

POETIC LEADERSHIP:
A TERRITORY OF AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND CHANGE

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POETIC LEADERSHIP: A TERRITORY OF AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND CHANGE

A DISSERTATION THAT INTRODUCES A NEW THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT OF LEADERSHIP BASED ON AESTHETIC MORALITY AND VALUES GROUNDED WITHIN CONSCIOUSNESS RESEARCH.

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Rescued dogs rule!

This dissertation is respectfully and lovingly dedicated to my parents,

Duane Frank Kasten, Ph.D (1932-1969)

and

Mary Lou Sophia Kasten (1931-2007)

*Look well unto this day,
For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course
Lie all the verities and realities of your existence:
The bliss of growth
The glory of action
The splendor of beauty
For yesterday is but a dream
And tomorrow only a vision
But today well lived makes yesterday a dream of happiness
And tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore to this day.
Such is the salutation to the dawn.
- Kalidasa
Written sometime between 170BC and 634AD.*

Abstract

Poetic leadership is a new theoretical construct that views leadership as an activity that unites a lyrical intellect with keenly felt emotion for the purpose of producing changes in the consciousness of self and others. This change begins within the interiority of self, moving surely to broader realms of one's surroundings and society, provoking movement that impacts the developing potential of the individual and the cultural milieu in which they exist. Emotion is the primary trace into consciousness used in this dissertation, which serves to unite experiences of the heart with experiences of the mind. The unification of these disparate parts of self provides the foundation for the aesthetic experience, which transcends temporal and cultural boundaries, and, when consciously produced within the self, produces a poetic consciousness which in turn allows for the experience of poetic leadership. As activity that is situated within the experience of individual consciousness, yet is directed to external concerns, poetic leadership moves deeply into the territory of the group. Group consciousness thus becomes a concern, and so is defined as a scholarly construct unique to the field of leadership and change. Influence, ethical conduct, and cultural responsibility are all examined as key considerations impacting group processes, and are situated as primary concerns of poetic leadership processes. : "The electronic version of this dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center,

www.ohiolink.edu/etd."

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Prologue

The impulse to bring a theoretical dissertation to life begs the question, “why?” The answers, of course, lie within the interiority of one’s own being. Perhaps the renowned physicist, David Bohm, put it best when describing why scientists seek out new discoveries. “...he wishes to find in the reality in which he lives a certain oneness and totality, or wholeness, constituting a kind of harmony that is felt to be beautiful.” And so it is that all of the acts of creation that have gone into this dissertation, the reading, the reflecting, the discussions with dear mentors, and the writing, have been inextricably linked with the feeling of beauty.

It is this feeling that impelled me to take my first steps into the domain of theory, even though the company in our academic field is daunting. I have studied the masters of the Leadership domain with some awe, fully cognizant of the fact that we have quite an array of giants shaping this fledgling field.

James MacGregor Burns, the Grandfather spirit whose work in many ways has launched this field, has been a particularly influential voice for me. When I first tackled his seminal work, *Leadership*, I found myself taking an inordinate amount of time to assimilate the complex linkages and analysis that he presented. Each line of thought seemed to weave an intricate web that turned into a starting point for a myriad of others. His ideas of transformational leadership particularly drew me, for

once I began to understand the scope of his vision I came to realize that leadership activity, in its highest manifestation, is about striving for the uppermost regions of humanity.

Ron Heifitz and Marty Linksy have also been quite influential in these formative years, having introduced the gracefulness of genuine voice and deeply human experience as elements that must make up the foundations of genuine leadership activity. Marty Linksy's story of seeking out a church on the eve of Rosh Hashanah because no synagogue was available was particularly moving to me. He relates his experience of entering the 600 year old Anglican church along with his wife, and sitting, as a Jewish man, facing Jesus. In *Leadership on the Line* (2002), he shares how he confronted his feelings of alienation from the Christian tradition, and how he realized that Reb Jesus' message was about vulnerability. "That's the message," he writes, "that's [the] learning of the sacred heart – the willingness to feel everything, everything, to hold it all without letting go of your work. To feel, as Reb Jesus felt, the gravest doubt, forsaken and betrayed near his moment of death. To cry out like King David in the wilderness, just when you desperately want to believe that you're doing the right thing, that your sacrifice means something."

In their reflections on a Sacred Heart, Heifitz and Linksy opened new doors of understanding for me. For the first time, I understand that concerns of the soul, and the desire to reach out and embrace the sacred, had a central place in academic life.

This realization has proven to be quite humbling, and I am increasingly convinced that the ability to act out of vulnerability, and with an awareness of the sacred, sets the stage for one's ability to accurately analyze and respond to situations that beg for leadership activity. The ability to accurately diagnose and act upon a problem (Type I, II or III?) to distance oneself by getting on the balcony, to think politically, and to understand the difference between allies and confidants, all stem from this foundation.

Howard Gardner, too, has been a seminal thinker for me, with his cognitive theory of leadership. It has been he who has helped me to understand the difference between acting as a leader and embodying leadership, and the importance of consistency and congruency in action. Such traits, I have learned, go into the makeup of authenticity in action, which is, of course, a hallmark of effective leadership activity. His conceptualization of Ordinary, Innovative and Visionary leadership has helped me make better sense of the existence of different kinds of leaders, and has encouraged me to live in my world in a more analytical and thoughtful way.

The theory of Servant Leadership, from Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990), opened my eyes to the potential beauty of leadership practice and encouraged me to consider that great acts of leadership could come from non-formal, sometimes surprising, individuals and practice domains. His positioning of a deep and compelling call to ethical action in the face of need has always spoken to me of the

importance of developing the capacity for seeing, taking in and coping with injustice, suffering and despair. The differentiation between those who would serve first, versus those who would lead first, has been an important touchstone for me. Servant Leadership has taught me, when considering the capacity and potentials of a leader, to always ask, “Does she seek first to lead, or to serve? Does he desire to make things better, or to hold power?”

Peter Northouse provided a very scholarly introduction to the broad array of components that go into the conceptualization of leadership and leadership activity, presenting an excellent overview and analysis of leading theories and thinking on this very broad topic in *Leadership, Theory and Practice* (2004). His analysis of trait, situational, skill, and style approaches to leadership requires genuinely critical thinking, and I finished his book with not only a better understanding of leadership, but with an increased capacity to genuinely analyze multiple perspectives at once.

I do wish that Northouse would consider that leadership activity includes attention to the creation of situations in the same way that it includes attention to the achievement of goals. The ability to foster the development of a situation is an activity that is critical to the development of individuals as well as systems, and introduces an important new element to our perceptions of the purpose of leadership. Perhaps in the next edition of *Leadership, Theory and Practice*, he will give this idea due consideration.

The wisdom of voices from the past and the importance of historical antecedents regarding leadership came from John Gardner (1912-2002), who PBS referred to as the quintessential American Hero. A former marine officer who served during World War II, he was also a former Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, captain of industry, political strategist at national and international levels, university professor, and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President John F. Kennedy, Gardner provides a compelling vision of leaders and leadership from a perspective bound by experience at the national and international levels of politics and industry, and governed by an unwavering commitment of service to our nation. His extraordinary background is surely present in his idea of dispersed leadership, which encourages the development of leadership capacity at virtually every level of society, and in the importance of leadership teams.

Of greatest interest to me, however, has been his focus on the importance of renewal. To Gardner, fostering this process is one of the primary tasks of leadership. His concepts of helping people renew themselves through the development of new skills and the “release of talent and energy”, combined with his sense of the need for organizational flexibility, helped encourage me to carry a deep spirit of inquiry and attentiveness to my work world, which, of course, is linked inextricably to my own leadership activity. Most importantly, his work has reminded me to continuously renew myself, my outlook, and views. In reflection, it seems to me that the capacity

for authentic renewal, the thoughtfulness that it requires, coupled with the activity of change, is in reality an act of love. For it takes time and consideration and care to bring about, and who would put such time into an effort that was not cherished?

The pursuit of this dissertation has been an act of personal renewal, impelling me to deeper and broader reaches of self, and scholarship and spirit. And, in choosing to follow the trail of theoretical work, I have found myself in a magnificent territory of ideas and possibilities, of creativity and conundrums. “It is a life’s work, to develop a theory,” Carolyn Kenny, my Dissertation Chair and mentor, has impressed upon me. And in reaching to grasp this guidance I have indeed come to see that a true marriage of scholarship, intellect and soul is the journey, and perhaps the calling, of a lifetime.

Setting out upon the path I found myself immediately confronted by a myriad of branches in the road. Which direction was true for the nature of my quest? For I have been on the trail of poetics and consciousness, a frontier that has long beckoned for my presence. Certainly the grandfather of theoretical tradition, the deductive-nomological path, with its origins in the scientific tradition and practice that demanded the creation of a set of laws derived from observable data, was not suitable. Nor were any branches of theory that were law oriented in content. For the explication of poetic processes, and the weaving together of meaning of multiple theories and definitions of consciousness is a task that lies in an exceedingly nebulous domain, and the generalizing function of law oriented theory does not fit well in this

territory. The construct of the idealizing notion of theory, with its emphasis on creating structures of probability operating out of axiomatic systems, also fails to work with this material. The broad scope of inquiry into processes and structures of consciousness preclude this approach, as does the purely subjective experience of poetics.

The constructivist view of theory, with its emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge from the everyday experience, was, perhaps, a better fit. The idea that meaning is constructed from experience, and that such meaning has validity, was certainly compelling. Here theory was not bound to the explication of an axiomatic model, but was concerned instead with contextual understanding and the ability of this understanding to inform our human experience and view of the world. Yet critical theory (from the social science perspective), with its emphasis on a communicative ethic aimed at societal change, was also compelling. And, lo and behold, critical theory from a literary perspective, with its emphasis on establishing and enhancing aesthetic understanding, added another dimension for consideration. Hans-Georg Gadamer, with his beautiful explanation on the importance of linking the experience of truth with aesthetic experience, brings this perspective to vibrant life. And so this dissertation should be read through the lens of critical theory that bridges both the social science and literary tradition. This is appropriate, as the subject matter bridges these domains as well.

And the subject matter! The stuff of consciousness and poetics has twined around and through me with compelling intensity, and I have, at last, in the bringing forward of this dissertation, given reason and purpose to this lifelong fascination. It has been with me since early memory, the desire to seek out and understand these mysterious entities, ever since I first read the poems that my father cherished, his collection of First Nations prayers, his books on psychology and Buddhism.

The desire to make meaning out of experience was fostered through a life lived alone with my mother after my father's untimely death in 1969. She struggled with full blown bi-polar disorder and psychosis from the time of his death onward, taking us on a spiraling journey from upper-middle class respectability to near destitution. At 16, as a ward of the state, missing years of formal education, and with my mother institutionalized by the courts, I was convinced my plummet to the bottom of existence was complete. Only with later maturity and wisdom would I come to understand that I had been gifted with circumstances that taught me to survive, and then live gracefully with complexity and chaos. (And herein lies the connection to leadership, for isn't this an important activity of leadership and change, and one worth sharing?) I will remain humbled by the price of this gift, which was paid by my mother's innocent soul.

The lives and gifts of both my parents came to me in a new light recently, just as I was finishing the final chapter of this dissertation. I realized, with a certain sense

of wonder and amazement (partially from the thick headedness that had kept me from perceiving it before) that the Sanskrit inscription on my parent's tombstone, which, until so recently had been my father's alone, is a poem.

It is the Salutation to the Dawn, that opens this dissertation, and it was dear to my father. It has been his enduring legacy to me, and as such, it has been enough.

And so I have come full circle in this extraordinary journey, and I realize with humility the love that has ever surrounded me and that has followed me through all of my years. And so it is in the spirit of love and beauty that this work has unfolded.

(And look, another journey is already beckoning, just across the morning horizon!)

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः
तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि
धीयो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Gayatri Mantra, in the original Sanskrit.

The Journey Begins

The tumultuous nature of our world today offers a multitude of challenges to negotiate that no other generation has ever encountered. The phenomena of globalism, and the associated political and economic realities of uneven resource distribution and consumption rates between and across nations is a hallmark of this new era. Bound up in this situation is the reality of world-wide terrorist networks that threaten the security of developed nations and the stability of developing ones, pending pandemics of unimaginable proportions that can travel quickly due to human mobility, and the ever looming potential of environmental catastrophe driven by skyrocketing utilization rates of natural resources, most notably fossil fuels.

The Need for a New Leadership Construct

In our day to day world we are now inextricably bound to a global communications system that functions twenty-four hours a day, and that invites us into the far reaches of the most remote places known to humankind. The speed of our communications has increased more than a hundred-fold within the past five decades, and is now developed to the point where it has triggered neurological adaptations within our very bodies (Restak, 2004); we process visual information with greater speed than ever before, and have developed capacities to rapidly sift through enormous amounts of data that continually flow around us, categorizing and ordering it in a manner that helps us to understand our fluctuating world. These data present us with information on social, religious, cultural, economic and political systems that challenge, contradict, or complement our own, demanding that we develop ever more complex capacities for understanding and negotiating our world.

In this era of post-modern disarray the presence of leadership is vital, yet the dearth of it resonates all around us. Chaotic political situations habitually bring forth leaders who function from fear or the desire to dominate, leading to self-serving power grasping or heavy-handed policy that serves a privileged few. We are continually surrounded by scandal that becomes headline news, corruption that insults daily life and financial well-being, a health care system on the brink of collapse and corporate practice that often functions for the purpose of short term

profit for a privileged few rather than long term stability that benefits the general economy.

The complexity, tragedy and pending potential of the current era demands the emergence of a new type of leader and a new practice of leadership, one that is suited to the rapidly shifting political and organizational structures that comprise modernity today. Such leadership needs to live in keen awareness of the habitual chaos, pending threat, and ever-present opportunities all around us, which are bound together by a network of nations with fluid and fluctuating alliances and boundaries, and shifting political and economic realities that are frequently highly unstable and volatile.

Of course this situation seeps into the living of daily life, and the individual person is now living in a milieu of shifting and often competing realities, some of which appear to be frightening or even dangerous. Such a world can often appear to be tremendously overwhelming, and it is all too easy to want to isolate oneself and hope the troubles and turmoils will disappear. In the United States such a desire is often particularly compelling, as we live in an affluent world that allows for the distance and isolation of privilege.

The artistry of a type of leadership that is compelling enough to reach around such boundaries must be powerful indeed, as it must negotiate, embrace and diffuse the tensions of a rapidly shifting world and the pending fear associated with this movement, all the while seeking out and embodying solutions to problems and crisis that are both old and new. It is the purpose of this dissertation to offer a new

construct of leadership, Poetic Leadership, that is matched to the world of today, that is grounded in tradition and wisdom practices from eras of long ago, and that reaches past them to establish a bridge into the bold and unstable realities of the present. As a theoretical dissertation this work will offer a new way conceptualizing the practice of leadership, and a new way of understanding the power, purpose and practice of leadership activity.

Considerations of Consciousness

As this work is bound by the shifting sands of post-modernity, with its tumultuous nature and vast inclusiveness, it begins with concern for the development of effective strategies for living and leading in unsteady states of existence. This leads to considerations of ways of being, and, deeper still, places and planes of consciousness itself. Chapters two and three deeply explore the relevance of consciousness to the domain, practice and activity of leadership, and ultimately explore the potential for the existence of a poetic consciousness. This potential is defined and situated within other research efforts currently underway that cross a wide variety of scholarly traditions.

The construct of poetic consciousness that provides the foundation for poetic leadership also has its origins in the seminal work on leadership produced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. It was during this year that he published his seminal work *Leadership*, which would revolutionize thinking regarding this alluring yet elusive topic. He received a National Book Award for his efforts, and the praise of

contemporaries and colleagues who recognized a lifetime of intellectual achievement in his work. Hailed as an “important book” with “implications regarding the future of democracy”, *Leadership* helped to define a new interdisciplinary academic and practice domain. Amidst the acclaim and accolades, however, it was easy to overlook some of the more revolutionary knowledge claims that Burns put forward. Perhaps the most future-oriented of these claims relate to consciousness itself, an entity whose study in the 1970’s was viewed as disreputable and a pursuit that rested far outside of acceptable academic domains (Damasio, 1999). It is not surprising, then, that these claims were largely ignored in the examination of Burn’s work.

There are two knowledge claims in particular that draw attention to the pursuit of consciousness. The first is Burn’s definition of transformational leadership itself, which describes this form of leadership as an activity that raises the consciousness of both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978). The second involves his view of conflict, which he views as an essential entity that must be embodied, managed, exploited and even created as a necessary means by which to achieve transformation (Burns, 1978). The assumptions that lie within these knowledge claims are clear; leaders must have a more highly developed consciousness than their followers, they must have an accurate means by which to judge this consciousness in themselves and in others, they must have the ability to create an environment in which transformation of the self can occur and they must have the skills necessary to effectively manage this environment over time. The foundational assumption here is

that leaders have an intimate awareness of what consciousness is, the temporal trajectory upon which it lies and the ability to manipulate it in themselves and others through the practice and embodiment of conflict. Perhaps the most hidden assumption is that consciousness exists as an entity that can be changed on the level of the group.

An examination of Burn's work leaves significant room for speculation regarding exactly what is referred to in the term "consciousness." This is not surprising, as the emergent field of consciousness studies is itself still in the process of determining exactly what this phenomenon describes, and it seems certain that field specific definitions will occur. We can draw some assumptions from the context in which we find the term; Burns' refers to "consciousness" as something that encompasses more than one's awareness of the world. It reflects one's way of being (including one's ethical orientation and moral reasoning skills), and that is changeable upon a developmental continuum (Burns, 1978). Such change is highly noteworthy as this change process marks a global change in one's way of being. Burns makes it clear that such a change is related to the experience of conflict and the choices that an individual is required to make when facing a multiplicity of options between genuine alternatives that impact individuals and their world in a fundamental way. Viewed from this perspective, consciousness here reflects both the interiority of the self as well as to the activity that one performs in the world. Additionally, Burns definition of transformational leadership requires a deep consideration of followers that goes far

beyond a cursory examination of group membership, processes and dynamics, leading directly into the relatively uncharted territories of group consciousness.

A Place of Poetic Consciousness

These considerations situate the leadership dilemma of consciousness in a highly provocative place. This seems fitting, however, as the complexity inherent in taking on challenges relating to the exploration of consciousness has always perilously bordered contentious regions. Fortunately, the current state of consciousness research grants some credibility to this endeavor, and so the future of this exploration now rests on academic and analytical rigor. Burns has challenged ideal leadership to raise the consciousness of both leaders and followers. Poetic Leadership brings this ideal into concrete practice through an aesthetic tradition that has long been a reflection of the human soul and heart.

An exploration of this tradition is provided in chapter four, which then delves into the essence of poetic and linguistic thought which is bound to the experience of consciousness, thereby inextricably linking them together. This place of depth and unity offers a source of tremendous power and temporal suspension that serves to breathe life into the construct of Poetic Leadership, taking it from abstract imagination into vivid, vibrant practice. A glimmer of this can be found in the flow of powerful images offered by a Buddhist poem from the 10th century;

*The waterfall
Is frozen. Cold presses*

*In the room. Around the stove
 Our quiet talk
 Lasts long.
 Poetic
 Minds complete
 The Greater Elegance.
 The intent of the patriarchs
 Employ every method.
 Chimes stop: Moon over steep fir.
 Lamplight dwindles: frost
 On the ancient
 Tower.*

*Not sleepy
 The long night, we agree
 Again we'll be going
 To Heng-yang.*

*The monk Wei Feng, Sung Dynasty, 10th Century
 Translated by Paul Hansen, 1990, from The Clouds Should
 Know Me By Now, Red Pine & O'Connor, editors, p. 92.*

The idea of a poetic consciousness reflected in this poem is a compelling one, for such a consciousness evokes images of grace, beauty, poised restraint, artistry in expression and a contemplative way of being, the deeper elegance of dwelling expressed by the Buddhist monk Wei Feng over a thousand years ago. Upon more thorough examination it yields mystical and human passion, intensity and a profound familiarity with emotion. This same familiarity with emotion is suggestive of a fully lived life that is reflective of all the vagaries and realities of human existence, from the most ordinary and mundane to the transcendent. Indeed, a poetic consciousness is gifted with a drawing together of this spectrum as the human drive to find meaning and purpose in existence is fulfilled. It is this search for meaning, and the

complimentary drive to expression, that provides the impetus for a fully revealed poetic heart. Its expansive movement continuously seeks understanding and resonance within the broader world.

The *Kokinshu*, which is a Japanese anthology of poetry gathered under imperial decree in the 9th century, reflects a deeply reverent attitude towards poetic thought that is grounded in the practice and presence of everyday existence. The realms of the ordinary provide a solid foundation that allows it to reach to higher considerations of being. An opening statement from this anthology captures the essence of this feeling;

“The poetry of Japan has its seeds in the human heart and mind and grows into the myriad leaves of words. Because people experience many different phenomena in this world, they express that which they think and feel in their hearts in terms of all that they see and hear. A nightingale singing among the blossoms, the voice of a pond-dwelling frog--listening to these, what living being would not respond with his own poem? It is poetry which effortlessly moves the heavens and the earth, awakens the world of invisible spirits to deep feeling, softens the relationship between men and women, and consoles the hearts of fierce warriors.” - *Translated by Hirshfield & Aratiani, 1990, p. xiii.*

Here we are invited to consider two powerful facets of poetic consciousness and feeling; the call to awakening that is directed towards spirit, and the deeply human movement towards healing and reconciliation that is made possible through lyrical expression. The call to become *awake* is quite profound as it guides the world of spirit towards the experience of emotion, this very human capacity that allows us to connect with each other in a meaningful way. There is a lovely hint here that it is the capacity for feeling that ultimately allows us to bridge the worlds of the seen and

the unseen, the mysterious and the mundane, the divine and the ordinary. More, we begin to understand that the fullness of human emotion is itself a great treasure, and that the experience of the divine may be found within our own hearts if we have the courage and tenacity to follow this path of feeling.

This experience of deep feeling offers a unique gift back into the realms of the mundane, the possibility and the promise of healing and understanding. The “softening of relationship” and the “consolation of fierce hearts” is no easy task to undertake. Poetry reaches into the depths of self, salving wounds of the individual, urging hope in the face of darkness, beckoning all the while to experiences of deep empathy. And even as she does this she works tirelessly to hold in check the desperate contours of despair and suffering that lives in this world.

The Deep Regions of Poetic Spirit and Cognition

Yet her movement goes far beyond solitary workings of healing, as her very presence in voice or print begs for the company of others. And while she may elegantly grace the pages of a private journal, it is in companionship that she finds her greatest strength. In going beyond individual concerns alone, she seeks to be a bridge between individuals, beliefs, cultures and traditions through images that evoke emotional resonance and empathy that are brought to vibrant life through the power of language. The emotional complexity carried within poetic craft takes us to the very essence of poetic life (Bourdieu, 1991) and thus to the center of poetic power. This emotional heartbeat charts out a vast territory for exploration, for true poetic

expression requires access to the broadest range of human feeling. From the most objectively positioned and distanced observations to the most passionately intense and searing experience of self, the domain of poetics demands that the entire emotional spectrum be not only accessible, but an aware and vibrant part of the self.

Borrowing from the domain of psychology, we find here a broad stimulus field, where the individual lives in an enormous field of fluctuating emotional potential. This emotional field must be managed, however, for without the ability to mediate the intensity, the individual self becomes completely absorbed by the continuous play of feelings or overwhelmed by a cascade of emotion that is too powerful to bear.

But when these deep feelings are managed and distilled through a poetic process they take on increasing power, eventually becoming tools of self expression, culture-making, and healing. And, as must any true healing agent, poetry wields these instruments until a conclusion has been reached. For even as poetry bears new life, the existential elements of hopes and dreams, the songs of war and love, and the scars of old wounds and unbearable hurts, so too does she bear the mysteries of death. Here we find the ultimate embodiment of conflict, in the narrow space between the living and the void beyond.

The renowned composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein, asked to have three poems written by Mevlana Rumi read to him on his deathbed. Rumi, a 13th century poet and mystic, is today considered a poet saint in the Sufi tradition, which

is the mystical branch of Islam (Barks, 2001). Revered as a great poet in much of the modern day Middle East, he keeps alive a vibrant branch of Islam that embodies tolerance and pluralism. In more recent years he has gained enormous popularity in the West, and is often credited with renewing modern day interest in poetics and with exposing millions to a peaceful and beautiful form of Islamic thought. Rumi's poetry, filled with dramatic imagery and intense emotion, continually asks us to look for the presence of the divine everywhere in our world, and to merge in union with God. The following poem, *Community of Spirit*, is one of the Rumi poems that Bernstein requested to be read to him as he faced his final journey.

