

**How can the *thought of the heart* offer  
effective ways of engaging with conflict?**

**An imaginal and reflexive study**

**By**

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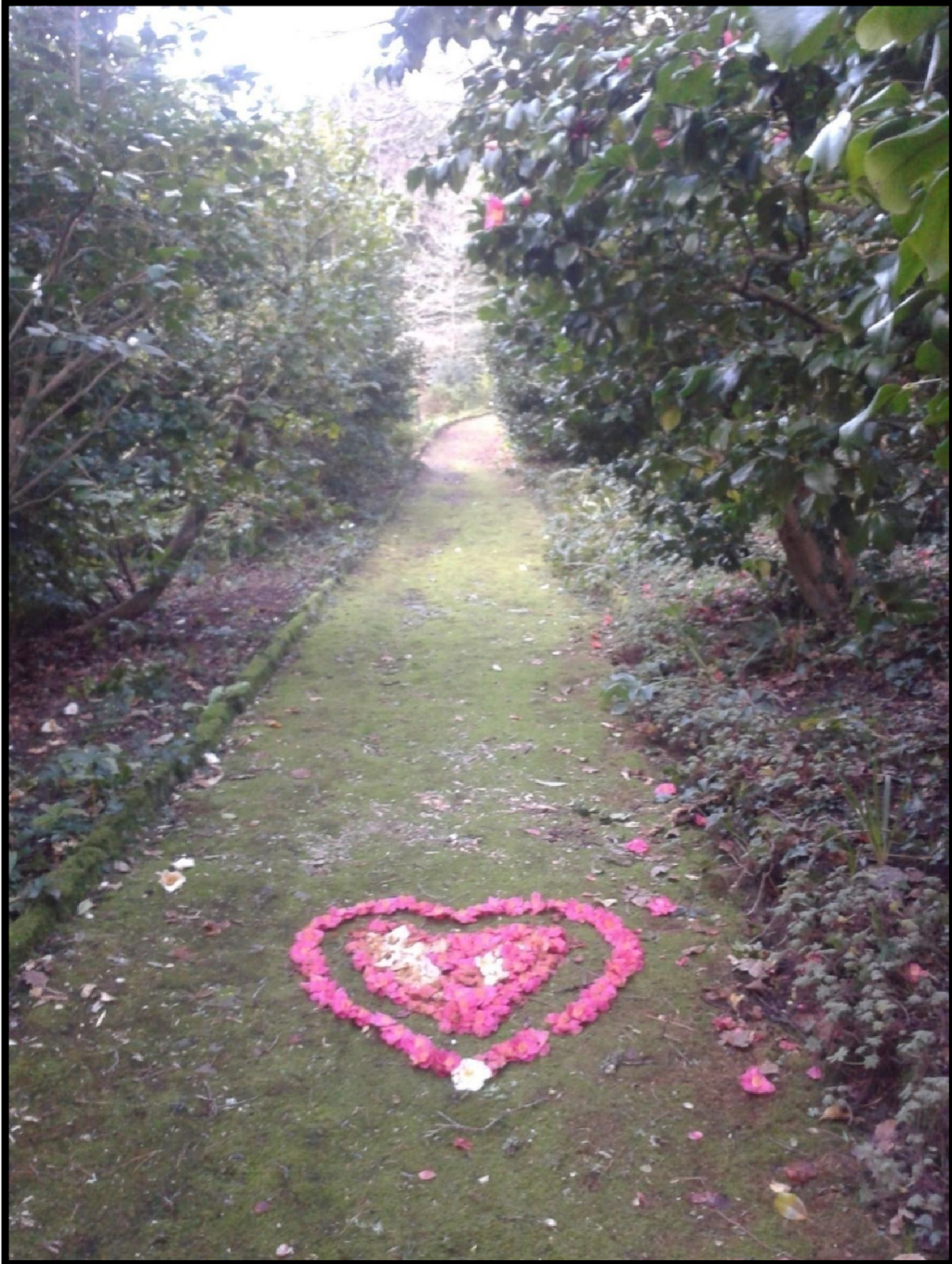
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## DEDICATION

For Jay, Kirsten and for Hearts, everywhere



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***Imagine that the heart is trying to speak to us; how would we understand its language and receive its message?***

***How might we cultivate the ears to hear the heart's voice, and focus the eyes to see the heart in its authenticity?<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> Words from my personal journal – August 2016

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# Abstract

This thesis explores the idea that heart knowing is a vitally important human capability which has, over the course of many hundreds of years, been divorced from, and rendered subservient to, knowledge about the world as generated through the brain (understood in modern times as the seat of knowledge and rational thinking). Suggesting that this move not only carries the potential to cause conflict, but in addition prevents contemporary society from engaging in creative ways with conflict, my research suggests that there is room for, and a growing need to, reconsider conflict and our interactions with conflict situations, through a more expansive, heart-centred lens.

While the heart and benevolent heart qualities such as love, kindness, non-judgment and compassion (Young, 2002, pp. 381–394; Hoystad, 2007, p. 12; Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 3), are often alluded to within conflict literature (LeBaron, 2002; Cloke, 2013), the practical role that the heart could play is consistently, and frustratingly, left unaddressed. I suggest that this issue is of key importance, and aim to show that while people in contemporary society might intuitively or unconsciously be aware that heart knowing may be helpful to navigate the complexities of daily life, the traditionally accepted lens of empiricism, which labels the heart a biological pump, creates epistemological barriers for the conscious consideration of this idea and often silences other hearts that may wish to make themselves known to us and express themselves authentically in the world.

By taking an imaginal and reflexive approach, supported by auto/biographical research, this thesis explores ways of seeing, being and knowing that are made possible by adopting the heart as a legitimate way of generating knowledge about the world. Through a heart-centred lens, this research explores the possibility of transforming current understanding of conflict, and subsequently relationships with ourselves, each other and the wider world. Importantly, this work suggests implications for not just conflict resolution and transformation, but for education that is truly transformative – feeding into growing conversations concerning sustainability and wellbeing issues. Certainly, the heart as mediator and teacher demands our imaginative, authentic,

empathic and courageous consideration, and it is upon this understanding that this thesis is written.

The qualities of the heart are much more than something  
theoretical

(Hoystad, 2007, p.13)

One can, it is true, understand many things with the heart, but  
then the head often finds it difficult to follow up with an  
intellectual formulation that gives suitable expression to what  
has been understood. There is also an understanding with the  
head, particularly of the scientific kind, where there is sometimes  
too little room for the heart

(Jung, 1978, p.259)

# Prologue

## A note regarding structure

Readers will notice that this thesis does not follow a conventional structure. For example, the literature review clarifying the sources I consulted in relation to the heart appears in the latter part of the introduction, following numerous prior references to the heart itself. The reason I have chosen to structure my work in this manner, and therefore break from a more conventional format, is because of the nature of my research. Specifically, the heart, the heart's voice, and the heart's wisdom and knowledge, is the focal point and driving force of this piece.

In short, the voice of the heart takes precedence in each section garnered through personal narrative, transference dialogues, dreams, meditations, and so forth, (which I explain methodologically later in this chapter), followed by an in-depth review of source materials to help make sense of what the heart is saying. In practice, this means that in each section/chapter, direct, personal experience *in relationship with my heart* takes precedence, and is followed by critical reflections. In this sense, readers will note that within the introduction, key ideas in relation to the heart are offered up within the context of personal narrative before reaching the literature review. The purpose of using this structure both in the introduction and throughout this work, is to put into practice a different way of approaching, and developing knowledge about, the world. In this context, the heart's voice is offered up first, followed by critical enquiry to make sense of the preceding material.

# Introduction

## Introducing the project

Numerous scholars from discourses including depth psychology, philosophy and religious studies have written about the “anaesthetised” (Romanyshyn, 2000, p. 173), “exile[d]” (Hillman, 2007, p. 4), “wound[ed]” (Baring, 1998, pp. 342–356), “cold..frozen...dried up...care-less...trivialized...mechanical” (Fox, 1998, p. 326) heart of contemporary society. According to postmodern theologian Matthew Fox, troubles exist in our modern world “because our hearts are not living fully” (1998, p. 326). From the time of the scientific Enlightenment, our hearts have been continually reduced to fit into a machine narrative, no longer able to respond imaginatively to the calls of the world (Hillman, 2007, pp. 6–7). The subtle heart that was once understood to link us to psychic (Baring, 1998, p. 344; Hillman, 2007, pp. 89–130), or spiritual realities, has long been forgotten and now lies “impoverished...hungry...starved” (Fox, 1998, p. 326), crying out in our “contemporary heart diseases” (Hillman, 2007, p. 4), sitting in our chests “divided” (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 113–120; Hillman, 2007, pp. 24–25), and “empty” (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 122–130). Why should this be? Is there something about *how* we create knowledge about the world that has manifested this heart in our day-to-day reality?

Before moving on to explore these questions by enquiring more deeply into the modern, divided and empty heart that drives this research project, I would like to clarify my position in relation to the terms *psychic* and *spiritual* as referred to above – as the ideas arising from these definitions underpin the direction of this work. Firstly, I am using the term psychic in a depth psychological sense, particularly as applied to the human faculty of the imagination. Specifically, Carl Jung (1875-1961) and archetypal psychologist James Hillman (1926-2011) emphasised that we live immediately in a world of images (Jung, 2014, p.3340; Hillman, 2007).<sup>2</sup> This is a “psychic world, which allows us to make only

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<sup>2</sup> Where I quote from Jung’s collected works in this thesis, I will be using Harvard referencing in the main text, and adding a footnote for ease of location in the relevant volume of the collected works. In this case, the reference can be found in Jung’s collected works thus: CW, Vol VIII, 2014, paras. 746-747.



indirect and hypothetical inferences about the real nature of matter” (Jung, 2014, p. 3340).<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the psychic alone has immediate reality, and it is the imagination (as a receiver and processor of images) that is a “psychic reality”, more ontologically immediate than physical reality (Vannoy Adams, 1992, p. 240). The imagination in this context, and as I will explain later, is a way of knowing through inner intuitions and sensory experiences often associated with the heart, which, in certain discourses, is the primary respondent to the images presented to us by the world (Hillman, 2007).

The term spiritual, as British psychotherapist Andrew Samuels states, is difficult to define (2004, p. 202), and what can be said about it is therefore very vague (Samuels, 2004, p. 202; Rowson, 2014, p. 16). However as Samuels states, “there is huge value in vagueness” (Samuels, 2004, p. 202). The term is also extremely complex and is seen by many to carry a great deal of baggage (Rowson, 2014, p. 14). However, in this thesis I shall be referring to spirituality in relation to transformative learning theorists Elizabeth Tisdell and Derise Tolliver’s observation that spirituality is about “Life Force....meaning making and a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things” (Tolliver and Tisdell, 2006, p. 38). This means attending to the idea that “‘the spiritual’ is....the integrating factor – life as a whole” (Sheldrake quoted in Rowson, 2014, p. 16).

This idea of wholeness and interconnection is important in relation to this thesis and I will draw out why this is the case through the different hearts that we will meet as my work unfolds.<sup>4</sup> However, for now I would like to return to the idea of the empty and divided heart of contemporary society which is the starting point of my research. Specifically, depth psychologist Robert Romanyshyn suggests that when English physician William Harvey (1578-1657) defined the physical heart as divided (with a wall separating left from right sides), and empty (in terms of its function of discharging blood), these terms could equally be seen as psychological realities “mirrored or reflected in the events of the age” (2000, pp. 238–239). In today’s contemporary world the very organ that once connected

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<sup>3</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 747

<sup>4</sup> Please see appendix one which maps out the different versions of the heart readers will meet in this thesis. This appendix is offered as a helpful navigation tool to aid the reader to contemplate the many hearts that appear in this work.

us to the deep mystery of life, is now “too small” to support us to engage in life in its fullest sense (Fox, 1998, p. 327), and consequently we find it hard to see how to birth creative “ways of living in the world, ways of education, of worship, of politics, of economics, of relationships of all kinds, including our relationship to all the earth systems” (Fox, 1998, p. 327).

As I write these words, hot tears sting my eyes and waves of grief well up in my chest. I can certainly relate to these observations as for much of the past thirty years I have felt increasingly disconnected from the world, anaesthetised from life. While I knew, deep inside myself, that the world I was taught to understand through my education and upbringing was so much more, as I grew older I had no way of accessing it and subsequently I felt deep inner conflict that affected every other part of my life. As I reflect on this, I am reminded of zoologist Lyall Watson’s words:

My heart is with the mystics...but my head belongs...to the world of science. I was taken captive more than thirty years ago. I was indoctrinated with a world view, a description of reality that I found extremely useful, but which has become alarmingly narrow (1998, p. 169)

This project is therefore concerned with the rediscovery of the lost, wounded, exiled, too small heart as highlighted above, carrying an understanding that the heart as it is known today is a *mere shadow of what it actually is, and could potentially be*. Inspired by Hillman’s essay *The Thought of the Heart* (2007), and the idea that the heart is an organ of imaginal perception, this project sets a stage for the heart to speak in relation to the phenomenon of conflict by adopting an imaginal approach which I describe in more detail in the methodology section of this introduction. In this sense, could an expanded view of the heart lead me to perceive and engage with conflict, and subsequently the world, differently? Additionally, could a wider perspective lead me to a more holistic outlook, enabling me to encompass separated and conflicted viewpoints?

By making the former statement and asking the latter question, I am drawing attention to the notion that, generally speaking, knowledge about life relies heavily on materialistic and reductive approaches that inform our engagement with the world at a primarily

mental level. This means that, particularly in the political realm, the heart can only be engaged with as a biological pump – eclipsing the heart’s long history as a feeling, thinking and intellectual organ. In relation to this idea religious philosopher Gregory Shaw observes that we “live in a profound disconnect between private experience and public discourse” (Voss, 2013, p. 244; 2015, p. 279). Perhaps related to this notion, cultural historian Fay Bound Alberti speaks of two hearts alive in today’s modern world – the heart of science and the heart of culture (2012, p. 166).

In relation to these observations, my work interrogates the contemporary scientific heart-as-pump narrative and attempts to rediscover other hearts that might have become lost to modern society because of a frame of reference that guides how the heart can be seen and engaged with (in relation to how we make decisions about life and create knowledge about our world). Specifically, one could interpret this statement as the difference between knowledge produced from empirically-based theory *about* the heart, and knowledge generated *through personal, lived experience of the heart*. Broadly speaking, one way of knowing characterises science and objectivity, the other reflects subjective experience which encompasses the senses, feelings, emotions and intuitions that arise from direct experience in relationship with life.

As American physicist and Buddhist Viktor Mansfield (1941-2008) has observed, the head is generally equated to intellectual pursuits like science and philosophy that takes an analytical approach to knowledge, considering the object of study in a detached way (2002, p. 226). Heart knowledge, in contrast, is receptive, intuitive and gained through identification with an-other (Mansfield, 2002, p. 226). While the head and heart may share some overlaps, they cannot be reduced to the other (Mansfield, 2002, p. 226). However, over the past several centuries these two ways of making sense of the world have become increasingly at odds with each other, and it is this conflict which lies at the heart of my project and at the heart of my own life.

Before moving on I must stress that it is not my intention in this project to demean or deride the empirical or scientific approach. As Mansfield says, both are equally important (2002, p. 226). Therefore, taking inspiration from Rice University religious studies

professor Jeffrey Kripal's reflexive approach, which I will explain in more detail later on, it is my aim to stay open and curious about the heart, moving backwards and forwards between different ways of knowing – expanding the “imaginative possibilities” of contemporary ways of seeing by taking up a certain way of authoring what would traditionally be seen as “impossible” or unacceptable (Kripal, 2010, p. 25). In this context, my project seriously explores the idea that the heart is a place from which valid knowledge about the world arises, and as such, can be granted status in our modern lives. However, there is a long way to go before I can make such a claim. In this sense, I suggest that there is already a living tension or conflict present in this work arising between different ways of knowing, in terms of how we engage with the heart in our contemporary society.

By committing to give other hearts (beyond the biological pump of science) a platform to speak, this work naturally exposes the idea of splits, separation and fractures in relation to modern ways of knowing. It is interesting at this point to consider that the word science means “to know”, but it actually originates from an “Indo-European root that literally means ‘to cut’ or ‘to split.’ The same root gave birth to the word *schism*” (Fideler, 2014, p. 39, italics in original). It is these splits and fractures in our interactions with the world and in our thinking, I suggest, that create the fertile ground for the phenomenon of conflict to manifest and take hold.

I will begin investigating this idea particularly through Jung and neuroscientist Iain McGilchrist's theories which suggest that modern Western approaches to life are seriously out of balance (2012). Indeed, Jung once stated that our contemporary approach to the world is “a very heavy sacrifice” (2014, p. 3026).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, American historian Morris Berman states, something is “wrong with our entire world view” (1988, 4%). In the modern view, subject (or the inner life) and object (the outer, empirical life) are now seen in opposition to each other (Berman, 1988, 4%-9%), consequently leading to an either-or view of reality. As Jung suggests, one-sidedness in any direction is equally problematic:

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<sup>5</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 135

In my picture of the world there is a vast outer realm and an equally vast inner realm; between these two stands man, facing now one and now the other, and, according to his mood or disposition, taking the one for the absolute truth by denying or sacrificing the other (2005, p. 122)

It is therefore important for me to state from the outset that this project proceeds on the understanding that there are multiple ways that the world *presents itself to us* for interpretation, requiring many lenses (namely the intellect, accompanied by the senses, intuition and imagination) to help bring the world into expression and to participate fully with it. Certainly it could be suggested that the closest those of us in modern society might move to such a way of seeing is through a phenomenological approach that is concerned with a first person, subjective view of reality – specifically, exploring phenomena as they appear in our own experience. However, it is worth stating that Romanyshyn observes modern phenomenology (in this case within the discourse of psychological science) has sacrificed its broader scope (2013, p. 88). Like Romanyshyn, my own understanding of phenomenology is a style of thinking and being, rather than a philosophy or strict methodology (2013, p. 88). As human beings entangled with the perceptual world, the world that presents itself to us is therefore never complete. We must look again and again, each time at a different world that has itself changed during the act of looking. Returning to look, we build an awareness that what we see is always unfinished, a dynamic relationship between ourselves and the world.

This way of seeing appears to have close links with our Greek ancestors who did not draw firm dividing lines between different ways of gaining knowledge about the world (Shaw, 1995; Naydler, 1996; Tarnas, 2000; McGilchrist, 2012; Kingsley, 2013).<sup>6</sup> According to philosopher and cultural historian David Fideler, all was part of an “integral enterprise, rooted in a desire to understand our place in the cosmic pattern” (2000, p. 41). The discursive intellect was therefore “a tool that could lead beyond itself”, thereby illuminating bonds “with the deepest levels of reality” (Fideler, 2000, p. 41). However, when a reductive lens is given precedence and narrows down the richness, mystery and complexity of life, it is impossible to engage fully with the world and consequently rifts have the potential to appear. *Importantly, this does not mean that other ways in which*

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<sup>6</sup> I will be expanding on this idea as my thesis progresses

*the world presents itself to us have disappeared.* It is this specific idea that forms the underlying thread of my work – namely, to explore approaches to knowledge which enable as many *other* voices of the heart to speak as possible.

When I talk about the ‘other’ in this work, I am referring specifically to the idea of the archetypal other in whatever form that ‘other’ takes.<sup>7</sup> For example, in life we are in relationship with ‘others’ that are part of the greater whole that constitutes the world. In this case, ‘others’ can be understood as taking any form. Therefore, when I speak of the “other” in this thesis, I am not referring to the academic study of othering that considers the ‘individual other’ as understood in a social, intercultural encounter – “Othering... [uses] stereotypes and representations about the other when meeting her/him and talking about her/him” (Dervin, 2016, p. 43). Instead I am considering the idea of the ‘other’ in educational theorist John Dirkx’s terms; specifically, that “the other” is “anything, anyone, or any group we perceive as apart or separate from our individual natures” (1997, p. 83). To frame this idea of ‘an-other’, the next section offers a practical example in relation to a deeply transformative experience that I had with my heart over a decade previously and set the trajectory for this exploration. In this context, I am framing my heart as an ‘other’, and making room for this ‘other’ heart to speak.

### **Experiencing an-‘other’ heart**

For as long as I can recollect, I have been driven to understand what pushes people into conflict, how it might be managed, and the possibility of its resolution and/or transformation. Starting as a personal enquiry at a young age as a result of growing up in a difficult home environment, trapped in a narrative of conflict (Formenti, 2015, p. 19), my journey with this question has led me through cardiac illness, a career in counselling, coaching and mediation, and onwards into this PhD – expanding my awareness along the way to encompass spiritual, ecological, social and political dimensions. In this sense, I am taking a frame of reference that situates life in a wider context; understanding that I am

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<sup>7</sup> This is a slippery, yet vitally important concept to grasp, and I will be drawing out my understanding of the importance of the ‘other’ within the context of this work as my research progresses.

part of, and affected by, a much larger and interconnected system, comprised of many layers.

This idea links closely with transformative learning theorists Rosemarie Anderson and William Braud's understanding of the human journey through the lens of transpersonal psychology which tries to "understand and value human life in its fullest and most transformative expressions" (1998, p.69). In this sense, transpersonal psychology encompasses simultaneously individual, communal and global aspects of the individual that reflect the "mystery and interconnectedness of life" (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. 9). Anderson, drawing on feminist theory (1998, pp. 77–79), states that research that delves into the depths of human experience demands an awareness of the "personal-political-universal circle of our endeavours" (1998, p. 79).

Considering my own journey to this point, I have an intuitive sense that this question is seeking exploration *through* me, and it is helpful here to consider Anderson's approach towards her doctoral students whereby she encourages them to find topics that seem to be "chasing them, pursuing them" (2004, p. 308). She observes that often researchers are "called" to a project from the culture at large which is seeking change (2004, p. 308). In agreement, Romanyshyn speaks of being claimed by the work (2013, pp. 14 & 62). That is, Romanyshyn suggests a researcher is called into the work to be in service to something other than her/himself (2013, p. 82). With these ideas in mind, this project is inspired by my own personal journey with conflict, and an understanding that despite the growing discourses of peace studies, conflict studies, conflict resolution, conflict management and conflict transformation (research areas exploring the cause, nature, resolution and transformation of conflict around the world), conflict still exists at micro- and macrocosmic levels of scale; continuing to cause pain and suffering for all parties involved.

Certainly from direct experience of living in a conflicted home environment, I spent much of my time feeling extremely anxious, worried and distressed; not knowing what to do about the situation that I was in, or how to manage the situation better. Experiencing debilitating chest pain throughout my early teens - often rendering me unable to breathe

properly - I made frequent visits to my GP, however nothing physically wrong could be found. In 1990, at the age of eighteen, I contracted a life-threatening virus. Having been admitted to hospital after experiencing severe fatigue, breathlessness and dizziness, I underwent numerous medical investigations – ECGs, echocardiograms and blood tests. Following a chest x-ray, I recall a cardiologist informing me that there was what appeared to be, in his own words, “a black shadow over my heart.” My condition appeared to baffle the medics, and, as no diagnosis or treatment was forthcoming, five days after admission I took a turn for the worse and was rushed into intensive care.

In the early hours of 14<sup>th</sup> August I experienced my first cardiac arrest, having two further events over the course of the next 24 hours. Eventually I was diagnosed with a condition called myocarditis – an inflammation of the heart muscle – and I spent the next three months in hospital. After being discharged, I made a slow, yet good recovery, moving forward with my life - graduating from university with a business degree and marrying at the age of twenty-four. Unfortunately the marriage failed and I met someone new, which caused considerable conflict in my life in relation to family dynamics. It was around this time that I began to experience a cardiac condition called atrial fibrillation – a very fast and irregular heart beat – which had devastating effects upon me, including being unable to work as a result of the debilitating physical symptoms, and the development of anxiety, depression and agoraphobia as I slowly lost faith in my heart’s ability to keep me healthy and alive. I became obsessed – listening to every single beat of my heart during my waking hours, convinced that if I did not keep a watch over my heart that it would stop and I would die.

One night, in around 2005, I recall waking up in a severe state of anxiety. I felt completely helpless, unable to deal with my relationship with my heart and feeling suffocated under the weight of never-ending conflict that seemed to rage within my own body, and in my external world. In that particular moment, I did not know what else to do, who I could turn to for support, and I seriously considered taking my own life. However, in one of the darkest moments I have ever experienced, *something* stopped me. The only way I can describe this event is a profound, intuitive sense that my heart was speaking urgently to me and that in order to survive and live well in the future, I needed to pay attention and



listen. This transformative moment - which broke through into my awareness at a time of great emotional conflict and chronic ill health - offered me a choice between life and death, showing me the phenomenon of conflict alive in my own body, heart and mind. This moment is one that I will never forget, and has continually defied any kind of appropriate explanation through the empirical lens that I tried to apply to it. Even as I reflect now, I can only attempt to describe what happened to me as a kind of “mystical” (Kalsched, 2013, p. 2) experience;<sup>8</sup> residing somewhere beyond a place that my knowledge at the time allowed me to perceive.

Transpersonal psychologist Steve Taylor suggests that such experiences “make us aware of a dimension of reality whose existence we never suspected” and can “awaken an urge for spiritual development” (2011, 7% - 8%). While I cannot categorically state that this experience awakened an immediate urge in me for spiritual development, it did stimulate an urge to understand what had happened to me. It also gave me a glimpse of something different with regards to the nature of the reality itself, standing in stark contrast to the view of the world that I had been educated into. The heart I met in this experience broke through into my awareness, inviting me to expand beyond my worldview. Perhaps as a by-product, this eventually led me towards an outlook which I would consider to be spiritual.<sup>9</sup> Taylor defines such an outlook as a sense of an old self dying and a new one being born (2011, loc 41, 1%). The new world is different, offering a new sense of meaning, harmony and beauty (Taylor, 2011, loc 41, 1%).

### **Engaging meaningfully with my experience: different ways of seeing**

Like Taylor, I suggest that the desire to make sense of such experiences naturally leads one towards narratives and discourses which can offer helpful insights, “to build up intellectual frameworks to understand” (Taylor, 2011, 5%). Certainly I found that

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<sup>8</sup> Jungian analyst Donald Kalsched affirms that the mystical/spiritual experiences of an individual are crucially important in any adequate understanding of the self (2013, pp. 2–3), particularly within the context of trauma. Referring to numerous scholars within contemporary psychoanalysis, Kalsched points to the idea of the mystical as being “ineffable”, “uncanny”, “infinite”, defying “rational understanding” with a “blurring of the boundaries between ordinary and non-ordinary reality” (2013, pp. 2–3).

<sup>9</sup> I will be exploring this idea further in my thesis, and clarifying my position in the final chapter

depth/transpersonal psychology and religious discourses offered a great deal of support. For example, Sufi teacher Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee speaks of such events as feeling or sensing the presence of the “divine”, causing the ego to respond in “awe or fear” (1996, p. 38). He continues to state that “when the experience has passed, the ego does not attempt to color experience with doubts” (Vaughan-Lee, 1996, p. 38). I can resonate with Vaughan-Lee’s observation as this event had such a powerful effect on me that I have never given up trying to understand. Indeed, since this experience I have carried a longing to make sense of what happened beyond a simple “rational re-reading”(Kripal, 2014, p. 338). That is, where revelatory or mystical experience is explained by being subsumed into a specific rational framework.

Driven by the awe-inspiring quality of this experience, I discovered the work of German theologian and philosopher Rudolf Otto (1869-1937). In *The Idea of the Holy*,<sup>10</sup> Otto considers the idea of the “numinous” – a term that he defines as an encounter with the holy/sacred that eludes apprehension in terms of concepts, but towards which the mind turns as a result of a feeling response determined by circumstances and the environment (1970, chaps 2&3). Otto defines the holy as a category of “interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion” containing a specific element or moment which distances it from the rational and which remains inexpressible (1970, p. 5). According to Otto, the word *holy* has been mistranslated and rationalised to incorporate moral dimensions (1970, p. 5). By contrast, the word *numinous* offers a way of moving beyond the rational, towards noticing experiences which cannot be defined.

The online Oxford English Dictionary states that *numinous* derives from the Latin word *numen*; meaning divinity or divine presence (2018). In contemporary English, *numinous* is defined as mystical or sublime, arousing spiritual or religious emotion, or in psychology, relating to an experience of the divine as awesome or terrifying (2018). Mysterious, often violent, frightening, awe-inspiring and/or carrying a sense of great urgency, Otto states that *numinous* moments and accompanying feelings of what he terms the “*mysterium*

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<sup>10</sup> First published in 1923

*tremendum*” (1970, pp. 12–24), have the potential to awaken the spirit.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the “daunting ‘awefulness’” of numinous experience (Otto, 1970, p. 31), at the same time Otto states that it exercises itself as “something uniquely attractive and *fascinating*” (1970, p. 31, italics in original). The element of fascination, the “living ‘something more’ of the *fascinans*” (Otto, 1970, p. 35, italics in original), is the second aspect of the numinous (Otto, 1970, p. 41).

I certainly resonate with Otto’s definition of the numinous. At that time my heart helped me to experience something that was simultaneously “wholly other” (Otto, 1970, p. 25), and yet, intimately personal. I was both filled with fear and consumed with fascination and wonder about what I had experienced. Considering the experience with my heart more deeply, I wonder about who this heart is, and where this heart is. Is this heart me? Do I have a heart? Who is speaking when the heart is speaking? What does this mean for my relationship with my heart? In relation to these questions, educator Wilma Fraser writes of the difficulty of this kind of reflexive work, particularly as the researcher must honour relationships “between the self and the other, between the ‘I’ who writes and the ‘I’ who remembers; and between the ‘I’ who coheres around a nexus of framing influences” (2018, p. 72). In this sense, what is the relationship between myself and my heart, and with the deeper reality that my heart showed me? What might exploring these questions mean for my sense of self, and subsequently the outcomes of this project? Certainly the numinous quality of this experience, and the resulting difficulty in making sense of it, has left me with many more questions than I feel this thesis can answer, but as this work unfolds I hope to find plausible ways to explore them and give space for these questions, and resulting ideas, to live meaningfully within this project.

Returning to Otto, since he coined the term numinous, several noted scholars have also used the term, including novelist and philosopher Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), who in his 1931 essay *Meditation on the Moon* (1957), used the idea of the numinous to try to reconcile the material and spiritual dimensions of reality. Additionally, C.S. Lewis’ (1898-1963) philosophical work, *The Problem of Pain* (2009), explored the idea of the numinous

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<sup>11</sup> Otto defines the term *mysterium* as that which is hidden and esoteric, “that which is beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar” (1970, p. 13)

and the uncanny in relation to the existence of God. In contemporary times, classics scholar Peter Kingsley defines the numinous as “the experience of the impossible in our lives” (2018a, p. 119). Jung is another important figure who used the term regularly in his work, defining numinosity as “a deeply stirring emotional effect” (2014, p. 5187).<sup>12</sup> While Otto suggests that the numinous can connect one to the idea of the divine as an ontological reality, felt objectively outside the self (1970, pp. 10–11), Jung’s interpretation of the numinous is psychologically rooted in experiences of the self – that is, linking the conscious to the unconscious.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, while Jung acknowledges the human capacity for “religious feelings and ideas” (2014, p. 1489),<sup>14</sup> his understanding of the numinous appears to differ from Otto in that he is “a phenomenologist of the psyche rather than a metaphysician” (Schlamm, 2007a, p. 408), agnostic “with regard to the objective reference of such experiences outside the self or psyche” (Schlamm, 2007a, pp. 408–409).<sup>15</sup>

However, in agreement with Otto, Jung points to numinous experience as resting upon an emotional foundation “unassailable by reason” (2014, p. 5245),<sup>16</sup> equally as challenging to both the intellect and the emotions. Religious studies scholar Leon Schlamm (1948-2015) in a paper exploring Jung’s view of the numinous states; “The *mysterium* moment of numinous experience absolutely transcends what is known to ordinary human experience, triggering religious responses of stupor, astonishment that strikes us dumb, amazement and utter incomprehension” (2007a, p. 405, italics in original). Pointing to the underlying quality of the numinous, Jung states: “Whatever the nature of these numinous experiences may be, they all have one thing in common: they relegate their source to a region outside consciousness” (2014, p. 5034).<sup>17</sup> What is interesting to me in Otto’s and Jung’s engagement with the idea of the numinous is the quality of openness that a

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<sup>12</sup> CW, Vol XI, 2014, para.454

<sup>13</sup> The human psyche comprises not only consciousness but the unconscious. British psychology Professor Roderick Main observes that Jung defined the unconscious as “a psychological borderline concept, which covers all psychic contents or processes that are not conscious” (2004, p. 17). See Main, 2004, pp.17-25 for more information

<sup>14</sup> CW, Vol IV, 2014, para. 781

<sup>15</sup> This reading of Jung is contended by Kingsley who suggests that Jung was a Gnostic scholar who carried a deeply religious attitude and was conscious of divine reality (2018a, 2018b). For Jung the unconscious could be equated to God (Jung, 1989, pp. 336–337)

<sup>16</sup> CW, Vol XI, 2014, para. 556

<sup>17</sup> CW, Vol XI, 2014, para. 222

religious or depth psychological lens can bring to experiences which cannot be empirically validated but which, nonetheless, are in some way real to, and carry meaning for, the experiencer. Certainly these lenses offer a framework from within which such experiences can be acknowledged and explored.

In this sense, the reason I am engaging with this idea of the numinous in the context of my experience, is on the understanding that the meaning I took from the event illuminated a pathway that changed my way of knowing and being in the world. This is not something which could later be understood as a pattern of reducible behaviour, but importantly, that the numinous quality of the experience suggested *something other* to which the finiteness of my being had to respond and explore. Arriving at this point, I felt as though the “unfinished business” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 114) in relation to my heart was being given the opportunity to reveal itself in this work. In a similar fashion, Romanyshyn speaks of waiting for almost twenty years to realise and understand the living presences that were guiding and informing his own work from the beginning. It was only after two decades of writing, reflecting and teaching that he finally realised the ultimate goal of the work itself; that is, to give voice to the role of the wound of the researcher in informing and guiding research (2013, pp. 114–115). The depths of the work had been calling Romanyshyn forward all that time, unfolding in ways beyond the grasp of the rational mind and linear logic (2013, pp. 114–115); transforming him in the process.

In a tantalising observation which appears to corroborate the importance of my own research and growing realisations about how significant the heart is in my work, Hillman points out that in modern times we are bereft of an “adequate psychology and philosophy of the heart, and therefore of the imagination” (2007, p. 6). In this sense, we have lost connection to our authentic hearts; the deeper heart beyond the physical organ (whatever this heart may be). Inspired by Romanyshyn’s exploration of the heart as a metaphoric reality for psychological life (1982), Hillman suggests that this loss, initiated by Harvey, over time created an inability within modern consciousness to hear the heart and to speak the heart’s language - “Thought lost its heart, heart lost its thought” (2007, pp. 24–25). In psychological terms, Romanyshyn suggests that it is not experience that is

seen in events, but events which are seen through experience (1982, p. 34). In this context, metaphor offers a way to texture our lived experience, which can therefore be understood as “metaphorical reality” (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 37).

In the light of imaginal/intuitive approaches that I shall be using in this project to create space to interact with my heart in a wider context, my hope for this work is that an appropriate stage will be created upon which to hold my heart and hear my heart’s story in relation to creatively engaging with conflict. In voicing my hopes for this project, I am reminded of Kripal whose life’s work has been to link “impossible” personal experiences more adequately with the theoretical understanding of religion. Having undergone a mystical experience several decades earlier, Kripal speaks of “that Night” (2001, p. 12); a night which for him initiated a religious quest, providing a lens through which he has dedicated the last twenty years of academic research. Seeing a parallel between Kripal’s wish for his work and my own explorations, “that Night” for me was a catalyst which has led me to consider the heart in many different ways and consequently I have explored numerous discourses that have enabled me, through the voice of the heart itself, to consider the phenomenon of conflict differently.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, I acknowledge that my experience was highly subjective and subsequently my work cannot be, in Kripal’s words “universalized into a general theory” (2001, p. 12) of, in this case, conflict and conflict resolution, as this would miss the point completely. My commitment to this work is founded on the insistence that such experiences, arising out of human consciousness, must be able to offer some guidance for engaging creatively with intellectual challenges - bringing fresh perspectives to unresolved problems and debated questions. What I understand Kripal’s comment to mean is that his experience and subsequent efforts to understand it cannot be abstracted into a general theory which can be applied uniformly in an empirical manner. Rather, I see that his efforts to understand the experience, and findings, might offer creative ways for approaching life’s challenges – acknowledging the importance of subjective experience in finding different ways of engaging with the objective, material world.

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<sup>18</sup> From this point onwards in my work, I will be referring to the night when my heart spoke to me as “that Night” – borrowing the term from Kripal (2001, p.12)

My enquiry therefore must deal with approaches to knowledge, exploring our place in the world, and the world's place in ours. While such an enquiry will not be easy, and I may never quite reach what Kripal terms the “flaming target” of that single event (2001, p. 12), it is actually not my intention to define “that Night”, but to acknowledge in that particular moment *a stage was set for my heart to speak in relation to conflict*. As Kripal observes three decades on from his own profound experience, there is no stable meaning of “that Night” that can be “languaged or reasoned”, as meanings change and mutate as Kripal interacts with his memories of the experience in his ongoing work (2017, p. 52). Kripal terms this interaction a “living hermeneutical process” that helps to guide his present and future thinking (2017, p. 52). In a similar way I intend to weave personal experience with scholarly research, maintaining the tension between many different strands in a living enquiry. To help in this process the heart will become a guiding image; a point of origination and home-coming, as I remain deeply committed to following the heart's guidance in the hope of revealing what it wishes to say with regards to modern-day conflict.

## **What is the heart?**

It is hopefully clear that in this thesis I shall be interrogating what the *heart actually is* (please see appendix one for a summary of the different versions of the heart which appear in this thesis). It is therefore my intention to engage with the heart as fully as this project allows. While the heart has been known in a vast array of different ways over the millennia, it is impossible for me to cover every aspect. Therefore, through an imaginal approach I am going to explore the heart as a living metaphor and a dynamic symbol of reconnection to ways of knowing and being that have, for many years, been obscured from the modern Western worldview in order to help me to engage more deeply with my research questions. It is subsequently my aim to show how other hearts (beyond that of the biological pump) might provide helpful ways of making sense of the world in which

we live. To that end, and for the purposes of clarity in this introduction, what follows is a short review of how the heart is generally perceived in contemporary culture:

- **Medical heart** - in modern medical science the heart is understood in biological terms as an organ which is an integral part of the circulation system. In this discourse, knowledge and emotions are connected to the head (brain). However, as contemporary culture still associates the heart with the emotions and love, the “worker heart” (McCormick, 1988, pp. 37–38) or “heart of science” (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 166), and the “feeling heart” (McCormick, 1988, pp. 37–38) or “heart of culture” (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 166) provide an interesting dichotomy. This idea is particularly important when considering the heart/brain opposition as popularly conceived in contemporary society.
- **Feeling and emotional heart** - in popular culture the heart is generally seen as the place where feelings and emotions arise (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 2). It is also commonly associated with benevolent qualities like compassion, kindness, non-judgement, love and gentleness. These qualities seem to naturally point to a depth of feeling beyond that of the rational mind. Within the context of my thesis, I suggest that this heart can be seen trying to speak particularly within conflict literature and holistic science literature, where it is frequently used as metaphor to refer to personal qualities.
- **Religious heart** - in the Sufi and Eastern Orthodox traditions the heart carries a broader meaning. As well as being a physical organ, the heart is also seen as the spiritual centre of an individual and an organ of knowledge (Vaughan-Lee, 1996; Corbin, 1997; Nasr, 2002; Ware, 2002). Drawing on the extensive works of Muslim scholar and mystic Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240), religious philosopher Henry Corbin (1903-1978) states that in Sufism the heart is the seat of the imagination and the mode through which one has the possibility of connecting with a transcendent reality. In this framework, the heart offers access to a region and reality of being which otherwise would remain “closed and forbidden to us” (1989, p. vii).



## Holistic heart: illuminating conflict?

While it is true that the heart is a physical organ of the body and makes meaning in our lives as such, it is also accurate to say that the heart makes meaning in our lives in many other ways that do not necessarily stand up to empirical scrutiny. Over the past two decades I have searched for ways to contemplate the lives of these other hearts, and in this research project I have had the opportunity to explore numerous different hearts – creating a picture of a fuller, perhaps more complete heart. In this sense, it could be suggested that in this project, the heart has been guiding me towards a sense of *its own wholeness*. Wholeness is generally defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as a state of forming a complete and harmonious whole; unity (2018).

Interestingly, in psychology, wholeness is a state in which the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche work together in harmony – this is what Jung termed the individuation process, that is, “becoming whole” (2014, pp. 2817–2819 & 5440).<sup>19</sup> In religious terms, wholeness is the state of being perfectly well in body, mind, soul and spirit. In science, the idea of wholeness is captured in the term ‘holism’ – an approach to research that emphasises the study of complex systems which are approached as coherent wholes whose component parts are best understood in context and in relation to one another and to the whole (Harrington, 1996, p. xvii). In holistic science terms,<sup>20</sup> wholeness is understood as the whole coming into being through the part, and the part being representative of the whole. The whole and the part are continually in a dynamic interaction, within which there is no whole without the part and no part without the whole (Franses, 2015a). All is connected through a living relationship, and wholeness in

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<sup>19</sup> CW, Vol VII, 2014, para.266-269 & CW, Vol XI, 2014, para. 906

<sup>20</sup> See footnote 30 and the ‘holistic science’ section in the Literature Review for more details

this context can be seen through the lenses of, for example, complexity theory,<sup>21</sup> systems theory,<sup>22</sup> deep ecology,<sup>23</sup> and eco-psychology.<sup>24</sup>

Taking up this idea of wholeness in relation to the heart in this project, it became increasingly clear to me that in order to do justice to the other hearts in my life I needed to seek out another order of knowing that would show “aspects and dimensions of reality...[that would be missed] without it” (Lachman, 2017, p. 31). In this sense, numerous scholars across the discourses of psychology and religion, from ancient to contemporary times, have taken seriously another way of knowing in addition to the rational intellect – namely, the imagination (Lachman, 2017). Indeed, it is the imagination which offers the possibility of bringing into one’s awareness realities that are not immediately present to the physical senses (Lachman, 2017, p. 31).

I will be speaking more about the nature, and importance, of the imagination as a producer of knowledge shortly, however, for the moment I would like to point out that writing at the juncture between the physical, empirical realm, and worlds that can only ever be pointed towards through the imagination is not easy. This project has continually pulled me in opposing directions as I have struggled to bring these worlds closer together and make meaning from them both. The work that you now hold in your hands has embodied the intellectual conflict that has manifested for me between empirical and imaginal ways of knowing; finding myself continually writing and rewriting as a process of understanding, weaving a pathway between different realms over and over again. It was this live struggle which helped me to give voice to the many layers of the heart, revealing itself to me as both a symbol of reconnection to what makes us human, and a grand

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<sup>21</sup> The study of complex and chaotic systems and how order, pattern and structure can arise from them

<sup>22</sup> The interdisciplinary study of systems. A system is a cohesive conglomeration of interrelated and interdependent parts. Changing one part of a system may affect other parts or the whole system

<sup>23</sup> An environmental movement and philosophy that regards human life as just one of many equal components of a global ecosystem

<sup>24</sup> The study of relationships between human beings and the natural world through ecological and psychological principles. The discipline aims to see the needs of people and planet as related, and on the same continuum.

holistic metaphor, guiding me towards ways of seeing and knowing that helped me to engage with conflict differently.

## **The conflicted heart in modern discourse**

Interestingly, I suggest that the conflict and challenges I found myself facing in this project in relation to how the heart is generally known and accepted in modern political discourse, and how we personally perceive the hearts of our lived experience, can be seen manifesting across numerous disciplines. Specifically, many scholars often mention the heart in relation to their work (LeBaron, 2002; Lederach, 2003; Cloke, 2013; Bekoff, 2014; Robinson, 2018), but never precisely define what this heart is, or what it might mean in practice. This issue can be seen particularly in the conflict literature, which I explore in greater detail in chapter one. It can also be seen in the holistic science literature, and in the discourse of feminism. Specifically, biologist Marc Bekoff speaks from an ecological perspective about the need for humanity to compassionately engage with nature. Bekoff's book – *Rewilding our Hearts* (2014) – relates to the heart in terms of a human capacity to develop kindness and compassion for nature, envisaging a “global social movement based on peace, compassion, empathy, and love” (2014, p. 19). Interestingly, the word *heart* does not appear in the index once, and the idea of what the heart actually is remains implicit in his work.

Similarly, psychologist Oliver Robinson's book *Paths Between Head and Heart* (2018) explores how science and spirituality relate in terms of how they both exist as parts of a larger whole. In this sense, it is generally assumed that the reader knows the head relates to science, and the heart relates to spirituality; however this is never fully discussed. Robinson simply states that logic and rigor are associated with the head, whereas feelings and intuitions are associated with the heart. These, he suggests need to be developed to find a “healthy balance” (Robinson, 2018, p. 18). While Robinson's project is very much like my own in sentiment, I suggest that his work beautifully highlights a difficulty with the subtle heart that I will be drawing out as this thesis progresses. Additionally, in the

feminist literature, Hilary Rose titles a paper *Hand, Brain, and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences* (1983). In this paper Rose gives no real definition or explanation as to what this heart is. The reader has to make the assumption that Rose is speaking of the heart in relation to loving and caring attributes – which she states are necessary for human survival (1983, p. 83).

With all of these writers, the role that the heart plays is left implicit - as though readers must understand what this heart is. Reviewing the work of the scholars highlighted above, it could be suggested that the heart being referred to is loosely associated with love, feelings, emotions, compassion and kindness. However, while we may intuitively know what we might mean by this heart, the issue is that a dominant narrative generally perceives any other heart (beyond that of a pump) as a sentimental add-on, and consequently nothing that we need to seriously concern ourselves with in relation to dealing with life. Illustrating this point, in the context of religion, French author and intellectual René Guénon (1886-1951) suggests that sentimentalism is the product of Enlightenment society, which suppressed “Divine” intellect and led modern society to materialist views and notions of sentimentality (2004b, p. 61). Psychologically, Romanyshyn suggests that in modern society we have abandoned our bodies, and consequently our hearts, to a way of seeing that states the medicalised, objectified body/heart *are the only reality*, the way they *are*, the only heart and body *that there is* (2000, p. 173, my italics). In this context, perhaps one can see how the heart beyond the scientific organ can only ever be reduced to ideas of sentimentalism and mere metaphor (in the contemporary sense of the word),<sup>25</sup> consequently having little to offer at the level at which valid knowledge about the world is created and agreed upon.

Considering this, it is interesting how many times other hearts try to make themselves known in the literature, however, whatever these hearts are, or mean for us practically in the modern world, fail to be brought into conscious expression. Why is this? What ways

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<sup>25</sup> See section headed ‘*Symbol and Metaphor*’ in this introduction for details regarding how the term metaphor will be used in this project

of knowing might we need to engage with to take seriously whatever these other hearts are? How can these other hearts live in our world? What other ways of engaging with the world and knowledge creation might we need to use to explore these questions seriously?

## Defining the imaginal

These questions seem to point to an approach towards life that offers an opportunity to *look into the world*, beyond outward appearances, and into the depths (in psychological terms) or heights (in religious terms) of phenomena. Indeed, this is the guiding principle of knowledge as offered through the imagination. Imagination is used here in the broadest sense, as a way to engage seriously with whatever might lie beneath outward appearances. This is in stark contrast to contemporary understanding that defines the imagination as an escape from, or substitute for, reality (Lachman, 2017, p. 31), equated with “the unreal” (Corbin, 1997, p. 181), and never in the sense of offering someone a deeper engagement with it. However, this project demands that I look deeper and encourage other hearts to speak, and in this sense I draw particularly on the discourses of depth psychology, esotericism, religious mysticism and holistic science which all provide imaginal approaches that can assist an individual to engage in a broad, deep and transcendent sense with life. With its roots in Plato and later in Sufism, the category of the imaginal is closely associated with Corbin who understood “the imaginal to be a noetic organ that accessed a real dimension of reality whose appearances to us were...shaped by what he termed the ‘creative imagination’” (Kripal, 2017, p. 233).<sup>26</sup>

According to Kripal, Corbin borrowed this term from Jung, who borrowed it from Swiss psychologist Théodore Flournoy (2017, p. 233),<sup>27</sup> who in turn borrowed it from parapsychologist Frederic Myers (2017, p. 235).<sup>28</sup> For each of these scholars the imaginal

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<sup>26</sup> For more information, see Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* (1997, pp. 179–180)

<sup>27</sup> Dates – 1854-1920

<sup>28</sup> Dates – 1843-1901

realm was the intermediate world of the *mundus imaginalis*, the “imaginal world” (Kripal, 2017, p. 233). In relation to this project, my use of the imagination is largely informed by Hillman and Jung’s depth psychological approach (where the imagination is seen as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche), and Corbin’s philosophical-religious understanding of the imagination (where the imagination acts as a bridge between the physical and the divine realms). Each of these scholars suggest that it is only through the imagination that one has the ability to access a more expanded sense of the world itself, or as independent scholar in consciousness studies and esotericism Gary Lachman suggests, “create it, or...collaborate in its creation” (2017, p. 31).

For Corbin, the heart is the organ of the imagination, an organ of knowledge that mediates between the material world of flesh and the transcendent world of spirit (1997, pp. 221–236). Corbin’s imaginal world was deeply spiritual and infinitely real – as “ontologically...real as the world of the senses and that of the intellect” (Lachman, 2017, p. 94). This means that the imaginal has its own mode of being (Lachman, 2017, p. 94), enabling imaginal perception to be understood “as engendering a kind of knowledge which arises from the confluence of inner recognition with ‘external’ reality” (Voss, 2009, pp. 37–38). In psychological terms and in a therapeutic sense, Jung and Hillman developed the active imagination to create a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious self (Voss, 2009, p. 37). Accessing images from the unconscious and making them conscious was part of Jung’s process towards individuation – that is, “‘coming to selfhood’ or ‘self-realization.’” (2014, p. 2817).<sup>29</sup>

As Corbin scholar Tom Cheetham writes, “One must become a participant in the drama of the psyche” (2012, p. 161). For Jung this process was an internal journey to the centre of the self which presents itself in images. Hillman agreed with Jung that we live in images (1991, p. 5), however in contrast to Jung, Hillman never uses the words individuation or unconscious (1991, p. 9). For Hillman, the “active imagination...is for the sake of the images and where they can take us, *their* realization” (Cheetham, 2015a, p. 32, italics in

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<sup>29</sup> CW, Vol VII, 2014, para. 266

original). As such, we are subject to the imaginal world that “is neither literal nor abstract and yet is utterly real, with its own laws and purposes” (Hillman, 1991, p. 6).

Another scholar that appreciates the importance of the imagination as a way of knowing is McGilchrist. From a neuroscience perspective, McGilchrist’s research focuses on the divided brain, suggesting that left and right brain hemispheres have differing insights/takes on the world (2012, p. 10; 2013, pp. 12–13), which affects us at the level of our experience of reality. In this context, the right hemisphere is more in touch with the world (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 195), is “concerned with the *relations between things*” (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 50, italics in original), “*sees more*” (Rowson and McGilchrist, 2013, p. 13, italics in original), and appreciates that life is a process of dynamic flow (Rowson and McGilchrist, 2013, p. 14). In contrast, the left hemisphere is the “hemisphere of abstraction” (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 50) – its priority is to narrow things down to a certainty, where life is seen as “fixed and static” (Rowson and McGilchrist, 2013, p. 14). McGilchrist argues that contemporary society has become too reliant on the left hemisphere to the detriment of the right; championing knowledge gained through objective reasoning (2012, pp. 386–388). McGilchrist’s research highlights the significance of the faculty of the imagination as being able to complement knowledge gained by objective, empirical reasoning (2012, p. 199). As he states, “Objectivity *requires* interpretation of what one finds, depends on imagination for its achievement” (2009, p. 166, italics in original).

While McGilchrist does not use the term imagination in a religious or psychological sense, he places great value on it; interpreting the imagination as a way of being and knowing beyond facts and words that reaches out into the world (2012, pp. 107–127). Like Corbin, Jung and Hillman, who in their unique language see the imagination as a bridge between the different realms as detailed above, McGilchrist sees the imagination as a key link between the two hemispheres (2012, p. 199). However, while McGilchrist seems to hint at different realms lying beyond literal, left-brain hemisphere interpretations, accessible through the right-brain hemisphere and the imagination, he never specifically makes a move into what these realms might mean to him, or how he might define them.

Nonetheless, McGilchrist's metaphor of epistemological duality will offer support for my project, particularly as he is speaking both from a scientific and philosophical perspective about the significance of the imagination as a way of knowing. Through his work, McGilchrist manages to capture the nature of my difficulty in writing at the juncture between two different ways of knowing, stating that for human beings "there are two fundamentally opposed realities, two different modes of experience; [and] each is of ultimate importance in bringing about the recognisably human world" (2012, p. 3). While the right hemisphere is better equipped to deal with "our passions, our sense of humour, all metaphoric and symbolic understanding...all religious sense, all imaginative and intuitive processes" (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 209), the left hemisphere renders experiences "explicit...mechanical, lifeless" (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 209). Each hemisphere has a different set of values and priorities, yet must coexist, and therefore as McGilchrist states, they are often likely to "come into conflict" (2012, p. 5). Certainly this is a powerful metaphor which seems to capture my own intellectual struggle as I find ways to write at the juncture of two ways of knowing, and do justice to the lived experience of my heart.

In addition to these scholars, it is important to acknowledge the active imagination process as developed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). Goethe's approach arose out of the early Romantic period; an intellectual movement that advocated a different way of thinking about life, first appearing in European thought at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Bortoft, 2012, p.10). In recognising the limitations of a growing rational approach to knowing the world, Goethe developed a way of seeing that cultivated his intuition, sensory experience and feeling. Known today as Goethean Science,<sup>30</sup> Goethe championed the imagination through his twin process of deep observation and "exact sensorial imagination" (Holdrege, 2005, p. 35). The former involved taking time and contemplating the object of one's study without any preconceived, preformed ideas (Holdrege, 2005, p. 35). The latter involved inwardly

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<sup>30</sup> The Schumacher College in Devon, UK, approaches learning using the principles of holistic science as its foundation – namely, respect for all living things and an understanding that all is connected (Schumacher College, 2019). The college's MSc in Holistic Science also used the principles of Goethe's approach to science. I graduated from this programme in 2014.



recreating the object of study in one's imagination to experience more vividly what was originally observed (Holdrege, 2005, p. 35). For Goethe, all is in the phenomenon (Holdrege, 2005), and it is by refining our perceptions that we are able to see more clearly and deeply (Holdrege, 2005, p. 31).<sup>31</sup>

Goethe's method of the imagination has strong parallels with the ideas of Corbin, Jung, Hillman and McGilchrist in terms of helping to bring into our awareness what is often hidden from ordinary, surface-level consciousness. Committing to an imaginal process as described creates the possibility of a deeper connection with other phenomena; using all one's senses and intuition, which could lead towards a spiritual sensibility or a religious sense of the divine.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, religious philosopher Jeremy Naydler states that Goethe's deep connection with the objects of his study was "a spiritual experience....For Goethe, the divine is present everywhere in nature....[and] was an intrinsic part of his experience of nature" (2009a, p. 110).

## **Symbol and metaphor**

In the same way that I am considering the imagination in its broadest sense in this project, I shall also be using the language of the imagination – that is symbol and metaphor - in the deepest and broadest sense. What I mean specifically here is that in this project a symbol is not just a narrow sign which denotes the object to which it is attached (Jung, 1988, p. 20), and a metaphor is not simply a linguistic device which serves as a simple comparison or decorative substitution (Voss, 1995, p. 29). When I refer to symbol, I am using Jung's definition which states that a "symbol always stands for something more than its obvious and immediate meaning" (1988, p. 55). Committing to follow the symbol takes the experiencer beyond surface explanations into greater depths of meaning. In a similar fashion, a metaphor carries over meaning (McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 115–118). According to Cheetham, a metaphoric vision of reality helps one to see

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<sup>31</sup> I will return to Goethe's imaginal approach in chapter five

<sup>32</sup> In chapter five I highlight scientists working with the imagination who have themselves developed what they would define as a spiritual sensibility in relation to their work

“through the literal appearance to the Presence that lies behind the day-light Face of things” (2015a, p. 98). Symbol and metaphor can therefore help to carry meaning across the gap between the literal world and another realm of knowing, which is often deeply subjective and mysterious in nature.

Here we return to the topic of two different ways of knowing, and the split/fracture in contemporary approaches to knowledge as detailed earlier through my experience of “that Night”, when my heart spoke to me in an extreme moment of inner turmoil and conflict. Like McGilchrist’s grand metaphor of epistemological duality that he explores through conflicted brain hemispheres (2012, p. 5), I suggest that my speaking heart can be conceived as a symbol and metaphor through which to engage in creative conversations in relation to the phenomenon of conflict. In this sense, the world of our lived experience can be grasped in its broadest sense – in and through changing heart metaphors. It is here specifically that the thread of this work is captured in two major themes which I will explore throughout the unfolding chapters:

1. **The division between head and heart** – this thesis uncovers and explores the notion of a symbolic and metaphorical disconnection of the heart from the head in modern thought. Essentially, this idea means acknowledging the dominance of the head/mind as the place from which valid knowledge about the world is currently generated (Bound Alberti, 2012), and demonstrating why, in the context of this thesis, such an observation is important. Specifically, I argue that this metaphorical disconnection has led to our modern understanding of the heart as being simply a biological pump in political discourse - its other, benevolent qualities subsequently perceived as trivial or sentimental.
2. **The significance of the left and right brain hemispheres** - the exposure of a symbolic and metaphorical split between the roles of head and heart in modern culture as indicated in point 1, naturally raises the question as to why this might have happened, and additionally, why the exploration of this issue is so crucial within the context of re-imagining the heart as an organ of perception helpful for

creatively engaging in conflict situations. It is here that McGilchrist's work is particularly relevant.

### **Relating these metaphors to contemporary approaches to knowledge**

It could be argued that the head/heart and left brain/right brain hemisphere metaphors are different because they arise out of different discourses. Certainly it is not my intention to conflate them in this work, but to use them both to reveal something about the nature of contemporary approaches towards knowledge production. It is this particular issue which is of relevance in my project, specifically in relation to conflict and in terms of making space to hear the authentic voices of other hearts. Psychologist Jeffrey Miller articulates this issue stating:

The scientific attitude reflects the tendency in human consciousness to split and hold things in a dualistic, either/or way; we create mutually exclusive categories (such as mind/body, spirit/matter, fact/idea, subjective/objective, interior/exterior, self/other) and organize things by forcing them into one or the other" (2004, p. 125).

This approach creates rifts and weakens/disclaims connections between the very things it is categorising (Miller, 2004, p. 125). Again, I would like to stress that while the metaphors I am using emerge out of different discourses, *they each demonstrate a split in thinking and approach*, which I suggest is vital to expose in order to be able to reconsider the heart, and its relationship with conflict, differently.

It is in this sense that I am exploring what could be seen through contemporary eyes as the divided nature of human experience. Certainly I am open to many voices in this project which are each articulating a split – ranging from a scientific, rational sense (Bound Alberti, 2012; McGilchrist, 2012), to a psychological sense (Romanyshyn, 1982, 2000, 2013; Jung, 2014), to a religious sense - that is, from within a particular tradition (Corbin, 1997). While none of these voices possess the ultimate way of expressing this 'split' and suggestions for 'reconnection', they each in their own way could be seen to be expressing the human dilemma. That is, the "divided nature of our reality" that has been

a constant observation since human beings have been able to reflect on it (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 461), and subsequently, how to navigate this as fully and creatively as possible.

Like McGilchrist, it is not my intention to “encourage simplistic dichotomising” (2012, p. 11). The issue is too nuanced to be addressed as such, and must thus be treated as a helpful device for thinking about the human condition. As McGilchrist states, “Nature gave us the dichotomy when she split the brain. Working out what it means is not in itself to dichotomise: it only becomes so in the hands of those who interpret the results with Cartesian rigidity” (2012, p. 11). Kripal makes a similar observation, suggesting that the seemingly dual function of the human experience can be seen as a helpful heuristic device (2010, p. 63), enabling us to consider more deeply our place in the world. In this way, the metaphors that I am discussing in this thesis are different and not different at the same time. This idea presents a key difficulty for me in terms of how I am going to write at the meeting place between discourses/ideas that are different, yet, when viewed through a more expansive, imaginal lens, not different at the same time. In this regard I will need to look at the relationship between phenomena, which is made possible through an imaginal approach and its language of metaphor and symbol.

## **A request to the reader**

As I hope I have now made clear, I am asking the reader to be willing to enter an imaginative mode of consciousness, *and commit to coming with me, as fully as possible*, into an exploration of conflict reflected through my speaking heart. In this sense, I am drawing generally on the plea of Otto who, in *The Idea of the Holy*, invites the reader to direct his/her awareness “to a moment of deeply-felt religious experience” and states that “Whoever cannot do this, whoever knows no such moments in his experience, is requested to read no farther” (1970, p. 8). While Otto is speaking from the point of view of a religious experience, it is the *quality* of invitation to the reader that is important here. Specifically, I am offering an invitation to the reader to experience an *enhanced worldview*, in the sense that whatever needs to be conveyed in this project can only take

place through a willingness to open up to a different way of knowing. If such willingness is absent, what wishes to make itself known in this project will remain hidden.

It is my hope that perhaps those who read this work may be inspired to use the experience of the epistemological split I engage with in this thesis in their own lives – that is, to recognise the significance of a mutually respectful conversation between head and heart, mind and body, matter and spirit. As Renaissance scholar Angela Voss suggests, the “meeting place of literal and spiritual realities” is accessible through an “imaginal methodology” (2009, p. 37), revealed to the senses through the “symbolic image” (2009, p. 37). Therefore, like Otto, all I can do is offer the language of symbol and metaphor (1970, p. 12) to point to other worlds beyond the physical realm. It is my sincere hope that you, the reader, will make an effort to follow me.

## Research questions

1. What is conflict?
2. How can the *thought of the heart* help us to understand conflict?
3. How can we move to a more reflexive and expansive position with regards to conflict?
4. What implications might this research have for conflict discourses and transformational learning?

## Importance of research

Conflict, war and violence not only damage and destroy lives, the consequences of these also incur heavy financial losses. Referring to the events in New York on 11 September 2001, American peace researcher Jean Paul Lederach states that “In less than two years as a nation we have engaged ourselves in two land-based wars costing billions of dollars” (2005, p. 25). These wars have not increased domestic or international security, and have only “succeeded in fostering the cycle” (2005, p. 25). Almost a decade later, a report written for online news outlet Al Jazeera, outlined the results of research carried out

since 2011 by *The Costs of War Project* to document the human, material, and political costs of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and related violence in Pakistan and Syria. The research discovered that:

[O]ver the past 15 years, US conflicts have cost more than 600,000 military and civilian lives, resulted in more than seven million refugees and displaced people, and run-up...nearly \$13 trillion in financial costs over the lifetimes of the conflicts (Khouri, 2016)

Even after such large sums of investment, the key question to ask is why there has been no real movement in conflict resolution and peace processes around the globe? While Lederach acknowledges that blame cannot be laid at the feet of a particular field, nor its effectiveness determined by the events of 9/11 in particular (2005, p. 22), he calls for the need for understanding and mobilising what he terms the human species' ability to nurture a moral imagination, which he defines as our:

[C]apacity to imagine ourselves in relationship, the willingness to embrace complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity, the belief in the creative act, and acceptance of the...risk required to break violence and to venture on unknown paths that build constructive change (2005, p. 29)

Since the turn of this century, peace and conflict resolution scholars have been calling for different, creative thinking in relation to engaging with conflict (LeBaron, 2002, 2014; Lederach, 2003, 2005; Elworthy and Rifkind, 2006, pp. 9–10), and this thesis is written as a response to that call. Importantly, this research is undertaken as a genuine attempt to explore ways of engaging differently and creatively with conflicts at all levels of scale – beginning with inner personal battles and local relationships and later attempting to move insights outwards towards contemplating political and global conflict. Indeed, the purpose of my thesis is to highlight limitations of the modern Western approach towards life, taking up the invitation of different thinking to move beyond contextual boundaries, which could offer creative ways of engaging with conflict, and with each other, in another way - suggesting deep implications not just for modern conflict resolution/peace research, but for education that is truly transformative. To that end, it is to the heart that my attention now turns, inviting its wisdom and guidance to be revealed through this project's imaginal approach to conflict.

## **Literature review**

The literature that has informed this study is wide-ranging and touches on many diverse areas including conflict resolution, modern neuroscience, holistic science, medical science, transpersonal and depth psychology, Pre-Enlightenment philosophy (Platonic, neo-platonic, esoteric), religious mysticism, linguistics and transformative learning. Given that this area of study is so wide, and in order to maintain focus on the heart as a way of knowing, I shall limit this review to that which pertains to the heart, and literature which supports the consideration of the heart as a valid place of knowing. My first task was to focus on the changing perceptions of the heart from ancient to modern times in order to develop a picture of how these views might have impacted our modern understanding of, and engagement with, conflict. Discourses consulted were conflict resolution, cultural history, cognitive linguistics, depth psychology and modern literature. With reference to my exploration of the heart as a source of knowing, my second task was to consult the particular discourses which allow the possibility to move towards exploring deeper questions about the self through the language of the imagination – namely, images, symbol and metaphor. Discourses consulted in this context include religious philosophy, Pre-Enlightenment philosophy, depth and transpersonal psychology, neuroscience and holistic science.

## **Main sources**

My thesis has been heavily influenced by, and owes a great deal to, Anderson (1998, 2004), Corbin (1971, 1989, 1997, 1998), Cheetham (2005, 2010, 2012, 2015a, 2015b), Fideler (1988, 2000, 2014), Hillman (1983, 1991, 2004, 2007), Jung (1969, 1988, 1989a), Kripal (2001, 2010, 2014, 2017), Romanyshyn (1982, 2000, 2002, 2013), McGilchrist (2012; 2013), West (2016; 2018), Wilson (2004, 2009; 2017), and Voss (2009, 2013). Each takes a specific position which facilitates movement towards connecting ways of experiencing the world which have become increasingly separated into distinct epistemological and ontological categories. In their various ways each of these scholars theorises the importance of the imagination, and in so doing, each aims to honour the

forgotten 'others' in everyday experience. As Fideler contemplates in his work, how do we refine our sensitivities and develop ways of deepening our perception of the world to participate more fully in the world's unfolding process (2000, p. 68)? Crucially, for the purposes of this project, Corbin offers the heart as the receptacle for the imagination that is capable of bringing together different realms of the human experience into conversation. Taking up Corbin's wish to reinstate the heart as the focal point of human life in order for us to experience the fullness of life as it presents itself to us, Hillman's later writings focussed on returning the heart to the world (Avens, 1984, p. 44; Hillman, 2007). My own project is a response to Hillman's appeal.

## **Conflict resolution and the heart**

There have been many calls from peace and conflict researchers over the past several decades to engage differently with conflict (Galtung, 1996, 2009; LeBaron, 2002, 2014; Lederach, 2005; Elworthy and Rifkind, 2006; Arai, 2009; Cloke, 2013), suggesting an invitation to explore beyond traditional, empirical approaches. I would like to stress at this point that my thesis is not an attempt to analyse specific conflicts that exist within the world, for there are well-established research disciplines which aim to understand these complex situations.<sup>33</sup> Instead, the focus of my enquiry responds to the lament of Lederach, who states that while the first decade of the new century and millennium provided a unique moment "to affect and redefine the ways we organize and shape our global family," (2005, p. 21), in terms of constructive change, "we have fallen short and shown ourselves incapable of realizing our potential" (2005, p. 21). Clearly, conflict, violence and wars continue to affect lives all across the globe at all levels of scale, and if we have fallen short of our potential, as Lederach says, might it be that we are looking in the wrong place for guidance, through a limited epistemology which has forgotten other ways of approaching the world?

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<sup>33</sup> Including conflict resolution, conflict transformation, conflict management and peace research.



Importantly, I acknowledge that there are some explorations taking place into new and creative ways of engaging with conflict, as evidenced in the discourses of conflict resolution and transformation. Specifically, a number of scholars are working with the idea that the imagination is a key ingredient in conflict resolution (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 2005; Arai, 2009; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2011, chap. 16). However, while these researchers share the sentiment that the imagination is an essential part of engaging in any conflict, definitions of the imagination vary considerably – from arts based approaches (Boulding, 2002; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2011, p. 358), to using the imagination to picture oneself in another’s shoes (Lederach, 2005), or using it to access the human capacity for compassion and empathy (Galtung, 1996; LeBaron, 2002).

Like Hillman, Jung and Corbin, my own understanding of the imagination reaches deeper into the fullness of the human experience not generally accessible through purely empirical means. Additionally, in this project, the faculty of the imagination naturally implies the heart and knowledge arising therein from an imaginal approach. Consequently, any implications that arise from perceiving the heart as an organ of the imagination must point to the issue of human knowledge. Throughout my thesis I endeavour to highlight the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the modern world and the limitations inherent in these assumptions; for these are necessarily factors in the formation of any concepts by which conflict is currently known and described.

Suggesting that conflict, as a political phenomenon (external), is currently only partially understood from a particular, empirically-based standpoint, I propose that an exploration of the nature of conflict through an inner, deeper, imaginal (and by definition, heart-centred) approach is long overdue. And while certain scholars have recognised the importance of the imagination as detailed above, particularly as manifested through the arts, there still seems to be reluctance and difficulty in moving directly into what exactly the imagination is and what it might mean for current conflict research. For example, in the 1000 page *Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, there are just two pages dedicated to arts-based (music, play, song and theatre) approaches to conflict, and there is no dictionary entry for the term *imagination* (Coleman, Deutsch and Marcus, 2014).

