief in pantheism and immanence. If the divine is believed to be everywhere then a stone, a tree, an animal or every conceivable form is worship-worthy. But this is not the reason why a devotee showers all his affection on an image. The philosophy of immanence simply serves as a justification for the idea that there is nothing impious about a form, any form. Ushering in *Mrinmoyee* has more to do with "manifestation". An image is worshipped because the devotee considers that the deity is manifested in the image. Such consideration by the devotee is a very conscious process involving deliberation and choice. The worshipper has to ritually instill life into the image. This process is known as *pran-pratistha*. The process can also be undone and the deity bade good-bye as in the practice of *Visarjana* or immersion of *Mrinmoyee* or the clay-image in water. In an act of worship, the worshipper plays as important a role as the object of worship. The worshipper calls upon the deity to be seated in the image and then engages in interaction with it. An example would be the Wilson volleyball from the Tom Hanks movie *Castaway*.

At the other end of the road of worship is the worshipped. While undergoing the process of manifestation at the call of the devotee, the deity becomes subject to all the limits of form, including birth, growth and death. The thought of such willing submission to limits in order to answer the devotee's call is seen as proof of the abounding love of the creator for the created. The belief in incarnation is closely related to the contemplation of godhood as *Mrinmoyee*, the earthly one, the one of flesh and blood, the manifest fountainhead of all that is treasured in *chit* or consciousness.

The separation of *Chinmoyee* and *Mrinmoyee* is, in the ultimate analysis, untenable. Nature is a continuum and is worship-worthy as such.

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