*There is a community of the spirit.
Join it, and feel the delight
of walking in the noisy street
and being the noise.*

*Drink all your passion,
and be a disgrace.
Close both eyes
to see with the other eye.*

*—Mevlana Rumi
Translated by Coleman Barks, 2001*

Poetry's relationship with death is an old one, and crosses both temporal and historical boundaries. While the evidence of poetic thought exists on tombstones and in written memorials throughout the Western world, in Japan we find an ancient tradition of writing a poem upon the occasion of one's own death. These poems frequently connect deeply with images of the natural world, particularly mountains, which were abodes of the gods in ancient times. Thus, in Japanese poetry, the image

of journeying to a mountain often means the final journey to death. A famous poet of the Heian period (794-1185 AD), the Lady Izumi Shikibu, composed this beautiful verse shortly before her own death. In it we find evidence of her deeply Buddhist nature; the reference to going out of darkness refers to leaving the darkness and delusion of the physical world, and echoes a passage from the Lotus Sutra (Hirshfield & Aratani, 1990). The road going into darkness refers to the mystery of the unknown, and Lady Shikubi asks for the moon's light, a symbol of enlightenment, to light the path that she must follow.

*I go out of the darkness
 Onto a road of darkness
 Lit only by the far off
 Moon on the edge of the far mountains
 Lady Izumi Shikubi, 10th Century
 Translated by Kenneth Rexroth, 1964* --

The domain of poetics travels easily from this rare and remote territory onward to the regions of the divine, where she “effortlessly moves the heavens and the earth [and] awakens the world of invisible spirits to deep feeling.” This reflection, traveling from the East in times of antiquity, is mirrored by the noted and influential Western philosopher Martin Heidegger, who writes, “Poets are the mortals who, singing earnestly of the wine-god, sense the trace of the fugitive gods, stay on the gods tracks, and so trace for their kindred mortals the way towards the turning,” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 92). While he finds much of poetic thought wanting, when Heidegger sources what he terms ‘valid poetry’ he draws deeply philosophical lessons

from it that reflect the contours of the time in which it was written while simultaneously pointing towards universal truths. His musings on this rarified type of poetry turn to the realms that he terms 'Being', and he finds within them a trace to the mystery of humanity's current existence, the greater 'Being' in which the lesser ones exist (Heidegger, 1971). Here we find Heidegger touching upon consciousness itself.

The strands of this inquiry into existence are taken up by the American psychologist James Hillman, who tells us, "Soul of bulk and substance can be evoked by words and expressed in words; for myth and poetry, so altogether verbal and "fleshless," nonetheless resonate with the deepest intimacies of human existence," (Hillman, 1989; p. 29).

The experience of emotion, translated through layers of sophisticated human complexity, becomes known feeling, which surely corresponds to the "fleshless" experience of existence. "...words [act] as independent carriers of soul between people," Hillman reminds us (Hillman, 1989, p. 28), asking that we become more attentive to both the form and intent of the language that we use. With his own poetic voice he echoes the spirit of the poets who seek to experience union with the Divine, and, speaking their truth, honors a poetic tradition of passion. We can reach to the heavens through myth and poetry, and the spirit of the form that bears them originates with the purest feeling and knowing experiences of the human heart.

The noted poet and translator, Jane Hirshfield, also asks us to consider the physical form that poetry wears. In her reflections on poetic thought she shares with us that the self moves through our physical being just as poetry moves through words (Hirshfield, 1997). The power of this idea is immense, as it asks us to consider an array of things physical, psychological, philosophical and spiritual that are known, unknown, and unknowable. We are asked to consider the very essence of an animating principle, even while we are left to determine precisely *which* animating principle we would focus on. For it is certain that we are given many in this brief passage; the breath of life that animates a body, the pattern of thought that holds image, the spark of consciousness that give us a self, the mystery that imbues ink patterns with feeling and artistry, the urge that brings all elements together in a drive to creation, binding them in a common aesthetic form.

Beyond these musings lies the greater mystery of the potential for an animating principle in which all of these elements exist, functioning, perhaps, as glittering facets of the same force. This is the domain of the sacred, which calls us to concerns of both soul and spirit, each of which has long occupied humankind. The territory that these musings present is both alluring and formidable in its deep mystery, providing an endless frontier for exploration. By accepting the challenge of looking to the spirit of an animating force we enter into an exploration of our very essence.

Considerations of Ethics, Aesthetics, and Power

With this in mind, it seems a very small step to go from the world of poetic consciousness to the domains of ethical reasoning and power. Surely it seems an evident truth that when we are engaged in the act of poetic creation we are somehow drawing upon our very consciousness as the primary mover of this process, and surely we are attempting to direct this process to some meaningful end. Yet to formally propose connections between poetics, consciousness, power and ethics requires that we honor all of these academic and practice traditions. And, while the world of poetics has had its share of controversy, she has always been assured of a place of honor in the tradition of the humanities. After all, even Plato could not maintain a critique directed against her for very long! Poetry has known not only popularity, but faith and reverence as well. She has experienced the power of helping to shape culture, the responsibility of holding history, and the complexity of being an active participant in the evolution of language and human thought. And, even when her popularity has waned, she has always been accorded a place of honor and respect in all cultures where she has appeared. When she has been ignored at least she has maintained a respected place on a dusty bookshelf!

The regions of ethics have walked a parallel path, for while poetry has been concerned with beauty, ethics have been concerned with truth. From epic poems to the musings of Plato and Aristotle, the ethics of living have preoccupied our forebears to a great extent, providing fuel for fires that burned brightly as the original

structures of society were formed. Considerations of ethical conduct have shaped the earliest ideals of governance and law, providing us with foundations for accepted conduct and cherished ideals to guide political life. And walking closely to these considerations of truth and beauty comes power, cousin to both. The embodiment of either truth or beauty is an invitation for power to manifest; the combination of both can be formidable. Chapters five and six explore issues of power through the play of darkness and light, and the deep roots of aesthetic ethical tradition and reasoning that bind it. It is here that the practice of Poetic Leadership comes to life, reflecting a rich and mature view of existence that is open to viewing the full range of human experience, and that is capable of delving deep into this experience to find the elements of both truth and beauty that reside within these realms. Power here comes from the capacity for understanding rather than the expertise of interpretation.

The expression of poetic consciousness and the practice of poetic leadership leads directly to discussions of influence. In Burn's original definition of transformational leadership, this activity changed the consciousness of leader and follower. This level of influence is extraordinary, and so too, is the influence of poetic leadership. Such far reaching practice and manifestation of power demands a careful discussion of the range of this power, and the ethical boundaries that must contain it. For now we are entering the territory of group consciousness, this elusive entity that powerfully binds individuals to a collective activity based upon shared developmental levels, linguistic patterns, experience, attitudes and belief systems.

Conceptualizing Group Consciousness

From an academic perspective, the idea of a group consciousness is certainly a radical one, particularly when considering the domains of the hard sciences. Situated firmly within second person inquiry traditions, the concept of a group consciousness lies well outside both the established domain of third person inquiry and the troublesome but recognized domain of first person inquiry. While political scientists may have a certain degree of comfort with the concept, consciousness researchers are still primarily concerned with the origins and functions of individual consciousness. The idea of a group consciousness lies well outside most serious scientific consideration, and so must be carefully situated and rigorously analyzed. The journey of teasing out this construct is critical, however, if the practice of leadership is to effectively introduce the potential for bringing about changes in consciousness. Chapter seven extensively explores this construct, and offers a definition that is specific to the domain of leadership studies.

Certainly the scientific fields concerned with consciousness may balk at this exploration; the recognition of this is helped through understanding the tumultuous nature of consciousness research itself. From the 1920's until the mid-eighties inquiry into this knowledge domain was a highly suspect activity that was simply not engaged in by those who wished to retain their membership in legitimate academic communities (Damasio, 1999). Behaviorist approaches to psychology in the 1920's dismissed inquiry into consciousness as non-scientific, beginning decades of derision

towards those who would drift into this unacceptable avenue of interest (Thorne & Henley, 1997). Later scientific research initiated in the 1960's by Timothy Leary of Harvard University, the United States military and various domestic intelligence agencies, exploring connections between consciousness, psychic ability and hallucinogens, served only to further discredit this avenue of inquiry. As their experiments proved more and more disreputable (and occasionally dangerous or even deadly), inquiry into consciousness itself became increasingly discredited in mainstream academic communities.

It was only with the advent of advanced imaging technology capable of capturing concealed neurological processes that inquiry into consciousness once again became legitimate. Nobel laureate Francis Crick, co-discoverer of DNA, significantly advanced the cause with his statement that "Consciousness is the major unsolved problem in biology," (Koch, 2004, p. xiii). In his introduction to Christof Koch's seminal work, *The Quest for Consciousness, A Neurobiological Approach*, he makes clear his position regarding the importance of formal investigation, "In the past dozen years there has been an enormous flood of books and papers about consciousness. Before that the behaviorist approach, and, surprisingly, much of the initial phase of cognitive science which replaced it, effectively stifled almost all serious discussion on the subject" (Koch, 2004, p. xiii). With these bold statements Crick swept away any lingering doubts that existed regarding the legitimacy of academic inquiry in this domain, and began the process of dismantling the veil of lingering suspicion that

hung over consciousness research. He also firmly situated consciousness studies as multi-disciplinary, thus opening the door for a multitude of new theories coming from many wisdom and academic traditions. Beyond any doubt, such positioning will lead to open, vigorous debate and approaches to inquiry that encompass all known research methodology.

The re-emergence of consciousness as an entity worthy of formal academic interest and scientific inquiry has created a mountain of research. In an interview with *The Harvard Brain*, world renowned neurologist and author Antonio Damasio notes that the difficulty lies in choosing which area of consciousness one wishes to study, (Liston, 2001, Vol.8, online newsletter, p.6). Inquiry into consciousness is now highly multi-disciplinary, with research coming from academic domains that include biology, artificial intelligence, physics, neurology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics and philosophy. It would seem that Crick's desire for an exhaustively explored phenomenon is thoroughly and enthusiastically being fulfilled. And, as we are only at the dawning of this new field, it is a certainty that this list will expand over time. The field of leadership certainly holds a place at this table, with the consideration of group consciousness as a primary point of interest.

As the experience of consciousness is woven through with emotion, it is fitting that our consideration turns to embrace Damasio's area of specialization. In his seminal work on emotion, *The Feeling of What Happens, Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, he describes consciousness as,

...the key to a life examined...our beginners permit into knowing all about the hunger, the thirst, the sex, the tears, the laughter, the kicks, the punches, the flow of images we call thought, the feelings, the words, the stories, the beliefs, the music and the poetry, the happiness and the ecstasy. At its simplest and most basic level, consciousness lets us recognize an irresistible urge to stay alive and develop a concern for the self. At its most complex and elaborate level, consciousness helps us develop a concern for other selves and improve the art of life, (Damasio, 1999, p. 5).

This description not only places the existence of consciousness on a developmental continuum, it also provides us with an entry point into the consideration of others in our world, and that beautifully introduced activity and product of self, *the art of life*.

Primary to Damasio's definition is the understanding that it is the active, temporally stable and aware sense of self that is one of the most defining elements of consciousness (Damasio, 1999). His analysis of this sense of self presents us with three discrete mechanisms for further consideration, emotion, the feeling of emotion, and the knowledge that we have a feeling of emotion. Emotions are outwardly directed and public, like embarrassment or anger, while feelings of emotion are inwardly directed and private, such as guilt or shame. Feelings are mental representations or patterns relating to our overall experience – our physical, mental, spiritual and social state, while emotions are produced through an immediate chemical response to a triggering event (1999).

When feelings move into active and alert consciousness and are recognized by internal biological mechanisms as relating to an existing neural map (which is an

existing mental picture that can be referred to in order to situate new cognitive material), they may be reflected upon briefly or at length, and thus may lead to deliberate action. As such, they are feelings made conscious. When they remain in the domain of the unconscious they may still be acted upon, producing behavior which may at times appear incongruous with the known self. As Damasio notes, here we enter into the domain of Freud, which intersects with Darwin's world of emotion as an evolutionary adaptation (Damasio, 2003). The consideration of evolutionary adaptation is important, however, as it addresses the behaviors and attitudes that shape our evolutionary trajectory. This takes us squarely back into the domain of Leadership Studies, as change processes in the forms of evolutionary movement and related adaptive behaviors are key considerations in this academic and practice domain, and important elements to consider in the construct of group consciousness.

Activity of Selfhood and Poetic Leadership

Chapter eight delves deeply into the activity of self that is required for the experience and establishment of a poetic consciousness, and explores how this way of being moves into leadership activity. Here the phenomenology of touching upon and exploring our experience of awareness is investigated for the purpose of increasing our own practice of being, as well as for the purpose of expanding our perceptions to more fully experience the lives of others. Further, this chapter examines how the activity of poetic leadership produces meaningful change and developmental evolution in both the individual and the group, urging movement upon a

developmental continuum that advances our collective progression. Finally, a formal dynamic model of poetic leadership is presented here that allows for the examination of the discrete elements that comprise the theoretical construct and that explains the dynamic of change that poetic leadership catalyzes.

This dissertation closes with an examination of applications of poetic leadership, and a discussion of how this model has the potential to contribute in a meaningful way to our world. Future directions for research are briefly explored, providing a road map for continuing work in this new region of leadership theory and practice.

Historical and Current Conceptualizations of Consciousness

Background

Any work that would enter into the domain of consciousness must be prepared to thoroughly and rigorously explore this mysterious territory. Indeed, the tumultuous nature of inquiry into consciousness is not only worthwhile as an investigative exercise, it is also a rare and fascinating glimpse into the often disorderly world of scholarly disagreement. And beyond this intriguing unruliness, which crosses a multitude of scholarly fields, the emergent tapestry of inquiry and research can be breathtaking in its complexity and diversity.

It becomes key, then, to review the history of academic and scientific thought regarding consciousness, and the issues that have accompanied its exploration. Situating such inquiry historically allows for a sensitive frame of reference to be developed regarding new avenues of exploration that have taken form. It also provides for an understanding of new areas of exploration that are emerging.

Early Western Theorists

In his seminal work *The Principles of Psychology*, which was originally written in 1890, William James (1842-1910) begins the scholarly consideration of consciousness with an early definition, “The mind is at every stage a theatre of simultaneous possibilities. Consciousness consists in the comparison of these with each other, the selection of some, the suppression of the rest by the reinforcing and

inhibiting agency of attention,” (James, 2007, p. 288). James dedicated an entire chapter to the subject of consciousness, and threaded further discussion on this topic throughout both volumes of this series. He was later joined in this investigative endeavor by Carl Jung (1875-1961), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Owen Barfield (1898-1990), with backgrounds in psychology, philosophy and linguistics respectively.

Jung included discussions of conscious and unconscious processes in his theories of ego, personal unconsciousness and collective unconsciousness (Jung, 1939 & 1968). Much of his work in the area of consciousness would be dedicated to demonstrating how accessible unconscious processes actually are to conscious awareness. (It should be noted that Sigmund Freud was also examining similar states, albeit for different purposes and from a different perspective, primarily focusing on pathologies.) It was during this same period of time that Barfield, a noted contemporary of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, explored the realms of consciousness for the purposes of finding the essence of meaning in expression and poetic thought (Barfield, 1973). Martin Heidegger was involved in a similar exploration, looking deeply into questions of the human experience of meaning and being. Ultimately he would develop a unique synthesis of phenomenology and existentialism that would have significant influence on future philosophical thought (Thorne & Henley, 1997). Although the success of these notable individuals in encouraging broad consideration of the general topic of consciousness was limited during their lifetimes, they did

succeed in effectively positioning the discussion for future generations of researchers to rediscover and explore. Returning to their early work honors the foundation that they established, and unveils rare and courageous intuition.

Perspectives from Behaviorism

The need for this positioning, and for noting the daring of their collective intuitions, becomes obvious upon a brief examination of the extensive influence that behaviorism held over the field of psychology from the 1920's until the 1970's. John Watson (1878-1958), in a debate with fellow psychologist William MacDougall, demonstrated the behaviorist position regarding consciousness succinctly when he stated:

He then who would introduce consciousness, either as an epiphenomenon or as an active force interjecting itself into the chemical and physical happenings of the body, does so because of spiritualistic and vitalistic leanings. The Behaviorist cannot find consciousness in the test-tube of his science. He finds no evidence anywhere for a stream of consciousness, not even for one so convincing as that described by William James. He does, however, find convincing proof of an ever-widening stream of behavior, (Green, 2007, para. 29).

Watson's determination to turn psychology into a positivistic discipline had far reaching consequences as his theories of behaviorism would become the dominant paradigm in the field for 50 years (Thorne & Henley, 1997). His influence stretched to encompass a new generation of researchers and psychologists, most notably B. F. Skinner (1904-1990). Recognized for his extensive work with animal behavior, Skinner developed theories of operant and respondent reflexes as well as extensive

theories regarding “shaping,” a form of behavioral conditioning (Skinner, 1937). The behaviorist paradigm led to viewing the human condition in highly mechanistic terms, which, in many ways, reduced the human potential as matters of existential thought, spirit and soul were dismissed as inconsequential and distracting.

Perspectives from the Soviet Union - Vygotsky

During this general time period, a young Russian psychologist named Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), was attempting to develop a unified theory of psychology. He had come to the conclusion that behaviorism was not capable of explaining higher cognitive processes and so needed to be challenged with a new paradigm that would be drawn from other well-validated scientific disciplines (Thorne & Henley, 1997, Vygotsky, 1986). This global orientation, which provided a broad systemic perspective, was to provide unshakable justification for the challenge to the dominant behaviorist paradigm, which Vygotsky found narrow and limiting.

Unfortunately, Vygotsky contracted tuberculosis and died at the age of 38, just as he was producing his most sophisticated work. For decades after his death his work remained largely within the realm of the former Soviet Union, and was foundational as the dominant influence on the next generation of Soviet social scientists, particularly the psychologists. This influence would grow over time, eventually providing significant contributions to the field of psychology and educational research at an international level. It was “discovered” by the West in the 1960’s, and was recognized by many researchers as an invaluable contribution to the

ever expanding field of developmental psychology. Working from the perspective that wholes are always latently present within partial developmental manifestations, his influence ultimately provided key building blocks for such notable works as Bandura's theories regarding social learning and Kegan's theories of adult development. Vygotsky's work is also central to theories of human computer interaction, as he views environment not as mere situation, but as a developmental force which acts upon our evolutionary trajectory (Nardi, 1996).

Challenges to Behaviorist Perspectives – Miller and Chomsky

Shortly after Vygotsky's passing, George Miller (1920 -) was hard at work developing a theory of "mathematical psychology" that would investigate short term memory and cognitive processing. He is particularly noteworthy for developing the concept of "chunking" (grouping concepts together for short term memory storage) and for writing and presenting a paper on consciousness during the height of behaviorism's popularity (Thorne & Henley, 1997). He would become a frequent collaborator with Noam Chomsky and the two would produce significant work regarding information processing and the connection between language and higher cognitive processes. Chomsky (1928-), historically considered the most important contributor to the field of linguistics (Thorne & Henley, 1997) is the father of modern day psycholinguistics, a tradition that was to offer the most comprehensive criticism of Skinner's theories of behaviorism. Chomsky argued that language, as a higher order process, could never adequately be accounted for by behaviorist theories of

conditioning and shaping. His introduction of psycholinguistics as a discreet discipline for study would provide a new avenue for accepted scientific investigation of mental events, thereby ending behaviorisms iron grip on the domain of cognitive study (Thorne & Henley, 1997).

The Troubled Years; Timothy Leary and the US Government

James, Jung, Heidegger and Barfield, all practitioners of a deeply felt phenomenological orientation towards lived experience, and who had first hand experience regarding the academic controversies swirling around the topic, may have been surprised by the next wave of researchers who emerged to formally consider the topic of consciousness. Timothy Leary (1920–1996), perhaps one of the most notorious psychologists to emerge in the mid-twentieth century, initiated a series of experiments on consciousness utilizing hallucinogenic drugs while a professor at Harvard University. His early experiments were conducted upon himself and his close colleagues, a tradition that had its origins in Germany, where toxicologist Louis Lewin, later known as the “father of modern psychopharmacology,” had experimented upon willing colleagues with samples of peyote provided to him by the Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical Company in the late 1880s (Lewin, 1888). Leary’s experiments would lead to the creation of a social/neurobiological model of human consciousness that would incorporate a heavy dose of Eastern mysticism in its final configuration. It was grounded in his extensive work that utilized psychoactive drugs in the quest to understand differing states of consciousness (Lenson, 1998). Leary’s

work, which occurred primarily in the 1960s and '70s, was practiced with great transparency and enthusiasm, and was thus open to public scrutiny, suspicion and denouncement. Along with his close colleague, Richard Alpert, Leary published highly controversial works relating to hallucinogenic substances and consciousness, including an essay which encouraged their widespread use (Leary & Alpert, 1962). He drew a large student following while at Harvard, and invited many of them to participate in his experiments with him. A number of these students remained loyal to him and his theories long after Harvard fired him, making it certain that he would achieve a cult like status.

Perhaps more surprising to the grandfathers of consciousness, the United States government, through the CIA and various military groups, was conducting research relating to consciousness and mind control utilizing hallucinogenic substances, albeit in a manner that was entirely covert. These government groups were reportedly interested in consciousness for the purpose of studying mind control, mind reading, and the potential for long distance telepathy. It would require the Freedom of Information Act to obtain definitive information on their experiments, which were often conducted on subjects without their knowledge, occasionally with disastrous results such as induced psychosis and suicide (Marks, 1979; Lee & Schlain, 1985).

The controversies sparked by consciousness research utilizing hallucinogens would cripple this avenue of inquiry for more than 25 years, and leave the theme of

consciousness a relatively taboo subject for formal scientific inquiry (Grob, 1994, para.2). It was at this time, perhaps more than any other, that inquiry into consciousness was clearly bisected into two distinct camps; the scientific view and the humanistic view. The hard sciences had never been comfortable with the ambiguities presented by consciousness, and would need time and the exhaustive efforts of diligent neuroscience researchers to reinvigorate inquiry in this domain. Science and Consciousness Review, an on-line resource with a prestigious editorial board including Christof Koch, Walter Freeman, Thomas Ramsoy, Geraint Rees and Bernard Baars, notes;

Human consciousness is a natural bridge between the humanities and the sciences; the taboo in science may therefore have helped to perpetuate the well-known chasm between the Two Cultures, between the experience of being human and the effort to examine ourselves objectively.

Thus the scientific taboo has tended to be dehumanizing, to turn conscious human beings into mechanistic fantasies. Yet major discoveries accumulated through the last hundred years have vastly improved our understanding of wakefulness, sleep, dreaming, hypnosis, pain and pleasure, selective attention, sensory perception, animal consciousness and much more.

They are beginning to have important applications in medicine and education. We believe these discoveries are humanizing. At the end of the 20th century a movement began to lift the scientific taboo, and a modest trickle of empirical discoveries has now become a remarkable flood. Yet the normal infrastructure of science does not yet exist in the scientific study of consciousness. <http://www.scicon.org/history.html>

Ironically, it would be the hard sciences and the new field of artificial intelligence that would renew vigorous scholarly inquiry into consciousness. Koch and Crick firmly situated consciousness as their primary concern, and were soon followed by other distinguished researchers from these fields, most notably Damasio,

James Austin, Jonathan Cohen, Marc Bekoff, Francisco Varela, Bonnie Nardi, V.S.

Ramachandran, Evan Walker, David Bohm and Robert Sapolsky.

The New Era of Scientific Legitimacy – Koch, Crick & Damasio

Christof Koch, in *The Quest for Consciousness, A Neurobiological Approach*, utilizes John Searle's working definition, stating "Consciousness consists of those states of sentience, or feeling, or awareness, which begin in the morning when we awake from a dreaming sleep and continue throughout the day until we fall into a coma or die or fall asleep again or otherwise become unconscious" (Koch, 2004, p. 11). He clarifies this definition, however, recognizing that it is both vague and broad, and provides further explanation by stating that he (along with Francis Crick) is primarily concerned with discovering the neuronal correlates of consciousness (NCC) and that their chosen avenue of exploration is on sensory forms of consciousness, particularly vision and visual perception. His work has yielded results indicating the existence of sensory systems that are neatly ordered in a columnar fashion in a hierarchical order. While most sensory systems function in a global manner, a few highly specialized cells are designed to activate for the purpose of recognizing specific individuals or objects (*your* dog, as opposed to *a* dog). Koch and Crick have named these specialized cells *grandmother neurons*, and believe they will significantly assist in the endeavor of understanding specific features of our consciousness that relate to the expression of the individual self (Koch, 2004).

Referencing Damasio, Koch (2004) distinguishes sensory forms of awareness as “core consciousness,” and those forms of awareness regarding a self-referential stance as “extended consciousness.” Elaborating on his chosen area of inquiry, Koch notes that his work is based on the assumption that, if he can determine NCCs for events that involve sensory consciousness, this work will support endeavors investigating other forms of consciousness as well. Koch further notes that a comprehensive theory of consciousness is needed to fully encompass the territory to be explored in future consciousness research.

