Nurturing Creativity:

A Journey of Personal Transformation

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University, 2011
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

The ‘idea’ of creativity invariably seems to meet with general approval. In fact, together with 'innovation', 'creativity' has become a common catchcry of our times. After all, we are told that we are living in the “Creative Age”, and we constantly look to innovation as being the answer to the problems that we perceive to be facing. However, it is one thing to like an ‘idea’, and quite another to be willing to make the journey to discover some of its possible sources - this is the difference between thinking and doing, the difference between theory and reality. Theory could be described as thinking that has been formalised and reality as the whole where living unfolds; so while there can already be considerable difference between thinking and doing, there is a ‘chasm’ between theory and reality.

This thesis is a representation in words of an actual occurrence – a personal transformation, a change in attitude. This could be described in more detail as a conscious opening to perceiving with an attitude of creativity by attending to the nurturing of creativity. A personal journey is unique, yet a human life is as much about relationships and connections as it is about personal growth. I have therefore chosen the company of guides to help me travel this journey. The main three are: Carl Jung for his support on exploring the whole of the ‘self’; David Bohm for his lucidity in expressing a holistic view of reality; and Robert Nash for his encouragement, through the use of scholarly personal narrative, on including lived experience in academic writing. Besides them, many others have been consulted on creativity and the nurturing of creativity, including some through interviews. By delving into creativity, both within and outside the territory of the ‘self’, this thesis also explores how perception is affected by societal concerns, with one of the principal influences discussed being the hierarchical order we live by – patriarchy.

It was my search for creativity that made me realise the need of nurturing my creativity in order to find it. This in turn led me to seek wholeness; thereby it was inherent that I should link the personal with the social and the academic. Thus in the writing of this thesis I have found myself weaving webs of connections, often across sheer windy chasms of dissent, to bridge academic writing with lived experience and the nurturing of creativity, through as holistic a perspective as I could access at the time of writing. The beauty of webs is that they hold, having innumerable points of connection to support them. Even if they are broken they can be built again and be made stronger, with ever expanding clusters of creative interconnections, as in our diverse human community new ways of seeing are constantly emerging and growing through the nurturing of creativity.
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A PhD journey is a long one and there were a number of times that I questioned whether the effort was worthwhile. At those times it was connecting with people who were interested in creativity and in what I was doing that invariably kept me going; so to all those who were at the right place at the right time – friends, relatives, colleagues, acquaintances and even total strangers – I am infinitely grateful for your timely interventions.

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And finally, thank you to Dina for helping me to keep my environment beautiful and in harmony.
Nurturing Creativity: a journey of personal transformation

Prologue:

Nurturing creativity – the beginning of a story...

She smiles, letting her gaze sweep across the universe as stars of all sizes and brightness come into view, some clumped close together and some scattered thinly across vast and dark expanses of space and time. She reaches for the more brightly coloured ones that look to be just the right distance from each other and unravels a strand of light from each, holding them yet leaving them attached to their stars. Singing to them she fashions each beam’s dimensions to suit her design and with an intricate dance she fastens them together to form a loom.

It looks just as it had in her dream - a sparkling living web of light waiting to be woven onto! Excitedly she claps her hands and laughs; then awed as the sound ricochets across the loom, she watches it spread until it catches and is held fast, glistening and humming as its vibrations are sent rippling throughout the universe...
Nurturing Creativity: a journey of personal transformation

Introduction:

**Being and Becoming**

*All of the creativity and free-ranging mobility that we have come to associate with the human intellect is, in truth, an elaboration, or recapitulation, of a profound creativity already underway at the most immediate level of sensory perception.*

(Abram 1997:49)

There is something deep within me that keeps me striving, that keeps me going. I have recognised it to be that which gets me out of bed in the morning and that which somehow infuses me with a willingness to ‘return to the world’ all the times I have felt nothing but dismay. It is equally present whether I am facing challenges, feeling fearful, or am releasing myself to laughter and pleasure, as in all cases it can bring me to a profound awareness that I am alive. Although this ‘something’ is obviously extremely important to me, I have spent much of my time unconscious of ‘it’. Constantly pushed to ignoring its subtle messages I became somewhat deaf to its quiet voice and have thus often lived disconnected from it.

Upon embarking on a PhD degree I felt as though I had finally grown up; having had the impression that I had for a long time been preparing for ‘something’, I had a strong sensation that this was ‘it’ - now I could do what I really wanted to (or so I simplistically thought). And yet ... the interior discord between the ‘deep something’ within me and the many other facets of my life started to become more obvious and therefore harder
to ignore. In retrospect, I know that this was especially due to the fact that having
chosen to look at the nurturing of creativity as my topic, this served to enhance my
awareness of my internal world to an extent that I never would have thought possible.
Beyond this however, the dissonance between the ‘deep something’ within me and the
way my life was unfolding was due to pressures which, apart from a few personal ones,
could be termed as being societal, and thus likely to be relevant to many people.

*This thesis describes the process of transformation that I underwent as, through the
nurturing of creativity, I gained greater understanding of both my inner world as well as
of the exterior world I perceive, and furthermore began to see how these mesh.*

It was my recognition of the emergence of this more holistic understanding that led me
to use scholarly personal narrative (SPN), discussed extensively by Robert Nash (2004)
in his book: *Liberating Scholarly Writing – The Power of Personal Narrative*, as the
overarching style for writing this thesis. After much deliberating over academic
methodologies, and just as I was approaching the final writing stage, I came across this
book via one of my supervisors. In reading it I felt a sense of release and freedom as I
realised that I had finally found an ideal tool to help me weave my thesis together;
something that would allow me to tell my research story. Being “writing that begins from
the inside out, rather than from the outside in” (Nash 2004:59), SPN lends itself well to
my topic and thesis, and facilitates a flowing exposition. This it does by allowing a
holistic approach as full a revelation as possible so that the topic’s richness may be

> … scholarly personal narrative writing can take many different forms. While it is personal, it is also
social. While it is practical, it is also theoretical. While it is reflective, it is also public. While it is
local, it is also political. While it narrates, it also proposes. While it is self-revealing, it also evokes
self-examination from readers. Whatever its unique shape and style of communicating to readers, a SPN's central purpose is to make an impact on both writer and reader, on both the individual and the community. Its overall goal, in the words of David Bleich and Deborah H. Holdstein, is “to admit the full range of human experience into formal scholarly writing”.

It certainly seems reasonable to want to allow the full range of human experience into writing that we purport to use for research, study and discovery. I use the word ‘reasonable’ throughout the thesis in the Socratic sense. Socrates, who many (including Plato) have epitomised as the ideal of reasonableness, endeavoured “to discover the truth ... and to arrive at justified beliefs through inquiry and deliberation” (Nathanson, 1994:6). In other words, the sense of the ‘reasonable’ imparted here is one that is arrived at ‘through inquiry and deliberation’, this being undertaken thoroughly and being inclusive of all we can discover. In other words, the sense of the ‘reasonable’ imparted here is one that is arrived at ‘through inquiry and deliberation’, this being undertaken thoroughly and being inclusive of all we can discover.

Inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi is an instruction: “Know thyself”. This phrase, attributed by Plato to the “Seven Wise Men” (Oxford Dictionary of Quotations) might appear ‘obvious’. Repeated by Socrates and countless other philosophers, teachers, spiritual guides, writers, and so on, it is arguably not only at the foundation of philosophy itself but also at the heart of all major spiritual teachings. However, it is at the same time so deep and elusive that in practice it has mostly been overlooked by Western civilization in its quest for knowledge. For me the counsel given by this phrase: “know thyself”, goes hand in hand with Shakespeare’s: “to thine own self be true”, (taken from Hamlet, this is Polonious’ advice to his son Laertes, though the ‘original’ meaning of this is not necessarily a profound one). I see these two phrases as being linked, for it is only by being true to yourself that you can come to know yourself, and
only through knowing yourself that you can be true to yourself. This is not just paradoxical rhetoric, but rather shorthand for explaining a process which can be clearly perceived by going beyond basic linear thinking. As in a dynamic dance, over time forming a spiral, the two recommendations flow in and out of each other, each taking turns in informing and being informed by the other so that together they gradually gain fulfilment and depth.

I would explain being true to oneself as akin to being honest with yourself in the process of getting to know your-self. This would allow one to experience emotions, thoughts, attitudes and life openly as they occur, without the control and filters of rationalising processes which have a priori agendas. Of course this is ‘easier said than done’ and likely to be only discovered as desirable by one in retrospect, as in the raising (often seen and referred to as the ‘civilising’) of a child are used many layers of rationalising filters which are taught as being ‘right’, and we therefore grow up believing that what we internalise as ‘supposedly unquestionable’ is necessarily part of life. At this point some might argue that a person is made up of all that she/he is taught including all those controls and filters. However, it is also plausible to believe that we are not initially a ‘tabula rasa’ (Latin for ‘blank slate’) when we are born, but that we are already each a being with a unique ‘essence’ or ‘self’.

More controversy might be seen as being brought in by the use of these problematic words – essence and self – but this Introduction is not the place to argue for the validity of any term I choose to use; here I just want to ‘introduce’ the terms I use in this thesis and give the reasons for my choices. Jung calls a human being’s essence “the “Self” and describes it as the totality of the whole psyche, in order to distinguish it from the “ego”, which constitutes only a small part of the total psyche ... [or] inner center ...” (Franz,
Through the exploration of the ‘Self’, Jung emphasises the importance of knowing and understanding oneself. This is a simple explanation for something which is very complex and in-depth; I will therefore repeat and elucidate this further at many points throughout the thesis, as it needs to be approached from many angles and linked to numerous and varied explanations so that a more complete picture of the ‘self’ may emerge.

Biologically it is a fact that we each start life as an invisible tiny core which, despite differing beliefs, we might all agree also contains a unique combination of genes. Daniel Goleman points out in *Social Intelligence*, that (2006:151):

> It is biologically impossible for a gene to operate independently of its environment: genes are designed to be regulated by signals from their immediate surround, including hormones from the endocrine system and neurotransmitters in the brain – some of which are profoundly influenced by our social interactions.

This starts to occur from the moment we are conceived and continues throughout our life, as is explained by the science of epigenetics - “the study of ways the experiences we undergo change how our genes operate” (2006:150). We could therefore see ourselves - who we are (even when we are first born) and become - as being a unique result of a combination of nature and nurture. A nature that, I would maintain, is therefore essentially creative given its varied choices of responses to all that we experience. In being open to being deeply affected by these experiences it is also a nature that is vulnerable, and therefore needs nurturing so as to be able to express itself and come to fulfilment. An in-depth explanation of this is given in Chapter Three, where the nurturing of creativity is discussed at length. While from this brief introduction explaining the thesis and its title, I now move on to elucidate how I arrived at it.
I had a dream soon after I began the final writing of the thesis: I was in a maze-like labyrinth that was open to the sky, with walls made of sheets of blue cobalt steel welded together. The passages were the size of common corridors, neither wide nor narrow, but in some spots there were lots of people so that it was crowded and difficult to get through. I could see that there were rooms in places attached to the corridor, where people lived. I kept walking and soon found that I encountered less and less people, I felt that I was getting to the edges. Eventually, where there were no more people, I turned a corner and came to what looked like a ‘dead end’. The way seemed blocked ahead by two panels of steel joined side by side, but as I walked towards them the perspective changed and I realised that they were not in fact attached to each other, and that the panel on the right was further away from me. As I kept walking towards it and past the panel on the left I saw that there were no more panels beyond these two, but an opening onto beautiful countryside which, from where I was standing still inside the labyrinth, revealed a copse of trees on the right and a gentle grassy incline on the left leading to what looked like a lush and scenic valley. I felt my heart start beating in my throat, excited at the thought that I would soon be running down to that valley, finally free from constraint. But then I was surprised by an unexpected thought: “Now that I know this is here, I must remember it and not go too far from it, so that I can come back and show it to others.” And with this I turned from the opening and started winding my way back through the labyrinth again... the dream ended there.

Dreams have, throughout the ages, been seen as both sources of mystery and revelation. While there remains much speculation on what dreams are specifically for, and research on dreaming continues within the fields of psychology and neurology, they are also explained as being an integral part of how we process our experiences and a way for our subconscious (I use the term ‘subconscious’ in place of the term ‘unconscious’, used by Jung, to highlight the possibility of becoming aware of what we are unconscious of) to communicate with our conscious minds. According to Marie-Louise von Franz “Jung
discovered that dreams can also give civilized man [sic] the guidance he needs in finding his way through the problems of both his inner and his outer life” (1978:220). She further stipulates (p.221) that:

In our civilized world, most dreams have to do with the development (by our ego) of the ‘right’ inner attitude toward the Self, for this relationship is far more disturbed in us by modern ways of thinking and behaving than is the case with primitive [sic] people. They generally live directly from the inner center, but we, with our uprooted consciousness, are so entangled with external, completely foreign matters that it is very difficult for the messages of the Self to get through to us. Our conscious mind continually creates the illusion of a clearly shaped, “real” outer world that blocks off many perceptions. Yet through our unconscious nature we are inexplicably connected to our psychic and physical environment.

In other words, by giving intellectual credence almost exclusively to matters that can be scientifically and technologically ‘proven’ and defined, our Western society chooses to ignore all other matters that nonetheless play pivotal parts in our lives and within our beings. Not surprisingly many of our dreams try to correct this self-imposed myopia by helping to point the way to becoming more whole. While it is gratifying to find scholars such as Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz espousing these views, my reasons for including the above dream in my PhD thesis is primarily quite practical. I have included it for the simple reason given in my initial explanation of SPN, which is “to admit the full range of human experience into formal scholarly writing” (Nash, 2004:29). Despite some individuals claiming that they do not dream or hardly ever remember dreaming, with almost a third of our lives spent sleeping our joint experience undoubtedly includes a lot of dreaming; thus it seems to me reasonable to assume that our dreams are a significant part of our human experience.
I have learnt that it is only by being impartially open and honest in my approach to research, rather than deciding *a priori* what will be or will not be included and where I will look for this, that I can gain insights from which to make meaning. It was through this process that my research focus, which formally started out as ‘the nurturing of creativity in education’, became ‘the nurturing of creativity’. In the course of interviewing people from the educational community, including parents, teachers and students, I found that most were disillusioned with high schools. They shared with me that creativity was scarcely nurtured within the confines of formal education; it was according to them more often a case of education stifling creativity. This was something that I could corroborate, having experienced it first-hand while being a ‘practitioner’ when gaining a Diploma of Education, and subsequently when teaching part time during the first year of my doctorate degree.

As I was collecting material and data on this topic, reading and interviewing participants about it, I began to feel very uncomfortable about the idea of becoming an ‘expert’. This after all is part of what doing a PhD is all about – you focus your research on a specific topic of interest to you that has not been adequately focused on before (as far as you know and can garner from research), or at least not in the way you intend, and you fill a gap in the knowledge by making a contribution of ‘new and original knowledge’. Though this could be construed to be ambitious in a sense, we do live in a world that is so abundant with distinct ‘things’ (even more than “the ten thousand things” referred to throughout Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching* (Dale, 2002)) that there always seems to be something to be found that has not been looked at before.

We are each of us different, with a uniqueness that permeates all levels, deep ones as well as that which shows itself in appearance. We are different in physical details: we
each have a specific combination of genes giving us a unique mix of characteristics. These include some particularly individual ones such as an exclusive set of finger prints, and irises with so many distinctive features that iris recognition is now being hailed as the most secure way of authenticating people’s identities. We each have a unique intelligence, as Sir Ken Robinson pointed out at the 2005 Melbourne held conference “Backing our Creativity” (33):

... your intelligence is different from everybody else’s intelligence on Earth. You have a hundred billion neurons, a unique biography, a unique set of experiences, capacities, wishes, longings, and values. There has been no person like you in history, and there won’t be again. And we cannot afford to squander the resource. You’re unique. Your brain, incidentally, I’m told – your personal brain – is as different from everyone else’s brain, it’s as different from my brain as your face is different from my face, or as alike as mine, similar, but unique to you.

It could thus be argued that acknowledging and admitting the ‘self’ within the process of research would ensure that the requirement of ‘new and original contribution to knowledge’ was amply met. In other words, it would be reasonable to expect our unique intelligence and subjectivity to creatively transform what was being studied into something equally unique. Regardless of what was being looked at, allowing and perhaps even encouraging researchers to be guided by their inner subjective perspective, rather than demanding that they remain ‘objective’, would go some way to guaranteeing sanctioned collaboration between their subjectivity and the material or topic in question. Hence, this would bring in new knowledge – new ways of looking at things, new applications and so on; the possible list is as endless as there are researchers. Openly promoting subjectivity could result in holistic and rigorous scholarship, grounded not only in methodologies to support and give expert authority
to the topic under investigation, but also buttressed by the context of the bigger picture that the wisdom of self-knowledge can provide.

However, rather than embracing our unique subjectivity as a ‘bonus’ that could open up inimitable opportunities, it is a much followed academic convention to insist on ‘objectivity’. During most of the journey of my PhD I found that I was pressured into constantly meeting specific requirements, and this led my attention away from my inner sense of being, from my awareness of being. As a result I experienced disconnection from my ‘beingness’, which became apparent to me as a feeling of being lost. Though not found in a dictionary, ‘beingness’ is a word that I have coined from ‘awareness’ and ‘being’ to mean a profound sense of self, or in other words - the experience of the continuity of oneself as a living being. Always present in me as an underlying foundation to my consciousness as well as an integral part of my consciousness – metaphorically akin to an iceberg (to use the well known metaphor), where only a small part is the visible part (the consciousness) - my beingness has often been ignored and overlooked.

In following the research guidelines I had set for myself, versions of the overall directives set up for all postgraduates, which looked great on paper and made for a rather attractive “programme of study” and subsequent “progress reports”, I was feeling stifled and out of time. While I was fulfilling requirements that were meant to further me along the PhD path, ironically these were in fact stopping me from delving into a vast and beautiful new territory to be researched that was opening up before me. I could see it but I was not ‘allowed’ to go into it because I had not planned for it, and as I had no map for it anyway it would never do to enter the ‘fanciful unknown’ – there were reports to complete, meetings to keep and books to read, and of course a PhD has to be confined within ‘clearly defined boundaries’.
At this time phrases like: “It is after your PhD that you get to write what you really want to write” and “After your PhD comes your really important work”, began floating around. I had a sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach on hearing this – was the PhD just another ‘hoop to jump through’? Was it all for show? And how could I contribute something that was new and original if I could not explore all that I wanted and needed to as it unfolded, but instead had to ‘stick to’ what had been planned? This maze of mind games was making me question the path of becoming an ‘expert’ even more, because if becoming an ‘expert’ meant getting further and further away from where my beingness wanted me to go then maybe I did not want to become one after all. In *Writing from the Heart*, Aronie says that “when you’re an expert there’s no room for error. There’s no chance for discovery. There’s no “anything is possible” because the expert has explored all the possibilities and the expert knows exactly how it should be done. Gone is the magic. Gone is the spontaneity” (1998:178). Of course that is literally impossible as nobody can explore ‘all’ of the possibilities in any particular scenario; however it aptly conveys the attitude of an expert – believing to be an expert is synonymous to locking your mind and heart away from any chance of wonder.

I began to consider the idea of dropping much of the educational focus (the external) from my PhD thesis so as to concentrate instead on the actual nurturing of creativity (the internal). But as my supervisors were quick to point out, the ‘nurturing of creativity’ is a huge topic and it needed to be made more specific for a PhD thesis. This is where uncertainty took hold; on one hand I yearned to be ‘true to myself’ and explore the nurturing of creativity however and wherever I was led to it, but on the other hand I found it hard to give up the journey I had planned – it was so neat, a perfect fit within the lines of requirements!
I now see the PhD journey I had originally set up for myself in a very different light: conformist and thus quite incongruous with the ‘actual’ nurturing of creativity, it was prepared to sacrifice creativity so as to pursue a rigidly methodical exposition of possible ways of ‘achieving’ (at least in appearance) the nurturing of creativity in high schools. By excluding the subjectivity of the self it would have remained theoretical (and hollow) regardless of how much action research was included in it. While claiming objectivity, it would have skirted around the topic; chasing knowledge, without ever daring to get to the heart of it by not allowing in the ‘non-academic’ experiences of the ‘self’ – both myself and the ‘selves’ of those interviewed. Regardless of how theoretically sound any amount of knowledge put into words is, or how objective it appears to be, the inescapable fact remains that it has had to be put into words by a ‘self’. With this ‘self’ being first of all a corporeal reality which, as David Abram puts it, “actually experiences things, this poised and animate power that initiates all our projects and suffers all our passions” (1997:46). Furthermore, as Liz Stanley states: “At a certain point, surely we must accept that material reality exists, that it continually knocks up against us, that texts are not the only thing” (1992:246). I therefore maintain that it is congruent to allow in the subjectivity of all the ‘selves’ involved in the research; for to exclude them would be to distort the findings.

Honesty without compromise was thus one of the main qualities I felt I needed to commit to in order to come out of the stalemate I was finding myself in, and yet it was difficult to let go of years of training of doing things the ‘right way’, of ‘paying my dues’. It was difficult to even rationalise doing things my way when I could not quite see myself as a ‘rebel’. Though I thought I knew the way I wanted to go I found it challenging to bring myself to start heading in that direction. And then something unthinkable
happened, shaking my life to such an extent that I was left reeling from the shock of it and on the verge of abandoning my PhD altogether: one of my sisters died.

Although it has now been over two years since then, I still cannot find the words to describe the pain I felt, the sadness, the endless guilt ... wondering if I could have done something of influence to prevent it from happening – maybe loving more, helping more, being more involved to advocate more strongly a different medical approach ... it was as if I were searching for a way to go back in time and change the outcome. I found her death almost impossible to accept and it made me sharply aware of my own mortality. Many of the things that I thought mattered suddenly lost all importance so that I had little patience with anything I perceived to be an autocratic construct.

At the same time, other things gained in meaning and relevance, like working with nature’s gifts of soil, sun and water to cultivate beautiful gardens; while others were revealed to me as being absolutely precious, so that I cherished times with my children, learning to be more present for them and other loved ones. Surprisingly, while the conscious ‘busy’ side of my research - those things commonly associated with doing a PhD like reading, writing, adding to a bibliography, and so on - slowed down considerably, my relationship to the nurturing of creativity deepened somehow. From being a concept confined inside research and within my thoughts, creativity became something ‘real’ that could hold me, opening up and making room for me, accepting me and enveloping me as I was, with all the pain, sadness, guilt, confusion, fear, or as the saying goes ‘warts and all’. So my focus turned inward, connecting to my beingness, as opportunities presented themselves to undertake creative endeavours that involved little known facets of myself, like those exploring dancing and drawing.
All of this has led to the development of a very different thesis to the one I had originally set myself to write, but it is now a thesis which I can wholly own with integrity, being as much a part of it as it is a part of me – it is my research story. As Robert Atkinson tells us in *The Gift of Stories* (1995:3-4):

> Story is a tool for making us whole ... a tool for self-discovery; stories tell us new things about ourselves that we wouldn’t have been as aware of without having told the story ... Our stories illustrate our inherent connectedness with others. ... In the life story of each person is a reflection of another’s life story.

Having started with the idea and belief that nurturing creativity is important, my PhD journey has enabled me to uncover many of the times throughout my life where this nurturing has helped me greatly. Being led to consciously nurture creativity I have now unequivocally experienced its worth at a personal level, so that as I write about it from what I have researched the personal experience serves as grounding and nourishment. Furthermore, this experience has helped me ‘walk the talk’, so that the ‘nurturing of creativity’ has almost become second nature for me. This has led me to recognise myself as being an advocate for creativity and the nurturing of creativity, which as a ‘label’ (not something I usually endorse) is more acceptable to me than any others, especially that of ‘expert’ could be. Being an advocate is something that is dynamic; thus I see myself as part of an ongoing process which allows me to become more and more of an advocate for creativity by growing into and developing my own creativity. Referring back to the dream I tell at the start of this Introduction, perhaps the idea of being an advocate suits me because it is something that may enable me to point the way out of the ‘labyrinth’.

Consistent to the idea of working from the inside out, chapters Three and Four are the core of the thesis, with Chapter Three looking at the complex subject of creativity,
including its need of nurturing in order to gain expression, and Chapter Four focusing on time and trust as facets of everyday living which can help to nurture the self’s creative nature as well as encourage a joyous expression of it. As core chapters they hold central and holistic arguments that explain the varied nature of creativity, and its need of nurturing. Chapters One and Two serve as introduction to the rest of the thesis, with Chapter One establishing the site of the thesis as the ‘self’, in this case ‘myself’ as a unique self who is holistically positioned within a number of contexts. Chapter Two builds metaphorical scaffolding, from many of the various theories and methodologies I have chosen, so as to provide support to the development of the exposition of my reasoning. Moreover, to establish a more holistic overview, it also shows how these theories and methodologies can be brought together and developed by the views I discuss in the thesis. As such, the resultant creative research methodology is basically woven into the body of the whole thesis, and this is explained further in Chapter Two.

Chapters Five to Seven advance the arguments given in the core of the thesis by relating the ‘inner’ to the ‘outer’ through an unfolding of narratives, drawn from the nurturing of creativity and interwoven with theoretical discussion. While some of the narratives are a personal sharing of my experiences, others’ quotes give insights from some of the stories told to me in interviews. This raises the generative and progressive nature of narratives, whereby they are shown to be interconnected, as each begets another or many others; these being qualities that are also displayed in the process of nurturing creativity. Lastly, the final chapter brings together all the threads of what has been discussed in the thesis and explores what the whole picture might look like. Thus Chapter Eight also includes a thorough deliberation on the value of being aware of ‘big picture’, or holistic, perspectives as opposed to limiting one’s awareness to only
specialised perspectives. Additionally, it outlines possible future directions where the nurturing of creativity, as suggested by the content of the thesis, may have a lasting transformative impact.

In keeping with the aim of scholarly personal narrative: “to admit the full range of human experience into formal scholarly writing” (Nash, 2004:29), as well as to be in harmony with the aim of a holistic perspective, throughout the thesis I weave the personal (mine as well as others’) together with the social and the academic. This makes for differing writing ‘styles’, and while I do not differentiate the personal narrative from the rest of the writing in any overt way, it will be clear to the reader when the transition is made as the texture of the writing changes. The exception to this are quotes from people I have interviewed, as well as recounts of dreams and fables, all of which are in italics; though italics are also used in the conventional way to highlight emphasis.

It is important to point out that, even though the focus of the research has shifted from the initial one of ‘nurturing creativity in education’, quotes from interviews with people from the educational community have been purposely retained; after all they are still about creativity (this is elaborated on in Chapter Six). Allowing other voices to be heard also amplifies a holistic perspective, as such they are written in italics so that they may be recognised but are allowed to stand alone, with no preamble to them. To help with understanding, and at the same time satisfy ethics requirements, the role of the person who has been quoted is given in brackets at the end.

The weaving together of different writing styles throughout the thesis mainly serves to integrate its holistic approach. Because of this however, in order to facilitate ‘keeping track’ of the journey undertaken through each chapter (which by ‘meandering’ covers much ground), at the end of each chapter I revisit the connections that have been made
to central contexts – those which could be seen as being ‘landmarks’ on the journey. These ‘inter-chapters’ also serve to give the reader a sense of the wholeness that is being woven; it is nonetheless important to remember that ‘that is all they are’ – a reminder of some of the journey of transformation that has been shared in order to assist with its recall.

In summary, the main point to reiterate about this thesis is that while it is an academic undertaking, it has nonetheless been developed from a holistic perspective which seeks to reveal the need for wholeness in the academic through the use of scholarly personal narrative. As such, and given the immense potential of studying the nurturing of creativity within many specific contexts, one specific subjective self has been chosen to provide the parameters for the thesis – the self of the author – ‘myself’. Creativity and the nurturing of creativity are therefore looked at subjectively from their effects on the ‘self’, with this being interwoven to scholastic research. Given this, the thesis necessarily departs from following standardised methodological approaches, embarking instead (not without trepidation at times) in open-ended discovery. It is the story of this journey that the thesis tells – a journey of personal transformation through the nurturing of creativity.
Chapter One:

Stepping Out as the Self

*It is strange to be here. The mystery never leaves you alone. ... Everyone is an artist. Each person brings sound out of silence and coaxes the invisible to become visible.*

(O’Donohue, 2004:xv)

It is the *research story* of a particular ‘self’ – myself – that is told in this thesis. Thus in this chapter I establish the site of the thesis as ‘myself’. As I see myself holistically within a number of contexts, I elucidate a self-reflexive ‘definition’ of myself and explore what entails a holistic approach. Furthermore, I look at the major contexts in question, these being: the social – influential facets of our communal history and experiences, which most importantly includes a look at ‘patriarchy’ as the hierarchical system we live under; and the personal - my subjective history and experiences.

My recognition of the importance of nurturing creativity as the basis for transformation has been, and indeed still is, a journey. As this process has unfolded over time, my understanding of creativity has crystallised before me as an ever clearer and more in focus concept. The experience of nurturing my own creativity has led me to start to see myself from a different and wider perspective, and at the same time begin to understand some of the causes for the discord and inner conflicts that have been hindering my self-awareness up to this time. As a result I have gained a more holistic awareness of who I am, including whom I emotionally, spiritually and physically feel
and sense myself to be, and who I intellectually believe myself to be. Perhaps it would also be more correct to say that to an extent I regained this awareness, given that in retrospect I realised it was something that had begun to develop within me as a young child. This was prior to my self-perception being affected by years of ‘socialisation’ in formal schooling, as well as in just growing-up, which resulted in the holistic awareness of myself becoming somewhat concealed for a time.

The centring of my recognition of myself, or in other words my identity, on the wholeness I am and feel myself to be, could be seen as the taking of an idealistic and political stand. Furthermore, this stand might be viewed as having a specifically feminist slant given that I am a woman who declines to accept the reductionist notion of identifying solely with the roles with which I am labelled: consumer, electoral constituent, daughter, wife, mother, teacher, and so on. However, to resist these limitations through a simplistic political mantle of ‘feminism’ would see me merely exchanging labels while still ‘playing’ within the rules of the ‘patriarchal tradition’. While this is not to say that I do not agree with much that feminism (in many of its permutations) stands for, and in fact I discuss this in Chapter Two, I choose however to connect to feminism on my terms (as many feminists do) rather than accepting any kind of constructed social ‘label’.

The term ‘patriarchy’ is fraught with misunderstandings and complexities; in this thesis I refrain from specifically focusing on the gender hierarchy so as to discourage a simplistic understanding that uses male/man/masculine as valid substitutions for the term. Though the absolute rule of the ‘father’ – the senior male – is the original meaning of the term from which developed the oppression of all ‘things’ ‘feminine’, it is nonetheless obvious that indeed men are also oppressed by ‘patriarchy’. As Thomas
Berry points out in ‘Patriarchy: A New Interpretation of History’ (where he draws from multiple works of feminism, ecology and ecofeminism), patriarchal institutions which control our way of life “have become progressively virulent in their destructive powers, until presently they are bringing about the closing down of all the basic life systems of the planet” (1990:145). Thus to help provide an understanding that can bridge these different meanings of ‘patriarchy’ my explanation of this term is necessarily complex and multilayered; so rather than offer a simplistic definition of it from the onset, by looking at various aspects of it throughout the thesis I build on what its significance is to the nurturing of creativity and to my journey of transformation.

I refer to ‘patriarchy’ as being a tradition because it has been instrumental in setting the rules of ‘civilised’ society for at least as long as we have had a written history - a history which seems to be principally about who has gained dominion over whom through the ages. Furthermore, these rules have become so ingrained and accepted as being ‘normal’ in our society that they are no longer recognised as having stemmed from patriarchy, a fact that is strengthened by it not being often named in current times. As Mary Daly points out, starting from: "the late nineties ... [the] nonnaming of patriarchy narrowed vision, so that connections couldn't be seen" (1998:234). When something we live with constantly is not explicitly talked about and recognised, it tends to fade from consciousness and becomes tacit. It can therefore exert even more influence by becoming an unquestioned ‘tradition’, or even being seen as ‘human nature’.

Patriarchy is the tradition that focuses exclusively on the assigned hierarchical values of the roles an individual is labelled with, without deigning to acknowledge the wholeness of ‘who’ one is. In Relating Narratives, Adriana Cavarero reminds us that it is this tradition that highlights the “discourse on the universal, with its love of the abstract and
its definitory logic” (2000:53). Thus borders, status, and facades are very important for patriarchy to continue functioning as it has been, with these helping in the installing and upholding of authority, mandates, rules and conformity. Another way of looking at the patriarchal tradition is as a hierarchical system of social order which is insidiously present in everyday life. In fact ‘hierarchies’ are present in almost every facet of our social life. Certainly they are reflected in the amounts of money people earn and the ways they earn it. There are hierarchies in all our institutions – from schools to nursing homes, as well as in our businesses, our religions, political structures and so on. In many cases a ‘hierarchy’ is also present within our families and extended families. Dale Spender speaks of this hierarchical system of social order in *Man Made Language* (1980:4):

> ... patriarchy is also a frame of reference, a particular way of classifying and organizing the objects and events of this world; it is a form of ‘order’ which patterns our existence (Cora Kaplan, 1976, refers to it as ‘patriarchal order’).

This ‘patriarchal order’ seems to organise everything and everyone hierarchically very specifically, so that there is a constant perception of an order where those who are the: ‘better’, ‘greater’, ‘richer’, ‘worse’, ‘lesser’, ‘poorer’ and so on, can be easily recognised. These comparisons are made according to the different values assigned to, and thus perceived in, the roles that individuals are identified with. For example someone purporting to be able to help people look after their health, like a ‘medical practitioner’ or ‘dentist’, is considered to be higher up the hierarchy than someone who helps people keep their homes clean, or looks after their children. Even though ‘cleaners’ and ‘babysitters’ evidently also help people look after their health - by providing them with a clean environment and recovery time from the often tiring task of attending to the needs of children - they however earn much less than ‘dentists’ and ‘medical
practitioners’ (and this is even when the recouping of educational costs are taken into account); furthermore they are also assigned a lower social status. Looking at what CEOs earn gives us yet another level of comparison; in the USA “In 1978, according to the Economic Policy Institute, the ratio of average CEO pay to average wage was about 35 to 1. By 2007 it was 275 to 1” (Hayes, 2010:38). What applies to American CEOs is probably not far from what applies to all CEOs as we are after all living in a ‘global economy’, and especially at the level of CEOs the market is more than likely international with all the multinationals and public companies who employ them. These sorts of figures are ‘beyond comprehension’, especially when so many people living in the same country as these CEOs (let alone third world countries) are struggling to survive.

Given that everything in a system of social order that is hierarchical is given a specific monetary value: home environment, education, food, health care, entertainment, and so on, this therefore influences what people can access as well as how they are perceived because of what they can access. All this inevitably has an impact on how people see themselves, whereby it is easy to identify with the hierarchical values that their roles are deemed to have, with some being valued more than others. Clearly, most of the roles with which this order defines me are in fact fulfilled by me in most of the expected ways, as many of these roles refer to my relationships like daughter, mother, sister, and wife. However, I no longer allow these roles to ‘fragment’ my perception of myself, something which for a long time they did indeed do with stultifying effects (I discuss this in chapters Four and Five). In other words, I do not accept nor maintain the boundaries which delineate each of ‘my roles’, nor do I accept their purported value. Instead, I identify with my ‘beingness’ (my awareness of being) which, as explained in the
Introduction, I experience and see as the continuity of myself as a living being. This
includes both the aspects of myself that I am conscious of as well as those which I am
not conscious of, though as the latter are nonetheless parts of me I acknowledge that I
may one day become aware of them.

My sense of ‘beingness’ is therefore very close to what Jung refers to as the ‘Self’,
describing it “as the totality of the whole psyche ... an inner guiding factor that is
different from the conscious personality” (Von Franz, 1978:162-163). I also experience
this beingness as being intrinsically connected to my physical, sentient body – therefore
I identify with a beingness/body fusion, or in other words a holistic self. In The Spell of
the Sensuous, David Abram looks in depth at the concept of the self, as connected to the
body, through the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (1997:45):

If this body is my very presence in the world, if it is the body that alone enables me to enter into
relations with other presences ... if without this body in other words, there would be no possibility
of experience – then the body itself is the true subject of experience. Merleau-Ponty begins, then, by
identifying the subject – the experiencing “self” – with the bodily organism. ... without this body ...
you could neither speak nor hear another’s voice. Nor could you have anything to speak about, or
even to reflect on, or to think, since without any contact ... any glimmer of sensory experience, there
could be nothing to question or to know. The living body is thus the very possibility of contact, not
just with others but with oneself [my emphasis] - ... Merleau-Ponty invites us to recognise, at the
heart of even our most abstract cogitations, the sensuous and sentient life of the body itself.

In other words, it is the corporeal reality of the body which by bringing together all that
is perceived by the senses allows for the abstraction of thought and reflection to be
made possible. With this inherent understanding, rather than allowing roles to define
me, I see the different roles that I could be said to be playing, as forming an
interconnected web of lived-in contexts, so that they become in effect ‘performative
spaces’ that my body and beingness animate from the depth of my centre. The main difference between this perception of myself and one that accepts the labels of roles, is that I identify with myself as being whole and it is this whole me who plays the roles I choose in the way I choose, rather than allowing roles (which have a relative hierarchical value) as dictated by any ‘outside authority’ to identify me. Though this difference may be subtle, I would maintain that subtle can nonetheless be very deep which would explain the big impact it has had on me. Its most significant effect being that a holistic self-perception enables my creativity to be nurtured to an extent that is much more far-reaching than a fragmented self-perception induced by ‘labels’ could ever allow.

To explain this further, it is important to devote some time to discussing the perspective, or point of view, which enables me to see and experience myself as I have described above. The perspective I speak of is closely connected to the nurturing of creativity, as it both enables the nurturing of creativity and is in turn engendered by it and thus this perspective is also the one I am using in the writing of this thesis; it is a holistic perspective and has already been mentioned as a holistic approach. But what does this mean? A holistic approach is different to the analytical/hierarchical combination that still seems the preferred approach in academic research and writing. While an analytical approach (also called a critical approach) can be very useful for arriving at the ‘heart’ - the crux - of whatever is being looked at, when this analytical approach is used in conjunction with a patriarchal perception of value it not only examines what is being discussed by cutting it up, but also by dividing, excluding and setting up boundaries.
On the other hand a holistic approach is used to look at the whole picture, with its myriads of parts (though details would not necessarily be focused on simultaneously to the same extent that single details are focused on in an analytical approach), by making connections, integrating, being inclusive and remaining open. For example in the study of marine (or other) life an analytical/hierarchical approach would not object to removing creatures from their environment to study them, and might perhaps even end up dissecting them to see how they function, or pin them to boards (as many now extinct butterflies have been) just to classify them. A holistic approach, however, would observe them in their natural habitat and take into account as many different contexts as it could in the given circumstances for the study. Moreover, as Pink points out by quoting Denning in *A Whole New Mind*, a holistic approach such as “Storytelling doesn’t replace analytical thinking ... it supplements it by enabling us to imagine new perspectives and new worlds ... Abstract analysis is easier to understand when seen through the lens of a well-chosen story” (2005:106). Being open and inclusive a holistic approach is therefore also inclusive of abstract analysis.

Even though we may not be able to totally and concretely perceive something’s wholeness – as in for example, physically seeing the whole of a tree (or whatever else we are looking at), which we can only see one side at the time – we can nonetheless perceive it through an inner storehouse of knowledge, an inner ‘knowingness’. This inner knowingness critically makes use of our experience while at the same time it also utilises creativity and imagination to communicate its findings to us. Thus we can imagine and therefore ‘see’ the whole tree even while seeing only a part of it; we trust our knowingness of a tree because it is connected to our experience of a tree. In other words, the more trees we have seen from different views and angles, the more readily
we can access those experiences and perceive the tree we are viewing as being whole. It is this complex process of both analysis and creativity that allows us to tell the difference between a real tree and one that has been constructed as part of a theatrical set. Though complex, this process of perception is not difficult for us; it takes very little time and does not have to be consciously broken down into its component steps (many of which happen simultaneously) for us to understand it or make use of it. Having studied this very process of perception, Gestalt psychology can help to explain it (Soegaard, 2010).

As given in the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, Gestalt is a German word meaning: “a configuration, pattern, or organized whole with qualities different from those of its components separately considered”; Gestalt psychology was developed in the early 1900s by German psychologists who put forward the line of reasoning “that the nature of the parts is determined by, and secondary to, the whole. They saw this as applying to every field of psychology ... [as well as to] philosophy, science and art”. Mads Soegaard further elucidates, in ‘Gestalt principles of form perception’ (2010), that:

Gestalt psychology ... accentuates concepts like emergent properties, holism, and context. In the 30s and 40s [it] was applied to visual perception ... to investigate the global and holistic processes involved in perceiving structure in the environment ... [and] to explain ... how [it is that] we perceive parts of objects and form whole objects on the basis of these.

It is telling of our propensity towards a holistic view of things that the breaking down (fragmenting) of a process into steps, such as the description of viewing a tree as given above, actually makes both the understanding and use of it more difficult. This is especially significant given the insistence by the education system to exclusively scaffold teaching and learning into a series of steps accompanied by detailed
instructions. Students are then made to methodically and repeatedly practice and explain the individual steps with the aim of specifically mastering them, rather than honing the skill as a whole. The belief that learning requires such linear breaking down and explanation to occur (as for the writing of a computer algorithm) likens humans more to machines than to other living systems, and disregards the holistic way that we learn as children. As Wittgenstein discusses in *Philosophical Investigations* "we just speak to children, and they learn. We don't have to explain what language is first" (Heaton & Groves 1994:39). Thus we first learn to speak by being spoken to; from talking to walking, to exploring the world around us, we learn it all by delving into each experience fully and holistically, not by fragmenting it into details which are then taken out of context. In *The Power to Transform*, Stephanie Pace Marshall states this unambiguously, (2006:38):

> Although learning is the creative process of life, our current learning story conceives it as a mechanistic, prescribed, and easily measured commodity that can be incrementally and uniformly delivered to our children. This narrative could not be more wrong. Learning emerges from discovery, not directives; reflection, not rules; possibilities, not prescriptions; diversity, not dogma; creativity and curiosity, not conformity and certainty; and meaning, not mandates.

In a society such as ours that hierarchically favours a specific analytical view of processes and systems so that they include only ‘valued’ steps that can be consciously explained and followed, where ‘logic’ has been revered since the time of the Greeks and ‘reason’ championed since the Enlightenment, it is interesting to note that there is nonetheless considerable value said to be placed on ‘outcome’ and ‘product’. However, it does not take much reflection to realise that this is clearly incongruous considering that as long as all that is ‘not yet understood’ is disregarded and purposely omitted, then
even the ‘best of outcomes’ can only ever be, or be made use of as, a selection of fragments.

In *Linked: how everything is connected to everything else and what it means for business, science, and everyday life*, Albert-László Barabási discusses where this modern obsession with detail has led us (2003:6):

Reductionism was the driving force behind much of the twentieth century scientific research. To comprehend nature, it tells us, we first must decipher its components. The assumption is that once we understand the parts, it will be easy to grasp the whole. Divide and conquer; the devil is in the details. ... Now we are close to knowing just about everything there is to know about the pieces. But we are as far as we have ever been from understanding nature as a whole. Indeed, the reassembly turned out to be much harder than scientists anticipated.

“Divide and conquer” seems a maxim that is more suited to warfare than to the understanding of nature of which we are a part, or as Alan Watts puts it: “The hostile attitude of conquering nature ignores the basic interdependence of all things and events – that the world beyond the skin is actually an extension of our own bodies.” (1989:10-11). To either insist on reductionism, or else to dismiss what is too complex to be understood, hardly seems reasonable. This approach gives rise to paradoxical and ironic situations, for both organisations and individuals, where although certain values are openly ‘asserted’, like the idea of nurturing creativity in education, what is done or not done proves to be quite inconsistent with these values.

Likewise it is also paradoxical to ‘pay lip-service’ to something, and this is a practice that can be found abundantly in seminars and conferences. For example, Jason Clarke from Minds at Work (an Australian organisation) is frequently an invited key-note speaker at educational conferences as, despite having achieved the lowest Year 12 score in his
school in 1977, he is much sought after for his creativity and innovation. Though this clearly points to the incongruity between tertiary entrance scores and creativity, and even after having listened to him, the educators who are part of his audience nonetheless continue to run schools that still persist in maintaining the status quo rather than nurturing creativity. What is more, it is totally accepted as normal that this should be the case. It appears to be customary to express agreement but not to put that agreement into practice, and thus there are huge gaps between how we might want things to be and what they are really like. In all likelihood if creative innovations were in fact to be implemented on a large scale without delay it would probably cause much surprise! Although it might be argued that it takes time to implement change, more often than not it is a case of a lack of intention rather than a lack of time, as the biggest changes could be implemented through a change in attitude (this is further discussed in Chapter Three).

Despite being considerably complex, a whole picture approach (our holistic perspective) allows for deep understanding as it is congruent with whom we are, the ‘self’ as a whole person - an inherent beingness extended through the physical body in such a way that it presents, and ‘is’, a continuous whole. This is especially important because, as I mention at the beginning of this chapter, within the hierarchical order we live in the ‘self’ has also been fragmented into different hierarchized roles and functions. Rather than people as whole beings, it is mostly these fragments that are discussed and considered when decisions of all kinds have to be made, and the various roles and functions of the self are often set up against each other, thereby creating inner conflict. The roles believed to be based on ‘rationality’ are the ones that have been placed at the top of the hierarchy and assigned the highest values. The functions and roles that have
been put at the bottom of the hierarchy are those that are too difficult to be completely understood and/or explained and controlled. Among these aspects of the self are: our inherent creativity, intuition, humour, emotions, bodily functions and responses, playfulness, as well as many of the ‘roles’ that are seen as carrying the responsibility for caring and nurturing, and so on.