However, one contributor to the handbook, interdisciplinary scholar on conflict transformation Michelle LeBaron, acknowledges the difficulty that conflict researchers face in stepping into this area:

Contemporary conflict practitioners sometimes find it difficult to use arts-based approaches even though they span cultural divides and offer connectivity across differences. Yet the age-old division of heart and mind that privileges analytic, reason-based approaches discounts the more diffuse resources of arts as its peril (2014, p. 596)

LeBaron's reference to the heart in the quote above is interesting, and in her work she talks extensively about the significance of the imagination, intuition, feelings and emotions in the conflict resolution process, and the importance of building mindful and heartfelt relationships in the service of bridging conflict (2002, p.36). However, she does not speak directly to the nature of the heart, other than to state that the imagination and intuition arise in the heart through feelings (2002, p.127). Similarly, mediator Kenneth Cloke highlights "openhearted communications", "heart calming," and "heart-to-heart communications" (2013, pp.120-121) as essential in engaging with conflict situations. Additionally, Lederach refers to the heart as a metaphor which provides a starting and returning point for conflict, where we can go to for advice and guidance (2003, pp. 17–18). However, while these scholars allude to the importance of the heart's role in engaging with conflict, they leave the practical application of what this might actually mean tantalisingly unexplored. It is as though they understand on a deeper or unconscious level the symbolic meaning of the heart, but on the level of everyday, accepted awareness, are unable to bring this understanding through into their work.

### **The heart: a brief overview**

The heart has occupied a key place throughout history, both as a physical organ and as a place of wisdom and intellect (Childre and Martin, 2000, pp. 7–8; Young, 2002; Arguelles, McCraty and Rees, 2003, p. 13; Hoystad, 2007; Perloff, 2010, p. 1502). Particularly important for my research from a historical point of view is cultural historian Fay Bound Alberti's work which focuses on the changing perceptions of the heart over time, from

the ancient past to the present day (2012). With the heart seen through contemporary eyes as a biological pump, and with, generally speaking, valid knowledge about the world generated by the rational mind situated in the brain (2012, pp. 1–15), Bound Alberti speaks of two hearts – science and culture - now alive in modern society (2012, p. 3).

As well as Bound Alberti's work, medieval literature and culture scholar Heather Webb provides valuable insight for my project by drawing out how the heart, before the 1600s, was conceived of as the place where one could connect directly to life (2010). In other words, Webb suggests that political, philosophical and religious life were each founded on a definition of the nature of the directly experienced, living relationship between the individual and the world (2010). However, with Harvey's discovery of the circulatory system and the publication of his work in 1628, the metaphor of the enclosed, pumping heart was born. In psychological terms, Romanyshyn sees this heart as a reflection of the world that was fundamentally changing in the eyes of the perceiver (1982). As ways of seeing changed, the heart gradually moved from a place of primacy as the seat of the soul, to our modern understanding of the heart as a physical pump (Romanyshyn, 1982).

Despite this shift in perception, cultural studies professor Ole Hoystad states that the heart is still associated with personal qualities such as love and compassion, and is still very much alive in metaphorical expression (2007, p. 12). Certainly as a result of my research across discourses including cultural history, medical science, linguistics, social psychology and literature, I have discovered that the modern heart (beyond that of a physical pump) appears to occupy a specific position as the seat of emotions, feelings and a symbol of love (Loe and Edwards, 2004; Niemeier, 2008, p. 365; Bound Alberti, 2012, pp. 2–3; Perloff, 2010, p. 1502). In this sense, the heart seems to retain its ancient and medieval associations. However, within the dominant paradigm of scientific thought, and in the medical sciences in particular, the heart is now considered subservient to the brain (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 15). Seeming to corroborate this idea, in literature, the head/heart divide is starkly visible in Western consciousness with an almost complete division of labour between the two body parts - the head seen as the centre of rational judgement and the heart the centre of the emotions (Niemeier, 2008, p. 365). This is a

subject that I discuss further in chapter two, focussing on feminist ideas of the body (Bordo, 1992). I also practically engage with this idea in chapter four.

In contemporary times, after several hundred years of the head/brain dominating discourse as the seat of rational thought, new scientific languages are attempting to re-establish links between the heart and the brain (Bound Alberti, 2012, pp. 8–9, 2016, pp. 109–110). Additionally, researchers at the HeartMath Institute in the USA have been focussing on the importance of the heart as an organ of intelligence (Chilton Pearce, 2004, 2012), since the early 1990s (Childre and Martin, 2000).<sup>34</sup> Reflecting once more on the idea of splits/fractures in our knowledge that underpins this thesis, it is interesting to contemplate the subsequent divisions that have already been identified in the opening pages of this introduction. Specifically, head/heart, left/right hemisphere, discursive intellect/imagination, mind/body. Certainly, the modern idea that knowing through the head or brain is considered a more reliable pathway to knowledge than following one's feelings or emotions (usually associated with the body or heart), is curious.

Why should this be, and is this a helpful way of thinking about our human experience? In Hillman's view, if modern society is bereft of an epistemology of the heart and therefore of the imagination (2007), I wonder whether exploring this apparent division between the head and the heart (and subsequent occulting of the heart) could provide understanding as to why contemporary society might find difficulty in contemplating heart-centred ways of engaging with global challenges in general, and conflict in particular? Through my research it has become increasingly clear that, on a very subtle level, benevolent qualities usually associated with the heart (like depth, love, relationship, closeness, compassion) are still widely *pointed towards* and *alluded to* as being desirable for engaging with everyday issues, but they do not seem to be given any validity. It appears that the heart's qualities cannot be implemented in any coherent, conscious way at the external, political level. However, if our general understanding of the heart is as a trivial symbol of

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<sup>34</sup> HeartMath Institute aims to help people bring their physical, mental and emotional systems into balanced alignment with their heart's intuitive guidance. The organisation conducts scientific research and training – see [heartmath.org](http://heartmath.org) for more information

sentiment, or a physical pump, it is perhaps a little easier to contemplate why the thinking, knowing, wise heart cannot gain any traction in our contemporary world.

I posit that the problem of such an intuitive, yet seemingly unconscious, understanding of the heart needs to be exposed, for if the thought of the heart is approached through our current, dominant epistemology, there might be a very real danger of completely misunderstanding the authentic heart that wishes to reveal itself. By revealing this problem, I hope that my research will create a space for a much-enhanced understanding of the heart, illuminating the authentic ways in which the heart thinks and imagines, enabling us to reconsider the significance of heart knowing in navigating daily life.

### **Religious mysticism & esoteric philosophy**

In order to draw out ideas pertaining to the wisdom of the heart, I will be consulting specific mystic and esoteric discourses which offer the possibility to consider the heart as something more than the contemporary pump of science. For the purposes of this project, Sufism offers a key point of reference, particularly as this tradition regards the heart as an organ of perception (Corbin, 1997, pp. 221–245). In other traditions, for example in the Christian West, the heart holds a special place as a metaphor for emotional life (Meslin, 1987). In Sufism and the Christian East the heart plays a key role in life as both a literal, physical organ in the chest, and a symbol of spiritual reality that points to a deeper truth (Versluis, 1999, p. 186; Nasr, 2002; Ware, 2002). I will also be referring to Fideler (1988, 1993, 2014), Naydler (2009b, 2018) and Shaw (1995, 2007, 2016) whose work attempts to bring ancient philosophy together with modern thinking in order to facilitate creative conversations in relation to contemporary issues.

## Holistic science

As detailed earlier, in this project holistic science is understood as a way of enquiring into nature by carrying a deep respect for all living things – seeing life as relational and interconnected. Contemporary scholars who are leading the way in questioning the traditional, detached, scientific approach include philosopher of science Henri Bortoft (1985, 2010, 2012),<sup>35</sup> poet and researcher Stephen Harrod Buhner (Buhner, 2004), educator and biologist Craig Holdrege (2002, 2005, 2013), physicist and holistic scientist Philip Franses (2015a, 2015b), engineer and philosopher Bernardo Kastrup (2016), McGilchrist (2012; 2013), theoretical physicist Basarab Nicolescu (2007, 2014), and finally, author and biochemist Rupert Sheldrake (2013, 2017). Each of these scholars makes a valuable contribution to my thesis as, in their individual ways, they question traditional ways of knowing from within the scientific discourse itself and offer theories for moving beyond narrow epistemological viewpoints that appear to move towards an idea of wholeness.

These approaches, if followed, seem to naturally lead one to what could be termed deep, transpersonal, transcendent, mystical or spiritual viewpoints, which themselves often carry qualities that one might associate with the heart. While it is not my intention in this thesis to make a case for each of these scholars' theories, when taken up imaginatively, they provide a strong foundation from which to consider the heart differently. In this regard, Buhner and Holdrege specifically refer to the heart as an organ of great importance in their work, interpreting it in symbolic and metaphorical terms with regards to humanity's relationship with the world.

Considering Goethe's axiom that *how* we see determines *what* we see (Bortoft in Naydler, 2009a, p. 10, my italics),<sup>36</sup> of particular interest here is the symbolic and

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<sup>35</sup> Dates: 1938-2012

<sup>36</sup> This idea is taken up by McGilchrist from a neuroscience perspective (2012, p. 5), and from a psychological perspective in Romanyshyn's book *Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor* (1982). I will be exploring these ideas further in following chapters.

metaphorical connection between this new arising holistic vision and the traditional Enlightenment view of division, abstraction and separation. Specifically thought-provoking is Spanish cardiologist Francisco Torrent-Guasp's (1931-2005) discovery of the ventricular myocardial band towards the end of the last century. Distinctly different to Harvey's discovery of a divided heart with a wall down its middle (perhaps corresponding to changing thought at the time and the birth of the scientific method),<sup>37</sup> Torrent-Guasp saw differently and put forward the theory that the ventricles of the heart represent a continuous muscular band folded on itself as a helix. This theory is not new, having been posited throughout the history of physiology (Buckberg, 2002), however, it is interesting to consider why this heart seems to be gaining more traction in what could be seen as an emerging holistic view in science. Rather than being a metaphor of division -"divided against itself" (Hillman, 2007, p. 24) - the heart is now being seen as a spiral; symbolically reflecting spiral formations that are found everywhere in nature (Buckberg, 2002). I will be exploring the implications of this significant change in perception in chapter five.

## Cultural history

In light of the discovery of the spiralling heart at a time when holistic thinking is gaining ground, of particular interest to this enquiry is the idea of changing awareness or consciousness coinciding with major changes in history which alter the dominant metaphor of perception.<sup>38</sup> In this sense I will be drawing on scholars whose work highlights particular ways of seeing, different to our modern view, but that nonetheless made meaning to those living in past times. Specifically, classicist Peter Struck suggests that in the ancient world a different register of perception operated where the intuitive imagination and the rational mind were not split, and where symbol brought the numinous and the literal realms together (2004).<sup>39</sup> Cultural historian Richard Tarnas (2000) also speaks of the changing nature of the Western mind over the past two

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<sup>37</sup> See Romanyshyn's book, *Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor* (1982, chap. 4)

<sup>38</sup> When referring to consciousness, I am referring to a *state of awareness* as an embodied reality (that is one's own existence, sensations or thoughts). This work does not explore the scientific question of the origin of mind which followed on from the theory of evolution, or, more specifically, the origin of consciousness in evolution.

<sup>39</sup> I will expand more on this idea in chapter four

millennia stating that “reality itself tends to unfold in response to the particular symbolic framework and set of assumptions that are employed by each individual and each society” (2000, p. 406), continuing to suggest that the world opens up according to “the character of the vision directed toward it”(2000, p. 406).

From a psychological perspective, Romanyshyn suggests that the world we see is the creation of a kind of mediation between the material world and inner subjective experience that he suggests is metaphorical in character. As subjective figures in a factual story, new perspectives and understanding can be created once one becomes aware of a significant difference in the metaphor (1982). For example, a major metaphor like Harvey’s pumping heart demonstrated that a difference in seeing was occurring at the time of Harvey’s discovery, providing a new perspective for human beings and their world (1982, chap. 4). Romanyshyn suggests that it is wrong to think that before Harvey’s breakthrough people were incorrect in their theories. Instead, we must consider the idea that a different way of seeing was operational which made sense to the people of that particular time. If we take this idea seriously, there is an opportunity here to look more carefully, and question, the approach towards knowledge that we are using to make sense of the world in which we live. In this context, is our current way of seeing appropriate for the challenges we are now facing?

## **Transformative learning**

As this project involves profound personal transformation in my understanding of, and engagement with the world in relation to conflict, I will be drawing on transformative learning literature in the concluding chapter to help make sense of my experience in this work in order to offer some practical suggestions for how it may be possible to learn to engage with conflict differently through the thought of the heart. As I am taking an imaginal and reflexive approach in this work, I will not be focussing on just the cognitive, rational processes of critical reflection in adult learning as put forward by transformational learning theorist Jack Mezirow (1985, 1991, 1995). I will be predominantly drawing on scholars who touch on the notion of spirituality and “other



more holistic notions” within transformative learning (Tisdell, 2012, p.27). It is in this way that I particularly resonate with Tisdell’s work on the spiritual dimensions of transformative learning as detailed earlier, that “transform our hearts, our souls, and our very being” (2012, p. 27). Certainly my extraordinary experience on “that Night” transformed my heart and consequently my *whole self* into something radically different; and continues to do so.

Therefore, in this project I will be using the term *transformation* in relation to transformative learning as defined by Dirkx (1997). Dirkx draws on Jungian psychology describing the transformation process as individuation or “soul work” (Dirkx, 2012; Formenti and West, 2018, p. 65). In this context, transformative learning prioritises the subjective life of the learner and cultivates a “wholeness of being” including all aspects of the human psyche (Voss, 2019, pp. 23-24). In this sense, transformation could be defined as an inner process of discovery which enables changes in one’s relationship with the wider community and the world at large (Voss, 2019, p.31). In the final chapter, I will explore the idea of the heart as being an integral part of the transformation process that Dirkx refers to. I also explore the notion that there might be something about the nature of the heart, and the kind of thinking that the heart makes possible, that facilitates an individual to access their own inner depths and create meaning in order to stimulate opportunities for profound change both personally (inner) and on a wider scale (externally) – specifically in relation to conflict. Certainly this exploration has implications for the contemporary world in relation to a myriad of issues including ongoing wars, ecological destruction, sociopolitical tensions and polarisation which call for transformation on all levels of existence – from personal/behavioural to technological and political (de Witt, 2016).

## Approach (methodology)

### Robert Romanyshyn's imaginal approach

One of Romanyshyn's key interests is exploring how advances in science and technology with its dualistic, either/or way of viewing reality have resulted in a tendency in human consciousness to split and hold phenomena in a dualistic, either/or way (Romanyshyn, 1982, 2000, 2002; Miller, 2004, p. 125). While there are numerous theories about how this way of seeing originated, and there are many discourses that have highlighted/are highlighting the limitations of this way of seeing (postmodernism, feminist theory, deconstructionism), as Miller points out, "there is no doubt it profoundly affects how we view the world" (2004, p. 125).

Romanyshyn sees conflict emerging from this way of thinking, expressing how the phenomenon has the potential to arise through a self-penned fable titled *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (2013, pp. 337–338).<sup>40</sup> Imagining a convention of expert ornithologists, Romanyshyn writes that each came along to define what a blackbird is, with each knowing that what s/he said is the truth. Romanyshyn imagines how thirteen different definitions of the blackbird inevitably come into conflict as each ornithologist attempts to show the fault in thinking lies in each of their colleagues. Romanyshyn's particular focus is on making space for 'others' (in this case, other voices within the unconscious) to speak to ensure that, as much as possible, we become better instruments to understand ourselves in relation to the world. The difficulty is that beings beyond ourselves experience life differently and have different perspectives. Essentially, we are all 'others', brought into existence through relationship and dialogue with other, others. In this case, Romanyshyn argues, "one is a perspective, a point of view" (2013, p. 340). To deny the validity of the other (namely, the different opinions of each of the

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<sup>40</sup> This fable is modelled on American poet Wallace Stevens' (1879-1955) poem of the same name (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 157–159, 2013, p. 310). As Romanyshyn states, "In each of thirteen separate stanzas the blackbird appears. Is it the same blackbird across the thirteen different stanzas, or is it thirteen different blackbirds? Is the blackbird the bird which appears in the first stanza, the fourth, the tenth?" (1982, p.158)

ornithologists), is to close down the possibility for dialogue and deny the other person the right to exist (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 341).

As my project is specifically concerned with providing a space for other hearts to speak in relation to conflict, Romanyshyn's imaginal approach makes it possible for me to undertake this endeavour. Indeed, Romanyshyn suggests that an unconscious dynamic exists between the researcher and the work which plays out in what he calls a "transference field" (2013, chap. 5). Holding a sense that "one no longer knows what the work is about" (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 137), one enters the transference field through an act of "humble submission" (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 137), which helps to create an imaginal space for the work. This imaginal approach creates a space to "play" (2013, p. 137) with the possibilities in the work and uncover aspects of the work which the researcher is "ignorant" of (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 137). In this spirit, the researcher is able to fully engage with the unfinished business in the work itself. Within the transference field, Romanyshyn has developed a process which he calls transference dialogues. These dialogues are entered into through the creation of a ritual space of reverie, which involves letting go and falling into a kind of daydream, "dreaming the subject matter of one's work with one's 'eyes wide shut'" (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 143). The transference dialogues help to open out into the unfinished business of the "other" in the work (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 147), which could appear represented as mood, dream image, spontaneous visual image or bodily sensation (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 156).

Romanyshyn models his process of reverie and transference dialogues on Jung's understanding of the active imagination (2013, p. 137). However, while Jung's active imagination was situated in the therapeutic framework (between patient and therapist), Romanyshyn's method is situated in the specific context of research (that is, between the researcher and the work). Adopting and extending Jung's method, Romanyshyn argues that his interpretation is a legitimate move as the unconscious is a dynamic presence in all aspects of life, not simply between patient and therapist (2013, p. 139). As such, the active imagination in the transference field is a mode of knowing that plays with the possibilities of the work, and consequently is a "legitimate way of knowing" (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 147). By being open to hear the voice of the work through an

imaginal approach, a bigger space opens within which the researcher can address, challenge, broaden, deepen and change (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 159).

Romanyshyn also identifies an additional phase to his imaginal methodology – that of “*alchemical hermeneutics*” (2013, pp. 263, italics in original).<sup>41</sup> This method moves further on from the transference dialogues, making place for the researcher’s “dreams, symptoms, intuitions, feelings, and synchronicities” (2013, p. 264). As the work deepens, this method opens up towards a symbolic mode of understanding that transmutes “everything visible into symbols” (Corbin, 1997, p. 13; Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 266). This is Corbin’s understanding of *ta’wil*,<sup>42</sup> a mode of understanding that “returns things to their origins in the spiritual world” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 266). This deeper layer of interpretation becomes particularly significant in chapters four and five of my project, as the method of the active imagination as specified here led me to an encounter with something *wholly other*, which I knew was fundamentally important for the unfolding of my thesis.

Crucially, Romanyshyn states attending to transference space between oneself and the work “is to lose oneself for the sake of the work” (2013, p. 136), releasing the idea that one knows what the work is about. By doing this, one opens up to an imaginal space where the work can express itself, and one can wonder “what is this work really about?” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 137). Of course, there are potential pitfalls with this approach in relation to the project becoming a narcissistic, therapy journey. However, the key point to make is that the focus is always *on what the work wants to say*. While the researcher is an integral part of the work, in recognising and remaining aware that one is in service to the work, the imaginal method itself demands that the researcher continues to self-reflect and return to the work - an act which in itself provides the necessary benchmark/red flag for knowing when one might be moving into territory that is too personal or too self-indulgent (Romanyshyn, 2013, pp. 139–140).

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<sup>41</sup> This term was coined by psychologist Veronica Goodchild and links to a well-established body of research, including Jung’s psychology of the unconscious (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 263)

<sup>42</sup> Also see *Alone with the Alone* (Corbin, 1997)

Certainly, Romanyshyn's imaginal method appears to directly suit my needs. Over the past thirty years his work has developed from a central thesis that psychological life exists as a form of mediation between what we perceive to be the objective material world (the world of fact) and our inner subjective world (as figures acting in the world of fact). In this sense, psychological life is metaphorical, because a metaphor both affirms and denies an identity between two things (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 212). While I am not discussing the nature of psychological life in my thesis, Romanyshyn's specific approach makes it possible for me to demonstrate the connection between my inner life and the objective qualities that I am writing about – *and this is what metaphor does*. For my purposes, Romanyshyn's approach offers a way for me to connect with the heart beyond the confines of the dominant Western ontological and epistemological model through symbols, images and metaphor.

Additionally, Romanyshyn states that the heart is particularly suited to an imaginal approach, suggesting what he terms "cardiognosis" – that is, "the place of the heart in knowing" (2013, p. 115) - as a method (2013, p. 287). Cardiognosis is a term originally used by Annmarie Schimmel in her book *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (1994). Taking inspiration from Schimmel, Romanyshyn defines cardiognosis as a way of knowing that is "neither about mind nor measurement...neither about the empiricism of facts nor the logic of reason" (2002, p. 156), aligned to inspiration, religious experience, enlightenment, vision (Schimmel, 1994). In this context, the heart is understood as the place where one feels in relationship with an-other. The path of the heart makes place for feeling in the work – where the researcher becomes like the work by "feeling with it and into it"; suffering in the sense of allowing the work to be what it wishes to be (2013, p. 288).

By using Romanyshyn's imaginal enquiry, supported by cardiognosis, I hope to be able to open a space for the heart to speak to me, and through me. In terms of the practical implementation of Romanyshyn's method, at the beginning of each chapter I present a personal journal piece, dream, and/or transference dialogue, contemplating whatever arises as portals/doorways into the research within each chapter. Each piece is written in a different font and italicised, in order to differentiate it from the main body of text.

Within each chapter, the insights gained from the personal pieces will be (where applicable) weaved into the main text, enabling me to reflect more deeply on those things which may have been forgotten or left behind had I not entered into an imaginal enquiry.

### **Romanyshyn's methodology set in a wider context**

As previously outlined, Romanyshyn's imaginal methodology and his development of transference dialogues (encompassing script, poetry, visuals from dreams and reveries) is based on Jung's notion of the active imagination (2013, p.137). For Jung the imagination is the "reproductive or creative activity of the mind in general" (1997, p.28), expressed in multiple ways including play, dreams and creative imagination (art, dance, drama, poetry). Jung discovered the active imagination during 1913-1916 (1997, p.19), after his break from Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939). Following decades of practice with the active imagination, Jung observed that sometimes the active imagination takes place mainly inside the mind (1997, p.30) – in terms of dreams, reveries, feelings or mood. Other times, the active imagination is given form through painting, drawing, sculpting, writing or poetry (Jung, 1997, p.30). In this sense, engaging with different modes of creative expression often leads to a deeper recognition of the meaning behind what is arising (Jung, 1997, p.33). This can help an individual to investigate their feelings or emotions around key issues; fostering the development of self-reflection and a greater capacity to come to terms with what might be arising from the unconscious (Jung, 1997, pp.34-35). In the contemporary world, all the creative art psychotherapies (art, music, drama, poetry) can trace their roots back to Jung's early work on the active imagination (Chodorow in Jung, 1997, p.19).

In addition to Romanyshyn's method based on Jung's work, it is interesting to consider other research methods which take up a similar approach. That is, methods that aim to expand beyond traditional evidence-based approaches to research and give voice to personal experience to advance psycho-sociological and psycho-cultural understanding. I am thinking specifically here of arts-based research (ABR), which is a transdisciplinary

approach to knowledge that combines the principles of the creative arts in research contexts (Leavy, 2019, p.4). Indeed, ABR appears to have many similarities with Jung's work in relation to his use of the creative imagination and consequent artistic creations. The term arts-based research was coined by educator Elliot Wayne Eisner (1933-2014) in the early 1990s (Leavy, 2019, p.6). Sociology professor Patricia Leavy observes that the field of ABR emerged from larger shifts occurring in prior decades; particularly within psychology and creative arts therapies, advances in the study of arts and learning (specifically in neuroscience), and developments in qualitative research within the social sciences (2019, p.6). During the 1970s, 80s and 90s, ABR methodologies developed rapidly (Leavy, 2019, p.6), and were specifically used to explore and illuminate aspects of human life and the social and natural worlds within which human beings are embedded (Leavy, 2019, p.3).

Leavy states that ABR practices offer the opportunity for researchers across multiple disciplines to "come at things differently" (2019, p.3); to see and think in novel ways, ask new questions and develop new insights (Leavy, 2019, pp.3-4). Leavy describes ABR practices as methodological tools that researchers use during any or all phases of research, including problem and data/content generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation (2019, p.4). In this sense, researchers engage in art making as a way of knowing, to facilitate and enhance social scientific enquiry (2019, p.4). Transdisciplinary in focus, arts-based practices draw on:

[A]ny art form and representational forms that include but are not limited to literary forms (essays, short stories, novellas, novels, experimental writing, scripts, screenplays, poetry, parables); performative forms (music, songs, dance, creative movement, theatre); visual art (photography, drawing, painting, collage, installation art, three-dimensional (3-D) art, sculpture, comics, quilts, needlework); audiovisual forms (film, video); multimedia forms (graphic novels), and multimethod forms (combining two or more art forms) (Leavy, 2019, p.4)

Interestingly, during the 1980s and 1990s, narrative inquiry (including writing, sculpture, poetry, drawing and collage) in the fields of education and social science became particularly prominent and was used as a means of more adequately conveying the deep

complexity of human life (Leavy, 2019, p.8; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014, p. 16). In relation to this point, the inclusion of scripts, poetry and literary texts in social science discourse have, over a number of years, provided ways of representing people's lives in an authentic way – having just as much authority and importance as “factual” data (Hoult, 2012, p.13).

It is opportune here to delve a little further into the development of narrative enquiry and writing as approaches to research, particularly as my own project makes use of personal narrative to draw attention to, and explore more deeply, my lived experience in relationship with my own heart and to provide a platform for my heart to speak (also see page 64). It is interesting to note that as ABR approaches became popular in the academy in the late 1900s, at the same time biographical methods started to gain more prominence and acceptance in UK social science research (Merrill & West, 2018, p.766). Educators Barbara Merrill and Linden West term this a “turn” (2009, p.3); that is, “a response to a long-standing omission or marginalisation of the human subject in research” (2009, p.3).

This “turn” has encompassed numerous academic disciplines, including many of the social sciences (Merrill & West, 2009, p.3). To set this in context, since the 1980s in the UK, biographical methods have drawn upon specific theoretical perspectives including symbolic interactionism, feminism, the psychosocial and psychoanalysis (Merrill & West, 2018, p.767). Since this time there has been a constant development and diversification of approaches, and these methods are now influential in the “disciplines of sociology, critical and narrative psychology, history, education and, in particular, adult education – not only in the UK but in the rest of Europe” (Merrill & West, 2018, p.767). Methods within the biographical tradition include autobiography, auto/biography, autoethnography, personal history, oral history, life story and narrative (Fraser, 2018, p.9; Merrill & West, 2009, p.2). These methods are linked by a willingness to open up to the stories that people tell about their lived experience, offering “rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and other”



(Merrill & West, 2009, p.1). Indeed, these methods offer the possibility to develop greater sensitivity towards subtler elements of the human experience that are often hidden or missed through a more traditional, evidence-based lens. Interestingly the different approaches being outlined here seem to echo a similar sentiment to ABR and Romanyshyn's imaginal methodology; that is, to include the complexity of the human subject in research and to seriously explore what arises.

As already highlighted, within the biographical, narrative tradition there exists numerous different strands across social sciences, transformative learning and education (Merrill & West, 2018). For example, at Canterbury Christ Church University there is an active auto/biographical research group set within the Faculty of Education. Auto/biographical narrative research (with a slash), as framed by scholars working in this research group, provides an opportunity to engage with the complexity of the human experience within the context of adult learning and education, paying particular attention to the inter-relationship between oneself and others in the construction of perceptions of life (also see page 64 for more information regarding my choice of this approach, and how I extend it in terms of my relationship between myself and my heart).

An example of the kind of work that has emerged from the aforementioned group is psychosocial scholar Elizabeth Hault's thesis on the neglect of literature and the literary imagination in educational research, that positions itself, or is positioned, in a narrowly and even conventionally social science perspective (2012). Another thesis arising out of this group is Fraser's pursuit of wisdom in education – personified in her work as *Sophia* - which Fraser argues is tragically marginalised or absent in current Western epistemological discourses and has led to profoundly damaging consequences for educative practices (2018). Also emerging from this group is the work of transformative learning scholars Linden West and Laura Formenti on adult learning, which imaginatively reframes its transformative aspects, illuminating the presuppositions and frames of meaning that guide modern thinking, and how transformation in an educational context

is an unceasing struggle for meaning, recognition, social justice and the pursuit of truth (2018).

Considering my commitment in this work to explore the journey with my heart and consequent learning arising, my choice to use Romanyshyn's imaginal methodology has been complemented and enhanced by auto/biographical enquiry. Specifically, this approach has offered the possibility to not only talk with my heart through my chosen imaginal approach, but to set this dialogue in context through the interplay of both my, and my heart's, individual stories – giving rise to meaning and understanding that could not have been illuminated through a more narrowly focussed lens.

Similar to Romanyshyn's view as already discussed, West states that this kind of approach is nothing to do with "solipsistic narcissism, but rather a determination to make better sense of the whole research experience, beyond naïve objectivism" (Merrill & West, 2018, p.771); helping to move beyond narrow epistemological and methodological assumptions. From my personal experience of auto/biographical enquiry in conjunction with Romanyshyn's imaginal approach, I agree with West's observation, and have offered reflections on this on page 48. Following this approach also means that critical interrogation and reflexivity in relation to the arising material becomes a natural part of the research, where learning is energised in dynamic participation with oneself and the 'others' in the work itself. Indeed, this idea reminds me once more of Romanyshyn's method as previously highlighted, and I consider the importance of reflexivity in the context of this project on pages 62-63.

Finally, it is interesting to consider Merrill and West's observation that over the years writing itself has become the place for "experiment" and even "subversion" by rejecting the "sometimes rigid, overly scientific, supposedly objective writing of some, in favour of a visceral enunciation of personal...experience" (Merrill & West, 2018, p.777). Certainly, my decision to use Romanyshyn's approach and auto/biographical enquiry is to seriously

explore, consider, and hopefully discover the value in, deeply meaningful, lived experience. I suggest that this is particularly important given the troubled state of the contemporary world today, offering possibilities for profound reflection in relation to personal transformation and consequent engagement in the world.

In this sense, my use of auto/biographical narrative alongside imaginal enquiry in this project is inspired by scholars that, through their own work within the biographical tradition, have struggled to challenge conventionally accepted narratives and break through into different ways of making sense of the human experience – in particular, Formenti (2015), Formenti & West (2018), Fraser (2018) Hault, (2012), and Merrill and West (2009, 2018). Encouraged by the afore-referenced scholars, this project attempts to explore, and do some kind of justice to, the sheer magnitude of the human experience (Formenti & West, 2018, p.260), and to enrich the pioneering work taking place across numerous discourses to find more complex and encompassing perspectives in relation to how we participate in, and make sense of, the dynamic unfolding of life itself.

To that end, as investigative tools, biographical, creative imagination and ABR approaches offer clear and important advantages, including:

- the development of new insights/learning
- the ability to explore, discover and problem-solve
- being evocative and provocative – having the ability to move and captivate
- the opportunity to raise awareness/consciousness, unsettle stereotypes and include marginalised voices
- the possibility to capture multiple meanings

(Leavy, 2019, pp. 9-11)

Returning to Romanyshyn, it is interesting to view his methodology within the context of the development over the past four decades of some of the approaches as discussed here. Specifically, the action of the active imagination (in a personal, psychological sense),

creative, arts-based approaches (in relation to social discourses), and biographical approaches (across a broad range of discourses including education, social sciences and psychology), appear to offer the possibility to develop and convey new knowledge that encompasses more of the human experience. As demonstrated, these methods are helping to foster open and diverse ways of perceiving problems and helping to disrupt ingrained perspectives (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014, p. 20) – reaching places that quantitative research on its own could not penetrate. Across multiple disciplines, these different modes of creative expression have proved invaluable from an investigative point of view – on personal, local and global scales – assisting researchers to hold differing viewpoints within the context of the complexity of the human experience, helping to view arguments through different lenses and consider ways to move forward.

Before concluding this brief exploration of Romanyshyn’s approach in the context of similarly-oriented methodologies, it is interesting to note that the psychoanalytical concept of transference is also frequently applied outside of the discipline within anthropological, sociological, and psychological research (Andersen, 2012). The idea of transference honours the complex interaction between the field and the researcher, and as such is an important influence on research outcomes, research questions, methods, interpretation and analysis (Andersen, 2012). Indeed, for Romanyshyn, transference is present in all situations of human knowing, and as such, by adopting an imaginal methodology comprising different approaches including transference dialogues, researchers can be drawn into the depths of the work to be addressed by the claims that the work makes upon them (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 146).

In this sense, the transference field is a subtle driver of creative work, which is then received by the researcher. In the context of Romanyshyn’s methodology, the transference field occurs between the researcher and the work, and as such, is a personal endeavour wherein one notices one’s emotions, feelings, dreams, daydreams. However, a similar theme arises in the social sciences where transference as a methodological device has become a “defining principle of reflexive inquiry” (Parker, 2015, p.44),

honouring the interplay between researcher and researched, providing a crucial space to capture the hidden complexities of previous silence. In this sense, arts-based approaches and issues around transference can become intertwined. Whilst I acknowledge that transference is not without its own complexity of definition and problems across numerous discourses, it can provide valuable insight into how people interact and perform, adding diversity and depth to representations of psychological and social life; providing admission to dimensions of the research process which may otherwise be difficult to access (Andersen, 2012). Certainly, it is helpful to consider how creative processes, the active imagination, and biographical enquiry as described here, can help to illuminate hidden or subtle layers of human experience and bring them into focus for deeper exploration; whether that is within a psychological or social science context.

### **A brief commentary on Romanyshyn's work in a wider turn towards knowing in other fields**

Romanyshyn's imaginal approach appears to relate to a wider epistemological turn in other diverse fields that seeks to bridge the gap between objective facts and the subjective life. Indeed, questions concerning the self and the nature of human experience have long been part of theoretical inquiry across numerous disciplines including philosophy, psychology, psychiatry and neuroscience (Robbins & Gordon, 2015, p.202). For example, the late biologist and Buddhist philosopher Francisco Varela's (1946 - 2001) work focussed on the embodied mind in neurophenomenology (Varela et al, 2016), fostering a rethink of mind-body dualism and attempting to develop holistic approaches to biology and the mind (Robbins & Gordon, 2015). As stated earlier in this introduction, such moves towards a more connected approach to knowledge that aim to transcend the subject/object, fact/value, feeling/thinking dichotomies which have long plagued philosophy and the sciences following the Enlightenment, have their roots in phenomenology in the tradition of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Robbins & Gordon, 2015, p. 197).

Interestingly, more than a century before these scholars (and as previously outlined) Goethe was working on an alternative view of reductionist Newtonian science that was, in contrast, a “participatory, morally responsive, holistic, and dynamic approach to understanding the natural world” (Robbins & Gordon, 2015, p.198). Goethe absorbed his whole self in “careful, open, and empathic engagement with the phenomenon of interest, whether that be a plant, animal, person, or land formation” (Robbins & Gordon, 2015, p.198). Goethe’s approach later inspired Husserl’s philosophy (Robbins & Gordon, 2015, p.198), and was particularly characterised by entering into a deep relationship with the phenomenon of study through the imagination; beholding a holistic vision in order to think *with* the phenomenon, rather than *about* it (Robbins & Gordon, 2015, p.198). This approach involved, and took seriously, the feelings and direct experiences of the scientist/researcher, refining his/her subtle capabilities *in deep relationship* with the phenomenon of study.

As already stated, in contemporary research, there are increasing numbers of scholars who are exploring the idea that there are larger connections between mind, body, experience and the wider world across a wide variety of disciplines. For example within the education faculty at Canterbury Christ Church University, there are large numbers of researchers who are exploring these wider connections through auto/biographical enquiry and autoethnography.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, similar ideas drive research within diverse fields including biology, psychology, physics and even economics (Weber, 2013, p.19). Returning to Varela, his position was that life and mind share a deep continuity (Varela, et al, 2016; Thompson, 2007, p. ix), and as such “mental life is also bodily life and is situated in the world” (Thompson, 2007, p. ix). In this sense, life and mind sciences are today being explored in serious relationship with phenomenological investigations of experience and subjectivity (Thompson, 2007, p. ix). As physicist and systems theorist Fritjof Capra writes, inspired by Varela, knowledge about the world is continually being brought forth through a process of living (Capra, 1997, p.267). That is, our whole selves (our lived bodies) are continually being informed, and consequently changing, through

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<sup>43</sup> See Fraser (2018), Hault (2012), Formenti and West (2018)

participation with the wider environment – “To live is to know” (Varela & Maturana quoted in Capra, 1997, p.267). What is interesting to note here is that Varela and his colleague Natalie Depraz make particular reference to the importance of the faculty of the imagination as a producer of knowledge, which they state is central at the core of life and mind (2003, p.200).

This idea also underpins German philosopher and biologist Andreas Weber’s work. In *Enlivenment* (2013), he argues that humans and nature exist in a space of mutual transformation. Existence is shared through what he calls “aliveness” (2013, p.11). All subjectivity is intersubjectivity, and notions of self are therefore constructed through experiencing self-through-other (Weber, 2013, p.32). Weber suggests that such a way of approaching the world can only be grasped by the poetic imagination, complementing the view from outside – that is, objectivity - with experience from within – subjectivity (Weber, 2013, p.57). In this sense, the imagination provides a more creative and expansive view, making it possible to travel from the material to the experiential without discontinuity (Varela & Depraz, 2003, p.195), and to hold what arises in open curiosity.

Bortoft captures this way of approaching the world through what he terms “the dynamics of appearance” (Bortoft, 2012, p.25). Inspired by Goethe, Bortoft suggests that the relationship between the world and ourselves arises in the following way. That is, something in the world (which has not yet fully appeared) evokes a response in the perceiver, which calls forth that in the world which evokes this response – namely, the appearance of that something (Bortoft, 2012, p.25). In this mode of awareness, one finds something coming into being through knowing, and at the same time this knowing depends on that something coming into being; a process which incorporates diverse ways of knowing.

A practical example of this “dynamics of appearance” (Bortoft, 2012, p.25) is encapsulated through the following description. In the ensuing text, a young researcher of Goethean enquiry reports her experience of coming into relationship with a nettle:

One day I sat down with a particular nettle, sat in a patch of many others, and I felt a really strong ‘star’-like quality. It is very hard to describe but it felt like this enormous spreading, shining sensation – like an expanding force of intense energy. I intuited it as a gesture of the wholeness of the plant. A wholeness that I could then recognise in parts of the plant such as the force of the ‘sting’ that you feel when touching the small syringe-like ‘stinging hairs’; the shape and expression of the thousands of tiny hairs seemingly bursting out of the plant with this immense energy; the pattern of ‘spikes’ on the leaf edges which feel like they are dynamically spreading outward with purpose. The whole plant felt like a star that was ‘shining’. A wonderful experience to participate in (quoted in Bortoft, 2012, pp. 175-176)

In this example, Bortoft suggests that what the researcher experienced as a gesture of the quality of the plant, was the appearance of the plant itself (2012, p.176). That is, the living quality of nature was making itself manifest to the researcher, and within the researcher, at the same time. What this experience shows is that the perceived separation between the sensuous, intuitive modes of our experience of being, and the material appearance of something, has the potential to disappear (Bortoft, 2012). As phenomena appear and express themselves through our direct experience of them, Bortoft suggests that this mode of awareness opens up a possibility to experience the “livingness” of phenomena (2012, p.175-176). In this context, it is possible to encounter phenomena differently, through an imaginal turn, *that values and takes seriously the subtle emanations of the wider world*; helping to dissolve rigid binary thinking that has troubled Western culture for centuries. In Romanyshyn’s terms, this imaginal turn creates the opportunity to explore the tension between the fullness of an experience and the failure of the objective mind and language to capture it (2013, p.5). In this sense, the imaginal turn creates a possibility to hold the fullness of what arises in the complex meeting place of human and world.



## **Rosemarie Anderson's intuitive enquiry**

While Romanyshyn's method will be my major focus, I am also drawn to Anderson's intuitive enquiry that makes a strong case for the place of compassion in, and love for, one's research (2004, pp. 307–341; 2011, p. 16). Defining her intuitive method as an “epistemology of the heart that joins intuition to intellectual precision in a hermeneutical process of interpretation” (2004, p. 308), Anderson suggests that in this process, the researcher honours their own life experiences as sources of inspiration, inviting the “research process to transform not only their understanding of the topic but their lives” (2004, p. 308). In intuitive enquiry, the heart's wisdom nourishes and balances analytic ways of knowing, seeking to bridge the gap between art and science (Anderson, 2004, p. 308). It is a direct perception of knowledge, an experience of the living world, that carries with it a sense that one “is tapping into a collective or unconscious source of knowing” (Anderson and Braud, 2011, p. 20). To capture the meaning arising from intuition, researchers have to navigate between “often diffuse or dreamlike states that accompany intuitions and analytical reason and reflection” (Anderson and Braud, 2011, p. 20). With practice, researchers can “learn to witness...intuitive perceptions and integrate them with other ways of knowing” (Anderson and Braud, 2011, p. 20).

## **Reflections on Romanyshyn and Anderson**

What shines forth in Anderson's method, and correlates beautifully with Romanyshyn's, is the deep recognition of the importance of compassion and sympathy for the researcher, the work, and those ‘others’ involved in the research – a heart-centred knowing that the meaning of the work comes out of personal passion and is an encounter with something deeply significant – perhaps even “sacred” (Anderson, 2016, 24:00-26:33). By working sympathetically, “the heart of the researcher and the heart of the

work resonate *together* in sym-pathetic harmony” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 288, italics in original).<sup>44</sup>

What particularly interests me in the imaginal methods described, is the key role of openness, sympathy and compassion, which both Romanyshyn and Anderson identify as characteristics of the heart. In order to hear the heart speak in this thesis, I will require Romanyshyn’s approach plus a sense of Anderson’s epistemology of the heart. Each of these methods provides the opportunity to enter an imaginal worldview through symbolic exploration and the language of metaphor in order to see what might transpire between the researcher and the work, offering the possibility of delving deeper into the nature of conflict. Importantly, Romanyshyn makes it clear that an imaginal approach to research complements and stands alongside empirical data and rational critique, and “is entitled to that place” (2013, p. 87).

## **Reflexivity**

By framing my enquiry with the guiding image and symbol of the heart as a mediator between different realms of knowing, my hope is to create a flowing and reflexive movement that will help bridge the often limiting subject/object epistemological stance of Western intellectual discourse and which may now be blocking any new or creative ways of interacting with global challenges ( Avens, 1980, p. 186). This reflexive movement mirrors McGilchrist’s central thesis about the importance of being able to move seamlessly between the rationality of the left brain into the creativity of the right brain, and back again – a reflexivity of awareness within which “things are made truly new once again” (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 199). This different space could be seen as Kripal’s “third classroom” (2007, p. 23) – a place of “gnostic epiphany” where difference is accommodated and real transformation can take place (2007, p. 23). In his most recent

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<sup>44</sup> “Sym-“ derives from the Greek word for ‘with’ or ‘together’, and “path” is related to pathos, which means feeling and suffering (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 288). Sym-pathy as a method for understanding and engaging with the work is an act of surrendering oneself to what one wishes to know – the work and the researcher coming together in resonance (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 288)

book titled *The Flip* (2019), Kripal terms reflexivity as “*an intellectual form or expression of the flip*” (2019, p. 172, italics in original), where the flip is defined as a reversal of perspective (2019, p. 12). Reflexivity is therefore “the ability *not* to think one’s thought, *not* to believe one’s beliefs” (2019, p. 172, italics in original), but to continually turn thought and awareness back on themselves, constantly interrogating one’s ideas (2014, p. 368).

Speaking to this place of reflexivity, Corbin, Hillman, Jung, Kripal, McGilchrist and Romanyshyn, in their particular ways, provide a way of re-establishing the ontological continuity between form and formless, matter and spirit, head and heart, mind and body, conscious and unconscious. Essentially using holistic metaphors, these scholars follow a particular kind of movement – inviting, opening up towards, and waiting, for meaning to arise out of and beyond narrow interpretations, bringing the meaning back, reflecting upon it, analysing and critiquing (knowing that this is never the end of the story, but a continual tricky, challenging and deeply transformative process).

### **The image/symbol of the heart**

The guiding image/symbol of the heart will become extremely significant as an anchor; specifically as a place to continually return as the thesis unfolds. This action of returning to the image/symbol of the heart, in an effort to hear its voice, while simultaneously navigating the external and internal realms, will, I suggest, become a relationship. This movement *between* ways of knowing, and of awareness, is what Romanyshyn, McGilchrist and Kripal’s work embodies, and it may even be the case, that as the heart reveals more of itself, the heart could also come to symbolise this approach.

## **Auto/biographical narrative, personal narrative**

Finally, as already discussed, I plan to use auto/biographical narrative in conjunction with the imaginal approaches described at times where telling a story is necessary. West highlights the value of using auto/biographical research as a method in transformative learning as a process to help us to understand the complexity of transformation and the interdisciplinary understanding required to engage with the totality of the lived experience (2014, p. 176). Formenti also suggests that auto/biography is a “journey in the human struggle for identity and meaning” (2015, p. 11); essentially a form of narrative research that talks about the meaning of experience in the context of the person who has lived it (Formenti, 2015, p. 13). In telling the story, one has chance to reflect, see oneself as a player with others, and consequently gain awareness.

As this project is intended to be a living enquiry, undertaken in relationship with my heart, and other people within which I am in relationship, auto/biographical research offers the possibility of illuminating and interrogating this dynamic. As educator Barbara Merrill and West observe, the business of auto/biographical research (with a slash), in this sense, attends to the “inter-relationship between the constructions of our own lives through autobiography and the construction of others’ lives through biography” (2009, p. 5). In short, we cannot write stories of others without reflecting on our own histories, social and cultural locations, subjectivities and values (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 5). In what could be seen as a radical turn, however, I will be taking the heart to be ‘an-other’ in this project, with its own story and perceptions that demands my responsive attention. As the heart I am speaking with in this project lives within me, and the people who I am engaging with through this growing relationship with my heart are part of my changing story, I am by default an auto/biographical researcher. I am thus implicated in transformative learning (Merrill and West, 2009; Formenti and West, 2018, p. 93), and in chapter seven I reflect on my journey with this work through a transformative learning lens.

## Ethics

This project carries significant responsibilities, and my research was bound by the guiding ethical principles provided by the awarding institution and its Code of Conduct on Research Practice (2015). Please see appendix 2 and 3 for the ethics review checklist and risk assessment. As my work is specifically focussed on exploring my own life experiences in relationship with my heart, and in a wider context other people in my life, it was necessary for me to anonymise the people in my story; particularly in chapter six. In the prologue to this research project, I have alluded to conflict within a generalised family dynamic, as it does not impact the work in any way to be more specific than this. As such, I have made every effort to ensure that privacy and anonymity has been assured for any individual I refer to - specifically in the context of drawing out the complexities of the phenomenon of conflict, and my relationship to it.

Importantly, there are difficult issues that arise in my work beyond ensuring privacy and anonymity for the people highlighted in this project. Specifically, the research raises wider questions in relation to under-represented voices, particularly in chapter six where I engage practically with the learning I have received from my heart in relationship with three different individuals. Whilst the auto/biographical methodology I have chosen to use can generate novel perspectives on important psycho-social phenomena (Merrill & West, 2009, p.11), and is therefore the reason I have chosen this in addition to the other methods I have selected to expand my perspectives into new, deeper areas, there are clearly issues to be aware of in relation to the knowledge generated through the research and the potential power arising from this. In an effort to engage with this complexity, after the case studies in chapter six, I reflect on the difficulties of the practical applications of the learning I received from my heart in relationship with other individuals in the context of power and voice.

## Methodological considerations

The imaginal approach that I intend to use in my thesis is directly inspired by the transformational encounter that I had with my heart decades earlier. Experiencing a change in my frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5), my heart transformed from a purely physical organ to become something more; a heart which has subsequently guided me towards seeing conflict through an imaginal, intuitive, symbolic and metaphoric lens. Subsequently my relationship with my heart has changed, and continues to change, as part of this ongoing exploration to consider whether the contemporary heart can be re-imagined as a legitimate way of developing knowledge about, and engaging with, the world. Such an endeavour will require many eyes and many perspectives. By using a combination of imaginal and intuitive research, auto/biographical, and writing as enquiry, I aim to do “justice both to the personal and the academic and bring narrative coherence and integrity to complex experience”(West, 2016, p. 45), attempting to create, in West’s words, “coherence from the messiness of experience and doing research,” (2016, p. 45). However, at the same time I must be aware of the importance of capturing what arises from the work into some sort of “theoretical form”(West, 2016, p. 45).

Here, West captures the inherent difficulty in bringing expression to this kind of work which pitches itself between two distinctly different realms –the academic and personal, objective and subjective, rational and imaginal. Indeed, it is crucial that I highlight that such ‘straddling’ of two distinct realms carries within itself the potential for conflict, capturing the difficulty of balancing and harmonising two distinctly different modes of enquiry which necessarily require intent focus and awareness if the authentic voice of the heart is to reveal itself. To bring some definition to such an abstract concept, as simultaneously a researcher and an individual directly experiencing my life-world (unable to extract myself from this enquiry and yet at the same time understanding the need to do this in order to produce academically sound research), it is my sincere aim throughout this project to continually check-in and decide, through the reflexive act of ‘stepping in’ and ‘stepping out,’ which voice is required; in the hope that through this dynamic and ‘live’ struggle, each voice will be afforded the appropriate space to speak.

## Concluding thoughts

As modern society's traditional way of knowing has become even more fragmented, it appears that conflict can only be the end result. Inspired by Corbin, Cheetham writes:

The modern world is unbalanced because, although these means of cognition [namely, the imagination and intuition] still exist in us, we are largely unconscious of them, and we are at their mercies. Even if we do give some credence to the powers of the imagination, we cannot know what to do with them since we have no framework in which to understand their significance, their power, or their use (Cheetham, 2015c, p. 75)

Considering my own experience in relation to Cheetham's statement, could it be that conflict still exists in our contemporary world because we have an inadequate understanding of the imagination (and subsequent epistemology of the heart) in order for to us to reconsider its meaning? Certainly, the complex wound that inspired this work has become the work itself, and I am finding that I am making space, in Romanyshyn's words, as witness and spokesperson, not just for myself, "but for what has been left unspoken, unsaid, neglected, marginalized, or otherwise forgotten" (2013, p. 76). As Romanyshyn states, with an imaginal approach one is in service to the unfinished business in the depths of the work, and as I enter into this thesis, I have a sense that the depths of the work are already calling me forward through the *thought of the heart* (Hillman, 2007). Where this research will lead, I do not know, but I am open to being totally transformed by it.

## Chapter one: What is conflict?

### Transference dialogue – June 2017

*The text below emerged over many days. While I had a strong sense that speaking with my heart was vitally important to my project, I found it very difficult to move into the process despite all the preparation I had completed beforehand to ensure I was in a safe, comfortable and open space. I felt very nervous and anxious, unsure whether I wanted to hear my heart speak again:*

*Me: Gosh...there you are....hello....erm...gosh....*

*Heart: Hello Louise, how are you?*

*Me: Erm, gosh...not really sure...I feel strange I guess....it's so strange to see you there*

*Heart: In what way?*

*Me: Well, I've never thought of you as outside of me before. You've always been inside me and as such that is how I've known you. Now I wonder whether I know you...do you know what I mean?*

*Heart: Not really*

*Me: Well, you've always been inside me, so that is how I know you. Now you are outside of me, you are different. You might not be who I think you are. Just by moving out of me, changing your position....somehow, you have become different to me*

*Heart: I understand*

*Me: I'm a bit overwhelmed actually. We've been through so much together you and I*

*Heart: I know! In so many ways...*



*Me: How are you?*

*Heart: I'm really well, thank you. In all ways....*

*Me: What do you mean when you say "in all ways?"*

*Heart: That I'm well inside you, and I'm well outside of you*

*Me: Hmmmm*

*Heart: What is wrong?*

*Me: That is so interesting. You do, you look really well. That is so pleasing to me...after everything, and after me...I mean you...I mean, us....being so ill and all the complications we had afterwards. Having been through so much physically, together....and now being well.....But you don't look like a biological heart. You look more like a Valentine's heart, but not quite like that either....*

*Heart: Are you surprised?*

*Me: Well, yes and no I suppose. It's like you are something different. You are not sitting there representing the biological organ inside me, but also you are not just sitting there like the traditional symbol of love, compassion, emotion...It's like you are so much more than that*

*SILENCE – the heart and I look at each other for quite a long time. It is a deeply emotional experience as I recall the night when my heart spoke to me. Guilt and shame arise as I realise how badly I must have hurt my heart by not listening to it*

*Heart: I can see you are upset...what is it?*

*Me: I hurt you, I didn't listen to you. You must have been pushed to your limits to scream at me in that way. I'm so sorry*

*Heart: Please don't cry*

*Me: I feel so bad that I hurt you and that I didn't listen to you*

*Heart: But you have been listening to me since that moment. We've been working together, you and I...*

*Me: But how did you feel back then?..... I was utterly terrified....both before you spoke to me and after you spoke to me. The terror of you not working properly, was replaced with the terror of hearing you speak!*

*Heart: I was scared too you know*

*Me: What were you scared of?*

*Heart: Of the increasing conflict, of dying....*

*Me: Me too....*

*SILENCE – we look at each other again, for a very long time. Neither of us seems to want to speak. It is all very intense and no words seem appropriate.*

*Heart: If you write about me, you have to really see me, you have to really hear me*

*Me: Okay.....*

*Heart: You have to really see me, you have to really hear me....*

*Me: I sense this is important to you, and I sense from what you are saying that I am not really hearing you yet, even though I am doing all I can to do your story justice*

*Heart: Be aware when you are writing your story. You were on the right lines before. You did not see me as just a biological organ, but neither did you see me as just a traditional symbol of love, compassion, or emotion*

*Me: Yes, you looked different, more radiant. But, I also knew that you are love, openness, compassion...*

*Heart: Remember this as you continue your research and your reflections. You may not be able to understand just yet, but remember this conversation. When you are writing your reflections, consider whose story you are telling. Is it yours, or is it mine?*

*Me: But aren't we connected? Your story will be mine, and vice versa*

*Heart: It is true that we have been through a great deal together, and in those experiences, there is a story that we tell. Just reflect on the story that you tell, and the story that I might tell in contrast*

*Me: Hmmmm, this is all very interesting to me. Clearly, I come from a particular viewpoint, and given my connection with you, what we have been through together, there is a danger that I could....potentially....miss the point and tell my story instead. If I am preparing a stage for you to speak, then I must be sure whose voice is speaking....*

*Heart: This is all I ask*

*Me: Of course....and thank you...this has been...well...I can't put it into words...thank you so much.*

*Reflecting on this dialogue, I become aware how subtle the difference is between my story and the heart's story. This realisation impresses upon me the importance of being vigilant and to take care to identify which voice is speaking in the project - to ensure that my heart's voice is given the opportunity to be heard as fully as possible. I am reminded of Romanyshyn's observation that dialogue with an-other is "necessary if one is to broaden one's consciousness" (2013, p. 340). Speaking of the metaphoric sensibility that is required to bring the depth of the work through in research, he continues to state that:*

*[T]he dialogue that a metaphoric sensibility invites begins in the ear and not on the tongue. It is a sensibility that is steeped in the art of listening....This capacity to listen is a disposition in which the words that the other speaks enter the ear and sink down to the heart before they rise to the brain (2013, p. 340)*

*Continuing Romanyshyn states that, “the capacity to listen is hard work because it is heart work (2013, p. 340). In the chapter that follows it is my sincere intention to listen hard to my heart and endeavour to do justice to the unfinished business in the work.*

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## **Reflections**

In this chapter I will be exploring the phenomenon of conflict through a number of different lenses, conducting an overview of modern conflict literature and moving on to explore depth psychological, religious, mystical and esoteric interpretations of conflict. Additionally, I will be exploring how these discourses perceive of the heart, discerning if, how and where the heart plays a part in these different framings of conflict. Firstly, as this project is informed by an imaginal methodology and therefore specifically concerned with creating a space for the heart to speak its thoughts about conflict, I am going to take some time to reflect upon the transference dialogue above. Indeed, following this experience, I found myself profoundly moved by my heart’s plea to truly hear it, and to be extra vigilant in relation to discerning which voice was speaking (namely my own, or my heart’s).

Following the dialogue, I was surprised to find that memories of “that Night” began to surface in my awareness. Specifically, and most painfully, I began to recall my heart’s screams, “Please, please stop this! You’re killing me! This conflict is your own creation yet you also have the power to change it.” While reliving this experience was not easy, I was struck by the fact that not only was I remembering my own feelings of inner conflict and turmoil, but I also felt deeply moved emotionally as I witnessed the agony of my heart’s suffering. Witnessing my heart in this way was a new experience, and I felt swells of sorrow and grief rise in my body as I consciously remembered the conflict expressing itself both *in* my heart and *between* my heart and myself. Questions arose that I had never asked before, including why was I unable to hear my heart’s voice, and why was I creating such pain and turmoil in my own life? In the same way, why were the people in

my life seemingly stuck in their view of the world, and completely unable to hear my voice? Everywhere I looked within this memory, there appeared to be conflict.

I found myself wondering, is this what conflict actually is – namely, a lack of movement on one ‘side’ (or ‘other’), and the subsequent manifestation of pain for the ‘other’, when the voice of the ‘other’ cannot/will not be not heard? Eventually, after several weeks, the powerful images and feelings began to ebb away from my awareness. I waited in silence, deeply touched by the pain I was able to feel from my heart and the extent of my own pain. I wondered out loud to my heart, what can I do to soothe you, what can I do to bring you into my life, and to move further into yours? How can we engage differently with conflict, together?

### **Towards engaging with conflict**

Instead of ignoring the conflict present in the experience detailed above, I recalled my heart’s advice from the transference dialogue. I knew intuitively that my heart was guiding me to move towards the conflict – *to step into it*. Thinking about the nature of conflict in my life, I recalled Cheetham’s observation (influenced particularly by Corbin and Hillman), that in order to become unstuck and untied from our difficult, conflicted relationship with life and subsequently change our world we must, “free ourselves *for* the Imagination” (2015a, p. 137, italics in original). In this context, the heart is the organ of the imagination, and therefore “learning the Imagination is learning the ways of the heart...learning to open to the world” (Cheetham, 2015a, p. 137). Thinking about this, I wondered about my engagement with the world. Was I not engaging fully? Is this why I found myself continually in conflict with myself and others around me? Was my heart somehow a key to understanding this?

Considering these questions through a depth psychological lens, it could be suggested that due to my overly rational approach to life I was unable to consider other ways of engaging with life to reach transformative insight into my worsening condition. Specifically, Main suggests that if something is ignored for long enough or overly rationalised, psychic energy can withdraw from consciousness and a corresponding

amount can accumulate in the unconscious which eventually becomes so great that it can “burst into consciousness” (2004, p. 26). This can result in an “irrational, numinous event” which promotes psychological development or individuation (Main, 2004, p. 26). Main is referring specifically here to Jung’s patient who dreamt of a scarab beetle and subsequently experienced a beetle tapping on the window during her therapy session. In this case, psychic energy activated the archetype of rebirth, revealing itself in images from the environment (Main, 2004, p. 26). Jung understood this event in terms of his theory of synchronicity – that is, “the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state” (Jung, 2014, p. 3397; Main, 2004, p. 12).<sup>45</sup> A synchronistic event is a meaningful coincidence, “uncaused...particularly at the level of ordinary human experience” (Main, 2004, p. 2). In this sense, one might suggest that the irrational, numinous event manifested in the form of my speaking heart breaking through into my awareness. This event brought me into conversation with conflict, and also revealed the possibility of another way of knowing and engaging with the world (previously unknown to me), which subsequently changed the course of my life and widened my experience of the world.

It is interesting here to consider Hillman’s suggestion, (based on Plato’s Myth of Er in the *Republic*) that “Each person enters the world called” (1997, p. 7). That is, each human being “bears a uniqueness that asks to be lived...that is already present before it can be lived” (Hillman, 1997, p. 6). Hillman defines this as “the acorn theory” (1997, p. 6). Specifically, Hillman suggests that the “soul of each of us is given a unique daimon...and it has selected an image or pattern that we live on earth....The daimon remembers what is in your image and belongs to your pattern” (1997, p. 8). In this sense, our task in life is to recognise the call, align our lives to it, and realise that accidents, heartache, and natural shocks all belong to the pattern of the image – they are fundamental to it, and help complete it (Hillman, 1997, p. 8).

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<sup>45</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para.850

According to Hillman, Greek philosopher Plotinus (205-270 CE) explained this view of the world as meaning that we choose “the body, the parents, the place, and the circumstances that [suit] the soul” (1997, p. 8). I find this explanation fascinating as Hillman is taking up the idea that your soul chooses your circumstances, however, in our physical lives many of us have forgotten what our soul’s choice was, often leading us into misery and conflict. For Hillman *soul* is generally indefinable, mysterious (Avens, 1992, p. 252; Hillman, 1997, p. 10; 1964, p. 46, 1992, p. xvi), and “shadowy” (1997, p. 10).

However, what can be said about it is that it makes meaning possible and turns events into experiences (Hillman, 1992, p. xvi), as it reveals itself in “intuitions, whispers, and the sudden urges and oddities that disturb [our lives]” (Hillman, 1997, p. 10). Therefore, by listening to our soul we allow ourselves to prosper. Hillman suggests that chaotic, unreasonable moments that occur in our lives are extremely valuable and act as reminders to us – specifically, that the daimon is our personal guide in life to help us remember our calling (1997, p. 39). Therefore, was the heart speaking to me on “that Night” the voice of my daimon, calling me back onto my path (Hillman, 1997, pp. 39–40)?

Jung and Hillman’s ideas about synchronistic events and the daimon respectively are interesting ways to view my experience, assisting me to open up to greater meaning in the event itself. Particularly as, according to Main, Jung’s theory of synchronicity “implies that it promotes individuation” (2004, p. 22). This is because synchronicity connects conscious and unconscious realms in a way that leads towards a fuller realisation of the conjunction of opposites that Jung calls the self (Main, 2004, p. 22). As individuation is a personal journey of self-reflection, aimed at uniting disparate parts (conscious and unconscious) of the inner centre or self,<sup>46</sup> it is by default concerned with the reconciliation of opposites (Main, 2004, p. 22). At a conscious level, it often seems impossible that conflict can be resolved between opposite points of view, however, when the tension between them is particularly strong, the unconscious psyche can give rise spontaneously to symbols, that unexpectedly express both sides without giving superiority to the other (Main, 2004, p. 22). In this sense, it is possible to see my speaking

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<sup>46</sup> The “Self” is distinguished from the “ego”, which only constitutes a small part of the total psyche (von Franz, 1988, p. 161). The self is an individual’s organising centre, and is the totality of the whole psyche (von Franz, 1988, p. 161)

heart acting as a symbol arising from my inner self, bursting through into my awareness at the height of conflict, showing me that I have both the power create conflict and change it.

This inner centre has been described in numerous ways across the ages, including the ancient Greek idea of the daimon and the Egyptian “*Ba-soul*” (von Franz, 1988, p. 161, italics in original). Even today, within the Naskapi Indian tradition,<sup>47</sup> it is common to rely on “inner voices and unconscious revelations”(von Franz, 1988, p. 161). The Naskapi soul is an “inner companion...’my friend’ or *Mista’peo*, meaning ‘Great Man’” (von Franz, 1988, p. 161, italics in original). *Mista’peo* is immortal and, interestingly, *resides in the heart* (von Franz, 1988, p. 161, my italics). This ‘Great Man’ of the heart guides the Naskapi to find their way in both the inner and outer worlds through the development of love, generosity and respect for all beings (von Franz, 1988, pp. 161–162).<sup>48</sup> Just like Jung’s understanding of individuation as being driven by one’s inner centre, being receptive to the guidance of *Mista’peo* allows the Naskapi to become more complete human beings (von Franz, 1988, p. 162).

As Jung scholar Marie von Franz (1915-1998) observes, often the deeply subjective nature of such experiences (manifesting in numerous ways, for example in the form of a voice, or a calling, or a dream) convey “the feeling that some supra-personal force is actively interfering in a creative way. One sometimes feels that the unconscious is leading the way in accordance with a secret design” (von Franz, 1988, p. 162). From my perspective, I certainly felt that *something other* was calling me forward in relation to the nature of conflict itself, and that my heart was the mouth piece for this experience. I will look at this idea further in the closing stages of this chapter through Jung’s theory of the transcendent function, but for now I would like to continue exploring alternative ways of making meaning from my experience.

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<sup>47</sup> The Naskapi Indians inhabit the Labrador Peninsula of eastern Canada (von Franz, 1988, p. 161)

<sup>48</sup> It is interesting here to consider Jung’s famous conversation with the chief of the Taos pueblos, a tribe of Indians living in New Mexico. Specifically, Jung asks the chief why he thought all white people were mad. “They say that they think with their heads,” he replied. “Why of course. What do you think with?” Jung asked. “We think here,” he said, indicating his heart” (1989, pp. 247–248)



Moving away from depth psychological interpretations, through a religious perspective my experience could be interpreted as the beginning of a process of spiritual development – uniting the self with a transcendent ‘other’. Sufi mysticism and Buddhism each view conflict as a phenomenon that arises within the self – specifically as a religious process of (the self) merging with the divine in the Sufi tradition, and as a process of spiritual development leading to enlightenment in Buddhism. In Buddhism the awakened heart of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and peace is one of the steps on the journey towards enlightenment in a religious or spiritual sense, capable of creating empathy and compassion towards any adversary (Kornfield, 2008, pp. 382–402). In Sufism, the fully developed heart, as an organ of perception and imagination, is considered able to comfortably hold conflict – opposites, polarity, and the apparent duality of the human experience (Vaughan-Lee, 1996, pp. xxiv–xxvi), in a mystic or Gnostic sense. Certainly as I reflect on my own experience, there was some kind of transformative quality and transcendent possibility, which I am still exploring and learning to engage with.

### **Inviting my heart to engage with conflict**

The rest of this chapter will take up the symbol of my speaking heart in relation to contemporary ideas of conflict. I will do this through a brief review of the conflict literature, weaving in ideas from depth psychology and personal reflections on “that Night”. Towards the end of this chapter, I will also briefly explore Hillman’s archetypal psychological understanding of conflict and the heart’s role in it, and Sufi/Buddhist notions of conflict and the significance of the heart in navigating it.

As I reviewed the discourses of conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation within the external, political arena, I found some references to the imagination as being useful for engaging in conflict situations, and I also found several references to the heart. It was, however, clear from my research that the idea of the imagination, or the heart, as being helpful in navigating conflict seemed to raise difficulties. In this regard I could see strong parallels between my own experiences of conflicted ways of knowing, and issues arising in the conflict literature – albeit framed in

different languages. In this context it was very interesting to notice an unacknowledged struggle on the part of some scholars (namely, Cloke, 2003; LeBaron, 2002; Lederach, 2005),<sup>49</sup> who, while pointing towards the idea that there might be something more to conflict that is not currently being explored, seemed to find it difficult to move towards what that might actually mean. This is, I suggest, a clear limitation to any authentic engagement with the nature of conflict itself and seems to capture something of my own difficulty in creatively engaging with conflict.

## **Conflict: a definition**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *conflict* as a fight, a battle, a mental or spiritual struggle within a man, the clashing/variance of opposed principles, or (psychological) the opposition, in an individual, of incompatible wishes or needs and the distressing emotional state resulting from such an opposition (2018). Certainly, the dictionary definition of conflict acknowledges inner (emotional) and outer (physical) conflict, but how is this idea captured within the conflict literature itself? To understand this in more detail, I looked into the literature and began to discover varying definitions for what conflict is. For example, while peace researcher Peter Wallensteen defines conflict as “*a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources*” (2012, p. 16, italics in original), conflict researcher Laurence Juma defines conflict as an “antagonistic state of action, a competitive or opposing action of incompatibles that may or may not result in any physical action” (2013, p. 6). Professor of conflict resolution James Laue (1937-1993) observed that conflict “encompasses all those situations of incompatibility of ideas, beliefs, values or even discourses that do not necessarily precipitate war or physical confrontation” (quoted in Juma, 2013, p. 6).

Sociologist Lewis Coser (1913-2003) regarded conflict from a social perspective, defining it as a struggle over values, claims to scarce status, power, and resources, entailing

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<sup>49</sup> I will address the ideas of these scholars later in this chapter

behaviour wherein “opponents” intend to inflict harm, damage or injury on the other party (1964, p. 8). While sociologists Robert Park (1864 – 1944) and Ernest Burgess (1886-1966) offer a definition of conflict which identifies it as evoking “the deepest emotions and strongest passions and enlists the greatest concentration of attention and of effort” (1921, p. 574), social psychologists Dean Pruitt, Jeffrey Rubin & Sung Hee Kim highlight the incompatible aspirations of each party concerned, defining conflict as a “*perceived divergence of interest*”, a belief that if one party gets what it wants, the other (or others) will not be able to do so (2004, pp. 7–8).

Organisational theorist Joseph Litterer (1926-1995) defined conflict as “*a type of behaviour which occurs when two or more parties are in opposition or in battle as a result of a perceived relative deprivation from the activities of or interacting with another person or group*” (1966, p. 180, italics in original), while from an intra-organisational point of view, behavioural scientist Clagett Smith defines conflict as “a situation in which the conditions, practices, or goals for the different participants are inherently incompatible” (1966, p. 511).

Indeed, Desmond Ellis and Dawn Anderson, authors of *Conflict Resolution: an Introductory Text*, state that there is much “terminological confusion” in the conflict literature overall, where “conflict” and “dispute” are often used interchangeably along with synonyms like “altercation”, “tug-of-war” and “fighting” (2005, p. 3). Ellis and Anderson refer to conflict as “hostile feelings between two or more parties” (2005, p. 3), which can either be “functional” or “dysfunctional” in nature – with beneficial or harmful consequences for relationships between individuals and groups (Ellis & Anderson, 2005, p. 2).

Additionally, Ellis and Anderson identify “subjective” and “objective” conflict – the former arising as a result of thoughts and feelings, and the latter arising as a result of the interaction that expresses the thoughts and feelings (2005, pp. 6–7). While there are clearly numerous definitions of conflict, and bearing in mind the interdisciplinary nature of conflict research itself, it is however possible to identify common themes which appear to run through different discourses. Specifically, conflict involves incompatibility and

expresses itself in different ways - that is, from a static position of passivity to violent action (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, & Zartman, 2009, pp. 3–4).