In his actual research, Koch (2004) assumes that subjective experience occurs and that brain activity is the basis for experience of phenomenal awareness. Stating that “it would be contrary to evolutionary continuity to believe that consciousness is unique to humans,” he relies on animal research in order to explore phenomenal states from a neurological perspective (Koch, 2004, p. 19). This research includes the use of neurological implants to monitor specific neuro-anatomical functions and responses to stimuli, EEG, MRI, fMRI, and PET scans, pharmacological interventions and detailed examination of brain matter. The experiments that he presents in his research utilize a traditional experimental methodology, being both testable and repeatable in laboratory settings. Additionally, Koch sites data from stroke victims in certain areas of his work that correspond to studies conducted on primates. (This particular avenue of inquiry has a long standing tradition in the medical sciences, as demonstrated in the neurology text *Neurology in the Arts*, edited by F. Clifford Rose,

Founding Director of the Academic Unit of Neuroscience at Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School, London, and Director of the London Neurological Centre.)

Damasio, noted neurologist and neuroscientist, eloquently addresses the problem of consciousness in his broad definition, shared in chapter one. His explorations as a researcher provide a narrower description: “Consciousness consists of constructing knowledge about two facts: that the organism is involved in relating to some object, and that the object in the relation causes a change in the organism” (Damasio, 1999, p. 20). Here we find an interesting link to Vygotsky’s work, which highlights the fact that individual entities do not exist in a static container, rather they (or *we*, to look at the matter in a more subjective manner) exist within environments that act upon human psyche and soul even as we would act upon the environment.

Damasio has chosen to approach the study of consciousness through the problem of “self” and emotion, and does so from a biological orientation (Damasio, 1999). He provides definition for this journey by noting that a neurobiological approach to consciousness faces two key problems; the phenomenal events that the brain itself experiences and the sense that there is an individual who is observing and interpreting these events even as this self interacts within a broad world of events and happenings. Acknowledging that these two problems are thoroughly entwined, he positions his research by explaining that separating them allows for a detailed

exploration of smaller parts, which makes overall investigation more orderly. He further delineates his work by emphasizing that, as a neuroscience researcher, he could identify *what* a feeling is, and the biology of *how* the feeling works, but not how the feeling is *known* to the individual. (This perspective, of course, leads us not only to further neuroscience, but to that notorious hard problem as well, which will be explored further later along our journey.)

In an effort to tease out this very human problem, Damasio (1999) turns to the scientific methodology utilized by today's neuroscience researchers, namely fMRI, MRI, and PET scans, EEGs, pharmacological studies and analysis of individuals with a range of neurological dysfunction, including lesion analysis. Studies with these tools have enabled Damasio to construct a series of important observations; a) some of the *processes* of consciousness can be assigned to specific neurological regions and systems; b) consciousness and wakefulness (along with certain forms of low level attention) can be separated; c) consciousness and emotions *cannot* be separated (this critical detail was identified from patients with various neurological impairments); d) consciousness can be separated into simple and complex forms (Damasio's terms are *core* and *extended*) with *core* being concerned with the here and now, and *extended* being concerned with identity and the organization and integration of lived experiences as they evolve over time, e) *core* consciousness provides the foundation for the development of *extended* consciousness – without its presence *extended* consciousness does not appear.

Artificial Intelligence and Human Computer Interaction

The newly emergent field of artificial intelligence (AI) and human computer interactions (HCI) is also taking a serious interest in consciousness, with some researchers postulating that they may have the capacity to build fully conscious machines (Davies, 1995), an activity which is certain to generate significant scholarly controversy in the near future. This speculation occurs in the domain of AI, and brings the worlds of science fiction and current science to a daunting crossroads. While the general public is brought into this controversy through film and print that has created a new archetype of the human-like android, science is left to grapple with deeper issues relating to technology and the potential for enhanced human experience through implants and mechanized enhancements designed for the human body.

Bonnie Nardi, a pioneer in the field of HCI, is one of the developers of Activity Theory, which has its origins in Vygotsky's work. Activity Theory (AT), which is a descriptive tool rather than a predictive one, seeks to understand the unity of consciousness and human activity and takes the position that consciousness is not a set of discrete variables, but is a unifying phenomena that encompasses the totality of human action and interaction (Nardi, 1996). As an activity, the human element is participatory and reactive. This line of thought introduces an entirely new element to the conceptualization of consciousness, and situates its presence both within and outside the individual self. This powerful image gives us a glimpse into a potential for

consciousness as an unfolding field dynamic, with boundaries as fluid as the possibilities that exist for human conceptualization and creativity.

An Explosion of Research – Multidimensional Perspectives

Yet another view of consciousness has been advanced by Bernard Baars, a Senior Fellow in Theoretical Neurobiology at the Neuroscience Institute in San Diego. Baars, a prolific author in the area of cognitive neuropsychology, has worked extensively developing theoretical material relating consciousness to the neurological processes of matching memory with existing neural patterns.

In 1988, recognizing that consciousness was emerging as a genuine area of inquiry, he noted that two polarizing extremes existed in this new area of study. The first was the behaviorist position that denies the existence of consciousness, and the second was the pure science challenge requiring a full explanation of the consciousness of another living organism (Baars, 1988). Noting that such extremes would most likely lead only to endless and fruitless debate, he proposed components of a formal methodology for consciousness inquiry. (Note here that Baars is careful in noting that he is not proposing *the* solution, or *the* methodology, he is proposing a model for consideration. In this aspect he joins the ranks of distinguished researchers who are carefully positioning themselves as individuals who are working together in the search for answers to our mysterious and endlessly intriguing puzzle.)

This new model of inquiry emphasizes a process of comparing conscious elements of experience with unconsciousness elements, yielding a new methodology

which he terms *contrastive analysis* (Baars, 1988). His criteria demand that these elements exist in pairs, having a clearly identifiable relationship placing them in the same functional domain, albeit with differences in precise area of operation. For example, he pairs “Precepts” (conscious input representations) with the following; low level, brief and masked stimuli (such as subliminal messages and their processing); pre-perceptual stimulus processes; habituated processing; unaccessed interpretations of ambiguous stimuli; contextual constraints on the interpretation of conscious precepts; and expectations of specific stimuli (Baars, 1988). From this methodology Baars has constructed a Global Workspace (GW) Theory, which is a model of the nervous system in which conscious events are viewed as mental representations that have at least three necessary properties; a) they are global, so that their contents are disseminated throughout the nervous system; b) they are internally consistent, because conflicting process will compete each other out of consciousness; and c) they are informative, in that they trigger widespread adaptation among specialized processors in the nervous system, (Baars, 1988). In discussion of GW, Baars notes that this theory is in the initial stage of development, and is only a starting point from which a more comprehensive theory will emerge.

Introspective Physicalism offers another perspective from the cognitive neurosciences. Anthony Jack and Tim Shallice, from the Institute of Cognitive Neurosciences at University College in London, introduce their on Introspective Physicalism work by offering the critique that many emergent theories are based

upon speculations regarding the properties of consciousness (Jack & Shallice, 2001). They believe that an integral component of any “ultimate” theory of consciousness will be an explanation of the processes that support introspection (which they name a Type-C process), which is assumed to be a key component of the conscious experience. Like Baars, they introduce a new model of inquiry that will explore this cognitive domain, the Shallice Framework. This method of inquiry has been proposed as a means by which to further define Type-C processes, which relate perceptual consciousness to consciously performed actions.

In proposing this perspective, Jack and Shallice ask us to remember that, regardless of proposed theory or methodology, no general consensus exists regarding the essential properties of consciousness. Indeed, they state that currently understood mechanisms of consciousness, while highly investigated, remain speculative in regards to the precise relationship that they have with consciousness and conscious experience (Jack & Shallice, 2001). With this perspective in mind, they deliberately return to a descriptive explanation of consciousness that originates from “folk psychology,” namely first person terms indicating “consciousness of something” and/or “consciousness of doing something” (Jack & Shallice, 2001). This narrowing of perspective clearly leads us once again to first person methodologies and squarely into the hard problem of consciousness, which will be elaborated upon further along our journey. It also leads us to the discussion regarding the connections (or lack thereof) between perception and awareness. Jack and Shallice lead us through an

investigation of the current status of thought regarding this puzzle, citing numerous studies (experimenting with both masked and subliminal stimuli) that indicate that awareness is not required for the occurrence of certain forms of perception. They utilize this information to identify a starting point for investigation; identification of mental processes that are consciously identified as being performed, those that are not, and the difference between the two. This leads us directly to the primary concerns of Jack and Shallice's current focus, an investigation into *intentional action*.

For investigatory purposes it is necessary to state that Jack and Shallice (2001) have made explicit the principle that awareness is necessary for intentional action. This principle allows for a distinct sorting of actions that are deliberate from those that are automatic and an examination of the factors that go into information processing in both domains. Further, they state that this principle is based primarily on introspective evidence, making an understanding of introspection necessary for a comprehensive understanding of, and inquiry into, consciousness.

In considering the construction of a methodology to understand introspective evidence, Jack and Shallice propose two ways in which this can be initially addressed. First, in understanding that individuals have an internal model for understanding their own introspective states, they propose that a more refined and clearly specified model be developed to help guide individuals in producing data that can be quantified. Secondly, they suggest that researchers can take raw data and re-interpret it utilizing a "testable functional theory." They report that conditions necessary for

successful development of such means can be created by ensuring that varying conscious states can reliably be elicited in experimental conditions and that introspective reports are closely related to objective judgments. Jack and Shallice (2001) clearly position their methodology within the domain of cognitive psychology, and argue that it is the very experience of conscious states that allows for the development of structure to understand them. (In closing our discussion on Introspective Physicalism, it is interesting to note that Jack and Shallice would most likely note that the power of introspection is required for Baars' notion of contrastive analysis, as an introspective ability would seem necessary for contrastive analysis to occur.)

Steven Pinkerton injects some light hearted brevity into the quest, opening his discussion of consciousness with an excerpt from a hypothetical college course catalog in a Woody Allen movie (Pinkerton, 1997).

Introduction to Psychology: The theory of human behavior...is there a split between mind and body, and, if so, which is better to have?special consideration is given to a study of consciousness as opposed to unconsciousness, with many helpful hints on how to remain conscious.

-from a Woody Allen movie, as quoted by Pinkerton, 1997, p. 133-134.

He trades on the ambiguity of this humorous passage to introduce the nature and frequency of ambiguity in both the definitions of and search for consciousness. While stating explicitly that he “doesn't like to dwell on definitions,” he draws our attention to the need for them due to the confusion over the exact nature of the phenomenon that is consciousness, and his identification of “bait and switch” tactics

utilized by various theoreticians who claim to offer a grand theory of consciousness, but who then examine a relatively easy question pertaining *to* consciousness.

Elaborating upon this, Pinkerton proceeds to explain those elements of consciousness which he believes have been over-examined, occasionally misrepresented, and overly complicated. The two main culprits in this area are issues pertaining to intelligence (for which “consciousness” is occasionally a “lofty synonym”) and self knowledge, which, according to Pinkerton, is quite explainable in cognitive terms and constructs that deal with perception and memory. He goes so far as to explain how researchers in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) could program basic levels of self-awareness into a robot, offering a bit of censure to those researchers who construct elaborate theories and methodologies for inquiry into those areas of consciousness that are already readily explained (Pinkerton, 1997).

Pinkerton next focuses on two areas that he believes are deserving of attention *vis a vis* the consciousness puzzle, which he considers to be cognitive access to information and sentience. It is here that Pinkerton provides boundaries for a conceptual map regarding how he views consciousness, and delineates those areas which he believes *serve* the process of consciousness from those in which it is fully intertwined. In his discussion he makes clear his expectations that genuine investigation into the processes of consciousness must reflect similarly careful positioning and definition.

Beginning with an examination of access to information, he describes the basic neural mechanics involved in this process, describing them in terms of engineering. Citing studies performed by Koch and Crick, he describes how information that has been scattered across the cerebral cortex is bound together by a mechanism that synchronizes neural firing (Pinkerton, 1997). Computationally, he explains how short term memory moves to long term memory (and back), and cites philosopher Stephen Stich for making explicit the knowledge that conscious information is *inferentially promiscuous*, that is, it makes itself available to a large number of information processing agents rather than to singular systems. In explaining how this information is then utilized, he cites a simple yet elegant study by Newell and Simon, in which they ask individuals to “think out loud” as they complete a puzzle. From these data they constructed a simulated mental activity model demonstrating human problem solving (Pinkerton, 1997). From *access to information* Pinkerton moves to the term *access-consciousness*, explaining that it is made up of four main features; awareness of a field of sensation; information that moves in and out of attentional awareness and that can get moved in and out of short term memory; sensations and thoughts that are bounded by emotion; and the appearance of the executive “I.”

In tackling the issue of sentience, Pinkerton (1997) asserts that it may be the other side of the conscious access coin, in that subjective experience is what drives the areas of sensation, attention and memory, emotion and the experience of the “I.” If this is true, Pinkerton observes that a new theory of how sentience arises will not

be needed, as answers will be available from data regarding conscious access. (It should be noted here that this is entirely dependent upon our acceptance of Pinkerton's correlation of sentience with awareness.) He qualifies this however, with a discussion drawing our attention to issues of ethics, rather than the sciences, and speculates that sentience presents us with a puzzle that may never be understood. Referencing McGinn, he leaves us with a sense of deepening mystery and awe regarding the unique combinations of properties that give to rise to an ultimately inexplicable sense of being.

A Mysterian Perspective

The introduction to Colin McGinn offers an additional perspective (perhaps better called a radically different perspective!) for consideration. In his thought-provoking work *The Mysterious Flame*, he proposes that consciousness depends upon an unknowable natural property of the brain that is not explicable in terms of known electrochemical processes. McGinn doesn't stop here, but continues on, stating that he does not believe that we have the *capacity* to comprehend consciousness, that such an understanding would exceed our constitutional limits. In explaining this position, he leads us on a historically oriented journey of what we *don't* know, and speculates that we are most able to function within a limited reality set that is resistant to new knowledge-conferring relationships (McGinn, 1999). He then explains how, in his view, scientific materialism has taught us to rely on specific concepts and methodologies exclusive to that domain for *all* of our knowledge, missing the fact that

methods suitable for investigations into the physical world are *not* suitable for investigation into the mind. He cautions that, in relying upon them for our current investigation, we are not able to produce material that will definitively answer any of our questions (1999).

Rather than seeking for a new perspective or methodology of inquiry from which to proceed, McGinn urges us to consider that we have run up against our cognitive limitations, wryly stating; “There is no product warranty inscribed upon our brains reading “This device is guaranteed to solve any problem it can formulate. If not completely satisfied, please return to Philosophical Products Inc. for a sincere apology and your money back” (McGinn,1999, p. 46).

In formally defining his position as “mysterian,” McGinn (1999) explains how adopting such a view can be helpful to our consideration of consciousness. First, he emphasizes the importance of recognizing when we are about to exceed our limits of understanding so as to avoid futile exploratory efforts. He then turns to recognize what we do know about consciousness, so as to place it within the domains of neurological architecture, thereby removing the possibility of mystical answers. More poignantly, he encourages us to consider that knowledge of consciousness would not necessarily add to our human experience, and that a certain lack of knowledge helps us to confirm our awe of the universe. To a certain extent, this awe challenges what McGinn describes as the arrogance and darker sides of science. His “mysterian” position deliberately helps to qualify science’s position as an absolute

authority regarding knowledge. Ultimately, he encourages to grow into a stance where we can accept our limitations, and to turn our attention to a new field that is emerging, that of inquiry into our cognitive strengths and weaknesses.

In offering us the “mysterian” perspective, McGinn (1999) clearly and succinctly outlines his reasoning for offering such a radical view. His balanced analysis serves as an important counterpoint to the current race to explain consciousness. By offering such a point of view, McGinn adds an important new dimension to our discussions.

Qualia and Lived Experience

The next cluster of theoretical perspectives hails from those individuals who are most interested in exploring the subjective experience of consciousness, the *lived* experience, often termed by researchers to be the *qualia*. Broadly clustered together into a category termed *first person methodologies*, these perspectives and methods of inquiry include introspective approaches, phenomenological reduction, and an introduction to meditation practices from the Eastern traditions (Varela & Shear, eds., 1999). The methodologies examined in this section represent a sampling of those that are emerging to engage in the study of consciousness, and provide an example of the range of inquiry currently being utilized.

Openly acknowledging that such methods come under close and often skeptical scrutiny, particularly when compared with purely experimental studies conducted by consciousness researchers from the hard sciences, Varela and Shear

(1999) note that there should be an explicit methodological foundation for all first person inquiry. Accordingly, such a foundation should have a clear philosophical orientation that leads to an explicit procedure for entering into the specified phenomenal domain, there should be clear and consistent manner for expressing and validating this procedure within a community of investigators, and both procedure and evaluation method should be open to general review and stringent evaluation. They further elaborate upon this discussion by covering methodological territory that is specific to researcher positioning in first person inquiry. First, such methodologies require that researchers have the capacity to suspend and redirect basic attitudes, then accurately perceive and record data. Finally, this recording must be done in such a manner that leads to intersubjective validation and a possible revisiting of initial data. Such boundaries around methodology, Varela and Shear hope, will help focus inquiry efforts in a manner that will eventually yield a formalized and “full blown” methodology.

Pierre Vermersch provides an example of Varela and Shear’s requirements with his introspective methodology. It should be noted that this type of introspection differs markedly from Jack and Shallice’s method of Introspective Physicalism, which draws from the behaviorist technique of recording in their demand that all introspective evidence is reducible to quantification (Jack & Shallice, 2001). Vermersch begins his analysis with a discussion of Introspection as a source of empirical data, stating “introspection furnishes descriptive verbalization in the

second-person of what can appear to the subject, within the limits of what has already been brought to conscious awareness or of what could be brought to conscious awareness,” (Varela and Shear, eds., 1999, p. 30). He continues on, noting that such data, while not representing absolute truths, represent genuine experience, and that such experience must be both critically evaluated and inserted within a methodological framework of research for potential correlation with other data.

As an activity, Vermersch operationalizes Introspection by clearly positioning it as a reflecting activity that must be practiced by those who would use it in formal methodology (Varela and Shear, eds., 1999). He provides a model for this activity that follows the act of introspection through time and reduction. It begins with the occurrence of a lived experience (L1). The subject then (either alone, or with a trained mediator) describes the lived experience, which in turn leads to another lived experience (L2). It is through noting this second lived experience, the act of reflection, that access is gained back to the first lived experience (L1), accessing those insights that have now been made conscious. This retrospective analysis has required a first reduction. Attention now gets shifted back to (L2) for analysis of the introspective act, (reflection upon reflection) which leads to (L3). Clearly, the model becomes simpler as it is consciously accessed and practiced, demonstrating beyond any doubt Vermersch’s requirement that it is practiced prior to being utilized as a method for inquiry. Scrutiny of this model also reveals how the reduction of the experience and practice of introspection leads to the ability to construct a formal

methodological framework. Information yielded from this model becomes distinctly situated in three domains (L1,2,3), providing potential data along a continuum of time as well as experience.

In a related area, Intuition, is examined by Claire Petitmengin-Peugeot (Varela & Shear, eds, 1999). Opening with a quote from Heidegger, “intuition represents the ideal of all knowledge, the ideal of understanding, of being in general” she positions the need to understand the intuitive process as central to understanding the functioning of consciousness (Varela & Shear, eds. 1999, p. 43). In recognizing that studies on intuition have traditionally been limited to anecdotal data and the substantiation of popular beliefs, she observes that no work has been accomplished to describe subjective experiences associated with intuition, and proposes a methodology to acquire these data. This methodology is comprised of three basic sections; information gathering, analysis and modeling, and a process of comparison of the emergent models.

A particular area of concern exists in gathering data on intuitive experiences in that these experiences appear to exist in a domain of cognition that is not consciousness (Varela and Shear, eds. 1999). Citing both Vermersch and Piaget, Petitmengin-Peugeot presents findings that awareness of mental activity is not required for the performance of certain cognitive functions, and notes that these experiences do not meet the criteria for Freudian repression to the unconscious, and so would seem to originate from a “non-conscious” domain. As this domain of

thought is not at the forefront of conscious functioning, accessing it requires deliberate effort, a reversing of the activities of thought, habit and action. In order to accomplish this, she outlines a process of explication requiring the subject to relive the experience involving intuition that is being explored. In this process, the role of the researcher becomes that of guide, traveling with the subject through the sights, sounds, tastes and feel of the experience. She offers guidance to researcher on how to validate the “realness” of experiences, suggesting that eye contact and the utilization of present and past tenses in language be monitored.

In this method, access to “pre-thought” is required, necessitating a reversal of attention from the subject’s external process to internal ones (Varela and Shear, eds., 1999). This requires a slowing of self, a suspension of current mental activity and a period of self-monitoring. Slowing of speech, and breaks in thought are seen as indications that the subject is beginning to access pre-thought, and are to be noted by the researcher as a means of validation.

Finally, the clarification process requires that the researcher engages in language “empty of content” so that the actual experience of the subject can be focused on, and so that the researcher minimizes the possibility of contaminating the exchange. During this process the subject is encouraged to explore generalizations, nominalizations, emotions and specific cognitive processes (Varela and Shear, eds. 1999).

Analysis and modeling consists of reviewing transcripts and narrowing data sets into a form that allows for comparison of collected material (Varela and Shear, eds., 1999). This is accomplished by reducing descriptive material to those experiences which solely relate to intuitive experiences, and eliminating general commentaries and indications of belief systems. The modeling phase consists of reviewing the process that has occurred and the construction of two different types of models; a five phase diachronic model that covers the temporal experience of the subject and a synchronic model which is comprised of more descriptive and experiential data. Generic diachronic and synchronic models are then created, which allows for a narrowing of the data to one or a few specific intuitive events. These models are then analyzed along with those generated from other subjects for comparative purposes.

The modeling process described here, while cumbersome to implement, has yielded some important data regarding experiences of intuition, including feelings of certitude and feelings of coherence and meaning. Additionally, research into intuition utilizing this process has produced data indicating that individuals who are able to enter into calm, self-monitoring states are able to identify and consciously participate in intuitive states in greater degrees than are other individuals (Varela and Shear, eds., 1999). Practice of self-monitoring clearly appears to foster this ability. This unforeseen consequence leads to the domain of the Eastern traditions, which encourages such reflective practice for the purpose of achieving conscious states of

equanimity and tranquility (not to speak of enlightenment!). A comprehensive discussion of Western and Eastern traditions examining consciousness far exceeds the scope of this dissertation, however, a brief introduction is due as this area of exploration is gaining significant attention amongst consciousness researchers (Varela and Shear, eds., 1999; Austin, 1998).

The Meeting of East and West

B. Alan Wallace (1999) introduces a Tibetan Buddhist perspective by first providing some insights regarding how Buddhism differs from Western approaches in regards to the examination of consciousness. The most specific example of this is Buddhism's premise that understanding one's own mind is central to understanding the external nature of the world. Understanding one's own mind requires a vigorous regime of mental disciplines, pranayama (breathing techniques) and specific meditation techniques. Only with discipline and purification of the mind can the journey to examining one's own consciousness begin. The first step in the process is to refine the attention and balance the nervous system, thereby gaining control over the dual nature of the mind, which is seen as tending to migrate between extremes of lethargy and excitation. One of the primary Tibetan Buddhist practices to gain this control is the practice of *Samatha*, which means quiescence. Meditation upon an object is one of the elements of this practice, which helps to lead to experiences of mindfulness (requiring sustained attention) and introspective ability. Consistent practice of this technique over extended periods of time (possibly lasting for years)

begins to enhance an individual's attentional abilities as well as their capacity for introspection.

This very brief glimpse into a tradition that has pursued the understanding of consciousness for centuries is both fascinating and daunting. Clearly, methodologies exist for inquiry into consciousness that have been exhaustively studied, tested and refined, and which await broader introduction to the West. Certainly this knowledge has been alluring to researchers coming from the entire spectrum of inquiry, indeed, the neurologists have led the way in formalizing connections between Western hard sciences and the Buddhist contemplative tradition. The Mind Life Institute (www.mindandlife.org) headed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is a primary example of this, providing a formal milieu in which various meditative states and techniques are scrutinized by the Western sciences. There are many other researchers today who are striving to bring these two traditions together in hopes of producing a unified system of inquiry and validation that will ultimately both serve and honor both perspectives. Waiting off stage are other contemplative traditions, most notably Vedic philosophy, Tantric theory and practice and Sufism. Hopefully these traditions will soon join Buddhism on the forefront of scientific interest.

Ken Wilber (2001), noted philosopher and author, brings an entirely new perspective on consciousness that has been developed from a merging of both Eastern and Western tradition. While this is not the place to exhaustively examine his

theory, its comprehensive vision demands inclusion in any undertaking that would presume to examine our current understanding of consciousness.