Through the familiar experience of oneself as ‘whole’ – a combination of mental, emotional and bodily functions working together in concert – that we live with everyday, one is thus equally able to utilise a holistic perspective to consider the ‘whole’ of whatever is being ‘looked at’. Thus, an ability to perceive the ‘whole’ is an almost subconscious extension of our experience of being ‘whole’. Though we are made up of many parts and the self has many facets, most of us identify with all of these connected together (this is linked to how we perceive the whole from parts as explained above by Gestalt psychology). So we say, think and feel: “I am going to call my friend because I miss him/her” and not: “My hand is picking up this phone and making a call, so that my emotional self can speak to the person he/she has formed an attachment to.’ Moreover, this holistic perception of ourselves can help us to realise that perception itself, together with that which makes it possible – our own selves – are also part of the wholeness that we perceive; in other words, we and what we do and how we see, are also part of this whole world. Though we are whole we are also part of a bigger whole than each of us is.

This ability of perceiving the whole is an extremely complex experience and it is therefore also a complex concept, and although it is to us as familiar as breathing and eating are, so that we do not find it difficult to do (as explained above), we do encounter this complexity when we attempt to explain ‘what’ and ‘how’ we perceive.
Though difficult, we are nonetheless able to describe the ‘wholeness’ of something, so that in most cases we could convey the understanding of it to others, specifically because they have had similar experiences. This is especially the case if we rely on the input we gain from our senses and give detailed descriptions of these, each sense adding to the total descriptiveness of the ‘whole’ until understanding is reached. An example of how this wholeness needs to be connected is provided a couple of paragraphs further on, with the story of the seven blind men – in gaining information only from their sense of touch, and of only one specific part of the ‘whole’, their ability to perceive holistically is inhibited. This story provides a useful analogy to how our ability to perceive wholeness can be obstructed.

In *On Creativity*, Bohm connects the occurrence of fragmentation to our use and development of thought and language, for although (2004:76):

*... there is a real need for thought and language momentarily to focus attention on one thing or another, as the occasion demands ... [however,] when each such thing is regarded as separately existent and essentially independent of the broader context of the whole in which it has its origin, its sustenance, and its ultimate dissolution, then one is no longer merely focusing attention, but, rather one is engaged in breaking the field of awareness into disjoint parts, whose deep unity can no longer be perceived.*

While it is natural for us to operate from a holistic perspective as children, in growing up it becomes almost inevitable for us to internalise an ‘*institutionalised perception*’. This is what I have called a perception that, being primarily based on conforming to the way institutions operate, therefore accepts the hierarchical viewpoint of our society as being ‘intrinsically right’. By extension this means also accepting the value labels this ruling hierarchy defines things with as being ‘right’, as well as its established use of language and thought along the existing paradigms. This acquired perception negates
our previous holistic one, and can thereby set up internal conflict between our minds and our senses, as our senses often retain a holistic perception. Thus putting aside a holistic perspective of open communication and relationship, where both we and what we perceive are part of the whole, as we grow up we adopt a view of the world that is rather simplistic, dichotomous and fragmented into 'subject' and 'object'. As Abram puts it (1997:56):

To define another being as an inert or passive object is to deny its ability to actively engage us and to provoke our senses; *we thus block our perceptual reciprocity with that being*. By linguistically defining the surrounding world as a determinate set of objects, we cut our conscious, speaking selves off from the spontaneous life of our sensing bodies.

By accepting (and sometimes even adding to) the fragmentation of our own selves, including the ‘fundamental’ division into ‘subject’ for our thinking conscious minds and ‘object’ for our corporeal sensing bodies, we are therefore only able to perceive fragmentation in the world around us. Thus a child in Western society who is taught about ‘opposites’ does not take long to start making sense of the world through the use of common opposite pairs – light/dark, good/evil, male/female, rich/poor, or as Hélène Cixous refers to them: “... dual, *hierarchized* oppositions ... Wherever an ordering intervenes, a law organizes the thinkable by ... oppositions” (1981:91). This ‘universal’ use of opposites and hierarchies has resulted in a perspective – driven by the hierarchical values of patriarchy - that is rigidly myopic, and yet it is nonetheless the one that our modern world is governed by and that many important decisions are based on. For one of the pairs to be ‘right’ the other must be shown to be ‘wrong’, thus as Bohm states: “each individual human being has been fragmented into a large number of separate and conflicting compartments ... to such an extent that it is generally accepted that some degree of neurosis is inevitable ...” (1980:1). This is not surprising, as this
reductive binary view of the world results in forced divisions for one who could initially see the many gradations (or ‘shades of grey’) bridging the black/white pairs, and these divisions render meaning elusive.

There is an old, and in some circles well-known, story re-told by Ajahn Brahm in *Opening the Door of Your Heart* (2008: 154-156) that not only helps to illustrate the restrictiveness of this sort of imposed perspective, which throughout the thesis I refer to as *institutionalised perception*, but also demonstrates the importance of a holistic perspective.

The story relates how long ago a king had some troublesome ministers who argued constantly. Nothing could ever get done as they did not agree on anything, each one claiming to be right while the others were wrong!

Then one day the King decreed a public holiday that was to include special performances in a spectacular show. Many people came to see the event, including of course all of the ministers who were given the best seats. At the end of the show the King brought his royal elephant into the amphitheatre followed by seven men, who were known to all as having been blind since birth. The King guided the first man’s hands to feel the elephant’s trunk and told him that this was an elephant. He then placed the second man’s hands on one of the elephant’s tusks, and the third’s on its ears, he had the fourth man feel its head, and the fifth its torso, the sixth a leg, and finally he had the seventh man feel the elephant’s tail. In a loud voice he then asked the men to take turns and tell the audience what an elephant was.

Still feeling the trunk, the first blind man stated that he was certain that an elephant must be a species of snake. At this the second blind man, holding a tusk, was outraged and declared that an elephant must undoubtedly be a type of plough. Feeling an ear, the third blind man announced that an elephant could be none other than a palm leaf fan. By this stage the fourth blind man, who had been feeling the head, was doubled up in
laughter and hollered that only fools could mistake a large water jug for all those other things. With his hands still on the torso the fifth blind man interrupted and proclaimed that an elephant could only be an enormous rock. The sixth blind man jeered at this description saying, while feeling a leg, that clearly an elephant was a tree or maybe even just a trunk. The last blind man, who had been feeling the tail, derided them all exclaiming that an elephant was indisputably some sort of flywhisk.

Shouting over each other, the blind men began arguing so vehemently that they got into a terrible fight. It didn’t seem to matter to them that they couldn’t see who they were hitting, “They were fighting for principle, for integrity, for truth. Their own individual truth, …” (2008:156). As the King’s soldiers pulled apart the fighting men, everyone present looked to the ashen ministers as all understood the meaning of the King’s lesson.

As Brahm points out: “Each one of us can know only a part of the whole that constitutes the truth” (156). While we ourselves are whole (like any living cell is), though still made up of many parts, we are also part of a much bigger ‘whole’ – a whole ecosystem, a whole world, and so on. Abram reminds us that “the boundaries of a living body are open and indeterminate; more like membranes than barriers, they define a surface of metamorphosis and exchange” (1997:46). Yet, if instead of recognising this we hold our limited knowledge to be ‘the truth’, that can be proved ‘right’ by proving another’s truth ‘wrong’ – this being largely the conventional argumentative way of accepted academic methodology, then we are being just like “the blind men feeling a part of the elephant and inferring that their own partial experience is the truth, all else being wrong” (2008:156). In doing this we take that which we ‘see’ completely out of context by severing it from the whole. On the other hand, embracing a holistic perspective allows us to accept wholeness and complexity so that through openness and dialogue with others, we may together get closer and closer to understanding truth. “Imagine the
result if the seven blind men, instead of opposing their data, had combined their experience” (156). The ‘wholeness’ of the elephant, though difficult to perceive by each blind man alone, could have been arrived at by each description being added to the others’ in a dialogic and collaborative way.

It is not implausible to imagine the seven blind men as being representative of rigid academic faculties (or government departments, or different industry sectors, and so on). As within any one faculty would be studied specific aspects of things deemed to be rightly belonging inside its boundaries and domains, the interconnection existing between different faculties would hardly be considered, and thus the members of each faculty would argue for the supremacy of their particular point of view. A holistic approach is instead by nature interdisciplinary because it is all about the ‘big picture’, which however does not necessarily mean that the details are glossed over. This is well exemplified in chaos theory, which uses a holistic approach to look at “complex systems and their environments” (Schueler 1996:22), where minute changes are known to be able to affect complex and very large systems – in chaos theory this is known as the “butterfly effect”.

Mathematician and meteorologist Edward Lorenz ‘discovered’ in 1961 that the difference in tiny details can have substantial effects on huge and complex systems. This phenomenon has been dubbed ‘the butterfly effect’, theoretically even the flapping of a butterfly’s wings could conceivably and significantly impact on air currents: “If a butterfly flaps its wings in Tokyo, then a month later it may cause a hurricane in Brazil” (Cohen & Stewart, 2000:191).

In The Collapse of Chaos, Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart “define the complexity of a system as the quantity of information needed to describe it” (2000:20). Complexity theory is
linked to chaos theory, and is being studied as an interdisciplinary science; it has been defined as: “a chaos of behaviours in which the components of the system never quite lock into place, yet never quite dissolve into turbulence either” (Waldrop, 1992:293). In other words a complex system is a dynamic system, which though it may appear chaotic does not actually degenerate into chaos; however it is still very difficult to accurately predict its next stage as, from where we stand, there are no easily discernable patterns to be found. Thus, since a complex system is one that resists systemization, it follows that complexity has also been defined as the capability to “switch between different modes of behaviour as the environmental conditions are varied (Nicolis & Prigogine 1989:218), so that as Schueler states: “complex systems are able to adapt to their environments” (1996:22). They could therefore be said to be in a constant state of flux and flow.

The above descriptions of complex systems could aptly cover most living things and natural phenomena including human nature, behaviour and interaction. This therefore fits the ‘self’ quite well, especially if one looks at the whole self complete with creative potential, rather than solely at the fragmented and bordered parts of the self as seen through an institutionalised perception. The human being, this ‘self’, is indeed a natural phenomenon for, regardless our individual beliefs of how humans first came to be on earth, we would be hard put to argue that we are not in fact an intrinsic part of the natural physical world. However, given the endless resources of time, energy, lives, and so on, that have been dedicated to raise ‘man’ (the use of this term is intentional) above the rest of the physical world, it would be reasonable to deduce that being a part of the natural world is somehow perceived as an unacceptable state of affairs by many in our society. Indeed the way that this raised ‘man’ is now bent on achieving the destruction
of the physical world – pollution, global warming, unsustainable mining and use of natural resources, destruction of many animals’ habitats, destruction of old growth forests, and so on - could be said to reflect the successful and almost total disconnection from nature, including from our own human nature.

Though it appears that it is no longer discussed much, the concept of patriarchy is something that needs to be addressed thoroughly in this thesis (as stated at the beginning of the chapter) for it is the one constant that I have found throughout my life to be at the basis of whatever seems to be opposed to the nurturing of creativity. Indeed, I have so far identified it to be also the main principle of anything that counters nurturing, or denies even just the idea of an egalitarian joyful life – it is the bedrock of things such as war, profit as the main reason for work or enterprise, and the misuse of power in countless situations. Though it may seem that I digress from discussing creativity by delving further within the machinations of patriarchy, it is important that I show the extent of its hold on our society as this greatly affects creativity. It is the values of patriarchy that form the basis of an institutionalised perception that supports our hierarchical order. It is an institutionalised perception that actively blocks the perception of an open perspective which is vital for the nurturing of creativity.

Though John Ralston Saul does not name patriarchy, in Voltaire’s Bastards, he nonetheless aptly describes its rule in oppressing women and rendering them subordinate. Being traditionally the main holders of ‘feminine’ roles, women have most often been the ones to display qualities of nurturing (1993:35):

It would ... be a great error to assume that our society has had or has within it today the basic flexibility to allow real female participation. ... [not to] suggest that women have played no role inside the structures of power ... Today, more than ever, women are occupying positions of
influence ... in the past they have been the exceptions to the rule and they were usually obliged to
hold on to their power by deforming themselves into honorary men or into magnified archetypes of
the female who manipulated men. It is still not clear that women can successfully become part of
the established structures without accepting those deformations ... the realities of Western rational
civilization ... [are] realities. Women might well want to change that ... Even if they do so, it is
difficult to see why women would want to claim responsibility for what has gone before.

Saul is one of a growing number of male writers (Thomas Berry, quoted at the
beginning of this chapter, is another) who openly acknowledge the general exclusion of
women from what Cavarero ironically calls “the glorious accomplishments of Man”
(2000:57-58), or in other words those feats of society deemed to be those that really
matter according to the hierarchal values of patriarchy. These include many of the
deeds told in history books and endlessly retold through mediums like movies, both
non-fiction and fiction books, and so on, over and over again tirelessly. This also
explains why war stories are so popular and why our children are made to learn so
many of their gruesome details at school; it is not to learn about the horrors of war so
that these may never be repeated again that they are made to endure this; no, rather it
is because wars are important within a society run according to the traditions of
patriarchy. Consequently wars are not likely to cease from being started while we deny or
‘play down’ the fact that our society is still ruled by patriarchy. For an example, one has
only to look at our official government websites about ANZAC Day (Australian War
Memorial, 2010):

ANZAC Day ... is probably Australia’s most important national occasion. ... When war broke out in
1914, Australia had been a federal commonwealth for only 13 years. The new national government
was eager to establish its reputation among the nations of the world. ... Although the Gallipoli
campaign failed in its military objectives, the Australian and New Zealand actions during the
campaign left us all a powerful legacy. ... the “ANZAC legend” became an important part of the

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identity of both nations ... The spirit of ANZAC, with its human qualities of courage, mateship, and sacrifice, continues to have meaning and relevance for our sense of national identity.

This site belongs to the Australian War Memorial, and bears the date 2010, meaning that it has been updated in 2010, or at least reviewed to see if it needed updating. Given that Australian society was vehemently divided during World War I as to whether to take part in the war (the referendum on conscription twice returned a “no” majority), I am surprised that this historical fact is not reported on this site. It is hard to believe that remembering how Australia ‘so eagerly’ proved itself in war is seen in 2010 as being the “most important national occasion”. There isn’t even a hint of apology, something along the lines of: ‘In retrospect it was realised that it was rather thoughtless to send all those young lads to their deaths’. According to patriarchal values however (and given the currency of war one might assume that many still share these) it is ‘right and proper’ to die in war for your country, commanding officer, and for whatever mission the governments involved consider appropriate. In the ANZAC case it ended up being for the ‘legacy’ of the “ANZAC legend” and the ‘spirit of ANZAC’, as defined by the patriarchal order. Another official government site sheds a somewhat different light on the noble, heroic and tragic ‘ideals’ enshrined by this legend and spirit (Australian Government, 2001):

Professor Manning Clark ... provides evidence of the ANZAC’s bad behaviour. As recruits, before being shipped to war, some indulged in sex orgies with an 18-year-old girl at the Broadmeadows camp, others confronted police in violent scuffles on the streets of Melbourne. Their behaviour in Egypt was no better - they burned the belongings of local people, brawled, got drunk and rioted, and spent sufficient time in the local brothels for many of them to suffer from venereal disease. Although perhaps less than heroic, this behaviour too - brawling, drinking, fighting - is part of the Australian construction of masculinity, ... Like it or not, hero and larrikin, ratbag and rebel, the ANZACs, in all their complex iconography, are an inextricable part of the Australian tradition of
masculinity. At Gallipoli, men from all backgrounds and classes from the newly federated Australia created the essence of what it means to be Australian - courage under fire, grace under pressure, giving a hand to a mate.

Though this paints quite a derogatory picture of the ANZACs, it is nonetheless seen as being part of “the Australian construction of masculinity”. Thus this "less than heroic behaviour" with its: “sex orgies”, “violent scuffles”, taking and burning the belongings of local people in their own country, brawling, rioting and getting drunk, is accepted and seen as almost giving rise to the ‘superlative’ qualities of “courage under fire, grace under pressure, giving a hand to a mate”. The meaning of being Australian is reiterated as behaving in a ‘generally nice way’ at the war-front; furthermore this is held up as being the essence of "what it means to be Australian". The last sentence in the above quote implies very clearly that only by fighting in the war did Australians finally find their identity, an identity that one supposes (given it is still seen as ‘legacy’) has since then been passed on to the womenfolk (despite its being steeped with masculinity), as well as to all others who did not take part in the war, who were in fact the majority of Australians.

Though this is an Australian example, similar examples could be found in most countries. This is especially so where arms constitute the leading commodity of the economy (Saul 1993:141-171), for as Saul states: “The most important sector in international trade is not oil or automobiles or airplanes. It is armaments” (141). The masculinity that is espoused in the second ANZAC website quoted, is a tragic masculinity imbued with all the hubris of a Greek hero; constructed by patriarchy it thus has the qualities that are valued highest by this hierarchical order. While Thomas Berry calls them: "the male values of conquest and dominion" (1990:153), I maintain that this statement is not necessarily a simplistic one - as in implying they simply belong
to human beings of the male sex - but rather that they are 'male' as in patriarchal, and as such they have been set up and reinforced as 'values' by all those who maintain the patriarchal order, men and women both. The simplistic substitution is an easy one to make, especially when over five thousand years of patriarchy's rule and traditions have placed mostly men (as opposed to women) in positions of power; it is therefore very important that 'male' and 'patriarchal' not be confused, so that the hierarchical system that is patriarchy may be more clearly seen.

Cavarero reminds us that “Philosophy asks after man as a universal” (2000:8); this can entice ordinary, though unique, men to trade in their uniqueness so that they may identify with the idealised universal – Man the ‘hero’ in all his ‘grandeur’. Patriarchy, as a specific hierarchical system that has enabled, and still enables, some of the men who have valued conquest and dominion to wield the most power by force, can thus be easily associated with the ‘grandeur’ of universal Man. The prestige imbued in the power that patriarchy bestows on those at the apex of the hierarchy (usually men) can be likewise easily mistaken with this idealised universal. Hence patriarchy and Man can become interchangeable, and this filters down to all men, trapping them within generalisations that they might find almost impossible to see their way out of without ‘losing face’ – like going to war. So it is that the patriarchal tradition “by ignoring uniqueness, celebrates the glorious accomplishments of Man .. [and] consents only to human beings of the male sex the ability to recognize themselves in this abstract universal” (2000:57-58).

In identifying with the generalised universal Man, individual men allow themselves to be fragmented and then reconstructed according to the patriarchal order so that only those fragments that are deemed acceptable as having some value are included; the ‘other’ parts of the denied self are repressed within the subconscious and cast into the
'shadow'. Jung tells us that the 'shadow' consists of "everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself [sic]" (1977:417), and this often ends up being projected on others so as to "have the illusion of being a whole person once again" (Hendrix, 1988:50). Hendrix explains this with an example of how projection can make someone believe they are in love (1988:50-51):

... we project whenever we take a part of the disowned self or the lost self and send it out like a picture onto another person ... He thought he was in love with a person, when in fact he was in love with an image projected upon that person. Cheryl was not a real person with needs and desires of her own; she was a resource for the satisfaction of his unconscious ... longings. He was in love with the idea of wish fulfilment and – like Narcissus – with a reflected part of himself.

Projection can also cause dislike, or even hate, if what is being projected is a repressed trait that is considered negative: "- the negative trait that had seemed so intense when I first saw him was really a part of me. I had taken the part of me that is arrogant – the part of me that does not fit with my image ... and thrust it onto Robert" (50). Though this process of denial and projection applies to both men and women, here I am exploring it as a possible psychological reason behind the oppression of women in a patriarchal society. In denying parts of themselves to fit in with patriarchy's values men are no longer whole, yet they yearn (even if often only subconsciously) to redeem these denied parts so that they might be whole again. They therefore project their repressed parts and then experience them, when they are mirrored back to them, as what they hate and love in 'others'. Or in other words, the 'Other', who for men is often most easily identified in women, may thus be hated and persecuted and yet is often also the cause of attraction precisely because this 'Other' is seen to embody (through projection) that which Man believes he no longer has and, through adherence to patriarchy's values, unconsciously believes he should not value.
While women are excluded from fully identifying with this universal Man (behind which stands a concealed ‘patriarchy’), this may have proved to be beneficial in protecting many of us women from the allure of entirely accepting the institutionalised perception as our own view of life. Despite this, I have found it bewildering and frustrating growing up in a patriarchal world that does not openly show itself for what it is and is constantly kept ‘hidden’. There were times when I felt I had been wronged, impeded or coerced somehow, yet I did not know how to even begin to stand up for myself. Though each incident itself might have seemed quite small and insignificant at these times, it was as though it heralded something much bigger and sinister, and I could sense beneath it a ‘quagmire of wrongness’ that would freeze me.

I was almost four when I first consciously became aware of my ‘self’, I remember it vividly. I had colourful pictures decorating my white wardrobe: they were pink and blue drawings of plush fluffy bunnies and they looked very realistic. I spent a lot of time playing and having conversations with them; what I remember is that one minute I was playing with them and then all at once (or so it seemed) I realised that I could not swap places with them, I was me looking at them and that was that. It was as though something had shifted within me, like a door opening and another one closing so that all I could access of my existence prior to that was a few fragments of colourful memories. Among them were those of my younger sister, by eleven months, who had died before I turned three. I had not been told about her death when it occurred, so for me she just disappeared. It was the convention then not to include children in grief, and as young parents mine did what they thought was the right thing to do. Apparently I kept on playing and talking with her, though I suppose that must have stopped sometime before I stepped into my consciousness. Or perhaps it was what brought on my self-awareness.
- a semiconscious decision to let her go. Regardless of how it happened, she was from then on unreachable.

From that time whenever I played I knew I was pretending, and all the memories of my childhood since are from the inside looking out, from the place where thoughts and feelings happen. Obviously I spent a lot of time there, observing and reflecting; and also listening to, or eavesdropping on, adults’ conversations of things they did not think I heard or understood, as they thought me engrossed in reading. I had learnt to read quite early and settling in an armchair with a book made me feel magical - it was as though I was invisible, and I was careful not to move or make a noise to draw any attention to myself. It was from as early as then that I began to become aware of much which did not make sense; not because I could not understand it, but because it was conflicting, absurd, or just plainly untrue. I did not know then of patriarchy or of the concept of institutionalised perception, I just saw adults who seemed to play at ‘pretend’ and then pretended they hadn’t.

By the time I reached my late teens my frustration had turned into rage, in itself not an unusual thing for a teenager. I remember wanting to physically shake people out of their complacency in accepting what seemed to me to be a confused jumble of often unfair events within a dreary existence, which was occasionally lit up by brilliance. Altogether in my school career I had frequented ten schools, in six different cities and towns, in two different countries. This maintained my role of ‘observer’, as I had never been in one place too long for any of them to appear ‘normal’, or for me to take them for granted.

Ideology has been said to be "a set of practices which make inequality seem as natural as the air students and teachers breathe" (Kenway & Willis, 1996:62). I did not find unfairness natural, and both any occurrence of it (wherever this may have been,
whether in the classroom or in world events) and my ongoing reaction to it, which was
to consider it a personal affront that I found hard to let go of, irked me greatly. On the
whole I thought of adults as being liars, whether through intent or circumstance.
Hungry for fairness, beauty and peace, I fluctuated between cynically seeing
conspiracies everywhere, to taking the weight of the world on my shoulders in wanting
to right all wrongs.

It wasn’t until I had children of my own that my view of life became softer and more
joyous. Nurturing my children and watching them grow has led me to reconsider many
things deeply. It has also made me realise that there is a lot more brilliance to be seen in
the world when looking through a holistic perspective. There is an adage that says that
children are sent to those who are ready to learn from them; I believe this with all my
heart as already I have learnt more than I ever thought possible (they are now thirteen
and ten), and more is disclosed to me every day. Having children has rekindled in me
much of the curiosity I had as a child, allowing me to rediscover myself; it has also
brought home to me the reality of the interconnectedness of life and the importance of
nurturing creativity.

Thus having, in this chapter, located ‘myself’ as the site of the thesis within the context
of a holistic perspective, Chapter Two builds the foundations and main framework to
support the development of the thesis.

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In this chapter I introduce the sense I have of myself, this beingness/body fusion that I
experience as being my whole self, as the ‘site’ of this thesis. Furthermore, I
contextualize how I have come to identify with this particular sense – with this having stemmed from a combination of communal social influences and personal life influences. While of course the specific life experiences I have had are unique to me, so that it could be argued that it is they which ‘make me who I am’, it is also how I have responded to communal influences that has shaped me – every decision and choice I have ever made set me up for the next one and the next, and so on. I consider one of the biggest influences of our social context to be ‘patriarchy’, and I have endeavoured to communicate the extent of the complexity that I perceive this social order we live under as having. Complexity itself is also discussed, since a holistic perspective reveals complexity wherever it looks – the self, creativity, the interconnectedness of life, and countless meanings and motives.

A holistic perspective is used throughout the thesis so it is important to explore it in this first chapter, I then return to it as a major focus in the last chapter. I therefore explain it in various ways: firstly I contrast a holistic approach to a reductionist approach; I look at it through Gestalt psychology; and I show how the intrinsic holistic perspective of children is inevitably replaced by an acquired ‘institutionalised perception’. This is the name I give to a perception that is guided by the values given by the hierarchical viewpoint of patriarchy, which most often also makes use of a specific analytical perspective as a method to provide a convenient way to include whatever supports patriarchy while excluding all else. Reductionism can often cause us to ‘lose sight of the forest for the trees’, for by taking the ‘trees’ out of context we run the risk of completely forgetting that they are in a ‘forest’. This, combined with a ‘carefully applied’ analytical force of ‘rationality’, can be a very useful tool for a social system like patriarchy to convince the general populace of the intrinsic rightness of its hierarchical values. This
conviction is particularly necessary to enforce patriarchy's ideals of conquest and dominion through all the social and 'personal' practices that this entails – from war to self-fragmentation.

On the other hand, a holistic perspective is shown to be based on connections, it enables those utilising it to be open to the new, but at the same time to be aware and accepting of their limitations, as in being able to acknowledge that there is much they still do not understand. Through a holistic perspective one can clearly see that there are 'wholes' and 'bigger wholes', or in other words something is at the same time a whole, though being made up of many parts, and yet is also part of a bigger whole. Moreover, a holistic perspective encompasses a 'holistic perception of the self', a perception that is vital to the enabling of creativity, as only by being aware of the self as whole can creativity be given sufficient scope to unfold.
Nurturing Creativity: a journey of personal transformation

Chapter Two:

Network of Support

What you have to do in this world you cannot do alone. Every successful human enterprise is a collaboration – a drawing together of diverse resources and energies...

(Sher & Gottlieb 1979:145)

In researching, reading and interviewing my way along the path of my PhD, I have journeyed through a great deal of disparate knowledge and material. Though I came across much that was tedious, so that at times I risked being overwhelmed by discouragement, there were even more times that I found ideas and points of view which made me feel that it had all been worth it. Some of these have messages to communicate that are congruent to the nurturing of creativity, so that to a great extent they support that which I write and have garnered through: experience (both my own and that of others), research, and my developing awareness of my sense of self – my beingness (as explained in the Introduction).

Other writings have provided me with connections which pointed to ways in which I could further develop my work. As time went by I refined my research so as to follow those leads that clearly support, enhance or elucidate creativity. This choice has in effect meant that creativity has been the central ‘methodology’ shaping the study. The result has been that much of what this ‘creative methodology’ led to has linked me to rich sources of inspiration, learning, and yet more creativity. All of this has enabled me to uncover an array of helpful literature which fits together well, and has provided me
with a network of support that has been very valuable for both my journey of transformation and the writing of this thesis.

In this chapter I therefore build metaphorical scaffolding (the loom) with some of the main literature that I have chosen to provide support for the development (the weaving) of my thesis. With creativity being the central ‘methodology’, the theories, methodologies and writings that I specifically focus on in this chapter are those that have the most overall affinity to it. The main ones (which are individually discussed at length further in the chapter) being: SPN, appreciative inquiry, ‘feminisms’, Cavarero’s theory of the ‘narratable self’ (2000:33), Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of ‘dialogic discourse’ (Zappen, 2000:7-20), are those that can thus provide me with the greatest backing. The ‘original’ methodology of some of these has been adopted and adapted for this thesis, and mainly provides a background structure - hence the metaphorical idea of the loom. Other literature like - Jung’s, Bohm’s, Saul’s, Robinson’s, Marshall’s, Aronie’s, Lederach’s, Abram’s, Goleman’s, and so on - instead appears more prominently throughout the thesis; as it imparts a different type of support to my writing, this requires it to be in the foreground. Moreover, in keeping with my holistic overview, I also show how the theories and methodologies explored in this chapter are intrinsically interconnected, as they can be brought together and further developed by the views I propose and discuss in the thesis.

As explained in the Introduction, scholarly personal narrative (SPN) is the main methodology I have chosen to structure the writing of this thesis. Apart from enabling my writing to be more holistic, the use of SPN espouses Jung's philosophy of the ‘Self’ (first explained in the Introduction), which stresses the importance of self-knowledge by endorsing the understanding of all parts of the Self. Coined by Robert Nash, a
professor at the University of Vermont and taught by him there as a course by the same name, SPN supports the practice of openly including the self in academic writing. In Liberating Scholarly Writing: The Power of Personal Narrative, Nash maintains that (2004:24-26):

As an author, you are always an insider; not omnisciently removed from what you write, but caught up personally in every word, sentence, and paragraph; in every statistic and every interview; ... The inclusion of the self in research and scholarship is inescapable, even more so when writers try intentionally to excise the self from their research. The “I” voice always has a way of seeping into an “objective”, third person text.

Why is it then that the traditional academic convention of going to much effort to remove these traces of the self, is still so often adhered to? As Nash’s and many other academic books will attest to this is finally beginning to change, and yet the belief that a treatise needs to be ‘authorless’ to command greater authority still seems to be prevalent. There is of course the postmodern idea that while the ‘author is dead’ the text is everything (Barthes, 1977:142-148), and yet at the same time the ‘authority’ of those in the cannon, and those deemed to be experts in their disciplines (even though they may have been literally dead a long time), continues to be revered. One could almost be forgiven for thinking that this ‘appears’ to be a case of ‘death’ bestowing distinction. It is useful to remember that once upon a time those enlightened scholars, who are now looked up to, were forging new ground and opening up new vistas with ideas never heard of before. It took some a very long time to be celebrated or even to be accepted in some cases. Ken Robinson comments on this in Out of our minds (2001:117):

There have been countless scientists, inventors, artists and philosophers who were ridiculed in their own times but whose work is revered by later generations. Think of Galileo ... Galileo's work was denounced for not being science at all. ... There are many examples of artists who died in
penury, whose work now changes hands for fortunes. Equally, people who were thought of as
visionary in their own times can be discredited by history for exactly the same reasons.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile remembering that no matter how much acclaim scholars receive, there always were, and still are, those with different and even opposing points of view, and this is so for most theories, beliefs or practices. Perhaps it might be worthwhile considering that all of these points of view may be needed so as to get closer to the ‘whole picture’ of reality, as the fable of the seven blind men (in Chapter One) suggests.

Ultimately, and perhaps even firstly (one would hope), writing is all about communicating an experience, idea, thought or discovery. And although there are many mediums through which to communicate, writing as an extension of talking is all about getting the message across, thus it is reasonable to suppose that clarity might be seen as one of the most important factors in writing. However, all too often academic writing is anything but clear, as Nash points out in his paraphrasing of Keyes: “The more a scholarly piece of writing needs translation, the higher evaluation it receives from scholars ... Use lots of insider words, complex syntax, and endless referencing, and you will be ... celebrated .. in no time” (2004:69). Traditional academic writing seems to encourage an obfuscating sleight of hand, or I should say sleight of pen. To draw an analogy from a well known children’s tale, it is as if academic writing were written by the likes of the Wizard of Oz, who does not want to be seen for the human he really is, and so hides behind a curtain and speaks in a booming voice into a microphone, as only by so doing does he feel he can have the authority of a great wizard.

On the other hand, SPN can enhance the clarity of academic writing because by revealing the writer it plainly shows that the writer is human. This renders the writing
more accessible, and it can also imbue it with more authenticity than any authoritative expert voice ever could; it does this because it can move the readers by connecting to their humanness. ‘Authenticity’ evokes validity, legitimacy and empathy, whereas ‘authority’ often carries with it a certain obligatory coerciveness that can instead irritate readers. It could therefore be argued that SPN might prove to be more effective writing than conventional academic writing, as by fostering the communicating of ideas in a way that can be understood it allows them to also be shared and built on. This makes it particularly useful for writing about creativity which is all about possibilities and open perspectives. Nurturing creativity entails being willing to allow exploration and the following of an unforseen path. In academia this straying from the set course is not often tolerated and can be quickly labelled ‘a mistake’ before it is even allowed to show where it can lead. In Writing from the Heart, Nancy Aronie, who is greatly supportive of creativity and bringing the personal into one’s writing, describes what it is like to be open to making mistakes (1998:179):

Living creatively for me means being willing to screw up, to play the fool, now and again .. the one who makes the error, the one who can be wrong, the one who understands he will mess up, the one who doesn’t know everything, the one who can be lost. Because I know that my biggest mistakes become my best teachers, and my biggest mistake might be my best piece of work. Of course it’s not really a mistake. It’s just the moment I get out of my own way. It’s the moment my ego takes a coffee break.

Though we go to school to learn, it is also at school that we are constantly judged, our achievements being measured and labelled with a specific ‘value’. As Jane Tompkins shares in A Life in School: What the teacher learned, once she became a teacher she relived the terror of when she was a student, consequently she found herself attempting to keep this terror at bay by somehow passing it on to her students: “If I alternately intimidated and
placated the students it’s because I was threatened and felt afraid, afraid of my students, and afraid of the authorities who had stood in judgement on me long ago” (1996:3). If we feel judged it stands to reason that even the thought of making mistakes becomes too risky to contemplate. With the idea of making mistakes being so terrifying it follows that a safe and proven way is preferable, therefore this encourages a stricter adherence to tested methodologies. With many academics following these methodologies there is a tendency for them to become ‘unquestionable’ and thus rigidly fixed, even though the world, including circumstances, people and everything else, is constantly changing. Rigidity particularly counteracts any possible nurturing of creativity as Daniel Goleman shares in *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1999:102):

Teresa Amabile, a psychologist at the Harvard Business School, describes four “creativity killers ...:

- **Surveillance:** Hovering and constant scrutiny. This stifles the essential sense of freedom needed for creative thinking.
- **Evaluation:** A critical view that comes too soon or is too intense ... [can lead] to a preoccupation with being judged.
- **Overcontrol:** Micromanaging every step of the way. Like surveillance, it fosters an oppressive sense of constriction, which discourages originality.
- **Relentless deadlines:** A too-intense schedule that creates panic ... deadlines and goals can focus attention [but also] they can kill the fertile “off time” where fresh ideas flourish.

In exploring intelligence that is other than intellectual or ‘academic’ through his extensive research, Goleman’s work gives support to many of my observations. The information in the quote above is particularly useful in providing an explanation as to why I found that many of the people I interviewed from the educational community were disillusioned with high school: “In the public school teachers don’t really care, they tell you what to do and then they don’t really help you if you need help” (high school
student). “The teachers are too interested in control, because they need to be. The school system seems to me to be above the students, they are not treated as equals ... it’s not a safe environment” (parent). “At this time creativity relies on teachers’ personal initiative, it is not really nurtured nor is it encouraged” (high school teacher).

As a place where evaluation and deadlines abound, and where surveillance and over-control are likely to be practiced regularly (depending on the sort of relationships and dynamics present between administration, teaching staff, and students) a high school is not apt to be able to genuinely foster creativity. This can also apply to primary schools, though perhaps to a lesser extent, given that there is usually less focus on testing, as well as to higher education institutions. In fact all of formal schooling’s potential for cultivating creativity is seriously jeopardised because of the emphasis that is put on assessment and reporting. This is something that has been steadily increasing in much of the Western world, and when so much weight is put on testing then the ‘right’ answers are sought out above all else. Margaret Boden draws a clear picture of how this translates into classroom attitudes that stifle creativity (2001:98):

First, an unbending insistence on the ‘right’ answer, and/or the ‘right’ way of finding it; second an unwillingness (or inability) to analyse the ‘wrong’ answer to see whether it might have some merit, perhaps in somewhat different circumstances (think of the ‘failed’ glue recipe that led to Post-it Notes); and third, an expression of impatience, or (worse still) contempt, for the person who came up with the unexpected answer.

Another reason we are so afraid of committing errors is that we are taught to strive for intellectual victory by proving others wrong. Not surprisingly, given that we live in a patriarchal society, the patriarchal ideal of conquering by defeating is mirrored and thus validated even in academia, where argument is a preferred writing style. In this way of writing, ideas and theories are proven wrong and then ‘deposed’ so that those
being proposed may take their place; however often those writing the texts have no
specific alternatives to suggest and so the focus can just be a sowing of destruction and
doubt. With much controversy, and debates becoming heated, there is in a sense a
constant state of fighting maintained. This is exacerbated by the focus being on the
problems, ‘mistakes’, and generally on the negative; thus a critique of something is
frequently viewed more favourably and is therefore considered a safer approach to take
in academic writing than that pursuing creative innovation. Yet there is no need to
destroy something to show the validity of something else: one method may be good and
proven and yet another may be better; more likely still there might be aspects of one
method that could be merged with parts of another and so transformed to create newer
and more versatile approaches that would remain more adaptable to changes, given
that times, people and places all vary.

The academic world does not need to be a war-zone to be rigorous; as Nash puts it, it
can be (2004:48):

... about loving ideas so much that we are willing to play with them, to take chances with them, to
express our passions about them, to deliver them in some fresh, new ways; to nurture and care for
them; and to continually test and challenge them in the company of others ... to make ideas live, ...
and ...[to] become wiser.

 Rather than competitiveness we could engage in collaboration, thereby transforming
competitive academic discourse to dialogic discourse which, according to Bakhtin
(Zappen, 2000:7-20):

... is not only a multiplicity and diversity of voices, a "heteroglossia," but an act of (and an active)
listening to each voice from the perspective of the others, a "dialogized heteroglossia." Its purpose
is to test our own and others’ ideas and ourselves and thus to determine together what we should

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think and how we should live. Its characteristic forms are the expression, juxtaposition, or negotiation of our individual and our cultural differences.

An openness and willingness to dialogue could allow for theories and ideas to be transformed as needed, rather than being proven wrong. Having experienced the centrality and importance of this through years of working on peace-building and conciliation, John Paul Lederach states: “A key to constructive social change lies in that which makes social fabric, relationships, and relational spaces” (2005:76). In his work, Lederach supports a holistic approach together with the use of creativity for positive and effective social change. Rather than a problem oriented approach, this sort of relational, positive and creative approach is precisely what appreciative inquiry puts into practice.

First proposed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in the late 80s, appreciative inquiry is a generative form of ‘action research’ developed in response to the authors’ recognition that overall most action research had failed to enable social transformation due to its intense focus on criticism and problems (Ludema et al., 2001:189). Social change and transformation require that new ideas be put into practice, yet criticism can prevent this as Daniel Goleman points out: “New ideas are fragile and all too easily killed by criticism. Sir Isaac Newton is said to have been so sensitive to criticism that he withheld the publication of a paper ... for fifteen years, until his main critic died” (1999:102).

Action research is research that is grounded in practice, although always linked to theory. Many of the findings of this research are arrived at through the process of actually putting ideas into practice and considering the input of those participating. Theoretical reflection follows issues raised by the praxis, and then informs the process.
In the *Handbook of Action Research*, Reason & Bradbury describe ‘action research’ as “the whole family of approaches to inquiry which are participative, grounded in experience, and action-oriented” (2001:xxiv). Rather than analysing things in a critically destructive manner and searching for solutions from the viewpoint of the problem, the appreciative inquiry form of action research looks at what is positive, as in anything that needs to change there are nonetheless likely to be aspects that are useful and we want to keep. For example, if we wanted to remove some stains from a brightly patterned favourite scarf or t-shirt, we would do well to focus on the design to ensure that it was not damaged by the detergent/s used to remove the stains, as if our focus was only on the stains we could easily make things worse and ruin the garment.

Although it is a cliché, we need to be mindful of not ‘throwing out the baby with the bathwater’. By focusing on the aspects that we appreciate and want to keep, these can be taken (in most situations) as the starting point for generating changes which are constructive, so that these aspects are built on rather than taken away from, and thus positive is added to positive. This does not mean that problems are ignored or deemed irrelevant, but rather that they are approached as being challenges and given secondary importance to anything that is working well. Effectively then, problems are disempowered so that they can no longer overwhelm us, or in any way prevent us from taking positive action. This is especially useful when, as Bohm suggests in *On Dialogue*, what is viewed as a problem is actually not really a problem at all but a paradox, as in cases when they are “problems with false or self-contradictory presuppositions” (2004:71), this Bohm says is more often than not the case especially in ‘problems’ connected to human relations or psychological matters (71).
David Bohm (1917-1992), a physicist and theorist, said to be “one of the most original thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century” (Nichol, 2004:116), explains that ‘problem-solving’ is a survival feature intrinsic to us, as it has helped us to solve problems such as how to get food, find shelter and so on, “Once the mind accepts a problem, then it is appropriate for the brain to keep on working until it finds a solution ... [as this is] necessary for proper rational thinking” (Bohm, 2004:73). However as he points out, sometimes a problem is actually a paradox, and this is crucially different to a problem that can be solved; in this case, if “the mind treats a paradox as if it were a real problem, then since the paradox has no “solution”, the mind is caught in the paradox forever” (73). This sort of dilemma seems to be quite widespread in our modern society as anything that presents difficulty or does not proceed smoothly is readily given the label of ‘problem’. While this might simply be language ‘shorthand’, it is important to become aware that it gravely undermines us as it causes much confusion and misunderstanding.

Appreciative inquiry is able to avoid this possible confusion, between what is a problem and what is a paradox, by focusing on the positive rather than on the ‘problem’. As a positive form of action research, it provides perfect support to the nurturing of creativity and to transformation, for as Ludema et al. state in ‘Appreciative Inquiry: the Power of the Unconditional Positive Question’ (2001:189-191), it:

... can unleash a positive revolution of conversation and change in organizations by unseating existing reified patterns of discourse, creating space for new voices and new discoveries, and expanding circles of dialogue to provide a community of support for innovative action. ... More than a technique, appreciative inquiry is a way of organizational life – an intentional posture of continuous discovery, search and inquiry into conceptions of life, joy, beauty, excellence, innovation and freedom.
Unlike SPN which is a relatively recent acquaintance, I discovered appreciative inquiry soon after commencing my PhD journey and immediately adopted it for my project. I chose it because its life-affirming and integrative approach to research is congruent with my beliefs, and though tried and tested (as a methodology) it is open to and welcomes diversity, thus allowing ample scope for creativity. Its process (as given in the above quote, and also depicted below in the figure of the 4-D model showing the different phases of appreciative inquiry) is in fact so supportive to the nurturing of creativity that it could be thought to have been designed specifically for it.

Phases of appreciative inquiry – the 4-D model (2001:192)

Indeed, the nurturing of creativity and appreciative inquiry share many similarities, in both their theory and practice, so that they can be easily connected. Comparing the similarities and differences of the two can help explain each one through the descriptions of the other, thereby amplifying the meaning of each. In Chapter Three I discuss creativity as being essentially an attitude, with the nurturing of creativity providing support to that attitude so that an individual, or a group, in following creativity can become an advocate for creativity in all life situations. This could be seen as paralleling appreciative inquiry, as similarly to it (as given in the above quote)
creativity can also be seen as: “an intentional posture of continuous discovery, search and inquiry into conceptions of life, joy, beauty, excellence, innovation and freedom” (191). However, appreciative inquiry is also described as being “a way of organizational life”, thus it is a methodology that though quite open is nonetheless specifically structured (as is shown in the above diagram). This allows it to be systematically explained and followed, which ensures its ease of use within organisations and institutions. Thus while this is a point of difference from the nurturing of creativity, which is structured in a much more informal and complex way, appreciative inquiry could actually be viewed as a ‘way’ of nurturing creativity. A deeper understanding of this may be gained by looking at the individual phases of appreciative inquiry and how these might be implemented to nurture creativity.

- The first stage, ‘discovery’, explores, researches and generally looks for the positive that is already present in the current situation. “Valuing the ‘best of what is’ opens the way to building a better future by dislodging the … dominance of deficit vocabularies” (2001:192). In relation to the nurturing of creativity this entails, from among all that is, the recognising and focusing on those qualities (in people and in the environment) that allow, encourage and open the way for creativity. These qualities could be environmental factors, or the attitudes of specific individuals, or they could emerge as a combination of these so that among them would be included: flexibility, openness, humour, connectedness, the establishing of a sense of safety, inspiration, caring, support in risk taking, and so on.

- The second stage, the ‘dream’ stage, allows for the ‘painting of a beautiful picture’ through the imagining and sharing of how things could be if they were allowed to
grow and be nurtured from ‘the best of what is’. In this stage “... new ways of seeing and understanding the world begin to emerge. ... the vocabularies used ... are creative and constructive in the sense that they invite new, positive alternatives” (192). At this point, having started with some of the best of what has been experienced, more can be added to the whole in working towards an ever improving vision. As ‘like begets like’, those recognised qualities and situations that nurture creativity are expanded on so that more are included in the vision that is being shaped. Furthermore, as perspectives open there could even be other more positive qualities to be discovered hidden among what can now be more clearly seen.

- The third stage, the ‘design’ stage, combines that which has been discovered and appreciated together with that which has been envisioned, and then turns this into something new which can be put into practice. “The key to this phase is to create a deliberately inclusive and supportive context for conversation and interaction” (192). This is tantamount to nurturing the creativity inherent in planning for the implementation of the ‘dream’; and it also gives it the best likelihood of success. As with the ‘dream’ stage, which in the nurturing of creativity is still open to any ‘discovery’, this phase may also re-visit and expand the work of the previous stages, as the planning might engender a greater vision as well as retrospective discoveries.