## **The conflict literature & making sense of “that Night”**

In the conflict literature, “*actors or parties* are fundamental” (Wallensteen, 2012, p. 16, italics in original) for conflict to exist. This means that conflict arises in relationship (LeBaron, 2002, p. 3), where a disagreement exists “between at least two sides, where their demands cannot be met by the same resources at the same time” (Wallensteen, 2012, p. 15). What is interesting is that within the conflict literature generally, conflict is assessed at the level of the external, physical person, in relationship with another person (LeBaron, 2002, pp. 7–8). With respect to inner, psychological conflict, emotions or feelings are said to arise in relationship with another physical being. However, in terms of my own experience of conflict, at the time “that Night” occurred, I found myself in many different kinds/levels of conflict. How might I make sense of this in my own life?

If one takes the overall message from the conflict literature that conflict arises in relationship, in the context of this project I am taking relationship to mean any phenomenon that I find myself in relation with. In this sense, I can take an archetypal psychological viewpoint, and imagine that conflict is a collectively inherited idea, pattern of thought or image universally present in individual psyches. This way of thinking can be seen in the archetypal psychological approach of Hillman. Strongly influenced by Neoplatonism (Shaw, 2016, p. 327), Hillman suggests that archetypes are the “*deepest patterns of psychic functioning*” (1992, p. xix, italics in original). Leading us into an “imaginative style of discourse” (Hillman, 1992, p. xix), an archetypal perspective enables us to communicate more deeply with the world within which we are embedded. From this perspective, conflict can be seen as a fundamental part of life that takes on numerous different forms in the physical realm – *what differs is one’s actual, lived experience of it, and the language one therefore uses to speak about it*. In Hillman’s view, an archetypal perspective provides a common connection for seemingly disparate events,

helping us to understand what is happening in our lives at the collective level (1992, p. xx), and guiding us to follow our soul's calling.

Taking this idea up in relation to my own experience of conflict, it could be said that from an external perspective I was experiencing a difficult and highly turbulent relationship in my home environment. From an inner, psychological perspective, I was wrestling with distressing emotions. Additionally, looking beyond this idea, it could be suggested that my experience of conflicting emotions arose because of a deeper factor – namely an emerging disjuncture between ways of knowing, preventing me from engaging more deeply with life. In speaking to me, my heart illuminated numerous taken-for-granted assumptions about the world I was familiar with and led to a myriad of questions. What is this heart? Is this heart inside or outside of me? What do the words inside or outside even mean in the context of this experience?

Reflecting back on the transference dialogue at the beginning of this chapter, my heart and I experienced this difficulty directly. Specifically, my heart was outside of me speaking, yet in everyday reality, my heart resides inside me. What was happening there? Romanyshyn provides helpful guidance in relation to these questions through his reflections on Jungian psychology. By taking the viewpoint that individuals are always in psyche, any exploration of the world must be reflexive because one is always implicated in the experience of study. From a depth psychological perspective, any study is reflexive, where “subject and object fold back upon each other and in so doing cancel out the separation between subject and object...there is no inside space that is the domain of psyche and no outside space that is the domain of matter...the inside is the outside, the outside is the inside” (Romanyshyn, 2009, p. 1).

In this view, the archetype of conflict becomes a reality of psyche taking us into a radically new paradigm that “requires another way of saying what we know” (Romanyshyn, 2009, p. 1). Such an idea states Romanyshyn, is “an ontological shock that requires an epistemological revolution” (Romanyshyn, 2009, p. 1). Clearly this project is about exploring ways of revolutionising how we might see, and engage with, conflict. In that regard, one could say that the symbol of the speaking heart asked me to be willing to

move into an expanded way of seeing. At this point, another way of knowing was brought into existence – thereby creating a relationship. It was this relationship that appeared to cause conflict because as time proceeded from this event, I experienced an imbalance between two very different ways of knowing.

LeBaron picks up this difficulty in modern conflict resolution. Specifically, she states that conflict is generally engaged with through problem-solving and analytical frameworks (2002, p. 7). However, despite “attempts to extract people from problems and promote rationality, more conflicts have surfaced, emerging out of unaddressed roots...because conflicts are indivisible from the relational context in which they arise” (2002, p. 8). In this context, LeBaron makes a case for approaches that work at the “symbolic level” – that is, the place where meaning is made and “identity is forged” (LeBaron, 2002, p. 1). This means exploring different ways of understanding self and other, and consequently growing our toolkit to encompass “emotional intelligence...imagination and intuition...body awareness...and spiritual resources” (LeBaron, 2002, p. 1). Addressing this idea, LeBaron refers to a practical example of the limitations of an empirical approach to conflict resolution which does not take emotions into account:

At the end of the lecture, a cluster of graduate students spoke to me with tears in their eyes. They told variations on each other’s stories, reporting how their academic careers had involved shelving important parts of themselves, including their feeling selves. As they were encouraged to see things analytically and dualistically, rational logic trumped feelings. This stood in stark contrast to the ways the rest of their lives worked. The academy sought to extract, isolate, and fragment through disciplines, scientific methodologies, and an emphasis on mental logic. Their actual lives worked quite differently, woven together in complexity, held together with the glue of feeling, connections, and intuitive knowing (2002, p. 46).

LeBaron’s observation is clearly raising a bigger question about the way that we engage with the world and the difficulty we have between different ways of making sense of it. As LeBaron continues, human lives encompass not just conscious and objective realms, but move “in concert with deeper, more ancient motions, complex motives, primal forces, and unseen patterns” (2002, p. 304), within which our personal lives take *place in relationship with one another*. Unfortunately, this mysterious, ever-changing realm within

which each human being is embedded is rarely explored within contemporary conflict research (LeBaron, 2002; Lederach, 2005, p. viii).

There are, however, some encouraging signs of change as individual personality (involving emotions, feelings, intuition and imagination) is being considered within context-sensitive approaches and respect for the different conceptions of the nature of conflict is being brought into scholarly discussions (LeBaron, 2014). For example, Lederach makes a case for developing what he terms “moral imagination” in conflict transformation (2005). Rather than using the term conflict resolution, Lederach prefers the term “conflict transformation” which he defines as efforts for constructive change which move beyond the resolution of specific problems (2003, pp. 4–5). Like LeBaron, Lederach’s research focuses on the significance of relationship in conflict. While LeBaron’s approach to engaging with conflict is more holistic in focus (writing explicitly about a person’s spiritual self as being equally important in conflict transformation as the emotional and physical self), Lederach’s writing is not so explicit, but emphasises the importance of accepting “the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence” (2005, p. 5). LeBaron (2002, pp. 7–10), Lederach (2005), and peace researcher Elise Boulding (2002; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011, p. 347) all suggest the significance of the transformative potential of the imagination and the need to take into consideration the human experience as a whole when engaging with conflict.

## **Conflict as a positive force**

*The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution* suggests that as a “normal”, “unavoidable”, “inherent feature of human existence”, conflict can sometimes be useful (Bercovitch et al., 2009, p. 3). Similarly, sociologists such as Durkheim believe that conflict can have some positive consequences for society as a whole (Ellis & Anderson, 2005, p. 2), while LeBaron perceives conflict to be a “gift” for change:

Conflicts buffet us, testing our resolve, yet they also create openings for us in ways we little understand.

Conflicts are much more than bad or good, desirable or deniable. They are the stuff of our dreams, nudging us toward who we can become. They are the sand in our oysters, calling us to immediacy and exquisite attention to alignment – alignment with our purpose and with what breathes meaning into our lives. They are the insistent tapping of what we know but have forgotten or of what we do not know but need to imagine if we are to extricate ourselves from the knots that confine us (2002, p. 286)

Interestingly, while conflict researchers Ellis and Anderson in their introductory text on conflict resolution (2005), point to the positive, “functional” qualities of conflict, and refer to the above quote by LeBaron, they do not include her observation about “purpose” and “meaning”, nor highlight her reference to the imaginal, referencing her quote thus:

[S]and in our oysters...nudging us toward who we can become, motivating us to extricate ourselves from the knots that confine us (2005, p. 2)

It is interesting to ponder for a moment upon why these scholars were motivated to remove the key words that all point towards the personal – again highlighting, I suggest, the difficulty that modern conflict scholars have with moving towards this realm. Indeed, as I conducted this research it was clear that few writers were engaging with personal experience and the imagination in relation to conflict. Additionally, scholars’ interpretations of the imagination seemed to differ significantly, from art-based creativity and story-telling, to imagining oneself in another’s shoes. It was rare to encounter ideas of the imagination as interpreted through the heart as a spiritual practice, or as a way of understanding one’s inner landscape in psychological terms.

### **The heart in modern conflict research**

Additionally, I could find no practical references to the role that the heart might play in engaging effectively with conflict. Lederach’s work moves tentatively towards exploring what a heart-centred approach to conflict transformation might entail when he speaks of the difference between “face value” and “heart value” (2005, pp. 36–37). In this perspective, “*Face value*....is the context as it is in all of its ugliness and difficulties....*Heart value* goes beyond the presentation of appearance and ventures into the way things are perceived and interpreted by people” (2005, pp. 36–37). For Lederach, both of these



values require a capacity to live with ambiguity, developing curiosity and possibilities to move beyond “immediate arguments and narrow definitions of reality” (2005, p. 37).

LeBaron and Cloke mention the heart as a key factor in bridging conflict, however, they only allude to its significance and do not define what this heart actually is. For example, Cloke writes about moving towards reconciliation in conflict through a process of “openhearted communications”, “heart calming”, and “heart-to-heart communications” (2013, pp. 120–121). He also suggests the importance of building heart intelligence (2013, p. 75) to engage more effectively with conflict situations, however he does not clarify exactly what this means, leaving implicit his understanding of the heart’s role in conflict. Cloke does, nevertheless, state that listening is a key part of conflict resolution, suggesting like Romanyshyn (2013, p.340), that committed listening must start in the heart (2013, p. 126). Continuing, Cloke suggests that when we listen with an open heart to the heart of the one who is speaking, it is possible for us to “locate the heart of their story and transform” (2013, p. 127).

Similarly, LeBaron’s subtitle of her 2002 book reads, *Conflict Resolution from the Heart* (2002). While she talks extensively about the importance of the imagination, intuition, feelings and emotions in the conflict resolution process, she does not speak directly to the nature of the heart; other than to say that the imagination and intuition arise in the heart through feelings (2002, p. 127). Correspondingly, Lederach refers to the heart as metaphor, as providing a starting and returning point for conflict where we can go to for advice and guidance (2003, pp. 17–18).

Following the guidance of my heart from the transference dialogue above, it is possible to become aware of a subtle difficulty in thinking. Clearly, the scholars referenced above are not speaking of the literal, pumping heart of science, however, they appear to be unable to specify exactly what the heart they are speaking of actually is, meaning that the heart can only be reduced to a mere metaphor in these terms. As a result, each of these scholars has no alternative than to leave the real significance of the heart’s role in engaging with conflict tantalisingly unexplored. Reflective of my own limitations in knowledge on “that Night”, I sense that these scholars understand on a deeper or

unconscious level the symbolic meaning of the heart and the importance of the imagination, but on the level of everyday, conscious interaction with the world, are unable to bring this understanding through into their work. It appears that the heart is trying to make itself heard within the conflict literature, but as in my own narrative, *scholars seem to be limited in their ability or capacity to fully listen to what it has to say.* Perhaps this also explains the visible lack of index entries within the majority of conflict resolution handbooks for the term *heart*, or heart-based qualities such as love, imagination, compassion, empathy and kindness?<sup>50</sup>

## **Conflict: a Jungian perspective**

Investigating ideas concerning the significance of the heart and imagination in the conflict literature, while at the same time holding onto the symbol and metaphor of my speaking heart, turned out to be a very interesting exercise. By doing this and simultaneously reflecting on my own experience with my heart, I was able to understand how difficult it is to engage with the full potential of the imagination and the heart if one's own approach towards each is limited by reductive ways of thinking. However, depth psychology offers ways to apprehend and integrate what is often beyond our conscious grasp, providing access to deeper meaning through "dreams, images, and metaphors of the unconscious" (Miller, 2004, p. 2).

For Jung, the "psyche is the starting-point of all human experience, and all the knowledge we have gained eventually leads back to it" (2014, p. 3081).<sup>51</sup> From this perspective, Jung believed that the psyche is a self-regulating system and he developed helpful methods to access deeper ways of coming into relation with the world – providing a container within which to explore the forgotten and unappreciated realms of the human experience. As already highlighted, these realms have been pointed out by LeBaron as missing in contemporary conflict research and one could make the suggestion that she is

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<sup>50</sup> The exceptions to this include LeBaron (2002) and Cloke (2013)

<sup>51</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 261

responding to the symbol and metaphor of the subtle heart in her recommendations. However, while she does not move towards a depth psychological approach, I suggest that this lens provides helpful ways of extending current contemporary viewpoints around conflict.

In 1918, Jung published a paper titled *The Role of the Unconscious* and put forward the theory that the conflict in Europe (which at the time was interpreted in mostly materialistic terms), was essentially a psychological crisis originating in the collective unconscious of the people who form groups and nations (Read, Fordham, & Adler, 2014, p. cxxi). In between the World Wars, Jung developed his understanding of the unconscious and the importance of self-knowledge in enabling human beings to maintain their own balance in the face of social pressures. Interested in the conflict, and resolution, of opposites as expressed through the conscious and the unconscious realms of the human experience, Jung explored the interplay and synthesis of opposites to understand how one makes meaning in the world and comes to realise the fullness of the human experience - terming this realisation the individuation process. Identifying the conflict of “two ‘truths’”, Jung suggested that the solution to the conflict of opposites can only come from “a positive act of creation which assimilates the opposites as necessary elements of co-ordination” (2014, p. 2381).<sup>52</sup> In his work on resolving the opposites, Jung introduced the idea of the transcendent function which typically manifests as a symbol that mediates between opposites as “a combined function of conscious and unconscious elements” (2014, p. 2175),<sup>53</sup> facilitating a transition from one attitude to another (Miller, 2004, p. 3).

Holding on to the symbol and metaphor of my speaking heart, it could be suggested that on “that Night” my heart became a transcendent function, helping me to engage with different parts of myself – in this case, conscious and unconscious elements.<sup>54</sup> Certainly if I consider the fact that my heart had been trying to speak to me for a long time prior to “that Night”, and until that moment I could not/would not listen, conflict was able to

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<sup>52</sup> CW, Vol VI, 2014, para. 541

<sup>53</sup> CW, Vol VI, 2014, para. 184

<sup>54</sup> I will explore this idea in a practical sense in chapters four and six

arise between myself and my heart because two incompatible ways of knowing were fighting with each other to be heard. In Jung's view, "the confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing...a new level of being, a new situation" (Jung quoted in Miller, 2004, p. 3). The essence of the transcendent function is transformation of consciousness (Miller, 2004, p. 4), and it is the symbol *as the transcendent function* that is "destined to resolve the conflict" (Jung, 2014, p. 2324).<sup>55</sup> This is because the symbol emerges from between the opposites generated from the living tension taking place in the psyche. In my own experience, it was my speaking heart that bursts through and brings a different mode of knowing into my awareness, showing me two different ways of knowing and offering an invitation to explore the deeper implications of this event.<sup>56</sup>

According to Jung the transcendent function is crucial to the individuation process and the Self's drive towards wholeness (Miller, 2004, p. 5). In this sense, Jung sees conflict as an integral part of psychological life:

The self is made manifest in the opposites and in the conflict between them; it is a *coincidentia oppositorum* [coincidence of opposites]. Hence the way to the self begins with conflict (2014, p. 5711, italics in original)<sup>57</sup>

In a fascinating letter to a client who was experiencing a conflict between motherhood and her career, Jung suggests that conflict is inevitable in life and that an individual must endure the opposites until a "reconciling third" takes shape (2015, p. 375). It is interesting to consider that Jung sees conflict as at the core of human life (2015, p. 375), and it is therefore each individual's goal to come to a third place wherein the opposites can be held together in some kind of creative tension. While in his work Jung does not mention the heart as a way of considering conflict created by the tension of opposites, it is certainly appealing from the point of view of this project to consider how the symbol of

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<sup>55</sup> CW, Vol VI, 2014, para.446

<sup>56</sup> See David Odorisio's paper which explores, through a Jungian alchemical lens, how the heart can become a vessel where profound healing can take place, and spiritual wholeness achieved, by holding the tension of opposites in a psychospiritual sense (2014)

<sup>57</sup> CW, Vol XII, 2014, para. 259

the heart, and the benign qualities so synonymous with the heart, might operate as a reconciling third that could provide helpful guidance for contemporary society in the grip of violence and conflict.

## **Conflict: an archetypal perspective**

Originating in the 1970s, archetypal psychology was developed by Hillman and was based on Jungian psychology. Focussing on the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, archetypal psychology recognises soul or psyche as moving in many directions and carrying a multitude of meanings. Indeed, the sheer complexity of human life suggests that conflict is inevitable. Hillman, in contrast to Jung, suggested that contemporary society needs to find a way of accommodating the multiple faces of the psyche (1991, pp. 36–37). In contrast to Jung’s monotheistic approach characterised by the integration of the psyche where conflict is subsumed into a higher order of balance, integration and wholeness (1991, pp. 36–37), Hillman’s “psychological polytheism” asks human beings to learn the skills of flexibility, tolerance and patience (1991, pp. 36–37). In this view, life is richly textured and multi-layered, demanding a “stretching of the heart and imagination” to hold this deep complexity (Hillman, 1991, p. 38), without reaching for the Jungian idea of wholeness, or a final solution. For Hillman, the natural tensions within the psyche must be honoured and not forced into a coherent whole. Wholeness, in this context, is just one of the many drives of the soul, multiplicity is another. With this in mind, Hillman states that before we try and resolve conflict, we must “look at our belief in conflict” (1991, p. 38), and then act in the world from that point. Certainly it could be suggested that through dialoguing with my own heart in this project, I am looking closely at my belief in conflict and opening myself to perceive it through many different lenses.

Hillman takes this action forward in his book, *Terrible Love of War* (2004). In relation to the phenomena of war and conflict, at the political level Hillman states that, “War demands a leap of imagination as extraordinary and fantastic as the phenomenon itself” (2004, p. 6). When referring to war, Hillman alludes to this term being related to other

conflict-related phenomena: “There are, of course, many excellent studies of aggression, predation, genetic competition, and violence; works on pack, mob, and crowd behaviour; on conflict resolution; on class struggle, revolution, and tyranny; on genocide and war crimes...” (2004, p. 3). Therefore, for the purpose of this exploration, I am taking Hillman’s reference to war to mean other war-like acts, including conflict. Hillman suggests that if we continue to try and understand war, conflict, violence through our usual empirical categories, we will never get to the true root of its meaning, and we will continue to reduce its meanings to “explaining its causes” (2004, p. 6).

Echoing Jung’s idea of the importance of the imagination, Hillman suggests that only by moving our attention fully into the imagination as an organ of perception (namely, the heart) we may begin to start to understand what conflict and war is really about (2004, pp. 4–5). Suggesting that we have impaired imaginations, Hillman states that our modes of comprehension need a “paradigm shift” (2004, p. 5); inviting us to have a relationship with war/conflict in order to come to know it better (echoing Jung’s idea about moving into opposites to know them better). However, as already highlighted in this chapter, and illuminated again here by Hillman, war/conflict is generally analysed empirically - “The elements of the art of war are first, measurement of space; second, estimation of quantities; third, calculations; fourth, comparisons; and fifth, chances of victory” (2004, p. 6). With this empirical mind-set applied to war, psychological and philosophical explorations of the underlying reason for conflict, and what it is, are considered irrelevant.

To really understand the root of conflict and war, Hillman espouses accessing the poetic, mythic mind (2004, p. 7), through the archetypal patterns of the imagination – uncovering the themes that abide throughout time, “timelessly” (2004, p. 8). Hillman’s work was deeply influenced by Corbin (Cheetham, 2015a, 2015c). However, Corbin, was influenced by German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s (1889-1976) work - *Being and Time*. Indeed, because of Heidegger, Corbin was able to realise that a more ontologically primordial level of “Presence” exists that is generally hidden from our commonplace day to day experience, taking place in space and time (Cheetham, 2015c, pp. 5–8), and which produces what we know as our history. Corbin’s decisive realisation was that the history

of external events is somehow subordinate to, and take place within, “this more basic structure of Presence” (Cheetham, 2015c, p. 8). Once realised, one is transformed and one’s mode of presence is altered (Cheetham, 2015c, p. 9), providing the opportunity to step into eternal, mythic time which awakens our “archaic potential for archetypal, transhistorical experience” (Cheetham, 2015c, p. 11).

Additionally, the idea of mythic versus historical time was central to the work of Romanian religious philosopher Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) and can be seen specifically in his book *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1959). In this work, Eliade explores numerous myths (acted out through symbols, rituals, dance, etc) across multiple human societies which carry similar ideas, suggesting that it is the willingness to enter into the experience of the myth which can link human beings to the timeless nature and character of the cosmos while participating in earthly life. Importantly Eliade distinguishes himself from Jungian psychology, stating that his use of the term “archetype” emphasises the fact the models for traditional/archaic man’s behaviours were believed to have been set at the beginning of time and consequently carry a “superhuman” and “transcendental” origin (1959, p. viii). However, despite this distinction, Eliade, Jung and Hillman all share an understanding that the mythic, poetic, imaginal mind can reveal patterns and forces that play out throughout human life and society that we are all influenced by in a way best generalised as archetypal (Hillman, 2004, p. 8). In this sense, Hillman suggests that to grasp the underlying pressures that move our lives, we have to dig deep and discover the mythic themes that abide through time. Certainly, the phenomenon of war asks for this kind of penetration, “else its horrors remain unintelligible and abnormal” (2004, p. 8). Continuing, Hillman states that archetypal patterns of imagination bring the opposites together, embracing both rational and irrational events, and these distinctions fade as we allow ourselves to penetrate deeply into the great universals of experience (2004, p. 8).

In a similar stance to McGilchrist, Hillman states that we currently we have limited skills in engaging our imaginative capabilities and need to learn the way of the imagination, as we cannot hope to understand any phenomenon until we have moved imagination into its heart (2004, p. 2). In this way, Hillman maintains that it is possible to discover the

deeper meaning of war and conflict waiting to be discovered (2004, p. 10), beyond causal explanations. Interestingly, in a similar observation, Eliade suggests that, in the ancient world, anything that had meaning connected human beings back to the forces of the cosmos (1959, p. 27). In a fascinating remark, Eliade states:

Struggles, conflicts, and wars for the most part have a ritual cause and function....[in] the divine and cosmic drama. War or the duel can in no case be explained through rationalistic motives...Each time the conflict is repeated, there is imitation of an archetypal model (1959, p. 29)

## **Conflict: mystical/esoteric interpretations**

To the ancient Egyptians the world was alive and therefore all natural phenomena were considered sacred to some deity (Naydler, 2018, p. 7). Consequently, the ancient Egyptians were directed by religious considerations, and logical thinking was not regarded as an appropriate mode of consciousness with which to approach the gods (Naydler, 2018, pp. 10–11). In the Egyptian pantheon, Seth was the god of chaos, confusion, division and strife. His symbol was the *was-sceptre*, the representation of control over the forces of chaos and strife that Seth represented (Naydler, 2018, pp. 290–291, 2019). In ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian philosophy, strife, conflict, destruction or chaos were connected with the energies of life and fertility, for if one could go into the terrifying places that were represented by strife and withstand them, one could die and be reborn in life (Naydler, 2018, pp. 19–23). Indeed, I am struck by how this view of conflict seems to have parallels with the Jungian notion of holding and reconciling the conflict of opposites as a process towards making oneself whole.

In terms of making sense of the human experience, Fideler suggests that “Wondering about our place in the cosmic pattern is the beginning of all philosophy, science, and religion” (2014, p. 10). By observing the cyclical movements and rhythms of the stars and planets, our ancestors learnt about number, which then developed into mathematics, giving birth to philosophy and science in the process (Fideler, 2014, p. 10). In this sense, it is perhaps easy to understand how, in the Pythagorean system, numbers were seen to



possess a qualitative essence as well as a quantitative meaning (Fideler, 1988, pp. 20–22; Foster Hopper quoting Aristotle, 2000, pp. 33–34).<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, Greek philosopher Pythagoras (570-495 BCE) travelled widely to assimilate the wisdom of the ancients, and is said to have spent a long period of time studying in Babylon and Egypt (Foster Hopper, 2000, p. 33).

In the Pythagorean system the number one represents the principle of “Unity” (Fideler, 1993, p. 60). The two (the Dyad) is the principle of duality and multiplicity, “the movement away from divine unity towards manifestation” (Fideler, 1993, p. 60). It is subsequently the beginning of “strife” (Fideler, 1993, p. 61), or conflict. Conflict is therefore not about some external irritation or opposition of views, but more a fundamental unease with the universe that is represented in a myriad of ways through the experience of life itself. However, through the number three (the Triad), the dualism of subject/object, knower/known transforms into the “possibility of... relation” (Fideler, 1993, p. 61). Bridging the “gulf of dualism” (1988, p. 22, 1993, p. 61), the three achieves “relation in *actuality*” (Fideler, 1988, pp. 22, italics in original), between two extremes.

The three “not only binds together the Two, but also, in the process, centrally reflects the nature of the One in a ‘microcosmic’ and balancing fashion” (Fideler, 1988, p. 22). In this way, the three or the Triad is known as “‘knowledge’ or gnosis”, reflective of a higher unity (Fideler, 1993, p. 61). Therefore the number three resolves the conflict. In this esoteric understanding of the world, the Dyad born out of Unity brings duality – subject and object, knower and known – while the Triad forms the bridge. Interestingly, the Pythagoreans called “the Triad ‘Proportion’ ..., ‘Marriage,’ ‘Peace,’ ‘The Mean Between Two Extremes,’ ‘Oneness of Mind,’ ‘The All,’ ‘Perfection,’ ‘Friendship,’ and ‘Purpose’” (Fideler, 1993, p. 61).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Metaphysical understanding of number also informed Neoplatonism, and can be seen in numerous Far Eastern religions (Guénon, 1991).

<sup>59</sup> See also Renaissance literature specialist Vincent Foster Hopper’s (1906-1976) exploration of number symbolism in medieval culture that takes seriously the profound meaning number had in ancient consciousness (2000)

Remaining with this idea, according to Kingsley, the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles (495-444 BCE)<sup>60</sup> saw the universe as an “endless cosmic cycle of uniting and separating, coming together and moving apart”(2013, p. 347). For Empedocles, separation is “done through Strife: the power of hate and fighting and hostility” (Kingsley, 2013, p. 347), or conflict. In contrast, “The uniting is the work of Love” (Kingsley, 2013, p. 347):

[T]his process of uniting and moving apart is all that ever has happened or will happen. Absolutely anything and everything is a part of this endless cycle...Because the same identical process keeps repeating itself at every conceivable level, down through the life-cycle of the stars to the tiniest insect as it breathes in and out, you can never be too sure that the grand events all around you are actually what you think they are...In the whole of existence there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that is not divine. Love is divine. Strife is divine (Kingsley, 2013, pp. 347–348).<sup>61</sup>

What seems to link each of these ideas is the notion that unity, or the number one, is represented by a transcendent or divine reality from which all duality/multiple forms arise, which create the possibility for conflict, or a higher unity. Speaking from the point of view of religious philosophy, Guénon suggests that understanding this notion is the key to the contemporary Western dilemma, because until one takes this seriously, multiplicity and division taking place on the material plane will create greater conflict (2004b, pp. 77-78). However, the more one can take an expansive, spiritual view, “the nearer one approaches that unity which can only be fully realized by consciousness of universal principles” (Guénon, 2004b, p. 38).<sup>62</sup> For Guénon, the depth of knowledge that a symbolic understanding can provide points the way for individuals to raise their knowledge up to the divine truths, to accommodate and subsequently move beyond conflict (2004a, pp. 1–11).

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<sup>60</sup> Born the year that Pythagoras (570-495 BCE) died

<sup>61</sup> Also see Foster Hopper (2000, pp. 39–40)

<sup>62</sup> For Guénon, a true understanding of life “can only come from above and not from below; and this should be taken in a twofold sense: the work must begin from what is highest, that is, from principles, and descend gradually to the various orders of application” (2004b, pp. 30–31)

## Conflict: Sufi and Buddhist perspectives

For the Sufi, the heart is a place which is open and able to hold multiple viewpoints - a place where conflict is transformed into something else. According to Vaughan-Lee:

The Sufi does not avoid or withdraw from the contradictions of life. Embracing these...with love and acceptance, we follow them to the source. The ego automatically separates the opposites into good and bad, pleasure or pain....so the ego remains caught in duality and the conflict of opposites...Embracing the opposites within the heart, [we experience] how the opposites are held together by the dual energies of creation....The two worlds, the inner and the outer, balance each other...(1996, pp. xxiv–xxvi)

For the Sufi, the heart is an organ of knowing that must be polished, over and over again (Morris, 2005, p. 31),<sup>63</sup> by accommodating the opposites in the heart and learning how to hold them together in order to glimpse the divine (Vaughan-Lee, 1996, pp. xxiv–xxvi). Such a philosophy seems to share parallels with Jung’s articulation of the reconciling third and the process of individuation as previously highlighted. Similarly, Buddhist philosophy states that the world is full of human suffering and conflict, and its teachings guide individuals to work towards a deep understanding of their own personal suffering and consequently to free their own hearts (Kornfield, 2008, pp. 12–17). When opposites arise, Buddhists say that the “Buddha-mind is lost” (Fontana, 2001, p. 34). Essentially, in making sharp distinctions between ideas, we are blinded to the fact that the whole of creation is actually all one (Fontana, 2001, p. 34). An enlightened heart and mind can see through the illusion of opposites into the unity which is the true nature of life (Fontana, 2001, p. 34).

Buddhist scholar Jack Kornfield states that the most treasured description of human awakening in the Buddhist philosophy, “what we in the West might call optimal mental health” - is the Four Radiant Abodes (2008, p. 386). These are “loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity or peace”(2008, p. 386), which Kornfield terms the “universal description of an open heart”(2008, p. 386). In Buddhist philosophy, mind and heart are not distinct, and with a peaceful mind and compassionate heart one has access

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<sup>63</sup> I will be exploring this idea further in chapter two

to empathy and loving-kindness which can help to ultimately shift one's thinking about an-'other' into a different place. Kornfield states that Buddhism:

[S]hows us the paradox of the universe, within and beyond the opposites. It teaches us to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. This realization is called the middle way....The more we delve into the middle way the more deeply we come to rest between the play of opposites....We can be with all our experience in its complexity, with our own exact thoughts and feelings and drama. We learn to embrace tension, paradox, change. Instead of seeking resolution...we let ourselves open and relax in the middle (2008, pp. 367–369, italics in original)

While there are clearly immense depths and countless centuries of tradition within the Sufi and Buddhist philosophies that I do not have space to go into here, I must make it clear that my thesis is not about considering perspectives from mainstream religions on conflict, but to show that there are, in addition to depth psychological and esoteric lenses, a number of ways of seeing the world that are aimed at generating peace, creatively engaging with conflict and working towards non-violence. Of course, it must be acknowledged that conflict does arise within these philosophies (and between these philosophies), however, the point of raising these particular perspectives from within a religious framework is to show that there are philosophies (and resultant exercises and techniques) aimed at assisting individuals to hold conflict within, and outside, of themselves. It is also interesting to consider that within Sufism, Buddhism and other major religions including Eastern Christianity,<sup>64</sup> the heart is seen as the primary organ through which one can transform one's life and connect with something beyond the world of the senses.<sup>65</sup>

As the seat of the imagination and organ of perception (Corbin, 1997; Hillman, 2007), and as a place of compassion, love, joy and peace (Kornfield, 2008, p. 386), the heart is a space which seems able to embrace conflict, and in the process naturally opens up towards the possibility of transformation - towards *a different way of engaging with life*. As Kornfield states:

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<sup>64</sup> I will be exploring these different religious hearts in more detail in chapter two

<sup>65</sup> See *Paths to the Heart: Sufism and the Christian East* (Cutsinger, 2002) and *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (Versluis, 1999)

As our peaceful heart meets other beings, it fills with love. When this love meets pain, it transforms itself naturally into compassion. And when this same openhearted love meets happiness, it becomes joy. In this way, the radiant abodes spontaneously reflect and connect the whole of the world (2008, p. 386).

Perhaps this is the heart that lies hidden in the conflict literature and the heart which I met on “that Night” all those years ago?

## Concluding thoughts

While I am not ready to answer this question immediately, in reaching this point I am thinking deeply about the significance of the heart’s role in conflict, particularly in relation to my discoveries in this chapter. Is conflict actually a manifestation of a fundamental unease in the unfolding process of the universe and life itself? And consequently is the heart, as a direct respondent to this dynamic movement in terms of our feelings and emotions, best placed to help us relate to, engage with, and understand this? Certainly I believe this exploration has identified a living conflict currently existing in modern culture between different ways of knowing which do not seem able to be reconciled - and this is demonstrated in the conflict literature itself. While the heart is sometimes alluded to in the conflict literature, it is never actively engaged with. This makes sense, because how can one meaningfully engage with an objective, material, pumping heart in discussions about conflict? This points to another heart living in the conflict literature that cannot be brought into expression. Importantly, what I suggest such an observation makes clear is a *subconscious desire to connect with a different heart to the one traditionally known and accepted as a biological organ*. The question then arises, why is this connection not being acknowledged, and further, how might we make contact with this other heart?

Going some way towards engaging with these questions, I suggest that depth psychology, certain religious discourses and esoteric/mystical philosophy as discussed here, offer helpful direction. The key difference between these approaches to the world, and knowledge as derived through the analytical intellect, is that the former attempts to

situate life in a wider context, moving towards the nature of direct experience, and a “more intimate connection with the world” (Fideler, 2014, p. 38). As Fideler states, “The intellect needs to point beyond itself to a deeper way of knowing in which there is a merging with the essential nature of reality” (2014, pp. 38–39). In this wider sense, the heart can be known both as a pump, *and at the same time, be something else*; thereby making an attempt to reconcile the two into something more than their constituent parts.

As I write this, I wonder what implications this expansive view of the heart might have in relation to modern conflict. Given my own reflections on “that Night” in this chapter, and the wider questions I have been able to ask by engaging with ideas from other discourses, I suggest that in contemporary society it would be helpful for us to consider the idea that there is something in our dominant narrative which is limited. The heart cannot solely be a pump, because the heart being called for in the conflict literature makes this clear. In the same way, my heart of “that Night” was not the pumping heart of science that I had been educated to know. *Something else* must be occurring, requiring a mode of cognition that can more readily engage with whatever this *something else* is. Additionally, this *something else* is not necessarily anything that can be engaged with objectively. As Plato pointed out, the rational intellect has its limitations, “we must develop the intellect, but we must also know how to move beyond it” (Fideler, 2014, p. 38). Taking this idea to its logical conclusion, there must be things in the world that cannot be known intellectually.

The heart that spoke to me on “that Night” spoke through images, feelings, intuitions. Indeed, I suggest that the heart lying unrecognised in the conflict literature (and in the literature of numerous other discourses) is one that is moved through direct experience of the living world. Additionally, I suggest that this heart could provide deeper knowledge of this world - if only we would give it a voice. It is here that I suggest ancient ideas about knowledge and our place in the world can offer guidance. In this sense, might it be possible through the expansive intuitions and deeper vision of the heart, to reframe conflict at the political level? That is, to see it not as some external irritation or opposition of views, but more as an experience of unease in relation to life’s unfolding? What I mean specifically here is that through my own experience of conflict I have been able to

practically demonstrate the unease inside of myself as crucial in understanding how ingrained conflict requires a deeper calibration of my sense of self and my place in the world.

Clearly this observation demonstrates that I have undergone some kind of transformation in my thinking around the nature of conflict. Returning to Dirkx here, it is interesting to consider his use of Jungian psychology in transformational learning wherein he describes the process of transformation as individuation or “soul work” (Dirkx, 2012; Formenti and West, 2018, p. 65) – which offers the possibility to move deeper into one’s self and expand one’s vision. According to Dirkx, the goal of transformative learning is to identify the images or symbols arising from the unconscious within the learning process, and establish an intrapersonal dialogue with them (1998, p. 7). Certainly, I can identify with Dirkx’s observation, as it could be suggested that on “that Night” images and symbols arose from my unconscious in the form of my speaking heart.

According to Dirkx, within this perspective, the dynamic of individuation is in operation (2012, p. 117; Formenti and West, 2018, p. 65). That is, as already detailed earlier, a process through which an individual moves towards psychological wholeness through the “recognition of and relationships with the unconscious and consciousness” (Dirkx, 2012, p. 117). In relation to the idea of conflict as discussed here, it is interesting to consider that often this drive is experienced as a struggle, or inner conflict, as we try to “integrate split off or unwanted parts of ourselves”, or “actively resist the process” (Formenti & West, 2018, p. 65).

Reflecting on “that Night” I certainly felt conflicted, both before and after my heart spoke to me. Additionally, since accepting my heart’s invitation to journey with it, I have experienced many moments of resistance and conflict. I also often feel frustration and inner conflict because I find myself unable to put many of these kinds of experiences I have had into words. Therefore, returning to my earlier question, is conflict some kind of experience of unease in relation to life’s unfolding? Indeed, in this sense, it is helpful to consider Dirkx’s understanding of transformation from the perspective of bringing together disparate parts of myself. While I do not yet fully understand the process of

transformation that my heart appears to be provoking in me, if I reflect on what has happened thus far to effect a change in my own thinking around the nature of conflict, I can only say at this stage that my speaking heart (and being aware of my heart's advice at the beginning of this chapter to continually reflect on whose story I was writing) showed me the importance of welcoming a different way of knowing into my world that has helped me to engage more expansively with my experience of being human and to see conflict differently.

Through an imaginal lens, it has been possible for me to appreciate and recognise my inherent connection and participation in life itself, and identify where I have become stuck or conflicted. Additionally, the qualities required to facilitate this approach seemed to represent the benevolent qualities traditionally associated with the heart – specifically, openness, non-judgement, compassion, generosity and kindness towards an-other. Could this different, enhanced, expanded heart be the heart that the conflict literature is alluding to? What more does this heart have to say, and how can this heart help individuals to transform their way of thinking and engage more creatively with conflict? The following chapters will engage with these questions in more detail, opening my eyes and ears to the heart in all its fullness and authenticity.



## Chapter two: The story of the heart and contemplations on the body/mind, heart/head relation

### Transference dialogue – February 2018

*Me: Hello again*

*Heart: Hello*

*Me: We seem to be making quite a habit of meeting like this.....I like it.....I mean, I like feeling that I can talk to you....without being afraid of you I mean. It's like I want to talk to you and find out all about you.*

*Heart: Yes, I like speaking with you too. It's nice that you are taking so much interest in me....you know....after so long.*

*Me: Yes.....hmmm....actually.....now I feel quite emotional, you know, after everything I did to you. Now that I can see you, outside of me, yet also knowing you are inside of me....gosh....that sounds strange.....anyway, identifying with you as 'you'.... it makes me feel sad that I pushed you to your limits.....I'm so sorry.....*

*Heart: Well, I do not need any apologies....believe me....it's just nice that you are finally opening up to try and hear me. What's done is done*

*Me: How can you simply let go of everything that I've put you through? Just like that?*

*Heart: Ermmm.....I'm sorry....I don't understand the question*

*Me: Well, there must be somewhere within you that is angry at me for not listening to you, for pushing you away for so much of my life....for damaging you....*

*Heart: Ermmmm.....nope.....not at all. I really do not get what you are saying. I was scared of dying.....scared for you....but I was not scared for myself, nor could I ever be angry*

*Me: Hmmmmmm*

*Heart: I am always speaking to you, you know – you decide whether to listen....or not....*

*Me: Ok.....so.....so.....hmmmm.....weren't you angry with me all those years ago.....that's why I heard you speak to me wasn't it?*

*Heart: Well, yes and no. You heard me, but you also heard yourself.*

*Me: O.....kay.....*

*Heart: It's complicated, I know.....but do stick with it. Remember what I said last time. Whose story are you writing?*

*Me: Well.....yours hopefully..... I am so conscious of making sure that I do you justice. I want to know all about you, about your story. I want to write all about you and your story – from ancient to modern times. So people can come to know you, as I am doing....*

*Heart: And what do you think you will write when you write my story?*

*Me: Sorry.....it's my turn to not understand.....*

*Heart: Whose story will you be writing?*

*Me: Well, that seems like an odd question, and I know that you wouldn't have asked it were it not important. So.....I sense that you are pointing towards what you cautioned me about in a previous meeting.....In which case, when I write about your story, it can only be done through my own eyes and the eyes of history itself*

*Heart: Yes! That is not to say that anything that involves me during the course of history is wrong, merely that it is a perspective. A way of understanding something through your own eyes within the place you find yourself.*

*Me: Ok.....so.....what we know as your story is actually driven by the perspectives of those who knew you in their time, who wrote about you then?*

*Heart: Yes, in a sense! Although equally I could have been writing through the people who were writing about me.....*

*Me: Oh.....so.....oh! Like me, with you! And, you with me! So who is writing whom?*

*Heart: Well.....isn't that a great question?!*

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## **Reflections**

In the previous chapter I explored the idea of conflict through many differing viewpoints, identifying through conversation with my heart, and subsequent reflections in relation to my heart's message, the phenomenon of conflict arising between different ways of approaching the world which could loosely be defined as objective/analytical and subjective/experiential. The experiential, imaginal discourses of depth psychology, Sufism, Buddhism, esoteric/mystical philosophy provided a helpful way of engaging with conflict in a wider sense – offering a framework to engage sincerely with the notion of the heart as *something else* beyond the medically defined, scientific pump.

I ended the chapter wondering whether the benevolent qualities and characteristics often attributed to the heart, that we understand today through metaphorical or religious language, might be helpful to focus upon in terms of engaging more meaningfully with our experience of conflict; in whatever form such conflict may take. Indeed, from a psychological perspective, Romanyshyn helpfully observes that such qualities and characteristics are “illustrative of a style of manners which spring from the

heart” (1982, p. 105), demonstrative of actions and gestures which expose the heart and enable us to embody its way of being. When we take on the heart in such a form, our actions and gestures are subsequently “performed with heart” (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 105).

What I understand Romanyshyn to be saying here is that *when we live through the heart*, the reality we create reflects our psychological life (1982, pp. 105–106). Specifically, our ways of being and acting in the world are revealed through how we see. To illustrate this point, it is perhaps a good time to consider the advice that I received from my heart in the transference dialogues in both this and the previous chapter. The first transference dialogue guided me to remain open, and to make space for the heart at every step of my research and writing – taking seriously that the heart speaking to me was genuine and consequently carried validity. This commitment to remaining close to the heart helped me to see differently. I became starkly aware of just how much the heart is referred to in modern parlance (that is, in the conflict literature), yet at the same time I came to see just how little attention seems to be paid to *what this particular heart actually means in practise*. Reflecting on this, it became possible for me to consider the idea that if our contemporary narrative only makes space for the biological heart, any other heart wishing to express itself will remain hidden, unable to speak, and consequently unable to offer any practical support in conflict situations. In relation to this point, Romanyshyn states that when we see life solely through an empirical narrative where the heart is only a pump, “Try as we may, we are not convinced that the [other] hearts are real” (1982, p. 106)

However, the transference dialogue at the beginning of this chapter seems to offer me a way of interrogating this conundrum. In this interaction, I am struck by how compassionate and kind my heart is towards me. My heart is not angry with me for not listening to it in the past; conversely, my heart is open towards me, seemingly glad to be conversation with me - my misdeeds of the past of no consequence. I am struck by my heart’s kindness and gentleness towards me, and because of this, I am moved to stay close to my heart when writing this chapter – specifically, ensuring that I follow my heart’s guidance and keep in mind whose story I will be researching. This awareness

helped to loosen my perceptions of the heart as simply a biological pump, and to take seriously the story of other hearts that lived in our ancestors, which subsequently made meaning for them and affected their actions in the world. By taking on the qualities and characteristics that my heart was clearly offering towards me, I was able to create a space in my research for other hearts to make themselves known, and in the process think differently about my own relationship with my heart and the nature of conflict itself.

Here I am once more reminded of Romanyshyn's fable of the thirteen blackbirds highlighted in my introduction. In this poem, Romanyshyn suggests that each blackbird is a reflection of who is speaking and each image offered is a way of "inhabiting a point of view, a way of taking up residence in one's image of the blackbird" (2009). For Romanyshyn, the key question the fable poses is which perspective of the blackbird is true, the best or right. If one knows that one is always in some perspective, myth, dream or fantasy about the other (whatever that other may be), "the possibility of and necessity for dialogue arises" (Romanyshyn, 2009), as ideas of what constitutes truth soften. Taking seriously the idea that each viewpoint of the blackbird is as valid as any other, it is possible to become curious about how other people might imagine the world into being. Instead of fixing around one view as truth, in a more open, imaginative approach, the blackbird has the possibility to 'live' in multiple ways. In this way, I see a strong parallel in thinking in relation to the different hearts that are beginning to appear in this thesis (also in relation to the qualities of the heart itself that help to open up towards different perspectives).

Considering my heart's question "whose story will you be writing?", it is possible that the heart *is* and *is not* every heart that is highlighted below, and consequently, "What 'is not' gives presence to what 'is'" (Romanyshyn, 2009). Such an approach towards the heart nourishes "the play of imagination" (Romanyshyn, 2009), opening up towards a heart that says just as much about itself as it does about the people writing its history. By imagining ourselves as an integral part of the story of the heart, perhaps we could be guided to contemplate whether the heart is shaping us or whether we are in fact shaping the heart (or both simultaneously). This notion speaks to the idea of a participatory worldview that creates the possibility to engage with the world more fully (Fideler, 2000, pp. 59–68).

Such participatory epistemologies are visible in Goethe's approach to knowledge which I explore further in chapter five, and in Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy as detailed in the previous chapter.

By holding tightly to my heart's advice from the transference dialogues, I found myself contemplating the many different hearts that have lived in Western culture across the last two thousand years – from an organ of intelligence, to an organ of emotions, a figure of sentiment and today's mechanical pump of science. As Romanyshyn makes clear, the heart "inhabits many worlds" (1982, p. 103), and researching these different hearts sparked a deep curiosity in me about my troubled and conflicted relationship with my own heart, and how this affects how I see the world. In this sense, as this chapter unfolded I found myself reflecting on the conflict within my own body, between my head and heart, my mind and body. This chapter engages with these reflections, firstly by exploring a brief history of the heart, and concluding by reviewing the heart in context with other parts of the body.

## **The heart: etymology**

The Indo-European root word for heart is "kerd", which derives from the Sanskrit word "hrid" (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 284). From these words arose "cor" (Latin), "kardia" (Greek), and "herton" (German) (Loe & Edwards, 2004, pp. 284–286). Since the 1600s the English word *heart* has been in common usage, and it can be traced back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century as the Old English word "hoerte" (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 286). Carrying multiple meanings, the Oxford English Dictionary describes the heart as follows (2018):

1. The bodily organ, its function, region
2. The centre of vital functions: the seat of life or the vital part or principle
3. Mind – in the broadest sense, including functions of feeling, volition and intellect
4. The seat of one's innermost thoughts and secret feelings; innermost being, depths of the soul, the spirit

5. Intent, will, purpose, inclination, desire
6. Disposition, temperament, character
7. The seat of emotions generally, as distinguished from the intellectual nature placed in the head
8. The feeling or sentiment one has in regard to a thing
9. The seat of love, affection and courage
10. Kindly feeling
11. Moral conscience
12. The innermost or central part of anything: the centre, the middle

This range of meanings shows that, even in our modern world where the medical idea of the heart as a biological organ takes precedence, the heart continues to be the place of subjective emotions and feelings via metaphoric language and symbolic imagery. As Romanyshyn states, “The cordial, courteous person is often seen as one who has a warm and big heart” (1982, p. 104). In a similar observation, Hoystad acknowledges that, “The qualities of the heart are much more than...theoretical” (2007, p. 13), stating that there is a strange double relationship between language and what language refers to (2007, p. 13). In this sense, *heart* is “an important word for an image with a rich, composite content” (Hoystad, 2007, p. 13). Interestingly, Hoystad continues to state that when we talk about the heart:

[W]e do not always know if we are talking about the heart as something substantial linked to the mystery that beats with its steady rhythm within our chest, or something else that refers to the symbolic values, attitudes and personal qualities of various kinds for which the heart is a metaphorical expression (2007, p. 13)

Suggesting that our understanding of the heart is shaped by the language that we use to talk about it, Hoystad states that the heart can take on real or symbolic value – pointing to different ways that one can know the heart (2007, p. 13). In agreement, religious scholar Michel Meslin (1926- 2010), who contributed a section on the heart in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (edited by Eliade), draws attention to the heart’s link between physical and symbolic reality:

The word *heart* may be specific, but the symbol is as multifarious as the polysemy of the term is rich. The range of meanings of *heart* is, indeed, at once based on physiological reality (which entails a certain animistic conception of the individual) and on spiritual and mystical meditations – two sources that are intimately linked in most cultures. (1987, p. 234, italics in original)<sup>66</sup>

In virtually every language, the word *heart* denotes both the physical, anatomical organ, *and* the emotions, with numerous nonmedical metaphors making their way into the English language since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 286). Interestingly, Loe and Edwards identify that the number of “nonmedical expressions involving the heart far outstrips those of all other organs and includes common terms such as ‘light-hearted’, ‘brokenhearted’, ‘sweetheart’, and ‘young at heart’.” (2004, pp. 286–290). It can therefore be suggested that throughout history and even up to the present day, the heart has been associated with both physiological reality and symbolic, mystical expression, with its close ties to human emotions (Hoystad, 2007; Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 282; Perloff, 2010).

## **A brief history of the heart**

While the heart’s history has been widely researched, the purpose of this project is to listen deeply to my heart and to stay close to the guidance my heart provides. For this reason I sense that my heart wishes me to acknowledge its role in the lives of our ancestors, and I will therefore outline a brief history of the heart over the last several thousand years. Beginning in the ancient world, when engaging and making meaning in daily life, many of the planet’s oldest civilisations including the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, Hebrews, Greeks and early Christians respected the heart’s wisdom and intellect (Arguelles, McCraty, & Rees, 2003; Childre & Martin, 2000, pp. 7–8; Perloff, 2010). According to Hillman, the oldest heart appears in ancient Egyptian myths – “the heart of Ptah, who created the world from the imagination of his heart” (1999, p. 121).<sup>67</sup> Everything emerges from the heart of Ptah, including words

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<sup>66</sup> Polysemy - the coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase

<sup>67</sup> However, Hoystad suggests that the first known literary sources that speak of the heart’s place in human life originate in Mesopotamia over 5000 years ago (2007, p. 19)



which express its imaginative power – “The world was first imagined, then declared” (Hillman, 1999, p. 121). For the ancient Egyptians the heart was the central organ of the body, the seat of conscience, the site of mind or intelligence (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 286; Taylor, 2010, p. 17), as well as the place associated with their spiritual destiny (Naydler, 1996, pp. 249–250). As the heart was considered essentially pure (Naydler, 1996, p. 250), it was so important that it became an integral part of the ancient Egyptian rituals performed upon an individual’s death (Naydler, 1996, p. 250).<sup>68</sup>

In the Mayan culture, the heart was the source of life (Meslin, 1987, p. 234). Offered in sacrifice to the gods, the heart was considered the most precious part of a person (Meslin, 1987, p. 234). In Hinduism, the heart symbolises the centre of life with the Upanishads describing the heart as the “place where everything that exists takes shape: faith, suprainTELlectual knowledge, ontological truth, speech, and biological life” (Meslin, 1987, p. 234). In the oldest of the Upanishads, the heart’s knowledge is true, since it can enable a person to pass from the unreal and illusory into the real (Meslin, 1987, p. 234). Such knowledge is transformative “for it discovers, by means of the heart, the divine imminence within man” (Meslin, 1987, pp. 234–235). Thus, “the heart is a place of passage from duality to unity, from formless to form, from the unreal to the real” (Meslin, 1987, p. 235).

Moving further forward into Greek antiquity, understanding of the heart subtly begins to change (Meslin, 1987, p. 235), with key thinkers attributing differing capabilities to it. In the writings of Homer and Hesiod, the heart was the centre of feelings, passions, and love (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 286; Meslin, 1987, p. 235). In the fifth century BCE, Empedocles understood the heart to be the seat of intelligence (Uttal, 2011, p. xii). Plato identified the heart with good deeds (Meslin, 1987, p. 235), and Aristotle considered the heart as the centre of life because the soul is located there (Hoystad, 2007, p. 52). However, while Aristotle situated sensations, sensory knowledge, memory and imagination in the heart, he did not locate intelligence (*nous*, mind, reason) there (Meslin, 1987, p. 235).

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<sup>68</sup> I will return to this idea in more detail in chapter four.

## The esoteric heart

Common to many ancient cultures was that the world was understood in terms of correspondences. That is, the entire realm of nature at all levels of being was not known causally, but rather symbolically through the ancient idea of the macrocosm – that is, the universe/heavens, reflected in the microcosm – namely, the human being (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 8).<sup>69</sup> Essentially, everything that existed outside oneself, was reflected within oneself (Hall, 2003, p. 222). To many ancient civilisations, the physical and spiritual realms were therefore connected, and the correspondences expressed the divine origin of all manifestation (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 8). Hermetic philosopher Robert Fludd (1574-1637) drew on these conceptions by linking the sun with the human heart, which is the centre of the soul (Fideler, 1993, p. 246). In esoteric traditions, the sun was the mediating principle between the two poles of spirit and matter, “situated at the creative midpoint between ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’” (Fideler, 1993, p. 246), and the human heart as the centre of the soul could therefore be understood “as the microcosmic reflection of the life-giving Sun” (Fideler, 1993, p. 246).

While esoteric teachings recognised the heart as the centre of spiritual consciousness, this was often purposely ignored and used in the exoteric sense as the symbol of the emotions (Hall, 2003, pp. 226–227). In this context, the brain was demonstrated to be superior (Hall, 2003, pp. 226–227). When a student of the Mysteries has passed through the lower degrees of initiation, they discovered that the substitution of the brain for the heart was a decoy in order to conceal the true interpretation of mystical knowledge (Hall, 2003, p. 227).

Guénon sees the heart as a universal symbol (2004a, p. 11), common to all ancient traditions (2004a, p. 406), arising directly from the primordial tradition (2004a, p. 406). In this context, Guénon’s use of the term primordial tradition rests in his understanding that a theme, or “universal principle” runs through world religions, esotericism and metaphysics (Quinn, 2006, p. 443). That is, “there exists an enduring tradition of superior

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<sup>69</sup> I will be exploring this worldview in greater detail in chapter four

spiritual wisdom, available to humanity since the earliest periods of history and kept alive through the ages” (Hanegraaff, 2006, p. 1125). According to Dutch professor of hermetic philosophy, Wouter Hanegraaff, Guénon never actually defines what he means by the primordial tradition (2006, p. 1133). However, Hanegraaff suggests that on close reading of Guénon’s work, one can understand his perspective on tradition as being the:

[E]nduring Truth as he sees it. This Truth is based upon certain metaphysical ‘first principles’, which are therefore universal by definition. They cannot be doubted: any attempt to ‘prove’ their truth by arguments means putting the cart before the horse, for these principles themselves should be accepted as the foundation and starting point, in order for any correct understanding of reality to be possible at all” (Hanegraaff, 2006, p. 1133).

For Guénon, the heart as the organic centre of the human being is associated with the ancient symbol of the “Center” (2004a, p. 66). As Guénon observes, the “Center” is “a point of departure [and]... also a point of culmination; everything issues from it and everything must finally return to it” (2004a, p. 66). Taking a symbolic interpretation, Guénon compares this movement to and from the centre to the physiological functioning of the heart— namely, blood leaves the heart and then returns, corresponding entirely with the principle of the centre (2004a, p. 66). As all beings are dependent upon the “Principle” for their daily existence, the heart is a physical and esoteric reminder of the principle force lying at the centre of all existence (Guénon, 2004a, pp. 66–67).

The heart in this framework has close connections symbolically with both the labyrinth and the cave. This idea will become particularly relevant in chapter four, however, for now it is interesting to consider Guénon’s suggestion that the labyrinth corresponds well with the idea of a spiritual centre, as it winds in on itself to a central point (Guénon, 2004a, pp. 200–201). Symbolically, both labyrinth and cave are closely linked as they each refer to the “idea of a subterranean journey” (Guénon, 2004a, p. 193), related to initiation. Across different times and regions initiation in this context involved a physical and spiritual descent into the subterranean world, ‘dying’ and being born again – journeying from the darkness into light (Guénon, 2004a, p. 195). Therefore, the labyrinth stands as a symbol that entails a journey to one’s own spiritual, “subterranean” centre

(Guénon, 2004a, pp. 197–201). In symbolic terms, on this journey one is drawn deeper into one's own heart.

## **The religious heart**

In *Symbols of Sacred Science*, Guénon states that true “knowledge of the heart” is “incommunicable” (2004a, p. 414), and one must *realise* it to know what it truly is (2004a, p. 414, my italics). While this “supra-rational knowledge” is available to all human beings, it cannot be attained philosophically or “from outside” (Guénon, 2004a, p. 414). One has to actively participate with life, through the knowledge of the heart, to perceive the “intelligible light...that radiant Light of the ‘spiritual Sun’ which is the true ‘Heart of the World’” (Guénon, 2004a, p. 414). In this context, the heart is not simply a physical organ, or the reflection of the sun in the human constitution. Rather, the “heart-sun is, in spiritual physiology, the point at which spiritual reality bursts through into human experience with supernal light” (Versluis, 1999, p. 186). As Episcopal priest and writer Cynthia Bourgeault states, knowledge of the heart is a “physiology of transformation” (Science and Nonduality, 2017, 09:00 - 10:00).

In this sense, in Christianity and many other traditions (including aboriginal traditions), the heart is understood to be the centre of the human being (Versluis, 1999, p. 186). In Christianity in general, the image of the heart is extremely important, and plays a key role in devotional traditions like the “cult of the sacred heart” in Roman Catholicism (Nasr, 2002, p. 33; Versluis, 1999, p. 169). The idea of the heart as a central organ, particularly an organ of spiritual perception, flows through the esoteric tradition (Science and Nonduality, 2017, 12:00-13:00; Nasr, 2002, p. 37; Versluis, 1999, p.186). Specifically, in orthodox Christianity and Sufism, the heart is not an extension of cognitive mind (Science and Nonduality, 2017, 08:00-12:00), but an antenna that receives the emanations of subtler levels of existence (Bourgeault, 2017), ungraspable by the rational mind. In Eastern Orthodoxy hesychasm the central spiritual practice is the “prayer of the heart”, specifically, the invocation of Christ in the heart of one's being (Meslin, 1987, p. 237; Versluis, 1999, p. 186; Ware, 2002, p. 5).

While the heart eventually becomes a simple metaphor for emotional life in the Christian West (Meslin, 1987, p. 236), in the East the heart keeps the meaning of spirit liberated from the “passions and the affections and of the place for the understanding of divine things and the love of God” (Meslin, 1987, p. 236). Certainly a fundamental theme of Christian mysticism is the divine heart and the human heart united in an exchange of love (Meslin, 1987, p. 236); the deep inner space of the heart where God has access and the human and the divine can meet (Ware, 2002, p. 3). In the Christian East, the “prayer of the heart” brings one into communion with Christ and the Holy Spirit, creating room for the divine to pray within the one who is praying (Ware, 2002, p.16). By concentrating on the interior of the heart, it is possible to discover the emotional life, desire and love (Meslin, 1987, p. 237). Once within the heart, one must “melt one’s perceptual and intellectual thoughts there...and let them heat up and burn until a cry breaks out in one’s heart, a call to Jesus, the unique source of that love” (Meslin, 1987, p. 237).

This idea of ‘melting’ also reflects the deliteralisation of the world through the Sufi notion of *ta’wil*, the metaphorical vision of reality which “melts the world”; seeing through the literal appearance of day-to-day reality to the ineffable beyond (Cheetham, 2015a, p. 99).<sup>70</sup> By doing this, God reveals himself, and a person can experience the eternal joy of being united with Him forever (Meslin, 1987, p. 237). As already discussed in an earlier chapter, in Sufism the heart is the place of inner creative power, the seat of the imagination (Cheetham, 2015a, p. 137; Corbin, 1997, pp. 221–236; Hillman, 2007; Hoystad, 2007, p. 86). Forming ideas and images, the heart is an organ of perception of a sensory and spiritual nature and cannot be distinguished from the physical heart - possessing both the ability to give life and to reflect.

This idea is illuminated in Sufi mystic poet Jalaluddin Rumi’s (1207-1273) reflection on the heart as the microcosm that mirrors and mediates the macrocosm; “I looked into the heart – it was sea, a space of the worlds, a sea that moves in a thousand waves” (Hoystad, 2007, p. 88). In both Sufism and the Christian East, the heart is a pivotal concept – the faculty by which a person can know God (Ware, 2002, p. 5). This heart is

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<sup>70</sup> Also see Sayyed Hossein Nasr’s essay, *The Heart of the Faithful is the Throne of the All Merciful* (2002). I will be exploring *ta’wil* from a practical perspective in chapters four and five

the place of God's desire, the organ of prayer and the source of knowledge of the divine. Not just an abstract thought, knowledge of God emerges from the very existence of the human being within the space of the heart itself.

## **The emergence of the modern heart of science**

At least up until the medieval period the heart was understood to be a complex, vulnerable organ (Webb, 2010, p. 1), open to sensation and “host to myriad entities that we [in contemporary society] would now divide into the categories of physical, spiritual and psychological” (Webb, 2010, pp. 1–2). Additionally, as the seat of the soul in respect to the act and power of life (Webb, 2010, p. 20), the heart occupied a position of primacy in everyday existence (Webb, 2010, pp. 19–26). However, the heart's reign as a place of power, open to the myriad of realms that create the human experience, began to be questioned when Harvey published his findings in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 122). According to Webb, Harvey so successfully insulated the heart that even today, the Western scientific world is “reluctant to consider the heart as susceptible in any way to the outside world, or even to emotion (now located at a safe distance in the brain)” (Webb, 2010, p. 50).

Certainly, since the time of the Enlightenment and the dawn of modern science in the West, heart and mind have become increasingly separated - reflecting a much longer tradition of separating out of phenomena from their customary partners (that is, spirit from matter, mind from body) beginning at the time of the pre-Socratics (McGilchrist, 2012; Naydler, 2009b, p. 168; Tarnas, 2000). This development is a major topic that I will explore in the following chapter. However, for now it is enough to reflect upon how the heart is generally referred to today – namely, within one of two distinct categories. Firstly as the physical, “pump-like muscle hidden behind the rib cage”, or secondly, “metaphorically about the heart that loves...that knows...that feels” (Webb, 2010, p. 1). This links to Bound Alberti's observation that there are two hearts living in contemporary society, the heart of science and the heart of culture (2012, p. 166), and psychotherapist Elizabeth McCormick's reflections on the “worker heart” and the “feeling heart” (1988, p.

38). As Webb states, in the modern world we are quite secure in this division, assured of the physical job the heart does, and that in reality it has nothing to do with the “messiness of emotion, thought, or sensation” (2010, p. 1).

With this division, referred to by American writer Gail Godwin as “The Great Heart Split” (2004, p. 95), our knowledge of how the physical heart works took a leap forward as we came to understand the role that the pumping heart played in keeping our physical bodies alive. This movement consequently demythologised the heart and its role in navigating the complexity of life. At this time, according to Hillman, “thought lost its heart, heart lost its thought” (2007, p. 25), leaving the way clear for the brain to become the “sole or essential governing organ of the human body and psyche” (Arguelles et al., 2003, p. 14). Even today, despite recent advancements in cardiac research suggesting that the heart is more complex than a pump (Arguelles et al., 2003; Childre & Martin, 2000; Guarneri, 2006; Perloff, 2010), possessing a “functional brain” (Perloff, 2010, p. 1503), primacy is still given to the rational mind situated in the brain at the level of medical theory (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 7).

## **Science facts about the heart**

The story of the heart in this brief history is now moving into our more familiar, science-based narrative. For interest, here are some key facts about the heart:

- There is some conjecture in the medical literature about when the embryonic heart begins to beat. Scholars Loe and Edwards state that it is 23 days after conception (2004, p. 283), while American cardiologist Joseph Perloff observes that it is 18-21 days after conception (2010, p. 1503). However, recent research undertaken by a team funded by the British Heart Foundation at Oxford University suggests that it is actually earlier than this, positing that the heart begins to beat as early as 16 days after conception (University of Oxford, 2016).
- The heart starts beating before the brain has been formed (Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 9) .

- Each day, the heart beats approximately 100,000 times and pumps over 7,500 litres of blood (Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 9; Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 282).
- In one year, the heart will beat approximately 40 million times (Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 9).
- Over a lifetime of 70 years, the heart will beat approximately three billion times (Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 9; Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 283).
- The size of the heart is proportional to body size, and is about the size of a clenched fist, weighing about 300g (10.5oz) in adult women, and 325g (11.5oz) in adult men (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 283).

## **Heart transplantation**

Until the early twentieth century, physicians maintained a conviction that “the heart could not be surgically touched” as the patient might die (Nathoo, 2009, p. 9). This idea was countered in 1925 when London surgeon Henry Souttar (1875-1964) wrote, “the heart is amenable to surgical treatment as is any other organ” following a successful operation he had performed on a patient who lived for several years thereafter (Nathoo, 2009, p. 9). Cardiac surgery properly commenced in the 1940s (Nathoo, 2009, p. 10). In the 1950s, transplanting a human heart was considered a “fantastic dream” (Nathoo, 2009, p. 8), however, by the mid-1960s this dream was thought to be within reach. In the medical profession there was a great deal of resistance about whether this surgery should take place at all (Nathoo, 2009, p. 8). As Bound Alberti observes, “Before the 1960s the notion of a heart transplant arguably inspired as much anxiety as a brain transplant does today, probably because the focus of the ‘self’ has moved from the heart to the brain”(2016, p. 94). In 1964 the “father of clinical cardiac transplantation” (Nathoo, 2009, p. 23), American surgeon Norman Shumway (1923-2006) and his colleague Richard Lower (1929-2008), felt confident the surgery was possible, however, “their key reservation was the societal response to such an audacious act” (Nathoo, 2009, p. 8). It was therefore not until November 1967 that cardiac surgeons made a public declaration that “human-to-human heart transplantation was not only possible but imminent” (Nathoo, 2009, p. 8).



The first human heart transplant was performed by South African surgeon Christiaan Barnard (1922-2001) on 3 December 1967 (Nathoo, 2009, p. 1). Indeed, the “operation provoked far greater media interest than did the first kidney or liver transplants - which had occurred in 1955 and 1963 respectively - even though the technical skill involved was similar” (Bingham, 2011, p. 1243). Following Barnard’s success, in 1968 over 100 transplants took place in 18 different countries – inaugurating “the year of the heart transplant” (Nathoo, 2009, p. 1). In May 1968 the first heart transplant happened in the UK (Nathoo, 2009, p. 1), performed by surgeon Donald Ross (Nathoo, 2009, p. 12).<sup>71</sup> Towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s, the UK was performing around 300 heart transplants annually (Nathoo, 2009, pp. 1–2), and in 2016, Bound Alberti wrote that “more than 5,000 cardiac transplants” were taking place around the world annually (2016, p. 94). However, donor human hearts are scarce with “only about 1 in 10 patients that need a transplant worldwide [receiving] the life-saving surgery” (Palomino, n.d.).

It is interesting to consider the long history of the heart, and contemplate the fact that for many working in medical science today the heart carries no special significance (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 108). However, as Bound Alberti observes, such an “attitude is understandable [for] how else could one operate without a sense of dread?” (2016, p. 108). While for the medieval scholar seeing a heart would have been the closest way of seeing the soul (Webb, 2010, p. 147), in modern times the idea of the soul has been removed from the heart (Bound Alberti, 2012, pp. 162–163). However, it appears that the heart’s rich and complex history, and the place the heart still holds in human life at the intuitive, sensory level, refuses to submit to modern medical interpretations. Raising more questions about the mysterious nature of the heart, in the wake of Barnard’s first successful transplant, academic and political writer Ali Mazrui (1933-2014) “drew attention to the meanings of the heart as a moral, emotional, and spiritual symbol” (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 94). Mazrui asked whether the inheritor of the heart might have a change of identity or soul (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 94), and recently fascinating stories have emerged from individuals who have received heart transplants claiming changes in

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<sup>71</sup> Dates – 1922-2014

personality and temperament since acquiring the new heart (Bound Alberti, 2012, pp. 1–2, 2016, pp. 94–95).

## **The heart/head reconnection in medical science**

Under the banner of medical holism, since the mid twentieth century there have been a number of interesting attempts to resolve the mind-body dualism highlighted above (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 39). Certainly recent developments in neurocardiology appear to confirm ancient understanding of the heart,<sup>72</sup> suggesting the existence of an intelligent link between the heart and the brain (Arguelles et al., 2003; Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 10; 'Heart vs Mind - What Makes Us Human', 2016; Merton College Oxford University, 2017; Perloff, 2010, p. 1503). Additionally, HeartMath Institute founder Doc Childre and his colleague Howard Martin suggest that the heart has its own independent nervous system - “the brain in the heart” (Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 10) - enabling it to make functional decisions independent of the cranial brain (Arguelles et al., 2003, p. 14). In this sense, the heart learns, remembers and feels in its own right (Arguelles et al., 2003, p. 14; Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 109). This idea contrasts significantly with traditional science’s idea that the heart is simply a pump and that intelligence resides solely in the brain, yet closely reflects the understanding of ancient civilisations who believed that the heart carried its own ability to think and make decisions:

Instead of simply pumping blood, it [the heart] directs and aligns many systems in the body so that they can function in harmony with one another. And although the heart is in constant communication with the brain, we now know that it makes many of its own decisions (Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 4)

Since the late 1990s, HeartMath has been pioneering wellbeing research based on discoveries made by physiologists John and Beatrice Lacey of the Fels Research Institute twenty years earlier (Childre & Martin, 2000, pp. 10–11). At that time, scientists knew

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<sup>72</sup> Neurocardiology is a discipline which explores the idea that the heart is a sensory organ with sophisticated centres for receiving and processing information – with a nervous system that enables the heart to learn, remember, and make decisions independent of the brain (Perloff, 2010, p.1503)

that the body's nervous system connected the heart with the brain, but they still presumed that the brain made all of the decisions.