With a far reaching developmental viewpoint, Wilber (2001) offers a perspective with a broad historical reach. Rather than beginning with a definition of consciousness, he instead begins with an overview of general developmental stages, explaining that the process of human development is in fact a microcosm of the process of universal evolution. While referencing classic theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, Maslow and Freud, he takes traditional developmental work to entirely new domains, tracking a general evolutionary trajectory of collective development all the while proposing that new levels of cognitive development, along with consciousness, are leading to higher stages of being that will continue to emerge over the course of human history. Citing Jan Smuts work, which proposes that nature is always producing wholes that move into greater wholes, Wilbur demonstrates how developmental evolution moves through clearly defined stages, with newly developed stages completely imposing themselves on preceding ones evolving towards states that are more and more complete. This continuous movement demonstrates a developmental schema that seamlessly builds upon itself *and* that contains future stages which may not be conceived of at earlier developmental points. Existence at developmental points along a developmental continuum that cannot conceive of higher, later points do not preclude their existence.

Drawing from both Western and Eastern traditions, Wilber outlines three basic realms of consciousness which ultimately yield a 10 stage evolutionary structure (Wilber, 2001). The first realm is a lower level of consciousness representing basic biological drives, needs and processes. This level would include those drives relating to the biological sensory systems (safety, need for food, perceptual experiences) and gratification drives, such as sex and procreation. This stage is transcended when the individual is no longer exclusively bound to an identification with the body and its instinctual drives. The intermediate level is one of thought, images and symbols, when language develops, allowing a more sophisticated processing and exchange of information. It is at this phase of development when concrete or simple patterns of thought develop abstraction and the capacity to engage in higher order logical thought. The unified integration of body and mind, including a successful integration of the ego related processes, mark the successful completion of the intermediate level, which, Wilber (2001) notes, is the highest level of functioning that the majority of researchers in the Western tradition are prepared to formally recognize. It is due to this stopping point that we must look to the great mystics in both Eastern and Western traditions for information regarding the higher realms of consciousness.

It is in these higher realms that we begin the journey to transcendental awareness, the beginning of gnosis, deep states of intuition and insights into universal knowledge. Beyond these higher regions lies enlightenment, the highest realm of consciousness, the final place to which all evolutionary processes ultimately lead.

Interestingly, this evolutionary continuum provides us with an echo from a poem that was written in the 13th century;

*I died as inanimate matter and arose a plant,
I died as a plant and rose again an animal,
I died as an animal and arose a man.
Why then should I fear to become less by dying?
I shall die once again as a man,
To rise an angel perfect from head to foot!
Again when I suffer dissolution as an angel,
I shall become what passes conception of man.
Let me then become non-existent, for non-existence
Sings to me in organ tones: To Him we shall return.*

Rumi – from the Mathnavi, translation, E.H. Whinfield

Wilber's ten stage model further defines specific stages of consciousness, each of which must be successfully negotiated before it can be subsumed by higher stages. The stages begin with a consciousness that is focused at the physical level, that moves to the realms of cognitive and emotional existence, and that ultimately holds the capacity to travel to the causal level (Wilber, 2001). In this developmental model, Wilber cautions, pitfalls specific to each stage lie in wait which can prevent an individual from further progression. This perspective echoes other developmental theories, which require the successful integration of lower stages within the self prior to entrance into higher stages. Wilber's focus on *holons*, the seeds and pattern of completion that exists in all stages, is more unique. Interestingly, this line of thought follows in the footsteps of Vygotsky's thinking, which provides an earlier model for their existence. Vygotsky surely deserves credit here, for he clearly identified that

wholes of behavior and existence are clearly latent within smaller, perhaps more observable parts.

In his model, Wilber also makes a clear distinction between conscious states and permanent traits, indicating that various states of consciousness may be accessed by a wide spectrum of individuals, while permanent traits emerge as stage specific components. It is the development of permanent traits that allow for movement along the developmental spectrum, while states of being may provide the motivation necessary for seeking out higher realms of existence.

The revolutionary nature of this model clearly presents many questions and controversies. As a developmental model, it pushes the boundaries of all current theoretical work into completely new regions of thought. As a model of consciousness it is perhaps the first true bridge between Eastern and Western scholarly traditions as it clearly represents foundational perspectives from both. Apart from one's position regarding its ultimate legitimacy, it neatly takes us into our next area of territory to explore, the ever looming hard problem, which is the territory that lies between first and third person inquiry into consciousness.

This exploration has provided a brief overview of some of the most important thinking that has and is shaping the academic domains concerned with consciousness research. While not entirely comprehensive, it provides a glimmer into the vast territory that consciousness research encompasses. It also sets the stage for an analytical review of various perspectives as they compliment or contradict each

otaher, and a fine tuning of methodology for inquiry. Most important for this effort, it sets the stage for the introduction of a perspective on consciousness from the tradition of leadership theory.

Soul and the Old Woman

*What is the soul? Consciousness. The more awareness,
the deeper the soul, and when
such essence overflows, you feel a sacredness around. It's so
simple to tell one who
puts on a robe and pretends to be a dervish from the real
thing. We know the taste
of pure water. Words can sound like a poem, but not have
any juice, any flavor to
relish. How long do you look at pictures on a bathhouse
wall? Soul is what draws
you away from those pictures to talk with the old woman
who sits outside by the door
in the sun. She's half blind, but she has what soul loves
to flow into. She's kind; she weeps.
She makes quick, personal decisions, and laughs so easily.
-Rumi (translated by Coleman Barks, 2002)*

Trends and Troubles in Consciousness Research

The Hard Problem of Consciousness

Any comprehensive discussion of consciousness must include a thorough discussion of emerging thought and new theory, as well as some reference to the notorious “hard problem.” The term, coined by David Chalmers, has become well known as one of the most difficult problems facing consciousness researchers today (Chalmers, 1999, retrieved 6/22/07). The hard problem stands at the crossroads between social sciences, the humanities, and the hard sciences, acting as much to join them as to separate them. From the perspective of hard sciences, third person data are the only data that can be counted upon to be consistently reliable and valid. They

can be quantitatively measured, and lend themselves to experimental designs that can be replicated.

Yet to study consciousness in humans, particularly in narrow domains such as introspection and intuition, there must be a certain reliance upon first person data. *Individuals* must interact *with* researchers, instead of *subjects* passively submitting to an experiment. Chalmers (1999, retrieved 6/22/07) position is that the entirety of the science of consciousness is about relating third person data to first person data, understanding that it is at heart irreducible and so must retain a descriptive form. He also positions himself as believing that, while the neurosciences may provide vital data regarding consciousness, they will never fully obtain the material needed from subjective, first person accounts with their third person methodology.

Dean Hamer (2004), internationally noted geneticist and author of *The God Gene – How Faith is Hardwired Into Our Genes*, clearly situates this discussion by leading it back to James and the need to view consciousness as a subjective event. Moving the “hard problem” from discussion, which began over a century ago, to resolution, appears to be a conundrum which is likely to extend well into the future.

Chalmers (1999), noting that third person science has established excellent methods for data collection and analysis (noting EEGs, brain imaging, single cell studies, etc.), calls for the comprehensive development of methodologies that can expand and legitimize first person inquiry. While acknowledging that serious obstacles stand in the way of this occurrence, such as the idea that introspection upon

one's ideas may change the nature of the experience, Chalmers argues that ideas from both Western and Eastern philosophy, as well as from contemporary and historical psychology will eventually provide the needed background structure for the creation of these new and comprehensive methods of inquiry. Finally, he notes that a new language is needed for the expression of first person data regarding consciousness for the purposes of consistency as well legitimacy, even if the best that can be done is a language which will describe the structure of first person experiences.

Francisco Varela (1946-2001) and Jonathan Shear, meanwhile, have urged researchers from all traditions to remember that subjective experiences are inherent in objective experiences, and that what needs particular attention at this time is the line of demarcation between the two. This position echoes Johann Wolfgang van Goethe (1749-1832), the world renowned literary voice, poet, and scientist, who was long fascinated with unraveling the mysteries of color and light. His trace into this domain where objective observation runs headlong into subjective truth was optical illusion, about which he states "Optical illusion is optical truth" (Zajonc, 1995, p. 194). Goethe brought the difficult question of perception to the scientific tradition of objective experimentation, thereby challenging the traditional use of mechanistic concepts and explanation already so present within this domain. Through his efforts he succeeded in situating the personal, imaginative processes of human interaction within scientific domains, though this early contribution would go long overlooked and undervalued. Varela and Shear (1999), in explicitly calling for us to remember

that inquiry into consciousness is a very *human* endeavor dependent upon human perceptions and interpretation, revisit Goethe's earlier reflections. They also offer the view that the next stage in unifying formalized consciousness research is an exhaustive search for links that already exist between first and third person methodologies.

This leads directly into the second person problem. In third person inquiry, the researcher is an objective observer, collecting and analyzing data utilizing rigorously standardized procedures. In first person inquiry, the researcher is entering into the process of data collection in another manner entirely, questioning, prompting and deciding which data are essential and which are not. As demonstrated in Petitmengin-Peugeot's work, utilization of certain first person methodologies has the potential to alter the manner in which the perceiver processes information. Researchers practicing introspection then, as a means for increasing proficiency with first person methodology, may themselves perceive the same information differently over time as internal changes occur.

Second Person Perspectives

When considering second person methodologies the territory is altogether different again; for now we are in regions concerned with second-person inter-subjective and shared experiences. Here is found experience gained through spiritual and shamanic practices, ritual, celebration, ceremony, and cultural tradition. This is also the domain concerned with the potential for other forms and manifestations of

consciousness as they interact with and between members of different species. In a bold move a group of visionary researchers have formed the Center for Interspecies Research in an effort to establish rigorous and creative scientific investigations into consciousness and communication within and between different species. Such an inclusive effort clearly has the potential to significantly broaden the scope of our considerations regarding consciousness itself, and perhaps the very way in which we conceptualize this mysterious subject (<http://www.interspeciescenter.org/index.asp>). Ultimately, it may reshape the very way in which we perceive our world, or, at the very least, the manner in which our world is ordered.

Second person experiences allow for the work of researchers such as Marc Bekoff, Jane Goodall, Christian deQuincy, Jeremy Narby and David Abram to be legitimately situated within academic domains seriously pursuing knowledge relating to consciousness. It is here that we find the magical work of David Abram, who seeks to decipher the mysteries of kinship that can bind us to the land and the land to us when we step outside of the norms of modernity and industrialization, and Jeremy Narby, who offers a fascinating journey into the mysteries of intelligence and awareness present in the plant and animal worlds (Abram, 1997). We also find second person considerations in the revolutionary work done on self organizing systems (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Such systems emerge as a dynamic interaction of both local and global influences, and come into being when tension points require a systemic balancing act between interacting influences generated by both individual

system and environment, informed by a feedback loop which serves to constantly inform both individual and environment of changes and adaptations that are occurring. This interrelating system creates an environment in which both the structures and processes of a system are self-producing, and organize and balance themselves.

Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1987) developed a descriptive phenomenology in order to deeply examine self-organizing processes, which in turn has served to inform the scientific community of the many potentials that exist within the structures of our own living systems. This phenomenological approach requires vigorous first-person methodologies for data collection (although theoretical findings are situated within the second-person domain), thereby requiring the broader scientific community to consider the value of reflective practice wisdom as it applies to inquiry into living systems and consciousness. This practice model has helped to reconcile the hard problem as it has been developed from within the domains of neurobiology, theoretical biology, neuroimmunology, and cybernetics, where Varela and Maturana distinguished themselves for decades.

Interspecies Perspectives

The investigation of consciousness in animals resides firmly within the domain of second person inquiry, and researchers such as Jane Goodall, Jose' Bermudez and Marc Bekoff are using cognition, intelligence and emotion as traces into this unique domain. Some intriguing questions that immediately present themselves in this

inquiry process relate to considerations of non-linguistic thought and reasoning processes, emotional expression and experience in non-linguistic domains, and the purpose of REM sleep in non-linguistic populations (Bermudez, 2003). Interspecies interaction is also an important domain for investigation, with research only in its infancy.

While such research is, in many ways, just beginning, its reaches already appear to be quite broad. Jose' Luis Bermudez (2003), Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Stirling, has produced a rich investigation of non-linguistic communication and thought in his revolutionary work, *Thinking Without Words*. In it he states, "The contemporary behavioral sciences have almost completely abandoned a longstanding tenet in the study of cognition, namely, that thought and language go hand in hand, and hence, the study of thought can only proceed via the study of language. Until recently, even those who held that thought could in principle exist without language had little idea how to study thought except through the language by which it is expressed. But current practice in the study of animal behavior, in the study of pre-linguistic infants, and in the speculations of cognitive archeologists about the evolutionary prehistory of *Homo sapiens*, has left these assumptions far behind," (Bermudez, 2003, p. 3-4).

Linguistic Perspectives

It would be unfair to leave the linguistic world completely behind, however, and a linguistically oriented perspective certainly presents another facet of thought

for consideration. Gregory Nixon (1999), writing in the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, notes that our understanding of our world and our selves is enhanced through a linguistic process that allows us to reflect back on ourselves. Such a view tightly binds the experience and evolutionary unfolding of consciousness to language development, opening many doors for exploration in regards to the multiplicity of languages that have existed and that exist in the world today.

The controversy presented by this line of thought is obvious, as such a statement begs the question *Must we have a language to be considered conscious?* (The door opens here to a ranking of levels of consciousness depending upon language proficiencies, and potentially explosive discussion regarding the consciousness of animals and individuals who do not have language capacity. This line of discussion also leads to the need to distinguish a process of *expressing* consciousness from the experience of consciousness itself.) These considerations notwithstanding, this perspective certainly offers a fascinating theory to consider regarding how linguistic power serves to develop and provide certain boundaries for the experience and description of conscious experience, and perhaps to an exploration of differing experiences, states, traits, or stages of consciousness.

From a humanizing perspective, we must go back to the hard sciences of Antonio Damasio, who situates his examination of consciousness with emotion, or Christoff Koch, who easily recognizes the existence of consciousness in “lower” species through comparisons between human and animal neurological processes and

pathology studies. Paradoxically, the domain of Human Computer Interaction (HCI) also provide traces into considerations of animal consciousness through work that examines how organized systems influence experience and self, with such studies having primary roots in activity theory or work done on self-organizing systems. They are particularly informative when linked with studies examining how animal behavior is organized.

New Domains and Eastern Views

Other investigative trends include the examination between principles of physics and consciousness, mathematical constructs of consciousness and the ever burgeoning field of artificial intelligence. From the social science perspective, archeology is venturing into this domain as are researchers from cross cultural studies, and this very discussion invites the scholarly domain of Leadership to the consciousness research table. It seems only a matter of time before scholars from other traditions join the search, each bringing with them valuable insights, field-bound biases and extreme variances in methodological orientation. It may be that each tradition will need to produce its own, unique definition of consciousness and adopt corresponding methodologies for investigation, staying mindful of the fact that such definitions may be reduced or reshaped if submitted to a process of unification for the purpose of developing a “grand theory” of consciousness.

To complicate things even further, we have the entire repertoire of perspectives from the East waiting in the wings, and the field of consciousness

research is expressing a remarkable depth of interest in the exploration of Eastern traditions, most notably through the work of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Mind and Life Institute (www.mindandlife.org). The graphic of a mobius strip, offers a perspective on how the Eastern methodologies can begin to bridge the Western first and third person perspectives. The overall graphic represents a circular continuum, with the outer section representing third person perspectives and inquiry, the inner section representing the first person perspectives and inquiry and the bend in the structure representing the entry point of second person methodologies. The overall frame of the structure represents the Eastern perspective, which posits the idea that we exist within consciousness itself, and that genuine understanding of one aspect of consciousness naturally leads to understanding the greater phenomena. The mobius strip also demonstrates the Eastern paradoxical perspective of finishing at the beginning.

Reshaping Our World – Neuroplasticity

The voluminous amount of research regarding consciousness that has occurred over the past two decades has led to some revolutionary neurological discoveries that are reshaping our perceptions of self and neurological systems. Perhaps the most stunning finding of this research relates to the adaptive potentials that exist in the adult brain.

Prior to the 1980's, conventional wisdom held that the brain had the power to grow and change only during infancy and early childhood, during which time its functions became hardwired and immutable (Begley, 2007). Neurological growth, adaptation and development therefore only occurred during the earliest years of life. Any potentials that were not developed early on were assumed to be frozen and consequently unreachable. This obviously led to a view of human development that carried a certain hopelessness with it; if you weren't fortunate enough early on to have access to an enriched environment your chances at maximizing any gifts of self were limited or non-existent. And worse still, individuals who were born with neurological limitations, or who experienced the trauma of brain injury during or at any time after birth, were viewed with certainty as being damaged for life (Doidge, 2007). Additionally, this view perceived not only the development of the brain as stagnant after a certain point, but the organization of the brain as well (Begley, 2007). Once an area of the brain had developed a specialization, it was believed, that region of the brain did not deviate from its learned function, but simply existed to carry out its assigned responsibilities in a predictable and orderly manner. The brain was perceived as a finely tuned machine, with parts that were simply not interchangeable. In many ways, it was perceived as an ultimate computer.

Two important researchers who questioned this belief, Michael Merzenich and Jan Kaas, both of whom had done post-doctoral work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, began investigating the validity of this concretized assumption. They

developed a hypothesis that primate brains might reorganize regional functions as a result of experience (Begley, 2007). To test this hypothesis they conducted an experiment on the somatosensory cortex of owl monkeys; they cut a key nerve in the hands of the monkeys, waited a few months for the monkeys to adapt to the ensuing partial loss of functioning, then measured the electrical activity in the region of the somatosensory cortex that was known to correspond with the location with feeling and use of the hands. If static specialization of the brain was indeed the case, the portion of the monkey's brains implicated in use and feeling of the hands should have withered, appearing non-functional. Instead, the brains of the monkeys were processing signals from the regions of their hands that had been left unaffected by the surgery (Begley, 2007).

These findings were no less than revolutionary. Not only did they challenge decades upon decades of neurological research, assumption and belief, and not only did they invalidate countless medical and psychological textbooks, they introduced an entirely new paradigm into the equation of human development that promised to be nothing less than revolutionary. *The brain could continue to grow, change and adapt over time, depending upon experience.*

The academic community was less than enthusiastic about the findings, and initially dismissed them as being attributable to flawed experimentation. The first papers produced by Merzenich and Kaas were passed over by most mainstream journals, and thus ended up being published in relative obscurity (Begley, 2007). The

findings were simply too radical, and went up against Nobel prize winning research that had definitively concluded that neurological development was limited to early development. Undaunted by the setbacks, Merzenich and Kaas continued with their research, eventually reaffirming and expanding upon their initial hypothesis. These efforts were enhanced through additional work conducted by their students, which in turn validated the earlier findings (Begley, 2007).

Paul Bach y-Rita (1934-2006), a Biomedical Engineering and Rehabilitation Medicine Professor also at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was a scholarly pioneer who conducted research that revolutionized the fields of neurobiology, medicine and rehabilitation, beginning in the 1960's. Most notable was his work on sensory substitution, which was a foundational precursor for later work conducted in the 70's, '80s and '90s. His efforts revolutionized thinking regarding the ability of the brain to reorganize itself, most notably through his conceptualization of *unmasking* (Doidge, 2007). According to Bach y-Rita, this is a neurological process by which the brain uncovers new routes for information processing that had previously been hidden. Practical application of this theory has allowed for the development of treatments to address various neurological deficits and damage, with ensuing transformative results that have significantly altered the lives of patients with whom he worked (Doidge, 2007).

The work of Merzinich, Kaas, Bach y-Rita and other pioneers finally proved to be so conclusive that objections regarding the validity of their research were silenced.

Finally, after decades upon decades of dogmatic beliefs viewing the brain as a mechanized, unchangeable system, new understanding took hold, then grew. Eventually the concept of a broad based *neuroplasticity* was introduced to and accepted by the academic community, which would in turn influence a wide variety of professional and practice domains.

The educational community quickly came to embrace ideas of brain based learning, with entire educational systems and programs dedicated to the enhancement of the learning process through utilization of techniques and methodologies that tapped into the power of neuroplasticity. The field of addictions eagerly embraced the idea of neuroplasticity, finding within it hope for addicts who had damaged their brains through substance abuse. Cessation of substance abuse could now provide damaged neurological systems with the opportunity for some level of recovery rather than a bleak future of brokenness and permanent damage. Physicians and psychiatrists also began discovering the potentials that now came within reach, and an entirely new healing domain, neuro-rehabilitation, came into being.

As our understanding of neuroplasticity has increased, so have the potentials for application to real world situations. Alvaro Pascual-Leone, Associate Professor in Neurology at Harvard Medical School, Director of the Laboratory for Magnetic Brain Stimulation, Attending Neurologist, and Director of Research at the Behavioral Neurology Unit at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, studies the physiology of

higher cognitive functions and the pathophysiology of neuropsychiatric symptoms, as well as brain plasticity in regards to skill acquisition and recovery from injury. He developed the technique of transcranial magnetic stimulation, a non-invasive method for mapping and generating activity within the brain (Doidge, 2007). His work with blind individuals learning to read Braille have demonstrated that not only does the brain have masked neurological channels that can be deliberately accessed when primary channels of communication are no longer available, it has the capacity for developing entirely new neurological pathways (Doidge, 2007). This finding is significant, as it removes many of the lingering boundaries concerning the conceptualization of our own neurological potentials.

In his review of *The Brain that Changes Itself*, Oliver Sacks, the renowned neurologist and best selling author, notes that, “Only a few decades ago, scientists considered the brain to be fixed or ‘hard-wired’, and considered most forms of brain damage...to be incurable. Dr. Doidge, an eminent psychiatrist and researcher was struck with how his patients’ own transformations belied this, and set out to explore the new science of neuroplasticity by interviewing both scientific pioneers in neuroscience and patients who have benefited from neuro-rehabilitation,” (Doidge, 2007). This groundbreaking book shares with us a multitude of case studies regarding the transformational power of neuroplasticity that a few decades ago would have been deemed pure fiction, including stories of individuals who have overcome significant neurological deficits. It also introduces cases highlighting the fact that creative

potential and enhanced neurological functioning, including memory, can be developed in anyone interesting in dedicating the necessary time to their pursuit (Doidge, 2007).

Quite literally, we have moved into an era where the power and potential of neurological functioning seems beyond measure. Indeed, we are just beginning to understand the enormity of change potential that exists within the brain. Current studies demonstrate that we can alter our neurological functioning simply through imagination alone, a feat which once would have belonged firmly in the realms of science fiction. Yet now, at a place where imagination and concrete reality collide, we stand at a precipice of human knowing, poised between competing realities and with a world at our fingertips that seems to be ours for the shaping. Consciousness weaves alluringly through this realm, beckoning us onwards to greater discoveries of self and world. The continuing journey promises to be profound, wondrous, and even awe-inspiring.

Consciousness and Leadership Theory

While the exploration of the scholarly territory of consciousness is deeply absorbing as an academic exercise, the field of Leadership Studies calls us to consider matters involving the increasingly volatile state of affairs in our global community. Mikhail Gorbachev, when discussing the rapidly shifting postmodern society in which we live, observed, “The roots of humanity’s troubles run very deep. There are no simple prescriptions to overcome them....what is needed are changes in

consciousness, in relations between people, between nations and in their attitudes towards nature” (Austin, 1998).

Gorbachev did not call for a “changing of minds,” or even for a “change of heart.” He called for a change in consciousness, for a radical new orientation towards each other and our world, and a new awareness of interconnectedness between humanity and environment. Inherent in his plea is the understanding that a change of consciousness is an overall undertaking, reshaping the entirety of a person’s existence, far beyond attitude and behavior alone. From this perspective, then, a change in consciousness is an absolute change in a way of being, as well as a change in a way of relating to others and the broader world in which we live. Utilizing this definitional foundation, inquiry into consciousness from a Leadership orientation is not only logical, it is essential. It is no wonder that James MacGregor Burns has linked transformative leadership activity with transformations in consciousness, for somewhere in the tangle of this idea of consciousness rests the greatest hope for positive change in our world.

And as this positive change is considered, we must remember that beyond the concerns of the individual lies the reality of context, of the larger world that we have created, that in turn acts to create *us*. We cannot limit our perceptions of self to *self*; we must now definitively link considerations of the individual with considerations of the group, and of the larger world beyond. This understanding is particularly important in considerations of leadership activity, which, by practice, is generally

externalized. Additionally, by appreciating the circular dynamic of self and milieu, we begin to understand the depth of responsibility that we must accept for the world around us as it exists in the present moment. Inherent in this understanding is the responsibility that we must assume as we produce and create an environment that is intimately linked with an individual awareness of being, and individual, group and societal developmental capacities and trajectories.