- The last stage, the ‘destiny’ stage, is that of the implementation of the synthesis of the previous phases. “Appreciative inquiry accomplishes this by including ever-broadening circles of participants to join in the conversation ... [as they] translate their ideals into reality and their beliefs into practice” (192). This connects to
Bakhtin’s idea of dialogue and develops it into a tangible process that allows the melding of individual and cultural differences and similarities into a best practice scenario. Similarly for the nurturing of creativity, having had it take hold as a prevailing attitude, this would continue expanding and growing in new ways that allowed it to go from strength to strength. This also links to what Bohm suggests open communication and creative dialogue can make possible, as he posits there is “the possibility of transformation of consciousness, both individually and collectively … [through] the ability to dialogue, the ability to participate in communication” (2004:109).

This comparison, of the phases of appreciative inquiry with an equivalent process for the nurturing of creativity, also allows us to see that the diagram of the 4-D model, previously shown, is a simplified ‘snapshot’ – a moment frozen in time - of what actually occurs. A diagrammatic representation of a process, or methodology, can only show the relationship between its main phases (its aspects) as this might be at one moment in time. If drawn repeatedly over time this would appear more as a dance, with the actual pattern formed dependent on the dynamics of all the elements involved. Overall the nurturing of creativity is much more complex than a linear (though circular - as shown in the diagram) progression of phases. Given that each phase connects to the others by possibly engendering them, as well as being engendered by them, different phases could occur simultaneously (or with very little time span between them) and flow in either direction. I maintain that this complexity holds true for any number of processes that involve the interaction of different elements, which is especially the case for human interactions.
Primarily, any methodology that is explained in a linear way (unless it describes a manufacturing factory assembly line) has been conceptualised, or reduced, into its principal components; it has been formalised by being defined and then labelled with its definition. It can therefore only be a useful simplification for the understanding of a process, which in practice is (or becomes) a lot more complex. As already discussed, even in appreciative inquiry the phases do not necessarily remain sequential. This is a very important point to be aware of, as focusing too closely on the explanation of a specific methodology, that is to say to the exclusion of everything else that may be connected to it, can cause us to expect it to be rigidly adhered to.

Though naming (or labelling) the stages of the methodology (process) and giving them diagrammatical representations can be very practical in explaining the methodology so that it may be more easily understood, it can also further fix it as the ‘right way’ that the process should unfold, and can therefore be reductive. This sort of expectation can greatly hinder any creativity or newness that could come from the process and prevent it from growing and transforming. If however, the methodology is recognised as just being an explanatory simplification of the process – an explanatory part describing the whole - then rather than becoming a control that prescribes how a process should unfold, it can allow the process the freedom of occurring as it might, thereby nurturing its potential to be creative. Appreciative inquiry seems able to do this quite well, and this is further highlighted by its developers calling for: “a positive revolution of learning and change by experimenting with appreciative models of inquiry yet to be discovered” (Ludema et al, 2001:192).

Being “based on the premise that organizations move in the direction of what they study” (192), appreciative inquiry also helps to validate my decision of making
creativity, and thus the creative process, the underlying ‘methodology’ for my PhD. Rather than being seen as just a ‘topic’, even a central topic, creativity as a ‘methodology’ becomes that which holds everything else together and underpins it, like the hub in a wheel. In practice, this has meant that while I have followed planned directions in my research I have at the same time remained open to connections and developments, creatively following them as they arose. This has meant being flexible to make changes as necessary, rather than rigidly adhering to a set ‘plan’ which could have proven to be irrelevant. An analogy for this would be the navigating of uncharted seas dotted with unknown islands which, according to the ‘map’ one has, are not meant to be there, yet obviously they cannot be ignored and sailed through. In fact (as explained in the Introduction), the main change to this thesis has been the focus of the topic shifting away from looking at ‘the nurturing of creativity in education’ to looking at ‘the nurturing of creativity as the basis for transformation’; a change which may not have occurred had creativity not been chosen as my central ‘methodology’.

Ludema et al. have found in their study of appreciative inquiry that (192):

... when groups study human problems and conflicts, they often find that both the number and severity of these problems grow. In the same manner when groups study high human ideals and achievements, such as peak experiences, best practices and noble accomplishments, these phenomena, too, tend to flourish. In this sense, topic choice is a fateful act. Based on the topics they choose to study, organizations enact and construct worlds of their own making that in turn act back on them.

Thus appreciative inquiry focuses on the ‘active’ part of research, which seems obvious given that it is action research. However, I believe that it goes further than what is obvious, as it can be clearly taken from the above quote that any sort of research will have an effect both on the researchers and on the topic in question. Research can do this
by connecting the researchers and what they are looking into, in a world that comes into being precisely because of the research being undertaken, and this world is shaped by the way the research is enacted. Therefore, in a sense, all research is action research. I have experienced this in my own research, and given that my topic is the nurturing of creativity as the basis for transformation, and the central methodology is the creative process itself, this immediately sets me up to be open to the nurturing of creativity, with this indeed having the potential of not only affecting me but of also affecting any others with whom I come into contact through the project. In practical terms this has facilitated change and growth on my journey, thus enabling me to learn much about creativity and the endless possibilities for applying it – these aspects are thoroughly discussed throughout the following chapters of the thesis.

Being informed by many different theories, action research can in practice draw from a number of these simultaneously. In ‘Uneven Ground: Feminisms and Action Research’, Patricia Maguire looks at “how feminisms have informed and grounded action research” (2001:60). She speaks of ‘feminisms’ in the plural to reflect the feminist understanding that there is a multiplicity of feminist perspectives included in feminist scholarship, rather than a single ‘universal’ one. In keeping with this, through the weaving together of the writings of many scholars, the main message in this chapter is in relation to the concept of voice and egalitarianism. The grounding provided by feminisms is shown to be inclusive given that it makes spaces that allow any marginalized voices to speak and be heard, and not just those of women. Thus the frustration experienced when one’s mode of expression is controlled and limited (or even silenced), which results in meaning being denied and stultified, is relieved through the nurturing of one’s self-expression. This thereby fosters creativity and can lead to meaning being uncovered. In
contrast to the patriarchal value system (discussed in Chapter One), traditionally embedded within institutions that function on hierarchical principles of elitism, feminisms greatly value lived experience and the transformation that this can give rise to, as Maguire explains (2001:59-64):

> Embracing this call to transformational action, personal and structural, has always been a bedrock of feminism and feminist scholarship (Mies, 1983, 1986, 1991; ...). As Liz Stanley asserts, feminism is not merely a perspective (way of seeing) or an epistemology (way of knowing), it ‘is also an ontology, or a way of being in the world’ (1990:14). ... Both action and feminist research have centred the voices of the marginalized and muted in knowledge creation processes by starting from their everyday experiences (Barsley and Ellis, 1992; ...). Even though there is no unitary women’s experience, feminist-grounded action research embraces experience as a source of legitimate knowledge (Barrett, Chapter 27; Gatenby and Humphries, 1999; ...).

Because of their values, as well as their showing up of patriarchy, theories of feminisms serve as a supportive foundation for my action research. Moreover, as can be seen from the above quote, feminisms concur with SPN about the importance of allowing experience within scholarship. Nash suggests a mantra so that academics may be more open to this: “The discourse should reflect people’s experience” (2004:155), and this mantra supports feminisms’ egalitarian notion of all voices being allowed to be heard. This egalitarian notion is another strong point of connection that my thesis shares with theories of feminisms. If we did insist in grounding research within experience rather than link it principally to theory, then perhaps we might look at writing, and especially at academic writing, very differently. Given that any text can only be as useful and valid as the writer’s understanding at the time of writing it, it would therefore seem reasonable to place a little less credence on the ‘rigorousness’ of texts of theories.
Furthermore, we would instead consent for texts to be altered and updated as more was learnt through lived experience.

It is difficult to believe that we continue to allow ourselves as a society to be bound by traditions and philosophies, as laid out in texts, whose writers had not the slightest idea of the world we live in and the challenges we face. An example of this is Cartesian duality which, though it has been shown to be flawed by countless scholars, obstinately remains a basis for many of our social constructions. Perhaps this is so because it has served the patriarchal tradition too well, and furthermore continues to do so by providing a convenient distance between discourse and action that prevents ‘upsetting’ the status quo to any great extent. In fact in Voltaire’s Bastards, Saul, who is invaluable for providing context through historical background to many theories according to which our society seems to operate, tells us that Cardinal Richelieu (who was also Prime Minister for Louis XIII and happened to be a contemporary of Descartes) was the first to restructure government to be ‘rational’, incorporating “into the first real modern state ... all of Descartes’s deductive ideas” (1993:49). Furthermore, he set a precedent for many of the occurrences of our times (1993:49):

The degree to which he was creating our future can be seen in such details as his restructuring of the educational system in order to produce more graduates in scientific, practical professions and fewer in the general arts ... He was obsessed with detail ... placing himself at the centre of the flow of information in order to control or to collect it.

Cartesian dichotomy was thus obviously very useful to Richelieu's patriarchal method of 'divide and conquer', and this way of operating is observable (Saul 1993) in our modern day politics. Side effects of dichotomising discourse and action are dangerous ironies, such as the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Summit which produced large amounts of
emissions so that ways for the reduction of these emissions could be discussed. From within ‘feminisms’ Maguire gives another clue, by quoting Harding, as to why theories such as Descartes’ are still being upheld (2001:61):

‘... we are forced to think and exist within the very dichotomizing we criticize ... These dichotomies are empirically false, but we cannot afford to dismiss them as long as they structure our lives and our consciousness’ (1987: 300-1).”

Harding thus seems to believe that although we recognise dichotomy as an imposed social structure that does not reflect reality, in the sense of the way things actually are, we choose to remain within it because “we cannot afford” to reject it. This begs the question of ‘why?’ What can we possibly lose by rejecting it? This sort of thinking reveals a problem-based perspective that is actually a paradox – a ‘problem’ “with false or self-contradictory presuppositions” (Bohm, 2004:71) – and so has no solution, but by being seen as a problem appears to be so overwhelmingly crushing that it totally prevents emancipation and positive action. Though feminist perspectives are very successful at uncovering unjust power relations and the nature of oppressions, they still focus on the negative, on the ‘problems’, thus they would greatly benefit from the use of a ‘methodology’ like appreciative inquiry, which might enable them to positively transform the oppressions that they can so clearly see. The great strength of appreciative inquiry is that it bases its research on a positive approach, so it presents a very different outcome from its recognition of the limitations imposed by Descartes’ theory (Ludema et al, 2001:198):

Ever since Descartes, the Western tradition has suffered a form of epistemological schizophrenia (Popkin, 1979) … [given that its] starting point of doubt and negation undermines its [supposed] constructive intent. Appreciative inquiry recognizes that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments, but are simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention. The seeds of change … are implicit in the
very first questions we ask. For the questions we ask set the stage for what we ‘find’, and what we
find becomes the knowledge out of which the future is conceived, conversed about and constructed.

By utilising a holistic perspective that acknowledges the intrinsic connection between
investigation and action, between learning and experience, appreciative inquiry is able
to help us set aside the limitations of dualism so that a best practice action, or ‘way of
being’, flows almost seamlessly from a holistic ‘way of seeing’. By coming from the
positive question and helping us to comprehend that both investigation and action are
part of the whole, appreciative inquiry cuts through any expectation of struggle, as
experienced when grappling with a ‘problem’. This sort of practice can enable the
nurturing of creativity by encouraging what we can see - all of the positive and
passionate things that we might find within ourselves, our relationships and in the
world around us – to ‘bear fruit’ so that this will then nourish and nurture us in an ever
flourishing cycle of growth and transformation. The crucial value of nurturing that this
suggests is highlighted by Ken Robinson (2009:258-259):

> We need the right conditions for growth, in our schools, businesses, and communities, and in our
> own individual lives. ... Some of the elements of our own growth are inside us. They include the
> need to develop our unique aptitudes and personal passions. Finding and nurturing them is the
> surest way to ensure our growth...

I first encountered Robinson’s work when a friend attended the Backing our Creativity
Symposium held in Melbourne in 2005. At the time I was just finalising my PhD proposal,
and reading Robinson’s keynote presentation helped to further coalesce my ideas,
thereby providing me with a workable platform. The focus of this developed and
transformed over the course of the research (as I have already pointed out in the
Introduction) from looking at the nurturing of creativity within formal education to
within the self. Nonetheless, the importance of the nurturing of creativity has remained
the main message at the heart of my work, changing only in its perspective which has expanded to accommodate a more holistic micro/macro view. Thus I hold that the **nurturing of creativity within the self, when followed, can unleash personal transformation that is the basis for what can become a connected, widespread and sustainable creative transformation and growth across society.** Given this shift in the direction of my research, I recently noted with interest that the focus of Robinson’s latest book, *The Element,* is also on the power of nurturing creativity within the self, which is seen as being interconnected to that of others, as he calls for us to “move beyond linear, mechanistic metaphors to more organic metaphors of human growth and development” (2009:257).

This idea of replacing rigid linear metaphors with organic ones so as to make more sense of our lives, as well as to construct meaningful ways of reaching decisions for the directions to take, connects back to SPN’s invitation to include the personal in the scholarly. For of course much of our lived experience is essentially organic already, coming as it does from the interaction of a unique organic entity (the self) with an organic world. David Abram, who in *The Spell of the Sensuous* reconnects the body and mind with the natural world through the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, explains this well (1997:56):

> If ... we wish to describe a particular phenomenon without repressing our direct experience, then we cannot avoid speaking of the phenomenon as an active, animate entity with which we find ourselves engaged. It is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty so consistently uses the active voice to describe things, qualities, and even the enveloping world itself. To the sensing body, no thing presents itself as utterly passive or inert. **Only by affirming the animateness of perceived things do we allow our words to emerge directly from the depths of our ongoing reciprocity with the world.**

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It is the acceptance of this personal and related way of being in the world, the acknowledgement of the relationships we have with all that we engage in, and all that is around us, which can allow us to build a specific unique meaning and thereby nurtures our creativity. Though, as Stephanie Pace Marshall points out in *The Power to Transform*: “We have become almost blind to wholeness, connections, relationships, and the vibrant and healing energy of our senses and creative imagination” (2006:48), by paying attention to the way our relationships mirror our own selves back to us, we can gain an understanding of our uniqueness which in turn can cultivate our creative self-expression. This enables us to be ‘who’ we are – the creative unfoldment of our unique selves, rather than just ‘what’ we are - a series of disconnected roles we are labelled with by the definitory hierarchical system we live in. In *Relating Narratives*, Adriana Cavarero makes a strong case for this point through her complex and multifaceted theory of the ‘narratable self’: “Every human being, without even wanting to know it, is aware of being a narratable self – immersed in the spontaneous auto-narration of memory” (2000:33). As she points out, it is this narratable self which is able to construct the meaning of ‘who’ we are (2000:3):

... narration ‘reveals the meaning [of the self] without committing the error of defining it.’ Unlike philosophy, which for millennia has persisted in capturing the universal in the trap of definition, narration reveals the finite in its fragile uniqueness, and sings its glory. ... The one who narrates not only entertains and enchants, like Sheherazade, but gives to the protagonists of his/her story ... a design, a ‘destiny’, and unrepeateable figure of ... [their] existence, ... 

Sheherazade is the narrator in the story framing the magical *Tales of the Thousand and One Nights* (or *Arabian Nights*) telling stories to her husband, the Persian King Shahryar, to stop him from slaughtering women. Fearful of women’s unfaithfulness, as he had been betrayed by his first wife, the King married virgins only to have each one killed the
morning after their wedding night. Through her use of Sheherazade, Cavarero reveals narration as being a feminine art imbued with the power of the orality (wholeness) of its beginnings, and she contrasts this with the mostly written (thus fragmented from the whole) "philosophical discourse on the universal – the definitory art that loves the abstract" (2000:51), which has served to support patriarchy. Orality can be seen as being connected to wholeness because it is apparent in its full life context, whereas writing is connected to fragmentation as it is not necessarily contextualised, especially in the case of ‘universal’ discourse which has therefore been generalised and abstracted.

Looked at symbolically, the framing tale of the Arabian Nights places the King “as the symbol of a masculine position of misogyny and cruelty” (122). This can be seen as an apt representation of patriarchy with its values of “oppressive governance ... with little regard for the well-being or personal fulfilment of [any not in power], for the more significant human values, or for the destiny of the earth itself” (Berry 1990:143). Sheherazade is instead placed “as the symbol of a feminine knowledge capable of giving the lie to the misogynist prejudice, and capable of overcoming its violent effects” (Cavarero 2000:122).

Through her character, Sheherazade symbolises feminine wisdom and nurturing, “since the Feminine of the primal relationship is connected with the symbolism of home, paradise, and the original unitary reality” (Neumann 1994:240). This symbolic representation is not, therefore, the modern simplistic and dichotomous one of the masculine versus the feminine, as in male versus female. Rather, through its connection to ‘unitary reality’ the feminine stands for the creative impulse - the synthesis of both masculine and feminine archetypal principles, or in other words, it stands for these principles connected in a harmonious relationship, and thus constituting a life affirming
The archetypal feminine and masculine principles are perhaps best explained by the ancient Chinese yin and yang, said to be the complementary creative energies present in all that is, given in Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching* as “a metaphor for all that exists” (Dale, 2002:172). Pictured in the familiar Tai Chi symbol they represent the interconnectedness of the nature of the universe and its dynamic and transformative rhythm of ebb and flow. “The dots inside the white and black halves indicate that within each is the seed of the other” (Knierim, 1999:4) and that one cannot exist without the other. Clearly the archetypal masculine is not the ‘masculine’ as promoted by patriarchy, as the only ‘masculine’ that patriarchy recognises is the one that has been warped to be brutal, misogynist, and issuing of a ‘phallocentric’ discourse. Cavarero explains how narrative can artfully unveil the symbolism (2000:123):

Contrary to the law of the sultan, which makes death follow sex, the law of Sheherazade makes a story follow sex, disconnecting sex itself from death and from the rite of deflowering. Narration and conjugal love go together, step by step, for one thousand and one nights. The tale not only stops death, but also gains the time to generate life. ... “after the last story, Sheherazade is able to avoid death by showing the children (sons, it seems) born from the conjugal loves of the thousand and one nights” (121)

The creative impulse embodied in the ‘feminine’ (Sheherazade) is able to be asserted through its generative unfolding of creativity (the narratives and lovemaking); it thus dissolves a distorted ‘masculine’ championed by patriarchy (the bloodlust of King Shahryar) thereby restoring the harmony of the connected masculine and feminine archetypal principles, which are the very key to life. Moreover, this reunion into unity can only be achieved through a holistic approach, rather than one that is reductionist and problem-based. In fact as Cavarero tells us (2000:123):
Importantly] Sheherazade does not tell her first story to the sultan, but rather to her sister ... [who] had permission to sleep on a bed lower than the nuptial bed in the room of the couple. At the request of her sister, Sheherazade thus begins a tale before sunrise that enthrals the sultan until the sun comes up and which makes him postpone the death of the narrator until the next day. ... [Rather than being] the explicit addressee of a tale that is requested by him ... [he is] only a listener knowingly seduced by the narrative art and her strategy of suspension.

Bohm informs us that suspension is the very approach needed when faced with any sort of violence or ‘problem’ paradoxes. As an example, in dealing with anger he suggests that we neither demonstrate it nor suppress it. “What is called for” he says “is ... suspending them [both] in the middle at sort of an unstable point – as on a knife-edge – so that you can look at the whole process” (2004:87). The narration of Sheherazade provides this knife-edge suspension for a thousand and one nights; this illustrates how the creative nature of the self is able to both find expression and gain awareness through the process of narration. It is through this connective and participatory process of narration that creativity is therefore nurtured, and being generative it has a nurturing and transforming effect on all that it comes into contact with. This connects back to Atkinson’s quote given in the Introduction: “Story is a tool for making us whole ... for self-discovery ... Our stories illustrate our inherent connectedness with others. ... In the life story of each person is a reflection of another’s life story” (1995:3-4).

With the main framework of literary support in place, Chapter Three now delves into the complexity of creativity so as to explore the central raison d’être of this thesis.

This chapter builds a framework of supporting literature for the thesis while at the same time it also continues to develop the theme of ‘the nurturing of creativity’ begun in
Chapter One, thus it moves further along the journey of ‘personal transformation’. In maintaining the weaving analogy, which works well with a holistic (and thus complex) perspective, I focus on introducing literature that does not necessarily need to be quoted throughout much of the thesis. This is the literature that provides theories and methodologies which inform the ‘how’ of the writing of this thesis, and includes: ‘scholarly personal narrative’ (SPN) and ‘action research’ - specifically ‘appreciative inquiry’ and feminisms’ theories.

After creativity, which is the central ‘methodology’ of the PhD and brings with it a holistic perspective and self-perception as well as the willingness to embrace complexity, the three listed above are the main methodologies according to which I have structured this thesis. They have many similarities to each other, and being supportive of the nurturing of creativity they are therefore shown to also be supportive of each other. SPN, feminisms and appreciative inquiry all concur on the importance of admitting lived experience within research. They thereby bring into question rigid conventional research methodologies which stifle creativity, but still hold ‘prime’ position in Western thinking because of patriarchal ‘control’. By maintaining a fear of making mistakes, coupled with promoting a ‘war-like’ outlook in academia, the patriarchal tradition keeps institutions focused on ‘finding’ problem-based solutions. This is not only overwhelming but can frequently lock one into a solution-less quandary whenever faced with paradoxes rather than problems – something which is more often than not the case when human issues and concerns are looked at reductively (in a fragmented rigid manner) rather than creatively.

In this chapter are also introduced, or included (for those who have already been introduced before now), some of the main authors of other supportive literature which
connects to the main methodologies given above. These are: Ken Robinson, Nancy Aronie, Daniel Goleman, Bakhtin, John Paul Lederach, David Bohm, John Ralston Saul, David Abram, Stephanie Pace Marshall, and Adriana Cavarero. Quotes from most of these authors are found throughout the thesis as their work supports the perspectives I put forward. Bohm is particularly instrumental to this thesis for his lucidity and exactness of expression in describing a holistic view of reality, which he also connects to creativity.

Bakhtin’s idea of the importance of dialogue that links individuals and their cultural similarities and differences for the creation of a best practice way of living, is connected to the appreciative inquiry approach of encouraging “ever-broadening circles of participants to join in the conversation” (Ludema et al, 2001:192). This is moreover also promoted by Bohm, who suggests a creative dialogue of open communication; he goes even further, in being led by creativity, by suggesting that there be no specific theme or topic so that dialogue might be simply allowed to emerge. This he proposes might be better achieved if we are able to ‘suspend’ any kind of emotional or intellectual reactions - even just our urge to react - by simply observing so that we might regain our ability to be aware.

Cavarero is closely linked to theories of feminisms as well as to the nurturing of creativity through her theory of a ‘spontaneous narratable self’. By recounting the narrative of Sheherazade, the narrator par excellence, she provides symbolism that reveals the feminine and masculine life principles as harmoniously connected after the false ‘masculine’ constructed by patriarchy has been unmasked. It is the generative power of narration that allows the inherent creative nature of the self to find expression and gain awareness.
All the threads of my methodology are hereby shown to be connected as they each provide nurturing for creativity and are at the same time led by creativity to unfold and develop through my journey of transformation.
Chapter Three:

Creativity

*Creativity is the true expression of your self. If you’ve got a self, you’ve got creativity*

(Aronie 1998:151)

*We’re hardwired for creativity; if we’re not creative we die*

(High-school teacher)

*Creativity is a way of expressing yourself, your feelings, in different kinds of ways*

(High-school student)

*Creativity is how you look at things – your own ideas about anything*

(Parent)

An eclectic and complex topic like creativity does not sit well within the boundaries of any specific definition per se, but rather encompasses a wide scope of definitions which vary depending on the context and who is discussing it. Given that definitions that are too specific can limit understanding by being reductive, a definition for a ‘big-picture’ concept such as creativity, especially at the onset of a chapter devoted to it, is likely to prove to be either too restrictive or too cumbersome for the chapter to develop from it smoothly. In *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*, Robinson approaches creativity in a circuitous way. He takes from pages 114 to 118 to build a definition of creativity, which he ends up stating as ‘his’ definition: “imaginative processes with outcomes that
are original and of value” (2001:118). He then goes on to further develop various meanings that can come from this. At the beginning of On Creativity, Bohm imparts his view that: “Creativity is ... something that it is impossible to define in words” (2004:1), and from there he takes the whole chapter to convey to the reader what creativity means to him.

Neither Robinson nor Bohm actually claim to be able to define creativity, they but merely share their experience of it and how they see it. Simply put: that which is all encompassing cannot itself be contained. It is not coherent to do so; a definition that attempted to do so could only be reductive and thus would confuse rather than help understanding in any way. Does this lack of a specific definition therefore make ‘creativity’ a meaningless term? I do not believe so, I would instead suggest that if what is being talked about is not easily accessible within a limited ‘package’ – like a specific definition would be - then to get closer to encountering and understanding this something, that may ostensibly be limitless, we might do well to open up our own borders of perception. However, it is important to remember that though creativity could therefore potentially be ‘anything’, that does not mean that it will be ‘everything’, its meaning will vary depending on the context it is in. It is in its contextuality, that is to say in its connection to the ‘whole picture’, that each of us will infer a meaning or even many connected meanings.

Even for concepts which are ‘specifically defined’ I maintain that the meaning we might each draw out of the definition would be slightly different – how else would so much misunderstanding occur despite the use of the same words? Imagine trying to give an accurate and inclusive definition of all the people that there are in this world. One of the biggest difficulties in trying this would be that in defining we attempt to ‘fix’ or freeze’ a
meaning, an understanding, a view, yet people change and move and grow. As Arthur Koestler points out in *The Act of Creation*, though “Words are essential tools for formulating and communicating thoughts, and also for putting them into the storage of memory ... words can also become snares, decoys, or strait-jackets” (1975:176). The very moment after ‘something’ has been defined the view of that ‘something’ may already have shifted, yet the definition would not allow that to be seen. So in all this complexity how are we to understand each other? For meaningful communication to occur it is useful to have some sort of ‘working definition’ for what is being discussed. This is a more reasonable and open way of working with definitions since, as more views are brought into the discussion, meaning can keep changing and shifting.

In regard to a ‘definition’ of creativity, given that everyone I interviewed had their own idea of what creativity was, I propose to let the readers start from their own views of what creativity means to them. Regardless of how disparate these initial views may be, in the course of reading this chapter I trust that they will nonetheless connect to the picture of creativity built herein. In Bohm’s words (1980:8):

> Each view gives only an appearance of the object [or concept] in some aspect. The whole object [or concept] is not perceived in any one view but, rather, it is grasped only *implicitly* as that single reality which is shown in all these views.

In other words, as my aim in this chapter is primarily to further the understanding of creativity, including communicating as clear a picture as possible of how this ‘understanding’ has developed during my research, I need to build and amplify its meaning from as many facets as possible. This is a process which is thus more likely to encompass and merge with others’ opinions, or at least parts of these, than to contradict them. A vivid analogy for this is given by Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Philosophical
Investigations in his explanation of “family resemblances” (a metaphor for the connection of similarities between things), which he describes as being "a complicated network of similarities overlapping ... as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres” (1968:32e).

So rather than choosing one view over another, it is worth recognising that it is in fact multiple views that make up the whole, and this importantly includes views yet to be perceived as well as those that remain ‘silent’, or little known, by not being published or discussed. Therefore I do not argue for the supremacy of my view over others – like the blind men in the fable told in Chapter One, rather I open a dialogue on the many meanings of creativity. This of course requires patience on behalf of all involved in the dialogue, and the willingness to stay with the process as it unfolds, as it takes time for the whole picture to start becoming clear; like in a jigsaw puzzle enough of the pieces need to be added for the whole to start to become apparent. Interestingly, professor of psychology Arthur J. Cropley lists “tolerance for ambiguity” (2003:124) as one of the conditions for creativity.

As creativity is at the core of this thesis, being both its main subject and the central ‘methodology’ of the PhD, this chapter holds the key rationales on the views garnered on it from all the research I have conducted. Consequently the aim of this chapter is to holistically explore the complex subject of creativity so as to further its understanding. This includes looking at how creativity needs nurturing in order to gain expression, and so introduces the concepts of time and trust (discussed in depth in Chapter Four) as catalysts for that nurturing.
The tendency of creativity to be seen as a complex concept is acknowledged in countless books and articles written about it. The myriad of ways that creativity is looked at and seen entices many to consider it a fascinating topic; so much so in fact that it has become quite a ‘buzz’ word, with the 21st century being heralded as the “Creative Age” (Seltzer & Bentley, 1999; Earls, 2002; Florida, 2004). Complex concepts have a way of becoming very ‘big’ in our minds, as they inevitably take up a lot of room while we repeatedly attempt to contain them within ideas and explanations. This becomes even more marked when our thoughts are communicated by writing. As Doidge explains, the meanings of words, their visual appearance when written, and their sound are all stored in different areas of the brain which are networked together so that neurons in these different areas can be “activated at the same time – coactivated – for us to see, hear, and understand at once” (2008:276). In academic writing, given its characteristic definitory and analytical tendency, if a concept is particularly complex (and thus big) then the inclination is to ‘cut’ a portion of it from the whole and, after having argued why that particular portion might be the one most worthy of study, go into that in depth. An example of this approach in regards to creativity is given by David Henry Feldman, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Howard Gardner (the well known proponent of ‘the theory of multiple intelligences’) in Changing the World: A Framework for the Study of Creativity, where they state that (1994:2):

We are thus concerned with what is sometimes called “big” creativity, in contrast for example, to the more humble ... tendency to bring a fresh and lively interpretation to any endeavour, [which is termed “small” creativity] ... In contrast, big creativity only occurs when something of enduring value is contributed to an existing body of knowledge, thereby transforming it.

Although this book contains some very worthwhile discussions and much that is enlightening about creativity, what I want to point out is that the above quote shows a
point of departure that is a reductive, though common, approach in research. Two meanings of creativity are ‘defined’ in the quote, even though the definitions given are somewhat general, then one of them is let go while the other is chosen to become the focus of thorough examination. While dividing up a topic and discarding the part that is of no interest is considered a perfectly valid approach, it is however important to remember that from this point on ‘small creativity’ is no longer going to be considered relevant to anything that is discussed, in fact it is not going to be considered at all. This means that all that is connected to ‘small creativity’ - that which supports ‘small creativity’, or any qualities that are engendered from it which could well give rise to, or interconnect with, ‘big creativity’ - can also not be used to inform the understanding of creativity, as it has been ‘shuttered off’ and is no longer allowed to ‘come into the picture’. Consequently the whole complex concept of creativity has, in this case, been reduced to only a part of it.

It could be shown that it is quite reasonable that a book focus only on a particular part of creativity, given that it is such a huge subject, and in fact this is not what I am arguing against. I agree that there is only so much that can be looked at in depth when discussing creativity or other complex concepts; however, this could nonetheless be done without the ‘excising’ of the part that is not being focused on. The conscious setting up of parameters that include parts of a topic while they exclude other parts, not only fragments what is being looked at but at the same time fragments one’s actual approach to research, thereby preventing an attitude that is open to discovery and creativity. In Wholeness and the Implicate Order, David Bohm states that “fragmentation is an attempt to extend the analysis of the world into separate parts beyond the domain in which to do this is appropriate, it is in effect an attempt to divide what is really
indivisible” (1980:15-16); like the different parts of the elephant that the seven blind men were arguing over (in the story told in Chapter One). Similarly, the main issue in regards to creativity being divided into ‘small creativity’ and ‘big creativity’ is that it is an arbitrary division. How can we know that in all instances ‘big creativity’ is separate to ‘small creativity’? Might it not be, at least in some cases, a series of acts of ‘small creativity’ that eventually gives rise to a change in someone’s attitude which then leads him/her to make a ‘contribution of enduring value’, and thus to ‘big creativity’?

The setting up of artificial, and often hierarchical, divisions between parts of the same whole (which regularly occurs in academic research and writing) can lead us to adopt a habitual approach that sets up rigid boundaries as a matter of course, and can therefore actually hold us back from working towards a clearer understanding. As Bohm reminds us: “our theories are not ‘descriptions of reality as it is’ but, rather, ever-changing forms of insight, which can point to or indicate a reality that is implicit and not describable or specifiable in its totality” (1980:17). In the same way it is also important to remember that words, and especially written words, can only go so far in describing reality, or any facet of it. A holistic approach – one that looks at a topic as a ‘whole picture’ (as explained in Chapter One) – ensures that we remain aware that reality is much bigger and more complete than our theories and written explanations of it are. By directing us to link the subject of our study to all that is congruent to it by association, a holistic approach is about finding new and clearer ways of describing what we actually see, rather than trying to formulate ‘acceptable’ definitions by excluding certain parts of the concept in question in order to make it ‘fit’ the theory we want to postulate.

It is worth noting that innovative businesses have found ways of employing holistic approaches to great success. One such example is QlikTech, a Swedish programming
consultancy company founded in 1993. In a Time magazine article (Saporito, 2009) the CEO of the company, Lars Bjork, explains how the human brain intrinsically works by association:

“Think of trying to remember the name of someone you met 20 years ago. You don’t drill down. You probably try to remember a situation, someone else who was there.” Making search much more like your brain ... is what has transformed QlikTech into one of the hotter business-intelligence-software companies around. ... [It] lets users search intuitively across databases and quickly displays information ... Last year, not exactly a joy ride for most companies, QlikTech’s revenues grew 50%, to $120 million, and it expects similar growth in 2009.

A holistic approach is fundamentally supportive of creativity as it is open to perceiving the new. As Bohm explains (2004:48):

... by becoming aware of preconceptions that have been conditioning us unconsciously we are able to perceive and to understand the world in a fresh way. One can then “feel out” and explore what is unknown, rather than go on ... with mere variations on old themes, leading to modifications ... within the framework of what has already been known ... Thus, one's work can begin to be really creative, not only in the sense that it will contain genuinely original features, but also in that these will cohere with what is being continued from the past to form one harmonious, living, evolving, totality.

Thus understanding follows an openness to perceiving the ‘new’ which then, given that life is dynamic and does not keep still, invariably leads to new insights. So it continues in an ever renewing process, which could be termed to be an ‘awakening’, whereby we discover and understand more and more of the whole (the world, ourselves, and everything) and are therefore able to partake of it consciously. Imagining this process fostered in all people leads to a vision of a world where creativity is nurtured and celebrated; to see how such a vision could indeed become a reality we now resume the in-depth exploration of creativity.

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According to Cropley research on creativity began in earnest in the 1950s with the publishing of an article titled ‘Creativity’ by psychologist Joy Paul Guildford, in the *American Psychologist*, which highlighted the importance of “divergent” thinking (2003:1). A common test for creativity at the time specified that creative thinking should lead to innovative outcome - that is some kind of tangible product, from works of art, to scientific discoveries, to specific plans and ideas. It may have been this focus on ‘product’ to give rise to the belief that creativity was a gift that only a few individuals possessed while the majority did not. Or perhaps it was from this already existing belief that the focus on product developed. Nonetheless, the idea that the output of people’s creativity could be increased somehow coexisted with the belief of specific giftedness. This was exemplified in the USA with the passing of the “National Defense Education Act, which called for promotion of creativity in schools …” (2003:2), as a response to the Soviet engineers beating the Americans to the launching of the first satellite in 1957.

It is important to point out that at this time it was largely believed that our brains were ‘hard-wired’ (which is short-hand for saying that the neuron connections in the circuitry of the brain are fixed, or at least preset by a young age). Progress in neuroscience has since helped to counter this idea of the brain being ‘hard-wired’ by providing evidence of its innate plasticity in demonstrating that new experiences and knowledge can result in the brain ‘rewiring’ itself into completely new circuits regardless of one’s age (Pfenninger & Shubik 2001). More precisely termed “neuroplasticity”, this ability of the brain to restructure itself is the topic of Norman Doidge’s *The Brain That Changes Itself*. This book most importantly dislodges the idea of the mechanistic brain, set up by Descartes through his division of mind and body (brain), this it does by giving evidence (through examples) of how by being able to “change its own structure and function
through thought and activity ... the brain differs from one person to the next and ... changes in the course of our individual lives” (2008:xv). Doidge discusses how despite whether one ‘does’ or ‘imagines’ an action many of the same networks of neurons are fired, thereby showing that action and imagination are intrinsically linked. “Each thought alters the physical state of your brain synapses at a microscopic level” (214).

Neuroplasticity is thus clearly connected to our intrinsic potential for creativity and this is something that some neuroscientists have been eager to disseminate. Evian Gordon, author of *Integrative Neuroscience*, states that: “The brain is the essence of creativity” and “we’re all born creative” (Dayton, 2007:6). Gordon, who advocates self-exploration and creativity through art as a means for brain development, is holistic in his approach to neuroscience and connects the conscious with the unconscious. “… whilst there is a great deal about the brain we do not yet know, the essence of what we do already know can be used to understand our Emotion-Thinking-Feeling-Self Regulation behavior, our sense of authentic Self …” (Gordon, 2009). In *Out of Our Minds*, Ken Robinson addresses these same connections: “… there is an intimate relationship between knowing and feeling: how we feel is directly related to what we know and think … There are times when we are immersed in something that completely engages our creative capabilities and draws equally from our knowledge, feelings and intuitive powers” (2001:11).

Creativity makes use of all of these - emotion, intuition, information gained from physical responses and intellectual reasoning - by integrating them together in complex ways that can be synthesised to generate ‘forms’ that are truly innovative. These various forms may be ideas, objects of art, discoveries, solutions to problems, or even just ways of being. In light of this, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio advises us that it is only possible to discuss creativity in an interdisciplinary context (2001:59-60):

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...from the interactions between individuals and environment emerge the social and cultural artifacts that we talk about when we discuss creativity. These artifacts cannot be reduced simply to the neural circuitry of an adult brain and even less to the genes behind our brains. It follows that the sort of activity that leads to creative behaviour ... [includes] something that results from the interactions of the brain with physical, social and cultural environments. That is why extremely reductionist views cannot capture all the issues we wish to understand when we discuss creativity.

This takes creativity beyond the confines of being bounded within each single human, to being seen more as a dynamic and complex social interplay of both nature and nurture.

If we now look back at the definitions of a ‘complex system’ (explained in Chapter One) as being a dynamic and adaptable system on the borderline of chaos, we can indeed see that this also applies to creativity. That is to say creativity is more like a complex and dynamic process than like a ‘thing’, an object, which can be statically labelled and defined. Similarly, although we speak of the ‘mind’ which, because it is a noun, we almost instinctively imagine to be something, some-thing – a ‘thing’, all that has been discussed above indicates that it might be more useful to see the ‘mind’ as an ever changing process connected to the brain. To quote Cohen and Stewart: “Mind seems to be an emergent property of brains ... That is, mind is a process, not a thing, and it emerges from the collective interactions of appropriately organized bits of ordinary matter” (2000:169). It is important that we do not give the phrase “appropriately organised” excessive concrete meaning, for as we have seen in looking at the brain’s neuroplasticity, although the mind might emerge from the brain, likewise the brain is forever emerging from the mind through our input of thoughts, beliefs, feelings and so on. Furthermore, it is all constantly dynamic and an inherent part of the equally dynamic process of life, which therefore adds to its overall complexity.
Creativity, which could be somehow said to parallel ‘the mind’, as well as involve it, also extends beyond it by connecting minds and brains to everything else that is in life. Creativity is therefore an intrinsic part of this dynamic process and could well be thought of as being indivisible to it all. In fact, asking at what point ‘creativity’ ends and ‘mind’ and/or ‘life’ start, is perhaps like asking the age-old eastern philosophical question of at what point waves end and the ocean starts.

Could all our misery, and the suffering that occurs on this world, possibly be due to a misunderstanding? Let us not forget that we (which is to say possibly just about the whole world) live in a patriarchal society. As Thomas Berry tells us: “Patriarchy is coterminous with the Western civilizational process for the past five thousand years” (1990:138), and as explained in Chapter One, patriarchy is a hierarchical system of social order that utilises “definitory logic” (Cavarero, 2000:53) for its rigid methodology. Saul notes in Voltaire’s Bastards, that during its rule it has instigated many ‘ages’ which despite differing in ideological content (all of which have been equally instrumental in preventing us from accepting the connections that creativity has always made as a ‘matter of course’) have even so resulted in very similar governance by a minority of powerful ‘elites’.

It was in the Age of Enlightenment that ‘reason’ was positioned as the acme of human development (Saul 1993:38-76). This belief in the supremacy of the ‘rational mind’, which is still mirrored by the hierarchical values assigned to different things and roles in our society, was birthed “to condemn darkness and superstition ... [and proclaimed] as the new solution to man’s problem” (1993:38-39). However, despite ‘noble ideals’ and what might seem like all the right reasons, Bohm explains how it is that revolutions
(historically imposed through force and violence) inevitably only serve to replace one ‘oppressive order’ with merely a different ‘oppressive order’ (2004:22-23):

... a preconceived idea of producing social harmony is in reality just as mechanical and arbitrary as is the chaotic state of conflicting orders which it aims to eliminate ... Indeed, no really creative transformation can possibly be effected by human beings, either in nature or in society, unless they are in the creative state of mind that is generally sensitive to the differences that always exist between the observed fact and any preconceived ideas, however noble, beautiful, and magnificent they may seem to be.

In light of this it may be wise to reposition ‘reason’, from its place of supremacy, to a more equal position of shared importance and value together with other forms of ‘knowing’ like emotion, intuition, physical responses, and of course creativity. However, doing this means having to relinquish the conformist ideals of the importance of the ‘expert’, and of ‘proving things right’. As Bill Lucas points out, the creative state of mind “requires the capacity to live with complexity and uncertainty. It will be difficult to nurture it in communities where only certainty is rewarded” (2001:42). This makes one wonder how rational it is to continue establishing ‘facts’, when they can only be partially factual anyway as we are not aware of the ‘whole’ and may never be, given that the ‘whole’ cannot be contained. This habit we have of establishing ‘facts’ is the very thing that “prevents theoretical insights from going beyond existing limitations and changing to meet new facts ... [since] the belief that theories give true knowledge of reality ... implies ... that they need never change” (Bohm, 1980:6).

Creativity is nowadays being looked at more holistically. Having finally been recognised as a process, it is therefore the actual process of creativity that is now often under scrutiny. What is more, it is increasingly being looked at in its full complexity and interaction with the environment; which is to say that it is being looked at in a cultural

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and social sense as well as a personal and spiritual sense (though not necessarily all together). While the complexity of creativity, together with its relevance and connectedness to all areas of life, is being ‘spelt out’ by neuroscientists, there are also others who have been arriving at similar conclusions from totally different directions and they are highlighting the need to nurture creativity in their fields. Among them are:

- John Paul Lederach, Professor of International Peacebuilding, who as a result of personal and professional experience, believes that creativity opens up a new vision of possibilities such that he sees it as being an integral part of peacebuilding and reconciliation. As he writes in his book *The Moral Imagination: the art and soul of building peace*: “The peacebuilder must have one foot in what is and one foot beyond what exists ... creativity moves beyond what exists toward something new and unexpected while rising from and speaking to the everyday” (2005:22-38).

- Mr Koichiro Matsuura, Director-general of UNESCO from 1999 to 2009, who in November 1999 made an appeal “for the promotion of arts education and creativity at school as part of the construction of a culture of peace” (Lea International Website 1999). This supports Lederach’s emphasis on the importance of nurturing creativity for peace-building.

- Mark Earls, author and director of one of the UK’s largest communications group, until he wrote bestseller *Herd*, who assures us that “creativity is what we should employ at work, and value above all else” (2002:17), while stressing the importance of networking and of group creativity. Moreover, he also gives numerous examples of how creativity is being seriously considered in more diverse fields than ever before.
Thus, linking back to my statement at the beginning of this chapter about creativity being a ‘big-picture’ concept, and taking into consideration all that has been looked at so far, I propose that creativity is such a ‘huge’ concept as to encompass life, or in other words be intrinsically interwoven with life, meaning that it could be seen as being a perspective that underpins life. That is to say, given its scope creativity might be best understood as being: one’s attitude; one’s approach to the process of living; one’s way of being. For when one has or adopts creativity as one’s attitude then it becomes a way of actually ‘being’ in the world, as well as a way of seeing. The nurturing of creativity is thereby a natural extension of this attitude of creativity, in other words it is the very nature of this ‘attitude’ which can lead individuals, or groups, to become advocates for creativity, so that they foster it in themselves and in others. Moreover, it is not just theoretical insight that leads me to propose this, but also the experience of personal transformation through creativity.

From deep within me has awakened an underlying attitude of creativity. This creativity has encompassed my world, allowing me to identify myself as an advocate for the nurturing of creativity and enabling me to give meaning to my life – not only to what is occurring now but from what has gone before to the unfoldment of whatever may come. Furthermore, it has made it possible for me to reclaim the whole of myself, even while I do not know the completeness of this (as it is part of the ongoing process of living), and to recognise the deep connections I have to the whole of life, which is in itself thoroughly interconnected and complex, though at the same time it remains ‘mind-bogglingly’ open to further transformation.

In Virtue Ethics, Christine Swanton writes that Abraham Maslow (renown for the Maslow hierarchy of needs) “claims that his studies of creativity in subjects rid him of
an important preconception about the nature of creativity” (2003:161). While he had previously categorised it by confining it to artists, composers and so on, he realized that in fact “creativity pervades life in general” (2003:161). Similarly, one’s attitude pervades everything about them; it is holistic in that it both informs and is a result of the workings and interactions of one’s subconscious with one’ consciousness and thus encompasses the whole of one’s personality.