The Laceys found that when the brain sent “orders” to the heart through the nervous system, the heart didn't automatically obey. Instead, the heart responded as if it had its own distinctive logic....the heart appeared to be sending messages back to the brain that the brain not only understood but obeyed....The Laceys and others discovered that our heartbeats aren't just the mechanical throbs of a diligent pump, but an *intelligent language* that significantly influences how we perceive and react to the world (Childre & Martin, 2000, pp. 10–11, italics in original)

In what Bound Alberti suggests could be seen as a “backlash in Western scientific medicine against medical specialization and the heart's identification as a material pump, or muscle” (2012, p. 40), attempts are now being made within the medical sciences to redeploy the heart as an organ of emotion. Further, Bound Alberti states that such a move indicates the “ideological, philosophical, and theological weight of resistance *against* viewing the body and mind as separate or divisible worlds” (2012, p. 40, italics in original); themes which have arisen repeatedly for the past several hundred years both within the sciences and culture as a whole. In a similar observation, Webb states that today “we are describing new routes back into the heart” (Webb, 2010, p. 4). Certainly this is an interesting move, and a question that arises for me is, why is this happening? Could this be a consequence of other hearts trying to speak to us, guiding us to see that our engagement with the world is limited in some way?

While it is not my intention to answer these questions immediately, my aim is to keep a focus on how our relationship has changed, and is still changing, in relation to the heart, and to cultivate curiosity around why this might be the case – keeping the advice of my heart from the transference dialogues firmly in my awareness. As Romanyshyn observes, “*How we speak and how we listen is a difference which matters*” (1982, p. 116, italics in original). Whatever might be happening, over the past half century research has discovered that the heart possesses its own logic, with decision-making powers and an ability to “talk” with the brain (Guarneri, 2006, p. 156). Indeed, in the context of holistic medicine, cardiologist Mimi Guarneri, suggests that it is only by learning to hear, and getting to know, *the whole heart*, that healing can occur (2006). In this context, Guarneri opens her awareness to not just the physical heart, but the mental heart affected by

stress/depression, the emotional heart hurt by loss, the intelligent heart with its own nervous system (2006, inside back cover). Additionally, in striking similarity to Guénon, Guarneri talks of the spiritual heart that yearns for higher purpose, and the universal heart that communicates with others (2006, inside back cover).

## **The metaphoric heart**

In contemporary society, the heart is very much alive in metaphorical expression. I will be exploring this in more detail in chapter four, however, for now it is interesting to consider Romanyshyn's observation that while such metaphorical ways of speaking are today seen as "figures of speech", the empirical truth of the pumping heart does not negate other hearts (1982, p. 102). These other hearts express themselves in and through our lives, and bear witness to the biological pump – just as the biological pump bears witness to our emotional and spiritual lives. Therefore, we need all expressions of the heart to fully experience the world. While stating that one's heart is in one's mouth is a metaphor, this heart is still expressing a feeling in relation to a person's lived experience of the world. Importantly, *this heart matters*, and is just as legitimate in terms of how we create knowledge about the world and how we operate in it, as the biological pump.

As Romanyshyn states, metaphorical hearts might seem strange from the viewpoint of empirical reality, however, we have no difficulty understanding what these hearts mean in our actual lived experience (1982, p. 103). When we hear these other hearts spoken about by another, we might be able to empathise with what the other person is going through; we can listen, celebrate with, or console. When we hear that someone is "broken-hearted" or "heart-sick", we have no need to consult a cardiologist, nor dismiss these statements imploring the person confiding in us to tell the truth (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 103). Rather, we understand - we can imagine how the other person is feeling, and consequently move into the world with them.

## The dark heart

Because of the heart's centrality in emotional, spiritual and moral life, it can also take on less desirable qualities, for example, the terms "cold-hearted" or "heartless" indicate a cruel/unkind person. Indeed, these terms were commonly used in vernacular to indicate a person's temperament and personality since before the writings of William Shakespeare (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 96). Shakespeare is probably best known for using the heart and its associated qualities to highlight the underlying impulses and motives that govern people's attitudes and actions (Hoystad, 2007, p. 174). In *King Lear* in particular, the "Shakespearian heart" becomes the "symptom and image of personal integrity in an ethical and existential sense" (Hoystad, 2007, p. 174).

Moving forward in time into Victorian literature, Bound Alberti writes about how hearts took on a vitality and morality of their own (2012, p. 134). Hearts became soft or hard dependent on experience, were filled or emptied by degrees of feeling, and struggled with deep questions about life (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 134). Certainly, many heart-related expressions that we are familiar with today appeared in the English language in the 18<sup>th</sup> century - denoting happiness or contentment, or conversely, sadness, depression or discouragement (Loe & Edwards, 2004, p. 290). For example, the Oxford English Dictionary contains entries for a number of contemporary expressions that highlight negative qualities of the heart, including "coldhearted", "rotten-hearted", and "heart of stone" (2018). In more colloquial terms, the Urban Dictionary defines someone with a "black heart", as a "person who is no longer able to feel emotion - specifically, their heart is dead and this usually occurs after multiple tragedies in their life" (2019).

This idea of a black, or rotten, heart is also interesting in a religious sense – particularly as the heart is often considered to be darkened. For example, in Sufism, the heart of the fully realised human is the centre point of every conceivable form and dimension of human experience (Morris, 2005, p. 2). In this view, the heart is "reflective" in two ways; firstly in terms of coming to know God through thinking, contemplating and pondering, and secondly, in terms of being able to fully reflect the divine through the conscious and often painful task of polishing the mirror of the heart (Morris, 2005, p. 2; Nasr, 2002, pp.

37–38). This polishing occurs through numerous trials and lessons (Morris, 2005, p. 2). In this sense, polishing does not mean a surface process, but a thorough cleaning and polishing of the heart in its greatest depth. In Sufism, the heart can “rust like iron” (Morris, 2005, p. 53), by receiving something that is “other than God” (Morris, 2005, p. 131). This rust blocks the self-manifestation of the “Truly Real” in the heart itself (Morris, 2005, p. 131). As lessons are learnt and assimilated, the constant polishing of the heart through contemplation enables the heart to reflect more fully the image of the divine (Morris, 2005, pp. 131–132; Nasr, 2002, pp. 37–38) – thereby deepening one’s relationship with God, and consequently, diverse others. In a similar fashion, Buddhist philosophy offers meditative and ritual practices which aim to end suffering through actively purifying and transforming the heart (Kornfield, 2008).

## **Contemplating living conflict: heart/mind, body/mind**

As I was gathering the material together for this chapter I became acutely aware of a developing theme, that is, the problematic relationship that I have always felt between my mind/body, and consequently my head/heart. Reflecting on the heart’s history through ancient and modern eyes, it is impossible to miss the idea that something significant has taken place in terms of how we relate to our hearts, minds, bodies, and consequently, our sense of self. From a social perspective, Formenti suggests that it is through our body “that we communicate, think, and *tell* anything” (2015, p. 12, italics in original). In agreement researcher and sociology lecturer Alexandra Howson states that our bodies shape our daily perceptions and interactions (2013, p.2). Similarly, McGilchrist suggests that the body is the “necessary *context* for all human experience” (2012, p. 118, italics in original).

With my heart’s advice from the transference dialogue as the focal point of my awareness, and reflecting on how distanced contemporary society seems to be from their feeling, thinking hearts, I sink into a reverie within which I see myself at middle school – at around eleven years of age. In the images that arise, I have a distinct awareness of my

sense of self moving upwards out of my body and into my head, seemingly occurring at the same time that my schooling shifted emphasis towards subjects that required heightened abilities in reasoning and critical thinking. Was this the time period in my life when I became more distanced/separated from my heart, and consequently, my body? Was this around the time that I began to visit the doctor for the chest pains I described in the prologue to this research?

While it is too great a leap here to contemplate a link between the physical symptoms I describe and my growing sense of separation from my heart and my body, it is interesting to consider the wealth of research over the latter part of the last century in relation to the body and how it seems to have become increasingly separated from, and rendered subservient to, the mind (Howson, 2013, p. 3; Jaggar & Bordo, 1992, p. 3). Specifically, I am referring to ideas about the body and mind as integral factors in how we generate knowledge about ourselves and our place in the world. Certainly, ideas of the body have been changing dramatically for hundreds of years; from the Enlightenment notion of the body being something to command and discipline (Hancock et al., 2000, p. 2) - subsequently becoming the domain of biology (Hancock et al., 2000, p. 1) - to in recent years, becoming a “problem for linguistic, cultural and social analysis” (Hancock et al., 2000, p. 2).

Building on the insights of Marxist historicism, psychoanalytic theory, literary theory and sociology of knowledge (Jaggar & Bordo, 1992, p. 4), feminist discourse has been challenging contemporary approaches to knowledge production for almost half a century. Feminist researcher Susan Bordo suggests that thinking in contemporary Western culture is in large part due to the dualist epistemology and ontology put forward by seventeenth century philosopher René Descartes (Jaggar & Bordo, 1992, p. 3).<sup>73</sup> This philosophy posited that mind and body are distinct, that body is subordinate to mind, and that mind is the source of thought through which the self is produced through cognitive rationalisation and through which we see the world as external to us (Howson, 2013, pp. 3–4). This perspective has had the long-term effect of separating the “universal from the

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<sup>73</sup> Descartes (1596-1650)

particular, culture from nature, mind from body, and reason from emotion” (Jaggar & Bordo, 1992, p. 3). Perhaps this list could also contain head/brain from heart (and the body as a whole), particularly as Bound Alberti points out that often heart and brain are considered as “competing objects in the construction of personal identity” (2016, p. 16).

In the context of my exploration, it is interesting to consider ideas within feminism which attach importance to the embodied self and how one generates knowledge about the world through the body. In relation to this point, feminist writer Joanna Hodge states, the “Cartesian concept of the subject introduces a separation between rational consciousness and sensual embodiment” (1988, p. 153), and it is this separation that drives themes concerning sexual difference (Hodge, 1988, p. 153). This idea can be seen in Australian ecofeminist, philosopher and activist Val Plumwood’s (1939-2008) observation that dualistic approaches to knowledge can lead to a conception of contraries or binary opposites where there is potential for one side to become subservient to the dominant view, or even forbidden. Plumwood termed this “hyperseparation”; defined as the “structure of dominance that drives western binaries, including...female/male, matter/mind” (Bird Rose, 2013, p. 94). According to Plumwood, hyperseparation places value to one side of the binary, and relegates the other to a position of “oppositional subordination” (Bird Rose, 2013, p. 94).<sup>74</sup> In this sense, it is easy to see how the heart and body have become seen as separate, and subordinate, to the head and mind, with immediate embodied experience also subject to this perception.

It is interesting to consider this idea in terms of the problematic relationship we seem to have today with the subtle heart of feeling and emotion, particularly in terms of the notion in contemporary feminism that suggests mind-body dualism is not gender neutral (Jaggar & Bordo, 1992, p. 4). In this sense, feminist writing suggests that the body has regularly been associated with the female and as the “chief enemy of objectivity” (Jaggar & Bordo, 1992, p. 4). Certainly parallels in thinking can be seen in depth psychology.

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<sup>74</sup> For further information about Western epistemology as both hierarchical and pyramidal, see Donna Wilshire’s excellent essay *The Uses of Myth, Image, and the Female Body in Re-visioning Knowledge* (1992). See also Patrick Curry’s essay *Defending the Humanities: Metaphor, Nature and Science* (2017)



Specifically, Romanyshyn suggests that, since the growth of the empirical method of observation, we have become ever more detached from our lived experience, becoming impartial observers of the world, locked in a process of abandoning/escaping the living body (2000).

A consequence of this has been to leave the living, experiencing, sensual body in the shadows, in the unconscious, lost and forgotten, subordinate to the head/mind. Indeed, this way of seeing the world has created a dualism between “culture and nature, intellect and emotion, spirit and matter”, thereby making women (as the symbol of feeling, carnality and nature) carriers of the negative side of these dualisms (Romanyshyn, 2000, pp. 172–173). In this context, as the heart was understood to sense life qualitatively, responding to direct presence and lived experience (Bourgeault, 2017), perhaps it is a little easier to see how reconciling this way of knowing could be difficult through modern, objective observations of the body – given that, as Howson suggests, we “see the world and operate within it from the particular vantage-point of our own body” (2013, p. 2). Over time, the scientific narrative of a biological, pumping heart that is subservient to the brain has served to “arguably [represent] the triumph of reason over passion, of mind over matter, of masculine over feminine” (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 15).

Perhaps this is why the medicalised heart is more accepted than the subtle, feeling, living, experiencing heart – that is, the other hearts that I am aiming to give expression to in this work? Certainly it is interesting to consider the idea that the body is often conceptualised in opposition to the mind and as the boundary marker between “the ‘inner’ self and the ‘external’ world” (Jaggar & Bordo, 1992, p. 4). According to Bordo, the body is a “medium of culture”, a “powerful symbolic form”, “a metaphor for culture”, and a “blueprint for diagnosis and/or vision of social and political life” (1992, p. 13). Bordo also suggests that the very concept of the body has been formed in opposition to that of mind (1992, p. 4).

As I ponder this, and consider my own troubled relationship with my own heart, I find myself wondering about other body parts that might also have a rich and complex history, just like the heart. At present I am not aware of any conversations of the kind I am attempting to have with specific organs of the body. It is important for me to point

out here that the reason that I have chosen the heart (and not any other organ that might be considered to possess a certain kind of ‘intelligence’ – like the gut or the liver) is because of my biography and the key role that my heart has played in my own life with relation to the way that conflict has manifested in my world. I have directly experienced the living quality of conflict through my personal relationship with my heart – through physical illness and emotional distress that, in my own body, manifested as unpleasant feelings in the heart itself. However, I am well aware that, for example, the gut or the liver may have a particular poignancy for other people. For example, could someone who experiences life through their gut, and gut instinct, identify a similar conflict in the mind/body conundrum that I am highlighting here? In asking this question, the point I am making is that there appears to be a challenge that lies deep within the mind/body relationship itself, subsequently illuminated through particular organs of the body, which, as embodied beings, we often call upon to help us to make sense of life experience.

While I personally do not have the same connection with my gut or liver as I have with my heart, I do understand that throughout history both of these organs have been considered as important as the heart and the brain, and subsequently made meaning to people in their own particular context. For example, in both ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Greece (up until the mid-seventh century BCE), it was believed that the seat of the soul was the liver (Naydler, 2009b, p. 155). Indeed, the ancient Mesopotamians saw the liver as a key psychic centre (Naydler, 1996, p. 190).<sup>75</sup> For example, in Mesopotamian literature, livers “rejoiced” (Naydler, 2009b, p. 155), and were “pacified” (Naydler, 1996, p. 190), and in divinatory terms, livers provided an important link between the physical and spiritual worlds (Naydler, 2009b, p. 155). As Naydler observes, interpretation of livers “was an elaborate science based on detailed empirical observation”, requiring expert training and extensive record keeping (Naydler, 2009b, p. 158). Of course, in the same way as ideas of the heart have changed over time, understanding of the liver also

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<sup>75</sup> According Bourgeault, ancient anatomical treatises specified that the qualities and characteristics we would today identify with the heart and feeling – “passion, drama, intensity...emotion” – were associated with the liver (2017)

changed, and in the Galenic model of the body, the liver was “the site where humours were produced” (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 96).<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, the gut has a long and colourful history. In a fascinating article, Simon Wilson writes that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “tummy-ache [had] the power to undermine religions” (2004, p. 34). Well-regarded intellectuals of the day claimed that the body could overwhelm the soul, “putting one’s very immortality at risk” (Wilson, 2004, p. 34). Indeed, theories and ideas about digestion became a “national obsession” at this time, with the stomach “more crucial than the brain” (Wilson, 2004, p. 37). With disorders of the stomach understood to affect the whole body and mind, the soul was brought into question (Wilson, 2004, p.37). Since the stomach was the central and most important organ of the body at this time in our history, when the stomach was upset, it disordered all other organs too, and created disorder on a soul/spiritual level (Wilson, 2004, p.38). In this sense, the material body was the main force that disconnected one from the divine, not the other way around – creating conflict between spiritual and physical - or religious and medical explanations of each (Wilson, 2004, p. 38).

Interestingly, in contemporary medicine, the gut has been the site of much research and it has recently been discovered that it is a “second brain”, governed by the “enteric nervous system (ENS), which has up to 600 million neurons” (Bound Alberti, 2016, pp. 15–16). In medical science terms, the gut is now seen as a mass communication centre, signalling to the brain (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 16). As Bound Alberti notes, the gut has long been linked to language and experiences of emotion (2016, p. 193). Intuitive forms of knowledge in the form of “‘gut feelings’ – are part of a much longer history of experiencing extra-sensory knowledge through the body rather than the mind” (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 193).

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<sup>76</sup> In the second century AD, Greek physician Galen (130AD – 210AD) established a “system of medical practice in which the heart and the passions were anatomically and spiritually situated as mediators between mind and body” (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 127). This system remained generally unchallenged until at least the Renaissance period (ElMaghawry, Zanatta, & Zampieri, 2014, pp. 3–5).

In the same way that heart rhythms change depending upon certain emotions, modern science accepts that similar physical responses can be detected in the gut - “we lose our appetites when distressed, anxiety can be linked to constipation or diarrhoea, and love conjures up ‘butterflies’ in our bellies” (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 193). Additionally, much like ideas of the heart have changed over history as discussed in this chapter, the gut also has a rich and complex history in medical science and metaphorical expression. While it is not possible to go into more depth here, it is interesting to consider what Bound Alberti terms the “secularization of the body; the removal of the sacred (the soul), and the substitution of material over spiritual explanations for how it worked” (2016, p. 199). In this way, the brain/mind has taken the place of the soul, so that “intuition and gut feelings are seen as neuroscientific experiences” (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 199). This idea is echoed in Sheldrake’s observation that emotions have been considered under a medical science narrative as “epiphenomenon” – that is, results of brain activity (2013, p. 10). This leads to narrow explanations of reality, reducing experience into causal explanations in what Kripal terms “rational re-readings” (2014, pp. 338–339).

It is interesting to see the same problematic theme arising here that I have already highlighted with the heart/mind, body/mind relationship. Specifically, that while we might experience life through the body, and perhaps, one organ in particular that means something to us, when the body is framed through the notions of reason or mind (and as a consequence, medical science narrative), we lose something of the nature of what our bodies are trying to say. We lose depth. In relation to this point, philosopher Ivan Illich (1926-2002) spoke strongly about the language of medical science damaging “our capacity to experience our selves and our environment...[obliterating] the ‘lived and felt body’, the ‘fleshy, bodily, carnal, dense, humoural experience of self’” (Illich quoted in Wilson, 2009, pp. 58–59). Internalising this mechanical narrative, we “annihilate [our] own sensual nature” (Illich quoted in Wilson, 2009, p. 59). As such our living, breathing, experiencing bodies are replaced by objective facts, distanced from life and the world itself. Commenting on Illich’s observations, Wilson states that the consequences of this “obliteration of the flesh are serious enough for the individual’s experience of him or herself”, which also undermines our “capacity to feel something for other people” (2009, p. 59). Considering this idea perhaps it is not so difficult to understand how, within our

modern selves, we might feel conflicted – particularly in relation to engaging meaningfully with direct, lived experience through the heart and the body. If I reflect on this through the lens of my own experience, I was educated into a particular, distanced, rational, head-based viewpoint as expressive of reality.

In relation to this, Bordo makes the point that the divide between mind and body is not a philosophical position, but a “*practical metaphysics*” that has been socially embodied in most aspects of life (1995, 4%, italics in original). This is why I believe it is so important to illuminate my own experiences with my heart (situated in my body), and to make space to explore the difficulties and challenges that I have experienced in my life by only allowing myself to listen to one particular story it tells. This is where ideas within feminist discourse offer a great deal of richness. In this brief overview of the heart and other organs of the body, it is clear that across human history there have been many different ways of experiencing and making sense of the world that are often at odds with each other.

While the language and symbols I am using in this research to express this conflict is that of the heart and the head (or mind), others may find that the gut makes more sense. What I am endeavouring to demonstrate, by exploring my story through a specific organ of my body, are the parallels of my direct lived experience with feminist ideas of the body, which themselves speak of an increasingly conflicted relationship between mind and body; beginning at the Enlightenment. As Hodge states, “Descartes sets about producing an account of the body and mind, such that the body can be safely ignored, having been shown to be subject to the discipline of reason, and not subversive of it” (1988, p. 163). It can thus be argued that the body has become a living metaphor for the phenomenon of conflict itself. As McGilchrist states, “metaphor *embodies* thought” placing it in a living context (2012, p. 118). The mind in this sense is left to create a heart of objectivity; our modern day heart of science, stripped of its other qualities and ways of knowing at the political level.

Sharing my own thoughts, Wilson suggests that what is needed in modern society is a “careful cultivation of the heart *and* mind” (2009, p. 59, my italics). My stress on the word

'and' is reflective of my desire in this research project to explore ways to bring these often conflicting parts of the human being into relationship and dialogue. This is particularly significant if one takes seriously the idea that we make sense of the world through our bodies. In this context, instead of creating a dichotomy of mind *or* body, head *or* heart, my aim is to bring the much maligned heart back into conversation in relation to how we produce knowledge about, and consequently, engage in the world - finding creative ways in which the heart's way of knowing, and the mind's way of knowing could be brought together. As Romanyshyn states, there is an important and recognisable difference between an understanding that arises from mind and the understanding of the human heart (1982, p. 101). However, both are equally as important and valuable. Certainly, given the topic of discussion in this chapter, I am curious whether we could also extend this idea to incorporate a careful cultivation of the heart *and* mind *and* body – coming to know the world through our whole embodied selves in direct, living relationship with life.

## **Concluding thoughts**

The different hearts and organs of the body that we have met in this chapter have taken us into the centre of debates about the complex, challenging and often conflicted relationships that we experience between head and heart, mind and body, and the meaning arising between them as embodied experiences. Considering this idea, from a cultural historical point of view, Bound Alberti states that our "bodies are products of the stories that we tell" and that by looking at the parts of the body, we might perhaps "be able to construct it anew" (2016, p. 19). In this sense, the different stories of specific bodily organs illuminated in this chapter could be seen as helpful ways for opening up conversation towards different ways of developing knowledge about, and engaging with, the world - specifically in relation to engaging differently with conflict.

Focussing specifically on the heart, while the heart is not uncomplicated, and can bring with it a sense of grandeur or a sense of moral high ground,<sup>77</sup> the centrality of the heart to the human experience in terms of interconnectedness, relationship and wisdom appears to be universal. In terms of understanding conflict, it could therefore be suggested that the heart could be viewed as a symbol or metaphor of mediation, a channel of communication (Hoystad, 2007, p. 89), which has the potential of facilitating a mutual exchange, or dialogue, between differing realms of human experience. Indeed, dialogue, according to psychologist James Lynch author of *The Broken Heart*, is the “essential element of every social interaction...the elixir of life” (1979, p. 215), and links back to the human heart. According to Lynch, lack of dialogue can manifest what he terms “broken hearts” (1979, p. 218),<sup>78</sup> and therefore relationships matter (1979, p. 3). Drawing on Lynch’s work, Romanyshyn states that while he agrees with Lynch, he would add that “human relationships *are the matter of the human heart*” (1982, p. 133, italics in original). In this sense, we have come full circle, taking seriously the numerous hearts emerging within this project as powerful symbols and metaphors for the possibility of relationship and connection.

As I contemplate this idea, I am reminded of my heart’s earlier advice from the transference dialogue – *just who is writing who?* I hear this question as if for the first time. Now I *know*, that *I do not know*. As my previous certainty regarding what I knew to be true about the heart dissolves into a void of nothingness, I sit in a state of numbness and subsequent contemplation, understanding intuitively that what I am experiencing is significant, although I do not yet consciously know exactly why (and what) this means. Eventually I feel the urge to write the words ‘*pumping heart*’ into my internet search engine. One result in particular catches my eye. It simply reads, *the heart is not a pump* – an eyebrow-raising line illuminated as if in direct response to the earlier dissolution of my educated beliefs about the heart. Digging deeper I discover recent research in cardiology

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<sup>77</sup> The heart could be associated with a sense of “I know”, which lies beyond question – because my heart says so.

<sup>78</sup> In modern medicine, “Takotsubo syndrome” is an acute and usually reversible heart failure syndrome, first described in 1990 (Lyon et al., 2016, p. 11). It is commonly called “broken heart syndrome” in the context of bereavement (Lyon et al., 2016, p. 12). Referring back to Plato’s observations on dialogue, Lynch states that dialogue is a “*process and not a thing...it is reciprocal, spontaneous, often nonverbal, and alive*” (1979, p. 218, italics in original)

that suggests our 400 year-old understanding of the heart is flawed (Cowan, 2016; Furst, 2015; Marinelli, Fuerst, van der Zee, McGinn, & Marinelli, 1995).<sup>79</sup> What does this mean? If the heart is not a pump, what is it? What exactly was it that helped us to see differently after all this time of knowing the heart as a pump?

I will close this chapter with a quote from GP and author Gavin Francis from his bestselling non-fiction book titled *Adventures in Human Being*:

It's nearly four hundred years since William Harvey realised that classical beliefs about the heart were wrong and that it works as a four-chambered pump. Before his *De Motu Cordis* was published in 1628, ideas hadn't moved on since Roman times. In fact, we still often speak as if classical beliefs were true, and the heart generated not only our pulse, but also our spirit (Francis, 2015, loc 88 of 253)

Writing in 2015, perhaps Francis did not know that ideas were changing in relation to the heart. Alternatively, perhaps this statement itself reveals an unquestioned belief in the physical heart, itself a perspective facilitated by the empirical method as the generator of absolute truth about the nature of reality. In this way, how could the heart be anything else than a pump? How ironic that Francis would now find himself where he once placed those classical beliefs that flourished before Harvey's discovery. Having met a multitude of hearts in the researching and writing of this chapter, my own heart's words ring in my ears once more, "I could have been writing through the people who were writing about me." My thoughts quieten and my body relaxes. "Yes," I say to myself. "Yes, you really could have been writing through the people who were writing about you. And, more importantly, I think you still are."

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<sup>79</sup> I will return in more detail to this topic and new discoveries in medical science in chapter five



## Chapter three: The pumping heart of science

### Dream – September 2017

*I awoke from a particularly disturbing dream within which I had been carrying a severed head by the hair. Burnt into my mind were numerous images that I wished to forget. Droplets of blood pooled into a puddle on the floor by my feet as I looked all around me for the body that once belonged to this person. The head swung from long, blood-stained hair that was wrapped tightly around my hand like creeping ivy. I lifted up the head and brought it into line with my own. Lifeless eyes stared into mine as I felt something terrible reach down into my gut. My heart wept with grief. Did I do this? Did I behead this person? I looked for the murder weapon but I couldn't see anything. Who was this person? I didn't know. I couldn't tell if this person was male or female. I was so confused. Why did this happen? I did not feel angry, I just felt numb. This person was a stranger to me, yet at the same time I felt so intimately connected that none of it made sense to me. I began to cry, falling to the floor sobbing. The dream ended and I woke up, however the repugnant images remained with me for many months following – regularly haunting my daily work.*

### Journal entry – October 2017

*Several weeks following the dream above, I had an appointment with a vascular surgeon who, when making conversation during a routine consultation, politely asked me what I did for a living. I answered the question, telling him that I was a PhD student re-imagining the heart as an organ of perception with regards to engaging in more creative ways with conflict. Somewhat confused, he asked for further clarification of my project, and I explained in a little more detail what my research entailed. After exhaling heavily and rolling his eyes, it was very interesting for me to note how this man seemed totally unable to consider the heart as anything other than a literal, physical pump. His parting comment to me*

*as I readied myself to leave was that, as my work involved a lot of sitting down, I should consider wearing support stockings whilst “I was writing my fibs.”*<sup>80</sup>

*At first I was amused by the comment, however, reflecting on it later my feelings changed to frustration and anger, and then numbness (exactly the same feeling as I’d had in the dream a few weeks earlier). Becoming more familiar with the process of “letting go of the work” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 140) to become more finely attuned to the subtler threads that tie me to this project, I set the space for the unconscious dynamic and the “unfinished business” (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 138) in the work to reveal itself. Some time later, catching up to where this project had been leading me (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 144), I realised that perhaps the numbness I felt in relation to the dream and my conversation with the surgeon was my heart’s reaction to its estrangement from modern life – its subservience to knowledge generated through the intellect associated with the head/mind in contemporary times. Consequently, we are no longer aware that we can always hear the subtle voice of the heart in its many guises – not just as a biological organ.*

*As I contemplated this, I had a sense of my heart telling me that its (and our) future is up to us – that is, in terms of how we see the heart and how we engage with it. Do we see it from a fixed position as a biological pump and nothing more (which is itself only a perspective)? Or, by committing to an imaginal approach and seeing symbolically and metaphorically, can we engage with the heart as **both** a biological pump **and** something more, leading us towards long-forgotten realms of knowledge, and perhaps changing our entire perspective of the world in the process?*

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<sup>80</sup> My visit to Kent and Canterbury Hospital took place in October 2017

## Reflections

We find it difficult even to entertain...questions about the pre-Harveian heart, because the heart which we see today, this pumping heart, is one in which we believe....Vision has consequences....When we commit ourselves to a scientific truth we also commit ourselves to a psychological style of life....we cannot forget that the divided heart which Harvey sees is a *historical, psychological vision*. We cannot then forget that the heart which he sees is also a way of seeing, a means by which human life is envisioned in a new way. (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 117, italics in original)

It is interesting to consider Romanyshyn's quote above in relation to the previous chapter within which the heart told a fascinating story of its life across the millennia demonstrating how it lived within, and has been experienced by, the *viewing consciousness of those who were perceiving it*. In this investigation, I explored the idea that people across history have made meaning out of, and have lived successfully with, the particular heart that they saw and engaged with; making sense of their lives accordingly. In the same way that the heart made meaning in this framework, it is clear that other bodily organs like the gut and liver also gave rise to attitudes that "portray ways of experiencing the world" (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 101). By looking through this lens, it has been enlightening to consider the idea of a developing tension within the mind/body relation (specifically since the time of the Enlightenment). Certainly in the light of my research, and in terms of interrogating my own conflicted relationship between my head and heart, mind and body, this idea is extremely compelling.

While today our world is predominantly understood through what could be seen as a head/mind-based, objective lens of science, and the particular kind of narrative that this engenders, this does not mean that the heart of subjective experience is any less true or valid in terms of how we create knowledge about the world, or consequently engage with life itself. By exploring numerous hearts and giving them the opportunity to live, the biological heart of science that we are so familiar with today could be re-framed as one perspective amongst many, arising through our direct experience of the world. I suggest that this observation shines a light directly on the conundrum of the heart lying in the conflict literature as discussed in chapter one. It stands to reason that the heart the scholars are referring to is not the physical pumping heart of science – this would not

make sense. The heart being alluded to must be something else, and it is my suggestion that the dominance of the scientific approach in our lives makes any kind of exploration into what this other heart actually is virtually impossible in the external, political realm framed generally through an empirical narrative. Certainly this could explain Bound Alberti and McCormick's observation that two distinct hearts now live in modern consciousness. That is, the "heart-as-pump" (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 3) or "worker heart" (McCormick, 1988, p. 38) of science, versus the "heart-as-emotion" (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 3) or "feeling heart" (McCormick, 1988, p. 38) of culture, which grounds feeling in both the organ and symbol of the heart (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 166). Bound Alberti's work explores the organ of the heart and its links to emotions in a cultural historical context. In this sense, she focuses on the emotions and links with feelings, the heart, love, and notions of the 'self' (2012, pp. 2–3), as informally acknowledged within cultural belief (2012, p. 157).

It is important for me to state that it is not my intention to explore emotions within my own work as this is a vast area of research which this project does not have space for. While I agree to a large extent with Bound Alberti, and celebrate her work as it endeavours to bring a different heart into conversation beyond the pumping heart, I am aware of a danger of becoming stuck around the idea that any other heart being spoken of (in relation to the heart of science) is one that is simply related to emotions and feelings. In this sense, I particularly resonate with the idea that flows through the esoteric/mystery tradition of the West that sees the untrained human heart as a slave to the passions and consequently the emotions; however, through contemplative prayer an individual can release and transform the heart so that it looks:

[B]eyond the obvious...bordered surface of things...into a deeper reality, emerging from some unknown profundity, which plays lightly upon the surface of this life without being caught there: a world where meaning, insight, and clarity come together in a whole different way (Bourgeault, 2017)

In this context, the emotions, experienced through the heart, *are simply part of an 'other', in this case spiritual heart, that stands in relation to the physical heart and the emotional heart.* However Bound Alberti's research is helpful to my own project in the

sense that we are both compelled to explore the meaning behind radically different hearts that live in modern awareness. Bound Alberti suggests that these hearts have arisen in large part due to the transformation in knowledge that occurred during the nineteenth century (2012, p. 166). As a result of this, we moved from a cardio-centric worldview to a cranio-centric worldview at the level of medical theory (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 7). In a strikingly similar observation, Nicolescu states that the split between science and meaning, subject and object, was fully consummated in the nineteenth century with the advent of academic disciplines (2014, p. 7). At this point, “Science and culture have nothing more in common. This is why one speaks of science *and* culture” (Nicolescu, 2014, p. 7, italics in original).

It is interesting to consider Bound Alberti and Nicolescu’s observation in relation to my dream about the severed head detailed at the beginning of this section. Specifically, I suggest that it is in some way linked to a change in perception that has moved our understanding of where knowledge arises from, and consequently has rendered the heart (as an organ of wisdom, soul or cognition) as invalid or subservient to knowledge generated through the head or mental activity. I also feel that my interaction with the hospital surgeon in the reflection above could be representative of the same issue. For example, while the surgeon knew the heart to be a pump, the heart that lived in me was *both* a physical organ *and* something so much more (a heart of science and a heart of culture). This is because I had made a *conscious decision* in my life to give validity to these different ways of experiencing the heart. Unfortunately, while I could appreciate the surgeon’s heart, the hearts that live in my own world could not be brought fully into expression within the boundaries of the surgeon’s stance towards the world. As I write these words, I sense that there is something about the heart of science that is related to conflict, however, before I can reach any understanding about what this link might be, it is important for me to make a space for the pumping heart of science to speak.

## The pumping heart

According to Romanyshyn, the symbol and metaphor of the pumping heart arose in our consciousness at a particular time period in Western history when old ways of seeing the world were crumbling (1982, pp. 110–113). This was the time of the Enlightenment (the age of reason) and the Scientific Revolution, and the scientific method arising from this change in perspective prioritised mathematically precise, logical, rational, quantitative thinking. According to Romanyshyn, at this time period in history the pumping heart became a “metaphorical reality” (1982, p. 142). In agreement, phenomenologist Jan Hendrik van den Berg states that “nobody before Harvey saw the heart *as a pump*, with the consequence that nobody, particularly no physician, was able to hear the heart *beat* as a pump” (1982, p. xii, italics in original). When Harvey first put forward his theory that a sound can be heard every time the heart beats as it delivers a quantity of blood, it met “with no approval” (van den Berg in Romanyshyn, 1982, p.xi). Before Harvey, people lived in a different world, just as real, and just “*as true*” as ours (van den Berg in Romanyshyn, 1982, p.xii, italics in original).

Arguing that from our current viewpoint earlier perceptions of the heart might appear false and perhaps even foolish, Romanyshyn suggests that we need to understand that our own outlook today is the result of a cultural perspective that embraces us so comprehensively that we do not realise that it is merely a perspective (1982, pp. 143–144). In his work Romanyshyn makes clear that one’s psychological life is reflected in the metaphor that one chooses to make sense of one’s experience of the world. Humanity’s vision of the heart, is a vision of humanity itself, “through this heart...we spy ourselves” (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 130). This is like McGilchrist’s idea that the “metaphor we choose governs what we see” (2012, p. 179) which I will be discussing shortly, and Bound Alberti’s observation that the metaphors we use in science and medicine matter:

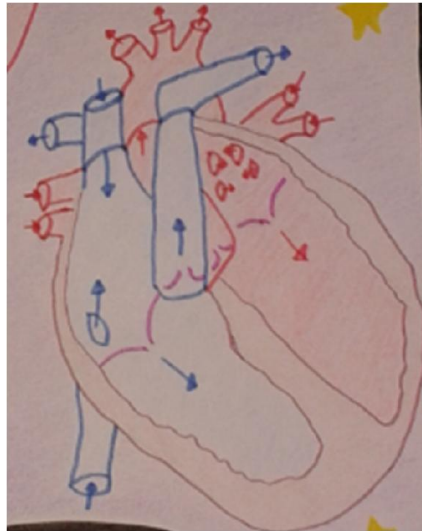
The language in which the mind-body relationship has historically been conceptualised is indicative of broader cultural shifts in social and economic life. Thus metaphors of clockwork bodies (and hearts) became conceivable at the same time as manufacturing mechanisms made such phenomena part of the material world (2016, p. 103)

Speaking directly to this idea, Holdrege talks of the heart thus: “The kind of picture of the heart and circulation we carry within us has consequences” (2002, p. 19), for while mechanical models are helpful to partially explain the world, there is a very real danger that when taken as the whole and literal truth of the nature of reality, phenomena become much *less* than they really are (Holdrege, 2002, p. 19). Specifically, a mechanical model is helpful only partially. If we can understand this, we become open to other viewpoints, however, if we are not, that partial truth has the potential to become a falsehood (Holdrege, 2002, p. 19). Similar to Romanyshyn’s idea that a particular approach towards the world both reveals and conceals information (2013, pp. 211–217), Holdrege continues to say that today our mechanical models/metaphor tends to occupy the mind to such a large extent that other metaphors or ways of viewing are obscured:

A high school or college student doesn’t usually learn “the heart has functions that can be interpreted in terms of a pressure pump,” rather they learn “the heart is a pump,” meaning that’s all it is. That’s what often happens to mechanomorphic metaphors in science. They become fixed and literal, losing their vibrancy and openness as metaphors that suggest relations...Once such metaphors have become fixed in the mind, it can then be difficult to loosen these images so that something of the richness of reality re-enters the mind (2002, pp. 6–7)

However, if as McGilchrist points out, “Metaphoric thinking is fundamental to our understanding of the world” (2012, p. 115), this calls into question how we come to know anything at all, and the very notion of our contemporary understanding of logic and reason. Indeed, what might be discovered in the act of stepping into the heart and opening up to hear the heart’s voice, cultivating an imaginative ear through the symbolic image, and the language of metaphor?

## Reflections on Harvey's heart



*Figure 1: Sectional anatomy of the heart (Livingstone, 2016)*

Recalling my heart's advice from previous chapters to commit to genuinely seeing and hearing it, and bearing in mind my interaction with the surgeon as highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, I begin by contemplating the heart that I am most familiar with. Interestingly, this is the first time that I have consciously sat and reflected upon the anatomical image of the heart, and the first time that I have allowed myself to consider what such an image might mean in terms of how I approach the world. As my eyes settle on the image above (see figure 1), my mind is drawn to a hazy memory of a biology lesson and the rather unpleasant experience I had around the age of thirteen when I witnessed a dissection of a pig's heart. Although I was not aware of it at the time, it was this biological heart that took precedence in my world. At that moment, the heart that I came to know in the classroom was the mechanical pump, even though in my personal life I did not experience my heart this way. As I allow myself to reflect, I am left wondering how such an iconic image could have been envisioned, and I am equally curious about how such a perception directs our lives today. Is it possible to trace a story regarding how the symbol and metaphor of the pumping heart might have taken its position in our modern lives? The rest of this chapter explores the story of how the pumping, literal heart of science could have been created.



## Harvey's pumping heart

Harvey was not the first to suggest that the heart is a pump. As early as 2000 BCE, Chinese physicians found that “the heart was a pump that pumped blood round the body, which accounted for the human pulse” (Hoystad, 2007, p. 55). In 1628, Harvey put forward his concept of pulmonary circulation (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 23; Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 107–113).<sup>81</sup> It is generally accepted that this theory served to radically transform Western science's view of the heart and the human frame in general (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 23). Harvey's discovery occurred during a time when thinking about the human condition was radically changing, with the mind and body conceptualised in terms of greater separation, and the former prioritised over the latter as the main source of knowledge (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 23). Philosophers and scholars of the day increasingly conceptualised the world in dualistic and mechanical terms, introducing new ideas about the nature of reality into society and culture that have formed the basis of our modern worldview (Bortoft, 2010; Del Collins, 2005; Kuhn, 1970; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; McGilchrist, 2012; Tarnas, 2000).

Famed today for discovering the circulatory system, Harvey's ideas have their origins in the thirteenth century, when Syrian physician Ibn al Nafis (1213-1288), began to describe pulmonary circulation (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 134, 2012, p. 4; ElMaghawry, Zanatta, & Zampieri, 2014, p. 10; Lauboeck, 2002, p. 53; Young, 2002, p. 33), challenging Galen's long-held theory of two separate circulatory systems (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 134). In her essay *The Emotional Heart: Mind, Body and Soul*, Bound Alberti observes that Renaissance anatomists developed Nafis' ideas further, and that in 1559, Italian anatomist Realdo Colombo (1516-1559) described “the movement of blood through the lungs and back to the heart” (2007, p. 134).<sup>82</sup> Following Colombo's observation, Italian physician Andrea Cesalpino (1519-1603) supported the principle of pulmonary circulation, and in 1603, anatomist Hieronymus Fabricius (1537-1619) described the distribution of blood around the body, providing Harvey with inspiration for his description of the circulation of the blood (Sculdetus, Villavicencio, & Rich, 2001; Webster,

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<sup>81</sup> Pulmonary transit refers to the movement of the blood from the heart, to the lungs, and back to the heart which all form part of the circulatory system

<sup>82</sup> Colombo's observations can be found in his work - *De re anatomica* (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 134)

1967, p. 269; Young, 2002, p. 44). As with all theories, it is important to note that not all anatomists supported the existence of pulmonary circulation, and by the time Harvey published his findings there was much debate concerning exactly how blood circulated around the body, and Harvey cited these ideas in his own work (Bound Alberti, 2007, pp. 134–135).

Harvey's classic *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* (commonly called, *De Motu Cordis*),<sup>83</sup> marks a change in approach towards the heart – describing it in more functional terms. However, it is interesting to consider that Harvey withheld his views for nine years until colleagues persuaded him to publish his findings (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 108). Perhaps his reluctance to openly discuss his research may be related to the fundamental place the heart occupied in culture at the time. According to Bound Alberti and Young, the images Harvey evokes to describe the pumping action of the heart were neither radical nor revolutionary (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 135; Young, 2002, p. 46). Even though he conceptualised the body in mechanistic terms, Harvey was fundamentally an Aristotelian - specifically, he understood the body as being moved by vital forces (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 135). Suggesting that Harvey retained an understanding that the heart was more than just a physical organ, according to Bound Alberti, Harvey's account of the heart was “compatible with Galenic interpretations of the emotional heart (with links to the spirits, the soul, and heat and as the body's symbolic centre)” (2007, p. 135). In agreement, Hillman notes that Harvey maintained the “archetypal images” of the heart as King (Hillman, 2007, p. 19). However, his writing is also generously populated with matter-of-fact observation, clarifying in detail the physical characteristics of his experiments, which laid the ground for the “mechanistic pump of science” (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 135).

It is interesting to consider how Harvey appeared to be standing between two worlds in terms of a fundamental shift of perception from one way of seeing to another. In a fascinating book titled *The Medieval Heart* (2010), Webb suggests that prior to Harvey's idea of the heart as an impermeable and self-contained organ, the medieval heart was

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<sup>83</sup> Harvey's work, *On The Motion of The Heart and Blood in Animals*, is available freely in multiple versions on the internet, most commonly as the Robert Willis translation. A printed version is also available (Harvey, 1993)

perceived as porous, vulnerable, and interconnected with the outside world (2010, pp. 1–9). Each individual human heart was “accessible to air from the outside world...[and] each individual person was open...to the very core of his or her being” (Webb, 2010, p. 51). Anatomically, this was made possible by the septum between the left and right sides of the heart possessing “tiny, obscure but nevertheless visible pores” (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 115).<sup>84</sup> While Harvey *failed to see these holes* (Webb, 2010, p.50, Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 115, my italics), and consequently laid the foundations for our modern divided, enclosed heart, in the medieval worldview, these holes allowed air to move between people and within people.<sup>85</sup> This same air moved between the earthly and divine realms, and could be imbued with spirits (Webb, 2010, p. 51). Such an “open... heart” was connected directly to life and enabled different ways of engaging with the world (Webb, 2010, p. 51).

The medieval heart was complex, “open to sensation....host to myriad entities that we would now divide into the categories of physical, spiritual and psychological. One thing it did not do...was circulate blood” (Webb, 2010, pp. 1–2). Webb suggests that although Harvey retains an understanding of the heart as a source, rather than being a source of blood or spirit (as in the old vision), he re-imagined the heart as the “source of motion” (2010, p. 47). In a subtle change of metaphor, Harvey suggests that the heart does not create (or produce) blood, life and spirit, but that it “sets things in motion” (Webb, 2010, p. 48). Still considered important to cultural, political and religious life, Harvey ensures that the heart retains a key role. However, by disconnecting the heart from its position as producer or creative source, the foundations are set for a move away from notions of the heart as ruler (Webb, 2010, p. 48). The heart as a source of motion, coupled with the popularisation of mechanical pumps at the time (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 4), opens up the “possibility of mechanistic descriptions of heart function that dominate our discourse up to the present day” (Webb, 2010, p. 49).

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<sup>84</sup> The septum cordis is the tough, fibrous tissue in the centre of the heart, dividing left side from right side

<sup>85</sup> Romanyshyn suggests that anatomists, as late as 1648, continued to see these holes in the septum (1982, p. 115)

## From Ancient Greece to the present day: the changing heart

Building on Romanyshyn and Bound Alberti's observations, I suggest that in order to understand the emergence of the physical, pumping heart of science, it is necessary to place its development in a wider context of the progress of human consciousness across millennia – particularly as my research is concerned with how we create knowledge about, and consequently come into relationship with, the world itself. For this reason I will now explore how this changing metaphor of the heart could have been made possible. Indeed, I posit that the seeds for Harvey's change in perception were sown almost two thousand years previously in ancient Greece, and here I will explore McGilchrist's helpful metaphor of epistemological duality to provide some guidance as to how these changes in perception could have been made possible.

### The Pre-Socratics

Bound Alberti observes that the ancient Greeks saw the heart as the centre of the human body (Beck, 2016). The heart was imbued with psychological characteristics and was also the space where "the soul moved through the body, bringing together the mind and the body with the divine" (Bound Alberti quoted in Beck, 2016). According to McGilchrist, in Homer's epic poems (specifically, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: circa 900 - 700 BCE) man did not perceive a body or mind which are separate (2012, p. 263). Similarly, French anthropologist Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914-2007) talks about the body and its meaning in archaic Greece as follows:

The fact is that in the archaic period Greek 'corporeity' still does not acknowledge a distinction between body and soul, nor does it establish a radical break between the natural and the supernatural. Man's corporeality also includes organic realities, vital forces, psychic activities, divine inspirations or influxes (1992, p. 29).

Vernant continues this observation by clearly distinguishing his own modern, rational consciousness from that of the archaic Greeks by stating:

It is I who am distinguishing between these different spheres [the world of nature, the social world, the human world and the supernatural world] because they do appear separate to us today, but the religious thought of the Greeks made no such clear-cut distinctions between man and his internal world, the social world and its hierarchy, the physical universe and the supernatural world or society of the Beyond made up of the gods, the daemons, the heroes and the dead (1996, p. 103)

Considering that I am proceeding in this enquiry on the basis that a certain kind of consciousness or approach towards the world is a viewpoint or perspective which consequently shapes our engagement with life, it is interesting to note that around the sixth century BCE there is evidence that the foundational theme or metaphor, through which people described the world, began to change. Specifically, a number of scholars, including philosopher Jean Gebser (1905-1973), psychologist Julian Jaynes (1920-1997) and McGilchrist pinpoint a shift in awareness at around this time in Greek culture when people became more aware of themselves and had a greater capacity to perceive difference. However, based on archaeological and anthropological evidence, Taylor contends the timing of this shift, identifying that an “Ego Explosion” occurred 6000 years ago (2005, 31%-35%). Taylor suggests that what is actually visible in the records at around 600 BCE is a “*more developed sense of ego*” (2005, 36%, italics in original), or sense of self.

Taking these differing viewpoints into consideration, what is of most relevance for the purpose of this discussion is that each of these scholars are pointing to a shift taking place in human consciousness, which is the key point that I wish to focus on. Specifically, what is most interesting in relation to this shift in awareness is the idea that a space is created for one person to be able to perceive the ‘other’. While McGilchrist and Jaynes agree there is a connection between the hemispheres of the brain and a shift of consciousness in the archaic Greek era (specifically, to be able to objectify and detach from phenomena), Jaynes’ “bicameral mind” thesis (2000) states that this ability is a result of a *merging* of the two hemispheres of the brain which had previously been separate (2000; McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 261–262). In stark contrast, McGilchrist argues that this ability occurred because of a *separation* of the hemispheres (2012, p. 262). Jaynes terms this merging of the two hemispheres “mind-space” (2000, p. 263), while McGilchrist terms the separation of the two hemispheres “necessary distance” (2012, p. 262). This is what

McGilchrist calls an appropriate distance – that is, not a distance that separates, but one which “brings one into connection with that from which one is appropriately distanced” (2012, p. 282), thereby making empathy and love possible (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 282). McGilchrist states that this new way of seeing the world becomes particularly obvious in Greek art (2012, p. 283).

Also supporting this idea of a change in awareness around the sixth century BCE is Gebser who sees the ancient Greeks as foundational in the development of what he terms a new mental structure of consciousness, which emerged from the previously mythic structure. Gebser’s mythic consciousness is “typified by a symbolic (ritual) world... the ego is more individuated, but not to the extent of the self-consciousness mental structure” (Purdy, 1988, p. 172). Mythic consciousness is polar, with *complementary* aspects like ying and yang, male and female, whereas similar pairs of terms from the mental consciousness are *dualities* (opposites) rather than polarities (Purdy, 1988, p. 172, my italics). In mental consciousness, time and space become objectified, and the world is dichotomised into subjective self-consciousness and objective matter (Purdy, 1988, p. 172). Gebser identifies five basic structures of consciousness: archaic, magical, mythical, mental and integral (Purdy, 1988, p. 172). He is fluid with his dates for the shift from mythic to mental consciousness, suggesting that the movement began around 1225 BCE (Lachman, 2003, p. 221), coming into perfect expression with the Greeks around 600 BCE (Lachman, 2003, p. 221), however not becoming prevalent in Europe until around 1500 CE (Gebser, 1986, p. 73). Gebser suggests that integral consciousness is the structure emerging at present (Purdy, 1988, p. 172). Specifically, integral consciousness is typified by transcendence of the ego, and the “general integration of the abstracted (fragmented) world of the mental-rational into wholeness” (Purdy, 1988, p. 172).

Also identifying the time around 500 BCE as fundamental in human development is philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), who stated that at this point “Man, as we know him today, came into being” (1965, p. 1). Jaspers is acknowledged as developing the general theory of the “Axial Period” (1965, p. 1), or “Axial Age” (Bellah, 2005) - a term that honours the dramatic cultural changes in the middle of the first millennium BCE which were occurring in several societies across the ancient world (Bellah, 2005, p. 69).

Jaspers credits German philosopher Max Weber (1864-1920) as one of the sources for the development of his idea (Bellah, 2005, p. 75), particularly in relation to Weber's observations of changes in religious thought across Israel, Persia and India between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE (Bellah, 2005, p. 76).

Influenced by Jaspers, Israeli sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt (1923-2010) emphasises that this time period brought forward a new degree of what he calls "reflexivity" within individuals - namely, "the capacity to examine one's own assumptions" (Bellah, 2005, p. 77). This observation appears to mirror McGilchrist's and Jayne's observation that a change of awareness at this time created space to see differently. At this time in history, it appears that human beings became able to make specific distinctions between objects and developed the ability to perceive the 'other' as separate, making it "possible to see oneself as a self like other selves, to stand back and observe" (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 259). In this sense, it is to McGilchrist's thesis that this chapter now turns in an effort to explore how this standing back might have contributed to our conception of the pumping heart of science that we are so familiar with today. This metaphor is particularly important because, in contemporary thought, the mind/brain (situated in the head) is seen as the controlling organ where cognition, apprehension and awareness about the world takes place (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 14).

### **McGilchrist's metaphor of epistemological duality**

McGilchrist points out that the development of the human brain (as it develops in conjunction with its environment) would have left its mark on the world that Western culture brought about, discovering evidence in sixth century BCE Greece when "a radical change in the way we think about the world seems to have occurred" (2012, p. 266). In a thought-provoking cultural analysis, McGilchrist puts forward a metaphorical argument from the standpoint of contemporary neuroscience which suggests that the movement of Western thought over the past two thousand years has occurred through left-right brain hemisphere lateralisation (2012). McGilchrist's thesis suggests that as the left and right

hemispheres of the brain have developed from ancient Greece to the present day, the characteristics of each hemisphere have either flourished or waned (2012, pp. 5–6). Based on a vast body of experimental research, McGilchrist, through the metaphor of epistemological duality, argues that for human beings there exist two fundamentally conflicting realities; namely, two different types of experience which bring about the “recognisably human world” (2012, p. 3), and that the difference is “rooted in the bihemispheric structure of the brain” (2012, p. 3). While both hemispheres have considerable ability to perform any task, the striking difference between them is that each hemisphere goes about its tasks in different ways (McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 10 & 93). Importantly, *it is at the level of experience* that the hemispheres differ – each with its own “take” on the world (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 10; Rowson & McGilchrist, 2013, pp. 12–13).

The left hemisphere tends towards abstraction, extracting things from their context, categorising, focussing on the parts (McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 50–51), while in contrast the right hemisphere is concerned with context, the relationship between things (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 50). Its way of approaching and understanding reality, McGilchrist suggests, is embedded directly in experience, which is “multiple in nature, in principle unknowable in its totality, changing, infinite, full of individual differences” (2012, p. 352). In contrast, the left hemisphere sees only a representation of that experience, “in which,...the world is single, knowable, consistent, certain, fixed, therefore ultimately finite, generalised across experience, a world that we can master” (2012, pp. 352–353). What this means is that:

[A]t the core of our thinking about ourselves, the world and our relationship with it, there are two incompatible but necessary views that we need to try to combine. And things go badly wrong when we do not (Rowson & McGilchrist, 2013, p. 12)

Certainly from McGilchrist’s perspective, the Enlightenment world is the domain of the left hemisphere (2012, p. 353), and the approach formalised during this period in history is still characteristic of our modern world. This observation is particularly significant because as McGilchrist states, our disposition towards the world and one another is “fundamental in grounding *what it is that we come to have a relationship with*, rather than the other way round” (2012, p. 5, italics in original). Specifically, *how* we approach the world, creates *what* we see. In support of this McGilchrist states that, “The kind of



attention we pay actually alters the world: we are, literally, partners in creation” (2012, p. 5). McGilchrist is keen to point out that the “model we choose to use to understand something determines what we find” (2012, p. 97). How we therefore think about ourselves, our place in the world and our relationship to it, is revealed in the metaphors we choose to talk about these things, and paradoxically, it appears that we are obliged to understand something well enough to choose the appropriate model/metaphor before we can understand it; “Our first leap determines where we land” (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 97).

Since the sixth century BCE the left hemisphere developed in tandem with the right (McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 296–297). However, since the time of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, characteristically left-brain attributes – namely, logical, rational/analytical thinking and objective observation – appear to have become more dominant. Indeed, according to McGilchrist, Descartes’ belief that “I could take it as a general rule that the things we conceive very clearly and very distinctly are all true” missed the point that nature itself is many times more subtler than our senses or our understanding (2012, p. 328). The movement towards rationality and objectivity, relying solely on what could be observed, measured and counted as the basis for developing absolute truth about the nature of the world, was, according to McGilchrist, the fallacy that was to derail the next three centuries of Western thought (2012, p. 328), and as a result, contributed to the way that the heart was subsequently perceived and engaged with.

### **The heart’s exile**

Considering McGilchrist’s idea that the model or metaphor that we choose to approach the world creates what we see, it is perhaps easy to imagine how during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the heart would have to change in order to fit into new ways of perceiving life. The birth of Harvey’s heart occurred as fundamental developments were taking place in mathematics, physics, astronomy and biology. Scientific enquiry at the time demonstrated that the universe operated by rules that could be explained through mathematics, and that a religious interpretation was not the sole means of comprehending the forces of nature (Hayward, 1984, p. 62). Such developments created

a new analytical orientation to the world which prioritised precise quantitative thinking, categorisation and objective observation, becoming “the basis for new political and social theories as well as theories of human mind, knowledge, and behavior” (Hayward, 1984, p. 62). This period of scientific discovery coincided with Copernicus’ (1473-1543) theory of a heliocentric, sun-centred cosmos, Galileo’s (1564-1642) theory of gravity, and Newton’s (1642-1727) mathematical laws of motion; helping to bring the idea of a mechanical universe into European awareness with the publication of the *Principia* in 1687. In terms of obtaining knowledge, reason and critical thinking - characterised by the scientific method - were seen as more reliable.

It was during this flourishing of new ideas, and the application of critical analysis to all parts of society from religion to politics, that Harvey put forward his theory and helped to bring the idea of a physical, pumping heart into modern awareness. In relation to this point, and taking a remarkably similar stance to McGilchrist, Romanyshyn states, “We see differently ‘and’ the heart changes” (1982, p. 134). As ideas change, and the way that we engage with the world changes, the stage is set for a new way of conceiving of the heart, the body and the mind:

The ‘new physiology’ of the seventeenth century... brought considerable changes to medico-scientific understandings of emotions, as to all aspects of human physiology and psychology. It was not unconnected that new ways of thinking about the human frame – which separated out mind and body more than had been previously conceptualised, and which prioritised the former over the latter as the origin of knowledge and consciousness – coincided with a potential secularisation of the body and the emergence of rational philosophy as a way of understanding how humans thought and felt (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 23)

In short, using McGilchrist’s metaphor of the left-brain hemisphere, when one approaches the world through its own preferred way of generating knowledge that is characterised by the empirical approach, it is perhaps easy to understand how phenomena might be forced to fit into a particular viewpoint. In this sense, the left-brain hemisphere becomes caught in its own “self-reflexive virtual world”, blocking off all available exits and ways out of “the hall of mirrors” that it itself has created (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 6).

## **Paradigm shifts**

It is perhaps a good time to pause for a moment and consider the great changes that were taking place during history in terms of how our ancestors approached and thought about their place in the world. American physicist and philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) has written extensively about how major scientific developments have changed how human beings come to understand the world; terming these moments of change “paradigm shifts” (Kuhn, 1970). Kuhn built on the work of philosopher of science Norwood Russell Hanson (1924-1967) who suggested that the nature of observation may be influenced by prior beliefs and experiences (Kuhn, 1970, pp. 112–113). Certainly, an important part of Kuhn’s work was the nature of perception and how scientists observe things differently as a result of a scientific revolution (1970, pp. 122–123). In short, the Kuhnian tradition holds that science is a social, cultural and historical practice and knowledge is therefore always situated (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 89). While Kuhn’s work has received much criticism, particularly among philosophers, his ideas still remain influential, and I suggest this is because they offer compelling ways through which we can explore major shifts of perception and understanding within science and culture as a whole.

## **Resistance to the new way of approaching the world**

However, it is worth noting that the new ways of science and consequently generating knowledge about the world were not unanimously accepted, and were often contested. For example, Czechoslovakian philosopher, theologian and educationalist, John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), held a perspective towards the world which we would recognise today as holistic. Specifically, in Comenius’ case, he aimed to unite religious experience with the emerging empirical reasoning of the day (Ben-Horin, 1971, pp. 195–199). Perhaps one could argue, in McGilchrist’s terms, that Comenius was endeavouring to create knowledge about, and engage in, the world through using both his left and right brain hemispheres. I suggest that this is an important observation, particularly considering that Comenius’ worldview, set within an educational framework, aimed to transcend the particularities that divided humanity at the time (Ben-Horin, 1971, p. 199).

This outlook made him especially prudent in his own reflections on other religions, and today his views with regards to peace education are considered highly relevant (Rietveld-van Wingerden, ter Avest, & Westerman, 2012). Certainly there is something interesting about Comenius' approach that seemed to facilitate an expansion of vision, connection with others, and ultimately, transcendence of conflict.

Similar thinkers at this time carrying an interconnected or holistic vision include the German scientist Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), and Goethe. Again, what is interesting for the purposes of this discussion is the visible difference in approaches. For example, Leibniz discovered calculus at the same time as Newton, and while Newton used the new, empirical method - approaching his theory from the *outside* -, Leibniz approached his theory from the *inside*, using his subjective imagination – realising “an internal description of how the world presented itself to experience” (Franses, 2015b, pp. 48–49). Specifically, Leibniz makes the inside the basis for outer exploration, and not the other way around, as in the case of Newton (Franses, 2015b, p. 49). For Leibniz, even though his theory is the same as Newton's, he remains connected to the inside, that is, open to a sense of his own subjectivity and the transcendent dimensions of experience which he understood as God or the divine (Franses, 2015b, p. 49). For simplicity's sake, one could say that he approached the world through an expanded awareness of the different ways of knowing that were available to him.

It is striking how similar this approach is to McGilchrist's theory that our two brain hemispheres must co-operate in order to present us with the fullest experience of life as possible (2012, pp. 198–199). In this sense, the lived world of human experience encompasses not just the conventionally acceptable and consensually validated (Tarnas, 2000, p. 374), that one might associate with the left-brain hemisphere. Life is also unceasingly ambiguous, uncontainable and complex, pointing us towards notions of depth and transcendence (Tarnas, 2000, p. 374) – the domain of the right-brain hemisphere. While McGilchrist does not discuss transcendence, spirituality or religious sensibility from the point of view of objective truth, he does suggest that, when taken as a metaphor, the stories or myths arising from an openness towards such concepts are fundamental to our understanding of the world (2012, p. 441). That is, we cannot move

very far in the world, nor derive values that will help us live well in it, by reducing everything to materialist, machine-based metaphors (McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 441–442). The images and metaphors of transcendent, or spiritual others, offer human beings something other than materialist values to live by, and thereby offer powerful narratives that provide something more valuable than one that “dismisses the possibility” of their existence (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 442).

It is appealing in this context to consider McGilchrist’s suggestion that the right hemisphere starts the process of bringing the world into being (2012, p. 195), in all of its full, authentic, colourful wonder. In this sense, we receive the world through our direct experience of it and this information is passed to the left hemisphere for analysis. Once this is done, it must return what it sees to the world grounded by the right hemisphere (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 195). It is the imagination and the intuition that enables the conversation between the two hemispheres to happen, moving across them both through the language of metaphor and symbol – and it is therefore our responsibility to choose the best metaphor (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 97). *Consequently, how we choose to see, determines what we find.* I suggest that this multi-knowledge approach can be seen in Goethe’s theory of colours whereby he combined both his subjective imagination and objective reasoning skills to arrive at a contrasting theory to Newton’s (Bortoft, 2010, pp. 36–49; Franses, 2015b, pp. 114–115). While Newton understood that colours were in the light, separated out by a prism into their constituent elements, for Goethe, colours were the richness that arose at the boundary of dark and light (Franses, 2015b, pp. 114–115). This *coming into being* of colour through the relationship of light and dark can be observed directly in nature – at the horizon at sunset, and at sunrise. In this way, Goethe was expressing the phenomenon of light and colour as its own living theory – seeing dynamically the unfolding of the process of wholeness; the living *relationship between light and dark* (Bortoft, 2010, pp. 191–246).

Goethe saw colour as the dynamic interplay between emptiness and existence “as they played through each other” (Franses, 2015b, p. 115). Referring to Goethe’s approach, Bortoft states:

[K]nowledge is not achieved by the senses alone. There is always a nonsensory element in knowledge, and this must be so whether this element is verbal-intellectual or intuitive. The difference is that, whereas the verbal-intellectual mind withdraws from the sensory aspect of the phenomenon into abstraction and generality, the intuitive mind goes into and through the sensory surface of the phenomenon to perceive it in its own depth. It is by first going into the full richness and diversity of sensory detail that the intellectual mind is rendered ineffective, so that we can escape from its prison into the freedom of intuition (2010, p. 68)

The last sentence of Bortoft's quote above sounds remarkably like McGilchrist's idea of the left hemisphere's hall of mirrors (2012, p. 6). Escaping from the hall of mirrors/prison therefore entails an openness towards the different ways of knowing that are available to us – thereby aiming to reach the depth of a phenomenon as it is directly experienced. As Bortoft suggests, through a shift in one's awareness or approach, one is able to see the phenomenon "standing in its own depth" (2010, p. 68). In Goethe's language or metaphor, this depth was attributable to a sense of the living presence of the divine which he saw in every living thing (Naydler, 2009a, p. 110). Indeed, Goethe's way of seeing was part of a broader movement of Romanticism that had its roots in Germany (Tarnas, 2000, p. 366). In a revolt against rationalism, the Romantic vision perceived the world as a unitary organism rather than an atomistic machine (Tarnas, 2000, pp. 366–367). While Newton saw his theory of the colour spectrum in a rainbow, the poet John Keats (1798-1821) looked differently, bringing in sight, sound, touch, smell and mood (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 26–28). For Romanyshyn, as for McGilchrist, the difference in what is seen is made possible by how one looks. Keats therefore saw through a "double vision" (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 29), through the experiencing eye that sees the difference between the living rainbow and the spectrum, but also that acknowledges the existence of them both .

Certainly Goethe and Keats' approaches bear a striking resemblance to McGilchrist's metaphor that a broader picture of the living world is made possible through the co-operation of the two brain hemispheres (2012, p. 195). In Goethe's language this would be his imagination/intuition combined with his empirical reasoning skills. In McGilchrist's language, this would mean the co-operation of the two brain hemispheres. In this way both brain hemispheres, or both ways of gaining knowledge about the world, support

each other to facilitate a deeper experience of life – expressed through different metaphors.

### **The birth of the modern heart**

Following the Romantic period, this more holistic, integrative way of developing knowledge about, and approaching, the world was rejected. Emerging ideas from philosophers who lived after Harvey helped to solidify the model of abstraction - and subsequent metaphors represented by the scientific method - into our awareness. Within this vortex of change, alternative ways of understanding the heart occurred in the context of attempts to redefine and understand the body and its links to the soul and the divine (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 4). Setting the stage for the concept of man as machine – particularly captured by the philosophy of Descartes and French physician Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709-1751) - Harvey's work helped facilitate the transformation of the heart into a mechanical object, no longer the site of the emotions (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 137), nor the seat of the soul (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 138).

Influenced by Harvey's work, Descartes drew on materialist thinking and examined the physiological implications of the new mechanical philosophy which led to the split between mind and body, emotion and reason (Bound Alberti, 2007, p. 135). While Descartes has today become a "convenient symbol of modernity" (Kohák, 1992, p. 379), it is worth being clear that he was not alone in his way of thinking (Kohák, 1992, p. 379). Spanish physician Gómez Pereira (1500-1567), theologian Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) and the French philosopher/scientific chronicler, Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) all shared similar views (Kohák, 1992, p. 379). However, particularly influenced by Descartes' philosophy, debates between philosophers and physicians concerning the relationship between the mind and body peaked during the Enlightenment (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 35), attempting to move all phenomena to the material realm, and at the same time reduce the world to mechanical explanations. Helping this move, growth in manufacturing during the industrial revolution made metaphors such as "clockwork bodies (and hearts)" conceivable (Bound Alberti, 2012, pp. 4–5), in much the same way that modern technology has made it possible to conceive of the mind as a computer with memories and experiences existing in separate files (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 5).

However, while many attempts were made to “rationalize and make scientific the organ of the heart” (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 35), the heart’s traditional role as the centre for feelings and emotions, and as the seat of the human soul in culture, could not be easily reconciled with changing ideas within science and medicine (Bound Alberti, 2012, pp. 1–15). In the nineteenth century, at the level of medical theory, the brain overtook the heart as the organ of feeling (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 38), while the heart merely responded to, but did not produce, emotions (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 38). By driving the explanation for our direct experiences of life from the heart into the brain, it was then possible to reconsider them under the definition of epiphenomenon (Sheldrake, 2013, p. 10) – mental states produced by complex physiological responses and by-products of brain activity. This move not only mechanises our worldview, but suggests that every phenomenon has a material cause (Sheldrake, 2013). Certainly in the early twentieth century, with the rise of scientific medicine, the heart finally came to be seen as an organ of the body – “mechanized, predictable, subject to decay and the barometer (rather than the instrument) of emotional experiences” (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 17).<sup>86</sup> In the modern sense, because of our empirically-based approach to knowledge, the heart is now seen as a trivial symbol of emotion or a functional organ. No longer is the courageous, passionate heart connected directly to life as lived, nor to any sense of the transcendent, the spiritual or the divine.

Returning to McGilchrist’s metaphor, it could be suggested that the dominance of a left-brain hemisphere approach to the world has delivered to us a material, machine-like universe, made of disparate parts. Through this lens, the heart has been removed from its traditional role as mediator between objective reality and the deep, inner realms of felt, subjective human experience of life, which requires the imagination and intuition to interpret it. It is also worth noting that a result of this move has been to render subjective feelings inferior to the rational intellect; particularly as it is difficult for empirical science to measure them – “The intellectual is assumed to be higher in the hierarchy than the felt,

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<sup>86</sup> According to Bound Alberti, before the nineteenth century physical and psychological events were still felt in, and symbolised by, the heart (2012, p. 17).



sensed or sensory/bodily character. This trend also leads to underestimating the significance of the inner, subjective and experiential reality” (Kallio, 2015, p. 33).

I suggest that what is being pointed to here is the difficult relationship between the mind (head) and body that I discussed in the previous chapter. In this context, it is appealing to reflect on Bound Alberti’s observation that the scientific transition from “a cardio-centric to a cranio-centric body is one that has been largely unexplored as an aspect of the histories of medicine, emotions, and the body” (2012, p. 17). Certainly with my own research I am stepping into this heart/mind territory, suggesting that understanding this transition is critical not just from a scientific perspective, but from the point of view of the development of Western culture and how we currently conceptualise, create knowledge about, and engage in, the world.

### **Reconsidering the heart**

Bound Alberti writes that by the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the mind-body relationship had been redefined, with the heart subservient to the brain (2012, p. 15). What this means in medical terms is that the brain was conceived to send impulses to the heart and it is therefore *through the brain* that we become aware of sensations in the body (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 15, my italics). This “common-sense” view, suggests Bound Alberti, represented the “triumph of reason over passion” (2012, p. 15), and it is interesting here to note Bound Alberti’s parentheses around the word *common-sense*. Despite this “common-sense” view, Bound Alberti points to the passionate and emotional heart that remains in the modern human imagination - albeit considered inferior to reason and our actual, lived experience of the heart (2012, p. 15).

As human beings, our lived experience links us to the physicality of the emotions themselves, with passions being felt in the breast – whether that is heartache generated through lost love, or the skipped beats of excitement (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 4).