Acceptance of this responsibility brings a deeper perspective regarding processes of action and change. Burns provides some valuable insights regarding change processes in his conceptualization of the *transformational leader* as an individual who makes *conscious choices* amidst conflict and strife rather than exercising brute force (Burns, 1978). For Burns, truly transformational leaders must be able not only to effectively engage with conflict for the purpose of change, they must be able to *embody* it. When adequately considered, this requirement is appropriately understood as significant. For the responsibility of privately managing one's own emotions is a tall order in and of itself. Public management of the stressful emotions associated with conflict takes a deep familiarity with the self as well as an enormous capacity for active and effective engagement with the powerful negative emotions that are generally associated with fight or flight instincts.

Beyond this capacity, Burns further notes that a transformational leadership style, in its peak form, is a type of interaction that *engages* leaders and followers both in a manner that leads them each to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns,

1978). This theoretical stance is grounded in part in Kohlberg's theory of morality, which becomes a living structure for transformational leaders to utilize in inducing cognitive dissonance in followers for the purpose of encouraging movement to higher levels of being. This requirement demands that leaders maintain developmental levels that exceed their followers, as leaders must clearly know the territory ahead if they are to assist large numbers of followers in achieving potential developmental capacities. They must also have the capacity and resources necessary for creating environments that place themselves and followers in circumstances that encourage further development of the self.

Burns certainly provides an exceptional list of required attributes for potential transformational leaders. His linkage of consciousness to these traits complicates matters considerably, as does the further linkage between individual development and consciousness, and group development and consciousness. Indeed, the tangle can become so complicated that transformational leadership as originally defined seems nearly impossible to achieve. Yet Burns is clearly working with a trace into a deeply important leadership capacity. We need only look to the "Theory of the U," developed by Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers for a practical application of theoretical work relating to changing states of consciousness. This theory was developed to meet the demands of today's rapidly changing world, and as a means of merging into a change process that is fast paced, dynamic, "creatively destructive" and ill-defined (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworksi & Flowers, 2004). An integral component of

this theory brings us back to phenomenological roots in that it requires individuals utilizing it to engage in a period of time during which they suspend their beliefs, judgments and values relating to the problem at hand. The reason for this suspension is the explicit understanding that today's world is not suited to the knowledge of yesteryear, and that we must position ourselves in such a manner that allows a deep "knowing" from within to emerge (2004).

The entirety of the "U Theory" appears deceptively simple, incorporating only three stages in its makeup. The first is the stage of Sensing, wherein an individual merges into a situation so as to clearly understand the nuances, depth and breadth of the circumstances at hand; the second stage is Presencing, a time of retreat and reflection that allows for an "inner knowing" to emerge; and the third stage is Realizing, where action is "swift and with flow" (Senge, et. al., 2004). The "U Theory" clearly seems to be composed of a method for self-engagement with elements of one's consciousness and as well as the unconsciousness for the purpose of drawing a deeper form of "knowing" from within. The domains of intuition and introspection figure prominently in this equation, drawing a clear line to the arena of consciousness from deeper, lesser known regions of the self.

Viewed from this complex perspective, deeper and broader engagement with consciousness as a formal topic for research can only serve to inform our field regarding emerging new models for change. It also positions the field of Leadership ideally for legitimately joining the community of researchers who are exploring this

complex and alluring topic. It makes sense then, that this journey now turns to the deep realms of emotion and feeling, where transformation and consciousness intersect.

The Substance of Poetic Thought

Poetic Imagination

The search for places of deep emotion requires that we turn to look within the regions of our own selves, to the reaches of heart and imagination, all bound up and expressed through a restless and curious intellect. For it is here that the vagaries and vicissitudes of existence seek expression and movement, restively desiring a place in the outer world when the contours of self seem too small to contain them anymore. It is here in the interiority of self that the joys and the sorrows, the laughter and the grief, the gentleness and the passions find life and would begin their journey outwards. The path taken outwards begins with emotion and feeling, moving to image and then physical manifestation. Words, dance and music, indeed all of artistic creation bears the elements of self, dream and imagination that will not stay bound to individual form alone, that relentlessly move to seek union with the other in both the far and near reaches of the external world.

The poetic tradition provides a unique view into this journeying between inner world and outer, bearing forth and uniting the wildness of untamed emotion with the grace and musicality of aesthetic intellect. The gifts borne forth by poetic tradition are many; since times of antiquity, poetic expression has been deeply entwined with human development, acting both as descriptor and carrier of historical

and cultural truth, lived experience and lore. Such a charge is significant, as the vehicle that carries these treasures is trusted with the very soul of a people or nation.

This soulfulness is reflected in the Homeric epics of ancient Greece, the Bhagavad-Gita of ancient India, and the Sumerian epics of Gilgamesh that originated over 2000 years ago. The wisdom carried by these epics has been elevated over time, and, in the case of the Bhavagad-Gita, has achieved the status of “sacred text” within Hindu, Tantric and Yogic traditions. Beyond a deep and often revered human wisdom, the great epics carry their cultures with them, and keep alive the voices and the spirit of the people who created them. In doing so, they grant their creators a unique immortality.

This immortality of authorship is merely a glimmer into the deeper temporal boundaries that these epics cross. The timelessness of their truths create a temporal suspension that allows their stories to stay vibrantly alive across the centuries, bearing with them stories, histories, and teaching legends that retain their power to influence thought, attitudinal norms and behavior. Viewed from this perspective, these stories offer a window into a spectrum of moral trajectories that have been held as ideal throughout human history, and that have been utilized to create and shape norms of ethical and ideal conduct. These stories resonate deeply within the human heart, and have been well loved by the people and cultures who created them and who have carried them. It is this love and accompanying sense of value that has created the impetus to preserve them for succeeding generations.

This same love also provides us with a window into the emotional complexity carried within poetic craft. It is here, in the broadest possible range of *feeling*, that we find the very essence of poetic life (Bourdieu, 1991) that has been distilled from the entirety of our collective experience. Robert Bly, in speaking of the legendary poet Bill Stafford, shares with us that he highly valued an attitude of inclusiveness when engaged with the process of poetic craft (Moyers, 1995). This inclusiveness speaks to the need for an emotional field of breadth and depth. It also speaks to the need for including the mundane experiences of life along with the extraordinary, placing neither above the other as each represents an essential aspect of human life. What is most noteworthy here is that Stafford spoke of inclusivity as an *attitude* rather than as a planned activity, situating it as a way of being.

This attitude requires an openness to experience that rejects presupposition and judgment. In an almost phenomenological approach, this inclusive attitude requires that the individual makes an attempt to consciously connect with life experience in a very pure way, setting aside assumptions and past experiences in an effort to be with the “now” in a very open manner. Consciously holding an attitude of openness and inclusivity broadens the life experience, as it requires active engagement with and attention to all elements of daily life.

The reflective attitude instilled by such practice creates a contemplative container to hold lived experience. It is in this place that we find both studied linguistic complexity and the poetic unification of emotion and image that is so

essential to the practice of this craft. Here is the foundation for metaphorical images that carry cultural and common knowledge, and, most importantly, emotion. These images have the potential to broaden the stimulus fields of individuals entering into a state of poetic consciousness, as they propel individual awareness into new places of depth and complexity through linking old and familiar concepts to new ones.

Once begun, this process brings an aesthetic morality into lived experience, expanding the boundaries of one's reality as new concepts of goodness, truth and beauty enter into both conscious and unconscious awareness. This begins a journey that paradoxically takes the individual into greater depths of interior existence even as it expands the boundaries of the self moving into the outer world.

Strains of a Music Long Past

To understand the richness of the poetic tradition it is necessary to begin by looking to the distant past. We first look to the third millennium before Christ, in the nation of Sumer, now known as Iraq. The world's oldest known poem originates here, preserved for future generations on clay tablets. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* tells the tale of Gilgamesh, who was the half-human half-god King of Uruk, and his mighty friend, the half-demon Enkidu (Mitchell, 2006). This heroic narrative provides us with a quest for immortality, the folly and wisdom of Gods and Goddesses, an undying friendship, a lesson of governance, and a morality story regarding the feminine. Intensely passionate, the epic resonates with the force of newly tamed

emotion, contained only by a hard-won wisdom brought forward from Gilgamesh's own heart.

The Vedic Ramayana, created in 500 BC, is the world's longest epic poem. Regarded as a sacred text by millions of Hindus and individuals who honor Yogic and Tantric traditions, it contains many volumes of texts, including within it the Bhagavad-Gita. This book-length section is regarded by many as the most sacred holy text of Hinduism (Rama, 1985).

The Gita gives us the story of Arjuna, who is going to war against his estranged uncle and cousins who have stolen a kingdom. Lord Krishna acts as Arjuna's charioteer on the battlefield, and, in the course of these duties, offers him the sacred wisdom of Yoga philosophy. This is the philosophy of kingship, which reveals the four branches of Yoga to the world for the first time (Rama, 1985). These branches are *Jnana*, *Karma*, *Bhakti*, and *Raja*, which are the paths of wisdom, service, devotion and discipline respectively. Practiced correctly, the branches of these paths lead the individual to enlightenment.

Following both Yogic and Tantric tradition, the Ramayana has been written in symbolic language, carrying not only metaphorical images but archaic instruction for actual ritual and contemplative practice. The course of the sun and moon can be read as references to celestial bodies, or as the movement of breath, with the movement of the sun referring to breath in the right nostril, and the movement of the moon referring to the left (Rama, 1988). This poetic tradition offers us the gift not only of

hidden wisdom, but of mystery and the search that must accompany it. This mystery, as do all mysteries from sacred tradition, offers the tantalizing promise of eternal knowledge and eternal life.

The ancient Greeks offer a more mundane view with their vision of poetics. Plato provides contradictory views on both poets and the function of poetry. He first discredits poets by proclaiming they should not be included in his ideal Republic. He holds forward the idea that poetry can be a dangerous thing, and critiques Homer for providing an unattainable ideal vision for life rather than an organized philosophy that serves daily existence. It appears to be this visionary element of poetry to which Plato so vehemently objects, for he finds the function of inspiration to be highly suspect when compared with the rational logic of ordered thought. We find him declaring that poetry is irrational as it too easily arouses emotion leading to fantasy, thereby leading men astray (Halliwell, 1998). Especially damning is its musicality, which may go so far as to convince individuals to believe that which is untrue. Reason must be the guiding attribute in Plato's Republic, not the chaos of strong feelings which he believes may obscure truth.

This was hardly a popular position in a nation that valued the arts so highly, and Plato finally relented in his strong view by stating that he would indeed allow poetry into his Republic if her proponents could demonstrate to him that she provided necessary beauty and was contributive to ideal government (Halliwell,

1998). It would take his most famous student, Aristotle, to bring forward this argument.

Aristotle argued that poetry, far from being inspirational fable with a skewed view of truth, was in fact a skill that could be learned through a set of orderly rules and guidelines (Halliwell, 1998). In his *Poetics* he provides clear guidelines for styles of poetry, and offers a comprehensive critique for how poetry is to be evaluated. He points out that poetry provides us with universal truth as opposed to the specific truths given by history or philosophy, and that these universals provide us with a global view of reality. To Aristotle, this is both a valid and specific way of approaching truth, and thus must be honored.

In regards to emotion, Aristotle provides us with the sophisticated view that poetry provides a cathartic experience, allowing her listeners to experience intense feelings for the purpose of learning how to control them. Thus begins a process of purification of the self, which ultimately leads to the betterment of the social order as passions are tamed and grief is turned to insight and wisdom (Halliwell, 1998). Poetry then becomes a vital element of the greater good, and survives to serve and embody goodness, truth and beauty.

The great Sufi poet and mystic, Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi, well understood the power of emotion that Aristotle sensed lay at the heart of this craft. Rumi was born in the city of Balkh in what was the Persian Empire during the year 1207 AD. While still a young child, Rumi's family fled the region as Ghengis Khan's hoards swept

through the territory, eventually settling in Konya, Turkey where his father was a noted scholar and head of a University (Barks, 2001). Born into a lineage of religious scholars and jurists, Rumi followed in his father's tradition by embracing an academic life, and had gained fame in his endeavors by the time he was a mere thirty years old.

History tells us that Rumi met his spiritual master, Shams i Tabriz in Konya after Shams had begged God to send him a worthy disciple. This meeting appeared to cast a spell on both master and student, for Rumi and Shams shared a unique and binding devotion to each other and to God. They would disappear for weeks at a time in spiritual communion and deepening mystical Friendship, often returning to a disapproving community who failed to understand the depth and truth of their relationship (Barks, 2001).

Certain members of the community in which Rumi lived grew jealous of this friendship, and eventually drove Shams away (Barks, 2001). He returned once, only to find his death. Rumi was seized by a terrible grief, and wandered through the region in desolation. It is said that it was in Damascus that he realized that his Friend and their love was still alive within his own heart (2001). Rumi stopped his wandering, and began composing ecstatic poetry. His greatest work has been collected in the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz*, which translates as "The Works of Shams of Tabriz" (Barks, 2001). These ecstatic poems carry with them a deep longing for love, and for the divine. They also carry the searing pain of utter annihilation, the long wounds of separation, and the certainty of union again with the Beloved.

*How did you get away? You were the pet falcon of an old woman.
 Did you hear the falcon drum?
 You were a songbird put in with owls. Did you smell a garden?
 You got tired of sour fermenting and left the tavern.*

*You went like an arrow to the target, from the bow of time and place.
 The man who stays in the cemetery pointed the way,
 But you didn't go.
 You became light and gave up wanting to be famous.
 You don't worry about what you are going to eat,
 So why buy an engraved belt?*

*I've heard about living in the center, but what about
 Leaving the center of the center?
 Flying toward thankfulness, you become
 The rare bird with one wing of fear,
 And one of hope. In autumn,
 A rose crawling along the ground in the cold wind.
 Rain on the roof runs down and out by the spout
 As fast as it can.
 Talking is pain. Lie down and rest,
 Now that you have found a friend to be with.*

"From These Branches," Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks, 2001

Rumi's poetic work provides a bridge from the mundane to the divine. Each passage, from the simplest to the most complex, is an element of a finely wrought container that holds both metaphorical imagery and emotion. In Rumi's case this emotion is usually a longing for union with the divine, or a trace into emotional depth that eventually leads to this experience. The imagery provides links from the realities of everyday life to an existential quest for meaning, urging the reader onwards to a journey of discovery exploring the very nature of life and death. To Rumi, the simplest act of cooking leads to a comparison of the self being cooked well

enough to be presented to God, and the act of sweeping holds us in wait until we can bear the beauty of the divine.

Broom Work

If every heart had such a private road into the Friend as this, there would be a garden bench on the tip of every thorn. Every grief an exuberance. Flame-colored souls enjoy each other. Lightening stands doorkeeper for the full moon. If it didn't, the sky's shifting would start to occur on the ground. If legs and feet and wings took us to the beloved, every atom would become such transportation. If everyone could see what love is, each would set up a tent pole in the ocean: the world's population pitched and living easily within the sea. What if inside every lover's tear you saw the face of the Friend, Muhammed, Jesus, Buddha, the impossible-possible philosopher, the glass diamond one, Shams i Tabriz? A friendship fire dissolves divisions: Yesterday becomes tomorrow. Stay low and lower under the green roof. Keep sweeping the floor. That broom work keeps a brilliance covered that would confuse us more than we can stand.

Rumi, from "The Soul of Rumi"; translator, Coleman Barks

Coleman Barks, a renowned translator of Rumi's works, provides us with two Eastern concepts to further explain this poetry. He shares with us that *fana* and *baqa* are Arabic words that speak to the painful states of annihilation and transformation. Once this forging of the self is completed, the new being moves with great fluidity

into new realms of understanding, embodying grace, hope and the power of resurrection. Such a person is a living element of hope. *Baqa* speaks to the power of utilizing this new self in an intentional, conscious manner for the purpose of embodying realized wisdom in daily action. It is an elegant, graceful way of being that calls other to see, and, perhaps, to a journey of their own.

Emotion as a vehicle propelling the self into the divine appears in Meister Eckhart's work as well. A contemporary of Rumi's (c. 1260-1327), Eckhart was a Christian mystic from Germany who entered the Dominican Order at the age of 15. Noted as an accomplished scholar and Professor of Theology, his theoretical work was aimed at bringing forward the idea that humanity's intellectual life was a great treasure, and that, through this intellect, the human spirit could be directed to God. This philosophical positioning, which granted the ordinary person permission to realize God through their own intellectual reasoning and self-cultivation, earned him the Chair of Theology at the University of Paris. It also earned him the displeasure of the Church, who censured his works after his death. It is only now, in the 21st century, that his work is once again being recognized as profoundly important (Eckhart, retrieved 7/3/07).

Expands His Being

All beings are words of God, His music, His art.
 Sacred books we are, for the infinite camps in our souls.
 Every act reveals God and expands His being.
 I know that may be hard to comprehend.
 All creatures are doing their best
 to help God in His birth of Himself.

Enough talk for the night.
 He is laboring in me;
 I need to be silent for a while,
 worlds are forming in my heart.
 – Meister Eckhart

Eckhart's powerful use of imagery takes us deep into the eternal mysteries of the divine with a great sense of assuredness. These images move with great rapidity, challenging us to keep up, to take in more and more densely meaningful information. This rapidity of sequencing creates a temporal shift as we attempt to concurrently hold a multitude of powerful images in our mind at the same time. We are the vibrant light of God that is expanding within our heart, we bear worlds in our very self, we are a living sacred text, we are one with all living creatures. Expansion of self is evoked through the attempt to hold these vast images in a unified whole, which in turn provides verification for Eckhart theory that the self can grow through a process of intentionally directed internal work.

In a very beautiful manner, both Rumi and Eckhart honor the Aristotelian tradition that puts forward the proposition that poetry represents universal truths. In the mystic poetic tradition, these universals take us into a pattern of divinity and God realization, urged into being through poetic form. These patterns inspire an emotional longing in followers, urging them to the path of the divine Seeker. In both mystical traditions, these seekers are eventually asked to put aside existing patterns of individuality, transcending the small self through unification with the Divine.

The troubadours of the Middle Ages move us from the divine to the human with their focus on idealized romantic love, passion, playfulness and parody. Largely located in France, this movement brought forward intricately constructed verse paired with music and playful, often biting commentary regarding romance and courtly intrigue (Kehew, Pound & Snodgrass, 2005). The troubadour movement lyricized courtship and made play of relational complexity, all the while mobilizing the whole movement through actual travel. The troubadours of this age wandered throughout the countryside and towns of France, popularizing songs and poems, spreading scandal, and carrying news. This movement has been credited with influencing not only the poetic work of following generations, but within influencing modern music and poetic expression as well.

The expansion of the poetic tradition through the activity of the troubadours is significant. Poetic expression now focuses on the extraordinary emotion that is possible in individual daily life; the gossip, sex, infidelity and barely contained passions that make up the human realm of relationship (Kehew, et al, 2005). Ordinary life is elevated in importance through the power of aesthetics, which in turn acts to reshape the norms of a social structure. Poetic craft, in its complexity and artistry, now moves seamlessly through an entire society, with the power to focus the attention of a significant portion of the population on new trends and information.

Subsequent periods of time brought with them their own unique poetic movements, each bearing unique gifts and offering new perspectives on linguistic

artistry. In the late 1380's we have Richard II commanding the noted literary figure John Gower to begin writing in English, rather than in the traditional court language of French or the religious language of Latin (Schmidt, 2000). This move to English was highly significant, as it marked a cultural and political movement of the elite towards the common people of England. Knowledge and historical truths were suddenly accessible, and a rich aesthetic life was now moving into the conscious domain of a people who had been taught that their language was uncivilized. Poetry here was a strong symbol and vehicle of cultural power and, ultimately, freedom. (It must be noted here that the English in turn suppressed the languages of the peoples that they conquered; i.e. the Irish, the Scots, but this discussion is beyond the scope of these efforts.)

In Gower's efforts to please first Richard, and then Henry the IV, he wrote his poetic masterpiece *Confessio Amantis* which explores love, virtuous behavior, and the nature and consequences of sinful behavior in the English language (Schmidt, 2000). While he was quite adept at composing poetic work in both French and Latin, it is this work that he is most famous for, and that, ironically, gained fame in its time for being so good that it was translated into the languages of the Continent – both French and Latin (Schmidt, 2000). Formal and courtly approved poetry, it seems, is determined to move into and live within all language. Through Gower, we begin to understand how powerfully poetry carries and honors aesthetic culture within her being.

Gower was a friend and contemporary to Geoffrey Chaucer, who is sometimes noted as the “Father of English Poetry” (Schmidt, 2000). Chaucer, born into a well placed merchant family, had an active life which included time spent in the military and devoted diplomatic service to the British crown, both of which took him abroad for extended periods of time. His wife, Phillipa, came from a family of the educated gentry, and connected Chaucer to many significant literary figures of the time. Amidst managing his family affairs, a very busy public life, and a constantly unstable economic situation, Chaucer was a man who was both captured by poetry and compelled to write.

His work is emotionally broad in scope, and sophisticated in presentation as he consistently works with and captures a sense of cultural inclusiveness in his writing. He pairs this global view with great clarity of thought and elegance in formal expression, a combination which offers us images and linguistic play of both elegance and depth (Schmidt, 2000). It is also linguistically formidable in its ability to bring forward imagery that evokes not only emotion but place and time. This spatial and temporal positioning grants Chaucer a powerful aesthetic legitimacy that is vibrant in all of his work. It allows him to layer patterns of thought and experience into a unified whole that captures the reader with its scope and intensity. As Schmidt (2000) notes, Chaucer broadened the poetic vocabulary of his time even as he brings a strong sense of cultural uniqueness into the integrated whole of his work.

The 1500's and 1600's brought a new style of poetic expression into popularity, the ballad. This advent moved poetry away from linguistic sophistication and concern with style and structure to a more basic imaginative place that was preoccupied with battle, death, politics and love (Schmidt, 2000). These were not the artistically expressive and correct songs of the troubadour, these were songs of a more earthy sort. The ballads of this age allowed for a greater level of individual creative expression in their construction as many of them were drawn from stories of everyday life or from folk lore. While they sacrificed the formal elements of poetic construction so valued by the educated elite, they brought forward a lived structure and language that mirrored the experiences of the common people. In addition to traditional stories of love and war, they provided satire and biting political commentary to the masses, allowing anonymous voices critical of crown policies and individual politicians to be heard. They were ribald and provocative, sung in the streets, in markets, in taverns and in houses of ill repute. They offered counsel regarding good behavior, encouraged both drinking and abstinence, and provided advice regarding employment and trade. They also offered advice to the lovelorn, celebrated and derived love, and provided a vehicle for the expression of affection. Poetry thus traveled surely between the classes, sacrificing dignity and formal structure for rougher voices and meaner manners. In so doing poetry broadened her voice, proving that her reach far exceeded polite society and graceful manners. She now belonged to the common people, too.

It would take the Renaissance to revive the drama and beauty of classically structured lyrical poetry. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry, Earl of Surrey, would be credited with fathering the new English poetic tradition through their carefully measured and emotionally sophisticated verse (Schmidt, 2000). Wyatt, heavily influenced by the older verses of Italian poets that held true to ideals of structure and form, is the first great sonnet writer of England. Henry, Earl of Surrey, with his classical style, emotional restraint, and studied elegance, is named the first English classical poet (Schmidt, 2000). The two of them would set the stage for subsequent poetic masters of the Renaissance to step forward, most notably Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, Her Royal Highness Elizabeth I, Mary, Countess of Pembroke, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare.

The Renaissance brings us poets who worried over the transformative power of art against a historical backdrop of the Reformation. Clashes between Protestantism and Catholicism preoccupied Europe, as history brought forward an era where all ideas and beliefs regarding spirituality and religion were being questioned (Norton, 2006). As intellectual pursuits became focused on ideological issues pertaining to this struggle, the poets were prolific in their own efforts, weaving religious concerns and discourse into their writing, debating long-held truths, exploring new ideas. Both sides of the religious issue were adopted as long held traditions clashed with new and independent thought. The verse, form and content changed again, adapting to new realities, attitudes and political and social norms.

This period would be followed by the Elizabethan age, the Restoration, Romanticism, Victorian, Modernity and post-Modernity, each bringing with them variations in form and vocabulary, quarrels with these changes, critiques and praise of the past, unique insights and revelations. Each would reflect the changing nature of the world, mirroring the shifting patterns of the *now* that they strove to capture.

And lest we grow too concentrated on the English tradition of poetics, we must remind ourselves of the simultaneously evolving branches of poetic thought and discourse that were taking place throughout the world. India, who offered up the Vedas, continued to produce astonishing poetic material throughout the ages. Indian poets held true throughout the centuries to their mystical traditions, weaving tales of Enlightenment and transcendental love for the Divine into their work. We have divine poets, including the flute playing Lord Krishna, who lived both inside and outside of the Gita, the playful singing and dancing elephant headed Lord Ganesha, and the beautiful Goddess Saraswati who is the embodiment of wisdom and art.