There is a story told (a Japanese folktale) that can serve as an analogy about the far-reaching effects of attitude: one day a puppy climbed up the stairs of a house full of mirrors, as soon as he entered, tail wagging in happy expectation, he saw reflected back at him countless happy and tail-wagging puppies; delighted to have made so many friends he left in high spirits. The next day another puppy climbed up into the house of mirrors, but he did it in a fearful and shy way, creeping in with his tail down and a scowl on his face, seeing all the reflected puppies scowling back at him made him growl and he quickly fled afraid that the growling puppies would hurt him. This tale clearly illustrates the circular way that attitude can work for or against you, with an attitude of creativity being the one most likely to enable growth and transformation.

As Lederach points out, to be willing to work and move with creativity involves risk as it requires that one be open and vulnerable and let go of all need and desire to control the process. Yet at the same time it is this very vulnerability and openness that can allow one to see past danger, by bridging the gap beyond fear and violence, “back to humanity and the building of genuine community” (2005:163-173). Being aware of the presence of creativity within the work of peace-building, Lederach suggests that this creativity be actually nurtured, anticipating that the result of this may lead to significant insights as well as to the increased mindfulness of the perceptiveness of groups and individuals. “Over time, I believe, we would keep our professions alive with a sense of wonder and...
awe, and we would replenish our work-as-craft with art and soul” (174). This is part of the indivisibility of the ‘whole’ that Bohm speaks of – though creativity is an intrinsic part of us, we need to acknowledge this and nurture it, rather than ignore it, so as to be able to fully incorporate it in our lives and make use of it.

Looking at creativity in business in *Welcome to the Creative Age*, Earls points out how creativity has been relegated to minor sectors of this serious and ‘hard-nosed’ world so that it is mostly given no ‘voting rights’. From this position of diminished value, the only input creativity is usually allowed is a superficial one of embellishment and design so that it cannot interfere with “a ‘command and control’ culture” (2002:23) that is not well disposed to creative risk, because any sort of risk is seen as dangerous. This is not only a great waste, but it is also akin to a denial of our human nature. “Creativity is our greatest inheritance”, says Earls, and it enables us “To refuse to believe that what is given is what is given. To believe that things might be otherwise. And then to make them so ... to make it a world ... we might want to live in” (21-23).

Following from the thrust of both Lederach’s and Earls’ reasoning, yet another way of describing creativity is as a potential ability which we all have, both individually and collectively, to contribute to the survival, advancement and well-being of our society of human beings. Since a ‘potential something’ only becomes a reality when it is recognised, acknowledged and turned into action, this clearly points to the usefulness and indeed to our current vital need to immerse ourselves fully and take a holistic approach to that which we are trying to understand, rather than attempt to comprehend it only intellectually. This is especially so in the case of creativity, and it connects to my choice of using creativity as my central ‘methodology’ (as discussed in Chapter Two). In a sense it is a way to ‘walk my talk’, and practically speaking it means ~ 95 ~
that I have allowed the whole research process to develop in an open ended manner so that, as much as possible, each part can be recognised as being integrally connected to the whole.

A pertinent question to pose at this point might be: why then, if we are all inherently creative, have so few of us been able to fulfil this potential to date? Is it perhaps a case that we have not been recognised as having fulfilled, or at least that we are in the process of fulfilling, that potential? And could this possibly be due to an underlying stubborn belief that true, or ‘big’, creativity is a rare gift possessed by only a few? In *Unlocking Creativity*, Robert Fisher lists some of the qualities exhibited by people in touch with their creativity (2004:13):

- they are flexible;
- they connect ideas;
- they are unorthodox;
- they show aesthetic taste;
- they are curious and inquisitive;
- they see similarities and differences;
- they question accepted ways of doing things.

These are the sort of qualities that are quite apparent when observing most young children (before school age) in their play. Perhaps it is because children’s play is largely self-generated, as opposed to directed, that when they are playing the process of
creativity is evident. Though play is considered as yet another concept too complex to define, Fisher suggests it can be seen as meaning “all activities not imposed on children by adults” (21). Playing is the child’s way of discovering all about life and being alive, and so it makes sense that young children would approach most things in life through play. Totally absorbed by whatever they are involved in, there is a fresh sense of wonder constantly present in their interactions with their environment and they are not afraid to show their delight or displeasure, or indeed to ‘drop’ things and go on to something else, and furthermore they appear to do this seamlessly, following a complex internal process that only they can perceive.

If an adult or older child tries to teach a young child the rules of a specific game, invariably these will be questioned and many creative attempts to alter them will be made, if this is not successful then often the child will end up refusing to play in the prescribed ‘restrictive’ manner. I experienced this when my youngest was taught the game of Monopoly, and I have seen it occur with many other children as well. Though adults explain away the child’s non-compliant behaviour by telling themselves that the child is obviously too young to understand and follow rules, I think this is a reductive assumption. It is more a case that young children do not see the point, the benefit in other words, of following rules. They do not see the point of forgoing the open-ended exploration of possibilities in playing, for a fixed approach such that winning or losing are the only alternatives - it does not make sense to them, and perhaps it should not make sense to us either. It is not that the concept of winning and losing is beyond them; rather it is in fact so restrictive that a young child’s viewpoint cannot possibly operate from it. Why trade a perspective of a big picture that has room for all to achieve fulfilment, for one that has been constructed so that the majority have to lose to allow
barely one to be the winner? Why stop playing with each other to instead play against each other?

From these beginnings what happens as children grow up? While they may or may not have a supportive home environment, many of these qualities are likely to be discouraged in children once they reach school age. Many of the creative characteristics listed by Fisher are liable to be ‘frowned upon’ at school, where students overtly displaying them are apt to be seen and labelled as ‘disruptive’, ‘naughty’, ‘attention-seeking’, and so on. Similarly, these characteristics would also be discouraged in most other institutions that value a hierarchical structure of control. Looking back to Damasio’s explanation of creativity as a complex interplay of both nature and nurture, it follows from what he says that the potential for creativity can hence be affected by a myriad of factors - flourishing in an ideal environment, but being stifled in a contrary one.

The premise, which neuroplasticity also confirms, is that we are all potentially open to our brains ‘wiring’ themselves in any of many possible ways, and we are also open for this process to be repeated over and over in forever new ways. If however, we are not in an environment that is holistically supportive of creativity (that is socially, culturally, physically and spiritually) then we may ignore our potential to be open to the new, and make do instead with prescribed ‘wiring’. With repetitions of the same experience over time this ‘prescribed wiring’ – this institutionalised perception that we internalise (discussed Chapter One) - will be reinforced in us so as to become rather rigid and harder to overcome. In fact with ‘endless’ repetitions it can feel like we are following a ‘script’ as with compulsions and obsessions. In these cases, as Doidge states, “the more you do it the more you want to do it; the less you do it, the less you want to do it”
Therefore the more we conform the more we want to (or need to) conform, and the less we use our creative potential (for whatever reason) the harder it becomes for us to be open to being, or becoming, more connected to our creativity.

Cropley describes a general ‘congenial’ environment supportive of creativity, outlined by Csikszentmihalyi (1996), as consisting of: “openness, positive attitude to novelty, acceptance of personal differentness, and willingness to reward divergence” (2003:67). Cropley adds an “absence of rigid sanctions against (harmless) mistakes” (2003:150) as another important societal quality, seeing it as necessary in a society that is to provide support to creativity. If we juxtapose these environmental factors to the creative qualities listed by Fisher above, we can see that they are in fact compatible. In other words, societal conditions such as these would foster the blossoming of creative qualities. Thus it is easy to imagine that where open-ended inquiry is allowed to unfold, without having to follow rigid directives and with no fear of repercussions, there would be support of people being curious, inquisitive and flexible. Likewise an environment that allowed people to question the accepted ways of doing things would thus be accepting of personal diversity and have a positive attitude to novelty. On the other hand, a hierarchical institution or organisation, or indeed a hierarchical society (as a patriarchal society is, as discussed in Chapter One), whose structure is thus often based on an inflexible linear model where policies are implemented and followed in a top-down manner, could not easily be supportive of creativity. In fact it may be argued that it would be difficult, if not actually impossible, for a hierarchical structure to be associated with anything that might nurture creativity.
Further investigation of the above features for a congenial environment to creativity, reveals that much of what they are dependent upon is ultimately related to one or other, or both, of two main factors. These are time and trust, both of which I see as being intrinsically linked to creativity and to each other. Fisher states that: “Creativity thrives where there is time to explore, experiment and play with ideas.” (2004:1). By considering this statement in the context of a congenial environment, it follows that in such an environment there would be an attitude of ‘openness’ (and therefore of trust) to time as well, which practically speaking simply means being more flexible in regards to time. It is harder to imagine, however, where one might actually find a place that was flexible in regards to time, especially given that modern society is constantly claiming to be ‘time-poor’.

In a world ruled by outcomes (goals) it might seem strange that we so often end up short-changing ourselves, and make it difficult to achieve those goals by being inflexible with time. So as to have a more tangible example, and given that we have been looking at what tends to suppress children’s creativity as they grow up, we might look at time in relation to education. If we liken a desired outcome (a learning outcome in the case of education) to the destination in a journey, it makes sense that the journey will need to take as much time as it actually takes to get to the destination. This is especially so given that the journey doesn't always go according to plan; as for instance one cannot always travel by the means one had initially chosen. Therefore being time flexible in education would mean that, rather than setting timetables and deadlines of varying rigidity, which is mostly what presently occurs in the majority of schools, a time plan could be structured to be open to the actual time it takes to learn. In this way the topics of study might be allowed to develop according to students’ interests and abilities with more
focus being put on the process of learning – which is where the living and the creating happens - rather than on the outcome. After all, the outcome is only the conclusion or completion of the process of learning; it consists only of the split second when the ‘finishing line’ is crossed, and not many athletes would ever get to the finishing line if they neglected to pay much attention to the actual journey towards it.

In setting out to reach a goal, to achieve a learning outcome, a teacher and her/his students must journey through unknown territory, this is the process of learning, which is unknown because although it can be planned it cannot be exactly predicted nor controlled how this plan will unfold. Although there is much potential for learning, the unknown can be the cause of anxieties and fear, however it can also elicit a sense of excitement and adventure. Whether the unknown is faced with excitement or with fearfulness largely depends on attitude, as illustrated in the story of the house of mirrors told above. Consciously harnessing creativity can help us to face the unknown with a positive outlook. As the most complex function of our selves creativity has, according to neuroscience (Pfenninger 2001), especially evolved to provide us with a “vision of novel contexts” (91), so that we might give meaning to what we encounter and find usefulness in what we discover. Most importantly, in order to employ their creativity on their journey, the teacher and students will need to provide it with a supportive environment. This is where trust comes in as, together with time, it is required if they are to maintain an open perspective during their journey.

By journeying through the process of learning (unknown territory) with a conscious attitude of creativity, this teacher and students may ultimately find that what they learn might be different to what was planned, that is the outcome may change. It is important to be open to this possibility, because in fact the unplanned for learning may be greater

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and of more benefit than the planned for learning would have been. “The thing that I like about having an idea that you build your creativity on is that your little seed not only grows, but it might grow in a direction you never planned it to, but that is really, really, positive for the students” (teacher). This is because as the learning journey changes from what was originally planned, often in response to all sorts of unexpected contexts and dynamics, the attitude of creativity will ensure that the outcome is adapted so as to be the best possible outcome given the circumstances. Thus the trust that is spoken of here is mainly trust in our own creative potential.

I have found that there is a relationship between how long it takes me to fully ‘open’ to an attitude of creativity, that is in regards to whatever I am doing, and the trust I invest into the activity. I can recognise when I am wholly ‘coming from’ creativity as I experience what Csikszentmihalyi calls ‘flow’ (1996) - a feeling of being outside, or beyond, time and totally immersed in and enjoying what I am doing. What occurs for me is that the more I trust myself, and what I do, then the more trust I feel and the less time it takes me to open to the creative process and be creative and in a state of ‘flow’. This then seems to sharpen all my senses, including my inner sense of vision which allows me to see more clearly so that I can seamlessly adjust what I am doing as I am doing it, while heading in the ‘general’ direction I want to go in. On the other hand, the less trust I invest in myself the more uncertain I am, and this affects the ease with which I can connect to my creativity. I have found at times, that I have in fact been in such a state of mistrust, anxiety and doubt, that it has made me feel so disconnected and completely locked away from my creativity, despairing of ever being able to reach it again.

If we believe that we are indeed creative beings then it follows that creativity is a natural perspective for us to have and we would expect to be able to operate from an
attitude of creativity. However, what occurs in the world shows that many of us still doubt that we have an innate creative potential, despite all of the evidence supporting this. According to psychologists David Fontana and Ingrid Slack, this lack of trust in our abilities is due to the constant criticism that we received as children, where adult judgment taught us to place little value in activities that engaged our creativity. Unfortunately this still occurs, and so “children are literally educated out of their creative abilities” (2007:81). Fontana & Slack alert us that creativity not given full expression is deeply injurious to our psyche, (2007:82):

The mind feels restless and unfulfilled, searching for something without knowing quite what it is. There is a feeling that some undefined potential is going to waste, and that something precious is being denied the light of day.

So we develop the habit of holding in our creativity, and because we have not experienced otherwise (except perhaps in vague memories of a distant childhood), many of us do not even believe that we have the potential for being creative! Through the value judgement imposed by our hierarchically structured education we have actually been taught to repress our innate urge to be creative, and so we have learnt not to trust our creativity. But trust is a curious concept (as is discussed more fully in Chapter Four), for while we do not usually give any thought to being trusting if we are following ‘rules’, a policy, or some kind of specified procedure of a hierarchical structure, that is exactly what we are doing. We may think that we are merely complying with requirements, but at the same time we are placing our trust in what we are following so completely that in fact we are not even questioning it. We trust it blindly and we rely on it totally; all the more so because we are not in the habit of being self-reliant or of trusting ourselves.
The more we unquestioningly ‘follow’ exterior structures laid out for us, the less likely we are to trust ourselves and become self-reliant on our own creativity. Bohm observes that “what we learn as children, from parents, teachers, friends, and society in general, is to have a conformist, imitative, mechanical state of mind” (2004:20). Even those who rebel against this are often trapped into “projecting an opposing or contrary set of ideals ... trying to conform to these. But evidently such conformity is also not creative” (20). By giving in to the pressure to conform that we are faced with from childhood, we basically allow an imposed order to take over our mind, and this precludes creativity. Although Robinson tells us that those in the business sector are frustrated with an education system that pushes conformity “because they're getting people coming through who can't think out of a straight line” (2005:11), it has nonetheless been the traditional corporate model that has reinforced conformity, and indeed education systems worldwide have but set out to emulate it.

In his conclusions to Welcome to the Creative Age, Earls discusses how it is the very way that companies are structured for control that stifles creativity (2002:257):

... we love specialization, hierarchies, department siloes and serial processes, which reinforce these structures of control ... we have to remove these structures in order to ‘network’ our companies properly ... Without these changes, we cannot create a work environment that gets the most from our people or gives them the most rewarding experience. Without these changes, we cannot build a Creative Age company, a place where people want to work.

Yet to be able to make these structural changes we need to realise that we still live in a world ruled by patriarchy where the hierarchical structure is intrinsic and thus is seen as being ‘normal’. We are constantly being told that the world needs leaders, and leadership courses and seminars seem to currently abound. This belief is of course inherent with growing up within hierarchical structures - leaders are the ones at the top.
that give the directions, and they therefore need followers. As reported by Options (Issue 20, 2007, p. 18), Dr Ian Plowman, an evolutionary psychologist and social researcher, tells us that: “Leaders discourage creativity, but they don’t even realise they’re doing it” (2007:18). Those we recognise as leaders are people who invariably hold positions of responsibility, and hand in hand with that responsibility goes a reasonable amount power. Interestingly Plowman adds: “All high-ranking persons are generally driven by a need for power ... and the need for power is in direct contradiction with the ability to be creative” (2007:18).

Though this is a generalisation, which would therefore have exceptions, it nonetheless makes sense. While people in touch with their creativity naturally thrive from the interaction with similar others, leaders (or at least those who clearly identify themselves as such) are instead not necessarily interested in creativity. What leaders seem to want ranges from simply being the ones who others follow and look up to, to a yearning for glory and adulation, with this especially appealing to those with narcissistic tendencies. While all narcissists are attracted to leadership and highly pressured jobs, Goleman tells us that there are quite a number of narcissistic CEOs (2006:125). Carl Robinson rationalises that (2009):

... many entrepreneurs fit, a more general, albeit less obnoxious, narcissistic style profile than would a random sampling of the general public because it would be hard for entrepreneurs to endure the trials of starting a business without a certain degree of self-centered single mindedness.

Despite such rationalisations, I maintain that condoning and/or encouraging narcissistic type of behaviour even to a minor degree - for as Goleman states: “Unrealistic self-inflation comes more readily in cultures that encourage individualistic striving rather than shared success” (2006:124) - undermines creativity as much as demanding
conformity does. Although narcissistic behaviour can include charm, flamboyant expression and creative ideas, the main difference between this and ‘real’ emergent creativity is that the surface creativity of narcissism is not in context with the big picture. It does not need to be, as it is meant to impress quickly rather than have a lasting effect. Thus rather than acquiescing to the ‘need’ for narcissistic self-centredness to ‘survive’ the ordeals of setting up a business, we might open ourselves to looking at the ‘bigger picture’ and see what new things creativity might propose in order to turn these ‘ordeals’ into adventures. This would entail delving into the nurturing of creativity, both for ourselves and others, rather than accepting narcissistic behaviour as ‘the price to pay’ for short-term creative thinking. Indeed creativity provides such a high level of self-awareness that can eclipse the “self-centered single mindedness” of narcissism, and furthermore it is much more useful because it is grounded in the context of the bigger picture of the self interconnected to others.

If we look back at the qualities of those in touch with their creativity we can see how being curious, inquisitive, and questioning of the accepted ways of doing things, would make it difficult for these sorts of people to be led into anything that they did not actually want to do, or be a part of. Furthermore, these are not people who could be easily controlled; they would not want to be ‘team players’ if they did not agree with what was being asked of them; they would instead seek to have an input into the things they were involved in and would therefore be more likely to negotiate. They would be self-reliant and able to see many different possibilities. Thus a leader interested in power would want to discourage these qualities. On the other hand a creative ‘leader’, who might be better named a facilitator, would understand the needs of self-reliant people with an attitude of creativity and would support them rather than control them.
A facilitator with an attitude of creativity would trust that they could all together (as a whole) be part of a constructive and creative form of decision making – an egalitarian system or structure, from which could flow positive action. Such a person with an attitude of creativity would therefore be in a ‘creative state of mind’. As Bohm indicates, in this state one's (2004:21):

... interest in what is being done is wholehearted and total, like that of a young child ... always open to learning what is new, to perceiving new differences and new similarities, leading to new orders and structures, rather than always tending to impose familiar orders and structures in the field of what is seen ... This kind of action of the creative state of mind is impossible if one is limited by narrow and petty aims, such as security [certainty and the avoidance of risk], furthering of personal ambition, glorification of the individual or the state...

We have all experienced what it is like to be in a creative state of mind (at least as young children), and with growing research on creativity and brain plasticity more of us are increasingly becoming aware of the possibility of cultivating this. We now need to consciously return to being in this state and claim it as the birthright that we all share. Chapter Four looks at how this can become a real possibility through the support that time and trust can give.

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This chapter starts with the explanation (both mine and other's) that creativity is too complex a concept to be defined simplistically or rigidly, or even elaborately, as no
matter how involved a definition one is prepared to give, it is still likely to leave out some aspect of how creativity is seen and thus on the effect it has on different people. Trying to definitely ‘define’ creativity would be like trying to give an accurate and inclusive definition of all the people that there are in this world.

By starting from one’s own meaning of creativity and sharing this in an open dialogue, the understanding of creativity may be expanded on. This is especially the case because creativity is best viewed from a holistic perspective, being one of the indivisible ‘things’ that Bohm refers to. Analysing, by dividing and grouping, what in effect is indivisible, causes fragmentation and works against improving understanding. The example given here is the dividing of creativity into ‘big’ and ‘small’ creativity. This is shown to be reductive to the overall understanding of creativity as it fragments it by including some facets of it but excluding others. It is not predictable how something as complex as creativity will develop in different people and situations, so that which for some may be ‘big’ creativity, defined as “when something of enduring value is contributed to an existing body of knowledge, thereby transforming it” (Feldman et al, 1994:2) could be considered ‘small’ creativity by others, and vice versa.

Often it seems that a theory is so closely identified with that which it is trying to explain, that it may end up replacing it. In other words, the reality of the concept, ‘thing’ or process is no longer seen without the theory explaining it, so that in fact rather than helping the understanding of what it is trying to explain, the ‘theory’ can obscure it and render it inaccessible. Despite this, our theoretical way of gathering evidence to make ‘sense’ of the world gained strength some four hundred years ago with the “rise of reason” (Saul, 1993:38-76). This has served to validate patriarchy's methods of ruling by dividing and grouping, according to its order of hierarchical values. Internalising this
way of perceiving while we are being ‘educated’ - this ‘institutionalised perception’ - leaves little room for creativity and the connections to wholeness that creativity points to, for it undermines them. This is why so many adults do not believe themselves to be creative.

To counteract the demoralising effect of no longer believing in an intrinsic part of ourselves we need ‘trust’. Mostly it is trust in ourselves and our abilities that we need, but as trust is something which has to be built on we therefore also need time to acquire it. Trust and time are thus both important factors as they facilitate the nurturing of creativity to such an extent that I see them as being catalysts for the unfoldment of creativity.

Creativity has been recognised as being important in diverse fields of study and human endeavour: from reconciliation to business, education to environmental sustainability. This has made it the subject of many recent books, articles and discussions, and depending on who is talking we are said to be living in, or be approaching, the ‘Creative Age’. It is not surprising that creativity generates so much interest as it is intrinsic to us as human beings. I see it above all as being an underlying attitude in us, which once we reconnect to it can guide us and our perception so that it becomes a way of ‘being’ in the world, as well as a way of seeing. To reach this state, which Bohm calls “the creative state of mind” (2004:21), we have to let go of much preconception and the institutionalised perception (the way of ‘seeing’) that leads to this; we also need to actively nurture our creativity and cultivate the qualities that it brings out in us.
Chapter Four:

The Grounding Strength of Time and Trust

Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.

Lao Tzu

... something arose in me, a trust that something in my life itself was the teacher

(Anderson & Hopkins 1992:56)

This chapter expands on the brief introduction, given in Chapter Three, of the concepts of time and trust in relation to creativity. The focus here is on time and trust as facets of everyday living rather than as huge abstract concepts which defy definition. Therefore, instead of grappling with these concepts to try to arrive at a ‘higher’, or ‘better’, philosophical understanding of them, my aim is to communicate how it has been my experience that a certain way of engaging with them can help to nurture the self’s creativity and enable a joyous expression of it. Thus the focus is on time and trust as agents for the nurturing of creativity, and to do this I will look at them both separately and together.

Scholarly personal narrative (SPN), a way of structuring academic writing explained in the Introduction and Chapter Two, is a large component of this chapter, as the personal insights shared were gained in retrospect through self-reflexive narratives of life experiences. Though the import of some of these cannot be easily shared through writing, I find that their potential for impact continues to unfold a long time after their
occurrence. As Nash writes: “The ultimate intellectual responsibility of the SPN scholar is to find a way to use the personal insights gained in order to draw larger conclusions for readers; possibly even to challenge and reconstruct older political or educational narratives, ...” (2004:18). This then is precisely what I am doing here, looking at time and trust and utilising my insights of them to challenge the conventional accepted way of perceiving them. Because they are such complex concepts, they are commonly either discussed through an in-depth use of philosophy or ignored and/or ‘taken for granted’, while at the same time their lack is often bemoaned. Either way, I feel that it is important to deepen our experiential understanding of them as they are more than human constructs or measurable ‘commodities’. We need to see more clearly how the way we perceive time and trust affect us in our everyday experiences so that we may embrace them in new ways that will enable us to more harmoniously flow with our innate creativity.

It is with some trepidation that I embark on writing this chapter, as making use of what could be called a ‘trust/time connection’ to help nurture our creativity is something I believe is vital for us to be successful in the challenges we face as a society. Just thinking of it sets my stomach churning as it inevitably brings feelings of frustration at not having the certainty that what I am setting out to explain will be understood. Clearly it is complex, and given how anxious I am feeling at being in the process of facing something so challenging I suspect it might have been ‘easier’ to follow my original course of writing a thesis on ‘Nurturing Creativity in Education’. Had I done so I could have elaborated on all my findings and interviews and produced yet another individual (or original) scholarly critique of the education system. But from my experience, and from what the action research of ‘appreciative inquiry’ points out as the main reason for its
development (as discussed in depth in Chapter Two), problem-focused critiques are not often, nor easily, likely to facilitate social change or transformation. As Ludema et al. state (2001:191):

As people in organisations inquire into their weaknesses and deficiencies, they gain an expert knowledge of what is 'wrong' with their organizations ... but they do not strengthen their collective capacity to imagine and to build better futures ... Appreciative inquiry distinguishes itself from critical modes of research by its deliberately affirmative assumptions about people, organizations and relationships.

When the spotlight is on what is wrong with something then the critical voice is so strong as to be overwhelming, thus it literally drowns out the possibility of the new taking shape. Focusing on the negative makes it impossible to trust, and trust is what is needed for taking action in building or indeed re-building the new.

Re-reading the last paragraph it does not take me long to realise that I need a large amount of trust to overcome my concern at continuing along the path I have chosen. I need to trust that I am willing to give myself enough open time - unmeasured time without pressure - to sufficiently untangle the complexity of my experience, so that I might express it in words. Furthermore, I need to trust that whatever happens I will be able to deal with it in the best way possible. This means trusting myself, which is not necessarily easy to do as I can’t make myself do it. In Trust: Self-Interest and the Common Good, Marek Kohn points out that: “Like love, trust is involuntary ... Although you can’t make yourself trust, you can act in ways that help trust develop ...” (2008:9). Through practice and experience I have learnt that I can get to a place where I feel more trusting and safer than I do now, which could mean feeling safe enough to deal with whatever fears might arise because I know that I will be able to do the best I can for myself. I have also learnt that to get there I need time. This entails being aware that I am only
physically present right ‘now’ at this very point in time, while also being consciously aware that this time will flow and pass. In a sense time is always ‘moving’, so that the ‘future’ becomes the ‘present’ and then the ‘past’, and the best thing I can do is flow with it, as this is what allows me to always consciously be present in the ‘here and now’. By doing this I also give myself a chance to see the returns of the trust I am choosing to invest in, or to put it another way - I will be able to see it ‘bear fruit’.

A new day, dappled sunlight playing with the jacaranda and bougainvillea shines through the garden bay window in the kitchen and drips on the translucent blooms of the begonias. It’s perfect! Full of colour, the day stretches before me fresh and inviting, with just a hint of mystery to be revealed. Hovering in this moment I feel suspended between the mundane and eternity, in a magical threshold world that has already quenched the desires of all my senses. I belong in this world ever-present to the now, time is my friend here. It is here that I do my deep thinking, much of my writing, and all my happy living; slipping back here whenever I can, in between the measured time slots that just by being a member of western society I seem to have agreed to keep by default. Yet it was not always like this...

Before I consciously chose to nurture my creativity, my access to the ‘world of now’ – to being present and connected to my beingness (as first explained in the Introduction) - was sporadic, and seemed to happen only by chance. Though aware that I was more than: daughter, sister, girlfriend, university student, friend, information officer at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, air traffic controller trainee, and so on, I did not know how to get beyond these roles. Each of them being a role I had been labelled with by virtue of my recognised relationship with someone, or because it was the means by which I earned an income, or would potentially do so in the future. These roles
fragmented me as I felt pressured to identify with each of them so as to be a ‘good daughter’, a ‘successful trainee’, a ‘high achieving student’, and so on. I felt weighed down by them and all the guilt they induced in me; guilt I felt because I could see that I was not fully fulfilling the unspoken expectations that my identifying with each of them required. Somehow, despite all that I was labelled with I had lost myself; it was as though my wholeness had seeped through the cracks created by the friction of the boundaries of my different roles clashing against each other. I fervently wished to get beyond the guilt and pressure, but not knowing how to find myself I could not go forward, no matter which direction I faced; I felt overwhelmed, powerless and stuck.

It is at this point of explaining a trust-time connection that many links could be made to clarify so much. Like differently coloured strands joining on from here I see these links weaving and creating the fabric of this chapter side by side, now intersecting and now diverging, each of them important and present in the ‘now’ of what I want to communicate. This is where the limitations of writing become very clear. In writing, an experience can be explained only one sensation at a time; likewise only one thread of reasoning can be followed at a time, and this is especially so in traditional academic writing where it is also preferable if each thread has a clear beginning and end. Thus if I were to be strictly linear in the conventional academic sense, to continue my weaving analogy, I would have to attempt to weave single and unconnected threads while trying to keep them from unravelling. Even if they did not unravel, as long as they remained unconnected (or even just connected to the subsequent thread) they would not form a very strong fabric. However, even though it is through ‘academic’ writing – the writing of a PhD thesis - which is mostly perceived in a linear fashion, that I am endeavouring to show a holistic picture of how time and trust can nurture creativity, I am employing SPN
as my methodology. By allowing in the personal, SPN enables me to point out as many of
the connected threads as I can to build up a coherent whole – the chapter as a colourful
textured piece of fabric.

Yet another factor complicates the process of my writing and overshadows my attempt
to reveal a whole picture, and this is my anticipation of the readers’ expectations.
Indeed writers are taught to always consider their readers’ expectations, depending on
the audience they are writing for, and this is even more so in the case of academic
writing. I am therefore concerned that the unconventionality of my writing might
prejudice how it is viewed. If a reader believed that something was not quite ‘right’ with
the arguments or ideas being presented then this could be detrimental to the message I
want to get across. This could especially be the case if the reader were strongly
identifying with the role of lecturer/tutor, examiner, supervisor, publisher or reviewer –
a judgemental role that requires qualitative and/or quantitative criticism, or in other
words some sort of value judgment being made of the work, usually in the form of a
grade or a decision to accept or not accept the text for publication. For as Nash reminds
us: “Anytime you want to do something different ..., whether it requires a drastic or
moderate change, you are talking about shaking up established hierarchies of
intellectual authority” (2004:150). Challenging established, traditional, ways of doing
things can make people feel threatened.

The above complication requires me to have even more trust if I am to go ahead and
risk writing this chapter. As I need trust to write, similarly much trust is needed in
reading – a suspension of disbelief and judgement, and a willingness to receive - with
more trust being required as the complexity of what is read increases. For my part, I
need to trust that the readers of my writing will themselves approach my work with the
trust necessary for an open attitude. As I am writing I am hoping, more than trusting, that many of my readers will have a ‘state of mind’ that is like the ‘congenial’ environment supportive of creativity as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Cropley, and discussed in Chapter Three. This requires: openness, a positive attitude to the new, acceptance of diversity, a willingness to see the value in that which is not ‘standard’ (2003:67), and an absence of the desire to suppress that which challenges conformity, and therefore by extension also authority (2003:150). These qualities might also be arguably seen as forming a sort of ‘intellectual’ trust by being connected to the thoughts that may arise from them.

Additionally, through the trust necessary for this attitude of openness, readers can also gain access to other qualities that are vital for the co-creation of the whole picture of the complex concepts presented. These are qualities like – patience, tolerance of ambiguity, and flexibility in going beyond the ‘specific’ role of reader to one who is dialoguing with the written text. This allows the reader to bring in personal experiences to connect with the text, which can then further the discussion that has been started by the writer. So in effect this is an attitude of creativity where overall, as Roger Fowler suggests in *Linguistic Criticism*, the “questioning of existing conventions is the basic creative act that is being performed” (1986:40).

The trustful and creative reading I am suggesting, and hoping for, requires time. It would be difficult for a reader on a tight schedule to be open to see what non-conformist writing really has to say, as this entails accepting the need for the “reanalysing .. [of one’s] theory of the way the world works” (1986:40). Thus given that most academics have so much to do and so little time, does this rule them out? Thankfully in my experience that is not necessarily the case, as both trust and time can be plentiful even
in environments where they may not rationally be expected. Yet this does not preclude
the fact that I need to be willing to take a risk with my writing if I want to share my
insights. As Lederach writes: “To risk is to step into the unknown without any guarantee
of success or even safety. Risk by its very nature is mysterious. It is mystery lived ...”
(2005:39). Still, the more one trusts the more risk becomes possible as somehow trust
provides an invisible and yet palpable mantle of emotional safety which allows one to
courageously face risk. In this way trust could be seen as being somewhat akin to faith,
which gave early Christians the courage to willingly face anything for their belief,
including the possibility of martyrdom. Although it could be argued that faith requires
belief in something, and the same could be said for trust, there must also be an
intransitive (invisible) aspect of trust as often we have no ‘proof’ of the existence of
what we may place our trust in. It is this particular aspect of ‘invisible’ trust which, if
fully embodied, can enable us to face life with an intrinsic openness that allows us to
live the mystery that Lederach speaks of above.

Trust has long been something that I have realised I need more of in my life, although it
was not until I actually began to trust more that I became aware of how little I trusted.
At the start of his book on trust, Kohn looks at the feelings that trust engenders, as even
the word itself “has the gift of warming the heart and dissolving its tensions” (2008:8).
In the last paragraph of his book, after having looked at the evolutionary origins and
development of trust and having explored it from various perspectives and in numerous
contexts, Kohn sums up (133):

Trust is desirable in itself. When it is placed well, it enhances relations of all kinds. Life is more
enjoyable, work is more productive, relationships are more meaningful and rewarding. And it is
also part of a complex of factors – association, social capital, community, democracy, equality,
health, and happiness – that make for a good society.

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In other words, trust improves the quality of human life by connecting us in positive ways. Kohn also highlights another important finding from the research of political scientist Eric Uslaner, and this is that: “Unequal societies are mistrustful societies; equal societies are trusting ones. Equality is cause of trust, not just an association: [with particularly] economic equality lead[ing] to trust” (123). It is understandable that equality would be an important basis for trust, as people who accept each other as equal would not be driven to compete with each other, defend themselves or feel the responsibility (often felt through guilt) of having to take care of others. This connects to the importance of establishing a sense of safety for people that Aronie emphasises in *Writing from the Heart*. In her writing workshops she builds safety and trust by accepting all as equals and thereby also nurtures their creativity. As she explains (1998:208):

> When people aren’t pitted against each other, when they are not even mildly competing, when people aren’t vying for position (because all positions in this circle are equally important), they jump out of themselves and into their humanity. ... When people feel safe, [when people trust] they recognize themselves in others, and instead of being threatened by their differences, they are moved by them. When they are safe, they are moved by their own differences.

When people feel safe enough to be open to seeing their own and others’ differences, then there is a chance for them to build on what they see and for their creativity to blossom. It is not necessarily easy though to feel safe, to trust, and thus to be open, as it appears that there are obstructions to this, ‘inbuilt’ in society. In fact, Kohn observes with surprise that despite there being a notable amount of research clearly pointing to a strong direct connection between inequality and dire problems of health and wellbeing, both in individuals and societies, “public discourse and popular concerns seem to look straight through inequality without seeing it. Even where inequality is remarked upon,
it is not recognized as a problem in itself” (123-124). In stating this Kohn has revealed the proverbial ‘elephant in the corner’ that is circumspectly avoided and ignored.

We live in a society that at one important level (at least) - the pragmatic one - designates the worth of things and people according to the system of values of the hierarchical social order we live by – patriarchy (this is discussed in detail in Chapter One and connected to creativity in Chapter Three). The principles of this system are entrenched within the institutions that run society, as well as being considered the accepted ‘norm’ by most of its members. In other words, this means that the hierarchical traditions of patriarchy are embedded within us. To realise this we need only consider how deeply ingrained in our psyche the war/fighting/conflict metaphor is. Not only does it appear to be accepted at all levels of society that conflict and fighting is a necessary part of our human reality (though the war aspect is examined in Chapter One, here I look at the more social and everyday effects of a ‘fighting’ mentality) but this is also most often the metaphor of choice for a wide variety of points that we want to get across, as it is the accepted way to communicate that we are serious about what we want to achieve. Thus we ‘fight’ dirt, disease, bullying, recession, poverty, global warming, terror, and anything else we fear, dislike or simply do not want. The use of what we call ‘strong’ words such as ‘fighting’, ‘war’, ‘warrior’, and so on, being an essential component to show we ‘mean business’; with any other option appearing too ‘wishy-washy’ and not serious enough.

That the fighting metaphor is so ensconced within us is but a symptom that reveals we are indeed carrying the values of patriarchy. They have been grafted onto us by the institutionalised perception we have been taught, which we learnt so well as children because we experienced that conforming was the only way to belong and be accepted. In *Born Curious: New Perspectives in Educational Theory*, Robin Hodgkin begins his
exploration of educational theory by stating at the very beginning of the book “that an infant, or any other learner, is essentially active and questioning” (1976:v). As we grow up our exposure to the “dominance of legitimated language ... [the] ‘Real’ language ... of school, book, radio, newspaper, and government” (Fowler 1986:30) stifles our innate inquisitiveness until we finally shut it off ourselves, tired of the negative (or even unsafe) reception it provokes. Thus by the time we are adults it is not easy to be consciously aware of that which we perceive as ordinary, as this is what provides us with our common sense of what ‘normality’ is - the familiar everyday things which blend together into a sort of big background canvas and do not require much of our attention because we know them so well. As Roger Fowler reminds us though, “common sense is not natural, but a product of social convention” (1986:29).

Much like the background noise of traffic for those who have grown up with it, ‘normality’ is not consciously noticed unless it stops or somehow changes. Fowler stresses that in our acceptance of something as normal and natural, when it “is in fact arbitrary, we become acquiescent ... we acknowledge [and thus internalise] meanings without examining them” (41-42) so that we end up living by largely tacit ‘rules’. In a hierarchy inequality is considered normal, as in fact a hierarchal system can only exist through inequality. Were we to actively promote equality in our society we would have an egalitarian system with ‘leaders’ who, rather than place themselves at the top of the hierarchy, could facilitate the work of others from wherever they found themselves in our human circle of belonging. Thus to return to Kohn’s surprise at inequality not being seen and recognised as a problem – how could it possibly be seen as a problem by anyone in a position of authority who ‘took themselves seriously’? Maintaining authority, within the system we live in and given the way that it currently operates,
effectively means maintaining inequality. Furthermore, the perception of any need for maintaining authority is primarily fuelled by a lack of trust.

One could further extrapolate that the inequality in our society is constantly perpetuated by the standardising of everything and everyone, so that each thing and individual is assigned (and sometimes reassigned) its ‘worth’ in line with the hierarchical value system we live under. This worth is what dictates how much something will cost, how much a person will be able to earn and have access to, including the means to pursue dreams, and so on; all of this ensuring that the hierarchical status quo is maintained and that the whole system continues to turn upon inequality. In Schooling for a fair go, Robert Hattam et al. highlight that “Tony Fitzgerald’s conclusion to his report on Poverty and Education in Australia (1976) still rings true” (1998:1), and this conclusion is as follows:

... that people who are poor and disadvantaged are victims of a societal confidence trick. They have been encouraged to believe that a major goal of schooling is to increase equality, while, in reality, schools reflect society's intention to maintain the present unequal distribution of status and power. (p 231)

I believe that most members of society are perhaps not consciously intent in maintaining the status quo. The greater majority of people probably genuinely want things to improve for those who are poor and disadvantaged. In Social Intelligence, Daniel Goleman reports that renowned Harvard psychologist, Jerome Kagan, assures us (as verified by his extensive research) that human nature is made up of a lot more goodness than nastiness (2006:62):
“Although humans inherit a biological bias that permits them to feel anger, jealousy, selfishness and envy, and to be rude, aggressive or violent,” Kagan notes, “they inherit an even stronger biological bias for kindness, compassion, cooperation, love and nurture—especially towards those in need.”

However, this ‘bias’ towards kindness is stymied if we do not feel safe ourselves. “Caregiving flows most fully when we are feeling secure ... [so that] we can feel empathy without being overwhelmed. Feeling cared for frees us to care for others - and when we don't feel cared for, we can't care nearly so well” (214). This means that, as in navigating through life we come across many things that can cause us stress and worry, the more of these pressures we have to deal with the less likely we are to be able to care for others, especially others who (unlike our children, elderly parents and so on) are not directly our responsibility and concern. In a hierarchical society there also appear to be more possible causes to feeling insecure and stressed, as Goleman points out (227):

In rigid hierarchies bosses tend to be authoritarian: they more freely express their contempt for their subordinates, who in turn naturally feel a messy mix of hostility, fear and insecurity ... because their salary and very job security depend on the boss, workers tend to obsess over their interactions, reading even mildly negative exchanges as ominous.

This applies regardless of the level of education achieved by ‘subordinates’. In some universities for example, even highly educated people in possession of doctorate degrees are hired to lecture/tutor/research on short-term casual appointments which require them to sign contracts to say that they accept the possibility of termination with one hour’s notice, and have them filling in time-sheets. This reinforces Fitzgerald’s point (made above) that educational institutions maintain the status quo.

Added to workplace insecurity, where many individuals often work long hours given that more and more places are looking to maximise their productivity while minimising their spending, are the ‘normal’ stresses of daily living. These are things like
remembering to complete forms required by the children’s school, looking after ill or elderly relatives, paying bills on time and perhaps having to juggle the budget to do it, making time for shopping, taking the pets for their shots, coping with traffic and noisy neighbours, and a myriad of other things that fill and fragment our lives without adding to the enjoyment of it. Though it might be pointed out that in comparison to the above in other parts of the world people actually struggle to survive and feed themselves, this also applies to many individuals living in Western societies – the homeless, the poor and destitute, the isolated, and so on. It could in fact be argued that to be in these conditions near affluence is even more debilitating than living in a third world country.

With all of these time consuming activities (as listed above) holding us captive, especially when we allow roles to dictate our lives, then there is little attention left over for caring and “lacking attention, empathy hasn’t a chance” (51). Furthermore, any time we are overwhelmed by pressures and responsibilities they impact more negatively on us, thereby increasing our stress and anxiety. With this sort of experience being commonplace our capacity to trust can be more easily eroded and we can become fearful of change, thus we can be coerced into maintaining the status quo even when it is not in our (or others’) best interest.

A timely and synchronistic example (given I was reviewing this chapter at the time) of this impetus to retain inequality, can be given by the circumstances that brought about a change of leadership in Australian politics. This change occurred on the 24th June, 2010, when Julia Gillard was elected as new leader of the Labor party following a leadership ballot in her favour, and was subsequently sworn in as Australia’s new Prime Minister.

In line with his principal motivation since becoming Prime Minister: “I was elected by the Australian people as prime minister of this country to bring back a fair go for all
Australians …” (last press conference as PM), Rudd planned to introduce a resource super profits tax on the profits made by many multinational mining companies through their Australian mines. While the intricacies of this tax are quite complex, the main gist is that with its introduction the Australian Government was committed to getting a fairer share for the Australian people from the mining of Australian resources – a share from the profits which have been going straight to the multinationals and their shareholders. This caused huge retaliation by the multinational mining corporations who undertook massive advertising campaigns to rally the public’s support, saying that it would cause job losses in the mining sector and economic uncertainty. In Mr Palmer’s (a Queensland mining billionaire) words: “This is the first time in Australia’s history that a prime minister has been defeated by a civil campaign of anger … Have a look when we first started this campaign where he was, and where he was at the end of it” (Business Spectator online, 4 June, 2010). The campaign he referred to is the advertising blitz undertaken by the mining industry, and he unabashedly states that the “mining industry campaign had helped ensure Mr Rudd was dumped as leader” (Business Spectator online, 4 June, 2010).

Although the change in leadership was actually a lot more complex than Mr Palmer claimed, as it involved party dynamics and other issues that do not need to be broached here, the important thing was the message that came from some of the super-wealthy of the world – those at the top of the hierarchy. Some of the biggest multinational mining corporations made it clear that they did not want things to change, even though presumably this would have meant a little move towards more equality, as the online Business Spectator (4 June, 2010) confirms:
The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies Inc (AMEC) has also called for "an immediate and complete withdrawal of the proposed toxic mining tax in order to restore Australia’s reputation as a safe, reliable and financially attractive place in which to invest".

I find the choice of the words “toxic mining tax” particularly ironic given the current ‘climate crisis’ the world is facing, which is exacerbated by disasters such as the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The spill began on the 20th of April 2010 and was finally capped on the 15th of July 2010, having released, according to the South Florida Sun-Sentinel online website, some 200 million gallons of crude oil.

I have delved into Australia’s unusual political event to show how despite the fact that “developments that reduce inequality favour trust” (Kohn, 2008:133), though these may be proposed, they are also likely to be more often than not by-passed in favour of perpetuating inequality (especially economic inequality). This is in line with patriarchy’s values of – “conquest and dominion” (Berry, 1990:153). These are ‘values’ which continue to be adhered to, so that it is ‘business as usual’ when it comes to ‘profits’, regardless how much abuse is caused to the environment or to those who are poor and disadvantaged, including our indigenous populations.

Something that both time and trust seem to have in common in many of the environments of our modern Western world, including its institutions, is that they are viewed as being scarce. “It all just comes down to time ... that preparation time and reflection time is just so crucial and most of the time you just don’t have it” (teacher). In a ‘productivity’ race for everything, deadlines are set to push people to produce more and more, faster and faster. Most businesses (and especially those with shareholders) tend to work on the previous year’s figures (of turnover and profit) with the constant aim of improving on them, of growing the business, of making more profit. Having less trust in
work situations automatically means having less choice on how time is utilised, as “seeking to control risks, employers codify what they once might have trusted their employees to decide for themselves” (Kohn, 2008:131). Thus it becomes a requirement for procedures to be written down and standardised so as to enable a more thorough ‘accountability’. With more procedures being prescribed, more trust is therefore replaced with control, and additionally more control seems to be required as new possible risks are identified, this in turn leads to more time being taken up with controlling, and so it continues in a ‘catch-22’ cycle.