Continuing, Bound Alberti states that, even right up to the present day, the emotional heart still dominates in culture – “it is the heart and the heart alone that stands as a cipher for emotion, especially for romantic love” (2012, p. 15). However, contrasting with

our personal, subjective experiences of the heart, a major problem in science today is the fact that as the brain is considered the site of the emotions “the heart cannot be both pump and feeling organ under scientific accounts of the mind-body relation” (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 8). I suggest that this difficulty highlights the issues at the heart of the conflict literature outlined in chapter one, and also illuminates the tension in my own life between my head and my heart.

Why does the heart still dominate in our modern conception of the emotional realm, and beyond this (as in my own experience), could the heart offer a connection to the transcendent, the mysterious, the numinous, the divine? As I draw towards a conclusion, I am made aware of a wide vista of possibilities, hidden behind a modern, narrow view of reality – a reality that has shrunk our understanding of the heart to a simple pump and creates interactions the likes of which I experienced with the vascular surgeon as I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The consequences of such a move, I suggest, have repercussions across all modes of experience, as the way that we make sense of such a heart is defined by the approach with which we conceive of it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; McGilchrist, 2012; Romanyshyn, 2013). Through this lens, the way that we approach the world has to change to accommodate this new point of view. As Bound Alberti states we are generally products of nineteenth century scientific thinking that has “redefined how we view our bodies” (Beck, 2016). In effect, our bodies have become metaphorically severed from our heads.

As I write this, I am struck again by the dream of the severed head that I recounted earlier which, after researching and writing this chapter, stands as a powerful image depicting the heart’s disconnection from the head, subjective experience, and transcendent realms beyond. In relation to this point, Bound Alberti suggests that this understanding of the head versus heart dichotomy is still very much built into our modern medical structures, “We don’t tend to think of ourselves anymore as a holistic whole, so we think about our hearts as very separate from our heads” (Beck, 2016). However, she also states that the relationship between the head and heart remains problematic because of the enduring nature of the heart itself, “there is no easy evolutionary narrative that takes us from the heart in the seventeenth century to the material brain in the present” (2016, p. 205).

## Concluding thoughts: limitations of the pumping heart metaphor

Taylor suggests that a consequence of the *Ego Explosion*, as discussed earlier, has been an increase in our “sense of inner discontent and incompleteness” and a lack of a deep sense of empathy and interconnectedness – that is, a sense that all beings share the same consciousness beyond the brain which pervades the whole universe (2005, 50%). In this sense, it is perhaps easier to understand Romanyshyn’s metaphor of Harvey’s divided heart - emptied of emotions and of its beliefs (1982, p. 133). Not only do terms like *divided* and *empty* belong to the heart of science (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 130–131), they also reflect a particular world - our modern world (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 131). As Hillman states, at the moment that Harvey’s heart was born, “Thought lost its heart, heart lost its thought” (Hillman, 2007, p. 25). If we take the scientific, pumping heart as a metaphor and symbol of contemporary life, I suggest that this divided, empty of feeling heart, which is granted little intellectual or academic status in the West, represents the conflict at the heart of my own life, and sheds light on the difficulty of bringing the hearts lying in the conflict literature into practical action. I am also wondering whether this symbol of the pumping heart also exposes many of the difficulties that we experience in contemporary life.

By taking on this popular ‘mechanised’ scientific outlook, our culture, according to Romanyshyn, has created “the kind of heart it sees” (Hillman, 2007, p.20). Speaking directly to this idea, in a BBC documentary titled *Heart vs Mind – What Makes Us Human*, McGilchrist states that through this lens we think we’re understanding ourselves but actually we’re describing mechanisms, and the mistake is taking mechanical models as an totalising discourse which tells us what we are (2016, 29:00 – 29:50). David Malone, science documentary film-maker who wrote and produced the aforementioned documentary, laments, “Mechanising the heart has, I believe, done untold damage to how we see ourselves” (2016, 28:10 – 28:20). By conceiving of the heart as machine, the only question we can properly ask is “whether it works or not” (Romanyshyn, 2000, p. 153). This observation mirrors McGilchrist’s idea about our disposition to the world creating what we see as discussed earlier in this chapter. Such an approach to the heart by means of critical thinking, and objective, rational observation helped to create the

mechanical heart that Harvey describes, heralding a new scientific age and subsequently a new worldview where the soulful, courageous heart no longer has a place (Hillman, 2007, p.21). As Holdrege points out, we ourselves determine how we look at phenomena:

A mind at home in the mechanical world of cause and effect can hardly avoid seeing the heart as a pump circulating the blood through the body. We can interpret all sorts of data in terms of this model and even create astounding devices such as the artificial heart. *But that doesn't mean that, by itself, this model is adequate* (2002, p. 6, my italics)

However, with the advent of an industrialised heart, there is no longer room in our awareness to contemplate other hearts. As Romanyshyn states:

It is easier to repair a broken pump than it is to heal a broken metaphor, especially when we have forgotten the difference. Without difference, a heart cannot be broken out of love, or if it can *it really does not matter*. Without the difference, the broken human heart has become only a metaphor, while the pump that can be broken can be exchanged" (2000, p. 18, my italics).

On "that Night" a different heart made itself known to me. In that moment, two hearts became alive to me in my experience – both as valid as the other. In that moment, both these hearts mattered deeply to me, and both have since deepened my understanding of the world. Returning to my interaction with the surgeon that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, by considering how the scientific, pumping heart came into being and how this heart has solidified into our general view of reality, it is perhaps easier to see how he could not perceive of any other heart. In contrast, through my own lived experience of my heart and by engaging with an imaginal/symbolic lens, I was able to comprehend both a physical heart and another heart that lives in parallel with the physical heart. Considering Bound Alberti's observation that two hearts currently live in today's society, my interaction with the surgeon brought these two hearts directly into being in one room. These hearts were also brought into conflict with each other, particularly when the surgeon's idea of the pumping heart could not move to engage with any other kind of heart that might have been present. At that point it was impossible for us to move together, to have an open conversation about what these two hearts might mean for both of us. Any potential for creativity in that moment was lost. What is

interesting for me is to consider what could have occurred in the room had both of our hearts been able to live.

Leaving the last words to Romanyshyn, the literal, pumping heart has “grown empty, hard, and cold. Unfeeling, the human heart is untouched by others, and unfeeling it is empty of its love and its beliefs” (1982, p.130). While any other hearts endeavouring to live beyond the biological pump have been silenced, Hillman suggests that now the heart has to be rediscovered in its exile (2007, p.4). This heart, created through our starved imaginations, is now making itself known through contemporary illnesses, relationship crises, and conflict – and it is towards this exiled heart, and what this heart might actually represent, that this work now turns. Particularly as Romanyshyn states, while many of us know our heart is a pump, “no one...experiences the heart in this fashion” (2000, p. 173).

What is particularly interesting to me as I write this, is McGilchrist’s observation that the metaphor we choose governs what we see and that we have a responsibility to select the best metaphor that delivers the deepest, fullest sense of our lived experience as possible (2012, p. 97). In this context, I suggest that given we have different ways of making sense of the world available to us, we have a responsibility to open up towards all ways of knowing. It is in this sense that I am now going to explore beyond the pumping heart of science, to another heart, the heart of culture – opening my awareness as wide as possible to enable an-‘other’ heart to speak to me.

## Chapter four: The heart of culture

### Labyrinth Reverie – June 2018

*The start of 2018 had been a particularly difficult time in my life with numerous conflict situations arising. During the same period, I also went through a number of health challenges which included a cancer scare. Undergoing two biopsies on lumps discovered in my left breast, I was advised to have an operation under general anaesthetic to remove one. Feeling particularly battle-worn in both my inner and outer life, at the time of the summer Solstice, I had an inner compulsion to walk the labyrinth in the Priory Gardens which is part of the Canterbury Christ Church University estate – see figure 2.*



Figure 2: Priory gardens labyrinth (Livingstone, 2018a)

*For many people in the Middle Ages, walking a cathedral labyrinth was a substitute for going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was as such, a devotional activity.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps my compulsion towards walking the labyrinth was my heart's*

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<sup>87</sup> In medieval churches labyrinths were sometimes called "*chemins à Jerusalem*, 'roads to Jerusalem,' and the centre was Jerusalem or heaven itself" (Solnit, 2002, 21%, italics in original)

*way of guiding me towards engaging further with my growing sense of the reality (for me) of something deeper, more, or 'other' in relation to my experience of life, and that walking in the footsteps of thousands of other pilgrims I may somehow tune into the memories and experiences of religious devotees across the ages to make sense of this connection with something other?*<sup>88</sup> As American writer Rebecca Solnit points out, labyrinths were not merely Christian devices, and “always represent[ed] some kind of journey, sometimes one of initiation, death and rebirth, or salvation” (2002, 21%). Clearly walking a labyrinth carried great meaning for the experiencer, and even today labyrinths are often used as walking meditations, helping to focus the mind and place the walker in tune with a greater reality that is metaphorically represented by the labyrinth (Artress, 2006, pp. xvi, 96–97; Solnit, 2002, 19% - 24%).<sup>89</sup>

*Holding my research project firmly in my awareness, I looked down on the ground at the entrance to the labyrinth and saw a sweet wrapper. I felt that it was important to remove this rubbish, so I walked back over to the table where I had left my bag and coat a little earlier and placed the wrapper in my bag for later disposal. This time I caught sight of a large black insect lying on its back next to my bag on the table which I had completely missed before. I thought the creature was dead, so I gently turned it over and saw that it was a large black beetle. Reminding me immediately of the symbol of the Egyptian scarab beetle, the creature started to move its front legs. Looking more closely, I realised that the entire lower half of the creature's body was missing. Seemingly reflecting the theme of this project and the modern, metaphorical disconnection between the head and the heart, I was again reminded of the dream of the severed head as detailed in the previous chapter.*

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<sup>88</sup> I am thinking here of Sheldrake's theory of resonance (2013). Specifically, he writes, “memories are transferred by resonance from similar patterns of activity in the past. We tune in to ourselves in the past; we do not carry our memories around inside our heads” (2013, p. 199). For Sheldrake, this theory fits into a wider hypothesis of morphic resonance which proposes “a resonance across space and time of patterns of vibratory activity in all self-organising systems” (2013, p. 199). For further information see Sheldrake's book *The Science Delusion* (2013)

<sup>89</sup> Our modern interest in labyrinths, and the creation of the “Labyrinth Movement”, can be traced back to the early 1970s (Artress, 2006, pp. xiv–xv)

*Finding myself overcome with familiar feelings of numbness, I realised that this creature was not going to survive. Trying my best to help, I moved the beetle out of the direct sunlight and over into a shady spot next to a tree. Covering the beetle with a leaf I carried my feelings of numbness into the labyrinth and walked slowly, wondering what the significance of this could be. In the centre of the labyrinth I waited for a long time, and eventually I remembered that I had picked up a white feather the day before that had been lying on the ground outside the room I had been teaching in. Finding the feather in my pocket, I held it and then released it into the wind. As I did so, a heavy shower began and I walked the return journey out of the labyrinth in the rain. Back at the end/beginning, exit/entrance, I was still in a deep, contemplative space and, thinking about the beetle, I had a realisation. While the beetle was just about alive, he was barely surviving, and could not thrive with the bottom half of his body missing (linking back to the theme of disconnection between the head and the heart).*

*In a moment of recognition, I knew that my experience with the beetle was significant for my work as the veils between two different realms became thinner and the theme of my project manifested itself in my physical experience with the beetle. Witnessing the symbolic and metaphorical nature of the heart embodied in my experience with the scarab beetle, I felt that this was the heart's way of telling me its own story through its imaginal language of symbol and metaphor. In order to receive my heart's message, I needed to engage my imagination to help me truly hear and engage with what my heart wanted to say to me. What follows is a deep reflection on this experience.*

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## Reflections

Readers will have noticed that I have titled this chapter *The Heart of Culture*. I am borrowing this term from Bound Alberti (2012, p. 166), as it is a helpful way of distinguishing between the biological heart of science, and a heart “associated with the self, with emotion, with feeling, and with the soul” (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 93).

Traditionally the latter heart is considered to carry no special meaning (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 108), as the organic, pumping heart is the only heart that is generally given any validity in contemporary society (as discussed in previous chapters).

However, taking seriously the notion of the symbolic and metaphorical nature of human experience (Avens, 1980, p. 188; Hillman, 1992, p. xvi; McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 115–118; Romanyshyn, 1982), in the previous chapter I demonstrated how the pumping heart of science could have been imagined into being. While in contemporary society there still exists a dominant metaphor that helps us to engage with, and know, the world, it seems that the heart still refuses to submit to the idea of being known simply as a biological pump, because as a symbol for our feelings and emotions the heart is unbeaten (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 156). Romanyshyn engages with this idea by stating that there is a distinct difference between an objective body of knowing “created in distance from oneself and one’s living body” and the “body which one has and the body which one is” (2000, p. 173).<sup>90</sup>

In simplistic terms, this could be seen as the difference between knowledge arising from embodied, living, subjective experience of the world, and theoretical knowledge generated from distanced, objective observation. While I appreciate that not everybody in the Western world experiences difficulty between the validity of knowledge produced from objective and subjective means, I am thinking here specifically of my own experience of being distanced from my heart through my adoption of a particular science-based framework that I used to make sense of my relationship with my body and

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<sup>90</sup> It is interesting to consider Romanyshyn’s observation that contemporary society has become distanced from oneself and one’s body – see *Technology as Symptom and Dream* (2000) for more information. Romanyshyn’s work has a strong resonance with McGilchrist’s theory of “necessary distance” (2012, p.242)

the world at large. Particularly as I have known my own heart, since the age of 18, in predominantly medical terms. Beautifully encapsulating my experience, Barbara Duden, writing about her own heart in an article titled *Historical Concepts of the Body* states, “I feel anaesthetised because the categories I was educated to describe myself [in] cannot be felt” (quoted in Romanyshyn, 1989, p. 173).<sup>91</sup>

Resonating with Duden’s words, I felt strongly that I needed to create a space for other hearts to come alive in my world and show me how I could have a more expanded, participatory relationship with life itself. Certainly I could have no idea how greatly this intention would change my perception and understanding of the heart in the space of the labyrinth, as I went on an unexpected journey via myth and symbol into the heart of the mysteries of life, death and eternity that revealed the heart of culture to me. This chapter traces my journey into and out of Canterbury Christ Church University’s labyrinth carrying the symbol of the half scarab beetle, facilitated by the three stages of walking the labyrinth as identified by Reverend Lauren Artress – the “three R’s - Releasing, Receiving, and Returning” (2006, p. xii). In this sense, the three R’s “describe the interior process a person may experience while walking the labyrinth” (Artress, 2006, p. xii).

## Introducing the labyrinth

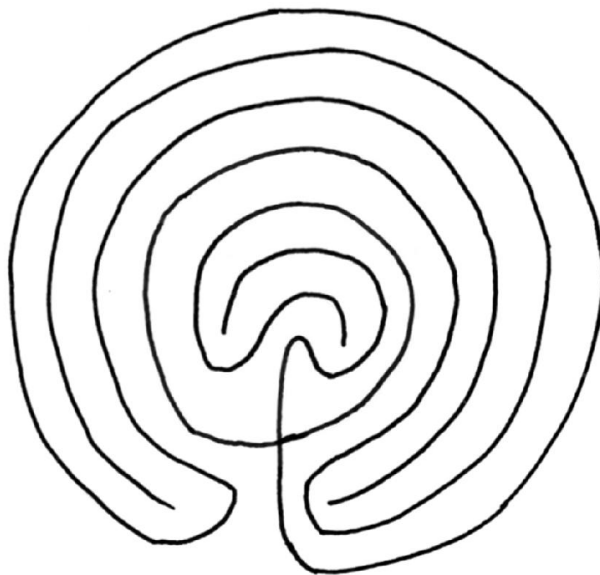
In surrendering to the winding path [of the labyrinth], the soul finds healing and wholeness (Artress, 2006, p. xxii)

According to Artress, traditionally the labyrinth has been used in several ways – specifically for meditative walking, and for ritual or ceremony (2006, p. xii). An ancient symbol, a labyrinth is usually created in the form of a circle – the “universal symbol for unity and wholeness” (Artress, 2006, p. xxii). Labyrinths were talked of by the ancient Greeks, made out of mosaics by the Romans, and have been found carved in rock in Sardinia, in the deserts of Southern Arizona and California and made out of stones laid on

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<sup>91</sup> No longer available in print. Further information can be found through *Resurgence* magazine, issue 112 (Duden, 1985)

the earth in Scandanvia (Artress, 2006, pp. 46–47; Solnit, 2002, 21%). The labyrinth has “a meandering but purposeful path, from the edge to the centre and back out again, large enough to be walked into” (Artress, 2006, p. xxii). Walking a labyrinth can be helpful to someone moving through important life changes, providing a sense of calm and giving insight into one’s journey through life (Artress, 2006, p. 21). According to Artress, the labyrinth is a “container for the creative imagination to align with our heart’s desire...a place where we can profoundly, yet playfully, experience our soul’s longing and intention” (2006, p. 17).



*Figure 3: Seven circuit labyrinth (Livingstone, 2018b)*

As already noted in chapter two, the ancient symbol of the labyrinth has close connections with the heart (Guénon, 2004a, pp. 193–201). The classical labyrinth design consists of a single path that “loops back and forth to form seven circuits” (Els, 2017, p. 3) – see figure 3. Once we make a choice to enter, the path “becomes a metaphor for our journey through life, sending us to the centre...and then back out to the edge on the same path” (Artress, 2006, p. xxii). Representative of a journey, initiation, the death and/or rebirth of something in one’s life or salvation (Solnit, 2002, 21%), the singular path of the labyrinth meanders throughout the whole circle, snaking around and around, requiring multiple turns before reaching the centre.

When I walked the labyrinth on the summer solstice I was vaguely aware that at times I was paradoxically closer to the centre spatially, yet at the same time I was the farthest away – specifically, in the context of the distance I needed to walk to reach it. Solnit captures the quality of this puzzle stating, “Inside the labyrinth the two-dimensional surface ceased to be open space one could move across anyhow” (Solnit, 2002, 20%). This means that even in a labyrinth of forty feet in diameter (that one could stride across in a matter of seconds), the spiralling circular path contained within a relatively small space adds length and time to the experiencer’s journey. In this sense, the labyrinth operates in its own time, and under its own rules inviting the experiencer to move into a different space. In the labyrinth, “Our world of splits and divisions disappears” as the experiencer “enters a nondualistic world....[facilitating] ‘both/and thinking’, the compatibility of paradox and a sense of the unity within the cosmos” (Artress, 2006, pp. 65–66). Certainly in my experience of the symbolic space of the labyrinth, the lines between the objective world and the deeper world of my lived experience blurred to such a degree that I felt I was taking part in what I can only describe as a waking dream.<sup>92</sup>

## The entrance

As I readied myself to enter the labyrinth the first time, I held the theme of my research project gently within my body. In a similar approach to Romanyshyn’s imaginal method, Artress suggests that focussing on a question when entering the labyrinth is helpful; opening oneself up consciously to whatever wants to arise (2006, p. 80). Having no expectations as to what would happen during the walk, I sank easily into reverie, silently asking my heart to guide me. A few moments later I opened my eyes and saw a sweet wrapper lying at the entrance to the labyrinth. Frustrated, I initially thought I would have to abandon the walk for a moment, clear up the wrapper and then centre myself again. However, I was entirely wrong in my assessment as this sweet wrapper became the catalyst that enabled me to encounter the half scarab beetle. Importantly, as my

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<sup>92</sup> Later in this chapter I will explore some of the ways ancient cultures saw the world, which appear to relate closely to my experience in the labyrinth. In modern times, Schlamm wrote of Jung’s technique of the active imagination as “dreaming with open eyes” (2007b, p. 83).

supervisor Angela Voss later pointed out to me in an informal conversation about the event, sometimes we dismiss as rubbish the very thing that can point the way. The truth of this statement cannot be understated, as I came to understand that the sweet wrapper *was all part of the process of my heart speaking to me as it responded to the images of the world communicating with me* (Hillman, 2007). Picking up the sweet wrapper I walked across to the table where I had placed my bag and coat a few minutes earlier.

It was during this second visit to the table that I noticed the black beetle for the first time – see figure 4. The creature reminded me immediately of the scarab beetle popular in ancient Egyptian culture that was connected with the weighing of the heart ceremony, and linked symbolically to the idea of rebirth and regeneration (Andrews, 1994, p. 56).<sup>93</sup> What was particularly bizarre about the image before me was that this creature was missing the lower half of its body. I felt that this was significant, particularly in relation to my earlier dream of the severed head.<sup>94</sup> Specifically, this dream had helped to create an opportunity for me to explore the consequences and limitations of the modern, pumping heart of science in contemporary society – pointing to other hearts living beyond our generally-accepted view, and indicating a split in how we develop knowledge about the world as expressed through the body.

Interestingly, Artress picks up on this head/heart dichotomy stating that in modern times, “Our bodies are cut off from our minds....The vision of unity, the wholeness of creation, has been lost” (2006, p. 92). In relation to this, I felt that the half scarab beetle that was lying on the table and missing a significant part of its lower body (see figure 4), was symbolically representing the modern disconnection between the head and the heart,<sup>95</sup> inviting me on a journey to engage with another kind of heart.

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<sup>93</sup> I will explain this ceremony in more detail later in this chapter

<sup>94</sup> See chapter three

<sup>95</sup> Also representative of the subsequent hierarchy between the head and the heart in the modern mind-body relationship where the head is seen to be superior to the heart in terms of what constitutes valid knowledge about the world (Bound Alberti, 2012, p. 15). I discussed this idea in chapters two and three, and I will be exploring the implications of this in more detail in this chapter.



*Figure 4: Representation of the half scarab beetle (Livingstone, 2019)*

## **Releasing**

Standing at the entrance to the labyrinth I held the image of the half scarab beetle in my awareness, asking for my heart to guide me. Artress calls the first part of the walk into the labyrinth ‘releasing’ (2006, pp. xii, 77). Speaking within a religious context, Artress suggests that one is advised to enter a labyrinth in a state of contemplation or meditation. With eyes open, she suggests that in this state the experiencer is in a “receptive, nonjudgmental state” (2006, p. 77), ready to receive whatever arises within. I find Artress’ description of this state similar to Romanyshyn’s imaginal method of reverie; however, what was particularly interesting in relation to this experience was the way that phenomena (specifically, the sweet wrapper and the beetle) actually manifested in my physical world - as if in direct and immediate response to my invitation to hear the heart speaking.

The physical nature of this event reminded me of Jung’s now-famous story of synchronicity involving a woman who was telling him about a golden scarab she was given in a dream. While she was telling the dream, Jung heard a noise behind him, like a gentle tapping. As he turned round, Jung saw a flying creature which looked exactly the same as a golden scarab (2014, p. 3394).<sup>96</sup> Jung describes synchronicity as “coincidences”

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<sup>96</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 843

which are connected so meaningfully that their “‘chance’ concurrence would represent a degree of improbability that would have to be expressed by an astronomical figure” (2014, p. 3393).<sup>97</sup> Synchronicity is “rationally ungraspable” and inherently inexplicable (Main, 2004, p. 62), but because of the meaning it carries for the experiencer, can be transformative. Main suggests that the active imagination can lead to a recognition of synchronistic events (2004, p. 24), and because I was engaging purposefully in an imaginal exercise in the labyrinth, this could be a reason why such events started to occur.

While Artress and Romanyshyn advise the experiencer to be aware of images, thoughts, memories and emotions that arise in the mind during a process of meditation or reverie, the abrupt manifestation of physical phenomena into my reality shocked me. My awareness opened up onto a world that is hard to describe, and I felt as though this experience took on a peculiar quality that, as I have stated previously, I would relate to both waking and dreaming. Certainly, one could suggest that this is reflective of Artress’ suggestion that the labyrinth helps the experiencer to move into a nondualist, both/and world which blurs the boundaries between ways of knowing (2006, pp. 65–66).

In relation to this strange space I found myself in, Artress states that the process of releasing in the labyrinth can support one to step “out of the linear mind” (2006, p. 77), from *Chronos* to *Kairos* time, or from clock time to dreamtime (Artress, 2006, p. 77). In ancient Greek mythology, time was viewed in two distinct ways (Fraser, 2018, p. 70). *Chronos* governs chronological, quantitative, linear time – the passing of time in years, hours and minutes, and the division of time into the past, present and future (Fraser, 2018, p. 70). It is time as materialistic, physical science knows it. *Kairos*, in contrast, referred to the “right time” (Fraser, 2018, p. 70). This means the personification of opportune moments and spontaneity; “If Chronos is the time of the ego, Kairos is the time of the Soul” (Segall, 2015).

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<sup>97</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para.843

I found these two ideas of time particularly helpful to guide me fully into the experience, moving my awareness into an expansive, imaginal mode of engaging with the world. In Chronos time, I could see a battered, injured scarab beetle, subject to the laws of nature, and, because of its physical impairments, not long for this earth. In Kairos time, I could also engage with what this experience was trying to say to me through the symbol of the scarab beetle and its strong associations with the heart in ancient Egyptian culture. On my second attempt to enter the labyrinth, I made space for both of these interpretations, opening my awareness as wide as I could. Renewing my commitment to hear the heart beyond the physical, pumping organ of science speak, I stepped onto the winding, spiralling pathway of the labyrinth listening out for the heart's words, seeking the heart's wisdom.

### **Exploring the modern head/heart relationship**

Walking the first stage of the labyrinth I was deeply aware of the head/heart division in modern consciousness – particularly as I had just completed writing the chapter on the pumping heart, and had just experienced a rather disturbing image of a scarab beetle missing half of its body. What is interesting in terms of this discussion is that although in modern society the heart is known as a pump, people generally do not experience the heart as such (Romanyshyn, 2000, p. 173). Bound Alberti suggests that this points directly to a crisis at the heart of modernity and what she calls the “feeling subject” (2012, p. 8). For if, as Bound Alberti states, in the modern worldview the “Emotions are felt by the body, and yet belong to the mind; [and] the heart is a mere respondent to the sensations and experiences being cognitively processed by the brain....the heart cannot be both pump and feeling organ under scientific accounts of the mind-body relation” (2012, p. 8). Bound Alberti's statement seems to reflect my experience with the surgeon as detailed earlier, capturing the difficulty that Romanyshyn identified from a psychological perspective that *objective knowledge* of the heart does not reflect our *actual experience* of it (2000, p. 173).



Such an observation points towards the important difference in modern thought between the head/brain and the heart, and the kinds of *approaches that these metaphors make possible in terms of how we experience the world*. In other words, because we now have such a significant split in our thinking and ways of connecting with our body, I suggest that it is vital to explore the kinds of ways of knowing that are made possible through the head/heart. Moving towards the exploration of this question, Romanyshyn clearly observes from a psychological perspective, “there is a recognizable difference between an understanding which proceeds from mind and the understanding of the human heart” (1982, p. 101). McGilchrist also captures a similar sentiment in his own work when he suggests that, in contrast to the left, the right hemisphere holds, and makes sense of, lived experience and therefore understands that it is connected to a wider reality (2012). What is significant in terms of this exploration is that for both scholars, it is the heart/right-brain hemisphere which apprehend the world differently and make an expanded vision of life possible. Importantly, as I have already made clear in my introduction, these ideas, while different, point to the idea of a split in how we generate knowledge about the world, and this is the reason why these two metaphors are so crucial to my work.

Spiralling deeper into the labyrinth, I was becoming increasingly aware of not only a division in our thinking about the head and the heart and what constitutes valid knowledge about the world, but I felt that I was directly experiencing the hierarchical relationship between the head/heart that I discussed in chapter two. Certainly the troubled relationship between the head and the heart (mind and body) has expressed itself in many different ways throughout history, and I have explored the left/right-brain hemisphere and head/heart metaphor that drives general discourse, in the previous chapter. To add weight to this developing theme, the field of cognitive linguistics in recent years has amassed compelling evidence to suggest that the human body is an important source for language or linguistic expressions (Swan, 2009, p. 461).

The reason why I draw upon this research is because I suggest it offers another fascinating view of the head/heart dichotomy that I am exposing in this project. As the anchor point for my thesis is the heart, and how the heart’s qualities might make possible

different ways of engaging with the world, particularly in relation to conflict, it is clearly important to understand how the heart is conceptualised across numerous discourses as outlined at the beginning of this thesis. Indeed, according to linguistics professor Susanne Niemeier (2008, p. 358) conceptualisations concerning the head and the heart stand in contrast to each other, particularly in Anglo European culture, where the head is seen as the site of rational thought, in opposition to the heart as the seat of the emotions (2008, p. 358).

Of the numerous dictionary definitions for the heart as discussed in chapter two, the idea of the heart as having mind – namely, having functions of feeling, volition and intellect – suggests that the heart possesses “a wisdom and truth that is separate from the brain” (Bound Alberti, 2016, p. 96). Considered a fundamental part of our linguistic heritage, Bound Alberti suggests that this meaning allows us to consider things that are, for example, “heartfelt” – suggesting something that is genuine and compassionate (2016, p. 96). Certainly, many of these metaphors suggest the inherent intelligence of the heart in decision-making. This links back to the idea of the heart as a source of intelligence in ancient traditions and writing (Childre & Martin, 2000, p. 7), when cultures respected the heart for, “harboring an ‘intelligence’ that operates independently of the brain, yet...in communication with it” (Arguelles, McCraty, & Rees, 2003, p. 13)

In a recent empirical study to consider the effect of body metaphors on cognition, emotion and performance, social psychologists Adam Fetterman and Michael Robinson discovered that people who located their sense of self as being in the head characterised themselves as rational, logical and “interpersonally cold”, whereas those who located their sense of self in the heart characterised themselves as emotional and “interpersonally warm” (2013, p. 316). Certainly, in metaphorical expression the heart and head are frequently contrasted with each other in their purported functions (Fetterman & Robinson, 2013, p. 317; Swan, 2009). According to Norwegian philologist Toril Swan, the head is rational and the heart is emotional (2009).

Niemeier states that this polarity is still quite entrenched in our language today, citing historical reasons from Platonic and Aristotelian thinking to the present (2008, p. 358),

making similar culturally historical observations to McGilchrist (2012). Niemeier points out that the location of the mind, rationality and intelligence have been presumed to be in the head particularly since the 1600s when brain anatomy began (2008, p. 358), however, such thinking has recently been challenged in the past few decades, specifically with the advent of neurocardiology.<sup>98</sup> It has also been challenged by the research of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1994) who argues that purely intellectual reasoning is an impossibility “and that human thinking is always supported and strengthened by emotions” (Niemeier, 2008, p.359). In this sense, both are related and must cooperate (Niemeier, 2008, p.359).

Interestingly, Niemeier points out that such developing scientific views have not yet influenced the use of entrenched linguistic expressions, as language change is not usually a quick process (2008, p. 359). With a “culturally shared constructed model of the head as the locus of rational thought,” the head is therefore seen as the control centre of the body (Niemeier, 2008, p. 365), revealing “an almost complete division of labour” between the head as the centre of rational judgment, and the heart as the centre of emotions (Niemeier, 2008, p. 365). According to Niemeier, this is because our present-day English language still conceptualises the head as being more important than the body and the heart contained within it (2008, p. 366). As discussed in chapter two, this mind-body dualism is often considered to be a phenomenon of Western contemporary culture with a history that can be tracked from Greek antiquity, through to the Enlightenment, Descartes and up to the present day; where the heart and head are conceptualised as having quite distinct and specialised functions (Niemeier, 2008, p. 366). While Swan observes that cultures do not have to operate within the rational (head) versus emotional (heart) distinction, Anglo European culture does, taking rationality and feelings into the body parts that are highly relevant in our own language:

In English, both *head* and *heart* are old words with an extensive history in the language of denoting concrete body parts. Over time, it became common to conceive of the heart as the organ, as it were, or the seat of feelings, while the head is seen as the organ or location of the intellect. Thus the head “contains” our reason and intellect and the heart

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<sup>98</sup> See chapter two

on the other hand “contains” various feelings and emotion. Consequently these two are, as our language shows, in a certain opposition (Swan, 2009, p. 463).

However, our contemporary relationship with the heart stands in strong contrast to other cultures around the world (both ancient and modern) who reference the concept “heart-mind” (Maffie, 2008, p. 1). For example, the Wixárika women of western Mexico, the Aztecs, classical Confucianism and Daoism see the heart as a way of generating moral knowledge about the world (Maffie, 2008, p. 1). These traditions “refuse to bifurcate what many leading modern Northern philosophies... standardly insist upon bifurcating: rationality and emotion, head and heart, thinking and feeling...” (Maffie, 2008, p. 1).

## **Approaching the centre**

As I walked the spiral path of the labyrinth, deeper and deeper towards the centre, I became acutely aware how the symbol of the half scarab beetle that I had encountered at the entrance to my walk had symbolised, physically and metaphorically, the modern, uncomfortable relationship between the head and the heart that I have always felt. As I approached the centre of the labyrinth, I noticed that I was feeling increasingly uneasy and I felt my physical heartbeat pounding faster in my chest. Enquiring into what these feelings might be, I had a strong sense that they were related to a feeling of helplessness, both in relation to the plight of the half scarab beetle that I had left under the tree, and in relation to how the split between the head and the heart has impacted every part of our modern lives. Specifically, I knew that there was nothing I could do to save the scarab beetle, and additionally I had no idea how I could begin to heal the rift between the head and the heart - and consequent ways of knowing - that were increasingly making themselves known to me as this project unfolded. Certainly the feelings that were arising were becoming too much to bear, and as I was seriously considering fleeing the labyrinth I became conscious of two hearts - my physical, beating heart, and another heart that was moving and growing in my awareness with every footstep.

## Reaching the heart of culture

Struck profoundly by the realisation of these two different hearts arising simultaneously in my awareness, I recalled Bound Alberti's reflection that this apparent divergence between them has "seldom been explored" (2012, p. 3). As Bound Alberti is talking in the context of the biological heart of medical science and the feeling heart of popular culture, I felt that as someone who has been deeply influenced by the medical science narrative in all aspects of my life, walking the labyrinth felt like a symbolic and necessary move towards engaging with this observation. Indeed, engaging imaginatively with the heart as a living symbol and metaphor is enabling me to contemplate different ideas in relation to how *we actually create knowledge about, and subsequently act within, the world*. Ideas, I contend, that might never have arisen had I not engaged in deep imaginal practice.

As I considered this more deeply, I was reminded of Romanyshyn's observation that the reality we find ourselves in is formed by the human imagination as it acts in the world (2000, p. 10). In other words, through imagining the world we create ourselves, our thoughts, emotions and feelings. As we change the world, the world changes us, in an ever-flowing dance of reciprocity. Such an approach towards the world could be seen to reflect the way that ancient cultures engaged with life. Philosopher Owen Barfield (1988),<sup>99</sup> Kingsley (2018a, 2018b) and transpersonal psychologist Jorge Ferrer (2013) are all modern proponents of an ancient way of being in the world that suggests human beings directly participate in the world's unfolding – the world affects us, just as much as we affect the world. Specifically, this understanding suggests our participation with a dynamic, mysterious generative force, which for Ferrer carries a sacred quality. According to Ferrer, such a participatory approach is "an enactive understanding of the sacred that conceives spiritual phenomena, experiences, and insights as *co-created events*" (Ferrer & Puente, 2013, p. 100, italics in original). Ferrer's observation is interesting, particularly in relation to the extraordinary experience that I was to have in the centre of the labyrinth, which I will now describe.

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<sup>99</sup> Dates: 1898-1997

## The centre: receiving

In the centre I stopped and waited, feeling my physical heart continuing to pound hard in my chest. Remembering the advice my heart had given me in an earlier transference dialogue – “If you write about me, you have to really see me, you have to really hear me”,<sup>100</sup> I was also reminded of Romanyshyn’s observation that the capacity to deeply and authentically listen is “hard work because it is heart work” (2013, p. 340). While the heart that has been speaking to me through the transference dialogues, dreams and reveries, *was more than* the pumping heart of science, it was not until I had walked to the centre of the labyrinth that I came to a realisation of the truth of this other/expanded heart that lay beyond the mechanical pump. It was as though, through the intentional act of walking, that another heart had been given the opportunity to physically reveal itself to me.

Specifically, in the centre of the labyrinth I came to a stark realisation of the heart’s subservience to the head in popular consciousness in terms of how valid knowledge about the world is generated. As I allowed this realisation to sink into my body, I felt as though I had been thumped hard in my chest. As a result of this, I understood just how difficult it is for the knowing, feeling and experiencing heart to engage meaningfully in modern life due to its place in contemporary knowledge as a physical pump. Essentially, the ‘heart-beyond-pump’ has been exiled from our modern lives and, particularly from my own experience, this has represented itself as a deep conflict between the physical heart of intellectual and academic discourse and the feeling heart of human experience that is today considered to carry very little value within these realms.

This recognition felt painful to me, and as I acknowledged this hurt, waves of emotion welled up from the centre of my chest, from deep within my heart. Grieving for the loss of *the heart, the loss of my heart*, I sank slowly to my knees and wept – the earth beneath me receiving my tears. Finding it hard to put into words the depth of grief I felt at the

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<sup>100</sup> See the transference dialogue at the beginning of chapter one

time, Fraser, in her book *Seeking Wisdom in Adult Teaching and Learning* (2018),<sup>101</sup> beautifully captures the idea of a kind of violence that can be “perpetrated at the symbolic and psychic levels when the limiting tyrannies of certain discursive practices are privileged over other and more meaningful ones” (2018, p. 187). While Fraser is speaking from within the discourse of adult education, referring to teaching practices that have lost “heartfelt” ways of learning (2018, p. 187), her comment captures the *quality* of what I felt in the heart of the labyrinth, in the heart of myself, *within the heart itself*. There is no doubt that the heart of science has, for many decades, been privileged over other hearts - hearts that respond directly, symbolically and imaginally to the world around them – that offer us a sense of being part of, and belonging to, the wider world. The price contemporary culture has had to pay for imagining the heart of science into being, *is the loss of the very heart that was weeping within me*, wracking my body with pain, hurt and grief, and washing the earth with its tears.

This weeping heart was the heart I recognised from “that Night”. It was such a profound insight that my tears stopped flowing. As I acknowledged this heart, my heart needed to weep no more. Finally I had heard my heart, felt my heart’s pain, and cried my heart’s tears. In the heart of the labyrinth, grieving and weeping, I came into direct relationship with the heart beyond the pump – the heart of culture, the heart that feels through direct engagement with life. This time I was ready to listen, and this time, I would do everything I could to engage with this heart, to hear my heart’s voice and to learn my heart’s language. As I pulled a tissue from my coat pocket to wipe away my tears, I found a large, white feather attached to it. I had acquired this feather from the university gardens only the day before. Certainly, not for the first time on this walk, I was struck by the symbolism, particularly as the feather is significant in the Egyptian weighing of the heart ceremony (Naydler, 1996, pp. 261–274).

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<sup>101</sup> Fraser’s book concerns the pursuit of wisdom in education, and the argument that wisdom – personified as Sophia – is marginalised or absent in Western epistemological discourses. The book reviews key historic and classical framings which have lost much potency and relevance as certain cultural narratives dominate – specifically reductionist (2018).

## Meaning-making in the heart of the labyrinth

The scarab beetle and the feather are both central to the ancient Egyptian weighing of the heart ceremony where the heart of the deceased is weighed against Maat, goddess of order, truth and justice, represented either by the Goddess herself or by her symbol of the ostrich feather (Andrews, 1994, p. 56; Naydler, 1996, p. 273). Believing that the heart could think, and had “the ability to speak” (Taylor, 2010, p. 209), the ancient Egyptians saw it as the seat of the soul, the centre of judgement and of the intellect (Hoystad, 2007, p. 25; Perloff, 2010, p. 1502). Developing a “cult of the heart”, the Egyptians embalmed the physical heart upon death, and also created “heart stones” (vessels), and “heart beetles” (stone scarabs), to symbolise the rebirth of the heart and its owner beyond death (Hoystad, 2007, p. 25) – see figure 5.

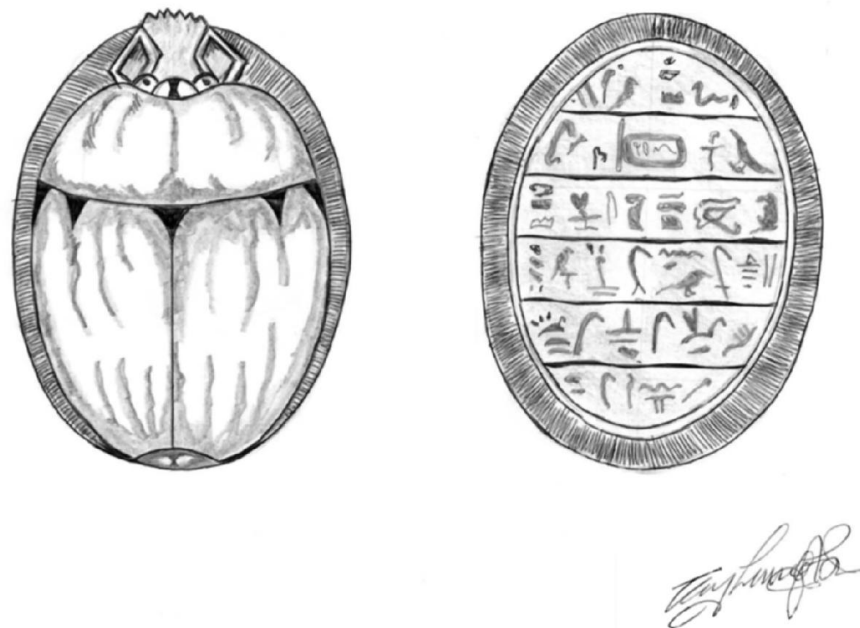


Figure 5: Egyptian heart scarab – front and back (Livingstone, 2019)



The ancient Egyptians made heart shaped amulets or heart scarabs intended to protect the heart and carry the deceased into the afterlife. Made from a wide range of green or dark-coloured stone, these heart scarabs were designed to be placed within a mummy's wrappings (Andrews, 1994, p. 56). They were also often inscribed with spells (Taylor, 2010, p. 174, Andrews, 1994, p.56), to prevent the heart from testifying against its owner at the judgement (Taylor, 2010, p. 226, Andrews, 1994, p.56). According to Naydler, there are many spells in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* to ensure the security of the heart (1996, pp. 250–251), binding “the heart to silence during the weighing” (Andrews, 1994, p. 56). Rather than the deceased heart suffering the fate of being devoured and its owner being denied an afterlife (Andrews, 1994, p. 56), spell 30B in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* countered this possibility:

O my heart of my mother! O my heart of my mother! O my heart of my different forms!  
Do not stand up as a witness against me, do not be opposed to me in the tribunal, do not be hostile to me in the presence of the Keeper of the Balance, for you are my *ka* which was in my body, the protector who made my members hale. Go forth to the happy place whereto we speed; do not make my name stink to the Entourage who take men. Do not tell lies about me in the presence of the god; it is indeed well that you should hear!  
(Taylor, 2010, p. 209)

On the Day of Judgement, the deceased person's heart is often depicted placed on one side of a pair of scales weighted on the opposite side by the symbol of Maat (Naydler, 1996, p. 273). For the Egyptians the heart was seen as essentially pure and attuned to Maat (Naydler, 1996, pp. 271–272). A well-balanced heart is therefore a heart within which the often competing forces of the psyche have been harmonised within a higher, divine, order (Hoystad, 2007, pp. 26–27; Naydler, 1996, pp. 271–273). It is interesting to consider this idea in relation to the two hearts that I had come into living contact with in the centre of the labyrinth. Specifically, from the point of view of balancing two previously conflicting hearts within my heart itself – moving into a different order of knowing.

As I reflected on this, I felt that the sense of unease I experienced as I neared the heart of the labyrinth was because I knew, perhaps unconsciously, that this walk symbolically represented my personal journey to the hall of judgement where my heart was going to

be weighed against the feather of Maat. On this journey I did not have an intact heart scarab to protect me. The scarab I had encountered at the beginning of my walk was injured and broken; reflective, I suggest, of the modern, broken link between the head and the heart that I was exploring in this project – the consequences of which have had serious ramifications across the entirety of my own life. As I made this journey, all I could take with me was my own heart, a heart which, in the heart of the labyrinth, had revealed the pain, the agony and struggle of the two forces that live within it - here represented as the heart of science and the heart of culture.

However, in finally recognising these two forces within myself, a different, more expanded heart could recognise them both as “belonging to itself and the balance...equalised” (Naydler, 1996, p. 272). In the centre of the labyrinth, neither my heart, nor I, were devoured. The whole experience felt like a symbolic death and rebirth – dying to old ways of seeing and knowing the heart, and birthing a deeper connection with my heart in the process. Passing through the hall of judgement, I was granted access to the return journey through the labyrinth - the heart and I forever changed by the experience.

As my time in the centre of the labyrinth was drawing to a close, I recall that my heartbeat had settled to a steady, calm rhythm. Placing my hand over the area of my heart I firstly thanked my physical heart, and secondly welcomed the heart of culture into my awareness. As I did this, I experienced an upsurge of what I can only describe as joy bursting outwards from my chest and up into my throat. At this precise moment I remembered the white feather lying in the safety of my enclosed palm and released it into the air. Watching it loop high into sky, the feather gently wafted upwards on a warm current of air. As I looked up I noticed darkened clouds had accumulated directly above my head in the previously clear blue sky, and as the feather disappeared into the distance a summer rain shower began.

Again, I was struck by the timing of this shower and opened up my awareness to consider the deeper meaning of this. Symbolic of regeneration, new life and fertility (Jung, 2014,

pp. 1371, 6989–6990),<sup>102</sup> the rain felt as though it was cleansing my soul, washing away old ways of seeing and thinking, making way for my newly discovered understanding. Certainly, rain is important to numerous cultures as a giver of life. According to Guénon, rain carries a spiritual influence, regarded as “‘celestial’ water” moving between heaven and earth (2004a, p. 353). In a similar observation, Swiss psychologist Jolande Jacobi (1890-1973) states that the rain “makes the earth fertile” and in “mythology, rain was often thought to be a ‘love-union’ between heaven and earth” (1988, p. 280). In the Eleusinian mysteries, “the call went up to heaven: ‘Let it rain!’ and down to earth: ‘Be fruitful!’” (Jacobi, 1988, pp. 280–281). In this sense, the rain facilitated a sacred marriage (Jacobi, 1988, p. 281), between different orders of reality. As I reflected on this, I felt that the biological heart of science and the heart of culture symbolically represented an important union of two different realities, coming together within the heart of the labyrinth (itself an ancient symbol of the heart). Indeed, I had been deeply touched by the heart of culture on this journey, feeling the heart’s pain and grief at being suppressed for so long, finally breaking into feelings of sheer joy from being recognised and heard – helping me to see differently and change my understanding of the heart, the world, and myself.

## Returning

On the journey out of the labyrinth I felt fuller, calmer and more at peace. I felt as though I carried a more wholesome heart within me – a physical, beating heart, and another heart, just as true and just as important, that moved and felt in direct relation to my experience of life. With every step I felt as though I was literally *walking in the heart*, the boundary between the physical and imaginal worlds blending and melding into an experience that I will never forget, and will never quite be able to put into words.

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<sup>102</sup> CW, Vol IV, 2014, para. 509 and CW, Vol XIV, 2014, para.727

## **Ancient knowledge for modern times: reconnecting with the subtle heart**

As I look for ways to engage fully with my experience beyond the causal boundaries of modern science, ancient culture offers much richness. Specifically, the idea that reality contains multiple planes that mirror one another is common among all traditional societies (Brach & Hanegraaff, 2006, p. 275; Milne, 2018a, p. 9). In ancient Egypt, for example, “people saw universal, spiritual forces active and immanent in the desert and flood, the course of the sun, the dome of the sky, and throughout the phenomenal world” (Naydler, 1996, p. 11). Having a “vertical dimension” (Naydler, 1996, p. 11), the physical universe “reached up into, and included within itself, spiritual realities that for the modern consciousness are no longer a living experience” (Naydler, 1996, p. 11). In this sense, perhaps the ancient Egyptians would have had little difficulty in comprehending my experience in the labyrinth, as the metaphysical world “poured into the physical, saturating it with meaning” (Naydler, 1996, p. 11). Seeing through the physical landscape into its depth and interiority, ancient Egyptians used their imaginative vision to grasp the world symbolically (Naydler, 1996, p. 12).

Ancient philosophy was steeped in theology, in the sense that the world was understood as a reflection of the divine source (Brach & Hanegraaff, 2006, p. 276). In this context, the world was conceived in terms of an “ontological ladder” leading from the physical realm to the divine (Brach & Hanegraaff, 2006, p. 276). The Neoplatonists for example, understood that the “world emanates out from an infinite source, which unfolds into a hierarchy of several major strata of existence, usually expressed as layered on top of one another” (Struck, 2004, p. 230). The material realm lies at the bottom, the immaterial realm at the top, and at the peak lies the “transcendent One” (Struck, 2004, p. 230). In this great chain of being (Lovejoy, 1964, p. 59), the moon reveals itself through Athena at the divine level, and silver or moonstone at the material level (Struck, 2004, p. 230). Therefore, one great chain of being reached out “in a perfectly unbroken or uninterrupted fashion from matter to life to mind to soul to spirit” (Wilber, 2000, p. 16). In the same mode of cognition, “Love reveals itself through the Goddess Aphrodite at the

divine level, the planet Venus at the cosmic level, the Venusian person at the human level, as well as the dove, the lilly, lapis lazuli and copper”(Voss, 2006).

Considering my experience in the labyrinth, through ancient Greek philosophy, one can contemplate the idea that the heart could be revealing itself to me through the symbols of the weighing of the heart ceremony - specifically, the feather, the scarab beetle and the physical heart beating in my chest. In this view, each of these symbols carries secret or hidden meaning to help me to reach deeper levels of understanding in relation to hearing my heart speak, as long as I keep my eyes open enough to see. Religious philosopher Joseph Milne states that in the modern age “we no longer conceive of the cosmos as our dwelling place” and because of this “We have lost the sense of being part of the great community of beings” (Milne, 2018a, p. 9). This would certainly make sense in relation to my own faltering, tentative steps towards engaging in a deeper way with my experience in the labyrinth.

### **Theurgic dimensions?**

I would also like to consider the idea that there might have been some kind of “theurgic dimension” to my experience (Voss, 2017, p. 309). Specifically, through the action of walking and contemplating the symbol of the half scarab beetle, the heart became, what I understand from Shaw’s writings on theurgic ritual, a “*concrete revelation*” (2007, pp. 26, italics in original). In this sense, I felt as though I had touched some greater, deeper intelligence which on the one hand felt familiar, yet contrastingly, felt wholly other and infinitely mysterious. Searching for ways of making sense of this experience, I was drawn towards accounts of theurgic ritual as performed by the Syrian neo-platonic philosopher Iamblichus (245-325 CE), and I was taken by how similar his reports appear to be to my own experience in the centre of the labyrinth.

In a neo-platonic sense, theurgy was a “work of the gods” - embodied and enacted by an individual in order to transform into “divine status” (Shaw, 1995, p. 5). This is in contrast to ‘theology’ defined as discourse *about* the gods which, “however exalted,... [remains] a

human activity” (Shaw, 1995, p. 5). Neoplatonic theurgic practices comprised of sacrificial rites and divination in order to receive living wisdom directly from the gods (Shaw, 2007, p. 26), and I was curious whether my walk into the labyrinth could have been a form of sacrificial rite – one within which I committed to dying to an old sense of the world for a new one to be born as I participated in some greater mystery. In relation to Neoplatonic theories of symbolism, Voss suggests that such experiences can possess a “*theurgic dimension*” (2017, p. 309, italics in original). Particularly as my experience in the labyrinth, facilitated by the symbolic images of the scarab beetle and the feather, gave me a tangible sense that I was taking part in a ritual practice of death and rebirth. Certainly, I felt as though I was in conversation with *something greater than my ordinary level of consciousness would generally allow me to perceive*, lifting my state of being to another level and imbuing me with a sense that I was participating “in a more universal or archetypal realm of being”(Voss, 2017, p. 309).

### **Corbin and Hillman: being ancient in a modern way**

Drawing on the work of Ibn Arabi, Corbin shows how the heart is the organ of active imagination. This creative power of the heart is called *himma* in Arabic, and *himma* makes real the figures of the imagination (Hillman, 2007, p. 5). *Himma* is the creative thought of the heart, and this *himma* “is itself the Creator’s theophanic Imagination at work in the heart of the gnostic” (Corbin, 1997, p. 198). In Sufi mysticism, the heart is a centre of mystic physiology which can offer an individual the “supreme vision” of the divine (Corbin, 1997, p. 221). The cognitive function of the heart as the organ of the imagination therefore transmutes objects into symbolic forms:

The active Imagination guides, anticipates, molds sense perception; that is why it transmutes sensory data into symbols. The Burning Bush is only a brushwood fire if it is merely perceived by the sensory organs. In order that Moses may perceive the Burning Bush and hear the Voice calling him “from the right side of the valley” – in short, in order that there may be a theophany - an organ of trans-sensory perception is needed (Cheetham, 2015c, pp. 70–71; Corbin, 1997, p. 80)

For the gnostic, the force of *himma* generated through the thought of the heart, is capable of directly creating objects and producing changes in the outside world (Cheetham, 2010, p. 9). In this sense, it is the heart, as the organ of the active imagination, that “at once produces symbols and apprehends them” (Cheetham, 2010, p. 9; 1997, p. 14). As I write this, I am particularly struck by the physical manifestation of objects in my reality and wonder whether my heart was actually producing these symbols. Of course I cannot empirically answer this, but I am also taken by Cheetham’s observation that the “apprehension, the *reading* and understanding of these symbols is not merely an intellectual exercise but an exegesis that transforms the soul” (2010, p. 9). After my experience in the labyrinth, I certainly felt transformed. For Corbin, such an act of interpretation, or “spiritual hermeneutics” is known as *ta’wil* in Arabic (Cheetham, 2010, p. 9). Therefore, the action of *ta’wil* is “essential symbolic understanding, the transmutation of everything visible into symbols” (Corbin, 1997, p. 13). This involves “‘carrying the symbol back’, towards the divine ground from which it derives and which it symbolises” (Cheetham, 2010, p. 9; Corbin, 1997, p. 28). In this way, a person moves from awakening to revelation, facilitating transformation, entry into a new world, to a higher plane of being (Corbin, 1997, p. 28). Was I in some way in communication with a higher, spiritual, divine realm, carrying the symbols of the scarab beetle and Maat’s ostrich feather back to the Gods?

Again, while I cannot empirically answer this question, from an imaginal perspective, I wonder whether this question, framed in religious language, is a way of expressing connection with something beyond the material realm? In this sense, it is possible to entertain Hillman’s understanding from a psychological perspective, that the heart provides access to an “ensouled” world within which we are “breathed in by the *anima mundi*”, seen by her, and perhaps even “breathed out as images by an ardent *himma* in the heart of each thing” (2007, p. 75, italics in original). This idea raises several questions, such as, do I have a heart, or does the heart have me? Is the heart in me or am I in my heart?<sup>103</sup> Reflecting on my experience in the labyrinth, I can see how, through the imagination of the heart, I came into deep participation with the mystery of the living

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<sup>103</sup> These questions can be seen arising in a dream following my experience in the labyrinth, which I write about at the beginning of the next chapter.

breathing world itself and how this experience offered me a different perception of life. Hillman asserts that it is only the “imagining heart” which can convert such “indefinables as soul, depth, beauty, dignity, love – as well as character and the idea of the “heart” itself – into felt actualities, the very essence of life. Without this heart, the cavity in our chest has only Harvey’s pump to keep us going” (Hillman, 1999, p. 122). Was the imagining heart that I connected with in the labyrinth, the gateway to a more expanded sense of the world - offering me the opportunity to engage physically with the symbols of my experience in a religious sense?

### **Jung and the transcendent function**

Having discussed the theory of the transcendent function in an earlier chapter, I suggest it would be interesting to consider the transcendent function in a practical sense, through the lens of my actual, lived experience in the labyrinth. While religious transcendence occurs upwards through the symbol, from a depth psychological perspective, Jung wrote of transcendence taking place by sinking into deep layers within the human psyche. According to Miller’s thorough exploration of the transcendent function in a book bearing the same title, he states that Jung believed that “psychological growth and individuation were only possible through an ongoing conversation between consciousness and the unconscious” (Miller, 2004, p. xi). Struggling in a “polarized dance” (Miller, 2004, p. xi), Jung posited that if these opposites could be held in tension, “a new, third thing would emerge that was not a mixture of the two but qualitatively different”(Miller, 2004, p. xi). He defined this action as the transcendent function, often represented by a symbol (Miller, 2004, p. 4).<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the symbol produces something that is not an amalgam or compromise between the opposites, but “a new level of being, a new situation”(Miller, 2004, p. 4). Through this confrontation of opposites, a new, living perspective emerges (Miller, 2004, p. 4).

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<sup>104</sup> See also chapter one for a theoretical exploration of the transcendent function



As I contemplate Jung's idea in relation to my experience journeying to the centre labyrinth, I could interpret the heart of culture as the heart residing in my unconscious, and the heart of science as the heart occupying my conscious experience. In the centre of the labyrinth the two conflicting hearts of my conscious and unconscious self were held in creative tension. Eventually a union occurred through symbols related to the heart – specifically the scarab beetle and Maat's feather of justice linked to the Egyptian weighing of the heart ceremony. In this sense, the heart took on multiple roles – namely, as the subject of my research, the container that held contrasting viewpoints, the qualities of openness, compassion and kindness to hold these contrasting viewpoints, and finally, the place that transformed my whole perspective on my project and life in general. As Miller states, transformation, or a shift in one's consciousness, is at the heart of the transcendent function (Miller, 2004, p. 4). Additionally, Jung saw the transcendent function as crucial to the individuation process and the drive of the self towards balance and wholeness (Miller, 2004, p. 5).

Taking a depth psychological perspective, perhaps my heart was guiding me to acknowledge and reclaim parts of myself that I had long ago forgotten or left behind. Specifically, acknowledging the heart(s) residing beyond the physical pump, or the heart's way of knowing in addition to my head's way of knowing, or the importance of the body in relation to the head. What my heart was specifically showing me in the labyrinth was that by living my life in one part, or one narrow interpretation, of life, other ways of coming into relationship with the world were obfuscated to me. *However, and most significantly, these other ways, or parts, were always there – waiting to be seen.*

Interestingly, religious scholar Jacob Needleman talks of the urgency for contemporary society to “rediscover how to join the attention of the heart to the powers of the mind and the perception of the senses”, in other words, “our being must catch up with our knowing” so that the heart and mind are balanced (2003, p. ix). For Needleman, the feeling component of knowing (that arises through the heart) is just as important as objective knowledge as understood through the mind/brain/head. Without this balance, or wholeness, our knowledge is incomplete and potentially damaging to all that we come into contact with.

Reflecting on my experience in the labyrinth, one could say in Jungian language that the transcendent function had been given the opportunity to burst through into my awareness, helping to heal the division in my own psyche and dry up conflict (Jung, 2014, p. 5149).<sup>105</sup> This created a new level of being, manifesting in my life through the unification of two different hearts representing my conscious acceptance of different, paradoxical ways of gaining knowledge about, and engaging in, the world. The conflict between them, transformed.

### **Reflections on the return journey**

Reflecting on my experience in the labyrinth, I suggest that it is possible to consider my experience in two particular ways, languages or framings. Firstly, as a revelatory experience wherein I connected with something greater, higher, beyond myself, and secondly, as a psychological experience uniting elements of my conscious and unconscious. While ancient people would not necessarily make this distinction, in modern terms Corbin is speaking from a religious metaphor of ‘revelation’ or communication between the earthly realm and the divine through the symbol. Contrastingly, Jung speaks about symbol in the language of depth psychology – specifically, the capacity for symbol to unite the conscious with the unconscious.

From the perspective of my project, the key theme that I am attempting to draw out is the capacity for symbol to act as a *bridge* between realms – namely, between the world of material phenomena and an-‘other’ realm of experience that is often difficult to define. I would suggest therefore, that it is the *depth* or *fullness* of one’s experience (what I mean specifically here is the type of approach – shallow/narrow or deep/transcendent) which ultimately returns *how* and *what* one sees (McGilchrist, 2012). Additionally, through Hillman and Corbin’s interpretations in particular, it is possible to access another world that the heart (both as a symbol and an organ of perception) helps us to perceive – uniting previously conflicted phenomena.

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<sup>105</sup> CW, Vol XI, 2014, para. 401

## Exiting the labyrinth: guidance for conflict

In the labyrinth I understand that I underwent some kind of ontological shock which had the effect of jolting me into a different space – a space that perhaps was once a common way of engaging with life for numerous cultures across history. I am reminded of Milne’s idea of the subversion of what was once seen as the higher faculties of one’s soul by Enlightenment thought, relegating them to merely subjective experience. Milne terms this the “ontological inversion” (2004, p. 5). In this sense, knowledge about life becomes redefined in empirical terms meaning that mystical experiences are unable to be satisfactorily engaged with. Fraser also discusses a change in her “ontological disposition” after a “transcendent” experience (2018, pp. 71–75). In my own case it was the symbol of the scarab beetle and the ostrich feather of Maat as part of a physical re-enactment of the Egyptian weighing of the heart ceremony that facilitated a radical transformation in my awareness. Certainly following this experience I can resonate with Struck’s comment that “The symbol makes the impossible happen; it becomes the node on which the transcendent can meet the mundane” (Struck, 2004, p. 213).

While I recognise Struck is referring to the notion of the transcendent in terms of Iamblichus’ interaction with the Gods (and consequently there is a religious sensibility to his statement), I do have a sense that my experience with the symbolic realm was transcendent in the context that it was outside of the range of my ordinary, day-to-day awareness. I am still undecided whether I would define this experience in psychological or religious terms – specifically, as part of a process of individuation or an experience of some higher, divine reality. Certainly, I am taken by both interpretations at different times. However, I suggest that my fluidity around this experience is a key part of this project, particularly bearing in mind Kripal’s method of reflexivity which advocates a continual movement between differing viewpoints. In this context, as my method is deliberately reflexive, I am making space to continually work through my understanding of these experiences, participating in a living dialogue and communion with my project – growing and changing in relationship with it.

Returning to the experience in the labyrinth and reflecting on it, when I arrived back at the exit/entrance, I felt as though my world had been completely turned inside out.<sup>106</sup> The experience I had was both physical and wholly ‘other’ – held together in a symbolic space within *which I finally saw the possibility of these two very different worlds being able to combine*. In this sense, the original conflict between these two hearts had been transformed. Certainly, the faculty of the imagination was integral in enabling this to happen – providing an expansive, open and welcoming space through the loving kindness and generosity of my heart to accommodate differing ways of seeing within myself as expressed through different hearts. Thinking back to “that Night”, I understood how the conflict that I had manifested in my life could have been of my own making; created through a failure of my own imaginal capabilities.

However, by taking up an imaginal approach towards the world and allowing it to speak in images and symbols, it is possible to comprehend that, as Cheetham states, “the other world already exists in this world” (2015c, p. 183). In Corbin’s language, it is our responsibility to actualise the divine world through the mode of cognition that makes this possible (Cheetham, 2015c, p. 183). According to Cheetham, the difficulty with this other world is that it is “fragile” (2015c, p. 183), but that “its fragility is a measure...of its worth, not of its irreality” (2015c, p. 183). That others may not see this world, or that we may only have fleeting glimpses are not reasons for doubt or despair (Cheetham, 2015c, p. 183). Seeing with wider eyes and more refined senses than we have been educated, and with the “courage of Love” (Cheetham, 2015c, pp. 183–185), perhaps we can learn to engage more with the subtle, living presence of the world itself – whether we interpret this world through a religious or a psychological lens, or both.

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<sup>106</sup> I am borrowing this term from Cheetham’s book *The World Turned Inside Out* (2015c). Undertaking an exploration into Corbin’s philosophical view of the world, Cheetham turns fixed assumptions of contemporary notions of reality upside down and inside out, radically revisioning how one makes sense of, and meaning in, the world.

## Concluding thoughts

As a direct result of my experience in the labyrinth, and opening to an imaginal mode of consciousness, I feel that I have perhaps glimpsed the worlds that Corbin, Jung and Hillman spoke of. I now understand that through the language of symbol, “boundaries are opened” and everything “has roots and branches extending beyond our knowledge. Every *thing* explodes with life and is in communion with beings all around” (Cheetham, 2015a, p. 144, italics in original). Indeed, the language of symbol and metaphor that is fundamental to an imaginal approach makes such a vision possible. As Cheetham states, “Metaphors are not tropes of poetic thought – they are features of the world. Metaphors exist because the things in the world are intertwined” (2015a, p. 144). Just as the metaphor of the left hemisphere and the mechanical heart has lived in us for the past several hundred years as discussed in the previous chapter, as a result of my journey through the labyrinth I felt intuitively that the symbol of the feeling, experiencing heart was at last being given the opportunity to live again in modern times. Specifically in relation to the last point, I actually *feel* different as this new, expanded heart begins to live authentically and meaningfully in my life. Certainly, according to the philosophy of the ancient Greeks as detailed earlier, when a symbol becomes alive, there is a passionate engagement and one is transformed - filled with living power.

Reflecting on my experience in the labyrinth, it was one of passionate engagement with a living quality of being that requested differing forces within myself to come together through the power of symbol. By recognising and accepting the symbols unique to my experience (Jung, 2009, p. 311), it was possible for me to move beyond the “limitation of the fragment” (Purce, 1974, p. 10), and link to “different ‘parts’ of the whole, or alternatively the worlds in which these parts manifest” (Purce, 1974, p. 10). Through the lens of correspondence, “each symbol is a link on the same frequency with the world above, a vertical bridge between objects within the same ‘cosmic rhythm’ on different planes of reality” (Purce, 1974, p. 10). In this view, our experience of reality is symbolic, “the whole of existence...a continuum...ordered in itself” (Purce quoting Wang-Fu Chih,

1974, p. 10).<sup>107</sup> In this context, life's dynamism manifests in images whose structures participate in the continuum itself (Purce quoting Wang-Fu Chih, 1974, p. 10).

As I reflect on what happened, I am struck by how the conflicting phenomena of the head and the heart, and the resulting two hearts of science and culture that I carried on my outward journey, were able to unite in the centre through *an event of the heart*. The heart created in this moment was both the heart of science beating physically in my chest, and the heart of culture – expressing feelings and emotions and at the same time moving me onwards, helping me to glimpse something different, *something more*. In this sense, the original conflict that existed between two radically different interpretations of the heart at the beginning of my walk had been transformed.

In the centre of the labyrinth, another heart burst forth, that held both interpretations of the heart as biological pump, *and* the heart of culture, yet was also something altogether different. Consequently this leads me to ask, if our modern, biological heart is simply one symbolic reading of the heart amongst many other (and I would argue, equally as valid), interpretations, what does this actually mean for us? How might this idea affect our knowledge and understanding of our place in the world? How could our interactions with the many different faces of conflict be changed by taking up this way of seeing? I suggest that such questions are of vital importance for our collective futures, and I will be exploring them further in the following chapters.

Finally, I would like to close this chapter by offering my thanks to the half scarab beetle that I met at the beginning of my labyrinth walk. Certainly without its active engagement in my life as a symbol for the *heart of culture*, I would not have had such a transformative experience. Nor would I have been able to bring two different ideas of the heart into my being and hold them together in creative tension, manifesting an altogether different experience and transforming both my idea of conflict, and myself, in the process.

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<sup>107</sup> Wang-Fu Chih (1619-1692) was a Chinese philosopher of the late Ming and early Ch'ing dynasties.

## Chapter five: The holistic heart

### Dream - August 2018

*I am inside my heart. I can hear my heart beating – a reassuring, steady, calm beat. The rhythm of my life, the rhythm of life. I see my heart expand, envelope me, and then I am in a garden – the garden of my heart. I walk slowly down a gravel path, as I sense my heart beating inside my chest, and my heart surrounding me as the garden. I recall thinking how this makes so much sense, of course my heart can be inside and outside of me at the same time! Of course I can have a heart inside of me, and simultaneously be inside my heart! What could be more natural?*

*It is a beautiful, mid-summer day in the garden. The bees are busily going about their business, looping and spiralling from flower to flower. Butterflies gracefully flutter, bob and swoop in and around the vegetable patch. Closing my eyes I hear the distant sound of a river and people laughing on the street beyond. Mouth-watering aromas waft on the gentle breeze from the adjacent cafes and restaurants. I have a distinct sense of the world as alive, hosting an incalculable number of experiences – human, animal, plant and rock. Everything is alive, everything experiences. Life in all its forms is moving. I drift in and out of a light sleep. A beautiful woman with long, golden hair, dressed in ancient Greek robes appears in the garden. Her beauty takes my breath away, and my heart inside my chest swells with joy and a distant recognition. Who is this person?*

*I feel that I know her, but I cannot recall from where. She begins to dance, weaving her way between the trees, I feel compelled to follow her. I watch her from a safe distance as she swings from left to right, looping and swirling around and around. Her arms outstretched, I watch as her robes and hair spin and spiral in time with her twirling movements. She is mesmerizing. I am entranced by the*

*vision before me. Then I am struck by how everything around me is moving, yet I am not. I notice my feet which seem cemented to the ground. I desperately want to dance as she is dancing, but I don't know how. I feel sad that I cannot move. Familiar feelings of frustration and anger wash over me. Why can't I move? Why can't I dance?*

*I recall the looping, swirling butterflies, bees and birds. The flow of the river. Aromas wafting on the breeze. My heart inside me. Me, inside my heart, in the garden. Everything in the garden, in my heart, is dancing. The world is dancing, yet my feet are not moving. In that moment I feel like I am outside of my heart and outside of the world. But then I have a sense that I must be part of this world as I am standing in the garden and this garden is in my heart. And, if I am part of this world, then it follows that I should be able to dance. The woman reaches out to me with a delicate, graceful hand. Staring deep into my eyes she holds my gaze. I have never before felt such love and compassion from another being. "Your heart still beats. The world still turns" she says gently, and dancing once more, she holds my hand.*

*Together we slowly and gently weave our way through the garden. With each step, I gain more confidence. We move forwards and backwards, left and right, up and down. I am particularly aware of how important the back and forth, left and right, up and down movements are to me. We whirl and twirl, spiral, loop and twist around and around the garden. "Is this one dance?" she asks me with a twinkle in her eye and a graceful smile on her lips, "or many dances merging into each other?" I can't speak. I am at once entranced and confused – on one level I understand the question, on another, I do not. She continues, "Remember my love, you have never stopped dancing, therefore you can never forget. All you ever are is between dances, and yet you are also the dance itself, and the dance is you!" And then she is gone. Life continues, but I know that I will never be the same.*

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## Reflections

The dream detailed above occurred a week after my transformative and transcendent experience in the labyrinth. These two words – *transformative* and *transcendent* - are particularly important in relation to the final stages of my thesis. Specifically, I made clear in at the beginning of this project how I was using the term transformative.<sup>108</sup> In the previous chapter I also made clear how I was defining the term transcendent, however, to add more depth to this understanding, I particularly resonate with Kastrup’s definition, inspired by Hillman (2016, p. 20). For Kastrup, transcendence offers human beings a chance to “get beyond the separateness, insignificance and transience of the ordinary human condition through association with something timeless and boundless” (2016, p. 21). Continuing, he states that transcendent truths “escape the boundaries of logic, time and space enforced by our universal grammar” (2016, p. 40). This description of the transcendent certainly picks up on the quality of experience that I had in the labyrinth and the idea of the numinous as detailed in the introduction to this project. Certainly I am curious whether the heart itself is responsible in some way for helping an individual to reach into knowledge beyond ordinary realms of experience.