We also have the flesh and blood devotees of these deities, nobles and commoners both who composed their poetry as acts of worship. Such was the power of devotional poetry in ancient India that it had the power to break down cultural norms and codes regarding gender and the status of women. Mirabai, a noble woman who lived in Rajasthan in the 1500's, was recognized as a great poet of her time. After living through the tragedies of war, and losing her father, husband, and father in law, she gave up her place at court when in her 30s to become a wandering devotee

of Lord Krishna. At first scorned because she was a wandering woman, her poetry eventually earned her the high regard of scholars and spiritual figures alike. Her poetry, as is notable in the tradition of the poet-mystics, is filled with intense longing held firmly within temporal reality.

*Do not mention the name of love,
O my simple-minded companion.
Strange is the path
When you offer your love.
Your body is crushed at the first step. If you want to offer love
Be prepared to cut off your head
And sit on it.
Be like the moth,
Which circles the lamp and offers its body.
Be like the deer, which, on hearing the horn,
Offers its head to the hunter.
Be like the partridge,
Which swallows burning coals
In love of the moon.
Be like the fish
Which yields up its life
When separated from the sea.
Be like the bee, entrapped in the closing petals of the lotus.
Mira's lord is the courtly Giridhara.
She says: Offer your mind
To those lotus feet.
-Mirabai from the Poet Seers, translated by A.J. Alston*

Centuries later the spirit that Mirabai captured in her work would still be alive and vibrant in the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. Born into a wealthy family in what was 19th century Bengal, Tagore was the youngest son of a highly religious family dedicated to living by the codes of the Upanishads (Nobel Prize website). He was a prolific writer in many genres, though his most famous work was his poetry,

translations of which took him around the world on speaking tours. Educated in both India and Great Britain, he moved easily through the most sophisticated literary and social circles in all the worlds through which he traveled. This is notable as class divisions at the beginning of the 20th century were wide; Tagore as an Indian moving through European society brushed past many an entrenched social code.

In recognition of his work he received the Nobel prize in Literature in 1913, and was knighted by the British government in 1915, an honor he would later repudiate due to the poor treatment he perceived to his country from the colonizing British Empire (Nobel Prize website). While he received renown and accolades in great measure as a leading voice representing India's spirituality during his travels throughout the world, he would be called "a living institution" in his homeland (Nobel Prize website). A friend of both Mahatma Ghandi and the legendary yogi Paramahansa Yogananda (Yogananda, 2006), Tagore was a figure of spiritual greatness who demonstrated the capacity to inspire individuals from all walks of life, classes and cultural backgrounds through his work. Poetry, in his capable hands, found a uniquely universal expression, pushing aside not only temporal and spatial boundaries, but cultural and religious ones as well. Yogananda (2006), in his seminal work on kriya yoga, introduces him to the West as India's "poet saint."

Far Eastern Contributions

Other Eastern traditions were also developing unique expressions of poetry throughout the centuries. In Japan we find a poetic tradition bound by highly

disciplined structure, specific codes of content, restraint, subtlety, and emphasis on sound. The restrained nature of this poetry places greater demands on the audience than does her Western cousin, for Japanese poetry requires intuitive listening skills and an appreciation for word play held within a highly structured and culturally bound poetic container. It also requires a clear understanding of the metaphoric imagery used within this tradition.

The earliest form of Japanese lyric poetry can be found in the *Kojiki*, or “the record of ancient matters,” which was composed in 712 AD (Hoffman, 1986). In it the tradition of using the imagery of nature as a focal point for poetic composition was established, which is still vibrantly alive in Japanese poetry today. The early forms of poetry drew heavily from the emotional cauldron of lived experience, and court records confirm that it was written from individuals from all walks of life. Over time it grew into a more courtly tradition, where form, structure, and verbal play began to overshadow, or at least linguistically cloak, the deep emotional content. Eventually the draw of poetics would become so strong that formal competitions would be held, with the Emperor lauding honors upon the most noted and successful poets.

The Heian period, which lasted from 794 to 1185 AD, is especially noteworthy as this was an era when aesthetics, and particularly poetry, flourished in the Japanese formal court (Hirshfield & Aratani, 1990). The work of women was particularly significant, as their literary contributions were considered equally with those

produced by their male counterparts, and provided a means for advancement within Japanese social hierarchy (Hirshfield & Aratani, 1990). Poetry thus became a hand of equality, powerfully working to provide all who possessed her skill with the potential for rising in a court that was traditionally bound by birth and class.

Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Aratani, translators and authors of the hauntingly beautiful *The Ink Dark Moon*, observe that the Heian period produced work where human experience was viewed in passionately emotional terms (Hirshfield & Aratani, 1990). Poetry allowed for the experience of feeling against the backdrop of a rigid Imperial court, where it became a vehicle that honored expressions of the human heart.

Hirshfield and Aratani's work is inspired by the poetry and prose of two noble women from this period, Izumi Shikibu and Ono No Komachi. Lauded as two of Japan's most distinguished and honored voices, these women produced work of such power and scope that it served to shape Japanese aesthetic tradition. Writing in the acceptable style of the *tanka*, one of Shikibu's poems provides us with an example of the alluring intensity of her words.

Things I Want Decided
 Which shouldn't exist
 in this world,
 the one who forgets
 or the one
 who is forgotten?
 Which is better,
 to love one who has died?
 Or not to see each other
 When you're alive?

Which is better,
 the distant lover
 you long for
 or the one you see daily
 without desire?
 Which is the least unreliable
 among fickle things—
 the swift rapids,
 a flowing river
 or this human world?

-Izumi Shikibu (translated by Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Aratani, 1990)

The *tanka* form of poetic expression has been in existence for nearly 1300 years. Known as the “short poem” (Hoffman, 1986), it was developed by the upper class citizenry as a way to aesthetically mark a special occasion or event such as a holiday, a party, a birthday, or a formal dinner. A *tanka* could also be composed for a lover, and often marked a notable event in a love affair, or the beginning or end of one. Written by both men and women, it is an emotionally charged artistic expression cloaked in symbolism and correct form. When written by lovers, it served as a means by which to communicate the deepest secrets of the human heart through the use of a few powerful images and artistic expressions.

Composed of 31 syllables in a structure requiring stanzas of 5, 7, 5, 7 and 7, in older times a *tanka* would be composed in beautiful calligraphy on aesthetically pleasing paper. An artistic or personally significant accompaniment, such as a beautiful flower or shell, would be attached to the poem. In this manner the *tanka* provided an elegant finish to notable events, or carried a deeply meaningful symbolic message to an intimate. The *choka* is the “long poem,” and, while still composed of 5

and 7 syllable lines, its length is indeterminate. Over time the *choka* began to be utilized for elegies and solemn occasions, while the *tanka* became the popular form for poetic expression (Hoffman, 1986). Its structure usually holds two distinct images that the reader is asked to hold simultaneously. Professor Yoel Hoffman (1986), from the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, notes that *tanka* gives us one image of nature, and one of the individual in a contemplative response to the first.

Haikai no renga, often called *renku* or *renga*, is a form of linked poetry that has its origins in *tanka* (Reichold, 2006). Its historical origins can be traced back nearly 1,000 years, marking it as one of the oldest surviving forms of poetry in active use today. *Renga* is begun by one poet, then expanded by other poets in a sophisticated balance of linguistic and metaphorical play. International work currently brings together many poets from widely differing cultures in an effort to produce new, globally oriented work (Kondo & Higginson, retrieved 6/28/07). As *renga* does not have one author it frequently lacks a formal narrative, and, at first glance, may appear disjointed and without sequential order. The resultant work often looks deceptively simple and disorderly. In reality, *renga* is highly structured through a complex series of links and shifts, which provide connections between images and thoughts as well as movement towards new thoughts. When looking deeply at this form of poetry, we find a series of often complex images that can be cognitively demanding to hold and reflect upon. When reflectively reading *renga*, it is almost as if we are being required to hold multiple conversations of images and feelings and

thoughts in our minds. These conversations can be playful, even superficial or sardonic, or they can introduce themes of depth, such as the nature of love or war. As a conversation, this form of poetry reminds us that a single voice alone is not sufficient for a fully rounded and completed artistic endeavor in this tradition. It also demands adaptability, and is flexible enough to allow for surprises, changes of tone or subject and to hold opposing views or emotions.

Haiku, which is a shorter, more compact version of *renga*, is, perhaps, the best known form of Japanese poetry in the West today. While its development may be attributable to a small and select group of 16th and 17th century Japanese poets, its formal development and wide ranging initial popularity is widely attributed to the famous Japanese poet Basho Matsuo, who wrote in the 1600's (Japan Digest, retrieved 10/7/07).

In its earliest stages some *haiku* was written in order to provide brevity to serious situations, or as immediate social or political commentary on some event. Basho initially wrote haiku that was satirical, but gradually changed his writing style as he became strongly influenced by Zen Buddhism. No longer interested in word play and puns alone, he developed *haiku* into a poetic form that captures the immediate and deep essence of the *now*. Noted for his journeys through the countryside and deep contemplation of suffering, he brought this depth of self into all of his work. In very little time his increasingly thoughtful approach to crafting these small gems began to influence all of Japan's haiku writers.

Basho's widely recognized poetic maturity and elegance is apparent in his most famous *haiku* (Japan Digest, retrieved 10/7/07); *Furuike ya, kawazu tobikomu, mizu no oto.*

*Breaking the silence
Of an ancient Pond
A frog jumped into water-
A deep resonance.*

This poem provides us with an image of an ancient pond, of old and still waters, which, when reflected deeply upon, can easily refer to the emotional maturity of the self. Basho provides us with an insight into his own emotional and poetic journey with this brief, yet powerful image. The water has been disturbed by the jump, yet in reality it is not disturbed – there is resonance instead, a joining of opposing forces into a unified movement. Basho gives us a yielding of the new into the old, an acceptance that has not been worn down through struggle. As the change is accepted the waters again become still, its inherent essence untouched. Through his image Basho offers a powerful yet gentle message of growth and change through the lens of Buddhist thought.

In the Tao we find poetic language, constructed in hauntingly elegant prose, that carries us into wisdom and transcendental realizations all the while grounding us in everyday life. Far removed from the ecstatic and longing images of Hinduism and Sufism, here we find a path of great simplicity that asks us to look relentlessly within for knowledge and guidance. This directive serves as a constant reminder that, in

order to genuinely engage with the world, we must first traverse the unknown territories of the self.

Verse Forty-Seven

Without going outside, you may know the whole world. Without looking through the window, you may see the ways of heaven. The farther you go, the less you know. Thus the sage knows without traveling; He sees without looking; He works without doing. -*Lao Tsu, (translated by Gia-fu Feng & Jane English, 1997 p. 91)*

Here can be found the Tao's timeless truth; that the most compelling realizations to be made are found within the boundaries of one's own reflections. This brief verse promises that the highest wisdom may be found when the path into the heart and soul is the one that is followed. It also cautions against the restless mind, which relentlessly looks to external sources for truth and guidance. While such guidance may seem quite simple, it is offered as a mediation upon which the individual must devote significant attention in an attempt to unlock universal truth. *Without going outside, you may know the whole world*, promises that it is the path of meditation that ultimately grants the perennial wisdom, the wisdom of all life and creation, and the process which produces it. *The further you go, the less know* is a warning regarding the insidious nature of the ego, which has the ability to engage in pride, arrogant seeking of knowledge and posturing. The sage who knows without traveling, seeing and doing, has unlocked the wisdom of egoless action, correct thought and correct perception.

In looking to the East beautiful, even wondrous, variations on our poetic themes appear. There is complexity cloaked within simplicity, metaphor hidden within metaphor, and spiritual teachings cloaked within the rhythms of nature. From court poetry to the death poems of monks, we are offered a poetic tradition that has the potential to literally infuse every aspect of life with an aesthetic heartbeat.

An Aesthetic Tradition

Our poetic journey, while hardly comprehensive, offers a view into the depth and breadth of this aesthetic tradition. It seems clear that individuals throughout time and across all cultures have sought emotional expression and spiritual progression through her power and grace. She is a vehicle that has been entrusted with the deepest stirrings of the heart, the glories and treacheries of war, and the playfulness of new lovers. She has carried the hope for enlightenment and union with God and Goddess, the joyfulness of birth and new beginnings, and the despair of those who mourn what has passed from this world. Perhaps she is the ultimate and final vehicle uniting the heart and mind, searching to communicate with the larger world. The search so far has found her many expressions and manifestations, from the divine to the ordinary. How wonderful, then, to turn to the origins of this striving to communicate. We now turn to a different branch of this path, looking for the very foundations of this aesthetic movement into the human soul.

On Linguistics and Limbic Systems

Story, Myth and Emotional Complexity

The American psychologist James Hillman tells us, “Words...are powers which have invisible power over us. They are personal presences which have whole mythologies: genders, genealogies, histories and vogues; and their own guarding, blaspheming, creating and annihilating effects. This aspect of the word transcends their nominalistic definitions and contexts and evokes in our souls a universal resonance” (Hillman, 1989, p. 29). Surely the deepest experience of this resonance is to be found in the presence and force of emotion, woven into being through the artistry of human language. The experience of emotion, translated through layers of sophisticated human complexity, can become known feeling, which in turn is shared with others through linguistics, the arts and all manner of relational exchanges. Hillman’s reminder that words carry power and knowledge asks us to become more attentive to both the form and intent of the language that we use. With his own poetic voice he echoes the spirit of the poets who seek to experience union with the Divine, and, speaking their truth, create a poetic tradition of passion. We can reach to the heavens through myth and poetry, and carry wisdom and insight from rarified realms back to the world of the ordinary. Though the words of poetics carry the

physical form through fleshless embodiment of letters, the spirit of that form originates with the purest feeling and knowing experiences of the human heart.

Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), who revolutionized the academic area of mythology by thoroughly twining together cultural myths, creation stories and sacred beliefs into a unified and global developmental spectrum, also worked to carry this knowledge to the general public. These efforts have gained him a place of reverence in the heart of many, and are beautifully offered to the world at large through numerous books, publications and lectures that have been saved for future generations (Campbell, 1997).

His developmental view is supported by artifacts of cultural evolution, and provides us with a perspective of how this evolution transforms over time. Campbell (1997) argues that the first ancestors originally looked to the animal world as the source of mystery and the divine. This was followed by focus on the plant world, whose cycles of death and rebirth lay the ground for both sacrifice ritual and beliefs of life, death and rebirth. From these traditions the focus turned to more abstract elements, including mathematics, the sciences and the stars, (Campbell, 1972). He notes that a process of “demythologizing” occurs when the sciences truly takes hold of a culture, which turns the attention of humankind to the self as the place of greatest mystery. The complexities of humankind thus take the center stage of attention, and the unraveling of this puzzle provides endless source for continued exploration, wonder and awe. It was the Greek poetic tragedies, Campbell finds, written in the 5th

century, that began the development of human focused spiritual pursuit. Poetics then, become the vehicle and the flame by which humanity itself reaches forward and upward. The primary emotions of these early tragedies were pity and terror, two very fundamental experiences which resonated deeply with their ancient audiences. Poetics, it would seem, came to life through the very breath of the emotion.

The power of aesthetic thought and work so impressed Campbell that he theorized that it was the mythmakers and the artists, through their creative processes, who brought forth manifestations of humankind's universal need to explain psychological, social, cosmological and spiritual realities, (Campbell, 1972). These manifestations, he believed, come forward from the recesses of the unconscious mind, which should be viewed as a link to the mystical (Campbell, 2003). It is only when we lose touch with this aspect of humanity, this ability to reach into the mystery and bring it forward, that we get into trouble. It all falls apart, Campbell says, when we so fragment ourselves that we lose the ability to interpret the symbolic as *symbolic*, and attempt to force it into literal truth.

When this process fails to hold together in our rational, science-based world, beliefs and traditions associated with the symbolic world tend to fall away, leaving many with a world that rejects the mystery of more soulful domains, while others, the true believers, cling vehemently and rigidly to interpretations and definitions of myths now believed to be fact. The gap between these two positions only widens

with time, leading to a world where two distinct camps rigorously define their respective territories, utterly dismissing the other.

Linguistics, “Felt Change,” and Aesthetic Awareness

Owen Barfield (1898-1997), a leading philosopher, jurist and pioneering linguist who courageously explored consciousness in the early part of the 20th century, writes with great depth about the importance of the “aesthetic imagination” (Barfield, 1979). To Barfield, consciousness is a state of awareness whereby we are fully embraced by and aware of our experiences. The “felt change” is one that we should actively attend to, first by noticing it, and then by recognizing how this change unites with existing experiences of meaning and understanding. By attending to this “felt experience,” Barfield moves us into a phenomenological realm whereby the exploration of linguistic thought is directed through feelings made conscious, leading to a deepening awareness of one’s world. The active experience of a “felt change” is a way of engaging with the world in a deeply appreciative manner, courageously embracing the full range of emotions and experience that the world would offer.

Barfield provides us with a highly sophisticated conceptualization of how our conscious experiences are created and mediated by the experience not only of emotion, but of feeling that is both known and tended. The possibility for meaningful change, then, becomes centrally located in all activity that produces emotion. Barfield places aesthetics as a key entry point into this realm, as he believes

that an aesthetic experience is a vessel which provides the individual with meaningful links between emotion and an existential search for meaning and purpose.

He also suggests that an aesthetic awareness, consciously reflected upon, has the ability to situate us within our own cultural context, thereby producing an interior place within our being that is capable of maturely considering cultural experiences that lie outside of our known boundaries (Barfield, 1979) . This observation offers a sophisticated conception of how we might consider information that is entirely foreign to us, yet that we would do well to understand. Further, it directly addresses the developmental experience of our own awarenesses and attitudes, and asks us to view these as a background for our worldview. It is against this background that we must consider new thoughts, ideas and customs, incorporating them in an ever expanding worldview that is both directed and mediated by the aesthetic experience.

Here Barfield directs us to look towards poetic processes as a guide for the development of both self and society, and as a trace into understanding how to effectively initiate and lead change. This intuitive vision, perceived by Barfield nearly a century ago, is deeply meaningful in today's world of calamity and crisis, where the understanding of other cultures and ways of being is not only a good idea, but an essential element of survival. And, as Barfield hints, we certainly must deeply understand our own experiences before we can adequately understand those of others.

The Power of Metaphor

Barfield's observations offer us guidance that is no less than extraordinary. And a deeper examination of his knowledge claim only serves to magnify the intuitive wisdom with which he used to draw forth these insights. In order to more fully understand the complexity of Barfield's work, it is important to first turn to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's (1980) work on metaphor conceptualization. Their seminal work, *Metaphors We Live By*, presents us with an elegant cognitive theory explaining that thought processes are largely metaphorical in nature, existing to structure and order our perceptions of our world. To better understand this metaphorical conceptual process, they study metaphorical linguistic expressions, using them as a trace into more fundamental conceptual processes.

As an example of this process, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) give us the expression "time is money," and a list of phrases that demonstrate how this concept is embedded within linguistic terms. Examples of their phrases include;

I don't have the time to give you.
 How do you spend your time these days?
 You are running out of time.
 You need to budget your time.
 Is that worth your while?
 I lost a lot of time when I was out.
 Thank you for your time.

By using a wide variety of examples that relate time to resources, we are led to understand how deeply this concept is embedded within our linguistic behavior, and, by extension, in our cognition. Through understanding this relatively simple

example, we can see how more sophisticated linguistic patterns can emerge over time, using one simple foundational element as a base. We can also see how cultural systems are bound to the process of metaphor, and how they are influenced by the same. For example, we can say that our American economic system places an extremely high value on commodities and resources that have the capacity to generate financial growth. As a society, we value money, and, by extension, the time that it takes to produce it. It is no wonder, then, that *time* and *money* are so easily linked together that we can identify both a pattern of linguistic expression and a pattern of cognition supporting this pattern within our cultural tradition. As a conceptual process, then, we find that time is metaphorically structured in relation to money. This process in turn heavily influences both individual and group behavior, and provides a cultural container that serves to shape societal development.

In addition to conceptual processes, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have also identified that metaphors can act as an orientational force, which serves to organize *systems* of concepts. It is quite interesting to note that these orientational processes are spatially directed, dealing with concepts of up-down, deep-shallow, front-back, in-out, etc., and that this spatial orientation is generated by both physical and cultural experience. Illustrative examples of this include statements indicating that happiness is oriented upwards, while sadness is oriented downwards.

I'm feeling up.
My spirits rose.
My spirits are high.

I'm feeling down.
 His mood fell.
 He was feeling down.

Concepts of consciousness and unconsciousness are also orientationally directed along a similar trajectory, along with control and the lack thereof, and health and sickness.

She fell into unconsciousness.
 He dropped off to sleep.
 He went under hypnosis.
 She woke up.
 I arose alert.
 She got up.
 I'm on top of things.
 He was at the height of his power.
 She rose to the top.
 He served under the commander.
 I have things under control.
 I have staff beneath me.
 She is in peak condition.
 He is in top form.
 I fell sick.
 She came down with the flu.

Interestingly, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that spatially directed metaphors that indicate an upwards direction tend to generate a physical response of well-being and happiness. This connection to emotion is highly significant, demonstrating how deeply intertwined metaphor is to both emotion and feeling. While directionality and actual choice of metaphor may vary from culture to culture, the fact that orientationally loaded metaphors directly link cognition to physical and emotional experience is clear. This connection certainly suggests that metaphor may be

instrumental in triggering various physical responses in the body, both positive and negative. It may also be highly implicated in allowing the individual to experience empathy, a possibility which is deserving of significant attention. And, in returning to the idea that orientationally directed metaphors are culturally bound, we see further evidence of the existence of a group uniqueness which is indicative of a fundamental group consciousness at work.

We find further connections with physical and social experience through ontological connections in metaphor that serve to assist the individual in making sense of the world. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note some key ontological functions of metaphor; quantifying, referring, setting goals, motivating actions, and the identification of aspects and causes, that in turn serve to reflect key cultural values of the society in which they occur. Such metaphors, they find, reflect a coherence between their own expression and the belief systems of the society that produced them. An excellent example of the linkage between physicality and the quest for coherence can be found in ontological metaphors that serve to contain or to provide boundaries for objects. Such metaphors relate to both a physical state and a mental conception of space. Examples include,

He is up a creek without a paddle.
She is coming out of the woods.
Which side of the fence are you on?
I am still on the fence.
Come in, out of the cold.
He came out of the closet.
We are coming into a clearing.

I cannot see the forest through the trees.
She is boxed in.
I am in a bind.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that container metaphors are an essential part of our being that relate back to the original idea and experience that our very bodies are containers, and further note that we bring this same metaphor into the boundaries that we build in the world, including houses, fences and walls. Eventually this metaphor serves to assist in the structuring of society itself. It is certainly worth noting that such a conceptual metaphor is almost certainly culture bound – the tendency to aggressively claim and bind territory and space would appear to be highly embedded within the Western-European tradition, which is at this time the most dominant global influence. We see expressions of this tendency imposed upon the features of the landscape through walls and borders, and territories that are clearly defined in print by maps and charts.

Metaphor and Group Process

It is also interesting to note that container metaphors are traces into the experience of potentially powerful and activating emotion – an image of coming out of the cold implies safety, that of being boxed in or in a bind indicates a feeling of being trapped and helpless while sitting on a fence implies feelings of ambivalence. On the global stage today we have powerful feelings associated with territorialism and boundaries, ranging from the fierce desire to provide protection to devastating experiences of fear and hopelessness associated with a pending or potential loss. In

the more existential realms of existence, we find territorial boundaries placed around political and ideological ideas of commerce and societal structure. When these boundaries are threatened a powerful response is evoked as basic emotions relating to threat are activated, and individual members of society respond to ideological threats in the same way that they would respond to a direct physical threat.

Certainly, when understood in all of its richness and complexity, the metaphorical experience is intimately connected to both our conscious and unconscious lives, our feelings and our emotions, our cultural and social views and norms. As a conceptual experience (rather than a linguistic one), metaphors provide a trace into our cognition, our expectations, our world views, our understanding of self and our cultural views. As a physical experience, they may engender or reflect emotions and feelings that are conscious or unconscious, which in turn serve to impel or restrain action. The physical experience of metaphor is a unique link between the body and our cognitive processes, possessing a unique and powerful ability to influence and direct both.

Metaphorical experience is intimately linked with group behavior, and provides us with a key structure through which to both understand and influence individual experience as well as group processes. As a tool of understanding, we can explore metaphorical meaning to broaden our understanding of ourselves, our motivations and our assumptions, deeply and actively pursuing Barfield's "felt changes." In doing so we not only have the capacity to become more transparent to

our own reflective sight, but we also expand our ability to hold and honor multiple meanings and perspectives, to understand others and to understand and attend to the broader world around us.