On a personal level, all of this translates to time being a source of impatience and irritation as it can seem that there is never enough of it, yet again when experienced a certain way it can appear as a flowing stream which, once one is immersed in it, could only be described as blissful. Listening to my intuition, a small quiet voice tells me that no amount of punishing work is going to get me ‘finished’ or ‘achieving’ sooner than what the journey is actually going to take. It is like watching a wave washing onto the shore come up and up, right to the point when it starts receding; the ocean pulling it back. The intellectual mind cannot work out where that point of ‘stillness’ will be when the wave will go no further. Similarly it would be unreasonable to dictate that it should come up to a specific point and take a specific time to do it. This sort of dictating is unreasonable because it makes no difference as to what will actually occur – the wave will only come up to the point where it will start receding, and it will take the time it takes to do this. This action of the wave washing on the beach is akin to the process of doing creative work. Writing is creative work; in fact making or doing anything we do in life is creative work when it involves starting from somewhere and through our actions
transforming the place we are at, be it physical, mental or emotional, because it involves creating something new.

David Abram looks at how time is viewed differently by different cultures. Accordingly he points out how Western society perceives the present as “nothing more than a point, an infinitesimal now separating “the past” from “the future” (1997:202). It follows then that we would feel very time-poor given that our preoccupation with measuring time has led us to view it “as a linear sequence of “nows”” (208), which can quickly evade us if we see them zooming at us from the future and receding into the past. We are thus left feeling empty-handed and almost cheated, an attitude of scarcity becoming firmly entrenched within us. It is this sort of attitude that can lead to difficulty and even panic ensuing when faced with making decisions. If we do not believe that we have enough time to make a considered decision we can feel pressured and fearful that we may make the wrong decision, or miss an ‘opportunity’ as it ‘flies’ past us.

There have been times in my life when I have felt coerced into hurrying a decision, and invisibly pushed into forgoing that which I intuited I both deeply needed and wished. While I could not have clearly stated what this was at the time, I strongly sensed I was unwittingly being deprived of even the time to find out. It has been in moments like this that I have heard the faintest of whispering within me ‘shouting’: “Trust! Trust!” However, I mostly ignored this, caught up as I was in the panic and seriousness of whatever situation I was in. This was also often heightened by a sense of guilt, with thoughts that I was letting myself down because: “I should have known what I wanted, but I wasn’t prepared enough, or good enough, and so on.” It was only when I finally started listening to this voice deep within me that I realised that this was exactly what I had to do. By trusting ‘trust’ itself, time opened out before me so that I found I had just
the right amount of it to do what was needed. Moreover, by trusting I found that I could think more clearly and that often opportunities presented themselves in ways which easily mapped out a path to be followed.

An example of this occurred a few years ago when my daughter, who was ten at the time, broke her arm above her wrist. After two weeks with her arm in a bandage and sling, and a second lot of x-rays, I was told that her green-stick fracture had not set right and that she would have to have a cast put on. Furthermore, it needed to be a hospital procedure under anaesthetic, as the bone would have to be manipulated and it would be best if this were done internally, that is by surgery. So since we were at the hospital already, and they just happened to have room, the registrar would arrange everything for her straight away, all I had to do was sign the papers to give my permission and then go home to collect what she needed for an overnight stay. In relying this information to me the young registrar looked rather grim. He stressed the importance of acting quickly given that we had already ‘wasted’ two weeks and leaving it any longer might mean that the bone would grow with a kink, and so cause all sorts of problems. He also pointed out the possibility of an infection occurring as the wound’s dressing would not be able to be changed because of the cast. While this latter complication was only a possibility it was nonetheless reasonably high so as to necessitate this prior explanation to me.

By this stage my daughter was openly crying and begging me not to leave her at the hospital on her own - a quick trip to the hospital for what had been meant to be only a follow-up x-ray had turned into a nightmare! What was I to do? Apart from wanting to calm my daughter I felt quite upset myself, and yet a quick and rational decision was required of me. Should I go ahead with what I had been advised to do by the medical professional? Among the things that my daughter loved most in the world was ballet – if
I didn’t act immediately would it ruin her chances of a possible career? Then there was my fear to deal with - of having my daughter go under anaesthetic (given that there is always some risk associated with this) and of the chance of infection. I don’t know what made me listen to my inner beingness that day - among all of the voices that clamoured for my attention in my mind was one that came from deep within; it was very calm and focusing on it for just an instant was enough to win me over. What I basically got from it was that I could trust myself to make the right decision and that I needed to give myself enough time to do this. So I left the hospital with my daughter and the x-ray. Having then searched for an appropriate specialist to get a second opinion from, within a few days she had a cast put on by him with minimal external manipulation, and after six weeks this resulted in a perfectly healed arm.

Listening to, and trusting myself gave me the time and courage to move forward with ease, and this included handling the objections and fears of other family members. What a few minutes before had appeared an insurmountable problem was suddenly a lot less complicated, as possible choices opened up before me giving me a sense of freedom. In retrospect the choices I made seemed like the only ones I could have possibly made as they had an inherent sense of ‘rightness’ about them. While my initial identifying and relating to my different roles had resulted in a cacophony of voices that pulled me in contrary directions, thereby weakening my chances for making a good decision, my centring on my beingness had strengthened my ability to trust myself. Furthermore, this experience (together with subsequent others) also taught me that trust and time nurture the possibility of a creative response for best possible outcome in countless situations. This therefore means that a best outcome is actually more likely to occur on occasions when trust and time are made use of. This applies even to decisions which
might not appear to be so vital, like home renovating choices - once the garden bay window, granite bench top and garden path had been installed each looked ‘right’, as if it belonged, as if it had always been there!

What occurs when we trust and give time to ourselves, or to anyone else, is that we nurture the possibility, the seeds as it were, of a creative attitude by giving it enough room to be in and to grow in. “Providing space requires a predisposition, a kind of attitude and perspective that opens up, even invokes, the spirit and belief that creativity is humanly possible” (Lederach, 2005:19). This is what it means to allow trust and time to nurture creativity. With trust and time creative attitude grows, creativity can then unfold as the ‘natural’ flow-on from this, as a process of lived experience of the everyday. This is what Bohm means when he speaks of “suspending action without suppressing it” (2004:87): suspension is giving time and attention while trusting that it is the thing to do. Trust and time seem to have an inter-generative connection, which is to say one generates the other: by trusting we become willing to give ourselves, others, and situations more time; similarly time allows trust to grow and deepen through experiences. It is this generative process which forms the space and the attitude for an environment that is supportive and nurturing of creativity, the same sort of environment as that described by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Cropley (2003), (discussed above and in Chapter Three).

A practical example of this sort of approach to time and trust, which goes beyond the personal, is of the successful Finnish school system. Finland has been coming top in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) study for a number of years now and this has attracted the interest of many countries, with some, like Japan, even planning to adopt the Finnish schooling model. Every three years PISA, which is run by
the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), conducts testing of 15 year olds on a number of subjects in around forty countries. The main aim of the study is to find out to what degree the students have gained, from their education, “the knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society” (OECD PISA website). To fulfil this aim PISA’s tests results answer questions such as: “Are students well prepared for future challenges? Can they analyse, reason and communicate effectively? Do they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life?” (OECD PISA website).

So what is it about the Finnish education system that makes students achieve so highly? The very informative website Virtual Finland tells the world that: “The Finnish school system is based on a culture of trust, not control, and teachers are active in developing their own work. On the job they set an example of lifelong learning” (Korpela, 2004:3). Perhaps it is telling that a prerequisite for all teaching is a minimum of a Master of Arts degree; as Robinson states: “Arts techniques can be powerful ways of unlocking creative capacities and of engaging the whole person” (2001:11), thus teachers in touch with their personal creative capacities are more likely to nurture these in their students. This is further heightened by the central importance that is given to relationships between students and teachers. Unlike for many Western countries, teachers in Finland enjoy a high degree of autonomy and do not have to undergo regular evaluations; students call their teachers by their first name and yet this does not lessen the high level of respect that teachers have in society.

Exams are rare in the nine years of comprehensive schooling as they are seen as creating artificial time pressure; furthermore, there is no standardised testing or grading in assessment. Priority is given to creating an atmosphere of safety and motivation so students are encouraged to learn in their own way, with learning by
'doing' and community focus being considered vital to help develop the students’ self-reliance. Thus children’s parents are welcome in the classrooms, and all the adults in the school (that is all staff, and not just the teaching staff) have an input in educating the children. It is also interesting to note that “unnecessary hierarchical structures are avoided among the staff” (Korpela, 2004:2). Compulsory comprehensive school starts at the age of seven, with one non-compulsory pre-school school year available for six year olds. Furthermore, schooling is free for all and is mostly government run and funded.

In one of the schools described on the website, lessons run for ninety minutes and the whole school works on a yearly theme that is approached in an interdisciplinary way, and also “treated artistically” (3). The environment of the school - including the furniture, lighting, and colours used – is considered important and is designed to enhance warmth and spaciousness with some special areas being incorporated, such as an enclosed winter garden for reading and playing chess. With a ten week summer holiday and the school day starting at eight and finishing somewhere between twelve and two (a free hot lunch is served in the school dining room), Finnish students aged seven to fourteen spend the least number of hours at school compared to most other OECD countries.

There is much more that could be said and studied about the Finnish school system, and an in-depth report of it is featured in Linda Darling-Hammond’s new book The Flat World and Education (2010). The main point I want to make here, is that it is clear to me that this is a school system that incorporates much that nurtures creativity in its teaching practices, as has been discussed in this chapter. Based on the choice to trust its teachers and students, rather than trying to identify only those who are ‘gifted’ through standardised testing, it is therefore a system that is more egalitarian than elitist.
Furthermore, this trust is invested over enough time to allow for a ‘natural’ return. To quote Tuula Haatainen, who was Finland’s education minister from 2003 to 2005: “We believe that if we invest in all our children for nine years and give them the same education then we will reach the best results” (Coughlan, 2004:1). What is more, this investment continues on to higher education, where tuition fees are government funded. Unlike many countries which ‘push’ students through university as fast as possible, something which often results in underemployment - employment in positions that do not utilise people’s abilities or qualifications (Robinson, 2009:231-232), the Finnish education agenda allows for the time necessary for people’s talents to be discovered and developed (Korpela, 2004:2):

School education stretches over long periods of time; most people do not qualify for their professions before the age of 20, and a significant number of higher education students do not do so before the age of 25. The goal is lifelong learning; there are plenty of further training opportunities supported by the public sector for adults already working in an occupation, and it is by no means a rare phenomenon for people to learn a new profession later in life.

Giving people sufficient time to prepare for a career is more likely to allow them to nurture their creativity and so find what Robinson calls “their Element ... the meeting point between natural aptitude and personal passion ... [which] provides a sense of self-revelation, of defining who they really are and what they are meant to be doing with their lives” (2009:20-21). Finland’s example clearly shows us that by harnessing trust and time it is possible to support creativity in the mainstream, that is to say for everybody rather than just for the ‘gifted’, while still operating within a modern Western structure. If an institution such as an education system can achieve this then perhaps it is possible for all institutions to endorse the nurturing of creativity. And while this enables individuals to be nurtured, a community of individuals who base
their work on an attitude of creativity might also help to transform the system and its institutions. Chapter Five explores this intrinsic connection between the individual and the community, between the inner world and the outer world.

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This chapter looks at how trust and time could facilitate the nurturing of a creative attitude within us all, so that together we might be able to imagine a different reality to the one we currently inhabit. While both time and trust are necessary for the nurturing of creativity, many of the environments of our modern Western world (especially institutions) seem to function on a carefully maintained perception of a lack of both. Furthermore, they often appear to have us ‘paying lip service’ to creativity while at the same time keeping it comfortably ‘at bay’. Being mostly based on hierarchical control, the structures of these institutions are simplistic and reductionist, and are thus unable to truly offer much support to something that is as open-ended, complex and natural as creativity. In other words, the way these institutions are run is incongruous with creativity. When this is what most of our experience amounts to, it might seem that to dream of being able to nurture creativity is as achievable as some utopia. However, my experience is that even a little extra time I chose to give myself, which also allows for trust in myself to develop as I have relieved my immediate time-pressure, enables me to connect with my beingness and gives my creativity a chance to unfold in unexpected ways.

‘Control’ and ‘risk management’ are directly opposed to trusting and giving time. Based as they are on ‘what if’ scenarios that employ ‘problem solving’, in what is usually seen
as escalations of possible conflicts of interests, they block creative perception before it even has a chance to ‘see’. Interestingly, the Finnish school system shows us that through trust and time, and thus also the nurturing of their creativity, Finnish students have a greater chance to both discover and develop their talents and abilities. In this case the educational institution trusts its teachers and students, and with this example it is conceivable that ‘institutions’ might function differently if they were run more according to trust than to control.
Chapter Five:

Self-fulfilment: as Within so Without

All know that the drop merges into the ocean, but few know that the ocean merges into the drop.

Kabir

This chapter connects the notion of ‘self’, the continuity of the self as a living being - the beingness/body fusion I identify with (first explained in the Introduction and Chapter One) - with the nurturing of creativity. Through the exploration of narratives of the journey I am on, it looks at the nature of the relationship between my beingness and the nurturing of creativity and then considers its effects, many of them unexpected and pleasantly surprising, on my interactions with the outer world. This is linked to what Jung calls “the process of individuation” – a “natural”, and almost unconscious, process of growth guided by one’s “Self” in response to an inner “urge toward unique, creative self-realization” (Franz, 1978:167). In discussing this I reflect on how my creativity has been nurtured by the creative endeavours I have undertaken and how this nurturing has revealed the connections between my inner and outer worlds. This chapter also looks at some instances of everyday events (Jung’s synchronicities) that, although they might not at first seem to obviously nurture creativity, have after-effects that quite clearly point to their nurturing quality.

As I travel along the path of writing this thesis I find myself negotiating between opposite forces which are causing somewhat of a vortex in the climate of my inner world. One of these forces I will call the ‘power of conformity’, as it stems from societal
beliefs and pressures for the ‘need’ to maintain things as they are. This gives rise to both the fear of failure and the fear of success, with the two of them being complexly interwoven. Concerned at the possibility of failing at what I have set myself to do, I find that this is heightened because of my belief that it is very important that I do not fail. So here lies the catch into a downwards spiral – the stronger is my belief that it is important that I do not fail the more I feel pressured not to fail, and therefore the more debilitating my fear of failure actually becomes, so that fear can literally paralyse me, stopping me from taking further action. This can feel so unpleasant that I (my mind) might seek out all kinds of ‘legitimate’ diversions to relieve the situation: from cleaning that must be done now, to paying important bills, to booking a concert that the girls cannot miss in the school holidays, or searching to read yet more of what others might have said on any of the subjects I address.

Although it appears so overwhelming, the fear of failure is well known to me and stems from my education. As Ken Robinson writes in Out of our Minds: “Many people have very deep anxieties about education ... it stamps us with a very deep impression of ourselves, and of everybody else, that's hard to remove” (2001:6). It is my experience of all the stages of schooling I attended (from primary right through to university), and of what happened there, that taught me to expect disappointment regardless of how much effort I put into a formal academic scenario, and despite whether this achieved ‘failure’ or ‘success’. With marks being awarded at school in accordance to a competitive hierarchical process, there is a constant pressure to be the ‘best’. So as not to ‘fail’ in meeting this expectation of being a ‘good student’ (an expectation that my parents and teachers had of me) I found I had to conform, which consequently meant having to forgo exploring profound aspects of myself that were desperately wanting to come to light.
“Children with strong academic abilities often fail to discover their other abilities” (2001:8); these are abilities that are considered to be less important anyway and so not ‘worthy’ of much time or focus.

Acquiescing to the pressure of focusing on school work I just did not have the mental space available, nor the time, to dedicate to getting to know myself better. My creativity was therefore not being nurtured and so I was unable to connect or develop it past a certain stage. I remember experiencing feelings of frustration, as well as of anticlimax after anticlimax when receiving good marks for tests and assignments and then going on to the next one and the next, and so on. Somehow I constantly had the expectation that something amazing was about to happen, something that would be worth all the holding myself back from the self-exploration I desired so as to produce the kind of work that was expected of me. Surely all the sacrificing I had been doing would be recognised and rewarded! At times I really felt that if something did not happen soon I would explode; it was like having some great energy that was dammed inside me trying to get out. Yet with every piece of work I did that did not originate from an impulse of my own creativity I only built the dam wall higher and higher. In detailing how covert messages that we are given at school warp how we see ourselves as learners, Marshall includes (2006:86):

YOUR PASSION, EMOTIONS, INTUITION, AND SPIRIT [AND THUS YOUR CREATIVITY] ARE NOT WELCOME OR VERY USEFUL IN SCHOOL. They distract you from the requirements of the curriculum, generally waste time, and get you, the teacher, and the class off track. Besides, none of that stuff is on a test, so it is not very important.

It is the imparting of these kinds of messages, even though this is not done wilfully or even in most cases consciously, that can make school very oppressive and possibly even
damaging. This is the ‘hidden curriculum’ which, as Peter McLaren explains in ‘Critical Pedagogy and the Curriculum’, “deals with the tacit ways in which knowledge and behaviour are constructed” (2001:38). Being part of the way that schools ensure the maintenance of the societal status quo, it is passed on by all those in authority at a school, though mostly quite unintentionally. The hidden curriculum is (38):

... a part of the bureaucratic and managerial ‘press’ of the school, the combined forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideologies, and social practices related to authority, behaviour and morality ... Often [therefore] the hidden curriculum displaces the professed educational ideals and goals of the classroom teacher or school.

In Chapter One, I relate how I learnt to read quite early and also how this strategically enabled me to become proficient at ‘reading’ adults and my environment, thus I was very good at picking up these silent messages from both school and home. Accordingly, as I wanted to fulfil the roles of ‘good daughter’ and ‘good student’, I did the only thing I thought I could do – I complied with what was expected of me. In doing this I was not aware that I was slowly storing a lot of rage at the self-repression I was being forced into. Of course I could have rebelled and ‘failed’ at school, but I happened to be good at academic work and I was taught that if you were good at something you did it, and did it, and did it – relentlessly. However, we were never told at school what ‘good’ all this academic achievement did us or the rest of the world. I was also, at the time, quite unaware of what other things this ‘doing’ prevented me from experiencing and creating.

I spent my schooling (especially at high school) very afraid of ‘failing’ and thus disappointing others’ expectations. At the same time I was frustrated with ‘success’, though again I was probably not conscious of this, as in my experience success meant being focused on and pushing myself into achieving even better tests and assignments.
results and grades. This required me to give up more and more of the interesting and creative sides of myself – like writing poetry or just having spare time to simply daydream and be in my inner world. Perhaps my fear of failure originated as a way of keeping me sane, to give me a reason for the absolute need to do what I was doing, and to hide my building anger at what was occurring. My anxiety got to be so overwhelming that in the first term of Year 12 (the year of my matriculation, which in Canberra did not require final exams but was calculated through continuous assessment), I made myself fail a physics test (by not studying) just to have some proof that nothing catastrophic would happen as a result of ‘failing’. This was the same year that I auditioned to be in a school production of Brecht’s *Mother Courage* and got the main role. It was a brilliant experience of creative work! We included the songs and had original music written for these, we also made most of the props and put together our own costumes. It was the first time, in a school situation, that I mixed with kids of all kinds of academic ability and from across grades - it was a breath of fresh air! The show was only on for two or three nights and though most of my friends said they liked it, my family did a lot of criticising. Having lived and breathed the play for over a month, so that I was thoroughly intimate with it, it did not occur to me that they may have found it difficult to understand, especially with English not being their first language. I was disappointed at their reaction, feeling at the same time that, while I had given it my all, I had somehow failed them.

All of these school experiences clearly have an effect on how I now face the completion of my PhD through the writing of my thesis, so that a fear of failure is intertwined with a fear of success that expects ‘success’ to mean conforming more and more, in line with the hierarchical order that shapes much of our lives. Yet because of the subject of my
research: the nurturing of creativity, and my experiences of that - including all the positive ones that have come from trusting it and giving it time - I am aware that ‘success’ can also be the stepping stone to more freedom in being able to live a life that is more in tune with the ‘whole’ of me. Thus the other force at play here, that which opposes the ‘power of conformity’, is the ‘power of the desire to be whole’. This means seeing the completion of my PhD as a transition that marks the recognition of who I am, and who I am becoming, and furthermore tells the world, so that I can live the reality of being myself more fully. In describing what motivates many of his students to write scholarly personal narratives, Robert Nash gives a description that is close to this force that is currently a strong presence in my life. He describes it as something that: “might heal the rifts that exist between their personal and professional lives” (2004:99). In this, their reasons for writing personal narratives are akin to mine (100):

They want congruence. They seek wholeness. They are tired of compartmentalization. What they do as professionals is inseparable from who they are ... They think of themselves as being called to service ... they know that, before all else, they are called upon to “profess” a belief or faith in the power of connections and relationships ...

In these relationships I would include as first and foremost the inner relationship that enables my perception of a beingness/body fusion and allows it to unfold and grow. It is the strength of this most intimate relationship that makes it possible for my inner and outer world to be meaningfully connected so as to flow one from the other in an actualising and self-perpetuating loop. Being visual, the shape that comes to mind when I think of this loop is much like the symbol for infinity, with creativity at the centre point. In *The Reinvention of Work*, Matthew Fox describes this process well (1995:118):

When we manifest the inner work we are truly working ... We take in a problem or concern from the world around us and we ponder it, we live with it ... we sleep on it, and we dream about it.

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Eventually, [we might] respond to it. Something is born of the problem we have faced, ingested ...

The outer work becomes an inner work for a while and then moves out into the world again to contribute its share of healing and truth ... In other words, as representatives of the age in which we live, if we are living with our hearts and minds open, we will indeed take in the struggle and conflict of our times. Our creativity will do its best to wrestle with those conflicts so as to produce some kind of resolution and hope.

To an extent, what Fox explains above is something that is regularly ongoing, whether we are aware of it or not. As we do not live insular lives we are constantly affected by what happens in the world around us, and in turn we have an effect on our environment. This is true just by virtue of our being part of a complex system of many networks, including ones that are social, ecological, biological, and so on. If we imagine anything we do, think or feel, or in other words anything that occurs because of one’s existence, as being a little drop that falls into a universal pond and sends a series of ripples in all directions, we then start to get a picture of just how complex a system we are part of.

What can differ, depending on the individual, is that the taking on of this ‘outer’ work as ‘inner’ work can be consciously and willingly undertaken. This is where an attitude of creativity, “living with our hearts and minds open”, plays a big part, and where if we take time to nurture our creativity and trust it, we can reap the most fulfilment, as our creativity will indeed “do its best”.

I would, however, suggest that it is not useful to imagine creativity as ‘wrestling’ with conflicts - creativity does not fight but creates. Putting a word like “wrestle” in the way of creativity can severely hamper its creative power, as even just by mentally preparing to ‘fight’ fighting we set ourselves up for more fighting – like the outcomes from declaring ‘war against terrorism’. As Lederach reminds us, justification of violence “narrow[s] or destroy[s] the capacity for creative alternatives ...” (2005:172). I point this
out because the fighting paradigm has so firmly taken up residence within the human psyche (as discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter One) that it regularly comes up to undermine what could otherwise be powerful insights (as in Fox’s quote above). Marshall advises that we “will require new language” (2006:16) to achieve a “new story”, as our current language “is rooted in a militaristic, hierarchical, competitive, and command-and-control framework ... with “our many, many references to war” (16). Indeed it has been suggested by many that our language needs to change, for as Bohm points out our current language mode is “playing a key role in helping to originate and sustain fragmentation in every aspect of life” (1980:31).

As our actions follow from our thoughts and words, it is therefore important that we are mindful of nurturing creativity whenever we can; this includes our language and what we build with it, as in the metaphors we choose to communicate our thinking. The ‘reality’ that we are agents in, is largely created from that which we focus on, as is pointed out by ‘appreciative’ inquiry’ (discussed in Chapter Two): “… when groups study human problems and conflicts, they often find that both the number and severity of these problems grow ... when groups study ... best practices and noble accomplishments, these phenomena, too, tend to flourish” (Ludema et al, 2001:192).

What if we were to simply drop our continual and habitual use of the words: fight, war, warrior, struggle, conflict, loser, winner and so on? These words only serve to strengthen our thinking along the same aggressive grooves that have been etched into our inner landscapes for countless generations, and they are obstacles to us taking a different road on a grand scale. What if instead we chose to use colour and music as new metaphors for suggesting the paths to follow? Both colour and music deeply affect our lives and they have so many nuances that we could go on forever discovering them. This
would make them great metaphors to adopt for resolving situations that we perceive as threatening.

Rather than heroes and warriors, or winners/losers, in these new metaphors we could all be artists learning to create colour and sound scapes to reflect our truth and wholeness, each of them a part of a dynamic and well-balanced whole picture of reality. Imagine working towards becoming masterful at transforming the picture, sound or ambiance of anything we didn’t like the look or sound of, to one that was pleasing and harmonious to us. This would bring out in us subtleties that we were previously unaware of, as depending on the picture that we wanted to create, we could seek out specific ‘colours’ and ‘music’, blending them together or contrasting them, to effect and beauty. For example when faced with diseases, rather than ‘fighting’ them we could look at the bodies and the lives of those people affected as if they were concerts or pictures, and work out which tones and colours to enhance and which to transform so as to facilitate healing. This would allow us to perceive things holistically; as artists we could delve in passionately, fearlessly facing the challenges of working with the whole complexity of a situation.

Choosing to use new metaphors while leaving behind those that hinder our growth is an example of consciously nurturing creativity. And consciously choosing to nurture creativity can help one along the path of individuation. Briefly described at the beginning of this chapter, the process of individuation is explained by Marie–Louise von Franz, in *Man and his Symbols*, through the analogy of a seed growing and maturing into a unique individual tree. It is not by conscious will power that a tree is thus able to grow, but by the nurturing of the soil, sun, slope of the land, wind and rain acting on the potential that is held within the seed as a promise (1978:163-167). Likewise, the
impetus of our growth towards the realisation of our own individual uniqueness arises in us from deep within our unconscious (as such, Jung believed it to be most commonly revealed in dreams). It is not necessarily an easy task to bring to light that which is ‘hidden’, as in this process “one must repeatedly seek out and find something that is not yet known to anyone. The guiding hints or impulses come, not from the ego, but from the totality of the psyche: the Self” (1978:167).

This searching within, and then allowing what is, to surface as it will; or in other words, this perfect combination of receptivity and effort, this is just what is required for creative work. It is not a coincidence that these two processes are linked, for creativity is intrinsically connected to our ability to birth ourselves anew moment after moment. Yet only if these insights are consciously recognised can the journey towards wholeness continue, as Franz points out (163):

If, for example, I have an artistic talent of which my ego is not conscious, nothing will happen to it. The gift may as well be non-existent. Only if my ego notices it can I bring it into reality. The inborn and hidden totality of the psyche is not the same thing as a wholeness that is fully realized and lived.

In other words, it is by paying attention to my beingness (the ‘Self’ Jung speaks of), in the sense of being open and trusting, and allowing the time needed for insights to bubble up to my consciousness, that I can become more and more whole. Thus the process of individuation involves consciously integrating that which comes from the unconscious and leads one to become more whole and self-actualised. Visually I see this as travelling my own individual path to fulfilling the potential that the ‘seed’ – the unique essence that I suggest (in the Introduction) we are already born with - within me holds as a promise. In this I have found that the activities that nurture my creativity, those that

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enable me to stretch my imagination and try new things without being prescriptive in any way, are also those that nurture me, and though they can be challenging they bring me the most insights for self-fulfilment.

I am aware that these last two paragraphs might be seen as providing but a tenuous explanation of what I want to communicate, but there is no remedy to this, and no apology from me. Like the ephemeral rainbow I glimpsed today for no more than seconds, before a curtain of grey rain washed it away, the sense of self-fulfilment and of creativity can no more be pinned down by words on paper. But this does not make it any less valid or important an experience than that which can be ‘logically’ argued and ‘proven’. This sense of the creative is at once similar and different for each of us, as Oriah writes in *What we ache for: Creativity and the Unfolding of Your Soul*, (2005:7): “Our creativity is the soul-deep impulse in all human beings to go beyond the perceptions of the senses to the conception of something new. We begin with what is and make something more of it.” Robinson echoes this idea of creativity combining a harmonious blending of the conscious and unconscious (2001:11-12):

Creativity is not a purely intellectual process. It is enriched by other capacities and in particular by feelings, intuition and by a playful imagination... We all have creative abilities and we all have them differently. Creativity is a dynamic process that draws on many different areas of a person’s experiences and intelligence.

Creativity goes beyond, it encompasses what is but moves further, past the “perceptions of the senses” past the “purely intellectual process”, and in doing so it connects all of one's fragmented ‘parts’, bringing them together towards wholeness. It could be argued that creativity can do this because we have actually always been whole, not fully grown and realised perhaps, but whole. Creativity experientially helps us to become aware of
this, despite the disconnection caused by our intellectual insistence of separately identifying with ‘different’ parts of ourselves.

Although writing has always been my preferred medium to express my creativity, being quite a visual person I am also attracted to light and colour, in fact I see writing as painting with words. The play of light and colour upon the corporeal substance of forms suggests to me specific textures and depths which can create harmoniously satisfying and sensually rich combinations that please me to the core of my being. At other times however, what I have perceived through this same sensual awareness has so negatively overwhelmed me as to nauseate me. This has especially been the case when I have been carrying an unborn child within me, at these times I remember instances of a jarring combination of colours and objects causing me to be physically sick. This might be explained biologically, as it could be argued that at these times the perception of my senses was operating at a heightened level given that I was responsible for the survival of another being besides myself. All of this could be summed up by saying that I have a deep sense of aesthetics and I am greatly pleased by beauty. There is a maxim that says that ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’, I read this as a way of saying that it is our inner beauty that is mirrored by all the ‘beautiful’ things we see (remember the story of the house of mirrors in Chapter Three). Interestingly I do not have ‘perfect’ sight as I am both short sighted and astigmatic to a different level in each eye, however, I have good peripheral and night vision, and near perfect close-up vision. This means that if I want to see details clearly I have to get close (in fact I wear glasses to drive), while with distance boundaries fade and at night lights share their brilliance by the glowing halos that surround them.
Having lived with these sight conditions for as long as I can remember, it could be speculated that by filtering the way I see they have also filtered the way I perceive things, or could it be the other way round? Could the way I perceive things be that which has affected my sight? It is also said that the eyes are the windows to the soul, or in other words that the eyes connect to one’s beingness, one’s ‘Self’. In *Natural Vision Improvement*, Janet Goodrich writes of vision rather than of sight: “From our physical eyes right through our feelings, thoughts, dreams, creative insights, and spiritual unfolding, vision permeates all our life experiences” (1985:1). She further points out that (6):

Arnold Gesell, who did brilliant studies of the development of children and their vision said, ‘Seeing is not a separate isolated function, it is profoundly integrated with the total action system of the child – his posture, his manual skills and coordination, his intelligence and his personality. He sees with his whole being [sic].’

According to Goodrich’s research there are many factors that can affect vision including emotions, diet, physical environment, posture, beliefs and the thinking patterns that arise from these; moreover these factors are not independent but interconnected, so that each one can reinforce another and so on, like in a repetitive domino effect. In summarising the thesis of Raymond Welch, who offers a sociological perspective for the rise of myopia in America, Goodrich calls attention to the possible effects of the industrial revolution, the beginning of the optical industry and of compulsory public schooling. (1985:1-13). She describes how eyesight has been steadily deteriorating since our technological advances have been requiring us to be more machine-like in the undertaking of specific tasks. These are things like data checking, flat screen watching, reading, looking at a whiteboard and so on – all tasks which cause our eyes to strain because to do them we keep them fixed and rigid. Thus rather than following movement
by moving with it, something our eyes are very adept at and attracted to which is why watching the flames in a fire is so mesmerizing, our eyes are often forced into a ‘staring mode’ for long periods of time (135-181).

Could it be then, that to an extent, the clarity of my vision reflects the society I live in and how I am affected by it? In posing this question I want to point out the vastness of what might need to be taken into consideration in order to give any kind of comprehensive answer. This would then also link back to what first led me onto this path of creativity, meaning that anything connected to and affecting vision would also connect to and affect creativity. Gilot notes, in ‘A painter’s perspective’, how (2001:171):

Seeing is more than a visual experience; perception is more than a function of just one sense ... The artist’s internal passions and power interact with cosmic forces to establish a new way of seeing that is different from – and yet fundamental to – the limited perspective of the ordinary world. To see a new way is to use the full continuum of mind and body.

Using nurturing and imagination for her suggested path to vision improvement, Goodrich states: “Creativity and confidence grow as you start nurturing your own well-being and imagination” (1985: xiv). There are times when despite my non-perfect eyesight I can see incredibly clearly, this is when all around me is harmonious and pleasing and I feel that I am part of a flowing and deep expression of life: I live it, I feel it, I am in relationship with it!

At about the time that I was becoming more interested in the ‘nurturing of creativity’ part of my PhD, I gave a ‘Pub’ talk (our University then facilitated a series of informal monthly talks and encouraged postgraduates to participate) entitled Creativity, Time and Trust. Among those attending was a lady who is the developer of the Extraordinary Mind Project – a series of two courses designed “for anyone wishing to uncover and recapture
their natural birthright of extraordinary talents and creativity” (from the Extraordinary Mind Project website). Having subsequently met at a café to discuss creativity and having been told that she had found out by chance about the ‘Pub’ talk, which naturally interested her because of the topic; I was convinced that this was a synchronistic opportunity not to be ignored. The concept of synchronicity was first introduced by Jung as: “a ‘meaningful coincidence’ of outer and inner events that are not themselves causally connected. The emphasis lies on the word ‘meaningful’” (Franz, 1978:226). Just as I was starting to consider nurturing my creativity so as to go deeper into it, here was somebody who had, for a few years, been doing just that – nurturing creativity. Though it crossed my mind that having already met her I might feel I had to live up to expectations, I was quickly relieved of this thought after the first lesson of the course.

I used to draw as I a child; I remember asking my sister to pose for me when I was about eight and actually doing a portrait of her that she had truly liked – and younger sisters can be really quite fussy about the portrayal of their likeness. As time went by it seemed to get harder and harder to put pencil to paper; being focused on wanting to draw something beautiful I was fearful of marking the paper in an ugly way, then at some point I stopped altogether. The first session of the Extraordinary Mind Project was very effective at removing expectations from the process of drawing. The focus had been on playfulness and deep concentration (after a brief meditation) and in connecting eye with hand coordination, but only by looking at the object being copied rather than also checking on how this was developing. Thinking that I therefore could not possibly achieve anything worth looking at from that sort of technique, I totally relaxed into it. Relinquishing control, I let the eyes and hand do their own thing while I ‘just went along
for the ride’. At the end of it, I could not believe that two and half hours had already gone by and I left feeling “refreshed”, just as I had been promised.

A peculiar thing started to happen as the lessons progressed - I found myself getting angry, feeling irritable, and I could not put this down to anything rational. I would become aware of these emotions well into the lesson, but being immersed in the drawing process I did not pay too much attention to them. I just noticed them and continued drawing; by the end of the lesson they seemed to have lifted, so that while driving home I was mostly in the sort of rejuvenated state I had experienced after the first session. It was not until the writing of this chapter, while revisiting the memory of these occurrences, that upon reflection it ‘dawned ‘on me what had been happening during this first course.

I surmised that the reason for those emotions and feelings of anger was that I had been releasing all the pent up rage from when I had been at school as a child and had been kept from exploring my creativity. Being in a non-judgmental environment where I felt safe and had a sense of belonging, as I was with a group of people who were there for the same reason I was, which was to reconnect with creativity, it was as if I had been in therapy – art therapy, and thus I unknowingly enabled my process of individuation to continue. Individuation is a process I have been on for some time now, it is a journey towards fully realising and coming into my wholeness, which for me perhaps began as early as when I first consciously became aware of myself (discussed in Chapter One). However, it does not really matter when it began as what is relevant to me is that it is unfolding and with that is increasing the possibility of being able to live more fully.

Not only did the Extraordinary Mind Project rekindle a stronger relationship with my creativity, but by giving me a sustained experience of being present and non-
judgemental it allowed me a deeper way of relating with all around me. In discussing
Merleau-Ponty’s approach to phenomenology, David Abram explains this well:
“Considered phenomenologically – that is, as we actually experience and live it – the
body is a creative, shape shifting entity ... [that] is my very means of entering into
relation with all things” (1997:47). It was my physical bodily experience of drawing, the
intensity of awareness on the process of drawing and the harmonious coordination
between eyes and hand, which kept me in the present long enough to allow me to
experience a deep connection, a fusion-like link with all that I was drawing. There was
no separation between my-self and all outside of my-self (the ‘other’), as so strong was
my relating to it that I ‘was’ that which I was drawing as I could express it and
experience it.

In the Postscript of On Not Being Able to Paint, Marion Milner sums up her exploration
on the ‘problems’ encountered in drawing and painting, with the discovery that these
‘problems’ are directly linked to the incongruence there is between what we physically
experience through our sense of sight and the ‘vision’ we choose to impose on the world
(1971:146-147):

Observations of problems to do with painting had all led up to the idea that awareness of the
external world is itself a creative process, an immensely complex creative interchange between
what comes from inside and what comes from outside, a complex alternation of fusing and
separating. But since the fusing stage is, to the intellectual mind, a stage of illusion, intoxication,
transfiguration, it is one that is not so easily allowed for in an age and civilisation where matter-of-
factness, the keeping of oneself apart from what one looks at, has become all-important.

We live in a society that persistently advocates for objectivity - a perception of
separateness (an institutionalised perception), which is contrary to the holistic

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perspective necessary for the nurturing of creativity, and indeed contrary to what quantum theory would suggest. As Bohm tells us (1980:9):

the quantum theory shows that the attempt to describe and follow an atomic particle in precise detail has little meaning ... In a more detailed description the atom is, in many ways, seen to behave as much like a wave as a particle. It can perhaps best be regarded as a poorly defined cloud, dependant for its particular form on the whole environment, including the observing instrument. Thus one can no longer maintain the division between the observer and observed ... Rather, both observer and observed are merging and interpenetrating aspects of one whole reality, which is indivisible and unanalysable.

Words like ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ (which appear in this chapter in some quotations) are used to communicate the idea of an inner sense of self that is more than just the ‘mind’, yet they can also often imply a priori religious or spiritual belief. A common saying is that “seeing is believing”, yet how often do we question what we see and how we actually come to see it? Regardless of what information we gain from our senses, it seems we have been taught to mistrust it and rely more on the ‘rational’ powers of the mind. In view of this it might perhaps be more correct to say that believing is seeing. In fact ‘beliefs’, or ‘principles’, hold a lot of power as they are quite a motivating force often cementing division between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This is perhaps why the implanting of beliefs in people through the harnessing of an institutionalised perception is a major preoccupation of those in authority. Indeed we all know of the many wars waged in the name of faith, beliefs, or principles. In Gulliver’ Travels, Swift satirised the pettiness of wars over principles through the telling of a story of a war being waged, between Lilliput and Blefuscu, over the disagreement of which was the ‘proper’ end (the larger or smaller) for an egg to be cracked.
What I am discussing in this thesis – the nurturing of creativity as the basis for transformation as I have personally experienced it, with that transformation being the becoming of a more whole me which enables me to live life more fully – is directly related to my awareness of being, which I have called my beingness. This awareness is independent of any belief which I may or may not have. Beliefs are of the mind, whereas my sense of beingness includes but transcends the mind to the wholeness of the self, which also includes the body in a beingness/body fusion. As far as I can ascertain, most people have this sort of sense of self to a degree from quite a young age, and this is what enables them to relate to themselves as ‘I’ (rather than just as ‘my hand’, ‘my head’ and so on). In the Introduction, I explain this sense of beingness, of knowingness, by likening it to an iceberg where only the visible part of it is the consciousness.

Beliefs are for me convictions which arise from the meaning I construct for myself given the awareness or perspective I have. In a sense then, in my experience my beliefs are deduced from how I see the world, while at the same time they help me to live congruent to that vision, yet they do not prevent that vision from expanding and transforming. My beliefs have therefore had to undergo a number of changes during my life, given that my perspective has grown wider and larger. In the quote above, Milner clearly states her perplexity at knowing that to see what one actually sees, as in perceiving and becoming aware of what is around you, is not “so easily allowed” in our society. Having come from a position where she had to uncover much of what she had been taught, so as to freely engage with her ‘new’ awareness of the external world, she gives experiential proof of living in a society where ‘believing is seeing’ (1971:145-147). In Anam Cara, John O’Donohue describes this in other words (2004:63-64):
To the judgmental eye, everything is closed in definitive frames. When the judgmental eye looks out, it sees things in terms of lines and squares. It is always excluding and separating ... It enjoys neither the forgiveness nor imagination to see into the ground of things where truth is paradox. An externalist, image-driven [as in appearance-driven] culture is the corollary of such an ideology of facile judgment.

As I mention above, the Extraordinary Mind Project gave me the experience of what it was like to be non-judgemental. Through a way of drawing that allowed for exploration and negotiation between that which I saw and what I wanted, or needed, to express - a way of drawing in other words that allowed the spontaneous creative process to flow - I was able to reconnect to the time where my creative energy had been obstructed and walled up within me. Caught up in this were old emotions of anger and frustration, which consequently also began to flow out. This occurrence, which could be called an emotional ‘clearing’, was activated by the nurturing of creativity that was also being supported by another activity that I had been undertaking for a while, a specific dance practice – Chakradance™.

I have always loved dancing, and particularly dancing by myself to music I love. By allowing the music to elicit from my body the movement it feels totally in tune with, and only that movement, and focusing on it, I find myself slowly releasing stress I was not even aware of. Aches and pains present themselves and then are let go, thoughts and ideas at times come thick and fast as well as solutions to things I had been pondering. It is like a dancing meditation. I came across this by chance, years ago, and since then dancing in this manner has always been a sure way for me to consciously connect with my body. Although I know this, it is interesting however, how many times I did not make use of it when I might have benefited from it. In times of need it has not been uncommon for my inner strategies for coping, and even thriving, to stay locked within while I
instead desperately search outside of myself for answers. Then unexpectedly something comes along (a synchronicity), usually when I have stopped searching, which has a close connection to my inner resources so that I am finally reminded of them.

In 2006, the year I began my PhD, a friend invited me to attend an ‘authentic dancing’ course with her. This is dancing that allows your own movement to flow from the body with the music, the idea being that the dancer will not ‘think’ about how to dance but simply accept the body’s suggestions unimpeded. As this was so similar to the kind of dancing I did anyway - the only differences being that it was danced as a ‘class’ group with the dance ‘teacher’ choosing a particular focus for each workshop – I went along. I had been concerned about possibly being self-conscious dancing in front of others; however I found that everybody was very focused on their own process and so did not pay much attention to anybody else. Moreover, the atmosphere in the class was one of acceptance and nurturing. At first I mostly benefited from the dancing on a physical level, as after the workshops I found I had a lot of energy. Then towards the second half of the course I realised that some kind of creative process was taking place, as I started to imagine, ‘see’ and experience amazing inner worlds and narratives at each of the workshops. This process appeared to be quite deep and remained contained within the time-frame of the workshops. Whatever other effects it had on me, it importantly reminded me of just how much I loved dancing; so with this reawakened awareness about myself I was open to incorporating dance into my life, and it was not long after the end of this course that I discovered Chakradance™.

As with authentic dancing, Chakradance™ allows for individuals to move spontaneously, but to music that has been chosen or composed for a specific chakra. Knowledge of the chakras comes mainly from the yogic system of ancient India. In Sanskrit chakra means
wheel or turning, and the chakras are seen as centres of energy, or energy vortices. Said to be “roughly equivalent to the autonomic nervous system and endocrine glands of Western medicine” (Penguin Encyclopaedia) and aligned along the spine, the seven major chakras – base, sacral, solar plexus, heart, throat, third eye and crown - allow energy to be received and transmitted throughout the body. Jung saw an affinity between the Eastern chakra system and the process of individuation: “the conscious coming-to-terms with one’s own inner centre (psychic nucleus) or Self” (Franz, 1978:169). He thus incorporated work on the chakras in the process of individuation through use of active imagination – imaginative techniques for accessing symbols revealed by the unconscious. He also made use of mandala (meaning circle in Sanskrit) art and drawing (1977:221-222):

I had to abandon the idea of the superordinate position of the ego ... I had to let myself be carried along by the current, without a notion of where it would lead me ... I saw that everything, all the paths I had been following, all steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point - namely, to the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre .. It is the path to the centre, to individuation ... I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate.

Peggy Phelan, who writes on performance theory, and spent twelve years as a member of the corps de ballet in the New York City Ballet, writes that (1997:54):

... the body can express things that consciousness and its discursive formations cannot. Within psychoanalysis, these bodily expressions are called symptoms. Symptoms are somatic expressions which signal the work of repression; they are the bodily place holders for material that consciousness cannot fully absorb ... [they] are condensed indexes of a not-yet-consciously-narrativized event... From a dancer’s point of view the symptom is one way of understanding a movement phrase. Movement phrases are somatic expressions ...
From what Phelan points out, and reconnecting to Jung’s process of individuation, it seems plausible that if the body holds that which cannot yet be consciously understood, then allowing the body to express itself freely through movement in dance can help to release these ‘symptoms’, which furthermore may reveal themselves as insights through active imagination and/or mandala art.