As I reflected on what had happened in the labyrinth I felt as though I had touched some kind of limitless, mystical truth that demonstrated the living quality of conflict living in, and speaking through, two very different hearts. By holding this conflict in an uneasy tension, eventually another heart burst through into my awareness – a heart that I have termed the holistic heart, due to its ability to hold two previously different hearts together within itself, creating a greater whole. Being directly involved in the creation of this holistic heart helped me to feel intimately connected to life; as I learnt to see that I was participating in an unfolding and ceaseless dance within an animated, timeless and boundless world of infinite heights and unfathomable depths. A world that could be seen as represented in the dream described above.

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<sup>108</sup> See the introductory chapter to this work

However, while an imaginal approach provided the space for me to enter into an expansive mode of awareness, moving back into the rational mind to translate this experience into words and concepts is not an easy task. As Kastrup says, as soon as one tries to do this, “the transcendent order quickly becomes a rather abstract and distant idea, as opposed to a present and felt reality” (2016, p. 23). Speaking of the mythopoetic thought of ancient people, Dutch archaeologists Henri Frankfort (1897-1954) and Henriette Frankfort (1896-1982) reference the “inarticulate” nature of encountering living presence (1959, p. 13). Unable to be scientifically validated as an object or event ruled by universal laws, living presence reveals itself in relationship with an-other, and is only known “in so far as it reveals itself” (Frankfort *et al.*, 1959, p. 13). When this happens, Kastrup quoting Corbin, states that one is left with “the agony of absence of the eternally further-beyond” (2016, p. 23). In relation to this idea, Voss describes undergoing a transformative “awakening” experience through her participation in Renaissance and early Baroque music. The music touched her soul so deeply that she longed for “the ineffable, unreachable place from which it seemed to emanate” (2017, p. 307).

Such a way of experiencing this other-worldly quality of life and making sense of it has been conceptualised in many different ways over millennia, from the mythopoetic understanding of the living presence of the world within which human beings are in a reciprocal relationship (Frankfort *et al.*, 1959, pp. 12–14), to Plato’s allegory of the cave (*Republic* 514a-520a),<sup>109</sup> transcendent religious experiences of God, modern psychological explanations of the soul, and holistic science conceptions of consciousness. Of course the issue with the transcendent (or the numinous, as discussed in the introduction to this project), is that while the “personal and direct experience.... leaves an indelible mark in the human mind, *the experience itself is almost never abiding*” (Kastrup, 2016, pp. 22, italics in original). This, suggests Kastup, provides fertile ground for the

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<sup>109</sup> Plato’s allegory paints a picture of prisoners shackled to the back wall of a cave, only able to see shadows cast by a fire that is positioned further towards the entrance of the cave. The prisoners see the shadows cast on the wall as their true reality, however it is actually the fire that is casting the shadows. In the allegory, a prisoner manages to escape, moving out of the cave past the fire, and onwards towards the blinding light of the sun outside the cave. Plato’s allegory considers the idea that there is a dimension to reality not recognised by most people (Voss, 2017, p. 308)

intellectual mind to scrutinise life through a rational, empirical lens, thereby becoming in modern society "the "bouncer of the heart" (2016, p. 35).<sup>110</sup> Taking a similar view to McGilchrist, Kastrup states, "The intellect is a valuable adviser but a lousy king" (2016, p. 47).

Taking McGilchrist and Kastrup's perspectives seriously, through a shift of awareness I discovered in the labyrinth that it was possible for my intellect to switch places with an expanded sense of awareness, and to play a supporting role (2016, p. 47). This created an opportunity for me to bring phenomena together that were once divided by the intellect through an expanded way of knowing/perspective. Through my experiences of "that Night", the labyrinth, and the dream of dancing inside my heart, I have a growing awareness that my heart is guiding me on a journey to expand my imaginal vision and symbolic vocabulary to enable me to accommodate *more of life* within myself. In short, I am becoming open to experiences of life that I would have at one time considered "impossible" (Kripal, 2010). However, the deeper I move into this project, I am gradually discovering an expanded sense of the world made possible by combining my growing imaginal capabilities, and subsequent learning gained, with rational critique. Indeed, Voss suggests deep hermeneutic insights that arise through direct engagement with images and practices have a rightful place alongside the "examination, interpretation and comparison of these forms in a more theoretical sense" (2017, pp. 308–309). Through reflection on theory, cognitive processes and personal narratives, a marriage of head and heart is able to take place, creating a "mysterious third thing" that arises when one is profoundly moved (Voss, 2017, p. 309).

### **A deeper insight into conflict?**

I can resonate strongly with Voss' understanding that by carrying a vision that unites head and heart it is possible to commune "with some deeper layer of reality" (2017, p. 307), and consequently to be moved, to be transformed. At the end of the spiralling, looping and circling labyrinth walk, my perspective had transformed. I was finally able to

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<sup>110</sup> For Kastrup the heart is closely linked with intuition (2016, pp. 53 & 81)

accommodate what had previously been two distinct understandings of the heart that, in modern discourse and also in my life, had always seemed to be in conflict. As best I can articulate, the process of this transformation had begun with my commitment to an imaginal approach. Engaging the imagination as my primary mode of cognition as advocated by Voss (2009, 2019, pp. 29–30), McGilchrist (2012, pp. 195–199) and Romanyshyn (2013), I was able to “stop the verbal-intellectual mind” before my experience could be narrowed into an abstracted explanation (Bortoft, 2012, p. 54); allowing me to *experience the experience*. Bortoft calls this “upstream” seeing, where one commits to redirecting one’s senses towards living experience (2012, pp. 27 & 59). As the imagination *is the act of observation* (Bortoft, 2010, p. 307, my italics), and not something added on later by the intellect, one comes to understand that there is nothing behind or beyond the knowing of the heart, as the actual appearance of phenomena within the experience has “expanded to include an intensive depth” (Bortoft, 2010, p. 307).

Through an imaginal mode of consciousness, it was possible for me to learn to perceive a number of different hearts as entirely legitimate. As a result, the hearts I met in the labyrinth no longer needed to be in conflict, as I could hold them comfortably within my consciousness – *having experienced their reality within myself, creating something new in the process*. Immediately I am taken by *the quality of the action* that helped transform my perspective. Specifically, through the act of expanding my awareness and cycling between imaginal and rational ways of knowing, it was possible for previously conflicting phenomena to come together to create something new.

As I contemplate this idea, I am once more reminded of the movement of the dance in my dream above, and also recognise the *quality of this particular action* as being expressed through a myriad of scholars and discourses. Namely, I can see this movement in Jung’s theory of individuation (2014, pp. 2817–2819 & 5440), McGilchrist’s theory of right-left brain hemisphere “reintegration” (2012, pp. 195–208), Goethe’s way of seeing (Bortoft, 2012, pp. 59–61), and Kripal’s methodology of the “third classroom” (2007, pp. 22–24).<sup>111</sup> Indeed, it could be suggested that each of these scholars aim to transcend

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<sup>111</sup> I will return to Goethe and Kripal later in this chapter

conflict in their work by adopting methodologies that are open and continually moving. While I understand that they all work across different disciplines, what is of specific interest for me is the *foundational theme* that each of these theories embrace. That is, the recognition of the importance of the imagination as a primary mode of cognition, and the quality of *open, reflexive movement between phenomena* that the imagination subsequently makes possible (and that their theories advocate). Each of these approaches *creates a possibility* for relationship between the phenomena that they are expressing, through the act of recognising ‘an-other’. In so doing, a new space is created for these previously separated ‘others’ to come together.

It is this observation that is most relevant to my project, particularly in relation to conflict. In this context, I wonder whether my knowing and imagining heart, through the dream of the dance detailed at the beginning of this section, and my experience in the labyrinth, could be guiding me towards the notion of a foundational reflexive, dynamic pattern to life itself, which is then expressed in the physical world in an infinite number of ways or languages? Could this be my heart’s way of teaching me this understanding through the imagery of the dance? Does conflict arise when any expression of life/any phenomenon cannot move/dance into the possibility of relationship with an-‘other’ – resulting in what we would understand in contemporary society as an-‘other’ being unseen, unrecognised, unheard and consequently unvalidated? Does conflict arise when the dance of life becomes blocked or stops, and can the teachings of the heart enable us to recognise this? The rest of this chapter will explore these questions in more detail.

## **A primordial dance: giving birth to the old in new times<sup>112</sup>**

As the heart is becoming an important space of learning and transformation for me, it is interesting to consider Formenti and West’s view of play and dance in transformational learning, where the learning space can be claimed to “dance with new partners and

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<sup>112</sup> This heading has been inspired by Kingsley’s interview with Murray Stein regarding Jung’s Red Book (2018b)

ideas, thus creating new possibilities for self” (2018, p. 63). In this sense, dance or play is relational, speaking to us at a deep psychological or existential level, “offering resources of hope in struggles to transform” (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 63). Indeed, through the dream of the dance, I am wondering if my heart could be showing me something about the dynamic, living, moving quality of conflict - offering me the possibility see differently, to transform my thinking, and consequently learn to engage with the world in better informed ways.

The key message from the dream was the quality of the dance itself, which disclosed itself to me as a cyclical, spiralling movement up and down, back and forth, around and around. Specifically, the dance appeared to be a metaphor to describe lived experience, in the sense that the unfolding of life itself could be interpreted as a dance. When the dance of life is repressed or blocked, the opportunity for conflict arises. Interestingly, this idea can be seen represented symbolically through the ancient Egyptian philosophy of Horus and Seth who represented two contending yet mutually interpenetrating realms of heaven and earth (Naydler, 1996, pp. 3–4). Seth and Horus represent the constant dance of opposites: life and death, light and dark, day and night (Naydler, 1996, p. 5). Seth represents chaos and death, while Horus overcomes the domain within which the forces of Seth are rampant (Naydler, 1996, p. 4). When Seth and Horus are in balance, so is the world.

As I work towards a different engagement with conflict guided by my heart’s teachings, I am aware that this observation has close ties with a general ancient idea of a cosmic pattern that orders and gives meaning to life. Certainly the Egyptians, Sumerians, Greeks and Romans, in different ways, were concerned with the qualities of nature and the human condition, and consequently, our place in nature itself (Milner and Smart, 1976, p. 35). Ancient philosophy was based on the idea that the universe was living and ensouled (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 15), emerging from a single “Principle, Power or Being” (Milner and Smart, 1976, p. 35). For example, for Plato, the universe is a “single Living Creature that contains all living creatures within it” (Fideler quoting Plato, 2014, p. 3), and in Chinese cosmology the yin-yang model teaches that reality is composed of “complementary pairs or ‘opposites’” at all levels of existence (Kripal, 2014, pp. 194–

195), which order the world. Certainly within the daily flow of activities and relationships, ancient human beings were concerned with themselves and their interactions with the world around them, while at the same time knowing that they were part of a wider pattern (Milner and Smart, 1976, p. 35); the macrocosm reflecting the microcosm, animated by a dynamic, living force (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p. 8). In this way, perhaps the dance of life that my heart showed me is guiding me to look more deeply at my understanding of conflict – directing me towards deeper meaning and understanding.

As I write, I have a growing sense that I am being given the opportunity to unite with an ancient truth in relation to ways of knowing and being in the world that could support my goal to engage differently with the phenomenon of conflict. Ruminating on this, I become conscious that the heart I am giving voice to in this project is a heart that has lived in the body of each and every one of our ancestors, who themselves learnt to give voice to the living, breathing, dancing world in their own unique ways and languages. As I contemplate this idea further and allow it to live inside me, I have a strange sense of linear time dissolving. In a timeless, endless moment, I somehow feel that I am connecting *through my heart* directly out into the world and onwards to the ancestors – being carried over into a different realm of understanding.

Stunned, I sit for a long time, not wishing to break the spell of this realisation. It is here that Corbin's explanation of *ta'wil* provides support,<sup>113</sup> as I realise that in the opening of both my heart and mind it became possible for me to connect with an ancient understanding of the heart and in doing so, see the significance of the underlying patterns that drive life. In this imaginal space of the heart, time dissolved and *ta'wil* transmuted "everything visible into symbols," returning "things to their origins in the spiritual world" (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 266). What makes *ta'wil* so important is the idea of return – carrying something back to its other, original, spiritual form through the symbol (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 266). In this case, my heart made this move possible. Interestingly, Romanyshyn's use of *ta'wil*, in contrast to the transcendent notion of Corbin, indicates a psychological move down, into the depths of oneself and into the

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<sup>113</sup> See chapter four

work one is doing (2013, pp. 266–267). What is interesting for me is that as this project unfolds I am growing more curious about the validity of both the inner depths and the transcendent heights of my experience, and therefore I am not closed to Corbin’s sense of the divine through which *ta’wil* operates.

The movement/dance of life teaches that it continually creates bridges between difference, between others – these differences or others changing continually dependent upon position or stance. Therefore, the only choice we have is to keep moving, driven by the looping, spiralling force of life. In Corbin’s vision, through the symbolic imagination of the heart and the metaphoric move of *ta’wil*, it is possible to appreciate the cyclical nature of life which in turn allows one to hear the voice of the soul and the soul of the world (Cheetham, 2015a, p.98-99). Through *ta’wil*, linear time is bent into a curve, turning back on itself; everything is eternal, everything is now.

Struck by how taking an imaginal perspective has helped me to connect through the heart and engage with this moving, cyclic, reflexive quality of life itself, I will now embark on a journey to hear yet another heart, collapsing time to integrate ancient truths with modern ways of knowing. Certainly, it could be suggested that with this intention I am taking up Jung’s request to find ways of connecting back to ancient knowledge and discover ways of bringing it into modern times (Kingsley, 2018a, pp. 185–195). While Jung brought back ancient teachings from ancient philosophers, I have a sense that my work involves reaching back into an ancient heart which in modern times has been forgotten and exiled, but that, in one way or another continues to live within us and through us. I will proceed from this point carrying an understanding that the ancient heart still lives on in us today, opening a space to hear the message this heart wishes to deliver for contemporary times.

### **The *Red Book*: Jung’s message**

In an online video interview between Kingsley and American analytical psychologist Murray Stein (2018b), Kingsley suggests that Jung’s *Red Book* (2009) contains an



invitation to readers to take the knowledge of the ancient past seriously, and that this idea is clearly visible in the subtitle to the *Red Book* – that is, *Liber Novus*, Latin for ‘New Book’ (2009). Kingsley observes that Jung wanted his readers to become aware that old and new must be reunited. This observation is particularly significant, specifically considering my quest in this chapter to explore the possibility that my heart is guiding me to explore the notion of an underlying pattern to life which could provide guidance with regards to engaging helpfully with modern day conflict.

Continuing, Kingsley warns that unless we take Jung’s idea seriously, we will not grasp what his project was actually about (Kingsley, 2018b, 08:00-09:00), that is, to “give birth to the old in a new time” (Jung, 2009, p. 311). Kingsley continues to paraphrase Jung stating, “true creation is to give birth to the primordially ancient in a world that is new” (Kingsley, 2018b, 11:00-11:20). Creation is therefore to give birth to the primordially ancient in modern times (Kingsley, 2018b, 11:00-12:00). As Kingsley states, to bring the ancient into the new you *have to be at home with the ancient, to understand the ancient* – “the new is the old” and “the new is giving birth to the old” (Kingsley, 2018b, 11:00-12:20). As a result of my experience in the labyrinth, and also my dream, I felt precisely as though I was being led by my heart towards some ancient understanding that could inform creative ways of being in the modern world.

## **Bringing the ancient into the new: a reflective exercise**

Taking seriously Jung’s invitation to create the ancient past, anew, I will once more follow my heart’s guidance and consider the significance of the spiralling, looping, circling movement that presented itself in the dream at the beginning of this chapter, and which has already become a major theme of discussion over the previous pages. After having such a powerful experience in the labyrinth, and understanding that the heart speaks in images and symbols which can be engaged with through an imaginal sensibility (as in my dream), I knew that the spiral was something important to explore in relation to the heart and conflict. I also knew that this was a very old symbol due to the appearance in my

dream of an ancient Greek woman, and I felt sure that I needed to explore primordial ideas of the circle/spiral further. It was at this point that I recalled Kingsley had written extensively about Empedocles who stated that spiral movements lay behind any cosmic cycle (2018a, p. 429).<sup>114</sup> In Empedocles' view of the world, "there is an endless cosmic cycle of uniting and separating, coming together and moving apart" (2013, p. 347). Strife or conflict is the force that separates, Love is the force that unites (Kingsley, 2013, p. 347):

[T]his process of uniting and moving apart is all that ever has happened or will happen. Absolutely anything and everything is a part of this endless cycle....repeating itself at every conceivable level, down through the life-cycle of the stars to the tiniest insect as it breathes in and out" (Kingsley, 2013, p. 347)

In a similar observation, Naydler states that evidence from both ancient Egyptian and later sources "points to a consciousness for which deeply felt participation in nature's cycles was the norm" (2018, p. 8). Taken by how similar ancient understandings of the cycles of life are in relation to my dream, I felt as though primordial teachings were reaching out to me across millennia manifesting as powerful images arising in my heart. As I was contemplating this idea, I was particularly intrigued to discover that Jung captures this spiralling movement in the *Red Book* when he speaks of the nature of humanity, suggesting that everything is in constant movement from below to above – "there is no part...that does not come round again" (2009, p. 311). In Jungian psychology, the world makes itself known to the experiencer through universal, primordial patterns and symbolic images that arise in the minds of individuals (Fideler, 2014, p. 167). Importantly, as I am considering the nature of the spiral, Jung observed that his patients "spontaneously produced circular images of wholeness in their artwork and dreams" (Fideler, 2014, p. 168). Jung understood this to be the unconscious psyche striving to regain harmony with the conscious self (Fideler, 2014, pp. 168–169). Jung himself states,

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<sup>114</sup> See chapter one for more information

“The way is not straight but appears to go round in circles. More accurate knowledge has proved it to go in spirals” (2014, p. 5553).<sup>115, 116</sup>

## Inviting the spiral to reveal deeper meaning

By asking my heart to speak to me and then waiting in contemplation and reverie, images sprang into my awareness. Specifically, these images were memories of doodles that I would create in the margins of my lecture notes during my Masters degree – single, double, triple spirals and vortexes (see figure 6). Romanyshyn suggests that the margins of our unconscious are deeply important in coming to know anything (2013, pp. 143–144). Indeed, one of Romanyshyn’s students discovered that the idle doodles in the margins of her classnotes provided her with the theme of her thesis (2013, pp. 143–144).

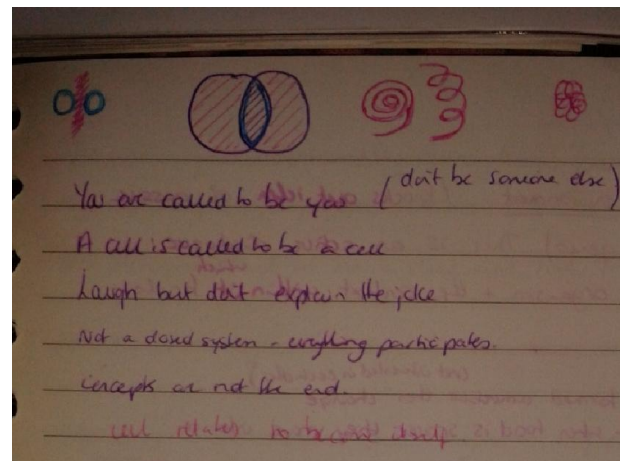
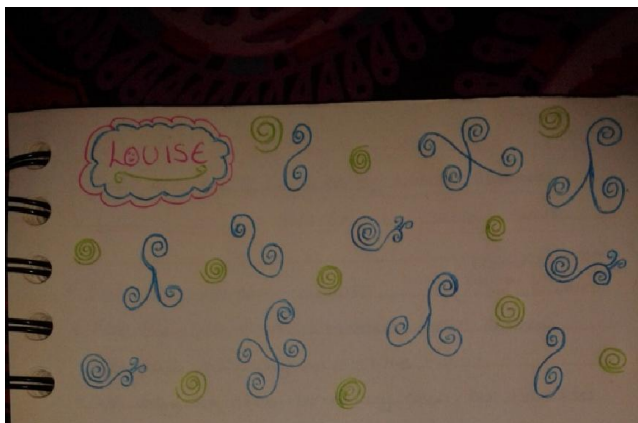


Figure 6: Doodles in the margins of my classnotes (Livingstone, 2014)

Holding memories of these doodles in my awareness, and being conscious of Jung’s earlier invitation to reconnect with the primordially ancient, I found myself drawn to a book by therapist Jill Purce titled *The Mystic Spiral* within which she observes that the

<sup>115</sup> CW, Vol XII, 2014, para.34.

<sup>116</sup> It is interesting to note that a number scholars use the idea of the spiral to inform their work, including Carol Pearson’s work with on the individuation process as a spiral (2012), and Ken Wilber’s understanding of developmental psychology in relation to spiral dynamics – for further information see *A Theory of Everything* (2001)

double spiral “*is one of the most ancient symbols known to man*” (1974, p. 11, my italics); connected intimately with the symbol of the circle (Purce, 1974, p.10). The double spiral is most familiar as the ying yang symbol of the Far East, and is also represented in the stone carvings of Megalithic cultures (Purce, 1974, p. 11; Guénon, 1991, p. 36) – see figure 7; the double spiral can be seen at the bottom of the image. The double spiral is also captured in the traditional art of ancient Greece (Guénon, 1991, p. 36). In religious terms, the spiral has been interpreted as the cosmic force which operates in dual directions (Guénon, 1991, pp. 36–37). It could therefore be suggested that the spiral represents an archetypal pattern woven into the fabric of nature itself, continually pulling life between two poles, between archetypal ‘others’.

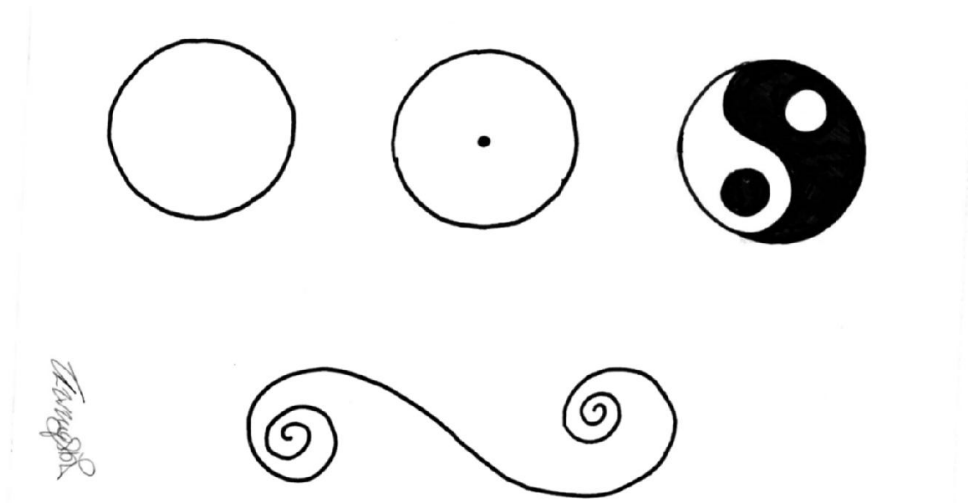


Figure 7: Circles becoming spirals (Livingstone, 2019)

Interestingly, the spiral is represented in a myriad of expressions across history. In geometry, for example, the logarithmic spiral represents one of the basic curves of life and growth (Skinner, 2009, p. 8). Taking an approach that focuses on the cognitive aspects of the prehistoric mind, independent researcher of earth mysteries, Paul Devereux, suggests that certain patterns are universal to the human race across all periods of time. Drawing on Heinrich Klüver’s work with hallucinogenic drugs in the 1920s, Devereux suggests that grids, dots, webs and spirals are patterns which emerge in

the human cortex early in trance states. Defined as entoptic images,<sup>117</sup> Devereux suggests that the patterns our ancestors saw during trance states formed the basis for decorative rock art as seen at a myriad of prehistoric sites across the world (2000, pp. 69–70). Certainly this is an interesting theory, and while it could explain why such images are so common across human history, what particularly interests me in relation to the spiral pattern is not how it might arise within our awareness, but the *deeper meaning of this image when set within the context our life experience*.

Specifically, what I mean is that in whatever form we may acquire an image (intuitively, imaginatively, synchronistically, or through chemical intervention), when taken up and considered symbolically, it is possible to move into a deeper exploration. To illustrate this point, body-centred psychotherapist Andy Harkin uses his intuitive imagination to speak of life as a movement, using the image of the circular, fluidic movement of nature to reflect the circular, fluidic nature of the human condition (TEDx Talks, 2016). In his lecture Harkin talks of the movement of the ocean and waves, linking this rhythm to the rise and fall of the human breath, and the expansion and contraction of individual cells within the human body (TEDx TALKS, 2016, 12:00-13:00). In this sense, the circular, spiralling movement he describes represents the dynamic process of life – something that Harkin terms as “coming back into our fluidity” (TEDx Talks, 2016, pp. 13:00-13:40).

Therefore, when the spiral is taken up as a symbol reflective of the dynamic patterns inherent in the world’s unfolding, one can imagine it cutting “through all levels and therefore dimensions...visualised in three dimensions: each circle as a sphere” (Purce, 1974, p. 10). When contemplated in this fashion, the symbol of the spiral can lead an individual to a sense of being one with the movement of nature as described by Harkin (TEDx Talks, 2016, 12:00-14:00). Linking parts to whole, each level/dimension is a wind on the spiral (Purce, 1974, p. 10) – starting from the circle and moving outwards in all directions (see figure 7). Certainly one can see this philosophy in the ancient idea of correspondences as discussed earlier. Similarly in depth psychology, the symbol of the circle represents the Self, expressing the “totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including

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<sup>117</sup> A term derived from Greek meaning “within vision” (Devereux, 2000, p. 69)

the relationship between man and the whole of nature” (Jaffé, 1988, p. 240). Certainly it is possible to see how the spiral symbol lends support to the overall ideas being discussed in this thesis, when taken as a way to explore the deeper meaning of life.

Reflecting back on the images from my notebooks and my Masters dissertation, I am particularly taken by Jung’s suggestion that if one recognises and accepts the symbol, “it is as if a door opens leading into a new room whose existence one previously did not know” (Jung, 2009, p. 311). By recognising and taking up the symbol of the heart in this work, I have come to realise that something about the quality of the spiral has been trying to capture my attention for many years and speak to me in relation to conflict. Indeed, Romanyshyn suggests that the living presences in the work of a researcher guide and inform the work from the beginning (2013, pp. 114–115), and I am deeply curious about what my heart has to teach me in relation to the symbol of the spiral in the context of conflict.

## The heart speaks

According to Purce, the image of the flat, double spiral can be visualised, and expanded out, into three dimensions – see figure 8:

[I]t has its origin and end in the opposite poles of a central axis....The spiral has actually returned by winding *on* to its source. It’s ‘end’ is not a second and therefore relativating infinity, as implied by the single spiral. The duplication of the One is simply *the One looking at itself, and in so doing becoming subject and object*: this is the duality by which all is known (1974, p. 11, italics in original)

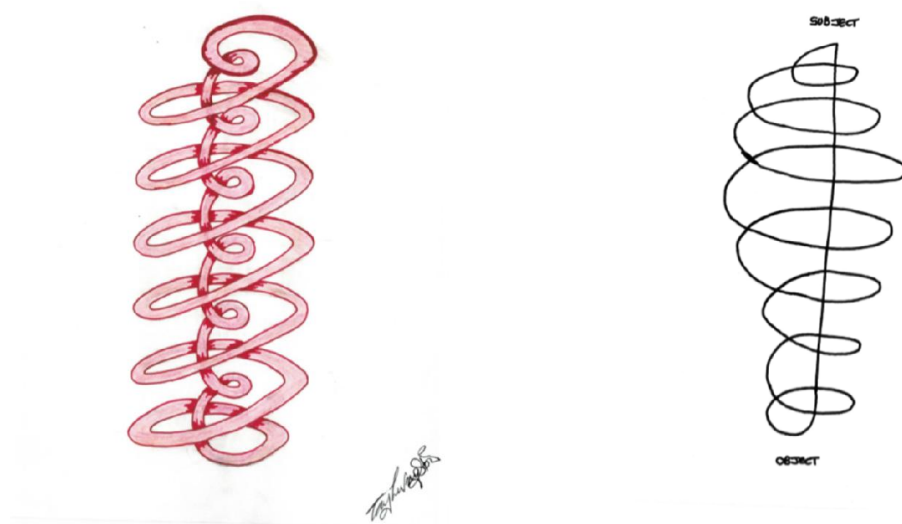


Figure 8: The flat, double spiral represented in three dimensions (Livingstone, 2019)

Purce suggests that through this duality, a third element enters the picture – namely, “*relation*” (1974, p. 11, italics in original). While subject and object are separated by distance, when observed symbolically, they can be at once divided *and* related (see figure 8). The spiral can therefore be seen to move away from its centre, but conversely it returns, again and again to itself – moving backwards and forwards, left and right, up and down (depending on one’s stance). Not only does this movement remind me of my dream of the dance, but also the underlying quality of Jung, Goethe, McGilchrist and Kripal’s theories, and also the qualitative relation of conflict to number in Pythagorean philosophy as discussed in chapter one.

What I mean specifically here is that:

- 1) The key message of my dream of the dance was the significance of movement – that is, moving from one foot to another, forward and backwards, up and down, right and left.
- 2) Jung, Goethe, McGilchrist and Kripal’s theories all express a movement between different ways of interpreting the world. For Jung, this is expressed through a movement between the conscious and unconscious, Goethe expressed this through imaginal and intellectual ways of knowing. Like Goethe, McGilchrist

stresses the importance of these ways of knowing, represented as the right and left hemispheres of the brain working together in harmony. Finally, Kripal highlights the importance of developing reflexivity between rigid beliefs and scepticism, moving to a third classroom of “gnostic epiphany” (2007, p. 23)

- 3) In Pythagorean philosophy, number carries a qualitative essence; where one is unity, two is duality carrying the potential for conflict, and the realisation of the three indicates relationship, peace, harmony.

As I write, I am curious about whether there might be a fundamental pattern that drives life, expressing itself in numerous ways (as indicated above), and is spiral patterned in nature. According to Purce, spiral patterns permeate life – from the rhythmic functioning of our bodies, to the passing of the seasons and time, to the movements of the stars and planets (1974, p. 13). By understanding the nature of the spiral pattern that drives the universe, we become better equipped to dance with the manifestations of this spiral pattern as it expresses itself uniquely in the myriad of experiences in our own lives. However, if we thwart or repress this movement in any way, the dance is compromised and conflict has the potential to arise. To interpret this in McGilchrist’s terms, for example, when the left hemisphere becomes too dominant, our knowledge of the world is limited, creating the problems that he describes in his work (2012). In Kripal’s terms, when one classroom dominates over another, rigid dogmas have the opportunity to appear (2007, pp. 23–24). For both scholars, the key to moving between and beyond hemispheres or classrooms is the open quality of the imagination.

Thinking about the imagination and the life of the heart that I have been exploring in this project, I wonder whether the archetypal pattern of the spiral could be seen expressed through its story in some way. For example, before Harvey’s discovery of the biological pump of science, the heart was imagined in numerous ways - as the seat of the soul, sovereign of the body, a source of power and connected directly to the divine (Webb, 2010, pp. 1–9). In this sense, I am taking this heart as representative of the point where the spiral begins. This heart was open to the air that moved between the earthly and divine realms (Webb, 2010, p. 51), helping a person to connect with God. In this context,



the heart is able to spiral upwards and downwards, back and forth between heaven and earth – preserving a person’s link with divine forces.

However, with Harvey’s discovery, the heart was no longer open to the world. In Harvey’s view, the tiny, but visible pores that were previously seen in the septum cordis were no longer there (Romanyshyn, 1982, pp. 115–116, 2000, p. 138). The heart that could once spiral back and forth between the earthly and heavenly realms, was no longer able to (Webb, 2010, p. 95). By reimagining the heart as a pump, the septum became a solid wall, separating one side of the heart from the other - dividing the heart against itself (Romanyshyn, 1989, p. 138). In Harvey’s vision, the heart is re-imagined - “divided and sealed within the body” (Webb, 2010, p. 95). This heart can no longer move between earth and heaven and the spiral stops. Heaven and earth become divided, the heart shrinks and hardens as the channel of communication between the realms stops, creating the possibility for conflict and strife to emerge. Additionally, it is possible to see this idea playing out in the modern relationship between the heart and the brain, where for many years, the heart was deemed subservient to the brain.

By dividing and distancing the heart from a deeper, more expanded connection with life, the modern individual is therefore unable to extend out into the world as it used to in antiquity. In this vision, we cannot move or dance fully with the unfolding pattern of life. Over time, we become divided and conflicted within ourselves, between each other, and in our relationship with life. Separation from a deeper, more expanded realm (however defined – be that religious, psychological) has left us exiled in the wilderness until the moment when we realise it is time to spiral back – perhaps transformed, carrying deeper knowledge. As Purce states:

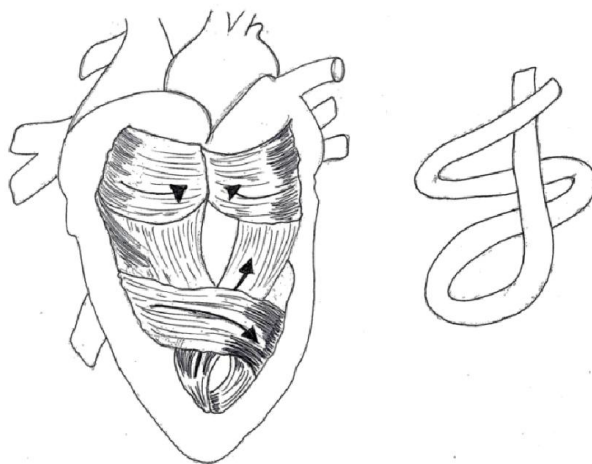
[All] expansion leads to contraction, and out of every extreme is born the seed of its opposite, so our almost exclusively analytic and quantitative approach to the world leads into a new vision of the continuum; and we turn on to the next winding of the evolutionary spiral (1974, p. 32)

I suggest that this idea of spiralling, looping back, or returning, towards a new vision of wholeness, relationship and reintegration can be seen represented in a myriad of ways in

the modern world including medical science, neuroscience, holistic science, depth psychology and comparative religion, and I will be drawing out some of these observations shortly.

As Romanyshyn states, “We see differently, and the heart changes” (1982, p. 141). I am curious as to why we are starting to see life so differently (moving from separation consciousness to reconnection), and I wonder what the heart is asking specifically for me to learn through this different way of seeing? In McGilchrist’s terms, could it be that an increasingly reductionist and materialist viewpoint has blocked the natural flow underlying life, and that as human beings *we are now being asked to respond to these limitations*? Are we, in different languages and different ways, being moved by the primordial spiralling dance of life itself towards a more holistic vision that could help us to redress the balance? As Webb suggests, “If we can approach an earlier thought style by examining a series of dominant concepts that seem impossible or incomprehensible today, we can perhaps find our way toward a new thought style at variance with our own” (2010, p. 182). In this sense, I am now going to follow the thought of my heart and explore the growing implications of the primordial spiral in relation to recent scientific discoveries about the heliacal structure of the heart.

### **Ancient symbols for modern times: the spiral and the heart**



*Figure 9: Representation of Torrent-Guasp’s myocardial band (Livingstone, 2019)*

A different view of the structure of the heart is now emerging based on the pioneering work of Torrent-Guasp who advanced the theory that the heart is a helical shape and thus functions in a twisting, spiralling motion (Buckberg *et al.*, 2018) – see figure 9. Interestingly, theories that the heart functions by means of a twisting motion have been circulating for over 2000 years (Buckberg *et al.*, 2018, p. 2), and in the 1600s, it was suggested that the heart has a helix or spiral structure (Buckberg, 2002, p. 863). While Harvey’s theory of the divided, pumping heart held sway in the advancement of modern medical science, in 1864 anatomist J. Bell Pettigrew (1834-1908) wrote about the spiralling course of muscle fibres of the heart,<sup>118</sup> speaking of the Gordian knot of anatomy (Holdrege, 2002, p. 7; Torrent-Guasp *et al.*, 2005, p. 192).

In the early 2000s Torrent-Guasp used hand dissection to successfully unfold the anatomic architecture of the heart, demonstrating what he called the ventricular myocardial band (Vesalius Studios, 2002) – see figure 9. What is interesting in terms of the topic for this chapter, is that seeing the heart in this way shows that it contains “a remarkable hidden harmony of spirals” (Buckberg, 2002, p. 871), rather than the two-sided, divided heart of Harvey.

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<sup>118</sup> The heart’s spiral structure was put forward by Lower in the 1600s (Stonebridge, 2011, p. 21; Buckberg *et al.*, 2018, p. 1), followed by “Senac in the 1700s, Krehl in the 1800s, Mall in the 1900s, and more recently by Torrent Guasp” (Buckberg *et al.*, 2018, p. 1). Neither Stonebridge nor Buckberg et al mention Pettigrew.



*Figure 10: Spiral formations found in nature (Livingstone, 2019)*

Cardiothoracic surgeon and friend of Torrent-Guasp, Gerald Buckberg (1935-2018), suggests that such notions of harmony are reflective of the myriad of spiral formations found in nature (see figure 10), and take us back to “the observations of Pythagoras in 600 BC, who described the golden section: the small is to the large as the large is to the whole” (2002, p. 863). In a paper exploring Torrent-Guasp’s helical heart, Buckberg refers to helical patterns found throughout nature in horned animals, within the flower bud of a daisy, and in sea shells (2002, p. 863). What is particularly interesting in relation to this project is that while two-dimensional imaging of the heart (for example, ventriculogram

and echocardiogram) support Harvey’s theory, newer three-dimensional imaging tools (MRI and speckle tracking),<sup>119</sup> allow physicians to see “clockwise and counterclockwise twisting rotations” that were described over 2000 years ago (Buckberg *et al.*, 2018, p. 2). It is also interesting to acknowledge that Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) produced anatomical drawings of the heart and even depicted clockwise and anticlockwise spirals within the aorta as the outlet of blood from the left ventricle (Buckberg, 2002, p. 880; Stonebridge, 2011, p. 21). As Buckberg asks:

We must...wonder about how Leonardo discovered the way that the blood flowed through the aorta. Did he look back at a Greek temple 500 years BC to see the same clockwise and counterclockwise spirals at the top of columns? Did he look further back to Neolithic times..., when prehistoric people made images on graves showing clockwise and counterclockwise spirals? (2002, p. 880) – see figure 11



Figure 11: Spiral carvings on the entrance stone at Newgrange, and spirals on top of a Greek temple column (Livingstone, 2019)

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<sup>119</sup> Speckle tracking is an echocardiographic imaging technique that analyses the motion of tissues in the heart, quantifying rotational movements, twist and torsion (Biwas *et al.*, 2013, p. 88)

Certainly it seems that Buckberg's exposure to the spiral symbol has prompted him to think philosophically about his own journey through life, observing that in all things we must maintain our student ways in order to enter "the spiral pathway of learning" (2002, p. 883). In a statement startlingly reminiscent of my dream, Buckberg's own journey into the helical heart has led him to the realisation that:

We learn more as we go down this spiral loop and thereby increase our concept of knowledge. Simultaneously as we obtain knowledge, we can begin to move upward, in a different direction, by grasping and using these concepts to develop wisdom. We must then use these methods to understand *growth*. Knowledge develops through analysis, differentiation, or taking things apart. Wisdom evolves by synthesis, integration, or by putting things together, to see with the eyes of the mind. These steps are not very helpful unless we undertake one other action, which is wholeness: to bring together diversities, to have complementary activity (2002, p. 883, italics in original)

I suggest that Buckberg's *experience* of the spiralling nature of the heart led him to contemplate ideas of wholeness, integration, reciprocity, and the importance of each of these things in relation to learning from the world within which we live (in much the same way that Harvey's vision of a divided heart led the pioneers of our modern worldview to contemplate a fragmented, divided world). Like our ancient ancestors, the spiral seems to be asking us now to look deeper into the world and to see connections where once there was separation. From the perspective of this project, the way that the heart is changing in people's eyes is exciting, and demonstrates, in a practical sense a change in the way that we perceive our place in the world. What is of particular interest to me is why such a move towards reconnecting phenomena that were once divided is happening. However, taking up the spiral as a symbol for life, once one extreme is reached (in whatever language this may be), our next move is to wind in another direction – circling back in the opposite direction on the evolutionary spiral as discussed earlier (Purce, 1974, p. 32).

### **The heart's spiral vortex**

Before concluding my exploration into changing ideas of the heart in medical discourse, I would like to refer to a fascinating book by American physician Thomas Cowan, titled

*Human Heart, Cosmic Heart* (2016). Cowan, himself a cardiac patient and also inspired by the ideas of Rudolf Steiner, spent decades exploring the heart. Stating that the heart is not a pump, Cowan suggests that the “function of the heart is to create vortices” – creating a “vortex flow” in horizontal and vertical directions (2016, p. 40). Like Buckberg, Cowan suggests that this vortex or spiral is an important form that helps to explain the nature and functioning of the heart (2016, pp. 30–31). Based on his own research into the spiral/vortex functioning of the heart,<sup>120</sup> Cowan suggests that the “forces, power, and activities of the human heart” are connected to, or can be considered the same as, the forces, powers and activities that move the wider cosmos (2016, p. 92). This dynamic process of life is in constant change, and Cowan warns that unless we start to see all of life in this way, we will never be able to effectively treat cardiac patients (2016, p. 108), nor heal our relationship with the natural world (2016, p. 94).

It is interesting again to consider how Cowan’s interpretation of the heart focuses explicitly on the spiral, which then allows him to reinterpret the form and function of the heart, and apply this in a wider, philosophical context to the world within which he lives. Additionally, his understanding and interpretation of the heart *works successfully* as he applies this understanding when treating his own patients (2016, pp. 47–63). At this point, perhaps we should remind ourselves of Romanyshyn’s observation that before Harvey, physicians of the day were treating their patients through their particular view of the world. It was not that before Harvey they were wrong, they were simply operating under a different vision – they saw in a different way, lived in a different world (1982, p. 115).

For Cowan, the heart’s function as a spiral vortex allows him to see the heart as more than a pump, becoming conscious of the heart’s link to the wider forces that drive life. Returning to Purce, in a similar fashion she suggests that life exists “in a continuum and a dynamic whole” which is itself expressed through the spiral drawn as a sphere or doughnut ring that “joins up with itself by spiralling through its own middle”(1974, p. 7). Perpetually “turning in on itself, expanding and contracting” (Purce, 1974, p. 7), this

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<sup>120</sup> See *Human Heart, Cosmic Heart* for more information (Cowan, 2016, chap. 4).

spiral, or “spherical vortex” (Purce, 1974, p. 7),<sup>121</sup> is observable in the perpetual motion of nature and resulting formations – see figure 12:

Many formations in nature, although both constituted and caused by dissimilar phenomena, are not only similar to look at, but have identical mathematical descriptions. This would suggest that together they form a higher overall order outside that [sic] limited by our concept of linear cause and effect. The spiral movement which creates a centre and a ‘whole’ is also that which – combined with gravitational contraction – creates the solar systems, their suns and planets....These are the macrocosmic movements and cycles, mirrored in man the microcosm, which provide him with his model for all things cyclic, from sleep and emotions to time itself....This order, reverberating down into the microscopic and subatomic levels, both structures and reflects our consciousness. The full significance of organization, which was obviously known to the Greeks since their word *kosmos* means ‘order’, is again being demonstrated by the physicists, who say that matter actually consists in its own movement and organization. Similarly the growth of human consciousness is the continuous refining of its own organization, the ordering of its individual microcosm....we are the spiral and all the spirals within (Purce, 1974, pp. 8, italics in original)



Figure 12: Spiral vortex (Livingstone, 2019)

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<sup>121</sup> This form is called the “vortex ring” by scientists (Purce, 1974, p. 7) or toroidal vortex



## The heart: our personal reminder of archetypal patterns

In a similar observation to Purce, and drawing on the work of Hillman, Jung and Plato, American Jungian analyst Michael Conforti has written an intriguing book that discusses the archetypal dynamics of self-organisation as it applies to the individual psyche and the natural world (2003, p. xv). Conforti takes the position that “Jung’s theory of the archetype is the psychological parallel to the scientific theory of self-organising dynamics in nature” (2003, p. xv), suggesting that matter responds to archetypal forces, defined as the “archetypal field” (2003, p. 17). For Conforti, as for Jung, there are numerous archetypes to which nature and human beings respond (2003, p. 18). Conforti’s idea of an archetypal field around which life, in all its forms, coalesces is similar to my own exploration in this chapter of an underlying pattern that drives life. However, for the purposes of this exploration into conflict, my specific focus is *on a common underlying generative realm which subsequently drives the many archetypes into form* – expressed here as the primordial spiral.

Researching this chapter, I carried a strong sense that my heart was asking me to redeem the ancient idea of a primordial pattern that drives life and understand its importance in relation to conflict. Specifically, as the heart is the organ through which the world communicates its images, the heart is the primary organ through which these images can be interpreted through the language of symbol and metaphor. In this sense, the heart is re-imagined as a thinking organ, generating knowledge about the world through its rich language, and having a key place in our lives. No longer a symbol of division with a wall separating its left and right sides, the heart can now be revisioned as a guiding symbol of reconnection for our troubled times, embodying the spiralling pattern of life within its own physiology and function.

Certainly it is interesting to see that the heart of modern medical discourse is being given the opportunity to be perceived differently, with a spiralling muscular structure that in turn influences the blood streaming through the heart as loops and vortices (Holdrege, 2002, pp. 8–11). This heart is also creating the possibility for people to perceive the world

around them differently, more deeply, with an expanded sense of awareness. As the heart moves between contraction and expansion, moving rhythmically between poles, “mediating and balancing between extremes” (Holdrege, 2002, p. 16), the pulsating heart in the centre of our chests stands as a qualitative representation of the spiral flow of life – a physical organ that keeps us alive *and*, if we allow ourselves to see, connects us to a sense of the wider cosmos. In this way, the heart is our own personal, physical reminder of the primordial spiral pattern that directs life, and subsequently the organ through which we can navigate our way through the contrasting forces that express themselves in each and every minute of our lives. The pattern of the spiral is within us, given expression through the heart, connecting us to disparate realms, to ‘others’ - in whatever forms these ‘others’ may take.

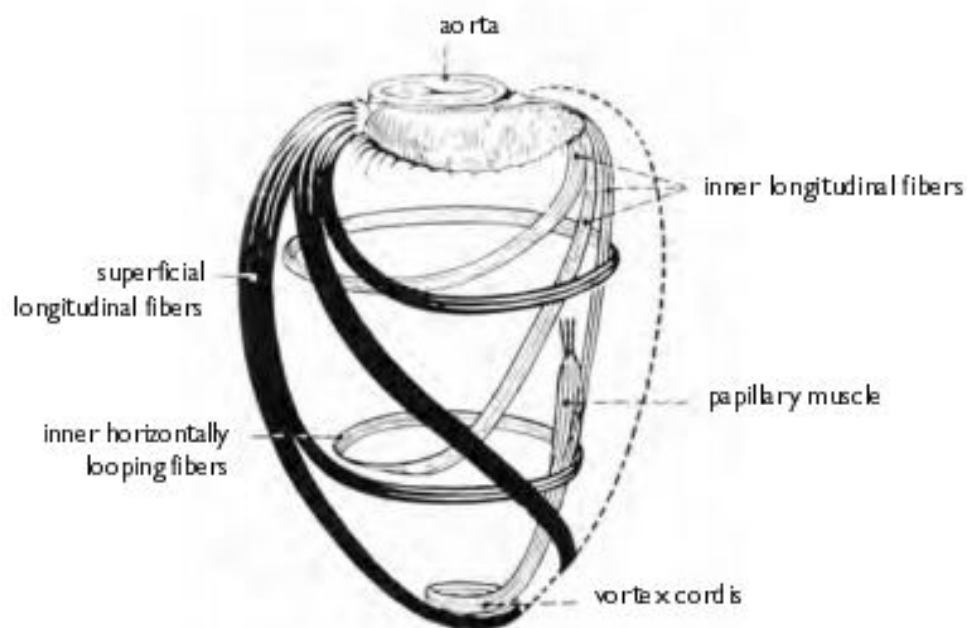


Figure 13: Schematic representation of spiralling heart fibres in left ventricle (Holdrege, 2002, p.8)<sup>122</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Scan of image taken from *The Dynamic Heart* (Holdrege, 2002, p.8) with kind permission of C. Holdrege; original source Benninghof and Goertler, 1980.

## Perceiving the heart's ancient message in modern methodologies

Taking forward the idea of the qualitative nature of the spiralling heart and its symbolic connection to a primordial pattern that underlies, and moves, life itself, in the concluding part of this chapter I would like to briefly explore some scholars who appear to be accommodating this spiralling, reflexive movement at the practical level in their own work.

### McGilchrist and Kripal

Firstly I will begin with McGilchrist's theory of left-right brain hemisphere lateralisation and Kripal's method of reflexivity as set within the framework of comparative religion, as both display this spiralling, reflexive movement. Both scholars call for a "hermeneutics of imagination to mediate between the opposites (of "reason" and "gnosis"), and a revitalised understanding of *metaphor* as the key to this process" (Voss, 2017, p. 315, italics in original). Before moving on from this point, it is important to be clear that while Kripal is speaking from a religious point of view and the idea of something 'other' existing beyond ourselves, McGilchrist does not make any such movement towards the validity (or not) of mystical or spiritual experience (2012, pp. 440–442). McGilchrist does however make clear that the state of awareness that might allow one to authentically approach a "spiritual Other" gives us something more valuable than a materialist vision makes possible (2012, pp. 441–442).

What I am highlighting specifically through these two scholars is the way that their methods of enquiry, made possible through the imagination, create a space of possibility for the unheard and the unseen (however that represents itself through their own positioning towards the world). Certainly this is a key observation when one considers the heart as the organ of the imagination as explored earlier in this project. However, it is also important to be clear that neither McGilchrist nor Kripal refer to the heart as the organ through which one would perform this move (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 199; Kripal,

2019, p. 134). Considering this further, I would argue that this is to be expected given the dominance of the brain as an organ of knowing in modern society as already discussed. Certainly, the purpose of this project has been to uncover the heart in its exile, and to date, little work has been done to bring the heart forward as a legitimate organ of knowing through which one might engage with issues within contemporary academic discourse, or within the political arena in general.

Looking at McGilchrist's work, the metaphor he uses suggests that when the right and left hemisphere are given the opportunity to work in harmony they "create an understanding of the wholeness of human lived experience in a dynamic, unfolding process of *forever becoming*; where rigid boundaries between whole and parts melt into each other, yet at the same time delicately remain" (Livingstone, 2017, p. 7, italics in original). According to McGilchrist, our experience of the world originates in the right hemisphere, which hands the process of being over to the left hemisphere where the parts can be known intellectually (through categorisation; words, numbers, symbols and metaphors). However, if the process stopped here, reality itself would remain decontextualised. The circle, or spiral, is only completed when the process continues, and what has been deconstructed is made whole again by being returned to the "world grounded by the right hemisphere", where the whole process is able to 'live' again (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 195):

There needs to be a process of reintegration, whereby we return to the experiential world again. The parts, once seen, are subsumed again in the whole....So what begins in the right hemisphere's world is 'sent' to the left hemisphere's world for processing, but must be 'returned' to the world of the right hemisphere where a new synthesis can be made (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 195)

It seems that, the work of division having been done by the left hemisphere, a new union must be sought, and for this to happen the process needs to be returned to the right hemisphere, so that it can live (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 199)

Furthering this reflexive, spiralling movement of generating knowledge, McGilchrist stresses the importance of the imagination in facilitating a move to a different, or third space:

It is the faculty of imagination...which enables us to take things back from the world of the left hemisphere and make them live again in the right. It is in this way...that things are made truly new once again (2012, p. 199)

Reflecting on the nature of the spiral, it is interesting to consider McGilchrist's metaphor alongside Kripal's metaphor of the "human as two" (2010, pp. 59–66). Through this idea, Kripal distinguishes between normal reality and other realms beyond everyday appearances that often break through into our awareness. Voss suggests that this idea is "both physiologically demonstrable in neuroscience, *and* symbolically demonstrable in the history of Western thought and culture" (Voss, 2017, p. 315, italics in original). In this sense, Kripal suggests that we do not need to frame "'the human as two' in religious, or even in philosophical terms. We can say the same in modern neuroscience" (2014, p. 275). Certainly in Kripal's view the human as two is a deeply "paradoxical" and "loopy" notion, that spins the human experience into a myriad of complementary pairs (2011, p. 333). As I write these words I am drawn back immediately to the spiralling, looping, paradoxical nature of my dream, and the advice that the woman gave me, "Is this one dance?...or many dances merging into each other?...you have never stopped dancing, therefore you can never forget. All you ever are is between dances, and yet you are also the dance itself, and the dance is you!"

Kripal's reflexive approach arises out of his acknowledgement of the quality of two-ness of the human condition. Defining this method as a "capacity to think about thinking, become aware of awareness, and...free consciousness temporarily from the parameters of society and ego" (Kripal, 2014, p. 409), this way of approaching the world ensures that one continues to ask questions and does not settle in one camp too long, continually moving to a new position. I suggest that this is a clear embodiment of the spiral, continually moving with the dance of life onwards to another loop on the spiral. Indeed, Kripal suggests that the person who re-reads reflexively "'wants it both ways' not because he or she is confused or is trying to be diplomatic, *but because the human being really is both ways*" (2014, p. 392). As Voss acknowledges, the metaphor of the "human as two" can thus be re-stated in Kripal's terminology as the human as "Two *and* One"

(Kripal, 2010, p. 270; Voss, 2017, p. 315, italics in originals). This notion acknowledges a third position capable of intuiting a fuller picture created by a leap of the imagination (McGilchrist, 2012, pp. 229–230; Voss, 2017, p. 315) involving a “reflexive ‘loop’ back to one’s own responsibility in meaning-making” (Voss, 2017, p. 315). In this way, we realise that we are part something larger, “projecting endless images onto the screen of life” (Voss, 2017, p. 315) – driven onwards by a primordial pattern that moves the world.

Relating this idea to the dance in my dream, I found myself in one dance, and then between dances, while at the same time realising that I was part of a wider, expansive, dance of life. In this research project, one might interpret this sentiment as a kind of expanded awareness. As Kripal puts it:

[W]e might imagine ‘turning around’ from all those entrancing movies on the screen to the projector behind us doing all that projecting. We might gaze at the light coming through the hole in the wall and look at the looker looking back at us (Kripal, 2014, p. 392).

Considering this research project, one could make a simplistic observation and say that I have moved from a fixed way of seeing the heart as a literal pump, to a cultural, subjective, experiencing heart, and onwards to another kind of heart – a holistic heart, the heart of this chapter, the heart of this thesis. Rather than becoming stuck in one interpretation, through a process of reflexivity, I am learning to continue to dance; moving constantly between interpretations in a process of ever-becoming new once more – learning to see differently and waiting to see what might wish to reveal itself through the spiralling nature of life itself. Most importantly, this is a movement that the heart embodies in its form and function, and therefore by taking up a symbolic reading of this process of continuous, spiralling movement, accompanied by the benevolent qualities of the heart, it has been possible for me to learn to engage with the phenomena of conflict differently.

## Holistic science

Holistic science aims to enhance reductionist science, and takes a number of approaches (Harrington, 1996, p. xvii). Some theories aim to find alternatives to the view of an organism as a mere sum of its elementary parts and processes, while others seek to unite mind and body (Harrington, 1996, p. xvii). Other approaches emphasise the inadequacy of thinking that the whole can be considered merely at the level of the individual organism; considering the larger system to which the organism belongs (Harrington, 1996, p. xvii). All of these approaches have led to a joining of voices across many disciplines to highlight how machine-thinking has created problems within politics and society (Harrington, 1996, pp. xvii–xviii). Holistic science, therefore, covers a wide area, including quantum theory, deep ecology, eco-philosophy, eco-psychology and holistic health. I am basing my understanding of, and my engagement with, holistic science on my experience of the MSc Holistic Science that runs at the Schumacher College, Devon, UK. At the heart of this programme lies Goethe’s imaginal approach to engaging in scientific enquiry that aims to see more deeply into the world than current reductionist approaches make possible.

Proceeding with this discussion on the understanding that as human beings we are subject to an underlying spiralling pattern that moves life, the approaches used within the holistic science programme appear to be responding to this model. The emphasis on the course is on wholeness and relationship – understanding that the unity of the whole and part lies not in their abstraction, but in their spiralling, dynamic association. In this context, many of the barriers and boundaries we create in ordinary life are, in a fundamental way, false divisions in a universe that is unified. It is interesting to note that practitioners of such ways of seeing (that is, holistic scientists) are often moved to explore spirituality, religious practices or depth psychology. In particular Sheldrake is a practising Christian (2017), and Franses writes about his lifelong drive to understand why the split between science and spirituality occurred (2015b, p. 15). Inspired by his work at the quantum realm, physicist David Bohm (1917-1992) developed connections with the late spiritual teacher Krishnamurti (1999), and ecologist Stephan Harding is a strong

advocate of Jung's ideas (2009, pp. 36 & 230). However, according to Fideler, few people applying this way of seeing to their work in science have realised that this "philosophy of holism," or the growing notion of "whole systems" has its roots in Pythagorean thought (1988, p. 45).

## Goethe and Bortoft

There is evidence to suggest that Goethe was guided by neo-Platonic doctrines, and elements of alchemy and cabbala (Gray, 2010, pp. 49–50). Goethe perceived that human beings were representative of the macrocosm, and as such were subject to opposed tendencies (Gray, 2010, pp. 51–52). In his scientific work, Goethe appeared to carry forward Pythagoras' principle stating:

Whatever appears in the world must divide if it is to appear at all. What has divided seeks itself again, can return to itself and reunite...in the reunion of the intensified halves it will produce a third thing, something new, higher, unexpected (quoted in Buhner, 2004, p. 37)

In his research, Goethe sought an encounter with the phenomenon under observation – that is, as it presented itself in its living wholeness in relationship with him. For Goethe, the whole is present in each part, emerging simultaneously with the accumulation of the parts; immanent within them. With each part a place for the "presencing" of the whole (Bortoft, 2010, p. 12), the part shows the way to the whole – *through the part itself*.

Redirecting his attention from the intellectual mind, Goethe was able to take part in the actual "presencing" of the phenomenon he was engaged with (Bortoft, 2012, p.15).

Placing the phenomenon at the centre of his attention, Goethe attended to the "phenomenality of the phenomenon" (Bortoft, 2012, p. 54). In this case, he created a direct, sensorial, living experience in relationship with the actual phenomenon of his study. Subtly different from approaching the subject of his study through the parts, for Goethe "authentic wholeness" manifests itself as dynamic, nested and relational, whereas "counterfeit wholeness" is abstract, linear and summative - arrived at through



the intellectual mind imposing an external system of classification (Bortoft, 2010, pp. 3–26, 2012, p. 21). Authentic wholeness, therefore, is characterised by a living, spiralling movement into the whole through the parts and back again; an encounter made possible by passing through the parts.

Sharing clear parallels in quality of approach with Kripal's idea of reflexivity, and McGilchrist's theory of the movement of thought between left and right hemispheres, Bortoft gives several examples of this particular movement. Firstly in an observation of the plant:

Goethe's way proceeds by active looking and exact sensorial imagination. We can see this...by considering the leaves up the stem of the flowering plant. We begin by focusing attention closely on the unique particularity of each leaf, looking carefully at its form and structure, and then trying to visualise it as well as we can. When we look at it again we will find that our perception is enlivened. Now when we follow the same procedure with the next leaf, we will notice differences, and yet at the same time there is a sense of similarity to the first leaf. After repeating this process with several leaves as we move up the stem, we can go on to practise the exact sensorial imagination of the sequence. We visualise the first leaf, and then move in imagination to the next leaf, and so on. We will soon begin to have an intuition of the sequence as a movement that is a dynamic whole...instead of just a series of steps (Bortoft, 2012, pp. 56–57)

Secondly, Bortoft demonstrates this movement through the act of reading and writing:

We can see that in each case there is a dual movement: we move through the parts to enter into the whole which becomes present within the parts. When we understand, both movements come together. When we do not understand, we merely pass along the parts (2010, p. 12).

Goethe's "delicate empiricism" was a conversation - a mutual interaction between himself and the subject of his study (Holdrege, 2005, pp. 29–30), using his imaginal capabilities and his rational intellect. Such conversation was limitless and offered "a potential for infinite growth through constant adaptation of...sensibilities and judgment to new ways of acquiring knowledge and responding with action" (Goethe quoted in Holdrege, 2005, p. 30). Certainly Goethe's sentiment reminds me of Kripal's and McGilchrist's theories, and my dream of the spiralling dance wherein both myself and the

dance were in mutual interaction, moving step by step into new states of being and awareness.

### **A cautionary note: how to keep moving?**

It is crucial to point out the “slipperiness” of this kind of work; for once one takes this up as a way of being in the world, there is little choice but to continue to move. Looking at this in terms of Kripal’s notion of reflexivity in a religious context, an individual is continually asked to move between deeply conflicting ideas. In this sense, Kripal identifies what he calls the classroom of sympathy (faith/belief) and the classroom of doubt (scepticism). The ideas generated from both of these classrooms can potentially harden into dogmas, and Kripal suggests the creation of a third, “gnostic classroom” within which one can safely expose ideas from both classrooms to sincere scrutiny and questioning (2007, pp. 23–24). However, one also has to be careful that the ideas generated in this new classroom do not harden into dogmas (Kripal, 2007, p. 23), and conflict. Therefore, we have a responsibility to keep moving and spiralling, to maintain our awareness, and to keep testing our ideas – expanding our experience of life as we do this.

Additionally, from McGilchrist’s point of view, the right and left hemisphere need to continue to work together, constantly moving between each other, spiralling into new dimensions of creativity. In a similar fashion, Franses talks about the elusive quality of wholeness which one meets “on a path that leads through that moment to other moments” (2015a). When considering any phenomenon through an imaginal lens that honours the dynamic, spiralling nature of life itself, it is helpful to hold in one’s awareness the idea that wholeness is never finished. It can only attempt to appear in a particular moment, yet it always suggests that there is something beyond - a continually unfolding process of becoming something new. As Franses continues, “The implication of this understanding is that wholeness is always something we are meeting newly”(2015a), leading us beyond where we are, taking us further, asking for our participation, never reaching the end. Essentially, in this mode of seeing, life becomes a dynamic process of

spiralling and unfolding – never fixed, never finished. In this way, we find ourselves embedded in a living enquiry with life itself within which we are asked to continually think about thinking, reflecting constantly on what we know, reaching into new realms of novelty.

## David Bohm

Inspired by his understanding of physics (Peat, 2007, p. 113), Bohm was critical of modern approaches to conflict resolution and suggested that in a conflict situation one must look at the “*order between and beyond*” (Peat, 2007, p. 114, italics in original).<sup>123</sup> In other words, rather than looking for a position of compromise “where each party makes a series of small concessions in order to reach agreement” (Peat, 2007, p. 114), or where one party dominates the other into submission, one looks instead to the “highly creative movement which occurs when one first finds oneself moving between two oppositions – opposing ideas, binary oppositions” (Peat, 2007, p. 114). Struck by the similarity of quantum ideas and the processes of human consciousness, Bohm in particular seemed to suggest that conflict was a process that has the potential to arise where the space between phenomena in relationship had not been given the opportunity to manifest some kind of creative coherence and order (2014). In other words, conflict arises in the space where the spiralling, dance of life is repressed or blocked in some way.

## Other views

Sheldrake states that archetypal patterns of form and movement govern life’s unfolding (1998, p. 214). In striking similarity to Jung, Sheldrake suggests that the scientific theory of morphic resonance brings “the past into the present” (1998, p. 209).<sup>124</sup> In this way, all

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<sup>123</sup> Bohm was closely associated with holistic physicist David Peat (1938-2017) for many years. The two collaborated on a number of books and Peat wrote Bohm’s biography – *Infinite Potential: The Life and Times of David Bohm* (1997).

<sup>124</sup> Sheldrake’s theory of morphic resonance was highlighted in chapter four

self-organising systems (atoms, molecules, crystals, cells, plants, animals and animal societies), draw upon a collective memory and form habits of activity that resonate across time and space in recognisable patterns (2013, pp. 99–101).<sup>125</sup> Considering the primordial spiral pattern of life, I suggest that this can be seen in Nicolescu’s theory of the “Hidden Third” that makes room for subject and object to be interpreted together, achieved through what he terms a “cosmodern consciousness” (2014, p. 215). In this sense, a heightened mode of awareness is required to cycle between phenomena that were once separated. In relation to this point, Buhner sees the human heart as the organ through which we can directly perceive the animate presence of the world – acting as the organ that spirals and mediates between the physical and formless realms and which helps to imbue the world with meaning (2004, pp. 69–129 & 267).

Wherever I now look in this chapter, I see scholars across many disciplines expressing my dream of the spiralling dance of life *in their own particular language*. Taking all of these different languages as metaphors, at the heart of each seems to lie the qualities of spiralling movement, reflexivity, reciprocity, openness, mystery, paradox, space; pointing towards notions of interconnection and wholeness. As I contemplate this, I am struck by how close these qualities are to the characteristics that I have previously identified as being attributed to the benevolent heart.

## **Concluding thoughts**

Through the dream of the dance, another heart has revealed itself to me – a living, third thing, which is a combination of the biological heart of science and the heart of culture, and yet through this exploration, has become so much more. The holistic heart has revealed itself as embodying the primordial, spiralling dance of life and has enabled me to bring disparate ideas together to create something new – to see, and engage with, the world differently. Certainly the holistic heart has shown itself to be deeply connected to life through its spiralling dance – a dance which is open, expansive and reflexive. In

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<sup>125</sup> Also see *A New Science of Life* (Sheldrake, 2009)

relation to this, Fideler states that the spiral, circular pattern as discussed in this chapter is deeply ingrained in our lives from birth:

At our birth we emerge from the root mystery of the cosmos, a deep and silent mystery into which we will one day be reabsorbed. Our own lives are a spiral pattern of creative unfolding, death, and regeneration. Fashioned out of the creative power of starlight and the fecund body of the Earth, we are the children of Earth and starry heavens caught up in the timeless rhythms of the celestial dance (2014, p. 29)

Reaching out over thousands of years of history (Purce, 1974; Nozedar, 2013, pp. 184–186; Fideler, 2014, pp. 26–30), the expanding, contracting, twisting and looping symbol of the primordial spiral can be seen represented in the heart’s rhythmic movement.

Understood over millennia as the symbol of life, love, emotions and the seat of the imagination, perhaps today the heart is the best metaphor and symbol we have to help us remember an ancient truth lying at the heart of life,<sup>126</sup> generally unchanged in quality over time. Perhaps the heart as a carrier of the qualities demonstrated in this chapter is our best hope of reconnecting to a more harmonious relationship with ourselves, nature, and to life itself? As Holdrege says about a qualitative vision of the heart and circulatory system:

Very different is the view of the living, dynamic heart and circulation. Here we see give and take, and continual change and adaptation through interactions. We see a dynamic, perceptive centre that maintains coherence and integrity. This image is not only truer than the mechanical one. It also imbues us with a sense of connectedness to our image of what it means to be human. From birth till death, the living heart shares in our life as ensouled beings (2002, p. 20)

The spiralling dance of life revealed through the union of the heart of science and the heart of culture shows itself in a myriad of differing images, symbols and subsequent metaphors as discussed in this chapter. By committing to keep the primordially ancient alive in our hearts we can learn to find ways to continually move between different positions into new and creative spaces, without needing to argue which way is best – dancing with the potential for conflict more wisely by continually opening ourselves up

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<sup>126</sup> I am not using the term *truth* in the sense of scientific certainty, but more in the sense of an age-old, unchanging, undefinable quality embedded in the unfolding process of whatever life itself may actually be

towards 'something more.' In this approach, the difficulty of writing at the meeting place of different discourses/ideas that are different, yet not different at the same time, becomes easier to express. The two/many do not now need to be in conflict, *they are simply different ways of expressing the complex dance of life within which humanity is embedded.* By committing to yield to the dance, through the symbol of the holistic heart which carries the primal relationship of part and whole, beyond our contemporary understanding of it, and beyond the imposition of labels, thoughts and judgments, perhaps we may well discover the gateway to new levels of understanding and knowing the world; realising new and creative ways of engaging with conflict situations and other life challenges.