When viewed as a tool of influence, the darker side of metaphor emerges as a potential weapon and instrument of control. For even as metaphor can reflect a cognitive process, when deliberately seeded into a population or group it can ignite one, replacing existing patterns of understanding with newer, more dominant ones that serve a political or economic purpose. And, when a metaphor has the power to bring with it a strong emotional response, most especially fear, the potential for misuse is clear. History is certainly replete with examples of such misuses, which have brought sorrow and annihilation to many to the detriment of us all. A deeper exploration of this potential engages a later chapter of this effort, as a topic of such importance requires considerable attention. It is sufficient at this point to note that an exploration leading to a deep understanding of the nature and complexity of metaphor should carry with it a charge for deep ethical reflection, and corresponding requirements for careful utilization that is bound to a consideration of the common good.

Reflections of Spirit

Jane Hirshfield, in the preface to her deeply sensitive collection of essays on poetry, reminds us that “Emotion, intellect, and physiology are inseparably connected in the links of a poem’s sound,” (Hirshfield, 1997, p. 8). She goes on to note that

poetry arises from the deepest concentration, an immersion into self, Wordsworth's place "too deep for tears" that eventually must produce a state of intensity so great that it demands expression in some physical form. We are directed to attend to three defining elements of concentration; the act of directing attention towards the center, the focusing of one's attention, and the increase in strength and density of the act itself. These three elements are correctly traced back to the Sanskrit term *dhyana*, which translates as "one-pointed meditation", and which in turn leads one back into a concentration of the self.

This positioning of poetic thought, as related to the meditative practice of those seeking enlightenment or the state of *boddhichitta* (which translates as *awakened* or *open heart and mind*), asks us to consider the creation and enjoyment of this aesthetic tradition as a practice which ultimately may deepen and expand the self. And meditation, like the creative process needed to produce genuine and courageous poetic work, requires familiarity and a certain comfort with solitude. The ability to be with one's self is a critical part of the aesthetic tradition, as one must be deeply familiar with the interior territory from which creative and passionate works emerge. Authenticity, the poetic voice exhorts, is a critical element of the craft, and authenticity springs from a comfort and familiarity with the self. This comfort is absolutely essential as new poetic territory is traversed and risks are taken, it provides the foundation for moving into new and unfamiliar regions of the craft.

Unlike individual meditative practices, however, the poetic tradition eventually reaches out to encompass as wide an audience as possible – she travels the universal paths of feeling and emotion, even as she embodies both. This state of being provides her with entrance points, both narrow and wide, through all cultures and traditions, and, ultimately, through time itself. She attends equally to the church-goer and the pub-dweller, the halls of politics and wide open spaces of nature, the factories and the farms. And so she moves effortlessly (her human authors often much less so) between public and private identity, a member of both and at home in all realms. Indeed, there is no place from which she shies away, she is a constant presence within all experience, waiting only to be drawn out and named.

Metaphor Universals

A deeper hint of the universality and timelessness of her power can be found through further exploration of metaphor. The world renowned linguist, philosopher and poet Jorge Luis Borges draws our attention to this in lectures given at Harvard in the 1960's (Borges, 1968). Speaking purely from the regions of senior scholarship, and working entirely from memory as he was nearly blind, he led his audience across time and cultural tradition, moving seamlessly from Spanish to English, from French to Greek, and from Latin to German, introducing poetic forms and philosophies, often embellishing the lecture by quoting entire passages of poetry as he went. Stock metaphors, he tells us, are metaphors that occur universally, that transcend language, and that reach across time to suspend all temporal boundaries while simultaneously

speaking to universal emotions that draw together the hearts of humankind. They are a very special kind of human communication, he shares, providing images that appear to bind us in a common human experience beyond language and culture.

Borges (1968) offers us an example of this in his finding that all of humankind have looked to the heavens, and in the doing have seen the stars above as eyes. In poetic tradition these eyes have embraced us with the grace of a lover, have held us with the tenderness of a mother, and have watched us distantly, coldly, as the eyes of forbidding and judgmental God. They have followed us with the passion and jealousy of a lover, and the cold determination of a hunter. While their purpose may shift, and the emotion behind their gaze change, the fundamental universality of this image stands firm and has been reflected in poetic structure throughout all of our history.

The identification of the stock metaphor is quite significant, for it introduces the idea of image as a power that both transcends and unifies language. By identifying images that he terms “universals” he opens up a new realm of human experience to us that calls us to recognize fundamental and foundational expressions of conscious being that bind us together in a common state of humanity.

Surely the recognition of the universality of some of our most sacred images must open the doors for understanding and acceptance between people and cultures, helping to put aside the opposition and confusion that arises from foreignness and the unknown. Borges (1968), while offering us fragments of a whole, invites us to

consider each universal image as a trace into a greater whole of which we are all an integral part.

Joseph Campbell chimes in with his own offerings, and gives us many more of these stock metaphors to reflect upon. The sun comes to us a powerful and masculine life giving force, bright and fierce to illuminate the day, driving away vestiges of the unknown, the shadows and the darkness (Campbell, 2003). This sun bestows life upon the land, brings growth, and is the generative force behind all things.

In the East he is *Surya*, God of the Sun, protector and giver of life. In the yogic tradition, *Surya* represents the transcendence possible beyond reincarnation – access to eternal life itself. To Rumi, Shams was the Sun, the embodiment of all life. We find frequent references to Shams as “the Sun of Tabriz” an honor granted him by his most beloved disciple. In ancient Greece, Zeus, the most powerful of all gods, was linked with the sun. And in more modern Western tradition the Sun is no less powerful, and often appears as a warrior cloaked in gold. In the Christian tradition it is Christ the Son, who is also illuminated by the Sun, who brings forward the full glory of divine light for the purpose of illuminating the world. William Blake offers us this brief, yet powerful, image in his poem *Day*;

*The Sun arises in the East,
Cloth'd in robes of blood & gold;
Swords & spears, & wrath increast,
All around his bosom roll'd,
Crown'd with warlike fire & raging desires.
William Blake, 1757-1827*

Yet another stock image is the Mountain, which represents an arduous journey that brings forth some new knowledge or intuition. The heights promise risk, and the need for daring, stamina and strength. Images of mountains contain a promise (sometimes viewed as a threat!) of change, or even total transformation. In the Japanese tradition this transformation was death itself, as the mountains were seen as the dwelling place of the gods and the journey to which the soul is ultimately called (Hoffman, 1986). Here is the last journey of the known self, into a mystery beyond definition and conception.

*The way I must enter
leads through darkness to darkness-
O moon above the mountains' rim,
please shine a little further
on my path.
Izumi Shikibu, death poem
--translated by Jane Hirshfield & Mariko Aratani, 1990*

Metaphorical image gifts us with mental representations that bind concept and heartfelt feeling, twining the two together in a tapestry of great character and depth. As images, metaphors carry emotion more powerfully than do words alone, though they are brought to life through the vehicle of linguistics. The linguistic subtleties and plays that refine poetic work to high art are embellishments that have varied across time and culture, allowing for cultural and historical uniqueness. Likewise, the lack of such embellishments have also been noteworthy, similarly marking historical, cultural or social norms and changes. Both allow for a continuing evolution of poetic thought.

Poetic Cognition & Poetic Consciousness

A poetic cognition, then, is one that is capable of being highly disciplined, that has great capacity for self reflection, that is familiar with solitude, and that can hold multiple and opposing images concurrently within active awareness. It is one that seeks out questions for the purpose of genuine understanding, forgoing the self-aggrandizing needs of the ego, and that offers new knowledge purposefully embedded within old, for the purpose of increasing and expanding the understanding of both self and the broader community.

When combined with the poetic heart that "springs forth only when the fullness of emotional experience has led to mastery, producing a self who bears the touch of an artist and who is determined to use that artistry to remake the world," we have a complete and rich poetic consciousness. We have the passionate heart and soul, inexorably moved to live and express the deepest regions of emotional experience. And we have the disciplined and structured mind, capable of bringing clarity, originality, linguistic expertise and active reflection to the poetic tradition.

The poetic heart and the poetic mind combine to offer a unique "voice" to the world, a "voice" which carries the consciousness beyond singular experience into the domains of the other, seeking always to make connection and to enter into meaningful relationship. This consciousness seeks to illuminate the world through both new and old truths and lived experience, drawing us all to new variations of old wisdom, painful realities, and eternal insights.

It is a consciousness that demands relentless introspection, that invites criticism from external sources and that has been well tempered by criticism initiated from within. This tempering is made possible through the fullness of experienced emotion and feeling; the deep familiarity with sorrow and grief, the breathlessness of new love, the tenderness instilled by the recognition of the fleeting nature of time.

The poetic consciousness, while living in embodied time, produces work and ways of being that transcends temporal boundaries. Such work can be reflected images of the universality of love, grief and anger, the sorrows and triumphs of life, all carried forward in epic tales and lyrical poems. Or it can carry the biting wit or gentle humor that moved a long-ago society to laughter or revelry, or the shaping of cultural norms. In its most powerful form it produces work and lives that touch upon the sacred, revealing truths that are known as such through their echoing resonance in the heart and spirit.

*Seeing into darkness is clarity.
Knowing how to yield is strength.
Use your own light
and return to the source of light.
This is called practicing eternity.
-Lao Tzu*

Light and Shadows

Luminosity

There is a certain luminosity present within poetic realms. When manifest in form it is reflective of both a deeply mature aesthetic sense and a pending potential, the glimmering promise of a higher manifestation of self, the holon of being (Wilber, 2001) waiting to take shape, gracing more mundane realms with inspiration and the promise of something greater that is just within reach. Without question it dances to the strains of a symphony of emotion and feeling, reaching out to encompass the broadest possible landscapes of self and being. The journey promised is one of our own evolution, taking us to the next reaches of our own human development.

With the movement of light comes wisdom and the awakening of both intellect and intuition, for the movement of light is deeply entwined with our physical existence. Light springs into being only at the introduction of an object or form. In his beautifully realized work, the noted physicist and author Arthur Zajonc asks, "What is the nature of this invisible thing called light, whose presence calls

everything into view --- excepting itself?" (Zajonc, 1995, p. 7). And so fascinated with light was the noted German poet, Johann Goethe, that he dedicated significant time and attention to pursuing her mysteries. Besides being a poet, Goethe was also a novelist, playwright, courtier, and natural philosopher, and is recognized as one of the greatest figures in Western literature. Yet even with the enormity of this literary success, Goethe considered his scientific work with light to be his greatest contribution to the world, commenting once to his secretary,

"I do not pride myself at all on the things that I have done as a poet...there have been excellent poets during my lifetime; still more excellent ones lived before me, and after me there will be others...but I am proud that I am the only one in my century who knows about the truth about the difficult science of color," (Zajonc, 1995, p. 193).

Goethe's journey of exploration began in 1790, when he reportedly gazed through a prism seeking to unlock the secrets of color that were hidden in light. He is said to have expected to see the colors of a rainbow appear on a white wall, and was surprised when they appeared along the shadows of a window instead, (Zajonc, 1995). In a flash of insight he unraveled Newton's theories of light, and began what he would consider the most important journey of his life. Yet it is important to note that Goethe, while dismissing the importance of his own literary gifts, brought a uniquely poetic voice and poetic gift to the craft of his scientific investigations.

In approaching his inquiry into light, which began through the investigation of optical illusions, he initiated what would become a global reinterpretation and reconstruction of science itself. By stating his belief that optical illusion is optical

truth, he formally declared his rejection of a mechanistic view of science and introduced a phenomenological approach that would help to define an entire avenue of inquiry crossing a multitude of scholarly domains (Zajonc, 1995). Further, with this declaration, he legitimized the human experience of phenomenon, thereby founding a tradition of first person methodology that would eventually encourage the transformation scientific inquiry from a mechanistic view to one more inclusive of lived experience.

Goethe could hardly have imagined that his view would be vehemently embraced centuries later, laying the foundation for a deeply human-centered view of scientific inquiry and eventually becoming a key component of our “hard problem” of consciousness. And, while he may have formally minimized his literary achievements, it is important to reflect with appreciation upon the poetic process that he brought to scientific inquiry. Clearly, he delved deeply into realms of both imagination and spirit as he developed his views on science, and courageously gave voice to opinion and scientific findings that challenged the dominant views of his time. Undaunted by criticism or skepticism from contemporaries, Goethe brought a powerful aesthetic view to our world and to the very structures that frame the Western tradition of knowledge. And how wonderful that, in his quest to study the nature of light and color, and through his dedication to aesthetic process, Goethe ended up illuminating our very wisdom structures!

Myths of Light

Joseph Campbell, in bringing us another powerful aesthetic view, writes of the “Myths of Light” that hail from the East (Campbell, 2003). He notes that they exist as “grandiose poetic images that refer past [themselves] to principles that are mysterious and ineffable” (Campbell, 2003, p. 5). Further, he goes on to share with us that “each myth is a poetic revelation of the mystery of that which is now and forever and within your own being, (Campbell, 2003, p. 8), and that the poetic songs, such as the Bhavagad-Gita, are a reflection of the “immortal spirit that never was born, and never dies, but is born in all things, lives in all things, and dies in all things, and the radiance of which gives things their glory,” (Campbell, 2003, p. 81).

Here Campbell asks us to turn to the poetic voice of myth in order to illuminate our very selves from *within*, and to touch upon the transcendent. This voice carries the power to propel an individual onwards to realization of self and spirit, to developmental capacities that are inherent and that lie in wait of a light that would allow them to grow. Paradoxically, we reach to outer realms for this light, only to find its direction pointing back to the interiority of the self.

The poetic voice is a particularly influential one. It is a vehicle for illumination through its reflection of aesthetic power that is both internal and external to self. This aesthetic power, this beauty, ensnares in such a complete way; we are charmed by her attributes, by the feelings she evokes in our hearts that travel through our bloodstream to all the corners of our being. And, as beauty is so deeply

twined through with emotion and feeling, she speaks to the very essence of meaning and purpose of existence, propelling us to question while helping us to make sense of our world. We are attracted to her, and to our own potential to unveil her through our vision. Finally, she speaks from and reaches to places in our being that crave illuminating experience, those places that allow us to grow, or encourage others to do so. Here are the realms of spirit and soul that so occupy human existence, those places that are often nameless but that have the power to propel us beyond ourselves to concerns that touch matters of the divine. And, when beauty moves through us, she is also moving us...sometimes to great lengths. We have a long history of pursuing beauty in all of her varied forms, of elevating her to heights that can be nearly impossible to reach.

Possessing a richly mature view of beauty is essential in order to fully understand and appreciate the wide landscape of poetic power. Carolyn Kenny, the highly acclaimed Music Therapist, author, and Indigenous Studies scholar, provides some rich reflections for us to consider,

Beauty can provide us with a necessary sense of coherence and give strength in the most difficult of times. My definition of beauty includes suffering. It includes conflict, pleasure, sorrow, anger, disfigurement, even death. In other words, my definition of beauty is not superficial. It is comprehensive and deep, elaborate, and even paradoxical. But it is also palpable. I could touch it through my senses and feel it in my heart, (Kenny, 2007, keynote address).

Power of the Poetic Voice

Poetry, even as she brings beauty, works within the interiority of our being to widen our own places of perception, so that our eyes, and our hearts, have an ever broadening view of our world. Kenny's definition provides us with a trace into the deepest regions of self, those rare territories of being that can perceive beauty within the most terrifying or squalid places. A poignant example of this movement towards depth can be found in the work of the noted poet, Quincy Troupe. An excerpt from his haunting work *River Town Packin' House Blues* clearly demonstrates how the beauty of poetry helps us to move into, and hold, the most brutal of images.

*...big tom was a black nigga man
cold & black
eye say, big tom was a black nigga man
black steel flesh
standin like a gladiator
soaked in animal blood, bits of flesh
wringin wet
standin at the center of death
buzzards hoverin
swingin his hamma called death
260 workdays
swingin his hamma named death*

*big tom was a black packin' houseman
thirty years
eye say, big tom was a black packin houseman
loved them years
& swang his hamma like ol' john henry, poundin nails swang that
hamma twenty years
crushin skulls of cows & pigs, screamin fear
the man underneath slit their throats
twenty years
the man underneath slit their throats*

*big tom was a 'prentice for ten long years
 watchin death
 eye say, big tom was a 'prentice for ten long years
 smellin' death
 was helper to a fat white man who got slow
 eye say, was helper to a fat, white man
 who swang a hamma
 'til he couldn't do it no mo
 so he taught big tom how to kill
 with a hamma
 eye say, he taught big tom how to kill*

*& twenty years of killin' is a lot
 to bring home
 eye say, twenty years of killin' is a lot
 to bring home
 & drinkin' too much gin and whiskey
 can make a gentle/man blow
 don't chu know
 eye say, drinkin' too much gin & whiskey
 can make a good man sho nuff blow
 don't chu know*

*big tom beat his wife, after killin' all day
 his six chillun, too
 eye say, tom beat his wife after killin' all day
 his young chillun, too
 beat em so awful bad, he beat em right out they shoes
 screamin' blues
 eye say, he beat em so awful bad
 he made a red-eyed, hungry alley rat
 spread the news, bout dues these black-blues people was payin'
 couldn't even bite em, cause of the dues these
 black-blues people was payin'.....Quincy Troupe, (Moyers, 1995)*

A deep poetic consciousness moves surely from the most intense experience of
 primal, primary emotion through all possible layers of feeling, then carefully sifts
 through all the vagaries of the lived experience in order to distill refined

understanding, meaning and insight. Through resonating thoroughly, and, at times, painfully, with the emotional experience, it is drawn inevitably to give birth to lived truths that seek out a place and voice in the broader world. This place is found through the authority of a powerful aesthetic that carries image and emotion into the deepest recesses of receptive experience, relentlessly seeking an audience who will listen, look and, most importantly, *understand*.

Troupe's work allows us to hold terrible images in our minds. His poetic refrain requires us to linger in the violence longer than we want, almost longer than we can bear, to see Big Tom's bloody work, and to see his despair viciously acted out on those around him. In the tragic tale to which we are an appalled witness, even the rats feel sorry for Big Tom's wife and children, providing us with an image of desperate anguish that reaches beyond human reason. With a deft hand Troupe brings us on a circular journey, asking us to see a depth of tragedy that is difficult to behold even as he asks us to understand the forces that have brought it into being. As we make the journey we move from revulsion to contextualization and comprehension, eventually coming to appreciate the master work that has painted the borders of this desolate path.

This aesthetic experience does not simply carry power, it *embodies* it. A poetic way of being embraces this power (though it may do so haltingly) and refuses to shy away from it, recognizing and acknowledging that the deepest experiences of suffering may be a consequence of its embodiment. This is not the reckless wielding

of authority by the brashness of youth, or the manipulative exercise of power by self-absorbed commanders of influence who are insatiable in their quest for self-aggrandizement. This is more akin to joining with a power that flows freely, all the while understanding that ultimate control of this entity is impossible. Indeed, like a flame that carries a potential to ignite into a raging blaze, this power may suddenly surge into a reshaping of itself that annihilates all in its path. A bearer of this power remembers this, accepts the risk, and lives in awe of the shifting streams of possibility in which they are constantly surrounded.

Lousie Bogan (1897-1970), noted poet and literary critic, comments on Yeats,

[Yeats, who writes] ...poems terribly beautiful, in which the hazy adverbial quality has no place, built of sentences reducing to the bones of noun, verb, and preposition...this is the further, the test simplicity, sprung from the passion of which poet will always be afraid, but to which he should vow himself forever, (Gioia, Mason & Schoerke, 2004, p. 120).

Here we find open acknowledgement of the courageousness required to delve into authentic aesthetic realms, even the slight hint that this very courageousness sometimes ranges into the territory beyond rational thought. For genuinely seeing form, naming presence, and ranging into all of the places of emotion with honesty is one of the most difficult burdens to bear. Such a task requires the confrontation of the desire to see things as one would wish, rather than in a truer, purer form. This sight is then stretched further yet, as the poetic voice must reflect this experience back into the world.

Chiaroscuro

The burden of bearing this consciousness is tempered by the magnificence of the gifts it bestows. For certainly it is through poetic consciousness, and thus poetic expression, that individuals are brought to the activity of exploration and deepening of the self. This deepening, which leads inevitably to greater maturation, allows one to enter into relationships with others and the greater world in an ever more reflective and full manner, eventually leading us to an understanding of the interdependence which twines us all together in the great tapestry that is humanity. For a poetic consciousness is not developed for the purpose of individual pursuits, it is developed in order to serve a greater calling. Hayden Carruth, in his *Ars Poetica*, brings us a beautiful meditation upon this thought.

The Impossible Indispensability of the Ars Poetica

*But of course the poem is not an assertion. Do you see? When I wrote
That all my poems over the long years before I met you made you come true,
And that the poems for you since then have made you in yourself become
more true, I did not mean the poems created or invented you. How many have
foundered that Sargasso! No, what I have been trying to say
is that neither of the quaint immemorial views of poetry is adequate for us.*

*A poem is not an expression, nor is it an object. Yet it somewhat partakes of both.
What a poem is, is never to be known, for which I have learned to be grateful. But
the aspect in which I see my own
Is as the act of love. The poem is a gift, a bestowal.*

*The poem is for us what instinct is for the animals, a continuing and chiefly
unthought corroboration of essence. (Though thought, ours and the animals', is still
useful.)*

*Why otherwise is the earliest always the most important, the most formative?
The Illiad, the Odyssey, the Book of Genesis, These were acts of love, I mean deeply*

*felt gestures which continuously bestow upon us
what we are. And if I do not know which poem of mine was my earliest gift to you,
Except that it had to have been written about someone else, nevertheless it was the
gesture accruing value to you, your essence, while you were still a child, and
thereafter across all these years, And see how much
Has come from that first sonnet after our loving began, the one
That was a kiss, a gift, a bestowal.*

*This is the paradigm of fecundity, I think the poem is not
Transparent, as some have said, nor a looking-glass, as some have also said, Yet it has
almost the quality of disappearance in its cage of visibility. It disperses among the
words. It is a fluidity, a vapor, of love.
This, the instinctual, is what caused me to write "Do you see?"*

*instead of "Don't you see?" in the first line
Of this poem, this loving treatise, which is what gives away the poem, and gives it all
to you. -Hayden Carruth, (Merrill & Buckley, 1995)*

Both Troupe and Carruth offer us the gifts of their poetry, and in the doing we discover that it is the poetry itself that moves us into the deepening places of the soul, into those realms that mark the earliest boundaries of the territory that is poetic consciousness. Troupe's poem asks us to investigate realms of darkness and shadow, making the journey bearable through the lyricism of his words and the use of refrain, which requires us to hold visceral shock in a state of cognitive suspension so that we may become used to images of brutality. Through the mastery of language he directs our emotional experience in a symphony of death, honesty and the history of one man's tormented life, all the while painting for us scenes of cruelty that are only tolerable because of the musicality of his verse. We see a painful aspect of our world through this poem, one that, in all likelihood, we would never willingly seek out on

our own. By taking us on this particular journey, Troupe asks us to enter more fully into the realities that make up our world.

Carruth also urges us to a journey, one which seeks the reaches of light by way of going towards the heart of both poetics and human existence. Commenting upon poetics in general as well as his own work, he believes that poetics are an expression of love for and of the world, (Merrill & Buckley, 1995). His work clearly reflects a graceful voice that has been formed through the diligent sifting through of emotional experience over many years. In his loves and wanderings we can easily imagine him tasting, experiencing, living, and, finally, distilling it all down to the essence of meaning itself.

We find no less grace in Troupe's work, even though the images are so difficult to bear. In many lights Big Tom must present as a mindless, vicious brute, so inured to death that he himself has become an instrument of annihilation, needing no tool or incentive to act out the violent narrative of his life. Yet in Troupe's graceful refrain we also find the experience of love through the quest to understand the force of brutality; we are called upon to be silent witnesses to the horror of a life constructed entirely by violence. Beyond this reality, however, we are also asked to embrace a deeper knowledge of how such an existence comes into being, and, more heartbreakingly, we are asked to see how such violence will continue.

The opposites of these two poems, one of shadow and one of light, come together to bring us a view of our human landscape which is full, authentic and

honest. The poems ask us venture into each territory, and we emerge from the experience with a more mature view of both. Through exploration of the regions of deep and passionate emotion – no matter how dark or bright – we are invited to expand our capacity to experience it. As this capacity broadens and deepens over time we find that it makes way for the experience of our own poetic consciousness and the power associated with this state of being. Such an experience propels us relentless along a path towards increasing insight and maturity as we explore the lightness of meaning, and deliberately encounter the regions of darkness and suffering that exist in our world. We experience these pairs of opposites in order to give voice to each, and we develop the strength to dwell in their intersections so that we have a fuller understanding of how each experience sustains the other. Through this process we are able to bring about change and understanding not through the wielding of brute power or influence, but through the experience of beauty and fullness that resonates from one heart outwards towards the larger world.