Chakradance™ incorporates all of these elements in its practice: authentic dancing while focusing on the chakras, engaging with what Jung calls the ‘process of individuation’ through active imagination, and integration with the drawing of a mandala at the end of a session. This enables it to be a holistic way of accessing the unconscious which by nurturing creativity furthers growth and self-development. For me it has also continued the clearing of emotions that had begun occurring in the art classes. In retrospect I realised that the releasing of my emotions had also occurred through singing, and this at times when I had been in urgent need of it. Two specific occasions come to mind; one was when I lived in Italy as an adult and was dealing with the break-up of a close relationship. A friend had been asking me to join her in a Gregorian choir she was part of, that rehearsed twice weekly and also occasionally performed (mostly in churches). Though I was then not in a state to be analytical, I knew that being part of something that required me to engage my creativity in order to connect with others in harmony was what saved me. It saved me from a ‘break-down’, or even from something more dire, thankfully I do not know from what, but I know that for three months or so I totally ‘lived’ for that choir. The other time when singing was central for me was when I was expecting my first child; I was also studying at university at the time. Again I connected to it through a synchronistic ‘chance’ - a friend of a friend introducing me to his piano teacher who also taught singing. He was an older gentleman, already in his sixties, who
had a great sense of humour and a sparkle in his eyes. Anyway I started singing lessons, and again I felt as though I was ‘swept away’, and at the same time I was brought back to myself by the power and the beauty that the experience of it brought to me.

Through the regular practice of Chakradance™ I realised that aches and physical pain I had were caused mainly by the keeping in of creative energy - resisting doing creative things through a belief of a lack of time - and stopping it from flowing and pouring out effortlessly. Following this realisation I had this visualisation, or day-dream, of my inner landscape: A powerful waterfall of love starts cascading and washing over the jagged rocks of jealousy and hatred, smoothing them to kinder shapes, tumbling over the pebbles of indifference and complacency and moving and mixing them into more caring formations that do not hinder flow, until it builds up so much momentum that it finally pushes through, shifting the boulders of fear that have dammed it in for so long. I continue dancing the sacral chakra and imagine stepping into the flow of that stream:

Energy flowing, going from water to fire, hot and cool, warm and cold, like water flows so the flickering of the fire seems to flow – liquid fire. The sun lighting the water orange and the liquid fire spreading through my being, whispering, caressing, lulling, soothing, inspiring to expand, move, dance, flow.

I have found it both humbling and comforting to realise that simple things that my beingness and body like to partake in, like dancing, singing and drawing, have such a powerful and freeing effect on my creativity. I have found this humbling because it has made me feel like a child again by allowing me to rediscover what it is like to play. And I have found it comforting because feeling so exuberant at being attracted by the wonder and beauty of being creative has in effect ‘rolled back’ long periods of tiredness and jaded existence. Given the experience of these feelings I wonder how empowering it might have been to have been allowed, or even encouraged, to pursue these activities as
a child at school. Rather than follow a prescriptive curriculum, would it not help our process of individuation, our journey of growth, to explore our creative potential more freely?

Robinson is quite outspoken about the importance of a more holistic approach to education: “One of the legacies of academicism is the exile of feeling from education. Reconnecting feeling and intellect is vital for the development of human resources and the promotion of creativity” (2001:14). ‘Feeling’ is a word that can mean so much in so many different contexts, and that is because we are feeling, sensual beings. Lessening the importance of the meaning of ‘feeling’ does not change the need we have to use and develop what we are in possession of – our creative talents. As we are unique these will be different for each of us, but what is similar is the sheer amount of energy and joy that we can gain through the nurturing of our creativity. Furthermore, as I nurture my creativity through various creative practices – Chakradance®M, drawing, writing, dancing, singing, playing music – by trusting them and giving them of my time, I find myself gaining clarity in awareness, self-fulfilment, and in my connection to others and the world around me. Chapter Six delves into that connection to others that enables us to connect to the ‘outer’.

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In this chapter scholarly personal narrative is the main thread used to introduce the different facets of my inner and outer worlds – the life of the ‘world’ within me, and my life in the world – as well as to explore how the nurturing of creativity is able to reveal the connection of these worlds.
My experience has been that from life as a young child where the inner and outer worlds blend harmoniously, education seems to step in and begins to build boundaries between the two, with this coming from both parental and formal institutional education. Thus in growing up connections to the inner self become difficult to sustain and apparently untrustworthy, and the value of the sense of self, and even the recognition of self, diminishes. What instead gains in importance is the apparent hierarchical place ‘held’ in society, one’s social standing or status in other words, given the ‘results’ of tests, reputation and ‘social’ behaviour. This can then lead to both fear of failure and fear of success as one learns that in a competitive world there is little room for self-fulfilment, and that ‘rewards’ are merely tokens just meant to keep one competing.

This competitive climate is strengthened by the fighting mentality fostered and maintained by the language we use, all of which severely hampers our creativity. Exploring creative new ways of looking at what is displeasing and working towards change opens up many possibilities that would allow us to work holistically and bypass competitiveness, while favouring cooperation and the building of connections. These new ways could be likened to being the ‘artist’s ways’ as they make use of feelings, intuition and even sensual perspectives as well as the intellect. This would then enable us to nurture our own creativity thereby promoting self-fulfilment on a deep level, since nurturing our creativity permits us to reconnect to our whole self and so reunite the inner and outer worlds of our lives.

This working towards recognising the whole of the self is what Jung called the ‘process of individuation’, and it is something which he saw as being the ultimate path to be in on in life. The allowing of creative self-expression enables one to achieve self-fulfilment, as
well as the fulfilment of that part of the whole (the whole reality) which each one of us holds uniquely.
Nurturing Creativity: a journey of personal transformation

Chapter Six:

A Concert of Voices

... the self is best understood, expressed, created, and re-created in relation to others.

Although life continually asserts its self, it never stops seeking connections to other life. ...

We simply must be connected and in partnership with others in order to continue to learn.

(Marshall, 2006:114)

The focus of this chapter is on connectedness to others and how they have played a part in my journey of transformation, which includes looking at the action research undertaken for this PhD. Though my research shifted from its initial focus on ‘creativity in education’, it is still relevant to include the ‘voices’ of those I interviewed, as what they have to say is nonetheless about creativity. This comprises individual interviews and group discussions with parents, teachers, principals and students, all of them focused on the exploration and nurturing of creativity. In addition, so as to amplify my own understanding of the transformative nature of creativity with that of others, I also consider many different ways that people relate through ‘dialogue’, which I see as being a place of exchange.

Throughout this research journey I have experienced connection through many different dialogues: in feedback gained from papers and talks given since starting my PhD degree; in conversations with colleagues, friends, relatives and acquaintances; and also through the interviews I have conducted. Being open-ended these interviews have
actually been less like ‘traditional’ interviews and more like dialogues. The reviewing of and reflecting on these dialogues and indeed on the whole ‘idea’ of ‘dialogue’ has led me, in retrospect, to recognise some of the unlikely times and places where dialogue had been on the ‘verge’ of occurring and this has been revelatory; moreover it has also helped me to make some insightful inferences drawn from these experiences which I discuss further in the chapter.

By modelling my method of interviewing on appreciative inquiry (as explained in Chapter Two) - the action research that makes use of the “unconditional positive question to ignite transformative dialogue and action within human systems ... [where s]electing a positive topic is an essential starting point” (Ludema et al., 2001:191-192) - I formulated a range of open-ended questions and proceeded to consult over sixty people on creativity. Much care was therefore given to ensure that the questions soliciting what the respondents thought about creativity, and the nurturing creativity, were worded in the positive and were unobtrusive. Essentially I allowed myself to be guided by what the ‘respondents’ were saying, and together we ‘dialogued’ on creativity.

With close to equal numbers of males and females, sixteen parents (three of whom were home schooling), twelve students, and thirteen teachers were interviewed, all from various high schools around Perth (both private and public) encompassing years eight to twelve, with the age of students ranging from 12 to 18. In addition four group discussions were held, one for teachers and principals (from here on I refer to principals as teachers), one for parents and/or guardians, and two for students. In total sixty-seven people shared their opinions on creativity, and though some participants took part in both group discussions and individual interviews, they were only counted once.
To report on the views and responses of those who took part in this action research, I present their ‘voices’ (written in italics in the case of direct quotes) alongside other research, together with my own insight and experiences. In other words, rather than giving interview responses as ‘findings’, after analysing these responses and grouping them accordingly, with the help of various quantitative and qualitative software packages designed appositely for action research, I have instead chosen to integrate individual and group voices by ‘weaving’ them, mainly from this chapter on, into the ‘research story’ that I am writing. This is not only consistent with my having chosen creativity as a ‘methodology’, as well as with showing the strength and interconnectedness of our web of human relationships, but it also makes use of aspects of co-operative inquiry – a form of action research that conducts “research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ people” (Heron & Reason, 2001:179). Its developers, John Herron and Peter Reason, present co-operative inquiry as research capable of redressing a ‘traditional’ lack of egalitarianism in research (179):

... there is often very little connection between the researcher’s thinking and the concerns and experiences of the people who are actually involved ... People are treated as passive subjects rather than as active agents ... the kind of thinking done by researchers is often theoretical rather than practical ... We believe that the outcome of good research is not just books and academic papers, but it is also the creative action of people to address matters that are important to them ... it is concerned too with revisioning our understanding of our world, as well as transforming practice within it.

The above quote sums up many of the issues that I discuss in this thesis and that I have been eager to uncover while conducting my research in an ‘alternative’ way to that traditionally endorsed. ‘Co-operative inquiry’ is therefore a practice that is congruent with my research; it is a form of participatory action research and as such provides a
useful perspective that reinforces the message of this chapter: the importance of being open to a multiplicity of voices that allow us to get closer and closer to being able to hear and see ‘wholeness’ through our interconnectedness.

As human beings we are inevitably connected to each other in a web of relationships from when we are first conceived. In fact, the dynamics of these relationships are what beget us in the first place; in other words had our parents never met we would not ‘be’, as in exist, or at least (depending on people’s beliefs) we would not exist in the exact way or form that we ‘are’ now. As Stephanie Marshall points out, to be alive is to belong to a complex network of relationships (2006:26):

*Life is naturally interdependent. There is simply no such thing as an independent living entity. Without the cooperation, partnership, and reciprocity of the other, the self will simply not survive. The cocreative process of life cannot support isolation. The self-regulatory capacity and sustainability of a living system is inextricably connected to the density, diversity, and intricacy of its interlinked and interactive networks and feedback loops ... In a living system, relationships are everything.*

The importance of this high inter-dependence for both our survival and well being, tends to be somewhat taken for granted and overlooked in Western society, while instead it is ‘individualism’ that receives the most attention. In *Welcome to the Creative Age*, Mark Earls identifies this bias through a practical observation of the difference between Western and Eastern ‘markets’ (2002:88-89):

*... it is easy to assume that the individual is the basic building block. Western culture and thinking has encouraged us for hundreds of years to think about individuals and their needs ... [yet] those who have worked in Eastern markets quickly realize how culturally dependent the nature of the West’s obsession with the individual actually is.*
This focus on individualism – believed to be by some (like Robert Jay Lifton, author of *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*) to be a fundamental step in our evolution - is important (1993). By helping us to recognise the desire for getting to know and *be* our own ‘self’, it heightens our prospects for developing and nurturing our individual creativity and thus also our self-awareness and ability to consciously make choices. “*In all its diversity creativity can’t be restricted. Creativity has to be spontaneous it has to be something that may change with different influences; it doesn’t always have to be right*” (parent). However, if the ideology of individualism is pursued too exclusively and pragmatically it can easily degenerate into competitive and harmful ‘selfishness’ – the consequences of which sadly abound in current society. It is thus important to keep the focus on the individual (or ‘self’) in context by seeing it as an integral part in the complex network of social fabric. This allows for a holistic approach to creativity, where the nurturing (or self-nurturing) of each person’s unique potentials can unfold into a sense of our connected humanity which can enable us to build genuine sustainable communities. These being the sorts of caring and self-actualising communities that are needed to be able to nurture the creativity of all individuals, as Marshall states (2006:180-181):

> Webs, or networks, are the fundamental and sustaining pattern of life. Webs remind us that the perceived fragmentation and lack of connection in our lives is a temporary illusion; that parts have meaning only in relationship to the whole ... and that the self is always illuminated in relation to other.

Through living in the world, within our web of relationships, we come to internalise a multiplicity of voices. David Bohm proposes that “our thought in its general form is not individual. It originates in the whole culture and it pervades us. We pick it up as children from parents, from friends, from school, from newspapers, from books, and so
on” (2004:59). Though we can be almost unconscious of this within ourselves, a ‘voice’ instilling doubt can be more clearly perceived from the ‘outside’; an example of this is given by an observation from a parent I interviewed:

“... my eldest son who is very good at drawing, he draws cartoons. At one time in high school one of the teachers just about destroyed his ability to draw, the teacher said ‘We are drawing a tree’, so he tried to draw a tree, then the teacher said ‘No, no that is not how we draw a tree’. I really had to sit down with him and say ‘Hey some people just see it that way, some people are just taught to see things that way.’

We are born predisposed for learning so as to survive, and because we cannot survive in isolation we have a deep desire to fit in, to belong, thus we constantly change ourselves and our behaviour to achieve this. As Aronie reminds us, the ‘others’ in our lives are especially important to us when we are young, in trying to please others (mostly the adults) “we learned very early how to be who they needed us to be. We learned how to accommodate, assimilate, validate them” (1998:209). In other words it is through our need to be connected that we instinctively care and want to help, and thus we are also very susceptible to others’ woundedness. Unless our carers and other significant adults in our lives were very aware and self-realised individuals who fully accepted, loved and nurtured themselves as well as us, we were faced with their woundedness - fears, prejudices, guilt and anything else which hurt them and held them back from growth. In the process of wanting to help them and believing that we could do this by trying to become what they wanted us to be, we thus accepted some of their ‘woundedness’ and needs to guide us; at the same time this caused us to put aside our deep desire to find out about ourselves. This desire is described in Jungian psychology as an “almost
imperceptible, yet powerfully dominating, impulse – an impulse that comes from the urge toward unique, creative self-realization” (Franz, 1978:167).

We could say, therefore, that from when we are children we are faced with a tension between forces pulling us in different directions. In discussing my experience of these, in Chapter Five, I call them the ‘power of conformity’, and the ‘power of the desire to be whole’. Where one is outward pulling the other is inward pulling, so it might be considered rational to see them as conflicting forces. However, as I have discussed at length, metaphors of conflict are reductive and mostly counterproductive, which is to say they are destructive. A more useful metaphor is one that likens them to the complimentary forces of circular motion, or rotation - the centrifugal and centripetal forces. Both of these forces are needed to keep a body rotating, as the centripetal force pushes it towards the centre of the circular motion – like the force of gravity pulling a planet towards the sun, or the electrical force that keeps an electron orbiting an atom - while the centrifugal force balances the centripetal force by pulling outwards from the centre:

Thus, in twirling a mass on a string, the centripetal force transmitted by the string pulls in on the mass to keep it in its circular path, while the centrifugal force transmitted by the string pulls outward on its point of attachment at the center of the path (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia, 2007).

In a similar way that these forces of rotation work together, I see the ‘power of conformity’ and the ‘power of the desire to be whole’ being connected as they need each other for balance. Lederach explains the nature of social relationships through the use of this same metaphor; he sees “the invisible web of relationships” held together by
“social energy that is simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal” (2005:75). His example is within the family relationship, which (2005:76):

... sends us out into the world, yet we return to it for a sense of identity, direction, and purpose.

Faith communities, chosen families, even geographic locations provide a sense of identity and also have this centrifugal/centripetal capacity. In each of these examples there exists a force that pushes out and pulls in, and in so doing creates a “center that holds.”

It is therefore by the balancing of the ‘power of conformity’ and the ‘power of the desire to be whole’ that stability and strength is achieved, this is what Lederach calls the “center that holds”. Maintaining this balance, a relationship is thus nurtured and strengthened to the extent that it can nurture each individual in it. Yet given that we are all unique the personal point of balance for each individual and relationship will naturally vary. “... everyone has their own creativity and are good at their own particular things ... some people have got good memories, some people can paint really well ...” (parent). Resuming what we left behind as children, this work towards the attainment of the desire to find out who we truly are (the Jungian ‘process of individuation’ discussed in Chapter Five), is then central to living a fulfilling life also because it can enhance our relationships. Most of the parents I interviewed expressed that they would like their children’s creativity to be nurtured so that they might fulfil their potentials, with one parent enthusiastically summing up this possibility:

“I remember seeing on television one time, a school for kids who didn’t fit in the system and who were able to excel as artists from a young age; as soon as they got to high school whatever they were interested in they did, and they just excelled and it was wonderful to see.”
A friend who works at a university designing websites, and as part of some of her work had to interview senior academics so as to put their biographies onto the sites, recounted to me that many of the engineering and other technical science professors were ‘crying on her shoulder’, lamenting that they had not been allowed to follow their passions as youngsters. Parents and other ‘well meaning’ adults had discouraged, or even prohibited, them from pursuing art or music or other things they really liked, persuading them instead to devote themselves to more ‘reputable’ and financially reliable subjects. Now as mature adults, with successful careers, they yearned for what they perceived to be their lost dreams, as they did not feel complete without them!

Robinson talks of this in The Element, when he writes (2009:138-139):

... many people face barriers from family and friends: “Don’t take a dance program, you can’t make a living as a dancer,” “You’re good at math you should become an accountant,” “I’m not paying for you to be a philosophy major,” ... When people close to you discourage you from taking a particular path, they usually believe they are doing it for your own good.

Yet not only can nurturing our creativity enable us to become self-actualised and whole, but it is also through the realisation of the uniqueness of each of our gifts that our human community can grow and successfully face new challenges that are constantly arising. “I bring in the older students to help with younger students, in this way they learn about that whole helping and nurturing ... we approach ballet very holistically ... they have to dance brilliantly on stage but then three minutes before they would have been helping with the younger ones” (teacher). It is because of this complementary and balanced dance of life, where all living things are interdependently weaving an intricate tapestry, that fulfilling the intent of an inner focus can also mean fulfilling the intent of an outer focus.

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At some point in our lives we need to converse with the voices we have ‘internalised’ so as to discover what they are saying, and whether some of these might be preventing us in any way from nurturing our creativity. In addition, we might choose to engage others in dialogue in regards to the myriads of issues that concern us in life, rather than unconsciously assimilate what the ‘experts’ (or those we admire) are saying, only to then believe that these are ‘our’ thoughts. To do this we need to take the time to creatively explore nuances of thoughts and feelings on these issues and see where this takes us. Bohm suggests that in a group of any number of people it is open dialogue, rather than discussion, which (2004:7):

... will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding ... which may not have been in the starting point at all ... something creative. And this shared meaning is the “glue” or “cement” that holds people and societies together. ... [Discussion] emphasizes the idea of analysis, where there may be many points of view, and where everybody is presenting a different one ... and the object of the game is to win or to get points for yourself. ... In a dialogue, however nobody is trying to win ... a dialogue is something more of a common participation, in which we are not playing a game against each other, but with each other. In a dialogue everybody wins.

The dynamics of a dialogue are similar to the way young children play before they are taught to be competitive (as discussed in Chapter Three). “Whenever she has been good at something ... like singing or piano, she would compare herself, so I think competition is an inhibitor of creativity” (parent). Bohm’s idea of dialogue is also akin to the notion of dialogue that Bakhtin puts forward, maintaining that: "To be means to communicate ... life by its very nature is dialogic” (1984:287). The type of communication Bakhtin envisions unfolds in open dialogues where we could express our ideas, both individual and cultural, and by noticing the shades of differences and similarities of these, work
towards more harmonious and kinder ways of living together (Zappen, 2000:7-20). It is the open-ended and informal nature of dialoguing that allows for creativity to be nurtured within it, so that it can work transformatively. Though in our current society there appears to be little opportunity for participation in these sorts of dialogues - the space and time necessary for them seems scarce when everybody is pushed to be goal-driven and to 'produce' - they are now more vital than ever.

Having the conscious intention of improving our well-being, both individual and societal, is a crucial undertaking given the high levels of mental health concerns we are currently faced with worldwide. Unhappiness, depression and suicide rates seem to be at an all-time high. Robinson writes: “Deaths each year from suicide around the world are greater than deaths from all armed conflicts” (2009:255). Perplexed at this, I researched it to uncover a little more information. In the WHO’s (World Health Organisation) first, and most recent, World Report on Violence and Health, launched in October 2002, I found what I needed. In the Abstract is stated that (2002:5-6):

Globally, an estimated 815 000 people killed themselves in 2000 … In much of the world, suicide is stigmatized … Suicide is therefore a secretive act surrounded by taboo, and may be unrecognized, misclassified or deliberately hidden in official records of death … During the 20th century, one of the most violent periods in human history, an estimated 191 million people lost their lives directly or indirectly as a result of armed conflict, and well over half of them were civilians. In 2000, about 310 000 people died as a direct result of conflict-related injuries – the majority of them in the poorer parts of the world.

Given the prevalence of armed conflict and how the media readily informs us of this, it is worth considering that deaths by suicide, at more than double the deaths by armed conflict (in 2000), in comparison are hardly ever mentioned. In Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported a decreasing rate of suicide since the late nineties,
when it had apparently reached 2700 in 1997. The approximate suicide rate given by the ABS in 2006 was of 2000 a year, this being nonetheless higher than the yearly deaths by motor vehicle accidents. Since then this figure has however been disputed, and in 2009 was adjusted by Professor John Mendoza, then chairman of the Federal Government’s National Advisory Council on Mental Health, to being around 3000 a year and possibly on the increase. In June this year (2010) Mendoza resigned his position because he was not being listened to by the government, he claims that: “Suicide is the number 1 cause of death for men 16-44 and women 16-34 years. But across Australia, life-saving suicide prevention services are starved for funds” (GetUp Mental Health campaign email).

I have included this quantitative information on deaths by suicide in order to juxtapose it to our essential individual (and societal) ‘need’ to nurture our creativity - that intrinsic need to realise our inner potential which many (including Jung) believe we have. Might it not be likely that the suppression of this need and the rate of suicide are somehow related? In the WHO’s above-mentioned report among the factors given as those predisposing people to the risk of suicide are: depression and a general sense of hopelessness. Having experienced the frightening darkness of both of these, I know that they reinforce each other and that they often arise from ‘tunnel vision’. This is the focused and reductive perspective that our Western institutions, starting with education (as the first one we experience as children), teach us to use to achieve the goals we are set, or that we set ourselves. By “looking unidirectionally toward a preconceived process and goal” (Lederach, 2005:118) - the ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ if you will - as being the only possible way to a solution, success, or whatever else one is hoping for, if through change or circumstance something irrevocably blocks
this ‘way’ then all hope is lost. By firmly believing that there is only one way out, or one way to reach an aspiration or dream, the rigidness of that belief can stop us from looking for and seeing other ways, it can even stop us from realising that perhaps the desired outcome we were aiming for is not really what we want after all. “Pressure is not good for creativity ... expectations are not good for creativity ...” (parent).

In Wishcraft: How to get what you really want, Barbara Sher advises anyone with dreams, to pursue “the goal that sounds most exciting to you – even if it’s the most impossible” (Sher & Gottlieb, 1979:82) as it is the passion for something that makes one realise what is the true way to fulfilment. Thirty years later in The Element: How finding your passion changes everything, Ken Robinson talks about the same thing: “When people are in their Element, they connect with something fundamental to their sense of identity, purpose and well-being ... and [with] what they are really meant to be doing with their lives” (Robinson & Aronica, 2009:21). Many of those I interviewed acknowledged the creative benefits of doing what you love:

“I think football makes me creative, because I love it” (student).

“I think that kids connect far better in the classroom with something that is their own rather than some essential curriculum, centrally imposed by whatever authority” (teacher).

“When you’re creative you kind of feel good and you can concentrate more, and sometimes you don’t have to concentrate at all because you are that much into thinking about something it’s like day dreaming” (student).

The last quote is a good portrayal of what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) calls “flow” - the feeling of being outside or beyond time, that we experience when totally immersed
and enjoying an activity (as discussed in Chapter Three). In other words, when we are following our passion we go beyond consciousness and fragmentation to engaging with the world with our whole selves. We find what makes us passionate by exploring the gift that we are to ourselves, as it is by getting to know ourselves that we can be led to what is the natural inclination for the growth and fulfilment of our ‘self’. This is not necessarily only one ‘thing’, but a unique combination of essential aspects of yourself. As Sher points out, “if you have to choose just one ... even if it's the one you love best, you’re going to long for” (1979:84) all the other passions which are being kept from becoming a part of your life. All too often though we ‘are made to do’ just that - to choose between what we love. We might see ourselves in an inescapable either/or scenario and, having learnt well what we have been taught, we believe that to be our only option, as Twyla Tharp writes (2003:55):

To lead a creative life, you have to sacrifice. "Sacrifice" and "Having it all" do not go together. I set out to have a family, have a career, be a dancer, and support myself all at once, and it was overwhelming. I had to learn the hard way that you can't have it all, you have to make some sacrifices, and there's no way you're going to fulfil all the roles you imagine ... Something had to give.

I agree that roles cannot be fulfilled; roles are not ‘real’, they are idealised stereotypes set by external standards. I have experienced very strong feelings of guilt and of being inadequate because I could not aptly fulfil all the roles that I saw myself in, and it was not until I consciously chose to play certain roles a certain way (as explained in Chapter One) that I was able to release this guilt and sense of inadequacy. However, we can have it all, though something does have ‘to give’ first, and this something is the limited perspective that we have internalised, the ‘tunnel vision’ I speak of above. As Sher remind us: “life is not a miser, and you have the right to everything you love” (1979:90).
Even if you do not have much time you can keep all that you love in your life as an occasional “side dish” (90). I see it as more a case of ‘not being able to have it all, all at once’. But to have it, you have to love it, and this is where knowing yourself is important as all the parts intrinsic to yourself connect and balance each other.

I have been asked many times how I manage to study while being married and looking after a family with two children and four pets (two dogs and two cats). Having a tendency towards perfectionism I find that the practical realities of daily living ground me, and though it can at times be quite frustrating having to put aside writing for a myriad of tasks, it is the living within a family that enables me to make time for many of the other things that I love, and one thing leads to another. Thus looking for ideas on a birthday cake reminds me how long it has been since I have drawn anything and I decide I could set up my easel permanently in my study; looking after a sick child brings me back to the practice of meditation and Chakradance™ which I have been neglecting for a few days. What is more, having taken the time to nurture these other creative aspects of myself – dancer, artist, singer and so on - I find I am nourished and led to insights beneficial to my study and writing that I might otherwise not have uncovered. Citing Isaacson’s biography of Einstein, Robinson writes of Albert Einstein experiencing something similar (2009:50):

“He would often play his violin in his kitchen late at night, improvising melodies while he pondered complicated problems. Then, suddenly, in the middle of playing he would announce excitedly, ‘I’ve got it!’ As if by inspiration, the answer to the problem would have come to him in the midst of his music.” What Einstein seemed to understand is that intellectual growth and creativity come through embracing the dynamic nature of intelligence. Growth comes through analogy, through seeing how things connect rather than only seeing how they might be different.
This holistic way of accepting and understanding oneself and one's associations grows the more it is practiced, and just as the individual can become more self-realised by integrating and becoming conscious of all aspects of the self, so can human society achieve more by being open and inclusive to all its members. Because each person is a unique and precious part of life, whose contribution is unrepeatable, it is in the interest of all to be open to others' voices when conducting research. I have ceased to be surprised when, having made time to see and talk to others and be with them, or even just to take a friend's call in the midst of a busy writing schedule, I come back to my work with one, or more, pieces to the 'whole of the puzzle' – the name of a useful book or person, a pertinent quote or anecdote, and so on.

What mostly occurs, however, is that while one is likely to include the 'voices' of other researchers, writers, academics, as well as of those members of society who are vocal and find ways of making themselves heard, this is not necessarily the case with the voices of 'ordinary' people. So, who are the ones who are made to remain silent? Among them are those who for whatever reasons, cultural or personal, or just because they 'speak' in ways that are not conventional, as indeed do many indigenous 'minorities', are excluded from being consulted even on things that concern them directly. Typically, and somewhat ironically, this means excluding the voices of students in matters of schooling, the voices of patients in medical concerns, prisoners and victims in matters of justice, and so on.

The most common practice seems to be to prioritise the voices of those who are the 'service-providers' - these are often also the financers of the services, however invariably they are also the main ones to profit from them. As well as financially, in the sense that they make a comfortable living from what they do, they also invariably
benefit in status and career through research and publishing, or bigger and better enterprises (businesses), or even being elected to various levels of political careers. The voices most usually heard are therefore those of the traditional enforcers of the ‘status quo’. As ‘service providers’ it is they who have set things up as they are, and this is not usually questioned (despite controversies brought up by the media where in most cases it is other ‘would be providers’ or ‘ex-providers’ doing the questioning). Given that they are the active ‘doers’ they are also seen as being the experts. This bias makes it more likely for those who are the passive recipients of these ‘services’ to be at best overlooked, or at worst consciously ignored, especially if what is being proposed by the ‘service-providers’ is actually not in the best interest of these recipients.

Though in some cases it may be argued that the recipients of these services – education, justice, medical care, and other types of care like aged and disabled, or even customers of commercial goods and services – are not sufficiently ‘competent’ to express a knowledgeable opinion, this is not a valid enough argument for the suppression or silencing of voices. As Friere writes (1982:29-37):

> The silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world.

Similarly, Lederach reminds us of the importance of maintaining peripheral vision rather than giving in to ‘tunnel vision’. The voices of those who are dismissed as not being ‘competent’ enough – elders, housewives, workers, and children (among others) - can fill in our peripheral vision and so give us a better view of the big picture. “A simple, straightforward statement of how things are, what they look like, can offer greater clarity than a complexified but misleading analysis” (2005:122) from the ‘experts’. This
is the equivalent of looking at, and listening to, life as it is actually happening rather than relying on working out abstractions like averages or complex theories for an overall picture. The point being that averages are not ‘real’ – in a family with 2.5 children, where can half a child ‘live’ except in the abstract land of averages? Or to retell an Italian saying about statistics which my father is fond of: “Statistics is a ‘special science’ which says that if I have eaten two chickens and you have had none we have actually eaten one each.” Bohm speaks of this through the perspective of physics (2004:101):

If you try to measure one atom exactly, you can’t do it – it participates. But if you take a statistical array of atoms, you can get an average that is objective. It comes out the same no matter who does it, or when. The average comes out, but the individual atom does not. And in society you can also get average behaviours, which are often predictable. But they are not very significant, compared with the thing that really moves us and makes the society come into being.

One may wonder how services can in fact address any of the needs of the recipients, given that so often ‘experts’ seem to rely on statistics and averages to provide them with the bigger picture, like the results of standardised testing in the case of education. On the other hand, if the recipients’ voices were listened to, some very useful suggestions may be garnered in terms of what would work better for them, and this could be used to improve the particular service overall. For example, the students, parents and teachers I interviewed had some quite specific ideas on changes that could be implemented in high schools for the benefit of all:

“You could be encouraged more, because like if kids are naughty they get in trouble but sometimes when they do good stuff, sometimes they don’t even get encouraged to do that – it is not recognised. It would help if it was encouraged. It would help your mind, like when you play baseball and you pitch and your team-mates yell out ‘Good pitch’ and
everything, and when you bat they just encourage you to do it better and it makes your mind feel better” (student).

“...the only thing that prevents good teachers from teaching in a good way is the institutional framework and constraints that they are operating under. My children went to an alternative primary school ... we understood that the kids needed a smaller classroom, a more engaged teacher ...” (a parent who is also an experienced teacher).

“...it would be good if you could choose what to do more often ... you're the one being creative and you have to think for yourself ... maybe if we could choose what we want to do half of the time ...” (student).

“The students here need a lot of reassurance that being creative is acceptable” (teacher).

“The smaller the class the more personal it can be, like with teachers and stuff so they can help you and encourage you more and you can find out about what you like ...” (student).

“Fifteen would be a reasonable class ... Surely if classes are smaller and so teachers can spend more time [with individual students] it's got to be good for all the students” (parent).

“...there is also theory of sport which is an hour [when] we write, this would be more interesting if there were more demonstrations rather than just talking all the time” (student).

“I would just like the school to get the best out of him, just to bring out the best in him basically and to tell us if you need any help in anything, if there are any problems or anything” (parent).
“Maybe they [the teachers] could all talk to you as if you’re equal to them and they’re not any higher than you. Also if they had more trust in you. ...” (student).

“I see a creative approach as looking at whatever you are teaching holistically, so if the person in front of you isn’t happy or isn’t part of the group then they probably won’t learn so I believe that happiness is part and parcel of learning... I believe if you provide a safe environment for somebody then they can develop more creatively” (teacher).

“... we always read and then answer questions, there are no activities ...we could do group work, something to make it more interesting ...” (student).

Most of the above suggestions are grassroots changes which could be implemented if approached with an egalitarian collaborative attitude rather than a hierarchical competitive one. Brian Schultz describes such an approach in *Spectacular things happen along the way: Lessons from an urban classroom* (2008, 152-153), where he tells of how he designs a course of study by taking into consideration what his students want and need. The results are impressive and validate his faith and trust in his students:

When the classroom is shared and the curriculum is co-constructed, the participants see common threads among [them] and are able to support one another because they have knowledge of others’ strengths and weaknesses as well as likes and dislikes. The ability to support one another in classroom activities is important, and this becomes a life skill that can be transferred outside of the classroom and the school environment.

When students from a housing project in Chicago share with their teacher the dream of repairing their crumbling school building, he calls them to the challenge by integrating this dream into their study programme. By nurturing their creativity he spurs their motivation and is amazed at what they are able to achieve together. In comparison to this the above suggestions from those I interviewed seem easier to attain: helping to
make school a safe environment through the building of rapport and trust; maintaining open communication within the school community to include parents; having less students in each class; giving students more say in what they study; and being willing to try out different methods of teaching which depart from the traditional academic ones and are more practical and creative. But for schools to be able to put these ideas into action, the service provider (those responsible for making decisions in the Department of Education in this case) would need to be open to listening to what is being suggested. Rather than enforce ‘top-down’ changes, they might encourage each school to put into practice its own ways of nurturing creativity which could be found by holding open inclusive dialogues in their community, as the ideas generated within a school are those most likely to suit that school best. “I think many teachers would like to nurture creativity, but it’s not valued, it’s not recognised as worthwhile by administration who would have to provide the time for PD [personal development for teachers], for creative meetings, for workshops, and so on, as a focus, so that it can be implemented” (teacher and parent).

If schools were administratively supported to do this, they would be able to make use of what Lederach calls “creative learning” which he says “is the road to Serendip, the discovery of things by accident and sagacity” (2005:123), or in other words learning through serendipity. To be able to discover things by ‘accident’ means being open to all that one comes across including ‘mistakes’, rather than setting out with a plan that has rigid parameters and disregards anything that is not within those parameters. This means being prepared to make good use of what might be found unexpectedly, so that studying, reading and even appropriate learning of what ‘the rules’ are and how they
are practiced can prepare one, as long as one is also open to connect all of this and flexible enough to depart from it as necessary.

Being open and prepared for discovery, means that rather than drawing up ‘plans’ to exclusively guide the unfolding of a process, wisdom is also taken into account. Another way of putting this is what Leslie Safran calls “creativity as mindfulness”. Seeing creativity as being mindful, she explains: “Is not just about making new connections but continually thinking about any part of life, consciously or unconsciously, looking around life from all angles, and asking questions about what one finds” (2001:81). This means living with a constant ‘attitude of creativity’ (discussed in depth in Chapter Three), and being open to discover, try new things out, and make connections.

By setting creativity up as a ‘methodology’ for my PhD research (as explained in Chapter Two), I have been led by “creative learning” to integrate all that I have found including that which was unexpected. Even what seemed to be contrary has played a part. Thus by being open to listening to others’ voices as they ‘crossed my path’ (no matter where these have come from), by listening to their stories and experiences I have often found validation for my own ideas or a clearer way of seeing them, while at other times I have been challenged in my thinking. At all times though, being receptive to others, to their written work or by engaging in dialogue with them, has resulted in my perspective becoming wider and wider. I have therefore come to realise that at any point in time what I ‘see’ and think of as ‘the big picture’ is really only ever a part of it, as it is a dynamic picture that is constantly shifting and growing. What to begin with might be simply a personal experience or an ‘inkling’ of how something might unfold, as we extrapolate from what we have learnt and heard from others, it can become increased perceptiveness that gains significance through the similarity of shared experiences.
“Creative insights often occur by making connections between ideas or experiences that were previously unconnected. Just as intelligence in a single mind is interactive, creativity is often interdisciplinary” (Robinson, 2001:11). This is equivalent to saying that creativity is more often than not holistic, whether it is within an individual or in society.

When I began my PhD journey I was working part time in a high school where I had been teaching English and Drama to various classes, across most years, since the last term of the previous year. During that term I had also taught a child-care class as well as a home economics class for four weeks. This mix of teaching served to give me quite a comprehensive overall knowledge of how the school operated and enabled me to get to know the students reasonably well; in some cases I felt the beginnings of a meaningful rapport with some of the students. Yet, from the moment I started teaching there, it seemed to me that this school was somewhat different from others I had been at.

Though the school is considered to have students from quite a low socio-economic cohort, with statistics showing that the majority of the students live in single parent households and some with grandparents, I had not expected such a marked difference in what simply appeared to be the students’ attitude. I came out from the very first lesson I had with the Year 9 Drama with a feeling that: “Wow I survived it!” it felt as though I had faced ‘raw rage’ disguised as teenage students. The person who had hired me had said that the students there behaved just the same as students in other schools behaved. Thus at first I thought that it must have been how I was teaching that somehow brought out the behaviour I had been experiencing, which of course had to be true to a degree. However, given the difference in the response I had had from students
in previous schools I had taught at, something didn't quite seem to make sense to me – I was not seeing the whole picture.

Constantly mulling things over, I started to hypothesise different reasons for what was occurring. I seemed to be getting on quite well with the students in the Fast Track class. A ‘Fast Track’ programme is one specifically structured for students who are identified as ‘refusing the normal mode of teaching’, not all high schools offer it and at this school it was available for the last two years, years eleven and twelve with students who can be from 16 to 18. The focus of this sort of course is a practical one as it encompasses things like life skills and work, rather than focusing on exams. Viewing this as a ‘release’ from a primary pursuit of academic goals, I tailored the English course to suit the students so as to help them improve their overall communication skills. This meant a much more personalised and individualised approach which worked well, and that by improving communication also enhanced the rapport of all the individuals in the class to each other, and thus by default improved class atmosphere and behaviour. Despite this I noticed that there was a concern from the ‘school’ over how things might be going with the Fast Track class - I could sense them almost holding their breath to see how things would turn out, and this surprised me. It was only much later that I became aware that in fact some teachers did have trouble with a number of the students in that class, and that they were seen as ‘rebels’.

Akin to streaming, ‘tracking’ is a term “used to describe various schooling practices which sort students into relatively fixed groups for instructional purposes according to perceived shared characteristics ...” (Ladwig & Gore, 1998:18). In the Fast Track case, this was the school’s last attempt at engaging the students who were ‘refusing the standard approach to schooling’ and thus could not, and would not, be part of a ‘normal’
class. They were the students who were ‘falling through the cracks’ and so in a sense it might be understandable that they were seen as ‘rebels’. They chose not to conform to the standard practices and requirements of school, and possibly this caused some teachers to view these students as threatening to their authority as ‘agents who ensure that these standard practices and requirements are met’. It is useful to bear in mind that “mass public schooling developed with strong regulatory functions and purposes ... [given that] schools were established for the control of populations” (1998:19). With that awareness, as a teacher I have always consciously distanced myself from measures of control which I consider to be an ‘archaic practice - a remnant from the Industrial Age’.

Thus with the Fast Track class there were no hidden or tacit ‘agendas’ on my part, I was upfront and so were the students, and this enabled creativity to be successfully nurtured. For example, the keeping of a journal on a camping trip to the coastal Pilbara did much to help students engage in a process of self-reflection, which moreover led to further positive interaction within the class. Equally nurturing, though perhaps in a more ‘academic’ way, allowing students to focus on ‘texts’ that were of interest to them, like the video Super Size Me, enabled them to actively take part in, both oral and written, discussion and analysis that demonstrated the achievement of specific learning outcomes. In other words, as there were no prescribed ‘goals’, much was learned and accomplished.

On the other hand, I did not feel I had this sort of freedom in other classes and so I found that teaching them required a lot of effort. This was due mainly to the clash between what I knew was expected of me - as in the material that was to be covered in a set time (the content) - and what I could sense that the students needed to focus on. This was of

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a more personal nature and connecting to ‘real’ life, and given the socio-economic background of many students possibly made their needs more urgent. In other words, the pressure I felt to make the students perform in a certain way prevented me from acting according to the needs I identified the students as having.

One day, after a particularly awful session with the Year 9 drama group where everything I had planned had basically just ‘gone out the window’, something clicked into perspective for me. My understanding crystallised, and I found myself seeing things in a different way. I realised that the ‘grief’ that high school students ‘give’ teachers is not personal, it only seems that way because the ‘role’ that a high school teacher is given is often seen as being that of ‘the enemy’ by students, and so it is easy for a teacher to ‘react’ to that or even identify with an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality. By the time children get to high school they have had to contend with a lot of pressure, much of it brought on by the expectations of many adults including of course all those in their primary school hierarchy, as well as their parents. Students I subsequently interviewed, despite not being from the particular school where I taught, helped to confirm this as they ‘shed more light’ on what affects high school students’ attitudes:

“In my running, ‘cause I like to run in athletics, when I sprint I can let all my anger out”

“I like physical things not sitting in a classroom all day”

“A lot of people get in trouble cause of their hair … if you have streaks they send you home … they tell you off for wearing two [sets of] earrings, and the headband is only allowed to be white or green or black, like only one colour, I got told off because it was white and black so one of the teachers told me to take it off”
“... if the kids had more respect for other people, some of the kids. If some of them left or got taught a lesson so that they changed the way they act ... you worry about what they think, so you don’t think you can do anything or say anything that’s a bit different.”

High school students seem to carry a lot of anger and frustration that has been stored up, and there appears to be no outlet for it. While being told that they are at school to learn and for their own good, every day they are faced with ‘surface’ issues like abiding by the rules of correct uniform wearing and having to keep their physicality in check – sit, and stand, and eat, and go to the toilet when they are told; all of them things that stem from ‘traditional’ schooling dating from the Industrial Age. In the meantime time their dreams, which could have been fed by their natural talents and potentials, the things they are passionate about and could have been ‘good’ at, had these been but nurtured in them; all of these things which could have made them thrive have instead been truly hidden from sight and even somewhat squashed. As Ladwig and Gore point out (1998:18):

The inconsistencies of requiring students to sit, by compulsion not choice, in classrooms in which they have little input or control, while we attempt to teach them to think for themselves and to participate in decision-making are clearly evident.

“Often kids are creative in certain areas but it doesn’t fit into what we would expect as normal behaviour in a classroom, so this [creativity] may not be able to be expressed. That makes nurturing creativity hard to address in a classroom, especially in the context of 25 to 30 kids” (teacher). As a result of this, and though they are not necessarily conscious of it, high school students feel frustrated, cheated, angry, empty ... and they have a need to lash out, to make somebody ‘pay’ for all their misery and so they mostly do this by ‘acting out’ with their parents and/or teachers. The drug taking and drinking
(surprisingly prevalent even in 13-14 year olds, as I discovered when teaching) could be seen as a very unfortunate symptom of despair of where the ‘kids are at’, and how they have been treated. As Marshall notes (2006:194):

The fragmented and cultural story that sustains the current map and landscape of learning and schooling is slowly eroding the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual health of our children and the health of our global society. ... Despite our best intentions, the fragmented landscape of schooling inhibits the creative and courageous engagement with life that our children are yearning for.

Just as I experienced in my own schooling (which I relay in Chapter Five), even those who are ‘succeeding’ in education, as in getting good marks, may be feeling resentful at what they are kept doing, as well as what they are being kept from. “It’s that we don’t trust our children, or the teachers don’t ... keep them busy don’t let them get into mischief ... at home they should be allowed to reflect on what they’ve done over the day ... and approach that with care and creativity” (parent about homework). So what can a teacher do when faced with the enormity of a class (up to 35 or sometimes even more) of individual angry and needy teenagers? It is all so immediate, and gut-wrenchingly raw that it is easy to become overwhelmed. It is extremely difficult to know what to do, and while as teachers we are taught to plan for and ‘control’ students’ behaviour, the first reaction when faced with anger might be to defend oneself.

With the Year 9 class mentioned above, realising that the anger was not actually intended at me, I did not defend myself, I paused and simply allowed their emotions to be. In retrospect I realised that in so doing I was in effect reflecting back to them their own selves, I was not solving anything but I was accepting them as they were. However, rather than holding this space - this “suspension of assumptions” as Bohm calls it, which can get you to notice how thought works, and from there can lead to dialogue and
connection between people if it is held long enough (2004:22-24) - I instead fulfilled the expectations of my employers and started 'teaching'.

What actually occurred was that the growing feeling of guilt that I was not fulfilling the 'role' of teacher broke my suspension. Instead of allowing this emotion of 'guilt' to simply be (which could have helped it dissolve), in 'judging' myself I tried to bring the class back to 'learning', and so our tenuous first links to dialogue collapsed like a tower of cards, and frustration ran high among all. I can see all this quite clearly now, my understanding having emerged in retrospect, as I was not aware of any of this at the time it was occurring. The educational institution, through which I had become a teacher and which had placed me in the situation I experienced, did not provide me with any kind of structure of support. Having impressed upon me the responsibility that I had to fulfil the role I was meant to fulfil – to impart specific content within a specific time – this institution was in fact the main reason behind the pressure which led me to forsake that particular opportunity for dialogue. “A lot of teachers I reckon these days get up and teach what they've got to teach and that's it, it's not as personalised for the kids ... if it was more personalised between teachers and students, rather than just teaching what you've got to teach out of a book ... smaller classes would probably be better ... knowing a bit about a student, not just being Mr so and so or Mrs so and so, I think that's really important” (parent). Rather than being supported to provide nurturing, teachers are pressured into conforming to a standardised system. “I find creativity very scary because I can’t assess it ... I have to be able to assess what I am doing ... because I have a timeline [a time when ‘things’ need to be done by]” (teacher).