## Chapter six: The *thought of the holistic heart* and practical applications

### *Reverie - Thirteen Ways to Know Me*

*Inspired by Romanyshyn's 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird' (2013, pp. 337–338).*

*(Also see appendix one)*

#### **I**

*I am the Sun*

*God's representative on Earth*

*As the Sun lies between the Earth and Heaven, Matter and Spirit*

*So I mediate between the sensible and intellectual worlds*

#### **II**

*Warm, round, full and whole, responding to the world*

*I am animal*

*Hear me roar!*

#### **III**

*Enclosed, divided*

*Blood pumping*

*Rhythmic pulsing*

*Contracting, expanding*

*Hold me in your hands.*

*Who am I?*

#### **IV**

*Oh! Love, joy, pain, suffering,*

*How you make me swell and move with your whims*

*No respite, always connected*

*To the world that moves you through my open embrace*

**V**

*I am an-other, in relationship with the head*

**VI**

*I am a feather – floating, looping, twirling ever skyward*

*I am a scarab beetle, rolling my treasure towards the sun*

**VII**

*Passion red, a motif on a card*

**VIII**

*A labyrinth*

**IX**

*A circle*

**X**

*Spiralling, looping – expanding and contracting*

**XI**

*No beginning*

*No end*

**XII**

*The first to form*

*The first to die*

**XIII**

*Connected with life*

*Open to the world*

*Moved by love*

*At one with All*



## Reflections

As I review the terrain through which I have travelled, I feel different – as though I have undergone some form of profound, inner transformation. I have a strong sense of awareness that the way that I look at life will never be the same again – specifically in relation to the phenomenon of conflict, which I now understand to be a manifestation of a blockage in the archetypal flow of life within which each human being is embedded. Indeed, the teachings of the holistic heart have led me to this different view. Within the context of this project, this heart has demonstrated to me that the heart of science and the heart of culture are both independently true, and yet at the same time, the holistic heart knows that this is not the full story and that from an expanded perspective, the heart of science and the heart of culture can come together to create something greater than the individual parts.

Based on this last statement, one might suggest that this kind of expanded approach towards seeing and consequently engaging with the world could be linked to an emerging phenomenon that has been observed in human beings, particularly across Europe and the USA over recent decades (de Witt, 2016, p. 208; van Egmond & de Vries, 2011; Wilber, 2000). Specifically, scholar and writer Annick de Witt states that a new worldview is appearing, often referred to as “integral or integrative”, because its main characteristic is to synthesise aspects of the world that were once thought to be mutually exclusive – such as science and spirituality (2016, p. 209).<sup>127</sup> In this sense, there appears to be a growing movement of integration of the ideas upon which most of our modern world is built - notably science and capitalism - with a kind of spiritual sensibility that points towards a deeper meaning or purpose in life (de Witt, 2016, p. 209). According to de Witt, this worldview has the capacity to see “a larger, deeper, or higher-level unity in our world of duality and opposition....capturing the potential unity through the full recognition of its differences...and paradoxes” (de witt, 2016, p.209).

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<sup>127</sup> Also see Gebser’s theory of integral consciousness as discussed in chapter three. See also Purdy (1988) and Gebser (1986)

Like numerous scholars before her, de Witt suggests that this capacity rests firmly upon scientific foundations (2016, p. 209). Indeed, I have highlighted a number of holistic scientists and their ideas in the previous chapter which are changing the way that we think about, and engage with, the world – bringing back notions of wholeness, interconnection, meaning, purpose, and even raising questions of spirituality. In this sense, and because our modern way of comprehending the world is generally founded upon the scientific method, it stands to reason that this is the mode of thinking from which the integral worldview is making its appearance. As already discussed in this project, as we are embodied beings making sense of the world through body-based metaphors, the head, mind or brain is generally accepted as the way through which valid knowledge about the world is generated. If this is the case, does this emerging worldview still arise from some kind of head-based rationalism (no matter how well-intentioned this different way of thinking may be)? Is there a danger of becoming caught up in another hall of mirrors, to use McGilchrist’s terminology (2012, p. 6)?

This is an important consideration for reasons I will now make clear. As McGilchrist states, “There is always an escape route from the hall of mirrors, if one looks hard enough” (2012, p. 140). In this statement, I am reminded once more of Kripal’s methodology that advises us to keep moving, to continue to question, and to look continually from different perspectives. Certainly this would appear to be the hallmark of an integral approach. *However, if an approach towards the world is to be truly integral or holistic, then it must open up as much of reality as is possible to us.* This means using all the skills at our disposal – that is, the rational intellect that allows us to narrow down, abstract, and analyse, *plus* our intuitions and imaginations that help us to open ourselves up to the expansive, subtle realms that lie beyond rational investigation. This is, by nature, a spiralling, double-movement that involves the whole self, taking an individual towards greater realms of complexity and into other ways of being, knowing and relating.

It is for this reason that I part company with McGilchrist at this point. Certainly his metaphor of left, right-brain hemisphere lateralisation has been extremely helpful for me to expose the differences in approaches to knowledge and his identification of our “impoverished intuitions” (Rowson & McGilchrist, 2013, p. 46). However, if our

imaginings are still understood in modern terms as a “function of the mind” (Rozuel, 2012, p. 489), I suggest that linking theories of the imagination to mind, could actually serve to maintain the hall of mirrors referred to in this thesis (McGilchrist, 2012, p. 6). Particularly as by doing this, we are still metaphorically divided between knowledge as generated through the head and knowledge arising through the body/heart. In this sense, my own project concentrates specifically on knowledge arising through the heart, and links this knowing with head-based, rational critique. It is in this sense that I am engaging with the ideas in this chapter. Not as part of a new, emerging worldview (which risks becoming fixed as a definitive approach, originating in the head), *but as a way of approaching the world through the whole self*; combining heart-based (and body-based) knowing with head-based rationality.

### ***The thought of the holistic heart***

In the context of this project, both the heart of science and the heart of culture need each other to know each other, and in that relationship, something totally different has the *potential to be created*. In a reciprocal, moving, spiralling relationship, it is possible to perceive how the holistic heart is just as dependent on the heart of science and the heart of culture, as the heart of science and the heart of culture are on the holistic heart. Instead of these different hearts being pitted against the other, where only one heart can be truer than the other, in a space of open tension, the holistic heart becomes the newly created, third thing through which these previously other, separated hearts, can speak and be heard. *In this case, the potential for conflict can be transformed into something different*. However, this is not the end of the story, as the newly created phenomenon carries the potential within itself to become another ‘other’, as it enters into relationship with another ‘other’. And so goes the spiralling, flow of life. Putting this into practical terms, the action that brought these hearts together to create something new was my willingness to engage with the world differently, to expand my vision wider and open to different perspectives. This enabled me to grasp the potential of conflict and channel it differently, facilitating something wholly ‘other’ to emerge. *In this way, the open,*

*expansive holistic heart stands as a living symbol for the transcendence of conflict into something different.*

## **Thirteen hearts and conflict**

Considering what the symbol of the holistic heart stands for, I would now like to apply this understanding to the poem at the beginning of this chapter. I received the verses in a deep state of reverie as I connected with the spiralling heart that I met in the previous chapter. I was inspired by Romanyshyn's poem about thirteen blackbirds that I have already discussed at length earlier in this work (2013, pp. 337–339).<sup>128</sup> It is interesting to consider this poem in relation to the different hearts that I have explored in this project. For example, if I had focussed on the heart of science as the only truth, the different hearts living in chapter two would never have had the opportunity to come alive in this project. Additionally, the heart of culture could never have spoken or revealed itself, and therefore the potential for the holistic heart to manifest would never have been realised.

*Specifically, the holistic heart has shown me that the phenomenon through which conflict appears is not the main issue.* What I mean here is that conflict lies as latent potential in all things, arising when the primordial flow of life becomes stuck. Taking seriously Hillman's idea that the world communicates to us in the language of images (2007), we therefore have responsibility for how we respond to them when we receive them. This also reminds me of McGilchrist's suggestion that we have a responsibility to choose the best model available to us in order to understand (2012, p. 97). As beings embedded in the ever-flowing, cycling, spiralling dance of life, we are continually asked by life to respond to the images the world presents to us. Therefore, it does not matter what phenomenon we are talking about in relation to conflict (for example, blackbirds, hearts, or silver spoons), as we are each given different images from life to dance with, and subsequently communicate in different ways and through different languages. When we choose to dance and open up to the myriad of images offered to us from the world, life

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<sup>128</sup> Please see the introduction to this thesis and chapter two for further information about Romanyshyn's poem

has the possibility to move, grow and change. When we choose to close down to one particular image that we believe to be truest, life cannot move and the potential for conflict can be realised. It is here that the holistic heart offers guidance to help us engage differently with conflict, as it actually embodies the qualities and benevolent characteristics that enable the flow of life to continue. As a symbol to refer to, to remind us of the nature of life, I suggest that the heart is unparalleled.

### **The importance of the holistic heart for modern times**

Thanks to Corbin and Hillman, it has already been established that the heart is the direct respondent to the living world that communicates through images. As the heart is the organ of the imagination, and therefore the organ through which we first apprehend the world, the heart is the organ through which we respond, think, act and engage with life. Inspired by Hillman's plea to bring the *thought of the heart* back into our contemporary conversations, my own work has been to retrieve the thinking heart for modern times. This research has discovered what I have termed a holistic heart standing as a dynamic symbol of reconnection on different levels of being – physically and psychically. At the physical level, the holistic heart embodies the primordial flow of life within its spiralling muscular arrangement, and in the spiralling nature of blood flowing through its interior space. With every heartbeat, the holistic heart reminds us how we are each subject to this primordial flow. It also reminds us how we need to continue to move between 'others' and difference, just as the holistic heart moves between different physical states. Psychically, the holistic heart carries the potential to recognise all 'others' through its inherent qualities of openness, love, kindness and compassion. As the organ of the imagination that responds directly to the calls of the world, these 'others' are presented to us as many different phenomena based on our own unique experience of life. However, by engaging the holistic heart and having an understanding of the philosophy of this heart, it is possible to move with the flow of life and subsequently respond meaningfully to the world itself.

I suggest that there has never been a more opportune time to reimagine the heart and engage seriously with the thought that the holistic heart makes possible, given the multiple challenges that we face as a global community. Indeed, in relation to the conflicts that continue to rage around the world, I am reminded once more of one of Jung's famous statements – a quote which has been at the forefront of my own mind since beginning this research journey almost three years ago:

The present day shows with appalling clarity how little able people are to let the other man's argument count, although this capacity is a fundamental and indispensable condition for any human community. Everyone who proposes to come to terms with himself must reckon with this basic problem. For, to the degree that he does not admit the validity of the other person, he denies the 'other' within himself the right to exist – and vice versa. The capacity for inner dialogue is a touchstone for outer objectivity (2014, p. 3045).<sup>129</sup>

While in this quote Jung is talking about human to human relationships, in psychological terms the process of individuation creates a balanced individual who, having undergone the internal work, can extend the same approach to others at the external level. By learning how to hold difference and the potential for conflict within oneself, an individual can consequently learn to hold difference and the potential for conflict at the external level. In other words, the 'other' within, and the external 'other' are both inextricably linked. In a similar observation, Taylor talks about the idea that inner harmony creates outer harmony (BuddhaAtTheGasPump, 2013, 85:00).

Returning to the poem that I received from my heart at the beginning of this chapter, we can apply this idea of the validity of 'others' to demonstrate the many different ways that the heart has been perceived over history and also throughout the course of this project. Certainly one could imagine that all these hearts are 'others', each with their own voices, and all carrying their own truths:

The other...reflects back to oneself that one is a perspective, a point of view. The other sees things differently, from another perspective, and with this recognition the other

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<sup>129</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 187 & Romanyshyn, 2013, p.339

challenges who one is and how one imagines the world. With this challenge...one might become curious, and, becoming curious, might consider that dialogue with the other is necessary if one is to broaden one's consciousness....They may begin to talk, but if the conversation is to be truly transformative for each, if each is to see his or her view as a perspective among others, then each has to be able to listen.....This capacity to listen is a disposition in which the words that the other speaks enter the ear and sink down to the heart before they rise to the brain.....the capacity to listen is hard work because it is heart work. The capacity to listen requires a change of heart, and this change of heart involves an emotional aspect in one's confrontation with the other (Romanyshyn, 2013, p. 340)

I strongly concur with Romanyshyn's observation above, as this project has enabled me to listen intently to numerous different hearts, and in the process, I have had a change of heart. Certainly, I have come to reside in an altogether different heart that has shown me the reality, and importance, of understanding the world through an underlying pattern that moves life - expressed through the phenomena of parts, difference or 'others'. By seeing symbolically and metaphorically, it could be said that whenever I am in relation with life I am automatically in the role of a part or an-'other'. For example, I am a part or an-'other' in relation with my research project, in this relationship with you the reader, in the university with other students, in the society in which I live, and in life itself. In the same way, my heart is a part (or an-'other') of my life, but not just in one way. As I have shown, my heart lives in me and through me in a myriad of other ways that have been made possible by following an imaginal approach arising through the heart itself. Indeed, myself and 'others', are continually cycling between and spiralling around each other, and subsequently we are expressing ourselves in the world in a myriad of different ways both individually and collectively – all in different languages and voices.

As I have opened up imaginatively to the world, I have consequently been greeted by a living, breathing, animate world. My own heart has been the key to this opening, guiding me onward through its benevolent qualities to incorporate more of the world within myself, helping me to flow more readily between others and differences. As I consider this idea, it is interesting that this movement, or flow, seems to be captured in other approaches in modern discourses that are facilitating the development of an expanded sense of reality. Specifically, as I have already mentioned, in Jung's theory of individuation, Kripal's method of reflexivity, and McGilchrist's left-right brain hemisphere

movement. In a primordial sense, this dynamic ebb and flow of life can be seen in the Pythagorean philosophy of the quality of number (Fideler, 1988, pp. 20–23), and the Platonic understanding of our place in the universe (Fideler, 2014, p. 10). However, while these approaches do not mention the heart, as the seat of the imagination and the organ that embodies the natural flow of life in its living movement, I hope that this project has uncovered an-‘other’ heart that is just as valid as the pumping heart. This is a heart that has much to teach, and which carries the potential to open our vision to the deeper mysteries of life. Indeed, the heart that I have uncovered on my journey seems to capture much of the qualities of the religious/spiritual heart of Sufism, Buddhism and the Christian East as mentioned earlier in this project. <sup>130</sup>

### ***The thought of the holistic heart acting in my life***

The consequences of my research have already reached out into my life in a myriad of ways. Particularly as I contemplate the poem, I have come to realise that the lines of the final verse capture the nature of the process that my heart has guided me to practice in my own life since beginning this journey, making a real difference in terms of how I create knowledge about, and engage with, others:

*Connected with life*

*Open to the world*

*Moved by love*

*At one with all*

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<sup>130</sup> I will be exploring the similarities of the holistic heart in relation to the hearts of other religions a little later in this chapter



Specifically, I have found that by holding on to the heart as a dynamic symbol of reconnection, I have been guided by my heart to experience the world more fully than I had previous to beginning this project (*Connected with life*). In widening my stance towards the world, I have been able to open my awareness to embrace an understanding of a primordial pattern that underlies and animates life (*Open to the world*). As a consequence, the world has begun to speak to me once more and I have become enchanted with the many voices through which life expresses itself (*Moved by love*). As I become more enchanted with life, I understand that every manifestation of life itself is subject to these primordial, archetypal forces. As a consequence of seeing the world in this interconnected way, I have felt more compassion to others (*Moved by love*), understanding that they are just like me, an expression of life, moving, flowing and spiralling with the ongoing dance of life as best they are able (*Moved by love*). Through this realisation, I know that I am one with the world (*At one with all*). In this state of loving flow, I have discovered that conflict has the potential to become something else - to be transcended and ultimately, to dissolve, as long as I remain aware and keep moving. However, the potential for conflict is always present, as is its transformation. This is what I understand to be *the spiralling, reflexive nature of the thought of the holistic heart* in action. Experiencing the heart in this way has transformed my thinking, and helped me to develop knowledge about the world in different ways.

## **Reflections on the holistic heart as Jung's transcendent function**

As I write these words of reflection I am reminded once again of Jung's theory of the transcendent function. Readers will recall that I discussed the transcendent function in chapters one and four, specifically in relation to Jung's idea that the transcendent function has the potential to go beyond conflict through unifying opposites. While in chapter one I carried out a theoretical exploration of a depth psychological understanding of conflict, in chapter four I was able to physically experience the living expression of the transcendent function in the form of the holistic heart as it burst through into my

awareness (created out of the living conflict experienced between the heart of science and the heart of culture). Interestingly, Samuels et al state that what is capable of uniting the two is the symbol (the transcendent function), which itself transcends “time and conflict, neither adhering to nor partaking of one side or the other” (1986, p. 150).

Reflecting on Miller’s observation that images in the conscious and unconscious struggle with each other in some form of “polarized dance” (Miller, 2004, p. xi), I was reminded of my dream of the dance at the beginning of chapter five which enabled me to engage directly with, and learn from, the holistic heart. This was made possible through my commitment to hold numerous different hearts in this project in creative tension. Interestingly, Jung suggests that whatever form the opposites appear in the individual, at the foundation it “is always a matter of a consciousness lost and obstinately stuck in one-sidedness” (Jung, 2014, p. 3046).<sup>131</sup> As I look back to “that Night”, I can see that I was stuck in a one-sided view of reality that only allowed me to consciously perceive the heart as a biological, scientific pump. Approaching the world through such a narrow frame of reference, other hearts were left unacknowledged, destined to reside somewhere in my unconscious until I decided to uncover them. As Jung understood that one cannot fully become the person he or she is truly meant to be without coming to terms with the unconscious (Miller, 2004, p. 3), I suggest that when my heart spoke to me on “that Night”, it was coming from my unconscious and trying to capture my attention. At that time in my life, conflict was raging both within myself and in the relationships in my external world, and as I desperately wanted to understand what was happening to me and to engage more wisely with conflict, this created a space for an-‘other’ heart to burst through into my conscious awareness.

In Jungian terms, it could be suggested that this desire was born from an inner drive towards wholeness, which Miller states could be seen as an “expression of a larger human urge to reconcile ontological quandaries such as spirit and matter, subject and object, inner and outer, idea and thing, form and substance, thought and feeling” (Miller, 2004,

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<sup>131</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 190

p. 5). In this sense, my inner drive towards wholeness manifested itself in my personal experience through the different hearts living in my conscious and unconscious reality, necessitating the creation of a dialogue, or a spiralling, shuttling to and fro of ideas. I am struck once more by how McGilchrist's theory of left-right brain hemisphere lateralisation and his plea to unite both hemispheres in modern times, and Kripal's methodology of reflexivity, could themselves be interpreted as different expressions of the human urge towards wholeness. In their own language, these scholars are attempting to reconcile the opposites to make meaning in their own lives. Mindful of a dance or interplay that moves between 'others', it is interesting to consider Jung's observation of this playing out in psychological terms:

It is exactly as if a dialogue were taking place between two human beings with equal rights, each of whom gives the other credit for a valid argument and considers it worth while to modify the conflicting standpoints (2014, p. 3045) <sup>132</sup>

The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites. The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing – not a logical stillbirth...but a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation (2014, p. 3046) <sup>133</sup>

Applying this philosophy to my own experience, one could say that as I learnt to hold different hearts in an open and receptive space, I could perceive once conflicting opposites differently. Once hidden 'others' could be given a voice, and through this spiralling, reciprocal action something qualitatively different had the opportunity to manifest. Through the emergence of the holistic heart, my awareness expanded and I was able to bring a new perspective to other areas of my life. I consequently felt more at peace in myself and was able to create more harmonious relationships with the people in my life.<sup>134</sup> As Miller states, viewed in this way, the transcendent function can be seen as an "archetypal process", foundational to the human experience that implicates other archetypal processes (2004, p. 5). While Miller is talking about processes specifically found in the writings and theories of other depth psychologists, I suggest that the

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<sup>132</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 186

<sup>133</sup> CW, Vol VIII, 2014, para. 189

<sup>134</sup> I will be sharing some case studies shortly

transcendent function is itself a representation of the archetypal, spiralling process of life that I discussed in the previous chapter.

It is this last point that I feel to be of utmost importance in relation to this project and consequently how we might begin to engage more creatively with the phenomenon of conflict. Based on my research I would like to suggest that it would be more helpful to reframe the transcendent function (in this case the holistic heart) as *an archetypal phenomenon representative of the foundational forces of nature that manifest in a myriad of different expressions*. The transcendent function is therefore produced in response to life's movement – namely, *human beings responding to life and subsequently 'linguaging' their experiences of this movement in a myriad of different ways*. It is here that the holistic heart of this research project comes in. As the expression of the relationship between, in this case, the scientific heart and the heart of culture, the holistic heart could be seen to be responding to the archetypal patterns of life itself – standing as a symbol that carries the potential to contain the manifestations of the flow of life.

## **Practical applications: case studies**

Having reached this point, I will now offer several practical examples of how the *thought of the holistic heart* has helped me to think differently and consequently engage more meaningfully with conflict situations. As my approach is auto/biographical and reflexive, I am going to focus specifically on my personal engagement with conflict as it has occurred over the course of this project. As I have already made clear conflict arises in relationship, consequently there are others directly involved in my story. However, for the purposes of discretion I have anonymised the actors involved.<sup>135</sup> My purpose here is not to concentrate on each particular individual, but to focus specifically on the action of the thought of the holistic heart in assisting me to navigate challenging conflict situations in a different manner than I had done previously.

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<sup>135</sup> See my ethics statement in the introduction to this thesis, and appendices

## Thomas

I have known Thomas since primary school. When we were children, he would tell me what I should and should not do. He controlled practically every part of my life. Being a sensitive child, I would bow to his every command - playing the games he wanted to play, eating the food he wanted to eat, making friends with the people he liked and approved of. As I grew older, I started to have a stronger sense of self and I spent less time with Thomas. Eventually we both went to university. We stayed in touch for a while, but I still felt he was trying to control me in many ways. He would make snide comments about the people I was friends with and disapprove of most of my decisions. We would argue constantly. Over time we lost touch as I wanted to remove myself from a friendship that I felt had become too one-sided. Even though I missed him, I could not stay in a relationship where I was unable to be fully myself.

Twenty years passed, and we had no contact. Then, several months ago, Thomas contacted me through Facebook. He wanted to meet and I arranged to see him in London. During our conversation Thomas began his old tactics, however, this time I acted differently. Instead of submitting to Thomas' overpowering personality and losing myself to his idea of who he thought I should be, I recalled the heart's qualities of love, openness, kindness and compassion. I also remembered my experiences in the labyrinth and the spiralling nature of the holistic heart which demonstrates the spiralling forces of life. As I did this, I found myself able to bring the heart's inherent qualities, and what I had learnt from those experiences, into our conversation – implementing this understanding into my awareness to help me engage with Thomas differently.

Specifically, I visualised Thomas and I standing together in an enormous heart. Focussing on the heart's qualities and remaining open, calm, kind and compassionate, I gently told Thomas that I had something important to talk to him about. Remembering the spiralling nature of the holistic heart, itself a manifestation of a marriage between the heart of science and the heart of culture, I saw Thomas and myself as two 'others' endeavouring

to come together in relationship to create something greater than our individual parts. At this point, I understood that I was standing on the precipice of conflict, and that its manifestation was dependent on both my, and Thomas', next moves. Reflecting on the spiral at this point, I sensed Thomas was willing and open to hear what I had to say. This meant that I could now move into the space made possible by Thomas and offer my perspective on Thomas' treatment of me, at the same time remembering to say what I needed to with love and kindness.

After I had finished speaking, I felt Thomas withdraw and close down. He folded his arms and became angry, shouting that he wished I had said something sooner. I felt that the spiralling movement of our interaction had temporarily stopped and the potential for conflict had once more arisen. Remembering that we were both in a relationship and we both had the potential to create conflict, I focussed once more on the image of Thomas and I together in relationship in the heart. Recalling the archetypal patterns that underpin life, I gently acknowledged Thomas' anger and told him that I should have said something sooner. I opened a space for Thomas to step into, hoping that we could begin to move together again. A few moments later, Thomas relaxed, smiled and moved into the space I had opened up, apologising for his behaviour and stating that until this point he had no idea how it had affected me. We spiralled back and forth, committing to stay open and hear each other's perspectives.

By opening myself to hear Thomas, I began to understand why he acted the way he did. Specifically, because I did not say anything to him about his controlling behaviour, Thomas did not know that there was anything wrong in our relationship. My non-movement/withdrawal in this relationship - namely, not acknowledging my feelings or speaking them outwardly - created conflict. In this case, the spiralling dance of life could not move as I had withdrawn from the relationship itself. As Thomas heard my experiences, he understood my reactions to his behaviour. We were both moving together, tentatively exploring new spaces by honouring each other's story with open hearts, love, compassion, non-judgement and kindness. While our new relationship is still

in the early days, I have hope for our future. I am glad that he is back in my life, and I no longer feel controlled. I feel like I have a voice, and that he respects mine. Thomas sees and hears me as an-‘other’ in a relationship with him. My relationship with Thomas has changed, and I no longer perceive myself to be in conflict with him.

## **Mark and Liz**

Several months ago I found myself in a conflict situation with a couple (Mark and Liz). None of us were able to see eye to eye and there were no opportunities to work through our difficulties in the same way as I had been able to with Thomas. With no outlet for my pain and anguish around the situation, I began to feel extremely upset and conflicted within myself as I was unable to gain any closure. Eventually I felt a strong pull towards my heart. At first I was unsure what to do, but I was certain that anything would be better than listening to my mind chattering unhelpfully about how to “get even” and “win” in the unfolding situation.

In the same way that I had imagined myself and Thomas sitting in a giant heart, I decided to imagine myself in my heart with Mark and Liz. The experience felt different from my interaction with Thomas because we were able to have a ‘live’ conversation. The difference in this scenario was that Mark and Liz did not wish to engage with me in physical life. Therefore, trying to visualise them in a relationship with me in my heart was difficult, and all I could manage in my imagination was to see them as very distant from me and almost transparent. Doing this exercise caused a lot of discomfort and I felt conflict arising in my body once more. As I felt conflict arising, it became more difficult for me to concentrate on embodying my heart’s qualities and characteristics.

Staying with the feeling, I continued to think of my heart and my heart’s qualities. After a while, I felt the conflict subside, and I began to realise that the conflict I was experiencing was caused by a lack of an opportunity to personally engage with Mark and Liz in order for them to hear my story. The issue that I had could not be expressed – specifically, my

voice was not being given the platform to be heard by them. In this case, there was no opportunity for me to enter into the spiral movement of life with Mark and Liz. With this realisation, I felt my heart encouraging me to see that just as my pain/my voice was not being acknowledged, neither was Mark or Liz's. In this sense, we were all in a stalemate position, none of us able to move together in a relationship that flowed with life's unfolding dance. This realisation reminded me particularly of my experience in the labyrinth wherein two radically different ideas of the heart were, at first, unable to come together. However, in the centre of the labyrinth these two ideas, these two 'others', were finally able to unite from a higher perspective. In this context, the holistic heart is an amalgamation of two previously conflicted 'others'.

The action of the holistic heart as the transcendent function was to bring these two 'others' together – to hear their voices and to move into an-'other', different place, honouring both and creating something new. This newly created other (the holistic heart) carried within itself the qualities of openness, love, compassion, non-judgement, that was able to hold difference in a new way. Sitting in the holistic heart, I continued to look for connections with Mark and Liz and I began to ask different questions, and think differently. Specifically, I began to wonder about their experience of me in relation to this conflict situation, and whether they were feeling just as hurt as I was. As I realised that each of us had a story, and we were each trying to find ways of navigating our way through life, my stance towards Mark and Liz softened. I saw them to be just like me – that is, human beings trying to make sense of the world. My narrative about them has changed and I now think of them more kindly. In this sense, I do feel that embodying the qualities and characteristics of the holistic heart has enabled me to move from a place of hardness and resistance in terms of my view of Mark and Liz, to a more open space where I can see them through different eyes. While I do not feel that the actual reason for our conflict has been addressed or has been given the opportunity to be aired, and in that sense there is certainly some conflict still present, I do feel that something in my own approach to this situation has shifted. In that case, I do feel as though my initial feelings towards Mark and Liz have changed, consequently, the conflict that I felt has shifted into something different.



## Myself

Throughout my life I have been preoccupied with understanding conflict and engaging with it in different, creative ways. Having reached this stage in the project, and having experienced my heart in such a visceral way, I have a strong sense that the phenomenon of conflict requires a particular kind of approach in order to engage with it more creatively. *My experience tells me that conflict is an integral part of life*, and in line with Hillman, I understand it to be a primordial component of being that structures our existence (2004, p. 2). Indeed, Hillman asks us to imagine the nature of war/conflict's collective force (2004, p. 7), and in this project I have attempted to do this, through the organ of the imagination – that is, the heart and the heart's subsequent qualities and characteristics. Through the imagining heart I have learnt to see how conflict might arise, and learnt to apply this different way of seeing to my lived experience with others. Whenever I now feel familiar feelings of what I understand to be conflict arising with myself – stress, anger, fear, tension, helplessness, numbness – I move instantly into the space of my heart focussing on the heart's qualities and characteristics. Immediately the aforementioned feelings subside as I invite into my heart space any 'others' that have contributed to these challenging feelings.

For example, one afternoon I felt extremely angry when I was unable to write. For over an hour I kept forcing myself to write something, but the words would not come. In the space of the holistic heart, I pulled up a chair for a dictionary (representing words). The dictionary duly arrived and told me that it was not ready to offer me any words as I was not in the correct space to receive them. At first I was annoyed and felt conflicted. I felt myself close down, forgetting about the heart and heart qualities in the process. At this point the conversation stopped. However, something kept telling me that this was an important part of the work. Thinking of the heart and heart qualities again, I opened myself up, and reflected on what the dictionary had said. As I tuned into myself, I knew that the dictionary was right. I was forcing words to come when I was unable to receive them. The primordial dance of life was blocked. In objective terms, I was very tired and I

felt strongly that my body needed some fresh air. I packed my work away and went for a long walk along the river. Afterwards I felt much better and the next day I was able to write.

### ***'Heart sense': towards a heart-based approach to life***

Given my experiences of the holistic heart, and reflecting on how this heart has supported a distinct change in my knowledge of, and subsequently engagement with, the world, I suggest that the *thought of the holistic heart* proposes a model for the deepening of relationships – opening up possibilities to revision and re-imagine deep rifts across a myriad of different settings within which conflict appears. In making this statement, I wish to make clear that taking up the way of the holistic heart and practically applying its teachings is not easy. I still find myself in situations where conflict appears, and often I find myself unsure what to do. As I contemplate this, I find myself wondering, how might thinking with the heart in the ways I have described help me to engage with someone so protected and defended that there appears no possibility for dialogue across different and complexity? In this sense I am still learning, and if in the future I do meet someone who is completely defended and perhaps even aggressive, I wonder what the *thought of the holistic heart* might have to offer. At this stage, the best I can say is that the heart I am working with does not seem to offer a solution to conflict, but points a way towards the possibility of navigating it differently.

In this context, thinking about the implications of the fable of the heart at the beginning of this chapter and applying the understanding I have gained from the case studies detailed above, I have taken the first tentative steps towards a spiralling, reflexive approach that the *thought of the holistic heart* seems to offer in relation to engaging differently with the archetypal phenomenon of conflict. I have termed this practical application of the *thought of the holistic heart*, '*heart sense*'.<sup>136</sup> I define *heart sense* as;

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<sup>136</sup> The term '*heart sense*' has been inspired by American writer Paula Reeves' book *Heart Sense* (2003)

insightful perception & considered discernment regarding daily life developed through the wisdom of, and benevolent qualities associated with, the heart. In this context, *heart sense* in action can be viewed as follows:

1. Sink into the heart - physically feel the qualities and characteristics that would normally be associated with it; that is, love, openness, compassion, kindness
2. From the heart-space, recognise the 'other' in relationship with you (in whatever form that 'other' takes)
3. From the heart-space, encourage the 'other' to tell their story and reveal themselves, just as the 'other' opens a space for you to do the same
4. From the heart-space, listen deeply and authentically, look for connections, honour differences
5. Cultivate a sense of wonder at the different conversations you might be able to have; despite alternate points of view
6. Continue to spiral in the space of the heart together to co-create the possibility of a different story – see figure 14.

While the steps presented above might seem quite simple, I want to state clearly that this is not the case. I have discovered through direct experience of this process that knowledge arising from the holistic heart does not necessarily result in curing or fixing something. Neither is the heart's way about some idea of perfection, or even improvement, or creating an ideal, trouble-free existence. In building a relationship with my own heart, myself, and others in my external world, I have found that knowledge developed through the holistic heart is about being willing to sit in discomfort, to experience challenging feelings and emotions, and to embrace imperfections, whilst at the same time committing to reach towards harmony and relationship. The holistic heart and '*heart sense*' have taught me how important it is to remain in the present moment, close to life, in order that I might better be able to respond to life as it unfolds in all of its glorious messiness. The holistic heart, and *heart sense*, demands openness, kindness, courage and bravery, to find comfort in discomfort, to resist reaching immediately for solutions, and instead to respond to life's invitation with as much of ourselves as we can muster – despite how challenging that may be.

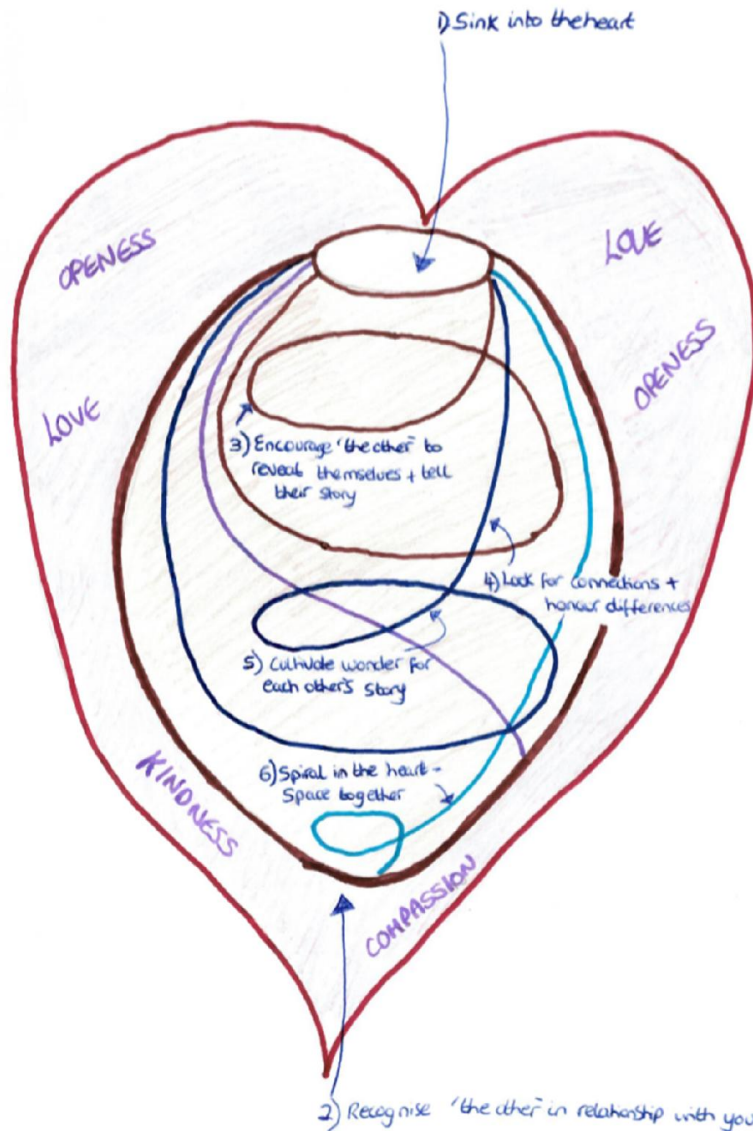


Figure 14: The thought of the holistic heart model – merging the traditional symbolic representation of the heart with the physical, spiralling heart of the previous chapter. A visual model for 'heart sense' (Livingstone, 2019a)

In this sense, in relation to point six of the 'heart sense' model above, both Thomas and I were able to move into different spaces together by remaining open to each other – despite our differences. This meant that rather than closing each other down, we created possibilities for each other to be as fully 'ourselves' as feasible and, whilst this process was challenging, we somehow discovered a deeper sense of friendship and connection. In this context, it seems from my experience of working with this model that for the best possible outcome, *all parties need to be willing to meet each other in the same way – to*

*commit to dancing together.* This brings me back to my curiosity in relation to how the *thought of the holistic heart* might support dialogue with someone who is deeply defended, as discussed above. Certainly there always exists the likelihood that another person may wish to destroy the possibility of connection and mutuality, and in this sense, all I can do is commit to remaining in the heart space and learn what the heart has to teach me in such a situation.

### **Reflections on ‘heart sense’ in relation to Buddhism, Sufism and the Christian orthodox tradition**

While I have previously made it clear that I am undecided whether the heart revealed in this thesis has a divine connection (but I am remaining open to this possibility in the context of seeing this idea as being an-‘other’), I suggest that it would be particularly relevant here to consider the approach of the heart described above in relation to practices that certain religious traditions use to reveal the divine or compassionate heart. Specifically, I am thinking of Buddhism, Sufism, and hesychasm – the mystical tradition of contemplative prayer in the Eastern Orthodox church – which all have striking similarities with the process of ‘heart sense’.

For example, in relation to Buddhism, Kornfield talks of the “courage of the heart” in terms of caring for others through “the fierce sword of compassion” (2008, pp. 32–33). Kornfield states that in Buddhist psychology, “compassion is a circle that encompasses all beings, *including ourselves*. Compassion blossoms only when we remember ourselves and others, when the two sides are in harmony” (2008, p. 32, italics in original). In writing about the specifics of meditating on compassion, Kornfield invites the meditator to feel her/his body, her/his heartbeat and her/his life within (2008, p. 33). Firstly, the meditator must treasure her/himself, then move to picture someone close, holding the person in her/his heart (Kornfield, 2008, p. 33). While doing this, the meditator is asked to become aware of the other person’s suffering and sorrows in life (Kornfield, 2008, p. 33). Finally,

the meditator is asked to wish them well, and then extend this compassion to others, to friends, neighbours, difficult people, enemies, and “to the brotherhood and sisterhood of all beings” (Kornfield, 2008, p. 34).

While Kornfield acknowledges the difficulty of this contemplative act, it is the heart that the meditator is asked to return to over and over again. This is because of the heart’s inherent capacity for compassion: “Remember, you are not trying to ‘fix’ the pain of the world, only to hold it with a compassionate heart....Let your breath and heart rest naturally, as a center of compassion in the midst of the world” (Kornfield, 2008, p. 34). Kornfield also writes of a similar meditation on loving-kindness, wherein one visualises love firstly to ourselves, then loved ones, friends, neutral people and finally enemies, through a soft and loving heart (2008, pp. 397–399). Indeed, I am struck by how similar Kornfield’s description of the meditation on compassion is to the model of ‘heart sense’ I describe above.

Similarly, both Sufism and hesychastic practices have a prayer of the heart that involves maintaining one’s focus in the heart, moving mind into the body, specifically into the heart (Nasr, 1986, p. 200). Certainly, in my practice detailed above, an important part of the process was for me to place myself inside my heart, and to remember the archetypal pattern that drives life embodied in the beating of my heart – subsequently navigating relationships from that space. Interestingly, the hesychast tradition and Sufism share the belief that one should remember God constantly, with every breath (Nasr, 1986, p. 198), and it is through the heart that one does this. As the centre of the human being, the wisdom of the realised heart passes to all other parts and elements of the human microcosm, and as such, one is able to “‘see’ reality as it is” (Nasr, 1986, p. 199). In relation to this point, writer and photographer Christine Paintner stresses the importance of seeing through the eyes of the heart, specifically in terms of contemplative practice within the Christian tradition, to support her work as a photographer. Paintner states that this practice is “one way of taking responsibility for ‘the how’ of our vision” (2013, p. 14).

I find this comment particularly appealing, as it illuminates our human capacity to see differently if we choose to - even in the midst of often difficult and negative situations. Cultivating a different eye through the heart, one opens up towards the possibility of changing the world that we see “and train our perceptions” (Paintner, 2013, p. 14). While the world we see might not be traditionally beautiful, or free of conflict, a heart-based way of seeing can often show us something different:

There is a scene in the film *American Beauty* that demonstrates this kind of graced insight. A white plastic bag is caught in the wind, in front of metal doors covered with graffiti. The bag dances in different directions, up and down, side to side, lifted and lowered by the air. Through the lens, the audience is invited to a slow, deliberate seeing, and what begins as a piece of litter on a dirty street becomes a symbol of how, even in the toughest and least expected places, beauty happens. Ricky Fitts, the character showing this image to his friend, murmurs, ‘Sometimes, there’s so much beauty in the world, I can’t take it – like my heart’s going to cave in (Paintner, 2013, p. 14)

Similarly, Kornfield tells the story of Phil, a Buddhist practitioner of loving-kindness who was mugged at gunpoint in New York (2008, pp. 389–390). Phil was forced to give his money, credit cards, wallet and finally his watch, however the mugger still threatened to shoot Phil. All through this ordeal, Phil retained focus on his heart, acknowledging the mugger and saying, “You did good...you got nearly seven hundred dollars...you got credit cards and an expensive watch. You don’t have to shoot me. You did really good” (Kornfield, 2008, pp. 389–390). The mugger was confused, lowered his gun and said “I did good?” (Kornfield, 2008, p. 390). Phil acknowledged once more that his assailant had done well, and the mugger walked away (Kornfield, 2008, p. 390). In this story, Phil lost his money but not his life. Kornfield makes the point that, whenever our goodness is seen, whenever we are held in the heart, with kindness, compassion and love, there is the possibility for blessing (2008, p. 390), and for transformation.

Of course there is much to be said about this story, but the point I am trying to illuminate through these examples is the push/pull, dynamic flow of life that is always moving through us, expressing itself in its multiple ways. It is how we dance with these events and how we see them, that returns specific outcomes. For example, perhaps it matters

whether we genuinely commit to seeing and receiving the 'other' through the eyes of an open, benevolent heart and aim to move towards harmony, or whether we block the 'other' and the flow of life – consequently setting up conditions for conflict to arise.

### **Reflections on voice and power in relation to case studies & '*heart sense*'**

Whilst I celebrate the freedoms that my choice of methodology has allowed during the course of this research, I am fully aware of the deep ethical responsibility I have towards others in relation to the new knowledge that now drives my life in terms of engaging with conflict. As I attempt to move my research from the personal to the political sphere, in striving for an open space of movement and dialogue with others by listening intently to my heart and practically engaging with my heart's teachings through the '*heart sense*' model, I fully acknowledge that it is only myself (in relationship with the individuals described in the case studies) who appears to possess this knowledge at this stage. In this sense, the issue of power dynamics is of concern, particularly where the individual voices of the people featured in these case studies are not represented. As I made clear in the ethics statement at the beginning of this thesis, my work focusses specifically on exploring my own life experiences with conflict in relationship with my heart. However, by implication, as I move newfound knowledge out of the personal sphere and into the wider world in an effort to think and engage differently with conflict, others are inextricably involved.

To have excluded the case studies from my overall research would have removed the need to deal with this particular ethical dilemma, but I contend it would have rendered a disservice to the heart's meaningful engagement with the idea of conflict that has arisen during the course of this enquiry. Indeed, the heart has taught me that, from an archetypal perspective, conflict arises at all levels of scale when movement with life slows or stops. In each case, conflict differs in expression, but always appears in relationship with something else. In this sense, it could be suggested that it is less ethically challenging to navigate my relationship with conflict through my heart on a personal level, however, when scaled up to consider conflict in relationship with other individuals, the terrain



becomes more complex. In this context, how do I give the deepest acknowledgement, respect and protection to the parties in these case studies who did not have a voice? Specifically, in terms of understanding that they were implicated in the *'heart sense'* process?

Indeed, the auto/biographical and imaginal methodologies I have used in this work have offered rich rewards in making sense of myself and my relationship with conflict, however, I cannot be sure that the individuals highlighted in the case studies above would see our interaction in the same way. Would they reject my interpretation of our relationship? In this sense, the balanced, flowing, reciprocal approach from both parties that my heart advocated through its teachings could not be brought into its fullest expression. This highlights an issue of inequality and an imbalance of power; something that my heart had shown me in the previous chapter through the dream of the dance, *and a challenging issue which carries the potential to cause conflict.*

Throughout this thesis I have sincerely committed to following the heart's teachings in relation to conflict and to reach a place where I could practically apply them. This means that I am now endeavouring to move beyond simply a call for heart-based knowledge in relation to conflict situations as seen repeatedly in the conflict literature, to a real sense of how exploring the practical application of this knowledge could create different outcomes. However, bringing the heart's teachings into practical action with other individuals highlights many concerns, not least the issue of knowledge and power (Merrill & West, 2009, p.11). As Merrill & West observe, "power permeates knowledge and knowing at every level" (2009, p.11), and as such, this kind of research is deeply complex. However, in relation to the last point, having worked so long with my heart and consequently developed a radically different way of knowing and engaging with the world, I would like to leave an open question in relation to whether all forms of knowledge are inextricably interwoven with questions of power. From my own experience, I do not have the sense that this last statement addresses, in the fullest sense, heart knowledge as explored in this thesis – particularly as I have discovered that this knowledge appears to be directly connected to notions of fairness, equality, balance, reciprocity; wherein the heart continually creates the possibility and conditions for all

voices to be given equal and open space to be heard – despite this being an often uncomfortable and challenging process.

However, still holding this idea of power in my awareness, I do wonder whether power is in some way connected to conflict (particularly when power is unbalanced by, in this case, one person possessing more knowledge than another). In the midst of these difficult questions and different ways of knowing, how do I think about my own findings in relation to the others in my case studies who did not have a voice? What about the thoughts and feelings of the other people in my case studies? Whilst I have undergone a positive experience in this work, what do the others involved with my research think? Would they have a completely different perspective? Indeed, on what terms can I say that my research is valid?

These questions highlight the difficulty I have discovered as this research has unfolded about the nature of conflict itself. What I mean specifically is that, at a personal level, it has been somewhat easier to reflect on how I might be manifesting conflict in my own life and to learn from this. Certainly, I have explored my personal journey with conflict in great depth and detail throughout the preceding chapters. Scaling my newfound knowledge up in relation to conflict from the personal realm to the social and political realm, however, brings new challenges and questions. It is with these challenges and questions in the forefront of my awareness that I must move towards an ending for this stage of my work and accept the deep complexity, and subtlety, of conflict beyond one's inner life.

It is my sincere wish that in post-doctoral research, I can engage with the questions I pose above in terms of the applicability of the '*heart sense*' model in relation with others; particularly given the urgent need to address the numerous violent conflicts that are taking place around the world today. However, as political psychologist Molly Andrews states, this kind of research, where other voices and stories are present, are always

incomplete and provisional (2007, p.169). As researchers we must therefore always entertain the idea that there is, just possibly, a story that we haven't anticipated, that might contradict our expectations (Andrews, 2007, p.169). I do see this last statement as being reflective of the teaching and learning that I have received from my own heart; that is, to keep moving and to keep questioning one's own assumptions, being ready to change as appropriate; always dancing with the potential for conflict to arise. Certainly, I would hope that by practically applying the heart's teachings in this way in each interaction, that I would automatically set the intention to work with awareness of, and respect and openness towards, other voices and stories, ensuring a safe enough space for them to speak. Whilst at the same time acknowledging that there is always the possibility for an-other to find themselves in a position of power over another 'other', despite how subtle this power dynamic may be. As I consider this, in the context of my case studies, why did I feel unable to communicate my learning with them? Was I fearful of rejection by sharing my knowledge? In this sense, where does the power in our relationship actually lie? Certainly, through the issues that may arise through the processing of these questions, the possibility for conflict is always present.

Merrill & West state that we cannot write stories about ourselves without making reference to and constructing others' lives and selves (2009, p.31). In terms of my own research, approaching others with the knowledge that my heart has given me does give rise to issues of knowledge and power – on all sides, as detailed above. To put this into the heart's terms, it is important that there remains a space for such issues to be acknowledged and explored with all parties concerned, so that all can keep moving together in this difficult space, which carries potential for conflict from all positions. My wish at this stage of my work is to leave open this difficult debate around knowledge and power, which continues with great enthusiasm within academic scholarship (Merrill & West, 2009, p.38). Indeed, I sincerely hope that my own research exploring the archetypal nature of conflict, and the open, reciprocal, respectful movement of heart knowing, could add an important voice to this debate at this time of political and social unrest in the contemporary world.

## **Reasons for not examining contemporary conflict situations & reflections on my trust in the heart's wisdom**

The difficulties that I have outlined above relate naturally to a key criticism that I am aware I will face with this research. Specifically, I understand that many readers may be quite sceptical (and perhaps even disappointed) about my decision to not engage with, or examine, contemporary conflict situations; particularly in the light of structural and political inequalities that blight the world today. Indeed, I have wrestled with this issue during the course of my research, and I have attempted to acknowledge just some of the difficulties in relation to this kind of enquiry above; reflecting on the complexities inherent in scaling up personal knowledge about conflict into the social and political realm.

In relation to this point, given the radical nature of this project and my commitment to develop knowledge about the world through the thoughts of my own heart, it is imperative that extreme care and caution is taken with this way of approaching the world. *I contend that we must proceed wisely, understanding that the heart's approach and consequent ways of knowing are radically different to traditionally accepted ways of being in relationship with the world.* It has taken three years of constantly working with my own heart to learn my heart's subtle language and teachings to help me navigate my personal interactions with conflict. Indeed, conflict has journeyed alongside me throughout the entirety of this project - both within me manifesting as tension and anxiety, and externally arising through relationships - slowly and gradually revealing its innermost core to me through the teachings of the heart. For that reason, it would be remiss of me to rush ahead and start to apply '*heart sense*' to contemporary conflict situations without first clarifying that I am speaking from a place of personal transformation. In this sense, I have developed knowledge about the world from a different place, and consequently learnt to see conflict as an archetypal phenomenon that arises when the dance of life stops; making itself known within the uniqueness of individual life experience.

Through the heart's teachings, I have learnt that perceiving conflict differently begins with oneself – firstly by applying this learning within, followed by deep reflection on how this might be applicable with others. However, as I discussed above, moving outwards to the social and political realm with this knowledge creates new challenges and questions, which need to be carefully and critically investigated. All I can legitimately say at this stage is, perhaps this way of developing knowledge about life could create possibilities for moving within conflict situations and political/structural inequality differently and creatively. However, at this point, this is something I can only speculate on. A good deal more research is required in relation to the action of the holistic heart in the context of contemporary conflict situations. This is because my last statement involves two vastly challenging issues. Firstly, the deep complexity of conflict when situated in the wider world, and secondly, the different way of knowing and being in the world that the heart advocates; meaning deep, personal and relational change. Only by finding some way of bringing these together (as I have attempted to do on a personal scale in this research), might it be possible to explore the practical action of the holistic heart in relation to modern conflict situations and consequent political/social inequality.

In this sense, I too am disappointed that I cannot, at this stage, offer a solution to contemporary conflict and social/political inequalities. I find myself in turmoil when I am faced with the myriad of distressing images that flash across my television screen on a nightly basis. In such moments of despair, I find myself returning to my methodology; meaning that I must embrace the heart's way of knowing. As I have already stated above, my aim in this work is to follow a route of scholarship that genuinely opens spaces for creative ways of engaging with conflict. In this sense, the methodology takes seriously what the heart wishes to say, meaning that I must follow where its teachings lead. Therefore, my commitment to the work is to seriously follow the learning that arises from this way of engaging. Taking inspiration from Hault's sentiment when describing her own holistic methodology in her work, she states that, I am required to "let go of conventional structures and to have faith" (2012, p.4). It is in this sense that the methodology I have used in this project has offered a process of engaging with the heart, which whilst being non-traditional in the sense of how knowledge is generally garnered in the modern world,

I have trusted implicitly to reveal deeper, *often extremely subtle layers to conflict*; transforming my own perception of, and engagement with it, in the process.

In an effort to look forward with a little hope, beyond the myriad difficulties I have raised in this commentary in relation to contemporary conflict situations, I would like to make a brief reference to several real-life examples of what practical engagement with the heart's way of knowing might look like. Specifically, in chapter seven, I focus on two contemporary examples of social conflict in relation to firstly, the English Defence League and a mosque in northern England, and secondly, parties involved with an American abortion clinic. Within these conflicts, the parties concerned have reached clear, discernible ways of being in effective relationship with each other, wherein they are able to hold and honour differences respectfully; reaching a meaningful space of connection. This, I suggest, is reflective of the heart's way of engaging with others. Whilst the potential for conflict is always present, as yet, it has been unable to manifest due to the deep commitment of each party to move together with openness, kindness and respect for each other (despite this often being a difficult, challenging process).

As someone whose life has been transformed by the heart's teachings in relation to conflict, I can perceive how engaging fully with the authentic heart of this project has the potential to support creative discussions in relation to contemporary conflict situations fuelled by political and structural inequalities. As a final thought around this issue, given the convincing evidence in relation to my own transformative engagement with conflict through the wisdom of the heart, it is certainly an area that warrants further exploration, and I outline my proposals for on-going research in the following chapter.

## Concluding thoughts

I want to reiterate that I am not advocating that engaging with '*heart sense*' on a practical level is easy. Most importantly, I do not believe this is the message that the holistic heart revealed in this project wishes to impart. Having worked with my heart over many months, I can attest to the daily difficulty I experience to see differently and to move into the heart space to embody the practicalities of '*heart sense*'. However, I suggest that one of the key points to remember when moving towards any kind of transformation is a personal willingness to try and see differently, and the continual practice of the heart's way towards any 'other'. As I draw this chapter to a close, I have a strong sense that the approach of *the thought of the holistic heart* discovered in this thesis could offer much support and guidance in relation to humanity's future flourishing on this planet. Certainly, this heart is not simply a sentimental add-on carrying little value, and neither is it a mere metaphor. As I have personally discovered, this heart offers an important and practical way of developing knowledge about, and engaging with, the world in modern times.

Considering that as human beings we are always in relationship with something/an-'other' – it is clear from the brief case studies I have highlighted above that the *thought of the holistic heart* has much to teach. From a personal and practical perspective, I am already using '*heart sense*' to help me act differently in my relationships, and I am learning slowly how to see differently, and consequently how to engage with conflict differently. I also have a much stronger relationship with my own heart. I have discovered that the *thought of the holistic heart* makes possible a vision of a very different world to the one that I have been educated and raised into - a world within which I have had the possibility to hold conflict in creative tension. As I reflect on this, I wonder whether this different way of engaging with the world, made possible through a profound transformation of my own heart and consequently my entire being, might offer a way of stimulating an enhanced, more harmonious, state of being in relationship with life, in all of its expressions. The concluding chapter will explore this idea in more detail.

## Chapter seven: Returning heart to the world - reflections & implications for engaging with conflict through the lens of transformative learning

### Transference dialogue – January 2019

*Me: Hello again!*

*Heart: Hello*

*Me: Thank you for coming to see me*

*Heart: It is always a pleasure to see you*

*Me: .....I am aware that in the context of my research project this is one of the last times we will be speaking. Is there anything you wish to say to me as I draw towards the conclusion of this part of my work? Is there any advice or guidance you may wish to impart?*

*Heart: SMILING AT ME*

*Me: I feel so much love from you that I feel I could burst with joy! It is overwhelming. You have given me so much....*

*Heart: I am glad that we find ourselves here, together. We have been on a long journey you and I. We have had our ups and downs, and yet, here we are...enjoying each other's company.....What do you think has changed for you since I spoke to you for the first time?*

*Me: Erm.....everything really. I know that this journey has been a long and often arduous one. Initially I was full of fear. I was terrified of you. I didn't know how to listen to you or engage with you. However, you never left me and you kept calling out to me. Creating a space to hear your voice has totally changed me. It's taken a long time, but I do look*



*at the world differently now.....and because of that I have changed significantly....and so have you...Do you agree?*

*Heart: Yes.....you have changed. It is nice that you do not ignore me anymore and that you appear more at ease around me. There seems to be an eagerness and openness to engage with me now.....With regards to myself, yes I have changed, but that change has arisen because you have given me the space to show you who I am. In that space I can be who I am, and at the same time, that space enables me to become so much more because of my relationship with you. We are both continually growing and changing through each other. As you change, I change. We are the dance of life!*

*Me: Yes, I can really see that now.*

*Heart: Remember at the beginning of this work I asked you to continually reflect on whose story you were writing?*

*Me: Yes*

*Heart: I want to thank you for doing this....for continually reflecting, listening for my voice, giving me the space to speak*

*Me: I do worry that I haven't done you justice..... I worry that I haven't managed to find the right words to convey what you want to say. I really want your story to be heard and to touch the hearts of everyone who reads this work*

*Heart: SMILING.....you have done more for me than you could ever imagine possible. You have opened up a space for others to begin their own conversations with their own hearts.....worry no more....continue to dance with me....there is so much more to see!*

*My heart expands and I am dwarfed in comparison to my heart's gigantic size. Then my heart embraces me so fully that I am swamped. I cannot tell where my heart ends or I begin. I am no longer outside of my heart; I am fully inside my heart, inside life.*

## Reflections

I am sitting in Canterbury Christ Church University gardens on a sunny Sunday afternoon. I have a free hour before I need to return to the classroom of the MA Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred course; a programme that I support in both an administrative and teaching capacity. As I enjoy the sun, I notice that the sound of police sirens in the distance gives way to the voice of nature. I welcome the bird song into my awareness, offering my senses to the chatter of sparrows, the twitter of robins, blackbirds, blue tits, and the cawing of crows and sea gulls soaring high above my head on warm currents of air. Some time later, my attention is drawn to my immediate surroundings. I watch a honey bee skipping from one fragrant flower to another, its legs heavy with pollen. Focussing my attention still further, I see tiny flies, dancing and weaving between sunbeams created through a union of the lowering sun and delicate tree branches reaching out over my head. Senses alive, I close my eyes, welcome the gentle breeze on my face, and invite the rhythmic song of nature to overwhelm me. I feel totally present – my heart, body and mind engaged in the unfolding dance of life within which I am fundamentally embedded.

Gradually I become aware of Goethe's approach to nature. Following his lead, I offer myself to the living quality of nature so that nature is able to think in me, to disclose herself to me in my heart, mind and body. I wait, happy for her to take her time. I feel at peace, in a relationship of mutual appreciation. Together we remain in the enquiry, in the immediate moment of our connection. This way of being in relationship with the living world is made all the more intense and meaningful because of the way that my heart has taught me to receive the world's language, and in turn, how my heart has taught me how to think differently about my place in life's dance. In a particularly astute observation Romanyshyn states, "through the language of the heart...the world of nature is transformed" (2001, p. 145).

Reflecting on our conversation in the transference dialogue at the beginning of this chapter, I am conscious of how much both my heart and I have been able to grow and change through this work by giving each other space to speak and tell our stories, becoming more fully ourselves along the way and changing the world around us in the process. Reminded of my dream of the dance in chapter five, I sense that these ideas forming in my awareness about the importance of relationship are beautifully illustrating life's archetypal dance; within which all beings are engaged in a living process of connection in a myriad of languages and expressions. As I reflect on this particular encounter with nature, I am reminded of the people with whom I attempted to meet in similar ways as described in the previous chapter. Each meeting was different, and each offered new understanding as I consciously made the effort to dance in the present moment in a space with the 'other'.

At this point I find myself thinking about what brought me to this research. Specifically, my personal experiences of conflict exposed through the often difficult and challenging relationship with my heart - a heart that I was unable to fully listen to or engage with. This has not simply been a three-year research project, but an entire lifetime's exploration that is still incomplete and forever in flux. I am acutely aware of my total exhaustion. This journey has been extraordinarily challenging, demanding a great deal of self-reflection, awareness of my whole body and deep concentration. In the chapel behind me, a gospel choir begins to sing *Amazing Grace*. The moment is pregnant with meaning, as though the world is in conversation with me acknowledging my inner thoughts. I am overwhelmed; moved to tears as my heart swells with appreciation and joy in direct response. My whole self feels connected to the world - acknowledged, seen, respected and loved.

Thinking about each of these moments, and all of those other equally poignant moments described in this thesis, the meaning imbued within them for me is palpable. These moments always seem connected in some way to my heart and my heart's way of knowing. Indeed, each of these moments seem to carry within them invitations for transformation, made possible by my heart's presence and a sense of connection to *something more* than material reality – blurring lines between the different realms of

human experience and consequently filling me with a sense of awe, joy and love. In this context, could this heart, responding immediately to the calls of the world, be the heart that resides in the conflict literature – alluded to, but never brought into expression? And if so, how might it be possible to bring this heart into our world today?

### **What ways of knowing does the thought of the heart make possible?**

In order to hear my heart's thoughts, it was necessary for me to recover its language – specifically, the imagination. In recovering the imagination and working consciously with active imagination techniques, I discovered a different heart, and consequently, over the course of this project, I have been able to engage more meaningfully with its kind of philosophy (Hillman, 2007, p. 6). I am once more overwhelmed as I realise my heart's significance in my life. Specifically, that my heart continually invites me to have a fuller, deeper living experience of the world within which I am embedded, showing me that there is always something more, as long as I maintain the commitment and awareness to see further. As my heart responds to images received in present moment communion with the wider world within which I live, and consequently by learning my heart's imaginal and symbolic language, I am coming to understand that the written and spoken word can only ever be attempts towards engaging meaningfully with life experience. Words support, and help to give some kind of generally agreed shape to, the language of images that the world offers in every living moment. Words also fall short and fail to do justice to, the magnitude of the human experience (Formenti & West, 2018, p.260) – as I have discovered on numerous occasions throughout this work.

This realisation invites me into another precious moment where I feel connected to something indescribable, ineffable, lying beyond the reach of language, yet paradoxically so close, that I sense I could actually touch it. The familiarity of this experience makes me certain that I am actually *feeling* what Hillman, Corbin, and countless others have talked about across the millennia. Through my often painful and challenging journey with my heart, I have been fortunate to have had many intermittent glimpses like these of *something more* shining through ordinary reality – for want of better terms, something

that has a soul-like quality, wondrous, sacred, perhaps even, divine. Glimpses, through the heart, that carry the revelation of something:

[B]eyond the obvious,... bounded surface of things,...into a deeper reality, emerging from some unknown profundity, which plays lightly upon the surface of life without being caught there: a world where meaning, insight, and clarity come together in a whole different way (Bourgeault, 2017)

For Bourgeault, and numerous others referenced in this thesis across depth psychology, esotericism, religious mysticism and religious discourses, the heart is first and foremost an organ of spiritual perception, and it is therefore the heart that offers the possibility to glimpse beyond what the rational intellect makes possible. While the heart responds to our direct experience of life and is consequently connected to the emotions and feelings, the heart I have met in this project has shown me that *it is so much more than that*. In this sense, the heart has multiples roles – specifically, as a biological pump, a respondent of feelings and generator of emotions, a communicator with the brain, *and* an organ of spiritual perception through which deeper, subtler realms can be accessed, and knowledge about the world received. Indeed, it could be suggested that engaging with the heart in its fullest sense opens us up to what we might term in our modern age, a spiritual sensibility.

## **The heart and transformation**

As I have been involved in a deep process of transformation with my heart throughout this project, and because, according to Cranton and Taylor, transformative learning is a process of “examining, questioning, and revising” perceptions (2012, p. 5), I will be exploring my conclusions through the lens of transformative learning. I am doing this particularly as I am looking ahead to the way that this project might offer insight in relation to supporting contemporary culture to engage differently and creatively with modern challenges, and conflict specifically. Based on my findings in this research project, it is helpful here to return to Tisdell’s and Tolliver’s understanding of the term ‘spirituality’, in the context that spirituality is about a connection to “Life Force....It is about meaning making and a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of

all things” (2006, p.38). I am struck by how similar this description is to the idea of an archetypal pattern or force of life that showed itself to me as being embodied in the holistic heart as already discussed. This is a heart which, through its spiralling action and inherent qualities and characteristics, is a guide that continually points us towards wholeness and connection – showing how conflict can be engaged with differently. In chapter six, I committed to consciously embody the qualities of this heart in my relationships, both with myself and with others, acting *through* the heart and helping to transform myself and my relationships in the process.

Reflecting on my journey, it could be suggested that I have developed a relationship with my heart that has enabled me to see beyond separation and conflict into the deep interconnectedness of all things, which has in turn opened me up to the idea of there being something more to life leading me towards a more spiritual outlook. Indeed, the kinds of thinking that my heart has made possible has enabled me to engage creatively with questions related to “old binaries” (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 1) which were often conflicted - such as objective and subjective knowledge, conscious and unconscious life. In this context, through the heart’s teachings I have undergone a deep, personal transformation in the way that I understand myself, others, and my place in the world. While Formenti and West point out that transformation is a difficult term (2018, pp. 1–2), the idea of transformation should not stop us engaging fully with the process of learning and committing to understand ourselves in the world in new and meaningful ways (West, 2019).

In this sense, the heart I have met in this work is holistic – showing me through my lived experience that I am part of a greater whole, embedded in an interconnected web of relationships, dancing together with the unfolding pattern of life. Like transformation, the term *holistic* is also challenging and often carries “the risk of cliché” (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 1). However, thanks to Bortoft and his work on authentic and counterfeit wholes, I suggest there is a way to discern whether one’s engagement with the term *holistic* has become formulaic. Specifically, in the context I am using the term *holistic* in relation to the heart, the heart I have worked with has conveyed real meaning to me, unforced by my prior ideas or judgements (Bortoft, 2010, p. 7). In this way, the totality of

my understanding was made possible by my heart's relationship with me during the project – with meaning disclosed progressively as we journeyed together and listened to each other. My realisation that I am part of a greater whole, embedded in relationship with life, was not based on logical reasoning alone, but through the meaning of my experience that was disclosed through the embodied, present moment, circular, spiralling relationship between myself and my heart – driven by something greater than both of us. This understanding was not something that could be purchased, or derived from an abstract formula (Bortoft, 2010, pp. 8–9).

## **The heart: a form that transforms in transformative learning?**

The development of this relationship, and subsequent learning gained, was ignited by my heart speaking to me on “that Night.” In a transformative learning context, Tisdell observes that learning experiences can often “transform our very core identity or worldview” (2012, p. 25). Certainly dramatic or major changes can, according to Mezirow, be “epochal” (2009, p. 23).<sup>137</sup> Given my personal experiences of transformation, I am now wondering whether the heart is an integral part of the transformation process, and whether there is *something about the nature of the heart, and the kind of thinking that the heart makes possible*, that enables one to access the depths of oneself and create meaning in order to engender opportunities for profound change.

This is certainly a big question in the context of my research, and interestingly, in her own work, Tisdell draws attention to the fact that there has been limited attention drawn to life's “Big Questions” in transformative learning that focus specifically on our place in the world and what gives life meaning (2012, p. 27).<sup>138</sup> While it is not my intention to suggest that the heart is a key ingredient in the transformative learning process that can be applied en masse, I propose that this entire project in communion with my heart has placed attention firmly on such big questions. Motivated by developmental psychologist

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<sup>137</sup> While Mezirow acknowledges that such experiences can transform one's core beliefs, he does not entertain the idea that they might have a spiritual dimension (Tisdell, 2012, p. 27).

<sup>138</sup> Tisdell is taking her inspiration from Sharon Daloz Parks' book *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams* (2000)

Robert Kegan (2000, p. 35), Tisdell asks, what form transforms in dealing with the big questions of life, particularly those forms that guide us towards living more deeply (2012, p. 27). Tisdell observes that some forms can transform one's being (affective domain), while others transform one's thinking (cognitive domain) – and there are obviously overlaps between these (2012, p.25). She continues to suggest that often the “‘form’ that transforms” is so epochal that it transforms ones being and identity and can therefore be understood as involving multiple domains, “emotional, rational, physical, and perhaps spiritual as well” (2012, p.26).

In this sense, because I believe that my own transformation was so epochal and has fundamentally changed who I am, the heart revealed in this project could be seen as a form that transforms, acting across multiple levels of experience. Namely as:

1. A metaphor for living with a greater appreciation and love for life
2. A symbol of compassion, openness and kindness and of reconnection to the world
3. A living, physical organ
4. The space which represents the spiritual centre of oneself from where one receives the world and thinks.

Certainly, I can attest that engaging seriously with my heart has helped me learn how to live more deeply, and to think more profoundly about my relationship with myself and the wider world, giving me what could be termed a more spiritual outlook on life – that is, a sense of connection and wholeness. In this sense, it is possible to meet conflict through the heart carrying a different perspective or approach. Indeed, I suggest that *taking on* the holistic heart as form that transforms across multiple dimensions of human experience as detailed here, could be seen as preferable to terms generated by the commodification or industrialisation of education (House, 1986, pp. 30-37; Robinson, 2010; Shukry, 2017), driven by economic factors (Shukry, 2017), or metaphors from industrial production processes like “outcomes”, “targets” and “goals” (House, 1986, pp. 35-37). It is in this sense that I will now explore the possibility of the heart as an aid in transformative learning; a practical example of a form that transforms.



## Hearing my heart speak in relation to transformative learning

Probably the most cited work in the field of adult education in relation to transformation is Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (1985, 1995). Mezirow's theory "emphasises critical reflection on assumptions and changing behaviors as a result of a disorienting dilemma" (Tisdell, 2003, p. 205). Used in transformative learning theory to describe a moment of disorientation, the term offers the possibility to consider the transformative potential such moments may bring (Mezirow, 1991). However, while I consider "that Night" as a disorienting dilemma in transformative learning terms, exploring what happened to me through Mezirow's theory would require a focus on reductive, cognitive approaches to account for my experience and any subsequent learning/knowledge gained (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4; West, 2019). As I have made clear throughout this project, such an approach would have been too narrow for me to explore the expansive nature of the deeply subjective, revelatory experiences I have had with my heart.

While most scholars in this field would agree that transformative learning involves "the making or remaking of meaning" (Dirkx, 2012, p. 116), in contrast to Mezirow's rational processes of critical reflection in adult learning, Dirkx questions the assumption that cognition is the fundamental vehicle in transformation (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 65), taking into consideration the role of the imagination in transformative learning and how this guides learners towards a deeper understanding of themselves in relation to their world (Dirkx, 1998, p. 8). It is in this context that I will now attempt to add to the research of scholars working with the idea that transformative learning depends less on rational acts, and more on holistic, intuitive and imaginal processes (Dirkx, 1998, p. 6). As the heart in this project has been engaged with as an organ of imaginal perception, I will provide a practical reflection of my journey framing it in a transformative learning context as follows:

- My heart as a disorienting dilemma
- The importance of the imagination in transformational learning – the heart as an organ of imaginal perception
- Notions of the spiritual in transformational learning – the heart as a gateway to knowledge beyond the rational mind
- Moving the discourse of transformational learning onward – considering the spiral and ‘*heart sense*’

## **My heart as a disorienting dilemma**

In transformative learning terms, what happened to me on “that Night” could be described as a “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow and Dirkx, 2006, p. 132). As I have made clear throughout this project, my speaking heart is not something that can be rationalised or objectively verified. However, the key to my life changing following this event seems to be my refusal to reach for a rational explanation. Here I find West’s notion of “human wrenching” particularly interesting (2014, p. 166). This is because on “that Night”, I was wrenched out of my familiar understanding of the world and into a new set of relationships, “including with the symbolic order” (Kegan, 2000, p. 67; West, 2014, p. 166), which transformed the knowledge by which my life, until that point, had been lived – rendering the structure through which I made meaning in the world “problematic” (Mezirow and Dirkx, 2006, p. 132). In that moment I had a radical shift of awareness, and made a conscious choice to seek out other ways of knowing that might enable me to consider my heart’s message through a wider lens. This led me towards spiritual and religious discourses, and to depth and transpersonal psychology. At the heart of these discourses is a clear appreciation of the faculty of the imagination, and the validity of subjective experience. As I consider this more deeply, what is particularly interesting in relation to both Dirkx and Mezirow’s orientation towards the process of transformation, is that in the past I had undergone other disorienting dilemmas, however because I engaged with them from a narrow perspective, they did not change me in the same way that taking an imaginal approach has.