Because of our interconnectedness, our living of life within a web of relationships, when something is not supportive of our processes it will often hinder them. I have found that
the way through a challenge will present itself more readily if I am totally present and simply aware of what is, without judgement and without being eager of jumping ahead with ready-made ‘formulae’ for solving anything. In other words, through experience, both my own and that of many others who have shared their stories with me, I have found that a challenge cannot be negotiated in the best possible way by any kind of book learning or training. The current way of teaching and teacher training in Australia, which focuses on content and a ‘behaviour management’ type of discipline, unfortunately completely misses the opportunity of providing that which ‘kids’, or even teachers for that matter, need. Marshall puts this quite clearly (2006:167-168):

   It is time to let go of our false ideas about school system change and move from believing we can control change to delighting in the idea that we cannot. Our work as leaders is not to prescribe, but to evoke and liberate – to create generative conditions for deep learning ... that embody the creative processes of life and learning and invite our children to astonish us.

   “They [adults] could ask for new ideas from children for making the environment better for everyone, like even for global warming - ways to solve that, ‘cause sometimes kids can be geniuses too” (student).

Releasing our belief in control requires trust (together with time I explore trust in Chapter Four), and again this is where dialogue can help, as through dialogue it is possible to acquire trust. A “participatory consciousness”, as Bohm calls it (2004:30), slowly pervades among those intent in dialogue, as they become aware that they do not have to defend anything and they relax their ‘mental boundaries’ and truly start to listen to each other. Entering into dialogue, and being in dialogue, not only enables us to connect to the concert of voices that we are constantly interacting with throughout life,
but by allowing us insight into group consciousness it can also provide us with a deep consciousness of our own self - who we are and what our part is in the wholeness of life.

From this place of awareness, openness and sharing we may find an impulse to ‘celebrate’ arising within us. So natural in young children for whom life is a constant joyous celebration, especially if they feel loved and cared for, this spontaneous inclination may be rekindled in us when our creativity is nurtured. The next chapter, ‘Celebrating Creativity’ explores this, as well as the many obstructions to our instinctive impulse to celebrating.

The main scope of this chapter is to highlight the importance of becoming aware that as human beings we are embedded in a web of relationships. Despite the Western focus of independence and individualism our society actually functions on interdependence. Because of this, consciously choosing to dialogue with the multiplicity of people, and therefore ‘voices’, we come into contact with, would allow us to get closer and closer to being able to hear, and see, ‘wholeness’ through our interconnectedness.

Furthermore, our interdependence does not just stop with human society but extends to all living things in an intricate tapestry of interconnected ecosystems. By becoming more aware of this we are able to see where we, as individuals, fit in the ‘whole’ as we are each of us unique, with a combination of gifts and potentials that are unrepeatable in any other. It is therefore not only in our interest, but in the interest of the ‘whole’ that our creativity be nurtured so that we may become self-actualised and fulfilled. This would therefore allow us to improve our well-being at both individual and communal levels.

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An open and egalitarian approach, or in other words an attitude of creativity, rather than the focused reductive perspective that we have been taught to operate from, is more likely to help us to achieve this awareness, self-fulfilment and wholeness. In all of this it is also important to remember that ‘wholeness’ is dynamic rather than static, meaning that it is constantly growing and shifting and flowing in its inclusion of everything. It is therefore unrealistic for us to have any expectation of being able to fully ‘theorise’ wholeness, as in explain it, prove it, and so on. However, we might well be able to experience it or have an awareness of it at any one time, especially if we are open to this and operate from a place of wholeness of our own ‘self’. Through dialogue with others we can share our experiences and insights so that our individual awareness of wholeness may start to expand as our perspective grows.
Chapter Seven:

**Celebrating Creativity**

*We become real when our inner work becomes work in the world; when our creativity, born of deep attention to both enchantment and nothingness, serves the cause of transformation, healing, and celebrating.*

(Fox, 1995:114)

Waking up to a new moment of being, a snug feeling of excitement within, like a precious parcel waiting to be unwrapped. I can no more control this unbidden urge of living that comes from deep within me than I could stop the sun from rising. “Creativity is the fragrance of individual freedom ... [and] of real health. When a person is really healthy and whole, creativity comes naturally ... the urge to create arises” (Osho, 1999:xi-1). One cannot pretend to have an attitude of creativity, similarly once one can see from a creative perspective then it is impossible to go back to perceiving from a more restrictive one; it is instead more likely that a creative perspective will keep on expanding thereby generating more creativity.

Drawing mostly from my own experience, this chapter looks at the state of mind that the nurturing of creativity generates and how this makes being creative very practical and liveable. ‘Walking the talk’ comes easily as, being more than anything else an attitude (as explained in Chapter Three), creativity is applicable to any situation or project. What comes from this is an ever-growing spiral of transformation and self-realisation - an honouring of creativity. I discuss how creativity can thus be celebrated through a holistic approach to living even seemingly simple things, as well as explore
my growing awareness of what blocks creativity. Also included are voices of others who have shared with me their thoughts and experiences of creativity (those I interviewed). As Lederach states: “Conversations with everyday people create connections to the environment and context” (2005:122). Including these – voices of people who are not ‘experts’ or ‘researchers’, or ‘authors’ on the topic - enables me to harness connections to the ‘everyday’, and thus builds more wholeness.

The word ‘celebrate’ comes from the Latin celebrare and celeber meaning “frequented or honoured” (OED). This brings in other meanings like support and stand-by, respect and value, all words whose significance connects to ‘nurture’ which is defined as “encourage the development of” and “cherish” (OED). I have experienced that it is in fact the nurturing of creativity – its honouring and encouragement - that celebrates creativity, so that the two, ‘nurturing’ and ‘celebrating’, are almost one and the same, or at least they are very closely connected. As is explained in chapters Three and Four, trust and time are needed to nurture creativity, as well as a ‘state of mind’ that is supportive of creativity. In practice I have found that above all, this entails allowing the inherent ‘wildness’ within me the necessary space it requires. I say this because there is much of the whole of me that I see as being wild. Firstly my beingness – that profound sense of myself of which my consciousness is only a small part – is mostly wild because there is much of this that I still do not know. As Marie-Louise von Franz writes (1978:231, 228):

Jung stressed that the only real adventure remaining for each individual is the exploration of his [sic] own unconscious. The ultimate goal of such a search is the forming of a harmonious and balanced relationship with the Self ... and because it is unique for each individual, it cannot be copied or stolen.
The unconscious within me is thus in a sense ‘uncharted territory’ for my mind and consciousness. I also acknowledge my body as being wild, since although it has somewhat been tamed by my mind it is nonetheless essentially natural; for, as O’Donohue puts so simply, it has come from the earth, from the ‘clay’ (2004:95):

... we belong beautifully to nature. The body knows this belonging and desires it. It does not exile us either spiritually or emotionally [nor does it exile our unconscious]. The human body is at home on the earth. It is probably a splinter in the mind that is the sore root of so much of our exile. This tension between clay and mind is the source of all creativity ... The imagination is committed to the justice of wholeness. It will not choose one side in an inner conflict and repress or banish the other; it will endeavour to initiate a profound conversation between them in order that something original can be born.

So the beingness/body fusion that I see myself as (initially explained in the Introduction) is mostly wild and partly ‘civilized’. Though the word ‘wild’ has been given many negative connotations, it has positive ones too, like: unrefined, unsophisticated and natural, which lead to whole, childlike, innocent, ingenuous, candid, trusting, sincere, honest, spontaneous, genuine and open – all of them qualities that can be seen to be linked to creativity and its nurturing. Thus it is that when I (my conscious self) allow my wildness space I am not trying to control or tame this, rather I am meeting those ‘parts’ of me that are wild on their ‘own ground’, and I am showing them that I am willing to establish an open dialogue. Through my behaviour I am reflecting those same qualities that my wildness has, as listed above, and I am therefore valuing and supporting that ‘unknown’ within me that I am meeting. This fosters the forming of strong connections between all the parts of myself, which results in my becoming more and more whole.
I recently experienced the importance of this open dialogue between different parts of myself. This was in connection to getting a sore lower back when I spend long periods of time sitting writing and/or driving. Interestingly, back in 1912 Maria Montessori, the first woman in Italy to receive a medical degree and also the founder of the Montessori Method of schooling, was already decrying the amount of time that children were made to spend sitting at a desk at school (2005:18-19):

The vertebral column, biologically the most primitive, fundamental, and oldest part of the skeleton … the most solid portion of the organism … bends, and cannot resist, under the yoke of the school. … Evidently the rational method of combating spinal curvature in the pupils, is to change the form of their work – so they shall no longer be obliged to remain for so many hours a day in a harmful position. It is a conquest of liberty which a school needs, not the mechanism of a bench.

The outrage evident in the above quote could be applied to a number of things nowadays, as much of modern ‘progress’ requires us to keep our bodies still and/or repeating the same movements. A result of this is that many of us are fast making friends with physiotherapists or chiropractors as we endure pain – the message from our bodies to tell us that what we are doing is not really that good for them. There have been times when I could barely sit without having my back spasm, and so driving was totally impossible. Having recently gotten close to this level of discomfort I made myself available to listen to my body and my emotions closely. I thus quickly realised that I had been neglecting my practice of meditation and Chakradance™, and that I had been feeling stressed. While dancing and meditating are always beneficial for me, they are particularly important when I am feeling stressed; yet rather than berate myself for my negligence, which would only have made me feel guilty on top of stressed and sore, I chose to pay more attention to myself. This was exactly what I needed to do as by reconnecting to my whole self, as well as to my practices, I gained more insights.

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Similarly to pain, forgetting to do what was good for me and feeling stressed were further ‘messages’ that there was something I needed to become aware of: something ‘new’ was trying to come to light and I needed to become conscious of it to enable that process. Eventually, this ‘feeling’ presented as insights that were about things that my mind had been pondering on for a while, and some of it has now been written in this thesis. Like Fox tells us (as discussed in Chapter Five), what we are concerned with in life we become actively involved in by ‘taking it in’ (1995:118); as whole beings we also become wholly, as in totally, involved, so what we take in not only dwells in our minds but it is also ‘carried’ in the body and expressed by the emotions. I have found that somehow the body seems to mirror that which the mind is experiencing, so that if the body is finding movement difficult and is in an almost ‘frozen’ state, then the mind is also stuck. By listening to myself, I have learnt that in this situation (which does not always bring physical pain - perhaps pain is reserved for when it seems I cannot be made to listen so as to really get my interest) it means that I need to pay more attention, be more aware, and that I need to integrate more within me so that I can become more whole. When I do start to pay attention again it is like I am returning home to myself; the feeling of welcome and the dissolving of tension and anxiety that I get from this brings to me such joy and well-being that I am moved by gratefulness.

Thus moving towards wholeness evokes healing; in fact the origin of ‘heal’ comes from the Germanic word for ‘whole’, and another way to understand healing is as in making whole. Therefore becoming more whole is akin to healing myself as I journey along a process that reconnects the different parts of me while at the same time recognising how intertwined they already are. Each time I show openness by being patient and flexible with myself, or trusting of aspects of me that are still unknown, I am accepting
myself and healing the fragmentation between the different parts of myself by releasing any belief that these ‘parts’ are separate. Thus I do this each time I accept myself rather than try to change myself, each time I listen to my intuition and trust it, and each time I allow myself the time for inner dialogue rather than force myself to conform to the expectations of set roles. Furthermore, in becoming more whole I am not only healing, but I am embarking on a transformation that nurtures my creativity, and I am thereby also effortlessly and spontaneously celebrating creativity as feelings of joy emerge unbidden.

Celebrating creativity is when you let go of everything that has been holding you back and you start dancing again to your own inner music - the music of your heart. This means recognising and following your own unique rhythms. While children instinctively know how to celebrate, it sadly seems that many adults have long forgotten it. True celebration is unplanned, unlike societally set ‘celebrations’ which are imposed and thus often have an artificial feel about them. Celebration is a spontaneous and timely coming together of many facets of living into a synchronistic event that evokes joy and makes one feel deeply alive. “... make it as easy as possible for them to have a good experience; ... sometimes you just need to play, just have fun ...” (music teacher).

Celebration is a moment of truth, integrity and beauty where you reflect all that surrounds you and what surrounds you reflects the inner you. As Francesca Murphy writes: “Part of what it means to be, is to be beautiful. Beauty is not superadded to things: it is one of the springs of their reality ... it is the interior geometry of things, making them perceptible as forms” (1995:48). Thus the beauty and delight of seemingly simple things can invite one to celebration, like: picking ripe mulberries and tasting the sunlight in them; catching the scent of boronia in the air: a delightful mix of warmth and
sweetness that is at the same time pleasing to the senses and the imagination; hearing a well-loved tune playing on the sound system of a car driving past; exchanging a smile with a stranger - a smile that is full of welcoming and the understanding of deep connection. In all these things, celebration is both recognition of the presence of beauty and creativity in life, whether easily apparent or concealed, as well as heartfelt gratitude and rejoicing that arises from that recognition. O'Donohue tells us that (2003:51):

To recognize and celebrate beauty is to recognize the ultimate sacredness of experience, to glimpse the subtle embrace of belonging ... the beauty of every moment, of every thing. Beauty loves freedom ... Uncharted territories are always beckoning. Beauty is at home in this realm of the invisible, the unexpected and the unknown.

Living life as the spontaneous celebration that it is, allowing colour to wash over the ‘borders’ of the mind, means accepting the invitation to consciously participate in celebration. Or in other words, it means accepting the invitation to fully and deeply live rather than to just skate on the surface of life, and be content with colouring in within the lines. Yet this is not necessarily easy, as so often we seem to be caught up in ‘a thousand things’ that keep us from just simply living and sap the joy that would come from that. When one has a closer look at what these ‘things’ are, they turn out to be ‘constructs, ‘dichotomies’, and belief in a world that is fragmented which is inevitably accompanied by fear and a sense of hopelessness. I found it incredibly difficult to write this chapter as many of these seemed to ‘get in the way’. Moreover, at times when I have endeavoured to communicate my joy of being alive, a positive outlook, and above all the ‘gut-feeling’ certainty that creativity and its nurturing is the way to ‘transformation’ and to an opening of perspectives and is thus to be valued and celebrated, I have been faced with one or two people who have asked: “But what about the dark, or destructive side of creativity?”

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Rather than replying that this sort of question can only stem from a judgmental and dichotomous perspective - from an institutionalised perception that I have been exposing throughout the thesis - I take the question to be deeper and to mean: is creativity then the ‘answer’ to everything, is it always happy and wonderful? The reply to this is: “No, of course not.” Firstly creativity is not an answer, if anything it is more of a question, it is an open and inquisitive way of looking at life, it is an attitude and a way of being (as explained in Chapter Three). This makes creativity a process, and furthermore it is a holistic process in that it involves many ‘parts’ which are brought together and connected through the process itself, as Damasio says (quoted in Chapter Three) “creative behaviour ... results from the interactions of the brain with physical, social and cultural environments” (2001:59-60). Thus, given that creativity is inclusive of ‘us’, it can only be as ‘happy’ or ‘positive’ as we are or feel. The process of creativity is not easy; it needs time, trust, the ability to tolerate uncertainty, the willingness to risk and face fear and chaos before it crystallises into a ‘form’ that can be recognised and worked with. There is therefore much that would, and indeed does, hinder this process (which I discuss further on in this chapter), however, I am also certain (for the many reasons I give throughout the thesis) that we have barely had a taste of just how much joy and goodness can come from creativity.

Fox highlights a common attitude that creativity, and thus the celebration of it, is an ‘extra’, that is not really necessary and “can be dropped like a sugary dessert from our diets” (1995:116). This is the mind-set that is responsible for the reduction of art and other creative classes from the curriculum when faced with budget cuts – something I saw happen over a number of years when I was on a school council and financial committee. What this ‘money-counting’ outlook totally overlooks is that “the universe is
intrinsically creative, always begetting, always birthing, always doing new things” (Fox 1995:116), and to deny that fact and fail to flow along with the universe and be in tune with it, because of budget concerns, is a severe case of ‘tunnel vision’ (discussed in Chapter Six). Creativity is more than just the ‘icing on the cake’ (which could make it sickly sweet), it is the whole cake!

All that impedes the celebrating of creativity also blocks the nurturing of creativity. This hindering can be caused by any number of things that at ‘face value’ might appear innocuous, though they are often pedantic. These can be even niggling details, like the requirement of submitting time-sheets with set hours for work that involves ‘unlimited’ thought time, openness and flexibility. It can be school time-tables that because of their rigidity cannot seem to take into account things like the weather, so that outdoor physical education may be scheduled to take place on rainy days or during the hottest hours of summer days, while during enticing spring days children are instead relegated to remaining indoors, in classrooms that require artificial lighting.

Young children embody the spirit of celebration, being ever ready to giggle, or to be caught up in reverie at the wonder of so many of the things we adults take for granted. “We learn in a fun environment, we take in more, I don’t know why” (student). Yet from the time they are ‘educated’ by their parents and/or teachers, they are often told to sit still and stop fidgeting, be quiet and not ask so many questions. Being made to comply with school and classroom requirements, their attention is ‘channelled’ into activities planned by adults, and those children who allow themselves to be distracted are disciplined by being shamed in front of their classmates. “They [students] have this … unspoken [question] ‘if I say something will you accept it, process it and give feedback without being judgmental?’” (teacher). This is the beginning of ‘socialisation’ and
education - a twelve to fourteen year stint which could be seen as a campaign to turn a colourful bundle of wild creativity into a compliant ‘grey’ citizen who will fulfil the requirements of his/her roles according to the position these hold in the social hierarchy. After this length of time it is perhaps understandable that many adults find it difficult to remember how to celebrate, for celebrating involves openly accepting all, as well as allowing yourself to be fully accepted, without ‘hiding’ those parts of yourself that you think are ‘unacceptable’. By ‘accepting’ I simply mean recognising and acknowledging the things we see, as we see them, without ‘measuring them up’ against any ideological or a priori belief. One needs to be as open as possible to facilitate this sort of perception which, as discussed throughout the thesis, is very much part of an attitude of creativity.

I cried when my eldest daughter started school, but they were not joyful tears of a ‘proud’ parent. I could feel an anxious knot between my heart and throat while I sobbed, as I felt that I was letting down this precious little being whose care and welfare I had been charged with. I did not want to cry, but my body remembering so many of the sad, humiliating and frustrating times I had experienced in school, took a long time to stop. I knew there had to be a better way, and this PhD journey has been part of ‘walking the road’ towards it. I now see that there are better ways to many of the things we do as a society, and to facilitate their development many more of us need to start consciously nurturing our creativity. We also need to become clearly aware that we are constantly getting ourselves ‘stuck’ by operating from controlled, fragmented and mechanised ways of being. To celebrate creativity we need to let go of constructs that do not work for us, but to be able to do so we first need to see what these are.

Doidge tells us that as we grow to adulthood (2008:244):

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... the spontaneity, creativity, and unpredictability of childhood gives way to a routinized existence that repeats the same behaviour and turns us into rigid caricatures of ourselves. Anything that involves unvaried repetition – our careers, cultural activities, skills, and neuroses – can lead to rigidity. ... Because our neuroplasticity can give rise to both mental flexibility and mental rigidity, we tend to underestimate our own potential for flexibility, which most of us experience only in flashes.

This is why many of us do not believe that we are very creative, yet it is only by abiding to these mostly invisible structures, that we have adopted or built often virtually unconsciously through an institutionalised perception, that our creative growth is stunted while at the same time we prevent ideas, light, colours, music, harmony and beauty from fully reaching us. This routinized way of being also extends to the way we celebrate. With all our Western festive traditions having been appropriated by consumerism, celebrating could be viewed as one long shopping spree. Starting with Valentine’s Day and ending with Christmas & New Year, these public holidays are interspersed with ‘personal’ birthdays, weddings, retirements, and so on. All of them requiring the purchasing of gifts to be given and/or exchanged according to social convention, as well as the ‘appropriate merry making’ as the season dictates. This can invariably result in frenzied preparations as we try to fit these ‘requirements’ into our already demanding schedules; making for gatherings of harried would-be revellers who may need more than a little wine to relax, or who are so determined to ‘have a good time’ that they turn celebrating into a rigid chore!

Many of us seem to have so many habits, plans, attitudes, and specific ways of doing things that we somehow believe we need to unswervingly adhere to, like: getting up at a certain time each day; driving to and from work, or to pick up the children from school, to the shops ... all often by following the same routes; watching the same shows on
television and listening to the same radio station; eating foods prepared in similar ways; and so on, throughout the weeks, months, and years. We let our ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ define us by believing these will not change. Although routine can be useful, as Doidge indicates above, too much of it can have quite a detrimental effect on us. Furthermore, the less conscious we are of these patterns of habits the more they unfortunately become “almost impossible to interrupt and redirect without special techniques” (244).

If we are not aware of what we do or why we do it, chances are that our subconscious learned that behaviour, or developed it from a belief, early in our childhood. As Lipton points out “Young children carefully observe their environment and download the worldly wisdom offered by parents directly into their subconscious memory. As a result, their parents’ behaviour and beliefs become their own” (2009:133). Terms like ‘download’ and ‘programming’ are used in relation to the subconscious because it processes information automatically (that is without our conscious awareness) - some 20 million stimuli per second compared to the 40 stimuli per second of the conscious mind – accepting and verifying this information with what is already stored in the subconscious as well as with what it perceives from the environment (2009:125-140).

As discussed in Chapter Five, it is quite likely that these habitual modes of behaviour, which are also often connected to cultural behaviour, have an effect on how we are able to perceive. In The Brain that Changes Itself, Doidge refers to an experiment conducted with Japanese and American students that confirms this. In it the students were shown a number of scenes of different animations of swimming fish and asked to describe them. While the Americans mostly focused their description on the main fish (the biggest, fastest, or brightest one), the Japanese described the other smaller fish and the surrounding environmental details more often than the Americans. Moreover, when the
Americans recognised specific objects they did so regardless of what background they were given, while instead the Japanese found it easier to recognise the objects in their original setting. Doidge proposes that this series of experiments, together with many similar ones that have been held, imply cultural differences of perception where Easterners are found to see things more in context and in relation to each other, while Westerners have more of a tendency to see things separately to each other, and thus individually. (2008:302)

“Everything we know about plasticity suggests that these different ways of perceiving, repeated hundreds of times a day, in massed practice, must lead to changes in neural networks responsible for sensing and perceiving” (2008:302). From this it is not difficult to imagine just how much of an effect going to school can have on children, especially being in a classroom, with a structured routine, where everything is repeated over and over. Doidge also notes that in “totalitarian regimes ... much effort is made to indoctrinate the young from an early age” (305) and that (306):

> Human beings can be broken down and then develop, or at least “add on”, neurocognitive structures, if their daily lives can be totally controlled, and they can be conditioned by reward and severe punishment and subjected to massed practice, where they are forced to repeat or mentally rehearse various ideological statements. In some cases, this process can actually lead them to “unlearn” their pre-existing mental structures...

Though we would probably be more likely to think of the above quote as one that applies only to totalitarian regimes and is therefore not relevant to schools, I would not be too quick to be so dismissive. ‘Totalitarian’ means ‘authoritarian’, and schools are most certainly run according to a strict hierarchical system of authority where children have no power, or at least very little. What is ‘severe punishment’ for a young child? Of course it will depend on the child, but I suggest that in many cases even having the
name on the board beneath the ‘sad face’, or being ‘told off’ by the teacher in front of the other children in the class, is sufficient for the majority of young children (before grade/year one) to start to modify their behaviour and therefore start altering and rigidifying their neural patterning. Not surprisingly, Robinson claims that (Robinson & Aronica, 2009:16):

...our current education system systematically drains the creativity out of our children ... Those students whose minds work differently – and we're talking about many students here; perhaps even the majority of them – can feel alienated from the whole culture of education. This is exactly why some of the most successful people you'll ever meet didn't do well at school. Education is the system that's supposed to develop our natural abilities and enable us to make our way in the world. Instead, it is stifling the individual talents and abilities of too many students and killing their motivation to learn.

Other scholars have spoken of this discrepancy between what we 'expect' education to provide and what actually comes from it, and as this is related to creativity I have accordingly included some of the points they make throughout this thesis. Yet this has led me to wonder about our assumption that education is actually meant to foster our talents. Why do we assume this? It is commonly known that compulsory mass education began during the time of the Industrial Revolution as a means to control the population and prepare people to be factory workers (discussed in Chapter Six), so why should it have changed so enormously since then? Are those who monopolise power in the world suddenly eager to share it with one and all? From the antics of governments and big industry around the world it would not appear that way, and as Plowman informs us (as stated in Chapter Three) "the need for power is in direct contradiction with the ability to be creative" (Options, Issue 20, 2007:18); all that leaders with a 'need' for power
really want is followers. Saul argues that we, as in the race of humans, have not moved much beyond the ideology of the sixteenth century (1993:13-14):

We are now more than four and a half centuries into an era which our obsession with progress and our servility to structure have caused us to name and rename a dozen times, as if this flashing of theoretically fundamental concepts indicated real movement.

As part of this institutional structure, that if anything has kept on increasing in size and influence since the sixteenth century, schools are recruited to be among the first preservers of the status quo and, even though they may or may not be a willing party to it, they do fulfil this role they are given despite all the ‘surface’ restructures that may occur. Writing in 1998 about schools in Australia, Hattam et al. state (3-4):

...the logic of the market in concert with the government is infecting our public institutions and civil society ... [this] will result in unwanted outcomes for major sections of Australian society, particularly those who will be forced to rely on public institutions because they have no power in the market. Simply put, the majority will become increasingly marginal.

This does not indicate much change from the times of the Industrial Revolution. Looking from a wider lens, Abbs points out that education is being dictated by a ‘managerial’ perspective; in agreement with the above quote he asserts that: “In our schools and universities we have become pathologically obsessed with quantitative measurement rather than the qualitative flow of meaning, with a brute collective standardization rather than more subtle modes of individuation” (2003:2). This obsession causes our educational institutions to be ‘restructured’ according to the logic of accounting firms, which again is aligned with the ‘idea’ of increasing productivity. This is the ‘money-counting’ outlook I speak of above which, suffering from ‘tunnel-vision’, finds it difficult to even be aware of creativity let alone any holistic type of approach or spontaneous celebrating – Heaven forbid! Any sort of celebration must be planned and budgeted for!

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Often those with this sort of outlook, being seen as ‘productive achievers’, are the ones that are given the power to run our schools and universities, or at least to prescribe from ‘above’ how they are to be run. Thus I suggest that, although many educational philosophies have ‘convinced’ us that education ‘should’ be about the development of talents and abilities, there can be little expectation that education actually is (or necessarily ever was) about nurturing creative abilities. Removing unrealistic expectation from our sights so that we can see what is, might in fact make it easier for us to set education up the way we would like it to be.

Though one may perhaps expect that private schools, given their focus on ‘excellence’, would be more likely to foster individuals’ talents that is also not necessarily the case, for as parents I interviewed relayed to me their experience was that the private schools they had sent their children to tended to promote ‘elitism’:

“...a teacher's role is to enrich every child and not [just] the select group.”

“There is a real pervasive way that teachers see the ‘elite’ as opposed to the ‘normal’ or the ‘base’ group, and they've got to get that out of their systems ... they've got to understand that their role is to bring out the creative element in every student, not just the elite.”

Private schools have traditionally been where the powerful and wealthy sent their children to become ‘leaders’, however, there may now be more students frequenting private schools than ever before. Ladwig and Gore remind us that: “...private schooling is inherently premised on notions of hierarchical provision of education rather than universal provision, on the idea that some students should receive a different (and by implication better) quality of schooling” (1998:18). It is therefore likely that such a
hierarchy would equally operate within the schools, so that those chosen or recognised as 'elites' would be the only ones encouraged to become leaders.

Apart from the ‘mainstream’ private schools, there are a few specialist schools that have been set up to follow more holistic educational philosophies, like the Montessori Method, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf Steiner. These philosophies grew out of an awareness of what education was lacking (which reinforces the above discussion of schools generally preserving the ‘status quo’) and thus share similar aims of enabling self-directed learning and the development of each child’s individual abilities. Though each of these philosophies claims a specific mission, and different schools following the same philosophy will vary (for each philosophy there are a number of schools world-wide), they are all largely child-centred and nurturing of creativity:

- According to the International Montessori Index website, the main message of the Montessori Method is to "follow the child". “The child's choice, practical work, care of others and the environment, and above all the high levels of concentration reached when work is respected and not interrupted, reveal a human being that is superior not only academically, but emotionally and spiritually, a child who cares deeply about other people and the world, and who works to discover a unique and individual way to contribute” (2009).

- Focusing on early childhood (3 to 6) the Reggio Emilia approach was established over forty years ago by the parents and community in the Italian town of Reggio Emilia. An excerpt from the travelling exhibition The Hundred Languages of Children, taken from the Reggio Children website, succinctly describes the approach: “Children have a hundred languages, and they want to use them all. They learn very soon how difficult it is for this right to be recognized and above
all respected. This is why children ask us to be their allies in resisting hostile pressures and defending spaces for creative freedom which, in the end, are also spaces of joy, trust, and solidarity” (2008).

- On the ‘Steiner Schools in Australia’ website, Hale and MacLean tell us that: “Steiner thought that schools should cater to the needs of the child rather than the demands of the government or economic forces, so he developed schools that encourage creativity and free-thinking. His teaching seeks to recognise the individuality of the child and through a balanced education, allows them to go into the world with confidence” (2004).

Though most of these styles of schools are widely known about, they remain, because of considerable cost, accessible to only a minority. Furthermore, this can also set them up as being exclusive which could lead to issues associated with exclusivity, like elitism, dichotomous thinking, and so on. Yet the Finnish education system clearly demonstrates (as discussed in Chapter Four) that it is possible for mainstream institutional education to support creativity. Finland’s education system however, was only established in 1919 when “provisions were laid down in the 1919 Constitution on compulsory, free-of-charge basic education for all and on vocational training and academic educational institutions provided by public authorities” (Korpela, 2004:1). Being a relatively young system without previous history, it was founded on an understanding that education would be vital for the newly independent nation, and as such it claims to be inclusive and egalitarian and based on trust rather than control, as one of their website states: the “Underlying values of basic education are human rights, equality, democracy” (Louekoski, 2007:1).
With many schools unable, or unwilling, to provide the quality of education that parents would hope for, some parents end up opting for home-schooling to ensure that their children are given a chance to develop their potentials. Those parents I interviewed were very satisfied with their choice to home-school:

“Creativity is really allowing the environment to occur, in which the person can actually develop their skills without negative influences”. Many parents who home school get together so as “to encourage one another in the areas that the children are good at ... it’s really seeing the possibilities of not being confined by a box or a system, and that is so freeing ...” “I don’t know whether the [education] system is designed to be as flexible as that [that is to be able to nurture creativity] it comes down to the teachers as well, whether they’re going to feel that’s part of their role or if they’ve got enough on their plate as it is ... there isn’t a high value placed upon teaching... the lack of appreciation of what they do is so evident” (This parent has a number of relatives who are teachers.) “The children are self-taught and they have a real love of learning ... for each of my children I can see now an avenue where they can decide ‘I'd like to do that, that's an area of interest I have’... and I've learned from my own upbringing not to try and squeeze them into an area ... Money is not everything, it's really the ability to be free to express the gifts which may be innate in people rather than suppress them [which is important]”. This last sentence reflects the celebration inherent in learning, and in expressing ourselves by following our ‘passions’. If, as has been shown in numerous ways throughout this thesis, this desire to fulfil their inner potentials is a natural inclination for children, then rather than supporting and nurturing them why do we, as a society, for the most part insist on blocking that?
I do not believe that we purposely set out to hurt ourselves or inhibit our growth, humans are kinder than that as Kagan specifies of human nature (discussed in Chapter Four), I think instead that we are fearful. One of the big effects of the ‘fighting’ paradigm that our society seems to co-exist with (discussed in Chapter One), so that we constantly use the ‘fighting metaphor’ in our communication (discussed in chapters Four and Six), is that it gives rise to fear. The use of the fighting metaphor is especially effective in being able to put us in an immediate state of alert as it makes us believe that we are in danger, and thus brings out our most visceral (and ancient) fear of death. We therefore see those things, ideas, or even people that we dislike as threats, which at the very least must be ‘beaten’ for us to be happy and successful, and ‘ideally’ should not even be allowed to exist in the world. This sort of mindset is not only applied to external matters but also to our own selves and our ‘nearest and dearest’, like our children. Thus we are ruled by the fear of not being perfect and/or of making mistakes, and we collude in preserving this state of affairs by being quick to judge ourselves and others on any supposed lack or flaw.

This attitude seems to have become such a protracted way of existence in our modern world that our fight or flight response - a physical reaction whereby hormones are released in our bloodstream when we experience fear so as to help save our lives by bolstering us to run away or to defend ourselves - is only ever temporarily assuaged. The very act of engaging in combat (even though this is in most cases only a state of mind) generates further fear, which sets up the cycle all over again; thus the ‘battle’, or the belief that we are ‘under fire’, never ends but is only ever punctuated with temporary periods of ‘cease-fire’. This self-perpetuating fear/’fighting’ cycle causes high levels of ‘stress’ from which there is no relief. (Lipton, 2009:118-120). In The Biology of
Belief, Lipton likens this constant ‘primed’ state we are in to that experienced by an athlete in a ‘get set’ mode – being about to start a race and awaiting for the ‘go!’ signal which never comes, (2009:120-123):

...this protection mechanism was not designed to be continuously activated. ... We are constantly besieged by multitudes of unresolvable worries about our personal lives, our jobs, and our war-torn global community. ... our hyper-vigilant lifestyle is severely impacting the health of our bodies. Our daily stressors are constantly ... priming our bodies for action ... undermining our quality of life ... frightening us into a chronic, soul-sapping protective mode.

Not feeling safe, we are even more terrified that we will somehow be made to face our fears. In other words, we are afraid of fear itself. In an attempt to relieve some of this fear, we therefore ‘cleverly’ follow set paths and methods to ensure that we can hold back from having to confront our fears, possibly forever. We learn this pattern of avoidance and repression subconsciously as children, when we are prevented from expressing all those emotions which are most often termed as ‘negative’, or ‘toxic’. Principally these are feelings of sadness, fear and anger, as well as other feelings like guilt, envy, jealousy, boredom, and so on. Goleman reminds us of something we have possibly all experienced: “emotions are contagious. We can “catch” strong emotions much as we do a rhinovirus – and so can come down with the emotional equivalent of a cold” (2006:13). Perhaps this is why parents so often feel the need to prevent their children from expressing their strong emotions, because it is distressing to them and just too difficult to cope with in the often already stressful environment of modern living. Additionally, parents may also feel responsible for how their children feel and behave, so that consequently many zealously teach them what is acceptable behaviour and what isn’t, with much of this being focused on ‘being safe’. Of course this brings up...
the parents’ own subconscious ‘programming’ and as a result this can be passed on without either parents or children being aware of it. (133)

Yet feelings are feelings, with the word ‘feeling’ itself suggesting that they need to be felt. While we might not yet know the full extent of their purpose in us, we might do well to avoid repressing them, as stifling the ‘negative’ ones seems to inevitably also prevent the ‘positive’ ones from arising. Doidge tells us that recent brain scans reveal that (2008:240-241):

when we dream, that part of the brain that processes emotion ... is quite active [while the part] responsible for inhibiting our emotions and instincts, shows lower activity. ... [Thus] the dreaming brain can reveal impulses that are normally blocked from awareness. ... The dream state also facilitates plastic change ... most of our dreaming occurs during ... REM sleep. Infants spend many more hours in REM sleep than adults, and it is during infancy that neuroplastic change occurs most rapidly. In fact, REM sleep is required for the plastic development of the brain in infancy.

In comparing the integration of learning through neuroplastic change in children, with a man who had been undergoing analysis, there were similarities found as “at night there was evidence not only of his buried emotions but of his brain reinforcing the learning and unlearning he had done” (241). This might suggest that feeling emotions is useful, or perhaps even necessary, in enabling us to learn. Not allowing emotions to be expressed so that what one feels does not show, or in other words being ‘inscrutable’, has long been considered a form of protection against those who would take advantage of our vulnerability; yet it can severely curtail our ability to celebrate and to actually feel joy. In The Wisdom of Forgiveness, Victor Chan informs us that this practice of not revealing his emotions actually caused his “ability to experience emotions [to] become impaired” (2004:35), while instead the Dalai Lama is “totally at ease with displaying his emotions ...[is] not ashamed of his feelings; ... self-conscious or embarrassed about them
... [he] would laugh without restraint at something funny and then, within seconds, display the most serious concentration” (36-37).

I have found that being in touch with my emotions and allowing myself to express them enables me to become aware of my impulses (those usually blocked from awareness, as mentioned in Doidge’s quote above). In other words, it lets me see what is behind the emotions rather than just stop at the emotions themselves. Any kind of new awareness is ‘learning’ and therefore this increases my consciousness; I find that I am drawn to where an impulse originates from and that this often leads me to discover a specific belief connected to it. To be able to do this however, I have to confront my emotions, as in look at them and allow them to be - accept them. This is not easy, especially when it comes to fear. Fear can have a paralysing effect but it can also be mesmerizing, as countless box office successes from the scary to the horrific attest to, so that the two effects together can be almost too much to resist. Though there is an almost obsessive glamour attached to the idea of what is destructive, at the same time we seem to be so ‘hung up’ about ‘negative’ emotions, somehow believing that even feeling them, let alone expressing them, shows us up to be less than civilised. We therefore seek to control our ‘negative’ emotions, and this often means hiding them away, repressing and denying them rather than facing them. The result of this is that they are relegated to our ‘shadow’ in our subconscious, where ironically we have less control over them, as Jung points out (1977:417):

“The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself [sic] and yet is always thrusting itself upon him [sic] directly or indirectly – for instance inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies ... [yet it] does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reaction, realistic insight, creative impulses, etc.”

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Refusing to confront an emotion can prevent us from discovering the impulse behind it, thereby getting us stuck in the emotional ‘fall-out’ from the subconscious, and so also stops us from exploring, nurturing and celebrating our creativity. This is something that can have grave repercussions for mental health - much has been said and written by the likes of Jung and Freud about repression in connection to neuroses (1977:170) - and mental health concerns abound in current society (as discussed in Chapter Six). On the other hand, after having faced an emotion and fully felt it, in my experience, it is then not unusual to find that it dissipates, so that it becomes possible to move through and past it. Like thoughts, emotions or feelings are ephemeral insubstantial things, and it is only by obsessing about them, as in being fearful of them or focusing exclusively on them, that we can give them enough energy to get 'bigger' and thus get stuck with them.

By trusting fully, and releasing myself to tears and laughter as I need, I find myself understanding and getting to know myself better and better. Thus as my perception of myself grows I realise that I am undergoing transformation and becoming more whole. This leads me to spontaneously feel life more intensely, more fully, which in turn gives rise to feelings of joy and gratefulness, something I experience as a heartfelt celebration.

As trusting can help me to confront my more uncomfortable emotions, it is for me the key to getting to know myself. Most of me, including my body, depends on my subconscious mind – with the subconscious (as mentioned above) being an incredibly capable and fast processor of information – it thus makes sense to trust ‘it’, which in effect really means trusting ‘myself’. By consciously connecting to my subconscious whenever and however I can, through creative practices like Chakradance™, my subconscious and consciousness can work together harmoniously. The ‘process of individuation’ (as coined by Jung, first discussed in Chapter One), this discovering of
ourselves and fulfilling of our potentials through a process of growth, is unique to each of us; what is more the pace at which it unfolds depends upon the sharing of information from the subconscious (or as Jung called it, the unconscious) which reveals it to our conscious mind according to what we can cope with. In these conditions ‘trusting’ really seems to be the thing to do, and choosing to be willingly trusting might be the most pleasant way to trust, as Marie-Louise von Franz suggests: (1978:236):

In order to understand the symbolic indications of the unconscious, one must be careful not to get outside oneself or “beside oneself”, but to stay emotionally within oneself. ... Only if I remain an ordinary human being, conscious of my incompleteness, can I become receptive to the significant contents and processes of the unconscious.

Thus I have now learnt that in times of need I am most likely to have the answers within me, yet if I feel lost and cannot find them, or do not remember what they are, then all I have to do is wait, trust, and be open to any synchronicity or serendipity that will make itself known as guided by creativity. This can at times be easier said than done, especially if I am ‘stuck’ on a strong emotion which hinders perception. Invariably, at times like this I have found that there is something or someone that I need to forgive, even myself perhaps, as somewhere in my psyche I am harbouring feelings which can be, and need to be, released so that I may flow past being stuck.

In Social Intelligence, Goleman explains how “holding on to hatred and grudges has grave physiological consequence” (2006:308), with studies showing that if people even think of anyone they hate their body “floods with stress hormones, raising their blood pressure and impairing their immune effectiveness” (308). However, forgiveness reverses this; “it lowers our blood pressure, heart rate, and levels of stress hormones and it lessens our pain and depression” (308). Given these findings alone forgiveness,
rather than revenge or holding on to anger, would seem the most sensible path to take, for while forgiveness "does not require condoning some offensive act ... It means finding a way to free oneself from the claws of obsession about the hurt" (308). Obsessing means focusing on something so strongly that we fixate, or in other words get stuck on it and cannot seem to move past it, It is almost as if we had 'hooked' this object with our focus – frozen it and us at a point in time when we were hurt, where undoubtedly are many strong emotions to keep us there. By forgiving we somehow enable ourselves to 'unhook' from what we have been focusing on, we allow ourselves to move past the emotions, and so we can return to flowing with life rather than remain 'frozen'. This allows us to reconnect with creativity which can then prevent us from getting stuck again.

Forgiveness is a concept that has been, and is, part of the wisdom of many different spiritual paths. Victor Chan tells us how the Dalai Lama links it to the 'theory of interdependence', which is another way of explaining the holistic perspective I espouse throughout this thesis. According to the Dalai Lama (2004:117-118):

The theory of interdependence allows us to develop a wider perspective ... With a wider mind, less attachment to destructive emotions like anger, therefore more forgiveness. In today's world, every nation heavily interdependent, interconnected. Under these circumstances, destroying your enemy – your neighbour – means destroying yourself in the long run. ... we're not talking about the complete removal of feelings like anger, attachment, or pride. Just reduction. Interdependence is important because it is not a mere concept; it can actually help reduce the suffering caused by these destructive emotions.

From all of these descriptions of the effects of forgiveness, it is not difficult to see that therefore forgiveness, by assisting in 'letting go', is likely to be conducive to the nurturing and celebrating of creativity. Similarly, nurturing creativity is in turn clearly
encouraging of forgiveness because it fosters an open mind; a holistic perspective. By enabling us to release emotions, forgiveness can help us to live deeply. Every time we live deeply and feel joyous we are in fact essentially celebrating life and its creativity. Thus in the practical examples of celebrations like Christmas and weddings, given earlier in the chapter, by not feeling tied – through guilt or other emotions - to others’ expectations of ‘traditional’ customs we are free to approach these celebrations creatively. In practice this means following one’s intuition on what is appropriate for an occasion rather than being compelled into things for the sake of appearances and convention.

Life is naturally creative, and as we are a part of life we are called upon and invited to be co-creators. As traditions are human creations, even the oldest and most revered ones such as religious traditions could be changed, and even though they may not seem open to change they could be adapted to suit new contexts and times with tact, care and creativity. Though Franz advises us that: “In their present forms, worked over and exceedingly aged, such religious traditions often resist further creative alterations by the unconscious” (1978:253), we in fact are the only ones that prevent these religious traditions from changing by ascribing to ‘rules’ and conformity. To facilitate change, it is important not to confuse religious traditions with the spiritual insights they must have once originated from, which therefore means that any of us may experience new spiritual insights that would enable change (253):

Without a human psyche to receive divine inspirations and utter them in words or shape them in art, no religious symbol has ever come into the reality of our human life ... discovery of the unconscious ... definitely excludes the illusory idea ... that a man [sic] can know spiritual reality in itself. In modern physics, too, a door has been closed by Heisenberg's “principle of indeterminacy,” shutting out the delusion that we can comprehend an absolute physical reality. The discovery of the
unconscious, however, compensates for the loss of these beloved illusions by opening up before us an immense and unexplored new field of realizations...

This returns us to where this chapter began, to the ‘Self’ – beingness – and to celebrating creativity, with the exploration of the subconscious revealing the holistic creative nature of the Self – that Jung refers to as the whole of our psyche. This is further explored in Chapter Eight, where all the main themes of the thesis are gathered together to see what the ‘whole’ picture may look like.

In the Introduction I relay Atkinson’s words that “Story is a tool for making us whole ... a tool for self-discovery” (1995:3). Writing ourselves is a way to make sense out of life and give meaning to it. In this chapter I connect to a central meaning that I have recognised life as having – that of celebration. Through the journey of transformation that I am on by taking part in life, by being alive and consciously partaking of it, I have come to the realisation that fully delving in living is in fact a celebration. It is a celebrating of its process, discovery and creativity. As the nurturing of creativity is what this thesis is all about, this chapter explores the state of mind of what it actually feels like to have an ‘attitude of creativity’.

Importantly, this chapter also looks at some of what may hinder an attitude of creativity from being nurtured, and thus celebrated. It therefore investigates how the so-called ‘toxic’ emotions can get us stuck and prevent us from flowing along with life and creativity, and how this is often made worse by repressing them. It especially delves...
into the experience of fear as something that can cause ongoing societal stress, and also discusses how forgiveness can help us to release many ‘negative’ emotions and other obsessions we may be ‘stuck’ on.
Chapter Eight:

‘Big Picture’ Symbols and Signposts

Creativity is a state of mind in which all of our intelligences are working together. It involves seeing, thinking and innovating ... creativity can be demonstrated in any subject at school or in any aspect of life.

Bill Lucas (2001:38)

As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason.

Carl Jung (1978:4)

This chapter explores how the emerging picture of what is discussed in this thesis might look. By bringing together many of the threads and motifs woven through the thesis, it returns to one of the main themes of Chapter One – the importance of ‘big picture’ perspectives to enable the nurturing of creativity, and follows some of the connections to this. Moreover, it looks at possible future scenarios in which the nurturing of creativity may have a transformative impact and how this could be facilitated. In addition it discusses the idea of an ‘original contribution to knowledge’, both particularly in regard to this thesis and also more generally in relation to everyone’s life. As this ‘idea’ is a specific ‘requirement’ for a PhD thesis, it is a point of contention, or more precisely a point of assertion, in the context of the nature of my thesis.

There is a Chinese proverb which says: “If we don’t change our direction we’re likely to end up where we’re headed”. We have been, and are being, shown constantly where our
current societal direction is pointing. With variations on the same themes that we have been experiencing for many generations, our direction appears to be: a world politically divided into nation states where small groups of ‘technocrats’ and ’elites’ hold power (Saul 1993; Bohm 2004; Berry 1990) in the sense that they ‘control’ others who, by allowing themselves (for a myriad of reasons) to be controlled through conformity, are therefore ‘forced’ to live in ways that they would not otherwise choose. This has led, among other things, to: social isolation; alienation; poverty; war with the potential for destruction on a global level given the copious arsenals that many countries possess; pollution and degradation of our natural environment through the use of fossil fuels, and other toxic concoctions, in the name of ‘progress’ (Hamilton 2010; Bohm 2004). It could be argued that things could be worse, that is true, and in fact as Hamilton points out in _Requiem for a species_ there is much ongoing argument in regard to global warming and the measures that are suggested by climate scientists: “climate deniers and conservatives have frequently accused the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] of exaggeration and ridiculed environmentalists for fear-mongering” (2010:6). However, things could also be much, much better; for while we are mesmerized by the fear associated with catastrophic future scenarios (the hypnotic effects of fear are discussed in Chapter Seven) _we nonetheless allow 'business-as-usual’ to continue in ways that are hurting us_ (as in hurting our health and well-being, our relationships and our environment) _now._

Having seen where our current direction has brought us, if we do not consciously change it we could expect it to lead us to much worse, with Dante’s Hell coming to mind as an image. Dante Alighieri, the fourteenth century Italian poet who wrote the _Divine Comedy_ – a mythical journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, describes Hell as a
place barren and desolate, devoid of plant life and filled with all types of pollution. In The Comedy of Survival: Literary ecology and a Play Ethic, Meeker sees this description as a “premonition of twentieth-century problems” (1997:91), he further points out that Dante could have instead depicted Hell by abiding to much of the symbolism of the times which saw nature as “evil and hostile to humans” (94), yet (94):

Dante’s decision to describe Hell as an environment polluted by people and excluding all wild or natural forms is a deliberate innovation that he executes with care and consistency. It is necessary to his idea that humans are responsible creators of the world in which they must live.

However, we could and we can choose to change our direction and head for different, more creative and pleasing vistas, but to accomplish such a change we need to keep the ‘big picture’ in our sights. Interestingly, those who populate Dante’s Hell “are people who have focused their attention on some fragment of the world … [and therefore] have lost the capacity for seeing themselves in the context of a larger perspective [my emphasis]” (92-93). This is all to point out the importance of holistic perspectives; especially given how little we (as a society) have so far taken these into consideration, with the ‘preferred’ trend being instead to focus on the details of fragments. Perhaps it has been necessary for us to look at the ‘whole’ bit by bit, because of course the whole is immense; but what astounds me is the continuation of this almost random focusing on the ‘bits’, together with what appears to be the deliberate avoidance of looking at the ‘big picture’ - as if not wanting to even accidentally catch sight of it. It is this sort of attitude that allows a fragment (even a tiny one) to be perpetrated for the whole, while the rest of the whole is mostly ignored. For example a particular company widely publicising having “saved 7.9 million tonnes of CO₂ in total since 2002” (Pearse, 2010:15) did not however specify that it “adds about 1.7 million tonnes of CO₂ to the atmosphere daily” (15), or in other words “Every 30 hours … [it] wipes out the [equivalent of the total] emissions savings
that thousands of its customers voluntarily made via the company’s offset programs over the past decade” (15).

By looking at a ‘bigger picture’, connected to this same example, McDonough and Braungart (respectively an architect and a chemist) point out that the ‘eco-efficiency’ widely pushed in slogans like ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ can actually serve to retain the same sort of outlook that was the initial cause of what it is now presumably trying to change (2002:53-63). They argue that eco-efficiency is not ultimately likely to arrive at any kind of resolution that is liveable, but only serves to preserve our mindset of consumption (2002:62):

... merely slowing it down with moral proscriptions and punitive measures. It presents little more than an illusion of change. Relying on eco-efficiency to save the environment will in fact achieve the opposite; it will let industry finish off everything, quietly, persistently, and completely.

Rather than persisting with an idea of sustainability that measures how well we are doing by reducing activity and limiting our exploitation of the environment, while it is nonetheless still based on exploitation and basically does not believe that humans can do any better than that (2002:45-67), they propose a completely new approach – that of “eco-effectiveness” (68). The main difference of this to eco-efficiency is the imagination that comes into its conceptualising; in other words it is a creative approach. By creatively re-thinking our designs to everything, McDonough and Braungart indicate that the structures we live and work in could actually produce energy instead of just using less energy; that the products we make could at the end of their ‘life’ become food for animals or plants or raw materials for new products rather than waste; that in harmony with nature we could experience an abundant life of contentment and
innovation (2002:68-91). “With creativity you’re expanding your imagination and you make up whatever [you need] according to your imagination” (student).

What could keep us from realising this appealing vision of what could essentially be a new way of living and being in the full context of the bigger picture, is our intrinsic habit of focusing exclusively on ‘fragments’. With many of these fragments being taken out of context, with sections expanded or shrunk out of proportion and ‘protective’ borders or boundaries placed around them, in most cases they can therefore only serve to block out a holistic perspective. As Bohm indicates, a reductionist perspective endorses a way of thinking which breaks “things up into bits, as if they were independent. It’s not merely making divisions, but it is breaking things up which are not really separate” (2004:56). Indeed, it is also stressful to live according to a perspective of reductionism for we seem to need meaning in our lives, and (as discussed in Chapter One) an innate way we have for making sense of fragments is to see them in context. Thus it is quite a different matter to see and explore ‘fragments’ in the context of the ‘big picture’, as here it can be clearly seen that they are interconnected (discussed in Chapter Six), so that the detailed information we learn about them can in fact add meaning to the whole.

In *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink quotes Seligman who says that meaning is a: “form of happiness that is ineluctably pursued by humans ... knowing what your highest strengths are and deploying them in the service of something larger than you are” (2005:217). Because of this Pink anticipates that soon “Meaning will move to the center of our lives and our consciousness” (218). This is something I can relate to, for (as explained in Chapter Three) in finding that the nurturing of creativity has allowed me to recognise a deeper meaning in my life it has been easy to consciously choose to be an advocate for the nurturing of creativity. Thus I believe that Pink has picked up on a
strong underlying societal consciousness shift that is currently occurring - that of realising the importance of the 'big picture', which he says is becoming more and more obvious, from business to health, from work to caring for the environment (136-141). Yet despite this, holistic perspectives are still being resisted, and the reductive approach is still being pushed, as Pink shares “we've been in the thrall of reductionist, binary thinking ... [and] there remains a strong tilt toward[s it]” (2005:27). Tellingly this is happening mainly where the hierarchical value system has most control; namely in governments and institutions, like for example in the education system. In these institutions, these ‘corridors of power’, there reigns a staid climate of standard methodologies and conformity and it is this that I suspect provides the biggest hurdle to a holistic perspective being accepted and implemented. “Creativity is a case of vision, having wide vision, as well as be enabled to examine the full possibilities” (teacher).

A metaphor for this might be a scenario of a group of people passionate about meteorites, so that they constantly read and study about them, missing an unexpected once-in-a-lifetime meteorite shower because of their obsession with studying in a particular way that keeps them separate from the whole. Another equivalent scenario could be of gourmets living in 'ivory towers' and choosing to eat grilled cheese on toast for life, so as to conform to requirements, while unbeknownst to them (through lack of open observation and inquiry) a superlative banquet is laid out for them every day which includes all the favourite foods of each of them. Writing in 1992, Saul states that (1993:497):

This is an age of conformity. It is difficult to find another period of such absolute conformism in the history of Western civilization. The citizens are so completely locked inside their boxes of expertise that they are effectively excluded from open public debate.
“We have expectations of what we should be able to do ... that’s prescribed to us by society ... that’s why we look at people who are a little bit different, people who dress a bit differently ... and think ‘Oh they’re a bit weird’, but they’re not really they’re just showing their creative sides, they’re just daring to show how true they are to themselves” (parent and teacher).

This level of conformity has ensued from, while at the same time it has reinforced, the reductive type of thinking that has given rise to standardisation and specialisation, both of which are symptoms of conformity. With a strong fixation on specialists and experts, people have also been labelled and seen as either ‘big picture’ or ‘detail’ people, a categorising as absurd as one that might claim people to be either right-eyed or left-eyed. While it is true that many people may have a tendency towards a clearer perception of either details or the big picture (and this is likely to vary depending on what it is that they are viewing or considering), indeed we all have the capability to both perspectives as our brain is specifically able to perceive in these two different ways, albeit supposedly through different hemispheres which nonetheless work together to help us attain the best possible perception.

Pink reiterates that the left hemisphere is known to handle analysis, the content of language and sequential reasoning, while the right hemisphere’s main tasks include interpreting emotions and nonverbal facial expressions, pattern recognition and holistic reasoning (2005:14). I would add that these are ‘probably’ the tasks of each hemisphere rather than ‘definitely’ so, I say this because brain function is very complex; we are only just discovering how intricately the two hemispheres can work together, or take over each other’s ‘tasks’ through neuroplasticity (initially discussed in chapters Three and Seven). In *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Doidge recounts how a woman with only half a
brain – the right side, as the left hemisphere failed to develop before she was born, has been able to lead quite a ‘normal’ life “because her right hemisphere took over for her left, and such essential mental functions as speech and language moved to her right” (2008:260). This ability of the human brain to adapt and change and make the best possible use of all that is available is a perfect example of creativity, and again also suggests that creativity is a process and an attitude (discussed in Chapter Three) that leads to certain ways of being and doing. *Creativity could thus be explained as a way of being and doing which utilises both hemispheres of the brain, and therefore includes both the holistic and analytical ways of reasoning, seeing both the big picture and the details.*

In typical dichotomous thinking, Western society has placed greater value on what Pink calls “L-Directed thinking” (thinking stemming from the left hemisphere) than on “R-Directed thinking” (thinking stemming from the right hemisphere) which it has tended to relegate “as useful but secondary” (2005:26-27). Furthermore, as a consequence of Western society self-appointing to be at the helm of the world - directing the ‘course of life’ by utilising its aggressive attitude of dominion in its ‘conquest’ of nation states through war and colonization, as well as in its competitive economic dealings - the supremacy of ‘left-brain thinking’ has spread world-wide. Hence analytical, sequential, reductive thinking has been “Ascendant in the Information Age, exemplified by computer programmers, prized in hardheaded organizations, and emphasized in schools” (26). While ‘right-brain’ holistic, contextual, innovative thinking that is “exemplified by creators and caregivers [has been] shortchanged by organizations, and neglected in schools” (26). Though this is largely still the case, there is now evidence that in our search for meaning (spoken of above) we are finally becoming aware, on a wider scale, that a more holistic type of perception is also needed and so this is starting
to look more appealing. This is not surprising; with all the changes and challenges that we are currently faced with, some of us are finally choosing to unshackle ourselves from the chains of conformism. “Creativity is their ability to do their own thing” (teacher).

Interestingly according to psychologist Baron-Cohen, men are generally more in tune with the left side of the brain and better at analysing systems; women instead have a greater tendency to be better at empathizing and have greater connection between the hemispheres, this being the case even with language which for men is mostly left-brain directed (2004:1-13). Importantly however, Baron-Cohen emphasises that this is a generalisation and that in most cases both men and women are equally capable of both systematizing and empathizing (2004:1-13). This generalised difference in men’s and women’s way of thinking might arguably help to reveal reasons for society’s chosen dominance of left-brain directed thinking, especially given patriarchy’s rule which has mostly placed men in positions of power (the different treatment of men and women under patriarchy is discussed in chapters One and Two). In The Undercurrent of Feminine Philosophy in Eastern and Western Thought (1981), Sandra Wawrytko discusses the ‘feminine and masculine perspectives’ (xxiii):

It is characteristic of the feminine attitude that masculine values are not dismissed summarily but rather are incorporated into its encompassing scheme of the universe. ... Masculine either/or logic [masculine perspective] is supplanted by the feminine formula of both/and ... The feminine perspective shows itself to be not merely the antithesis of the masculine thesis, but, moreover, the synthesis of the primal poles.

“The primal poles” referred to are the ‘masculine and feminine archetypal principles’; akin to the Chinese terms yin and yang (as explained in Chapter Two) these principles are said to be the two complementary creative energies of life found in all living things,
including men and women. What Wawrytko is highlighting is that ‘feminine’ perspective does not propose the supremacy of the ‘feminine principle’ but rather, by integrating the ‘masculine principle’ and “masculine either/or logic”, ‘feminine’ perspective is inclusive – “both/and”. Similarly, right-brain directed thinking being holistic therefore also includes connections to left-brain directed thinking; holistic thinking is thinking that considers the whole and is contextual, and contextural thinking is inclusive, open, and sees connections. Thus those who Pink suggests are deifying the right brain, claiming that its ‘era’ is coming, are actually using isolated left-brain directed thinking to do so. McManus’ quote from Right Hand Left Hand, (repeated in A Whole New Mind) shows just how misleading this notion is (Pink, 2005:25-26):

However tempting it is to talk of right and left hemispheres in isolation, they are actually two half-brains, designed to work together as a smooth, single, integrated whole in one entire, complete brain. The left hemisphere knows how to handle logic and the right hemisphere knows about the world. Put the two together and one gets a powerful thinking machine. Use either [exclusively] on its own and the result can be bizarre or absurd.

Though absurdity is apparent when one looks at the direction we as a society are heading in (as discussed at the beginning of this chapter), a judgmental point of view that chooses particular fragments to the exclusion of the whole is still largely championed. As Meeker tells us, Dante indicates that “misery” comes from “mistaking or distorting one’s vision so that only a fragment of reality can be seen, and then taking that fragment for the whole” (1997:88). This mistaking of a fragment for the whole stems from an institutionalised perception that is so myopic that it fails to see the fallacy behind the idea of a holistic approach that is exclusive of the analytical, as when choosing the ‘supremacy’ of the right brain.

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First explained in Chapter One and referred to throughout the thesis, ‘institutionalised perception’ is the phrase I use to mean an acceptance, and by extension an internalisation, of the hierarchical viewpoint of our patriarchal society. The parameters of this way of seeing, together with the fragmentation needed to perpetuate them – including the binary reductive thinking that would keep masculine from feminine, left-brain from right-brain, by setting false ‘opposites’ against each other - are so endemic in society that I suggest they may lead many to automatically operate from them regardless of whether they agree with, or even reflect on, the value system that endorses them. This is especially so given that the language we use has developed in accordance to those parameters, which therefore makes the endeavouring to expose fallacies by using the same language that perpetrates them both difficult and frustrating.

As Bohm points out (1980:xii):

> The subject-verb-object structure of [most] modern languages implies that all action arises in a separate subject, and acts either on a separate object, or else reflexively on itself. This pervasive structure leads in the whole of life to a function that divides the totality of existence into separate entities, which are considered to be essentially fixed and static in their nature.

As discussed throughout this thesis (and particularly in chapters One and Two), patriarchy has built our society on the “values of conquest and dominion” (Berry, 1990:153). These values make use of the fighting paradigm/metaphor (examined in chapters One, Four, Five, Six and Seven) which is based on the promotion of a competitive mindset that backs ‘winners’ and marginalises ‘losers’, and is thereby supported by the fragmenting structure of language. In other words, language perpetuates the value system of that which has structured it. As Koestler specifies: “prejudices and impurities which have become incorporated into the verbal concepts of a given ‘universe of discourse’ cannot be undone by any amount of discourse within the
frame of reference of that universe” (1975:177). Hence adhering to set methodologies and arguing within a limited perspective is unlikely to enable any change in the status quo; rather a much wider perspective needs to be considered as (1975:177):

verbal thinking is the most articulate, the most complex, and the most vulnerable to infectious diseases. It is liable to absorb whispered suggestions, and to incorporate them as hidden persuaders into the code. Language can become a screen which stands between the thinker and reality. This is the reason why true creativity often starts where language ends.

By opening to creativity we connect to a way of being that transcends language because it does not rely on language to impart the meaning; it enables us to see both the big picture and the details, and utilises a holistic way of reasoning which includes analysis when this is required. An example of this opening to, and thereby nurturing of, creativity was given to me by a parent I interviewed. Being also a teacher, this person related to me the experience of being part of a group of people who put together a drama production in a secondary school. This of course happens in many schools; however this project was quite unique. It ran over two years and involved a group of 50 to 60 students from diverse backgrounds, as well as two drama teachers, an art teacher, a music teacher and quite a few other teachers from right across the school; it was also community oriented. In the first year a professional writer and director was hired to work with the community and the students to create the script and direct the performance; a choreographer and a musical director were also brought in. Then in the second year it was redeveloped, and the production toured in Perth performing at a festival and various other public venues. It also toured ‘in the bush’ where some workshops were run.
Apparently the production ended up being "absolutely brilliant" and sparked some extraordinary learning experiences as there was a lot of cultural exchange that took place, also because of the travelling component. But from how it was explained to me it was the extra dimension of really nurturing creativity as a group that made it exceptional:

“...there were kids among that group for whom it is no exaggeration to say that it changed their lives, it was a transformational experience. It actually put them on a different path, quite dramatically because of the opportunities it provided - the change in their self-belief, the change in their world view, even the change in their confidence in the people around them, [like] the teachers that they dealt with and the change in their relationship; actually relationships are probably the most important thing of all. It also set those kids onto pathways for further education. ... It was quite extraordinary but I don’t think it’s unusual; there are lots of things like that. ... If you try to share that with people who haven’t experienced that ... it can be very difficult to try and get those ideas to grow. If you try and talk to people about that sort of approach to doing things they find it bewildering, they can’t get their heads around the possibilities, all they can think of is all the problems of how are you going to find the time, how are you going to get the money ... and out of fear or doubt ... people often won’t go for it ... and you do have to take some risks and you do have to be in an environment where you are allowed to do that ... Experience also tells me that in many schools that would be very hard to do, you would not be given permission to do this sort of thing.”

The above quote sums up within a specific experience much of what I have spoken of in this thesis – the need for trust, time, risk-taking, having a holistic perspective, and above all openness to creativity and its nurturing. The alternative is to remain confined within
an institutionalised perception. This is limiting even for those at the top of the hierarchy - those seen as the ‘elites’ and ‘winners’ that a system like patriarchy is meant to favour. With the ideal of ‘winning’ (which requires conformity) being valued above all else, even the ‘elites’ are prevented from the true fulfilment of nurturing their creativity and of getting to know themselves. As discussed in Chapter Four, it is when people are not competing for positions that they are able to link their differences in ways that complement each other and thus allow their creativity to bloom (this is also apparent in the above experience); though we can do much of our own nurturing, because we are interdependent (discussed in chapters Five and Six) we also need to nurture each others’ creativity. Instead, competition can cause us to feel stressed and anxious; Julia Cameron describes the following scenario (1995:172-173):

You pick up a magazine – or even your alumni news – and somebody, somebody you know, has gone further, faster, toward your dream. Instead of saying, “That proves it can be done,” your fear will say, “He or she will succeed instead of me.”... Competition lies at the root of much creative blockage...The desire to be better than can choke off the simple desire to be... It leads us away from our own voices and choices and into a defensive game that centers outside of ourselves... It asks us to define our own creativity in terms of someone else’s.

As pointed out in Chapter Three, children have to be taught to be competitive; they have to be shifted from their own games, those they invent which are endless meanderings in creativity, to games with rigid rules which end when somebody wins. From then on a competitive way of life is presented to them at every opportunity, especially at school where almost everything they do results in them being assigned a ‘grade’ or a ‘place’. “I think that a pressured environment doesn’t let you be as creative as you otherwise would” (student). Though ‘peddled’ by our patriarchal society as enabling “self improvement
and participation” (Saul, 1993:507), Saul reveals that competition can have quite an opposite effect (507):

In a world devoted to measuring the best, most of us aren’t even in the competition ... we eliminate ourselves from the competition in order to avoid giving other people the power to eliminate us. Not only does a society obsessed by competition not draw people out, it actually encourages them to hide what talents they have, by convincing them that they are insufficient.

Convinced that we are not good enough to be one of the best, since that is ‘all that we are allowed to be’ in this age of conformism, many of us choose to keep our unique creativity under wraps instead of exploring it, as furthermore most of us have no desire to be subjected to the pressures of ‘stardom’ that ‘winning’ brings (regardless of what field it is in). On the other hand there are those who seem to thrive on competition and highly pressured jobs and (as mentioned in Chapter Three) many of these people often have narcissistic tendencies. In Why is it always about you?, Hotchkiss tells us that narcissistic disorders are everywhere; children who have been deeply hurt through shame can grow up into adults who are terrified of being shown up as not being good enough, and/or having their carefully hidden feelings of worthlessness unmasked (2003:xiii-xix). Envious of anyone who appears to have more than they have, they are insatiable and always want more.

Apparently narcissism has been around a long time, as people with little regard for others and an over-inflated sense of self are renown through history. Yet Hotchkiss points out that in our modern times what is worrying is “the extent to which these personality flaws have received a widespread stamp of approval. Narcissism is not just tolerated in our day and age, it is glorified. Many of our leaders and the public figures we admire flaunt their narcissistic proclivities ...” (xv). However, this is not in the least
surprising given the competitive climate we live in. Juxtaposing some of the typical behaviour traits of this personality disorder – lack of empathy, egocentricity, obsessive focus, need for obvious adulation - to the behaviour implicitly encouraged by the values of patriarchy: an aggressive competitive approach in business; an authoritative controlling approach in governance and public institutions; all complete with militaristic references that reinforce a ‘fighting’ mentality, one can clearly see that there is a close match. It thus becomes understandable why this sort of backdrop to living could give rise to individuals behaving in such ways. One could go as far as saying: ‘Here are those who have learnt their lessons well!’ After all, as the saying goes ‘we reap what we sow’. This connects back to those characters populating Dante’s Hell, discussed at the beginning of this chapter - those unable to see themselves within the larger context.

Given the overwhelming current ‘state of affairs’, it might seem therefore that the only ‘acceptable’ choices available in our society are those of conforming to boring, almost mechanical behaviour, or risking sanity by indulging in developing a personality disorder so as to have an edge to ‘winning’. Yet even ‘winners’ are readily discarded; what is valued is the role of winner not the unique individual who is in that position – in a society that upholds conformity and competition above all else, the flesh and blood real person is merely a placeholder of no intrinsic value. The hubris lent by narcissism only serving to make the winner more ‘disposable’. However, as this thesis proposes, there is also another choice, that of nurturing one’s creativity, which by helping to develop a holistic perspective enables the ‘individuation of the self’, as advocated by Jung - that deep growth and blossoming into our unique ‘Selves’. This takes societal as well as personal effort, and also time and trust (discussed in chapters Three and Four).
From researching creativity since 2006, I have found that an institutionalised perception that sees the world as being mechanistic and fragmented, where each fragment has been given a specific hierarchical ‘value’ and thus has a judgement attached to it, is finally being called into question more widely. As is discussed throughout the thesis and particularly in chapters One and Two, people from a myriad of backgrounds are making interdisciplinary connections and realising the central importance of relationships and lived experience – this includes most of the authors I have quoted and many of the people I interviewed, and also many more whose work I have read or whom I have heard speak. To me this indicates our readiness and, in many cases, even our hunger and passion, to embrace a more holistic perspective. By nurturing and thus also allowing the expression of creativity, a more holistic perception starts to become apparent which thereby enables us to more clearly see our place within the whole. This contextualising of our-selves can provide life with the meaning that we need and desire, so as to be fulfilled. In saying this I share Marshall’s belief (2006:179):

I believe we are in the midst of a silent yet discernable transformation of consciousness. Our cultural mind is slowly shifting from fragmentation and reductionism, expressed in excessive competition, unbridled acquisition, winning, short-term thinking, and isolated self-interest to integration and interdependence – collaboration, shared purpose, and global sustainability.

It has been through my experience of the journey taken to complete my PhD that I have been led to having an equivalent belief. Equivalent because it is similar in essence though described in different words.

This thesis is a representation in words of a personal change in attitude – a conscious opening to looking out from an attitude of creativity, through the nurturing of creativity. This process of transformation that has begun within me, and will continue to unfold as

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I grow and change, enables me to perceive more than I did before it began. I am thus conscious of having a wider perspective, a clearer vision. However, at the same time I am also aware that I am only able to ‘clearly’ perceive some of the ‘whole picture’ before me; there is still much of it that I cannot see as it has an almost hazy quality to it, as if I were viewing it under water. What I can perceive is metaphorically like the ‘tip of an iceberg’, and though I do not ‘see’ the submerged part I am nonetheless aware of it and therefore open to it.

Among many other things, this transformation had instilled in me a deep awareness that it is only by choosing to awaken and see what the direction we are heading in is, that we can actually change our direction. To do this I believe that we need to look past the institutionalised perception that is keeping our perspectives confined. Furthermore, this is something that we each have to do for ourselves regardless of the many methods that are still being prescribed, with some people wanting to control and direct others, while countless others allow themselves to be directed and controlled. Though prescriptive ways boast ‘ultimate’ answers, I have found that it is not answers that are needed, but rather the openness of a holistic perception so as to be able to connect to one’s inner creativity, which is what allows for perspectives to grow and transform.

As Saul says: “[in] a civilization which seeks automatically to divide through answers ... our desperate need is to unify the individual through questions” (1993:585). ‘Ready-made’ answers divide because they limit what can be accepted and looked at; by being definite they set up boundaries and so are exclusive. Questions, on the other hand, allow us to stay with the process of dialoguing, as we discover our own and each other’s creativity and keep pace with the transformations of our perspectives. Perspectives are dynamic given that we move through life, and each of us has a unique perspective since
nobody can ever ‘be’ in exactly the same place as anybody else. The need for meaning that Pink and Seligman speak of is something that each of us needs, and as such each of us needs an individual unique meaning that can be true for the unique reality we each inhabit. In other words, the meaning we long for has to be a ‘perfect fit in motion’ and, for all the reasons I have given in this thesis, I believe that nurturing our creativity is as sure a way of achieving this as possible.

In this thesis I have looked at several issues that concern modern society – global warming, education, mental illness, rate of suicide, and so on – I have included these because they are issues that affect everybody, and thus they also affect me deeply. As I am a ‘representative’ of my time and environment it is not unreasonable to take my transformation as a sign of what could be occurring to other individuals, who are likewise also representative of this time (Pink and Marshall are quoted earlier stating their belief of an ongoing transformation). As previously mentioned, I have come across many who say they believe that we are moving towards a more holistic direction, part of the reason for their belief is likely to also be because of their own transformations and growth of awareness. Among them are architect William McDonough and chemist Michael Braungart, authors of Cradle to Cradle, who question the reductive approach of a mentality of scarcity where humans have to be ‘punished’ by some awful future catastrophe because of all the mistakes they have made, and instead focus on the creative alternatives to that (2002:186):

How can we support and perpetuate the rights of all living things to share in a world of abundance? How can we love the children of all species – not just our own – for all time? Imagine what a world of prosperity and health in the future will look like, and begin designing for it right now. What would it mean to become, once again native to this place, the Earth – the home of all our relations? This is going to take us all, and it is going to take forever. But then, that’s the point.
What McDonough and Braungart suggest in the above quote is an example of appreciative inquiry (explored in Chapter Two) where instead of looking at things from a problem-based perspective they are looked at in a more positive, holistic, and creative way. Another who values and promotes such a holistic approach is the Dalai Lama: “... look at humanity as a whole.” He says, “Today’s reality: whole world almost like one body. One thing happens some distant place, the repercussions reach your own place. Destruction of your neighbour as enemy is essentially destruction of yourself. Our future depends on global well-being” (2004:7).

In *Harmony: A New Way of looking at Our World*, the Prince of Wales with Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly also promote a holistic perspective (2010:322-324):

> the closer we dance to the rhythms and patterns that lie within us, the closer we get to acting in what is the right way; closer to the good in life, to what is true and what is beautiful – rather than swirling around without an anchor, lost ‘out there’ in the wilderness of a view shaped solely by four hundred years of emphasis on mechanistic thinking and the output of our industrialized processes. ... this will mean somehow replacing our obsession with pursuing unlimited growth and competition with a quest for well-being and cooperation.

We are surrounded by a whole reality, both in the world that we inhabit and in each other, that is richer and more rewarding than anything we could imagine. Understanding this deeply, and embracing a holistic perspective so that we can see it more clearly would enable us to live more fully in a participative way; it would enable us to nurture creativity and celebrate it. In practical terms this means being able to utilise our creativity to navigate the challenging changes all around us that are seemingly occurring so fast. It means being able to realise our deep connection to nature, to each other, to the world, and to the universe, so that we can set up sustainable environments that honour and celebrate these connections and can therefore take us
into the future. If we are open and trusting enough to allow the transformation, that would inevitably be generated from the nurturing of creativity, to envelop us, to truly transform every particle and every diaphanous space within us, then we would have no cause to ever feel alienated again, for regardless of whatever happened we would be conscious participants in a universal awakening of creativity.

As has been discussed throughout the thesis, creativity is much more than a purely intellectual ability, and thus to be able to connect to it fully our intellect needs to ‘take a step back’ as it were. This mostly involves a ‘toning down’ of left-brain directed thinking, which (as discussed earlier in the chapter) has been directing things for quite some time now. As Aronie suggests, we need to ‘get out of our own way’ and restore a more balanced way of being where our multifaceted selves – our emotional, physical and spiritual sides – are no longer seen as being the ‘poor relations’ to the intellect, but take their rightful place so that we might no longer suffer from a ‘swelling of the intellect’.

Creativity is also best nurtured within a connected community (discussed in chapters Three, Five and Six), Florida reminds us of this in *The Rise of the Creative Class*: “we must harness all of our intelligence, our energy and most important our awareness. The task of building a truly creative society is not a game of solitaire. This game, we play as a team” (2004:326). Yet rather than a team, which in our society is inevitably expected to play against other teams, I envision this more as a return to the endless creative ‘games’ we played as young children, where all of us could be fulfilled and, as Bohm indicates in the quote in Chapter Three, our “interest in what is being done is wholehearted and total” (2004:21). With this sort of creative state of mind, creativity could be applied to any of the issues we face.

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An example of one of our many modern societal concerns is that of healthy ageing; I became aware of this last year when I undertook some work with older people while looking at the issue of social isolation. Healthy ageing is particularly relevant to Western societies given that developed countries are fast becoming homes to ageing societies. From educators and psychologists to aged care providers, from neuroscientists and geriatricians to community workers, all have noted the increased health and well-being, including mental health and agility, of those who partake of creative activities. Social inclusion could also be listed as being one of the benefits that result from the nurturing of creativity, as it appears that creative pursuits of all types are ideal conduits for bringing people together. What is more, they can successfully bridge the gap between generations by restoring meaningful communication: “Creativity, in a real sense, serves as the voice of the community, articulating harmonies and tensions, and helping to make us comprehensible to each other” (Fontana & Slack 2007:82).

When people mix for the purpose of creative endeavours (such as in the example given earlier of the high school production) they co-create and experience a climate that is both enjoyable and safe and which invariably lets them relax their mental boundaries. This allows them to consider the diverse perspectives that are brought to the group through the participation of various people of different ages, background, cultures and so on, and it can further lead them to open up to a spirit of playful curiosity about each other. As the participants explore the possibilities of integrating various aspects of differing points of view that they may never have previously considered, but which nonetheless fire their enthusiasm and thus they find themselves drawn to, this can result in many of them attaining more open and fuller perspectives. People in touch with their creativity “question the assumptions they are given ... see the world
differently, are happy to experiment, to take risks and to make mistakes. They make unique connections often unseen by others” (Lucas, 2001:38). They are therefore open to allowing the nurturing of creativity to have a lasting transformative impact on them, as well as being ideal facilitators or catalysts for the nurturing of creativity in others.

In this chapter I have focused on re-visiting a holistic perspective which I have linked to much of what has been looked at throughout the thesis, altogether pointing to the importance of the nurturing of creativity. One of the main goals of a PhD is said to be an ‘original contribution to knowledge’. This PhD thesis is about the nurturing of creativity in a unique ‘self’ – myself; it relates the experience of my journey of transformation through a holistic perspective that weaves together academic writing, creative writing, and scholarly personal narrative. By sharing this unique personal experience of a perspective of creativity lived through the nurturing of creativity in this way, I could argue that I am indeed contributing something that is original. The dictionary definition (OED) of ‘original’ is “1 existing from the beginning; first or earliest. 2 created personally by a particular artist, writer, etc ... 3 inventive or novel”; thus by being the unique experience of a particular ‘self’ – myself, this thesis fulfils the two latter definitions. Furthermore, by being an experience it is also knowledge; Bohm explains how experience and knowledge are intrinsically linked (1980:6):

Clarity of perception and thought evidently requires that we be generally aware of how our experience is shaped by the insight (clear or confused) provided by the theories that are implicit or explicit in our general ways of thinking. To this end, it is useful to emphasize that experience and knowledge are one process, rather than to think that our knowledge is about some sort of separate experience. We can refer to this one process as experience-knowledge (the hyphen indicating that these are two inseparable aspects of one whole movement).
As quoted in the Introduction, Robert Atkinson tells us that: “Our stories illustrate our inherent connectedness with others. ... In the life story of each person is a reflection of another’s life story” (1995:3-4). Thus if we can accept and ‘see’ what has been said by so many for so long - that we are each of us unique (this is discussed from many different aspects throughout the thesis, with a number of quotes given), then we will realise that everybody’s life, each individual life, has a contribution of original knowledge to make. Simply by being, by living, one flows along the movement that Bohm calls the process of ‘experience-knowledge’. Furthermore, even if one never has a chance to ‘formally’ share this knowledge, this experience, because of our inherent interconnectedness it nonetheless must have an effect on some, and thereby it also contributes to the whole.

The effect our experience-knowledge can have on others is exemplified in Frank Capra’s 1946 film, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, which is about the uniqueness and importance of even one single life. Based on the short story “The Greatest Gift” by Philip Van Dorn Stern, the movie follows the life of a man who never seems to be able to achieve his dreams. Finally, through some bad luck and unfairness he finds himself one Christmas Eve seriously contemplating suicide, his guardian angel saves him and then asks God to grant him his wish of ‘never having been born’. The man, who never thought much of his life or himself, is then able to see all that has been made possible because of him – this includes his brother’s life (who would otherwise have drowned), the well-being of many working class people able to get fair loans to buy homes, his wife who without him would never have married, his four children, his mother and uncle, and so on. Thus he realises what a wonderful gift his life is, and not just to him but also to others.

If one accepts that one’s life is unique then it makes sense that it is important to know oneself and also be true to oneself (as discussed in the Introduction). This knowing and
being true to oneself may however be compromised if one is persuaded to strive to copy the content of someone else’s life, or even to ‘live up’ to an abstract ideal which is held up as a role-model. Marie-Louise von Franz gives us a common example of this enticement to copy ‘role-models’ through religious doctrine (1978:236):

Time and again in all countries people have tried to copy in “outer” or ritualistic behaviour the original religious experience of their great religious teachers – Christ or Buddha or some other master – … [yet] To follow in the steps of a great spiritual leader does not mean that one should copy and act out the pattern of the individuation process made by his [sic] life. It means that we should try with a sincerity and devotion equal to his [sic] to live our own lives.

We are encouraged both as children and adults to copy role-models and ideals, as these are ‘held up’ for us in different circumstances, like school, work, public life, and so on, where those who come closest to meeting the ‘ideal’ are often rewarded and/or seen as ‘leaders’. Because of the predominance of the left-directed way of thinking (which is a literal way of thinking) we are therefore more likely to take this literally, and so while striving to fill a ‘role’, even those of the ‘ideal’ careers – doctors, lawyers, CEOs - we neglect to nurture our own creativity. What is more this also encourages literal ways of prescribing, and abiding to, methodologies and policies in institutions and throughout modern life. Children at school are consistently shown exactly how to do something; books are written about ‘how to …’ in regards to almost every subject imaginable, and this includes spiritual matters and self-development, where even in the ‘new age’ specific ways of ‘doing’ or ‘achieving’ growth and development are highlighted and valued, complete with ‘gurus’ and ‘masters’ to be ‘followed’.

These types of prescriptive ways of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ are likely to inevitably fragment the ‘self’; by emphasizing ways ‘to be’ they also specify ways ‘not to be’, and leave little room for the unfolding of the self’s creativity. This thesis, has instead been written from
a holistic perspective that does not pretend to be objective but recognises the self’s subjectivity and thus speaks from it. Being therefore open though unique, it thus seeks to: share experience-knowledge, advocate the nurturing of creativity, and also hopefully inspire to live as fully as possible one’s own life, through the fulfilment that the nurturing of creativity can bring.
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Conclusion:

**Being and Becoming Revisited**

*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.*

(William Blake, from Auguries of Innocence)

The above quote sums up the essence of this whole thesis, eloquently and succinctly stating the transformative outlook, or state of mind, that someone in touch with their creativity is capable of. This is not just pretty ‘poetry’ – the above words barely touch the page they are written on, as in being read they expand and transmute into images, sensations and feelings. Touching and filling the deepest core of the self, they simultaneously continue to expand past the self connecting the visible with the invisible, present with past and future, and the self to all those who have, or will have, read, heard or written these words, or even simply to those who understand and can dwell within the sensation that their meaning evokes. This experience lasting but a few seconds of ‘real’ time, yet staying with one forever, gives one a glimpse of ‘wholeness’.

It is this possible quality of writing that attracts me to it as a creative medium, and I have therefore incorporated it as much as I could in this thesis. Yet because this is an
‘academic’ piece of writing I have felt compelled to follow some of the practices required by this type of writing; so after what seems an endless time spent on it – arguing with these practices as it were - I feel like I am tied up in pretzels! I am frustrated by the academic convention that perceives a need to explain what is said by ‘defining’ the main concepts of what is being discussed, instead of being satisfied with an open and thorough description of them. Through this ‘requirement’ standard academic language becomes obscure and restrictive rather than explanatory, and I have examined this in Chapter Two. On the whole I have avoided this ‘defining’ where possible as it would have entailed putting boundaries around my thoughts on ‘creativity’, ‘wholeness’, and even ‘patriarchy’, and as Bohm says “every border is a division or break” (1980:xi), as every border or boundary separates that which it includes from what it excludes. I have discussed my reasons for resisting these requirements in Chapter Three, though I have nonetheless, in most cases, supported what I have said with quotes or references from a number of scholars.

This thesis has issued directly from a combination of my thoughts and my experience of nurturing my creativity. Thoughts are only ‘snapshots’ taken from the dynamic process of thinking, which is an ongoing part of being alive and therefore of any experience. Just as thoughts easily arise so they also readily dissolve back into that dynamic process to then arise as new and transformed thoughts. This is to be expected because as a living being I continue moving, changing, growing, and transforming; with this perhaps happening all the faster in a ‘self’ like myself because I am open to creativity and consciously choose to nurture it. Through writing, these thoughts may be ‘captured’ and frozen and thus prevented from transforming, and while in a creative format (as in the example of Blake’s verse given above) they can hold and release meaning, the opposite
can be true for them otherwise. Because of this I am also aware that those who are not open to ‘seeing’ that which I have been presenting will not see it, regardless of how much I pour myself out on paper. Yet those who are open will understand and need much less than this to know: that it is possible to look at the world in an open and holistic way; that nurturing your creativity allows you to discover much about yourself and see yourself in context to the ‘whole’; that starting on a journey of transformation through creativity and openness leads you to more ongoing transformation.

Years ago I did some mountain trekking in the Alps in Italy and Austria - it was exhilarating, and on reflection it taught me much more than just how to trek. Being on a narrow path which meanders all over the mountains is very humbling and uplifting at the same time. The view is constantly changing as the path skirts steep slopes, climbs through passes and descends into valleys. The colours, scents, and even the ‘feeling’ all around you, transform at but a touch from the different weather conditions that succeed each other in kaleidoscopic wonder, so that at times it seems you have all the seasons within a few hours. But while taking in the views and sounds and feel of the weather, I also had to pay attention to where I was on the path. In other words, I needed to be present in the ‘here and now’ of the journey; I could not plan the journey ahead past where I could see, as I did not know what lay around the bend. At the same time I also needed to be aware of how I was feeling so as to take care of myself; it made more sense to wait and rest instead of forcing myself to climb steep slopes in inclement weather which could make the footing very treacherous and put me in danger of tripping and falling.

To do all of this I had to be open to taking in all that I needed from my surroundings while also remaining connected to my inner self – my beingness. Time and trust were
my constant companions; I trusted my senses, my abilities to make decisions and my skills, I also trusted all that was around me enough to be open to it, and learn from it. I listened to myself and flowed with time rather than putting myself under pressure by measuring it. I have since found that I could apply what I learnt while trekking to almost any situation in my life. Through the process Bohm calls ‘experience-knowledge’, with experience and knowledge being intrinsically connected (discussed in Chapter Eight), trekking taught me: that I knew how to make use of a holistic perspective; that I knew how to know myself better and how to be true to myself; that I knew how to nurture my creativity. Yet it was only through being on my PhD journey, as I experienced again this process of ‘experience-knowledge’ - this process of transformation - that I realised I already knew this, and yet I needed this process to make me aware of it, to expand on it and make it available to me.

As explained in the Introduction as an adult I had lost touch with my ‘knowing’ and with my sense of self - my beingness. Thus the biggest, as in the main and most lasting, transformation of this present journey has been my reconnection to my beingness as well as my commitment to remain connected. In addition I have also reconnected to an open perspective and to the nurturing of creativity, to trust and to a flowing sense of time. Viewing life from an open, or holistic, perspective has enabled me to deepen my understanding of both my inner and outer worlds and to see the many links between them. This has also increased the acceptance of my emotions, as well as my patience and flexibility with the flow of events. Additionally I seem to have developed an almost curious-like detachment from outcomes, and I am somehow at greater ease with all kinds of people. Though I have always got on well with people, being possessed of reasonable tact and empathy, I now find that I am able to more easily dialogue, calmly

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broaching those things that I might have previously avoided, thinking them controversial or even perhaps ‘taboo’.

This has been for me an incredible journey of transformation and moreover it does not seem to be stopping or even pausing. For example, where one day I might notice that something has become easier for me - like my anxiety over feeling time pressured - this then becomes even more effortless a week later; then later still I find it has shifted to a completely different place with the emotion having changed from anxiety to low-level frustration. Perhaps I am undergoing major neuroplastic change; maybe having committed myself to nurturing creativity and to ‘seeing’ from a holistic perspective at an intentional and emotional level, this is now getting my physical side to connect to that – with each thought and experience physically altering my brain (as discussed in Chapter Three). Whatever the explanation, I feel that it is almost superfluous when compared with all that I am experiencing. Life is certainly not boring as every day feels like a new beginning, and I trust that the revelation of any relevant explanation will ‘dawn’ on me at the appropriate time.

Lastly, as an extension of creativity and of the nurturing of creativity, I have realised that the way I view ‘products’ – the books we write (including academic theses), the things we make, our cities, homes, clothes and so on – has shifted considerably. I now see them principally as being an expression of the process we are experiencing: an expression of how we choose to live life in other words. While we, as living beings, are indivisible parts of the whole, these expressions are merely signposts pointing to that whole, yet if they are allowed to be creative expressions they are imbued with meaning that can help us see the whole more clearly; hence the importance of a ‘life story’ (as Atkinson points out) which can rekindle our awareness of wholeness and our place in it.
I have come to believe that it is therefore essential that these ‘products’ or ‘signposts’ be allowed to be freely expressed, as in arrived at through creativity, rather than by any set methodological or prescribed utilitarian approach which would sap meaning by fragmenting them into ‘things’. At the same time however, regardless of how great any of them may be, they can ‘only ever be’ expressions - snapshots of a particular moment we are in, and as such they will need to be changed and adapted as we grow in order to make room for the new. Or else they will need to be let go of, as the Tibetan monks are known to let go of their beautiful sand mandalas - releasing them to the wind soon after they are completed.

I would not be surprised, sometime after I have submitted my thesis, to find myself again in the dream of the maze-like labyrinth which I described in the Introduction; it will be interesting to see what happens then. My guess is that, having already ventured outside the labyrinth and into the beckoning countryside for many jaunts, I will be greeted with new vistas of previously unexplored directions – leading to the beginning of brand new chapters.
Life is everywhere!

It is manifest in thriving gardens; from the trees and bushes cascading with fragrant blossoms to the vigorous climbers twining themselves around trellises and over arches; from the lush native plants to the carpet of moss-like ground cover interspersed with tiny flowers.

It is palpable in the gentle breathing of children in their beds, now stretching and turning; eyelids fluttering in their slumber.

It is heightened in the warmth of friendship – understanding running between all kinds of people amidst the carefree, joyous laughter.

The senses glory in the richness of life when spying rainbows and beholding sunsets; when touching dewdrops and smelling damp earth in a summer shower; when hearing waves crashing on the beach on a hot day and feeling the breeze caressing the skin.

In dreams at night, life is replayed, re-lived and breathed in trustingly while consciousness is released. Then upon waking it may be felt rushing in, filling one with the bliss of being.

All this and more ... she takes in while her gaze glides over creation. In places the sparkling outline of the ancient loom of starlight can still be made out through the webs
of life it supports. She smiles, the depth and delight of it spreading throughout the universe, as she moves on through and into the future...
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