Specifically, what I mean here is that when I experienced cardiac arrests in 1990 at the age of eighteen, I did not feel compelled to move deeper into my own psyche. Certainly these events made me think about life and death, and what it actually means to die (I recall being disappointed afterwards that I did not see a tunnel with a bright light at the end of it, nor dead relatives waiting for me), however I felt no compulsion to go any deeper and carry out inner work. Preferring to remain with rational explanations for my experience (namely, I caught a virus), I was unable to consider my experience more deeply/symbolically and consequently unable to explore through an imaginal lens what this might mean. As Dirx states, at various times in our lives we all experience disorienting dilemmas (2006, p. 132). However, he continues to say that there may be times where we simply do not accept the “invitation implicit in such experiences to engage in a deeper form of learning about ourselves or our world” (2006, p. 132). It therefore becomes a case of whether we accept the invitation or turn away from it. In 1990 I knew I had experienced something important. Certainly my life from that point was never the same, but it did not change to the extent that it did when on “that Night”, I decided to “wrench meaning from the darkest of moments....let go and give space to others, and otherness” (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 4). In accepting my heart’s invitation, the heart became the ‘other’ in relationship with me – transforming itself into my teacher. Reflecting on these two events involving my heart, both involved transformation, however they both have distinctly different qualities and subsequently created radically different outcomes.

At the time I did not know how to make sense of my experience as there were no theories or explanations that could explain what had happened to me, *but I somehow knew* that my knowledge about life at the time was not sufficient to contain the vastness of the event. This event was terrifying, yet also awe-inspiring, shaking me to my core and wrenching me from the world that I was familiar with.

## **The imagination in transformational learning: the heart as an organ of imaginal perception**

Formenti and West call for new methods in transformation, learning and education beyond the “academic habitus, beyond specialization, and jargon” (2018, p. 279), and it is my sincere hope that, in this project, I have offered up a thoughtful and practical response. As I have discussed extensively in this work, it is interesting to consider the heart as an organ of the imagination that, when taken up as such, offers a different way of experiencing, and gaining knowledge about, the world. Dirkx states that the imagination as a mode of knowing is an important way that adults learn, playing “a key role in connecting our inner, subjective experiences of emotions and feelings with the outer, objective dimensions of our learning experiences” (2001, p. 68).

Indeed, as Formenti and West aim to sculpt a pathway to a more “eclectic understanding of transformation, learning and education” to enrich current theories (2018, p. 4), I suggest that the holistic heart that I have met on my own journey of transformation offers much richness. In a growing relationship with my heart, I have come to love and trust my heart, engaging my whole self – “mind, body, heart, feelings, imagination and soul” (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 280). Not only have I developed this relationship with myself, I have also been able to develop and change my relationships with others, through the wisdom I have gained from my heart’s guidance. This has been made possible because I loosened the grip of my rational mind, placing it in communion with my heart, giving my heart breathing space to respond authentically and fully to the world speaking to me (Hillman, 2007). I think that this observation is important, particularly considering Kripal’s vision that future forms of knowledge will be “reciprocal....[and that] Holism, comparativism, and intuition will be as valued as linear logic, mathematics, and reductive analysis” (2019, p. 199). Kripal’s image of future knowledge makes room for the imaginal *and* rational, heart *and* head (body *and* mind), and my aim throughout this project has been to explore ways in which these different modes of knowing can be brought together into genuine enquiry.

## **Notions of the spiritual in transformational learning: the heart as a gateway to knowledge beyond the rational mind**

Formenti and West's quest in their book *Transforming Perspectives in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education* has been to find a more "complex, encompassing, liberally articulated perspective on learning, and the need to value embodied narrative" (2018, p. 263). In this sense, they warn that we must remain alert and be careful of the danger of reframing other forms of knowing within a rationalist perspective (2018, p. 264). It is with both this quest and warning in mind that I engage with Formenti and West's observation and tentatively explore my ideas of the sacred or the spiritual in relation to this project. At this point I want to state that this is an important line of exploration because my understanding of the spiritual and the sacred have been shaped radically by this project and my growing relationship with my heart. Therefore, there must, and should be, a place for "notions of the sacred" in transformative experience (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 252). Indeed, throughout this project I have been exploring what the sacred or the spiritual means to me.

The pathway into exploring these ideas has been made a great deal easier by Tisdell's engagement with spirituality and transformative learning (2003). In relation to this she writes, "it is important to pay attention to how people understand new knowledge, and...to how they construct knowledge" (2003, p. ix). Returning to Tisdell's definition of spirituality as discussed earlier, I can say that in this project my heart has opened me up to ideas of wholeness and the notion of the interconnectedness of life at all levels of expression. This has felt at times like I have been exposed to some kind of spiritual or sacred knowledge. Interestingly, Dirkx suggests that the spiritual represents a kind of backdrop or context upon which our life plays out (2006, p. 130). Considering this idea, I would also like to make clear that, like Dirkx, this research has not been about advocating a particular religious perspective, but acknowledging a greater presence in, or significance to, life itself (Mezirow and Dirkx, 2006, p. 130) – albeit indefinable and mysterious.

With this part of the journey with my heart (in terms of this research project) almost complete, and Tisdell's interpretation of spirituality in my awareness, perhaps now is a good time to reflect on what I think might have happened to me on "that Night". Readers will have noticed that I have not yet settled on a theory. This is because, as I stated previously, the guidance that I received from the holistic heart I met in the labyrinth showed me that nothing is ever finished; life is always in a constant state of flux and unfolding. What I may choose as a reason today may not be the reason I choose tomorrow – given different information, circumstances and experiences. In addition to the heart demonstrating this theory, Kripal's methodology of the gnostic classroom that I discussed in chapter five also illustrates this idea. The spiralling nature of the holistic heart shows us that we have to keep moving, lest we fall into one side or another and run the risk of becoming stuck, or manifesting conflict.

In this context, I follow my heart's lead, preferring to hold multiple possibilities in creative tension to help me engage more freely with my ongoing experiences with my heart. The numinous experience I had showed me a different reality – something that I would have previously deemed impossible. Sometimes I lean more towards a religious sensibility, feeling myself drawn upwards towards some transcendent 'other' that carries a numinous, radiating, divine quality. On other occasions, I find myself more comfortable delving deeply into my unconscious and finding solace in depth psychological and transformative learning literature, which enables me to think about the nature of soul. I find myself unwilling to settle on an answer, as the guidance of my heart has shown me that nothing in existence is ever complete or finished, and so to settle on an answer seems counter-intuitive to the guidance of the heart itself. That is, to stay open to difference, open to 'others', remaining in a space of openness and possibility.

It is also helpful to consider my position in terms of Taylor's idea of "soft perennialism" (2016, p. 19). Taylor's research focuses on individual experiences of expanded states of being that occur outside the context of spiritual traditions. In other words, he specifically concentrates on individual experiences without the need to posit "a nondual spiritual absolute, a transcendent objective domain of reality that is fundamentally other to us" (2016, p. 20). Taylor's soft perennialism posits "an immanent all-pervading force which is

not other to human beings because it constitutes our own nature....It is more accurate to conceive of this force as fundamental or essential rather than transcendent” (2016, p. 20). With soft perennialism, an all-pervading force constitutes the essence of one’s being and everything else that exists. It is not a transcendent other, but could be described as fundamental, “built into the fabric of reality, as a universal force” (Taylor, 2016, p. 34). From a soft perennial perspective, the direction of spiritual or transpersonal development is expansion and extension:

[A]n expansion of identity and awareness, an increasing sense of connection, and an increasing intensity of perception. Soft perennialism points towards a deepening of one’s experience of and relationship to the phenomenal world rather than a transcendence of it (Taylor, 2016, p.33)

I find Taylor’s theory of an inbuilt, universal force driving reality as being very close to the idea of the archetypal dance of life as demonstrated to me through my heart. As I write and consider other viewpoints, I find myself unwilling to close down to a definitive explanation for my experience, and I am still curious about something ‘other’ calling me forward. Recalling what happened to me in the labyrinth and the events of “that Night”, *something more* was revealed to me about the nature of reality, and I sense strongly that I was overtaken by what Fraser calls “a visit by the transcendent” (2019). As a result of these experiences and many others, my “ontological disposition” towards the world changed (Fraser, 2018, p. 73),<sup>139</sup> and subsequently I have found that what makes my life meaningful is to leave the door open to possibilities. This, in Fraser’s terms, means celebrating and finding “spaces to hold my ontological disposition of the transcendent” (2019). In her research, Fraser writes about her experience of the transcendent as ushering forth a profound personal change that gave her a glimpse of a “greater whole, or web, of being”(2018, p. 69). In this way, “some real thing [lies] behind experiences” (2018, p. 71), leaving an individual with an awareness of a benign presence behind day-to-day reality (Fraser, 2018, pp. 71–75). Fraser does not define this presence in religious terms, but acknowledges her own sense of something ‘other’ (2018, p. 75, 2019).

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<sup>139</sup> Fraser states that one’s ontological disposition drives one’s epistemology (2019)

In this context it is the holistic heart which offers me the space to find and celebrate these possibilities, and I once more call upon the holistic heart's approach that demonstrates to me that it is possible to hold disparate ideas which at one level seem contradictory or conflicted, yet at another, can be seen as part of life's grand unfolding dance. The one and the many can be held in the holistic heart. Through the imagination, and through *the thought of the holistic heart*, it is possible for reflections on numinous experience, a sense of the divine, explorations of the soul and spirituality, and manifestations of the unconscious to each have their place. By not settling on one answer, I can continually move between different interpretations and in the process meet new ideas and engage differently with life. Certainly this model and way of thinking has been extremely beneficial for me in terms of my own engagement with conflict situations - transforming myself along the way, and equally transforming conflict into something different in relation to my personal experience of it.

### **Moving the discourse of transformational learning forward: considering the spiral & 'heart sense'**

The kind of back and forth, reflexive thinking that the heart appears to embody is a type of movement that could be described as a spiral. This is interesting, particularly in relation to the spiralling action of the holistic heart as discussed earlier, and the fact that a number of scholars within the field of transformative learning and adult education have also noted the significance of the spiral. Specifically, Formenti and West state that transformation arises from "a dynamic cycle triggered by aesthetic experience, entailing self-exploration, positioning and re-positioning, soul work, dialogue, and critical thinking" (2018, p. 233). This process, they say, is a spiral. Scholar Elizabeth Lange alludes to the dynamic, spiral process of transformation by linking transformative learning to discoveries in new science, chaos and complexity theory, suggesting that the transformation process is not linear, but rather a "looped process with many feedback cycles" (2012, p. 203). For Lange transformation occurs through our direct lived experience, in relationship with the living earth and its systems (Lange, 2012, p. 207). Indeed, I suggest that this observation carries similarities with my exploration of the



heart as a symbol of transformation, with the heart the mediator between ourselves and the living world that speaks to us through images, symbols and patterns.

In the context of spiritual development and learning, Tisdell states that it is “a spiral process of moving forward and spiraling back, rather than as a linear process” (2003, p. xv). Taking inspiration from other scholars including Kegan (1982) and Wilber (2001), who state that the spiral shape is an apt metaphor for understanding human development, Tisdell suggests that in the context of spiritual development, learners balance processes of inner reflection and outer action (Tisdell, 2003, p. xv). These ideas of the spiral in transformative learning speak directly to my own experience of transformation through my heart. In a wonderful synchronicity with my work,<sup>140</sup> Tisdell talks of the “Great Spiral” of development that is “more than a metaphor” (2003, p. 93). She continues by noting how the spiral shape, as a repeating pattern in the universe, weaves its way from the enormity of galaxies in space to the double helix of DNA (2003, p. 93). As she states, it is an appropriate way for understanding development in a transformational learning context (Tisdell, 2003, pp. 93–116).

As individuals living within the universe and subject to these repeating patterns, it is perhaps possible to consider this back and forth motion as manifesting itself in our own lives as, for example, in Jungian terms the tension of opposites – unconscious and conscious. Here we are back to Kripal’s notion of the “human as two” (2010, pp. 59–66). Each and every thing in our lives could be said to demonstrate this dual, spiralling nature, and I suggest, it is the holistic heart which stands as a powerful symbol through which one can comprehend this idea, generating knowledge about the world accordingly, and perhaps helping us to navigate the unfolding dance of life more wisely through the practical application of ‘*heart sense*’. As I consider this idea, the question then arises, how might this rather paradoxical notion be moved from the personal realm of my own story, and applied to the societal, political realms of modern life?

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<sup>140</sup> I did not engage deeply with Tisdell’s work until after I had written chapter five detailing the spiral nature of the heart

## Implications of the holistic heart in relation to transformative learning and conflict resolution

From my experiences in this project, I suggest that the *thought of the holistic heart* is well placed to inform both the discourses of conflict resolution and transformative education. Certainly, I do not see these discourses as mutually exclusive and suggest that they are intimately linked, one dependent upon the other. Similar suggestions have been made by Betts Fetherston and Rhys Kelly at the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK. Between January and June 2006, both these scholars researched the transformative learning potential of conflict resolution studies stating:

From a transformation perspective, CR [conflict resolution] is less about the application of techniques or models for managing conflict, than a search for processes that can make possible myriad transformations of self, self-in-relationships, self-in-society, as well as transformations in the structural realm (Fetherston and Kelly, 2007, p. 264).<sup>141</sup>

In relation to this comment and the inter-relationship of both discourses, I can offer a practical example by demonstrating how, by immersing myself in this project and through the teachings of the holistic heart, my approach towards life has changed, and I no longer see conflict in the same way. As I have changed, so have my relationships in the external world.

It is helpful here to return to Anderson's observation that the "personal is universal" (1998, p. 79). Indeed, as a result of this project I have come to understand that I am part of, and affected by, a much larger and interconnected system, comprised of many layers, simultaneously individual, communal and global (Anderson and Braud, 2011, pp. 7–9). In the language of transformative learning, Formenti and West observe that Mezirow's theory of transformation provides "a starting point for a diverse dialogue across difference" (2018, p. 66) – with 'others'. In this united approach, it is possible to see how my personal narrative could legitimately add value to the dominant narrative towards the

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<sup>141</sup> In their research Fetherston and Kelly do not focus on notions of spirituality, love, compassion, kindness – all benevolent attributes of the heart as I have already outlined.

phenomenon of conflict and its resolution, in a way that has social implications for people suffering in conflict situations and, at a global level, in terms of an approach which could inform our perceptions of life as a world family. Such questioning naturally involves enquiry into one's disposition towards the world, and consequently links back into transformative learning practices.

### **Relevance of the holistic heart in an increasingly conflicted world**

Taking forward the idea that the personal is universal (aware also of the difficulties with this as outlined in the previous chapter), I will now consider the relevance of my study in relation to our increasingly troubled and conflicted world - a world that Formenti and West acknowledge "often seems 'on the brink of catastrophe'" (2018, p. viii). Considering the nature of '*heart sense*' as described earlier, I will reflect on the practical applications of this approach in relation to several real-world case studies. Firstly, by reflecting on West's telling of an incident that happened in the north of England in 2013 (2016, p. 108). At that time, the racist English Defence League (EDL) threatened violence outside a mosque in York (West, 2016, pp. 107–108), foreshadowing conflict and disorder across communities. Deeply troubled, the elders of the mosque decided to do something different to the usual "knee-jerk responses and megaphone diplomacy", and invited some of the leaders of the EDL to "take tea with them,... share concerns and discuss differences" (West, 2016, p. 108). One of the elders, Mohamed El-Gomati is quoted as saying, "When we listened to each other we realised the EDL thought we supported extremist behaviour and the Taliban" (West, 2016, p. 108). West continues by noting that in the telling of each other's stories, these radically different groups began to slowly understand "what they had in common rather than what separated them" (2016, p. 108).

I am taken by how closely the interaction described above *relates in quality* to the process of '*heart sense*' and the approach of the holistic heart in this project. In their difference, both groups met in a space of openness and kindness, were willing to recognise the other, and looked for connections. El-Gomati talks of how both groups listened to each other, changing the narrative and transforming the outcome. It is helpful

here to reflect on the holistic heart and its guidance— specifically, that the potential for conflict is always present, as is the potential for interconnectedness, unity, harmony. This example demonstrates beautifully what can happen when we allow ourselves to dance with the archetypal flow of life – *and commit to keep moving*. In each case, there is give and take; space for the ‘other’ to move into the space and to be seen and heard. Additionally, the benevolent qualities often associated with the heart are important attitudes which portray ways of experiencing and approaching the world.

While West’s example does not mention the heart, the wider implications of this kind of approach, consciously situated within the heart and embodying the heart’s qualities, are profound. Contemplating this further, I am struck by a story reported in the *Boston Globe* in January 2001 (*Talking With the Enemy*, 2005).<sup>142</sup> In the report, six women – three pro-life and three pro-choice – discussed their experiences of meeting over a period of six years. The meetings began because of attacks on two Boston clinics where several workers lives had been threatened, and one worker shot dead. The women had begun to meet in order to “communicate openly with...opponents...to build relationships of mutual respect and understanding” (*Talking With the Enemy*, 2005), to avoid the polarising conflict generated by the press. This process was not easy, but the women agreed to shift their focus away from arguing about their own cause. They said, “knowing that our ideas would be challenged, but not attacked, we have been able to listen openly and speak candidly” (*Talking With the Enemy*, 2005). They talked and listened to each other, understanding that they had irreconcilable worldviews, (as no side changed their stance on abortion over the time of their meeting), but also appreciating each other’s dignity and goodness.

During this process one of the women was quoted as saying, “Embracing this apparent contradiction stretches us spiritually” (*Talking With the Enemy*, 2005). In what could be seen as the action of the holistic heart, the women state, “We’ve experienced something radical and life-altering that we describe in non-political terms: ‘the mystery of love’, ‘holy ground’, or simply, ‘mysterious’” (*Talking With the Enemy*, 2005). While these

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<sup>142</sup> The report is no longer available online via the *Boston Globe*, but is referenced at *Feminist.com* – see reference list for full details

women do not use the term transformation, they are clear that the meetings have changed them. They have learnt to disagree with each other, yet have become clearer in their hearts and minds about their activism, while at the same time contributing “to a more civil and compassionate society” (*Talking With the Enemy*, 2005). While the heart is not mentioned specifically as a key ingredient in their own process of transformation, they do speak of spirituality, holy ground and mystery. Indeed, I suggest that their experiences are strikingly similar to the process described in this thesis of the holistic heart, and I am curious about whether, on reflection, they would state that their hearts were unconsciously involved in these interactions.

While I can only speculate on the answer to this, I return once more to Romanyshyn, Corbin and Hillman’s observations that the heart responds, and creates knowledge about, the world in a different way to the discursive intellect. For example, in the case studies highlighted above, the people concerned appeared committed to enter into a relationship, to create space for each other, and to listen openly, kindly and respectfully to each other. This listening, states Romanyshyn, is “a disposition in which the words the other speaks enter the ear and sink down to the heart before they rise to the brain” (2013, p. 340). In this context, the “capacity to listen is hard work because it is heart work. The capacity to listen requires a change of heart” (Romayshyn, 2013, p. 340). However, I would go further and suggest that it is not the heart that needs changing – the heart has always had the same capacity for seeing the world differently. In this sense, I am making the point that the heart beyond the physical organ needs to be given the opportunity to live again in our modern world. We therefore do not need a change of heart; *we need a change of mind for the sake of our hearts*. Rather than being “jammed up inside our own heads” (Cheetham, 2015b, p. 2), this change of mind *involves us opening up towards the kind of world that the heart makes possible*. In this way, mind and heart can be brought together in reciprocal relationship within ourselves once more, beyond the binary opposition of head versus heart that has haunted the Western world on multiple levels for the past several hundred years.

Perhaps it is now time to consider how engaging with the world through the *thought of the holistic heart*, including its benevolent qualities, might be “epistemologically

advantageous” in helping us approach the world (Jaggar, 1992, p. 162). In the context of feminism, Jaggar draws attention to the fact that Jane Goodall’s scientific contribution to understanding chimpanzee behaviour seems to have been “made possible only by her amazing empathy with or even love for these animals” (1992, p. 162). Jaggar also points to American scientist Barbara McClintock’s (1902-1992) affection, love and empathy for the objects of her research (1992, p. 162).

In relation to this point, it is interesting to consider transformational learning scholar Edmund O’Sullivan’s planetary-wide view of transformative education that encompasses issues including ecology, peace, sustainability and survival. Given the grave challenges that face the human race, O’Sullivan suggests that if we are to survive, “we need new connections to each other and to the natural world” (2012, p. 171). As such O’Sullivan asks, “where might we seek direction regarding change?” (2012, p. 171), continuing to state that, “We need a different conception of how knowledge is going to be garnered in this century” (2012, p. 171). Nowhere in his paper does O’Sullivan mention the heart as a generator of knowledge, but interestingly he continually speaks in terms of wholeness, relationships and interconnection – characteristics of the holistic heart.

This brings me back to the foundational issue of my thesis – specifically, that the heart beyond the biological pump offers us a way of engaging seriously with, and thinking about, ideas of relationship, wholeness and interconnection. Indeed, this is a heart that is just as valid as any other. To paraphrase Romanyshyn, we need the biological heart just as much as we need the courageous heart, the feeling heart (1982, p. 109). All of these hearts live deeply within us, despite our acknowledgement of only one in formal discourse. However, I cannot help but wonder what would happen if we dared to be brave at this pivotal time on our planet, and enquire into the kinds of conversations the holistic heart and ‘*heart sense*’ could make possible in relation to conflict and other challenges. How would our idea of conflict be transformed if we took up the re-imagined heart of this thesis, and brought this heart back into contemporary conversations?

## Limitations of a transformative learning approach in relation to this research project

As Formenti and West state, “engaging in transformative processes must be deeply rooted in real life experience....[requiring] the capacity to listen to our own bodies and their manifold ways of perceiving and knowing, beyond the obvious and visible” (2018, p. 1). While this is something that I have attempted to do in this project, the transformative learning process has not been easy. Firstly, because I did not begin this project carrying a *conscious intention to transform* – and therefore, throughout this process, not only have I experienced a great deal of resistance and inner conflict, but also I cannot state exactly how I developed a different understanding of conflict. Secondly, I was faced with the difficulty of translating my experiences into language that makes sense in the space of the modern academy.

In relation to the first point, because of my unique transformative experience with my heart, I am not in a position to state – “*follow this precise process in order to transform your life and conflict will be resolved.*” However, because of this research I now have a different, more helpful way of engaging with it. Certainly, it is in this sense that I am engaging with the idea of my own transformation around conflict through the symbol and metaphor of the heart. That is, not as an answer or a definite theory that can be applied to any situation, but more as a way-shower, that if taken up, can point towards a different way of seeing, sparking different, creative conversations across multiple realms of life. I find this interesting, because I clearly followed some kind of thread; however, my path was unique, involving deep self-reflection. In relation to this point, Cheetham suggests that it is doubtful that any adequate solutions will be discovered to current conflicts if people are not prepared to do any inner work (2015a, p. 84). However, the conundrum here is that this type of inner work is not something that can be quantified or reduced into a specific process for transformation in relation to conflict that can be applied en masse. Therefore, how can my research project help to educate people for change? Importantly, I contend that *this is not the point of the heart’s way*. Indeed, I suggest that committing to engage with the heart differently becomes the catalyst for

transformation, and consequently each person undergoes an experience unique to her/him, and may, or may not, transform in the process.

In relation to the second point, I am aware how this project could be seen as deeply challenging, particularly when one considers how the academy is generally oriented towards rational, cognitive ways of developing knowledge about the world (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 5). In stark contrast, this project has continually put the heart, and its way of knowing and engaging with the world, first. In this sense, I am under no illusion that my work is different, perhaps even, radical – particularly as the heart, and its associated benevolent qualities, are notably absent from the modern academy (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 4). However, as I reach towards some kind of ending in relation to this part of my work, I am heartened by Formenti and West’s quest to “re-vitalise and re-enchant...engagement with learning” (2018, p. 4).

In this context, my journey with my heart can find a genuine place in the academy. For if engaging with, and developing an understanding of, transformative learning is genuinely valued within the academy, then as already stated, perhaps a more eclectic engagement with transformation, practically demonstrating real change (as in my own case), can enrich theories (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 4). This enrichment could not just inform transformative learning, but has the potential to reach outwards and beyond, *into discourses which may well depend upon human transformation* – specifically, conflict resolution. However, as Formenti and West state, in transformation, learning and education there is “no definitive answer, or final truth” (2018, p. 279). They continue to suggest that:

To learn, in transformative ways, has to do with learning to love our specific objects of enquiry, or at least the quest itself, and to engage our whole self – mind, body, heart, feelings, imagination and soul – in the company of others (2015, p. 280).

Finally, as Formenti and West state, this work must also come with a health warning, because “the jihadi, the storm trooper, and the religious zealot talk of transformation, too” (2018, p. 4). I have already spoken of the importance of continuing to move and to reflect on one’s assumptions. Being aware that anything in life has the potential to move



into fundamentalism is something that one needs to retain in one's awareness, and hence my work should be seen in terms of its wider message. Specifically, *it is the thought of the holistic heart reminds us to keep moving, to keep questioning, while at the same time honouring, respecting and being kind to the 'other'*. The physical motion of the beating heart reminds us that we are always in relationship, dancing between 'others', mutually exchanging energies, and living in a world where ourselves and others are always the 'other' in different perspectives. In the meeting space between others, the holistic heart has the potential to live, and this heart invites us to seek a "more open-ended perspective[s], [and] help us with less destructive, more inclusive journeys" (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 5); wherever these perspectives and journeys may lead.

## **General limitations and additional considerations**

As I have already made clear, I am aware that this work suffers from a lack of practical applications of the *thought of the holistic heart* and '*heart sense*' beyond my own experiences of it. As I have been reflecting upon the personal-political-universal circle in this chapter, it is clear from my research that while I have real-life examples of how embodying the living symbol of the holistic heart at a personal level has supported me to engage with conflict differently, I have not been able to address how this research might specifically inform external 'others' and issues in the wider world – other than in a tentative, philosophical sense based on real-life examples that appear to embody the thought of the heart.<sup>143</sup> In addition to the difficulties already outlined, there are further reasons for this. Specifically, the task of uncovering the heart from its position of subservience in relation to the head, and subsequently learning how to reclaim the heart from its marginalisation in mainstream discourses turned out to be a more complex and in-depth task than I had realised at the beginning of the project.

Also, the task of learning to communicate with my heart through its language of the imagination was a steep learning curve for me. I had to shift out of a rational approach

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<sup>143</sup> However, it is true that my changed behaviour has had an impact on other people in my life. In this sense, it could be said that the *thought of the holistic heart* has influenced people beyond myself.

towards the world in terms of speaking *about* the heart as a distanced observer, to an imaginal approach wherein *I directly participated in a living relationship with my heart*, embedded in an unfolding process that required me to learn a brand new way of being (and subsequently knowing) in the world. Here, I am reminded of Hillman's statement that we are bereft in our modern culture of an adequate understanding of the heart and its way of developing knowledge about the world (2007, p. 6). Learning to understand the heart's way of thinking was consequently not easy, and it took many months of practice with transference dialogues, reveries, walking meditations and working with dreams to begin to comprehend the kind of language that my heart was speaking. I then had to make sense of these experiences, implementing my rational mind, learning an entirely new way of thinking about, and engaging with, the process of life in relation to conflict.

It is at this point that I would like to reiterate this work is not a recipe or guidebook for how someone else can resolve conflict. Rather, I am outlining a *possibility* for experiencing the world, which has to be experienced by each person in their own unique way. In this sense, there is also the inherent possibility that the other person may not experience any kind of transformation in their understanding of conflict and engagement with others. However, I contend that this is also a necessary part of the process of learning to work with the heart. This idea can be seen articulated in educationalist Gert Biesta's "*weakness of education*" (2016, p.x, italics in original). Specifically, Biesta suggests that educational processes and practices do not work in a machine-like way (2016, p.x). Additionally, Biesta argues that the weakness of education should "*not* be seen as a problem that needs to be overcome" (2016, p.x, italics in original), but rather understood as "the very 'dimension' that makes educational processes and practices *educational*" (2016, p.x, italics in original). Applying Biesta's ideas to this project, knowledge generated in communion with the heart might sometimes transform a person or a conflict situation beyond recognition in a life-affirming and positive way. On the other hand, nothing may change; however, this must also be understood to be a valuable dimension of knowledge as generated by the heart, which offers important opportunities for learning. As Biesta states in an educational context, something which cannot be reduced to a machine narrative and therefore cannot offer fixed and certain outcomes always entails "*a risk*" (2016, p.x, italics in original).

Finally, I would like to make clear that in this project the heart is not being considered as superior to the head, from which one creates a whole.<sup>144</sup> For example, there is a danger of proceeding with a monolithic idea that the heart is a better way of making sense of the world because it is considered more loving and emotional due to its inborn characteristics, whereas the head is cold and calculating. I discussed this conundrum in the second chapter, highlighting the different ways that the heart has been understood over many centuries and drawing attention not just to its benevolent qualities, but to other, darker associations. Therefore, my wish for this work is for it to be taken as a *helpful way into creative conversations*. The heart, as with anything in life, has the potential to lead us in strange directions. Everything has its “dignity and disaster” (Wilber, 1998, 22%), and it is up to us to exercise care when taking up the ideas presented in this study. This is why the attentive process of self-reflexivity is so important, ensuring all voices can lend their perspectives to the enquiry. In the case of this project, heart *and* head working together, in, to use British paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott’s (1896-1971) term, a “good enough” way (1971), that endeavours to honour the deep complexity and messiness of the human experience.

## **So what? What does this research mean for our contemporary world?**

From the point of view of the journey that I have undertaken in the project, I suggest that the discovery of the holistic heart matters deeply to the contemporary world. Specifically, as I have demonstrated through the experiences in this project, this heart proposes a model for deepening relationships by revisioning and reimagining rifts across personal, political and universal spheres. In relation to this point, de Witt observes:

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<sup>144</sup> See Samuels (2015, pp. 157-158), who cautions that Jung’s dependence upon complementarity in relation to creating wholeness is suspect. Given Jung’s strong presence in my thesis, I would like to make it clear that I have used Jung’s work specifically as an aid for interrogating the differences that framed the idea of conflict in this work – specifically the uneasy relationship between head and heart, mind and body.

Our world is in dire need of profound change. Our global society is under intense pressure, on many fronts: from collapsing ecosystems and the increasing threat of climate change to sociopolitical tensions and polarization; from poverty, wars, and terrorism, to challenges to food, water, and energy security; and from growing streams of refugees to financial systems that thrive on perverse incentives. Many of these issues are intertwined with each other in complex ways, and some authors therefore argue for addressing these multiple crises as a whole, as a ‘poly-crisis’ (2016, p. 202).<sup>145</sup>

De Witt continues to state that, in addition to changes required at the technological, economical and political levels, we also need to create changes “*within*” (2016, p. 202, italics in original). That is, transformation “in the hearts and minds of people and changes in how we relate to ourselves, each other, and nature” (de Witt, 2016, p. 202). This idea links back to my earlier discussion. Namely, that in order to engage more effectively with each other, it could be helpful to find ways of bridging the gap between self and world, between subject and object, between head and heart, between head, heart and the body as a whole. In short, we must learn how to re-connect (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 267). By placing rational certitude into question (often associated with the mind/head), and cultivating a state of curiosity and openness to uncertainty and mystery (qualities often associated with the heart and the body as a whole), it might just be possible to embrace ourselves as lifelong learners in the unfolding dance of life as we “struggle towards healing, integration and wholeness” (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 269). Indeed, the world is diverse and polarised, full of conflict, dilemmas and paradoxes. Life is forever changing, and as such, we are called to learn how to continually work with these changes in ways that create the best possible conditions for flourishing.

Living more deeply, and experiencing more genuinely through an imaginal approach, I have come to know myself better, understanding how each of us are bound up in broader relationships with the other (Dirkx, 1997, p. 83). Certainly, through *the thought of the holistic heart* and practically applying ‘heart sense’, I have been able to imaginatively engage with the living quality of ‘others’ in the world – understanding how ‘others’ impact me, just as much as I affect ‘others’. Referencing the work of Heidegger, Bachelard and Ficino, Australian educator Peter Bishop states that “a skillful engagement with the imagination brings healing and soul making both to the individual and to the

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<sup>145</sup> de Witt borrows the term ‘poly-crisis’ from philosopher Roy Bhaskar (de witt, p.202)

world. Through an imagination of the heart one can become alive to the beauty of the world” (2010, p. 42). In my own case, through an imaginal approach, my thoughts have extended beyond my personal life, to consider my relationships with the wider world - particularly in the context of social justice and sustainability (Livingstone, 2019b).

Of course I appreciate that others may have different interpretations of the imagination and the organ through which it operates– specifically, in the context of this project, McGilchrist and Jung both view and interpret the imagination in different ways. Additionally, not all scholars of the imaginal regard social, personal or environmental aspects, and neither do all encompass the existential or the sacred (Bishop, 2010, p. 41). As I consider how an imaginal approach and the *thought of the holistic heart* might inform contemporary conversations concerning conflict resolution and transformation, and transformative learning in general, it is helpful to take into consideration Bishop’s observation that contradictory perspectives are a crucial part of an imaginal pedagogy (2010, p. 41). Indeed, the imagination forces the acceptance of contradiction, “of the yes, no, and neither and both, response” (Bishop, 2010, p. 41).

From my own perspective, this is what the *thought of the holistic heart* and ‘*heart sense*’ embodies. This heart does not make a case for, in Bishop’s words, a “new totalizing discourse” (2010, p. 43). It does however, stand as a symbol for the meeting place between different perspectives, different ways of knowing, different voices, different ‘others’, meeting in a loving, open, non-judgemental, kind space for conversation, dialogue and reciprocity. In this space, conflict can be held, learning undertaken, and new scripts written by each character in a myriad of different languages, held within the holistic heart-space - the imaginal theatre of life.

## Concluding thoughts

As I think about the wider applicability of my research, there are many questions arising that I would like to consider beyond this thesis including:

- What practical ways can the approach/way of the holistic heart discovered through this research be applied at the social/political/universal level? What limitations might there be?
- How could the *thought of the holistic heart* and 'heart sense' practically inform discussions in the conflict discourses in particular?
- What place does the *thought of the holistic heart* and 'heart sense' have in transformative education?
- What place does the *thought of the holistic heart* and 'heart sense' have in contemporary narrative generally, in relation to global issues. Specifically, sustainability issues, climate change, ecological degradation, educational and societal breakdown?
- If there is openness in contemporary culture in relation to the practical implications of *thought of the holistic heart* and 'heart sense', might there be a future possibility to develop a pedagogy of the heart?

It is my sincere hope that the life of the holistic heart discovered in this research project will continue beyond the submission of this work, and that together we will be able to continue to investigate the questions posed above. However, as I draw to a close, and I am thinking about how the *thought of the holistic heart* might facilitate more enabling conversations around the phenomenon of conflict, I am struck by my new-found knowledge around conflict itself. Specifically, that conflict seems to be the consequence of an approach which prevents the natural forces and flow of life occurring. As all phenomena in life (whatever they may be, or however they might manifest, at all levels of scale) are in relationship with each other, I have come to understand that an approach which results in closing down the 'other' carries greater potential for the manifestation of conflict than an approach which opens up towards what the 'other' has to offer.

However, conflict is also a part of the spiralling motion of the dance of life, and as such, it may be helpful to contemplate more effective ways of engaging with it that might help all beings, and the planet, to flourish into the future.

Almost fifteen years ago, the heart of my personal experience was “anaesthetised” (Romanyshyn, 2000, p. 173), “exile[d]” (Hillman, 2007, p. 4), “wound[ed]” (Baring, 1998, pp. 342–356), “cold...frozen...dried up...care-less...trivialized...mechanical” (Fox, 1998, p. 326). My heart was not able to live fully (Fox, 1998, p. 326), reduced to fit into a machine narrative, no longer able to respond imaginatively to the calls of the world (Hillman, 2007, pp. 6–7). At the beginning of this project, the very organ that once connected our ancestors to the mystery of life, was “too small” for me to engage fully with the world (Fox, 1998, p. 327). For the past three years of this research project in particular, my heart has willed me to risk myself and venture into unfamiliar territory, into a way of knowing that begins in a turning “where you lose your mind for the sake of the heart” (Romanyshyn, 2001, p. 146). This heart, I have discovered, is infinitely wise, unfathomably mysterious, and, the greatest teacher that I have ever had, transforming my entire outlook on conflict and changing how I engage with the world as a result. By giving space to this heart, I have been able to draw attention to issues in relation to contemporary approaches to knowledge production, re-visioning the heart as a symbol of reconnection to a life of greater depth, creating a valid place for the heart in contemporary discourse in terms of how we generate knowledge about, and engage with, life.

Completing this work, I suggest that the heart stands as an in-built personal reminder of the primordial energy that drives all life, bringing ancient understanding into contemporary times. As I write this I wonder, through the adoption and engagement with the imagining, holistic heart, what other lost ‘others’ or unheard voices might be found that can give us guidance for our modern world? How do we find it within ourselves to genuinely meet the ‘other’? I suggest that the holistic heart and its approach towards the world is a powerful symbol for our times. It proposes a model for deepening relationships, re-visioning and re-imagining deep rifts that we see in social, cultural and ecological terms. In this sense, this heart is a reminder to keep ourselves open to the calls

of a world that needs our loving and careful attention; now more than ever, as we reach towards opening spaces for creative ways of “living in the world, ways of education, of worship, of politics, of economics, of relationships of all kinds, including our relationship to all the earth systems” (Fox, 1998, p. 327). In a rather beautiful and heartfelt observation, similar to McGilchrist’s suggestion that the model we choose to approach the world through determines what we see, Milne states that the world calls us into being and how we live is our reply (2018b).

In this sense, we are called into relationship with the world, to dance with the primordial, spiralling dance of life itself. As such, we need nurturing spaces for interaction, communication, participation and multiple perspectives (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 177), and this is where the *thought of the holistic heart* offers guidance. Indeed, being willing to step into the learning space of the holistic heart, in connection with the rational, mind-based intellect, could help us, at this time of great uncertainty on our planet, to develop knowledge, reflexivity and creativity at all levels and enhance “our ability to learn from different and conflicting views” (Formenti and West, 2018, pp. 177–178). As we move towards the future, is it possible for us to open our imaginations and rational intellect, hearts and minds, and learn from these different, yet equally as important ways of knowing?

As I turn my gaze outwards from this project to consider how my research could make a difference at the political and global level in terms of how we can educate global citizens to engage creatively with increasing planet-wide challenges, it is helpful to consider Tisdell’s observation that to teach for social and personal change, we need to find ways of “engaging people’s hearts and spirits” (2003, p. 18). Indeed, Formenti and West state that a satisfactory theory of adult education and learning must reflect “life as a whole” (2018, p. 169). In this sense, my hope is that my research stands as a genuine move towards exploring how we might learn to educate for transformation in an increasingly changing, conflicted and unjust world by seriously taking up the *thought of the holistic heart* and asking “what different conversations in relation to conflict and other challenges does the holistic heart make possible?”



## Epilogue

If we want...a better world, then surely we also have to listen to the heart?  
(David Malone in 'Heart vs Mind', 2016, 58:00 – 58:20)

As Romanyshyn states in his book *Psychological Life*, “A heart which was really and only a pump could no more have written this work than a courageous heart which failed to pump blood could have written it” (1982, p. 109). This observation beautifully sums up this project. That is, giving space for many different hearts to speak and to demonstrate how important and valid *they all are* in relation to helping me make some kind of meaning in, and consequently facilitate my engagement in, the world. As I reach the end of this work, I understand that the *thought of the holistic heart* does not mean the creation of an ideal, conflict-free existence. Taking seriously and engaging with the *thought of the holistic heart* does, however, mean being willing step into life with one’s whole self and learning to move with what it has to offer in all of its uncertainty and imperfection. Remaining patiently in the present, embedded in life, our hearts release us into the possibility of new spaces for interaction and communication as they respond continuously to the calls of the world in all of its glorious complexity and infinite mystery - inviting us to step into the dance and move with life as best we are able.

I close my eyes and smile. I feel my heartbeat, and at the same time I am moved in an ‘other’ way. Responding, I drop into quiet conversation with my heart, and reflect on our myriad of conversations that have become a regular, and welcome, part of my everyday existence. The experience is much like talking with a trusted friend. For the first time in decades I feel at one with my heart. A sense of deep peace emanates from the centre of my chest and I know it is here we must end – for now. My journey with my heart continues beyond the words printed in this thesis. I am signing off from this work understanding that life is in continual flux, pulling and pushing between different poles. Conflict and peace, highs and lows, heaven and hell, glimpses of the divine and suffering are all part and parcel of the human experience. However, through the heart I have met in this work, and the knowledge I have developed in communion with it, my own daily struggles in life have become a little easier to engage with. I place my palms over my

heart, holding a deep appreciation that the *thought of the holistic heart* invites us to kindly and courageously break free from the rational ties that bind us, risk ourselves, imagine bravely, and step openly into the dance of life with all of its beauty and pain, love and hate, harmony and conflict. We have nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

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*Out beyond ideas of right and wrong, you and me, mind and body, this and that*

*There is a place. I will meet you there.*

*When we respond with our whole selves to the calls of the world, we can lie down together there*

*And laughing, know that the universe is too full to talk about*

*Theories, language, even concepts of 'you' or 'me'*

*Do not make sense any more.*

*With this precious knowledge, how will we meet the world?*

*Where will we go?*

*Who will we all become?*

Louise Livingstone, 2019. Inspired by Rumi's poem *A Great Wagon* (in Barks, 2004, p. 36)

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## **Appendix one: Different hearts that appear in this thesis**

## **The different hearts of this thesis**

Over the duration of this thesis I have connected with numerous different hearts that have each made a significant contribution to the unfolding of my research project. In this sense, each heart has provided me with a different perspective and consequently furnished me with knowledge, understanding and wisdom; moving from the physical heart to the sensory/experiential and beyond. I have therefore taken each heart that I have met as seriously, and as equally as important, as the heart of modern contemporary narrative – that is, the biological heart of science. As there are so many (yet interconnected) hearts making an appearance in this thesis, this appendix is written as a means to support the reader to more easily navigate this project, offering a way to better comprehend the theme of this project and discern the different voices of the heart. This is done specifically with a view to supporting the reader towards a deeper contemplation of the validity of the many different versions of the heart beyond the heart of medical science, in terms of creating knowledge about the world.

The initial stages of my research focussed particularly on two distinct categorisations of the heart – that is, the modern, pumping, worker heart of science, and the feeling, emotional heart of culture (Bound Alberti, 2012; McCormick, 1988, pp.37-38). I have provided a brief outline of each below:

### **The medical heart (heart of science)**

The scientific/medical heart is the heart that I had been educated to know most deeply, and the heart that had impacted my life so profoundly in the early stages of my life in terms of physical health issues. It could be said that this heart was conceptualised in 1628, when William Harvey put forward his concept of pulmonary circulation (Bound Alberti, 2012, p.23; Romanyshyn, 1982, pp.107-113). It is generally accepted that Harvey's theory served to radically transform Western science's view of the heart and the human frame in general (Bound Alberti, 2012, p.23). This change occurred at a time when ideas about the human condition were radically changing, with the mind and body

conceptualised in terms of greater separation, and the former prioritised over the latter as the main source of knowledge (Bound Alberti, 2012, p.23). Perceiving the world in increasingly dualistic terms has helped to change thinking around the nature of reality within society and culture, and has helped to form the basis of our modern worldview (Bortoft, 2010; Del Collins, 2005; Kuhn, 1970; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; McGilchrist, 2012; Tarnas, 2000). In this view, the heart is biological and organic, capable of being measured, controlled and fixed – just like a machine. The heart of science is the heart most generally accepted within contemporary discourse at the political level.

### **The emotional/feeling heart (the heart of culture)**

Due to its positioning in the realm of human experience, rather than as an objectively verifiable organ, this heart assumes many different guises. It is most closely associated with notions of the ‘self’ (Bound Alberti, 2012, pp. 2-3), and the many different ways that the human experience manifests itself in life. In this sense, the emotional/feeling heart is associated with diverse qualities that comprise the human experience:

- Benevolent qualities - this heart is most popularly associated with love, compassion, openness, warmth, kindness (Young, 2002, pp. 381-394; Hoystad, 2007, p. 12; Bound Alberti, 2012, p.3)
- Also associated with courage (Hillman, 2007, p.21), intent, purpose and will (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018)
- Emotions and feelings - in modern parlance, this heart is known as the place of happiness, love and joy; and contrastingly, the place also associated with emotional suffering, pain, heartbreak, sadness (Young, 2002)
- Character traits – people are often judged for their potential to be kind or unpleasant through heart-based metaphors; for example, “kind-hearted”, “heart of stone” (Bound Alberti, 2012), or having a dark heart.

What is interesting about this project is that when I took seriously other hearts beyond the medical heart of science by sincerely opening up to what the heart wished to say to

me, I discovered numerous versions of the heart; all of which offered meaning and a great deal of richness in relation to my unfolding research. By giving legitimacy to the emotional and feeling heart, *more hearts* began to make themselves known. These hearts are categorised thus, and a fuller explication of each provided below:

- **Symbolic heart – comprising sun, centre, labyrinth, circle, feather and scarab beetle**
- **Religious heart – the heart of Buddhism, Sufism and Orthodox Christianity**
- **Holistic heart – subtle and intelligent**

### **Symbolic/metaphoric heart (the esoteric heart)**

In this thesis, the heart spoke to me through symbolic language, particularly when I was involved in active imagination exercises; including dreams, reveries, meditations and transference dialogues. Experiencing the heart in this way led me to deeper, hidden or esoteric insights, given through symbolic and metaphoric language, which was made possible by holding the intention to take seriously the symbolic and metaphoric language that my heart was speaking to me. I have listed the different manifestations of this heart below:

- **Sun** – to many ancient civilisations, the physical and spiritual realms were connected (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p.8). Hermetic philosopher Robert Fludd (1574-1637) drew on this idea and linked the sun with the human heart, which he saw as the centre of the soul (Fideler, 1993, p.246). In esoteric traditions, the sun was the mediating principle between spirit and matter; the human heart as the centre of the soul was therefore understood as “the microcosmic reflection of the life-giving Sun (Fideler, 1993, p.246)
- **Centre** – following on from the previous point in relation to knowledge derived from the ancient principle of correspondences (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p.8), religious philosopher René Guénon states the heart is the organic centre of the human being and can be associated with the ancient symbol of the “Center”



(2004a, p.66). The centre in this sense is a point of departure and culmination where everything issues from it and eventually returns to it (Guénon, 2004a, p.66). In this sense, one can see this movement in the physical movement of the blood around the body, issuing from the heart and returning to it.

- **Labyrinth** – Guénon also suggests that the labyrinth corresponds with the idea of a spiritual centre, as it winds in on itself to a central point (Guénon, 2004a, pp. 200-201). In this sense, the labyrinth has been a significant part of religious traditions across the world since ancient times and corresponds well to the symbolic heart.
- **Circle** – generally understood to be the universal symbol for unity and wholeness (Artress, 2006, p.xxii), a labyrinth usually takes on a spiralling, circular shape. In this sense, the circle can be linked back to the idea of the centre and the heart through the ancient principle of correspondences (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008, p.8)
- **Feather and scarab beetle** - both are central to the ancient Egyptian weighing of the heart ceremony (Andrews, 1994, p.56; Naydler, 1996, p.273). The heart was often weighed against a feather, and the scarab beetle symbolises rebirth. Believing that the heart could think and speak (Taylor, 2010, p. 209), the ancient Egyptians saw it as the seat of the soul and the centre of judgement and the intellect (Hoystad, 2007, p.25; Perloff, 2010, p. 1502). In this sense, the heart was pure and only spoke the truth.

### **Religious heart (the gnostic/intelligent heart)**

In many religious traditions, the heart is not just a physical organ, it is the centre of the human being. It is seen as an organ of spiritual perception (Nasr, 2002, p.37; Versluis, 1999, p.186), where through contemplative prayer, one can meet with the divine.

- **Buddhism** – in Buddhist philosophy, mind and heart are not distinct, and with a peaceful mind and compassionate heart one can shift one's thinking into a different place (Kornfield, 2008)

- **Sufism** – through constant ‘polishing’ of the heart with contemplative prayer, a follower of Sufism has the potential to connect with the divine (Corbin, 1997; Morris, 2005; Vaughan-Lee, 1996)
- **Eastern Orthodox hesychasm** – in this tradition, the central practice is the “prayer of the heart”; specifically, the invocation of Christ in the heart of one’s being (Meslin, 1987, p. 237; Ware, 2002, p.5)

In Orthodox Christianity and Sufism in particular, the heart is not an extension of cognitive mind, but an antenna that receives the emanations of subtler levels of existence (Bourgeault, 2017), ungraspable by the rational mind. Certainly I felt like my own heart was drawing me forward to experience this kind of reality when I walked the labyrinth at Canterbury Christ Church University (I expand on this experience in chapter 4); furnishing me with a deep knowing that there was something more to ordinary reality that was often not available to me in normal day-to-day awareness.

#### **Holistic heart (the medical/emotional/symbolic/metaphorical/subtle/intelligent heart)**

I met this heart towards the end of my thesis. This is a heart that, in my personal experience, brought together all the other hearts previously described, and became something so much more than that. This heart demonstrates through its physical, backwards and forwards, expanding and contracting movement, the spiralling nature of reality, which I took up as a legitimate symbol and metaphor for life supporting me to develop deeper knowledge about the world around me. Applying this idea when in relationship with others (in whatever form these ‘others’ take), helped me to contemplate how the phenomenon of conflict might begin – arising when ‘others’ are not able to fully move into the world in relationship with me and express themselves. When combined with all the other qualities and characteristics of the heart as detailed above, the holistic heart began to support me to navigate my other relationships, and life, with more ease and understanding. This is an intelligent and subtle heart, different from the pumping heart of science, yet paradoxically, also the same.

## **Appendix two: Ethics review checklist**



For Research Office Use ONLY:
Checklist No:
Date Received:

**PROPORTIONATE ETHICAL REVIEW FORM  
ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST**

Your application **must** comprise the following four documents (please tick the boxes below to indicate that each section is complete):

*Ethics Review Checklist*

✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓	✓
✓	✓
✓	✓

*Consent Material(s)*

*Participant Information Material(s)*

*Risk Assessment Form*

*(NB. This **MUST** be signed by your Head of Department/School)*

**Please attach copies of any documents to be used in the study:** (NB: These must be attached where they form part of your methodology)

*Relevant permission letter(s)/email(s)*

*Questionnaire*

*Introductory letter(s)*

*Data Collection Instruments*

*Interview Questions*

*Focus Group Guidelines*

	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Other (please give details):*



## Section B: Ethics Checklist

Please answer each question by choosing 'YES' or 'NO' in the appropriate box. Consider each response carefully:

		Yes	No
1	Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent, or in unequal relationships? (N.B. The list of vulnerable groups is extensive, please consider the answer to this question carefully. If your own staff or students are participants within your research the answer to this question is 'Yes')	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to any vulnerable groups or individuals to be recruited?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without usual informed consent procedures having been implemented in advance? (including but not restricted to; covert observation, certain ethnographic studies, involve the capturing of data from social media sources)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	Will the study use deliberate deception? (N.B. This does not include randomly assigning participants to groups in an experimental design)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Will the study involve discussion of, or collection of information on, topics of a sensitive nature personal to the participants? (including but not restricted to sexual activity, drug use)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (including but not restricted to food substances, vitamins) to be administered to human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Does the study involve invasive or intrusive procedures such as blood taking or muscle biopsy from human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	Is physiological stress, pain, or more than mild physical discomfort to humans or animals, beyond the risks encountered in normal, life likely to result from the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences in humans (including the researcher) or animals beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10	Will the study involve interaction with animals? (N.B. If you are simply observing them - e.g. in a zoo or in their natural habitat - without having any contact at all, you can answer "No")	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13	Is the study a survey or activity that involves University-wide recruitment or a representative sample of students from Canterbury Christ Church University? (N.B. The <a href="#">Student Survey Unit</a> and the <a href="#">Student Communications Unit</a> should be notified of plans for any extensive student surveys (i.e. research with 100 CCCU students or more))	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	Will the study involve participants who may lack capacity to consent or are at risk of losing capacity to consent as defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

15	Will the study involve recruitment of participants (excluding staff) through the NHS?
16	Will the study involve participants (Children or Adults) who are currently users of social services including those in care settings who are funded by social services or staff of social services departments?



NEXT:Please assess outcomes and actions by referring to Section C



## Section C: How to Proceed

Responses to Section B	Next steps
C1. 'NO' to all questions in Section B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete Sections D–F of this form, including attachments as appropriate, and email it to <a href="mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk">red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk</a>.</li><li>• Once your application is assessed, and any follow up action taken, if it is given approval you will receive a letter confirming compliance with University Research Governance procedures. <b><u>No research can be undertaken until this letter is issued.</u></b></li><li>• <b><i>Master's students should retain copies of the form and letter; the letter should be bound into their research report or dissertation. <u>Work that is submitted without this document will be returned un-assessed.</u></i></b></li></ul>
C2. If you have answered 'YES' to <b>any</b> of the questions in Section B, you will need to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your project. This does not mean that you cannot do the study, only that your proposal will need to be approved by a Research Ethics Panel. <b>Depending upon which questions you answered 'YES' to, you should proceed as below:</b>	
a) 'YES' to any of <b>questions 1 – 12 ONLY</b> (i.e. not questions 13,14 or 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>DO NOT complete this form.</u></b></li><li>• Submit an application to your Faculty Ethics Panel (FEP) using your Faculty's version of the <a href="#">Application for Faculty Research Ethics Panel Approval Form</a>. This should be submitted to your faculty as directed on the form.</li></ul>
b) 'YES' to <b>question 13</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You have two options:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) If you answered 'YES' to <b>question 13 ONLY</b> you must send copies of this form (including attachments) to the <a href="#">Student Survey Unit and the Student Communications Unit</a>. Subject to their agreement you may then proceed as at C1 above.</li><li>(ii) If you answered 'YES' to <b>question 13 PLUS any other of questions 1 – 12</b>, you must proceed as at C2(b)(i) above and then submit an application to your Faculty Ethics Panel (FEP) as at C2(a).</li></ul></li></ul>
c) 'YES' to <b>questions 14 and 15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You <b><u>DO NOT</u></b> need to submit an application to your Faculty Ethics Panel (FEP).</li><li>• <b><i>INSTEAD</i></b>, Please use the <a href="#">HRA decision making tool</a> and proceed according to the instructions given.</li><li>• Applications must be signed by the relevant faculty Director of Research or other nominated signatory prior to submission.</li><li>• A satisfactory peer review must be completed.</li><li>• Once approval is given, you must send a copy to the relevant FEP.</li></ul>
d) 'Yes' to <b>question 16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If your study involves users of social services or social services staff you may need to undertake different processes:</li><li>• If your study involves carers of people receiving NHS care or treatment please follow the <a href="#">HRA decision making tool</a> and process outlined in c) above</li><li>• If your study involves local social services staff or service users who are children or adults you should complete an application for full internal approval and also</li></ul>



contact the relevant Research and Governance manager of the local authority or authorities involved for management approval to attach to your application.

- If your study involves more than three local authority children's social services sites you will need to apply to the Association of Directors of Children's Social Services for approval
- If your study involves four or more adult social services sites you will need to apply to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Service for approval.

## Section D: Project Details

D1. Project title:	How can the thought of the heart offer effective ways of engaging with conflict? An imaginal and reflexive study
D2. Start date of fieldwork	20/10/2018
D3. End date of fieldwork	31/03/2019
D4. Project summary  (This should be written in plain English avoiding overly academic language and acronyms)	<p>Include information for each of these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the purpose of your project?</li> <li>• Briefly explain your methodology in lay terms i.e. What are you doing and how are you doing it?</li> <li>• Who are the participants?</li> <li>• What will the participants be expected to do?</li> <li>• How will the participants be recruited?</li> <li>• What are the intended outcomes of your research?</li> </ul> <p><i>My project is exploring the idea that heart knowing is a vitally important human capacity which has, over the course of many hundreds of years, been divorced from, and rendered subservient to, knowledge about the world as generated through the brain. I suggest that this move not only carries the potential to cause conflict, but in addition prevents contemporary society from engaging in creative ways of engaging with conflict. My research suggests that there is room for, and a growing need to, reconsider conflict and our interactions with conflict situations, through a more expansive, heart-centred lens.</i></p> <p><i>I am taking an imaginal and reflexive approach. By imaginal, I am referring particularly to depth psychologist Robert Romanyshyn's imaginal method which includes taking seriously knowledge generated through reverie, dream analysis and transference dialogues. This is a deeply personal and transformative process, similar to the Jungian idea of individuation. By reflexive, I am referring particularly to the approach that religious philosopher Jeffrey Kripal uses - namely, engaging with academic research by reflecting on it through his own personal narrative. Kripal method involves never remaining with one specific answer but continually reflecting upon and questioning his assumptions in order to move into deeper ways of participating with his work. I am also using auto/biographical methodology, bringing in personal narrative.</i></p> <p><i>There are no participants in my research. I am planning to reflect on my research discoveries, explaining from a personal perspective how heart knowing is helping me to engage more effectively with conflict situations (specifically with reference to a close friend, and in relationship with a family member – who will be completely anonymised, as will the situations. These people will not be able to recognise themselves from what I write). I shall be expanding on how my research has helped me personally to engage differently with these relationships and transform conflict. I will suggest how personal experience of engaging differently with conflict could inform conflict situations beyond the personal, to the political and universal realm (following the ideas of transpersonal psychologists Anderson and Braud). The relevant chapter that this research covers will be written as personal reflection/fictional narrative.</i></p> <p><i>The participants are not expected to do anything.</i></p> <p><b><i>I am not recruiting any participants. Therefore please note that the consent forms and participant information are not required for this research.</i></b></p>

## Section E: Data protection

The [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) applies to the processing of personal data across the EU. It builds on the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998, which has been replaced by the DPA 2018. The GDPR introduces stringent requirements for protecting data and much greater accountability. It gives individuals more control over their personal data.

E1. Personal data Will Personal Identifiable Information (also defined as personal data) be collected and/or processed?

**NO**

*If you are in doubt, please refer to the guidance - [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#)*

- If you answered 'YES' to the question above please complete the rest of this section providing as much detail as possible using the guidance questions. *This should be written in plain English avoiding overly academic language and acronyms. It must contain as much information as possible on how your research will comply with the GDPR.*
- If you answered 'NO' to the question above and having read the guidance are sure that no personal data will be collected or processed please move on to section F.

E2. Data collection

- *What personal data will be collected? And what is the reason for this?*
- *What is the lawful basis for the collection and processing of personal data? N.B This is likely to be consent but not in all cases! Please use the lawful basis tool produced by the ICO to determine, if you are in doubt: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/resources-and-support/getting-ready-for-the-gdpr-resources/lawful-basis-interactive-guidance-tool/>*

E3. Subject access requests

- *What arrangements in place related to any actions required to respond to individual requests for access to their personal data (Subject Access Requests)? i.e. How are you ensuring that personal data can be quickly and easily extracted from the system and/or redacted?*
- *If consent is your lawful basis, will participants be able to withdraw consent at any stage of the research? What is the process for this? What is the cut-off date for withdrawal?*

E4. Data access & sharing

- *Who will have access to the personal data? Any third party involvement? For students this will include your supervisor and examiner as a minimum.*
- *Please list and define the roles of any third party organisations (including software providers or partner organisations) with an involvement in the processing of the personal data.*
- *Have you ensured that all third party involvement in the processing of data is covered by a Data Sharing Agreement (with a data controller) or a Data Processing Agreement (with a data Processor)? (Please refer to CCCU guidance for further information.) <https://cccu.canterbury.ac.uk/governance-and-legal-services/the-general-data-protection-regulation/data-sharing.aspx>*

- *Is this an international project? Will personal data be shared outside of the EEA? What safeguards are in place?*
  
- E5. Participant recruitment, privacy & confidentiality
  - *Are you using social media to recruit participants? How have you ensured the security surrounding your use of personal data in social media activities? How are you gaining consent? How are you informing participants of how their personal data will be used?*
  - *Are you undertaking any activities that could create privacy concerns for individuals due to personal intrusion? How will this be mitigated and addressed?*
  - *How will you ensure confidentiality? Please identify and list all the risks which could lead to a data breach.*
  
- E6. Data quality
  - *What processes do you have in place to check the dataset received or processed is, and will continue to be, relevant, adequate and not excessive?*
  
- E7. Data storage
  - *Where and how will personal data be stored? Have you consulted with the IT department in order to verify if they can offer a valid solution?*
  - *If stored external to CCCU systems, how are you ensuring that personal data is safely stored, processed and disposed of securely when no longer needed?*
  - *How long will personal data be kept/stored for? In what format will this be?*



### Section G: Declaration

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's [Health and Safety policy](#) and has been approved and signed by the relevant Head of School/Department.
- I certify that my project proposal and methodology has been subject to 'peer review' commensurate with the level of that research. For students this will be carried out by the supervisor and for staff by an appropriately qualified person independent of the research proposed.
- I certify that any required Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the Canterbury Christ Church University [Research Governance Handbook](#).
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Ethics Panel and [Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk) of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the research over the course of the project. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the **Contracts & Compliance Manager** at [Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk) in the **Research and Enterprise Integrity and Development Office** when the proposed study has been completed.
- I have read and understood the relevant University documentation relating to [Data Protection and the GDPR](#) and I am aware of my legal responsibility to comply with the terms of the GDPR and appropriate University policies and guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the **Research and Enterprise Integrity and Development Office** and **the relevant Faculty** and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the GDPR and appropriate University policies.

As the Principal Investigator for this study, I confirm that this application has been shared with all other members of the study team	(please tick) ✓
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Principal Investigator	Supervisor or module leader (as appropriate)
Name: Louise Livingstone Date: 29/10/18	Name: Angela Voss Date: 29/10/18

#### Section H: Submission

This completed form along with all relevant documents should be sent as an attachment to a covering email, to [Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:Red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk).

Please allow at least 4 weeks from the point that a completed submission is sent to the relevant Ethics Chair to receive an outcome.

**N.B. YOU MUST include copies of the Participant Information materials and Consent Materials that you will be using in your study. Model versions on which to base these are appended below for your convenience – please note that if you choose to create your own forms then you must ensure that all relevant confidentiality and data protection information is included. If any required information is omitted your application will be returned to you for further action. Copies of any data gathering tools such as questionnaires or focus group guidelines, and a COMPLETED & SIGNED HEALTH & SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT FORM must be submitted. Guidance on completing your H&S Risk Assessment can be found [here](#).**

## CONSENT FORM

### NOT NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT

**Title of Project:**

**Name of Researcher:** *<Please include the names of the principal investigator and any co-researchers if relevant>*

**Contact details:**

Address: *[Use CCCU postal address preceded by your Faculty]*

Tel: *[Avoid the use of a personal mobile/telephone number. Use professional telephone number or for students the CCCU main number followed by your supervisors extension.]*

Email: *[Use your CCCU email address]*

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.


*[If your methodology includes any audio or visual recordings, please add in another tick box above stating that the participant agrees to be recorded. If it will not be possible to remove an individual from the recordings in the event of withdrawal (e.g. group session recording) please state this clearly]*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant:                      Date:                      Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent      Date:                      Signature:  
*(if different from researcher)*



Researcher:

Date:

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Copies:      1 for participant,      1 for researcher

<Insert - **TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT**>

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET-**

**NOT NEEDED FOR THIS PROJECT**

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by <your name and (if relevant) the names of any co-researchers>

**Background**

<Set out the background to your study and the main aims, taking care to use plain English and avoid using overly academic language, technical terms and acronyms. Is this a funded research project? Please state here who the funder is and any third parties you will be working with on the project. Remember that the language you use here must be clearly understood to allow informed consent to be given>

**What will you be required to do?**

Participants in this study will be required to <list what will be required of them – sufficient detail to allow informed consent is required>

**To participate in this research you must:**

<Give a bullet point list of the eligibility criteria for participation in the study>

**Procedures**

You will be asked to <give details of what you want your participants to do e.g. complete an online questionnaire, take part in a focus group. What, when, how, where etc>

**Feedback**

<Give details of any feedback that you will provide to participants>

**Confidentiality and Data Protection**

On the legal basis of <state the legal basis – this is likely to be consent but not always> all data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's own data protection policies. No unrelated or unnecessary personal data will be collected or stored. The following categories of personal data will be processed <state the personal data categories that will be collected and processed>. Personal data will be used <state how personal data is to be used>. Data can only be accessed by <state whom; this will normally be at least the same person(s) listed in the initial paragraph of this sheet and any co-researchers. For students it will also include your supervisor and examiner as a minimum. Please also state here if data will be transferred outside of the European Economic Area (EEA)-if this is the case provide details of the recipients and the reason for this>.

After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed) and held for a period of <state how long the data will be held for after the completion of the project. CCCU recommends 5 years>.

### **Dissemination of results**

*<Explain, if known, how the results of the study will be published or otherwise disseminated. Any PhD or MA thesis will be published in the CCCU library and that should be referenced here>*

### **Deciding whether to participate**

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to (i) withdraw consent at any time without having to give a reason, (ii) request to see all your personal data held in association with this project, (iii) request that the processing of your personal data is restricted, (iv) request that your personal data is erased and no longer used for processing.


### **Process for withdrawing consent**

You are free to withdraw consent at any time without having to give a reason. To do this *<state the process for withdrawal here. This may be as simple as the participant sending an email, or it may be more complex in the case of online surveys, audio and visual recordings etc>*

### **Any questions?**

Please contact *<name of lead researcher>on<CCCU phone and CCCU email contact details; avoid giving personal contact details. Give the name of your University Department and its mailing address. For students please also include your supervisors contact details here>*


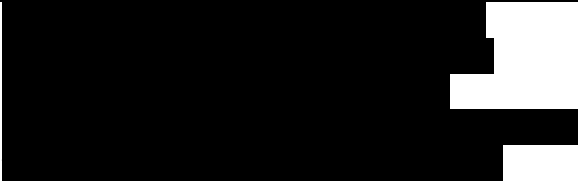
## **Appendix three: General risk assessment**

<i>DATE of Asses</i>	<b>HEALTH ANDSAFETY - RISK ASSESSMENT</b>	<i>ASSESSMENT No</i>	SCES
<i>Assessed by (</i>		<i>DEPARTMENT name or code:</i>	School of Childhood and Education Sciences
<i>NATURE OF ACTIVITY:</i>	Reflective writing on my own experience of engaging with conflict situations in relation to what I have learnt through my research thus far. Explaining, from a personal perspective, how heart knowing has supported me, on a practical level, in engaging more effectively with conflict situations (specifically in reference to a close friend, and in relationship with a family member).		<i>DATE OF ACTIVITY:As soon as possible</i>
<i>LOCATION:</i>	Eg18 – Postgraduate Room	<i>NEXT REVIEW DATE:</i>	[maximum 3years after date of assessment]
<i>Approved by</i>		<i>APPROVAL DATE:</i>	20/11/18

Hazard	Persons at Risk& Nature of harm	Current Control Measures	Risk Rating Severity x Likelihood	Additional Control Measures Required (Further action required)	Revised Risk Rating	Action by who	Action by when	Date action completed
Individuals included via personal reflection may be able to be identified by readers including themselves. If not in name due to anonymising this could still be possible through the kinds of details that are included.	Friend/family member	As this kind of research is potentially very sensitive, steps will be taken to mediate the aforementioned hazard by omitting identifying details in the narrative and anonymising individuals. The narrative will be told as a fictional story, distancing myself from the actual lived experience itself – ensuring the protection of everyone involved. Indeed, approaching my research in this way will help to protect both the individuals in the story, and myself, as much as possible from any adverse repercussions from the sensitive nature of this work.	1 - Low	Due to the nature of this project it is difficult to define further control measures. As already highlighted, the way of controlling any potential hazards will be carried out by omitting identifying details in the narrative and anonymising individuals to protect both the individuals in the story, and myself. Distancing in the narrative is imperative, and I will be enlisting the support of my supervisors to ensure that I achieve this satisfactorily.	1-Low	Louise Livingstone  Angela Voss	March 2019	September 2019

Hazard	Persons at Risk & Nature of harm	Current Control Measures	Risk Rating Severity x Likelihood	Additional Control Measures Required <i>(Further action required)</i>	Revised Risk Rating	Action by who	Action by when	Date action completed
There is also an ethical risk in exposing self.								

**All members of staff and where relevant students affected by this risk assessment are to sign and date to confirm they have read and understood it and will abide by it.**

NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Louise Livingstone		28/10/2018
Angela Voss		28/10/2018

## **Appendix four: CCCU compliance letter**



14 December 2018

Ref: 18/EDU/02C

Louise Livingstone  
c/o School of Childhood and Education Studies  
Faculty of Education

Dear Louise,

**Confirmation of ethics compliance for your study - *How can the thought of the heart offer effective ways of engaging with conflict? An imaginal and reflexive study***

The Faculty Ethics Chair has reviewed your Ethics Review Checklist application and appropriate supporting documentation for the above project. The Chair has confirmed that your application complies fully with the requirements for proportionate ethical review, as set out in this University's Research Ethics and Governance Procedures.

In confirming compliance for your study, you are reminded that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the *Research Governance Framework* (<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research-and-consultancy/governance-and-ethics/governance-and-ethics.aspx>) and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing, if appropriate, information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course should be notified via email to [red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk) and may require a new application for ethics approval.

It is a condition of compliance that you must inform [red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk) once your research has completed.

Wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Tracy

Tracy Crine  
Contracts & Compliance Manager  
Email: [red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk)

CC Dr Angela Voss

Research & Enterprise Integrity & Development Office

Canterbury Christ Church University  
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[www.canterbury.ac.uk](http://www.canterbury.ac.uk)

Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Vice Chancellor and Principal

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