Be With Those Who Help Your Being

*Be with those who help your being.
 Don't sit with indifferent people, whose breath
 Comes cold out of their mouths.
 Not these visible forms, your work is deeper.*

*A chunk of dirt thrown in the air breaks to pieces.
 If you don't try to fly,
 And so break yourself apart,
 You will be broken open by death,
 When it's too late for all you could become.*

*Leaves get yellow. The tree puts out fresh roots
 And makes them green.
 Why are you content with a love that turns you yellow?
 Mevlana Rumi, Ode 2865 (Coleman Barks, 2001)*

Group Consciousness

Setting the Stage

The play of darkness and light, the vagaries of life and love and living, all bring us directly into considerations of relationship, of *being* with each other, for better or worse, in all of the conditions that living brings forth from the greater world around us. For considerations of squalor and beauty, of poetry and art, of consciousness and striving, of growth, development and decay, are all grounded and maintained within our experience of connectedness with each other and with other sentient beings. The very construct of poetic consciousness comes to life for the purpose of reaching out to touch the lives of others, echoing Damasio's injunction that consciousness, in its most advanced form, is concerned with the well being of others and the art of life.

Such considerations take us into new and controversial territory concerning how a poetic consciousness intersects with and influences leadership activity. For leadership activity is quite clearly concerned with matters that pertain to group processes, and, according to Burns, with the development of consciousness itself. The introduction of a poetic consciousness into this process brings about important considerations of aesthetic awareness, intentional behavior, fully developed emotional engagement and conflict embodiment. It also brings about the contentious issue of how the consciousness of one being can influence the consciousness of another, and of a group at large. This brings us directly to the issue of group consciousness, a phenomenon sure to bring significant controversy along with it.

Historical and Current Antecedents

It was Carl Jung who first introduced the idea of a collective unconsciousness in his search to understand the psychological underpinnings of humanity's existence (Thorne & Henley, 1997). Jung considered consciousness to exist in layers, and made a significant contribution to the field of psychology by postulating that, beyond the individual consciousness, a collective, group consciousness exists of which we are all a part. This theoretical construct is often depicted pictorially as a nest, with interior layers of the individual self at the center, and the exterior and final layers comprising the universal acting as the outer edge that ultimately contain the nest itself. To Jung, this container of the nest, this collective unconsciousness, was an evolutionary background from which we draw our sense of the sacred. It exists as an intuitive

understanding of the patterns of existence and sense of potentials that are available to any individual willing to pursue a path of self-analysis of reflection. The collective unconsciousness exists as the deepest and most hidden area of the individual self, usually manifesting as forms, actions or patterns which take significant introspective thought in order to be made actively conscious.

Archetypal patterns are an integral feature of the collective unconscious, manifesting as behavioral life patterns that are cohesive, predictable and temporally stable (Jung, 1968). The persistent nature of archetypal forms make them more recognizable than unusual patterns, and provide us with an excellent trace into the nature of unconscious patterns and forms that exist around us.

Common archetypal patterns include the romantic myths of the rescuing prince and damsel in distress, the dreaded wicked step-parent, and the doomed relationships of the Romeo and Juliet patterns. In modern America we have an archetypal pattern of the strong, silent cowboy (an image of which is on the cover of the October, 2006 edition of Newsweek, referring to President George W. Bush and the failure of “cowboy diplomacy”), the romantic “bad boy” who is misunderstood by society but ultimately heroic in action, and the “underdog” down-and-out individual who manages to pull their lives together to make a comeback from seemingly overwhelming odds. Martha Stewart certainly stands as an example of this archetype, as she appears to have fully recovered from her public humiliation of committing perjury, felony conviction and subsequent incarceration.

Noted physicist David Bohm brings a different perspective to the consideration of group consciousness. Bohm's theoretical description of quantum interactions includes mathematical expressions for "pilot waves" that act as "guides" for the creation of order and patterns that lie behind the seemingly random events that make up the experience of the cosmos (de Quincey, 2005). Thus, in Bohm's world, a deeper design is at work in the unfolding matter of the universe that is intimately implicated with the experience of a manifest intelligence or consciousness beyond singular experience. It is no surprise, then, that Bohm's model makes explicit the requirement that consciousness must exist in order for the physical matter of the universe to be made observable, and in the doing he finds that the observer and the observed become inseparable. For Bohm, the most important collective journey is to seek out the basic patterns of being that exist as an underlying foundation of all human experience. While he does not offer us explicit examples of how to go about this task, his work suggests that he highly values the reflective process as a means by which to tap into intuitive wisdom. As his theoretical work advances we must assume that he will offer more clarity regarding his findings, as well as the process that he utilizes in seeking them out.

While Jung and Bohm's contributions to the idea of group consciousness are seminal, our current discussion requires a working definition that lends itself to utilization within the academic domain of Leadership Studies. For practical purposes, we must enter into a conceptualization of group consciousness that is more

historically and scientifically grounded, practically usable, and less biased towards the speculative.

We first return to the academic origins of Burns, political science. The concept of group consciousness, while a radical concept in many scholarly traditions, is a phenomenon that appears to be heavily relied upon within this field. In political science, we find that group consciousness is frequently utilized to explain the occurrence of political behavior and participation, and as a means by which to describe the formation and structure of unique groups that will have some impact on a general political process (Sanchez, 2006; Hood, 1997). The idea of *group consciousness*, while not formally defined, appears to speak to a depth and breadth of being that extends beyond the boundaries of group or cultural processes alone. And, while group consciousness appears to have been first utilized to explain the political organization and behavior of clusters of minority and ethnic groups (Sanchez, 2006), it is now being used to explore the identity of wider spectrum of the population, including sub-groups of the political elite (Hood, 1997). This increasing usage certainly speaks to the utility of the concept of a “group consciousness” and neatly links the idea of consciousness to group formation, behavior, attitudes and norms.

At first glance “group consciousness” appears to be equivalent to “group identification” or “group identity”. However, when we examine the idea of “group identification” we find a passive concept that is largely cognitive in nature, and that is primarily descriptive. “Group consciousness” differs from this conceptualization as it

becomes stabilized in the experience of collective emotion and thus has a constant potential of fluidity, action and change. The emotional attunement of a group, combined with cognitive congruency and cultural norms, is thus a key factor in distinguishing group consciousness from group identification. It must be noted, however, that group identification is an important component in the experience of group consciousness, though its presence is mediated by the experience of emotion.

It seems apparent that the descriptor “group consciousness” in the field of political science primarily describes the *contents* of consciousness. Certainly the domain of political science is not interested in the neurological processes related to individual consciousness, nor does it appear to be interested in formulating a theory regarding the potential for unified consciousness in the tradition of David Bohm. It does, however, provide us with an excellent starting point for considering consciousness as a phenomenon that can be applied and witnessed over time. More importantly, it offers us a perspective that consciousness not only *can* be changed in real world settings, but that it *should* be changed for the benefit of both leaders and followers, and the greater good of the larger world.

Looking to the hard sciences, we return to the critical work on emotion that undoubtedly applies to our exploration. Antonio Damasio gives us a sweeping description of consciousness as,

...the key to a life examined...our beginners permit into knowing all about the hunger, the thirst, the sex, the tears, the laughter, the kicks, the punches, the flow of images we call thought, the feelings, the words, the stories, the beliefs,

the music and the poetry, the happiness and the ecstasy. At its simplest and most basic level, consciousness lets us recognize an irresistible urge to stay alive and develop a concern for the self. At its most complex and elaborate level, consciousness helps us develop a concern for other selves and improve the art of life,” (Damasio, 1999, p. 5).

In this, Damasio not only places the existence of consciousness on a developmental continuum, but also provides us with an entry point into the consideration of the *other*, and the group by extension. Primary to this definition is the understanding that it is the active, temporally stable and aware sense of self that is one of the most defining elements of consciousness (Damasio, 1999). His analysis of this sense of self presents us with his three part model (core, extended and autobiographical) which in turn points us to the existence of neural maps that contain these patterns of self. These maps function as reference points for reflection, action and change process, and are thoroughly intertwined with the experience of emotion.

We are presented here with the problems associated with understanding how our neurology produces the mental patterns upon which we base our actions while maintaining a stable sense of self (Damasio, 1999). One of the neurological difficulties that presents itself here is how the brain interprets *qualia*, or the fine tuned sensory descriptors that provide us with both the major and the minor details of our existence even as it maintains a stable and consistent sense of individuality. Exploration into this process continues in numerous domains in the hard sciences. For our purposes here, this discussion relates to Damasio’s concept of core and autobiographical selves.

This discussion involves the creation of various orders of neural maps within the individual organism, each of which must interact with other maps as the individual entity develops increasingly complex abilities to interact with and explore the larger world. While this level of analysis takes us into third person methodological approaches, and further discussion in this direction is beyond the scope this effort, the foundational elements of Damasio's work provide us with key components for an initial definition and understanding of group consciousness.

The most critical of these elements are twofold, dynamic, changeable emotion and the existence of a stable sense of self that interprets and interacts with patterns of human functioning and existence even as they are intricately and intimately intertwined with each other. Clearly, each of these elements is directly and intimately connected to group processes. The three elements of emotion that Damasio identifies, emotion, the feeling of emotion and the knowledge of that feeling, are all heavily implicated in group processes as it is the experience, feeling and knowledge of emotion that provides us with a viable reason for and sense of group attachment. Without an attraction for (and intimacy with) the many elements of identity that bind a particular group, we simply would have no reason for group membership, nor would we have the means by which to negotiate that membership.

While the existence of a sense of self would clearly be required for feelings of autonomy within a group, it is also true that membership within a group or groups provides the individual with large portions of a sense of autonomy and uniqueness.

Robert Kegan (1982) observes that it is an infant's primary relationship with a caretaker that is responsible for an evolution of self, and the development of a new kind of consciousness. He further observes that human development is a process of continuously joining the world (as opposed to incorporating it), and of realizing the distinctions between self and other while utilizing this distinction for growth and expansion of self.

One only has to interact with individuals for a short period of time to realize how central group membership is to one's identity, whether that group membership includes a cultural group, a social group, an economic class or a political membership. And, in order to effectively function within the domains of multiple groups and the larger world, the uniqueness of the self must be cohesive enough to adequately interact with a wide variety of competing and often conflicting environmental, societal and cultural systems.

The ability to engage with the multiple systems of one's world requires an enormous complexity of being. Damasio (1999) offers us the non-conscious *proto-self*, which is "a coherent collection of neural patterns which map, moment by moment, the state of the physical structure of the organism in its many dimensions," the *core self*, which is the transient sense of self that emerges during the experience of core consciousness, or those states of consciousness that provide the individual with information about the immediate now, and the *autobiographical self*, which relates to extended consciousness and which is the non-transient self that is composed of an

individual's unique ways of being and characteristics that are temporally stable and that are built upon multiple experiences of core consciousness. More succinctly,

Core consciousness occurs when the brain's representation devices generate an imaged, non-verbal account of how the organism's own state is affected by the processing of an object, and when this process enhances the image of the causative object, thus placing it saliently in a spatial and temporal context, (Damasio 1999, p. 169).

During such basic neural activity a clear sense of self must exist as a reference point against which all phenomenal activity takes place. It is this core self that is engaged in processing the sensory images that flow around the organism and that is transitory as it emerges only to produce non-verbal images of experience.

The extended consciousness upon which an autobiographical self is built offers us the ability to produce and maintain several mental images and patterns concurrently, as well as the ability to hold multiple images of differing sensory information (Damasio, 1999). Extended consciousness also offers us the ability to negotiate the complexity of social situations and is reflective of the ability to engage in long term planning of complex endeavors, an occurrence which clearly draws upon the identity of an autobiographical self. In addition to this complexity comes the critical function of appropriately responding to and managing emotion, which Damasio has found to be the mediating factor in both reasoning and decision making capacity. As both of these capacities are required for the successful negotiation of one's environment, mastery of them is directly implicated in adaptive function with

further implications for the individual, the groups and the cultures to which the individual belongs.

Returning to Kegan's idea that one's environment is a dynamic entity that serves to shape both one's developmental trajectory and one's consciousness (Kegan, 1982), we are led directly to activity theory. This theory provides a new and helpful perspective to the discussion with the view that consciousness and activity are inseparable, and that, ultimately, consciousness is the everyday practice of one's life as it is embedded within the larger social construct of one's world (Nardi, 1996).

Eschewing the idea that consciousness can be identified as "discreet disembodied cognitive acts" or described in neurological terms, activity theory instead takes the stand that the human mind emerges in response to human interaction with the environment and social processes, and thus must be understood within the context of a larger system (Nardi, 1996). This perspective introduces the idea that we are inextricably bound to our world, which constantly works to create us even as we would believe that we create her. The idea of such interconnectedness certainly ranges into the territories of Eastern philosophy (specifically the Buddhist, Hindu and Yogic traditions) with their emphasis on interdependence, providing yet another neat link that ties Eastern philosophy to Western science and theory.

Having said this, it is, perhaps, slightly misleading to categorize activity theory as a theory per se, instead it is best viewed as a philosophical and cross disciplinary framework for studying different forms of human practices as development processes,

with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same time (Nardi, 1996). It has been utilized prominently in the United States in education, the development of educational technology, adaptive technology for the physically disabled and in the field industrial psychology. Perhaps its greatest utilization, however, has been in the emergent field of artificial intelligence and human computer interaction (HCI) (Nardi, 1996).

In addition to holding to the opinion that consciousness and activity are inseparable and indescribable without the other, activity theory is further described by its position that humans are object oriented, that all activity is hierarchically ordered, that cognitive events occur through a sophisticated process of internalization originating from external events, that all human activity is mediated through tools and artifacts that are both internal and external and, lastly, that understanding the presence of a specific phenomenon requires an examination of that phenomenon on a developmental continuum (Nardi, 1996). These principals combine to build a theory that is primarily descriptive rather than predictive, as well as one that is responsive to and dependent upon cuing from both the immediate and extended environmental and social milieus. It is thus eminently suited to understanding and addressing the needs of everyday practice efforts as they occur across multiple practice domains, (Nardi, 1996).

Object orientedness in activity theory states that all qualities of our human environment are objective, including those factors and occurrences that are cultural

and social in nature. The inclusiveness of this position indicates that the human environment is potentially meaningful in and of itself (Nardi, 1996) as subjectivity becomes absorbed within objective reason and is provided formal legitimacy simply by its occurrence. Understanding the hierarchical structure of activity allows for a grouping of activities, actions and operations, which provides a high degree of clarity when deconstructing behavior. In this structure activities are directed towards and by motivations, which can be either material or ideal and are best described as a *need* or *desire* of some type. Actions include all the dynamics related to goal formation relating to the primary activity, and operations are the specific behaviors that support and that are guided by the conditions of the primary activity (Nardi, 1996).

The process of internalization-externalization in activity theory is aimed at describing the factors that are foundational for the operation and development of key cognitive functions in the individual self. The occurrence and balance of internalization and externalization is key to Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development." Simply put, the process of internalization depends upon the social, cultural and environmental milieu, which act as both guides and reinforcers for the individual as new information is learned and assimilated and as the processes required for this learning and assimilation are developed. The "zone of proximal development" speaks to those actions that can be performed with others, and is a territory of self and other that mediates what is known and what can become known to the individual (Vygotsky, 1978). Externalization is the means by which internal

processes are then reflected back out into the larger world (Nardi, 1996). The processes of internalization-externalization as viewed through Vygotsky's zone of proximal development provides a key indication of the importance of group structures and function, and serves to support the hypothesis of a functioning and viable group consciousness that serves to shape, support and direct the functioning of the individual while simultaneously preserving the broader society and culture in which the individual resides.

Mediation of human activity by tools and artifacts also significantly supports this process through the development of culturally and socially specific apparatus that are both internal and external and that serve to shape and develop human behavior and cognitive processes. Tools produced by a culture influence further development of individuals in that culture as well as the culture itself. These tools may be practical and tangible, such as a wheel, an engine, or a computer or conceptual, such as capitalism, socialism, a religious movement of some type, democracy or communism. They may also be a combination of both, such as rosary or mala (Eastern rosary), a sacred labyrinth, or a statue of a religious figure at which an individual or community can worship. Inherent in the production of these tools is the understanding that these tools and artifacts are the carriers of cultural and social knowledge (Nardi, 1996) and the understanding that they have the power to change the factors upon which cognition itself depends.

Interestingly enough, noted American neurologist Richard Restak is currently tracking neurological changes in the human brain due to our new cultural emphasis on visual information. Not surprisingly, Restak is noting an evolutionary shift in the occipital lobe, which processes visual data (Restak, 2004).

Finally, the importance of understanding the occurrence of phenomenon from a developmental perspective cannot be underestimated. Activity theory requires that developmental processes be viewed through the lens of a sophisticated framework that includes consideration of both ontological and phenomenological processes as well as developmental sources that provide the individual (or phenomenon) with both real and ideal developmental forms (Nardi, 1996). Development from the perspective of activity theory becomes a process requiring both individual and environmental adaptation and growth over time. It requires active mutual engagement and communication, the co-existence of multiple potentials, and the understanding that both the individual and the milieu in which that individual functions will change over time, often in unique and unexpected ways.

Activity theory provides us with valuable insights regarding both the importance and the power of group processes. It also serves to remind us that we are constantly co-creating a reality around us which in turn acts directly upon us as individuals. Consideration of group consciousness takes on a new and more urgent perspective, then, as we understand the power of the collective to influence, shape, or

even determine our individual realities whether we are aware of this occurrence or not.

An Introductory Definition

A beginning point, then, in the process of understanding group consciousness is the identification of patterns of group engagement and belief that can be explicitly known and explainable, that are open to direction, that are adaptive, and that change over time in an evolutionary progression. This leads us squarely into the experience of emotions, which, from the perspective of evolutionary psychology, help us to adapt to our environment in a manner that increases our chances of survival (Buss, 2005). If the experience of emotion serves to form adaptive evolutionary change in the individual, it would be absurd to fail to note the implications for group evolution as well. And, as the experience of emotion is primary to our ability to interact with others and our environment in a meaningful and increasingly complex manner (Damasio, 1999), it becomes an essential consideration in any serious discussion of group consciousness.

An additional defining factor of group consciousness is the evolution of interactions between individuals and their environment. This perspective is key as it serves to remind us that even as we act we are being acted upon, and that the artifacts and tools that we create have an integral role in the experience and evolution of our own consciousness. It also points to the fact that we must engage in social, and thus group, processes, in order for individual learning and development to occur. This

primacy of group experience becomes a necessary force for the continuation of an evolutionary progress even as it serves to protect the individual from environmental threat and to encourage acts of adaption, development and creativity. From this perspective then, not only is it possible that group consciousness exists, it becomes a necessary condition for our present experience of individual consciousness.

Taking these factors into consideration, then, a rudimentary definitional framework for our purpose is: Group consciousness is an intuited sense of one's collective identity, including the attitudes, perceptions, awarenesses and beliefs that are distinguishing qualities of one's population that stabilize and exist over time, activities that are directed towards evolutionary adaptation and change, including artifact creation and transformation, and predictable patterns of engagement, often subtle, that may emerge only after close scrutiny and temporal experience. This consciousness is deeply embedded within the cognitive and emotional experience of the individual members of the group and may be expressed both individually and in collective form. It is the emotional experience that most strongly binds the group and that provides the impetus for any meaningful mobilization directed at collective action, including those actions that lead to change and evolutionary adaptation. Group consciousness may be present as an active and cognitive awareness, or it may exist as a collection of unconscious impressions, beliefs, impulses and attitudes. The mediating factor in bringing these unconscious factors to conscious awareness is the experience of emotion.

Yet, with its focus exclusively on the individual, this definition is only partial and must be enhanced if it is to serve a truly functional purpose. A necessary component of our framework must include considerations relating to context, environment and activity. Our definition, then, is improved by the addition of: *In addition to understanding group consciousness from the perspective of the individual the existence of a group consciousness is produced and refined through human activity and the environment in which the activity occurs. This activity produces processes, tools and artifacts that in turn act upon both individual and group developmental processes and consciousness, initiating an evolutionary trajectory that lies outside the domain of individual direction alone. This evolutionary trajectory has the potential to impact the individual, the culture in which the individual lives, and, ultimately, the environment in which the culture exists.*

More simply stated, group consciousness is composed of a collection of shared attitudes and impulses that are grounded within the experience of collective emotion. These attitudes and impulses lead to behaviors and activity that reflect and reinforce specific group norms and cultural traits. These norms and cultural traits exist in a fluid dynamic, acting in turn upon individuals that make up the group in a developmental process. Individual awareness of these group norms may exist in both active cognition as well as in unconscious attitudinal and behavioral patterns that remain consistent and predictable over time. Group consciousness is thus not a fixed

and rigid state, but an evolving dynamic comprised of collective patterns that tend to be persistent over time.

This new structure, with its emphasis on emotion and interaction with the environment as opposed to expressed belief and attitudinal orientation, lays the groundwork for understanding group formation and the process of group change from an entirely new perspective. The question of *what* core beliefs a group holds becomes secondary to both *how* and *how much* it believes, the social and historical context in which this belief system occurs, the images and metaphors utilized to lay down corresponding neurological maps, and the activities that occur relating to the existence and perpetuation of these belief systems and patterns of action.

Understanding that group activities generate an evolutionary process, and that this process itself has the power to influence the individual, gives us a new perspective from which to consider group activity and group change.

Leadership, then, becomes more and more situated as an activity that is directed at the influence or direction of group processes as they relate to emotional experience, the interactions of patterns of self, others and environment, and evolutionary adaptation and development. Genuine leadership activities are thus required to be attentive to these unfolding patterns if they are to maintain broad based legitimacy and long term efficacy, a factor which individual leaders and groups acting in leadership roles would be wise to keep in mind. The utility of this understanding becomes increasingly apparent when considering the emphasis that

Burns places on transformational leadership as a practice that actively engages conflict for the purpose of productive change. The experience of change directly relates to evolutionary processes, which require fluidity of movement and abhor static boundaries. Inherent in the existence of conflict and change is the experience of strong emotion that in turn serves to direct the development of the self or the group to which the self belongs.

To be able to direct conflict in a manner that serves a conscious purpose is to imply that emotion connected with this experience is effectively mediated and directed towards an outcome that is both planned for and anticipated. Such mediation requires not only a strong familiarity with emotion, but the ability to direct and manage it in the self and others as well. Understanding the complexity of this task is assisted by looking more deeply at the emotional experience, and at the range of emotions that combine to form our human experience. Fortunately, the enormous amount of research conducted on emotion within the past decade makes this exploration relatively easy. For the first part of our journey, we return to Antonio Damasio.

Group Consciousness and Emotions

We first turn to the idea that emotions can be classified into three distinct categories, primary, social and background. Damasio (1999) identifies six emotions that he classifies as primary and which can be identified across cultures and in animals; happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise and disgust. He identifies social

emotions, which include such experiences as embarrassment, jealousy, guilt and pride as emotions that allow us to successfully negotiate our environment, and further identifies that these emotions also exist both in humans and animals (Damasio, 2003). The category of background emotions defines the general emotional experience that is present in one's daily life. Background emotion is an important consideration as it indicates the general state of one's existence, and offers a trace into such global states as tension, preoccupation, overall well-being and cheerfulness (Damasio, 1999).

The social emotions give particular cause for attention, as they have most likely played a significant role in the development of unique cultural and social norms (Damasio, 2003). We find their origins in the primary emotions, following along the "nesting" behavior that leads from the experience of the simple to the complex. Social emotions offer us a view into a complex web of human (and animal) interactions and play a key role in social hierarchy and adaptive behavior, both for the individual and for the group. It is noteworthy then, that group norms and expectations appear to be bounded strongly by these social emotions, which provide a direct trace into primary emotion.

The expression of emotion as a causative factor in the formulation of cultural norms takes us back to the importance of Activity Theory, which states that "humans are object oriented, that all activity is hierarchically ordered, that cognitive events occur through a sophisticated process of internalization originating from external events, that all human activity is mediated through tools and artifacts that are both

internal and external”. Here the “sophisticated process of internalization originating from external events” certainly speaks to the experience of emotion, although it would appear to be implicit rather than explicit in this theoretical orientation. This is a key point to tease out, however, as neurological data has conclusively determined that memories laid down with emotion provide more intense and vivid recall experiences than do memories laid down without emotion. Such strong memories certainly have the ability to influence long term behavior and attitude formation in a powerful manner.

Paul Eckman, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, San Francisco, and a world renowned expert on the facial expression of affect, put forward the idea of 10 basic emotions that universally appear across cultures and species during his presentation at the 8th Mind Life Conference with His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Goleman, 2003). This list includes anger, fear, sadness, disgust, contempt, surprise, enjoyment, embarrassment, guilt and shame. Noting the universality of these emotions is important; current thinking is that when an emotion crosses cultures as well as species it exists to serve an evolutionary function. This utilization of emotion provides us with yet more evidence for the importance of emotion in both individual and group development as it is definitively connected to the ability for adaptation to one’s environment as well as the desire to act as a change agent upon that same environment.

Beyond providing us with the list of 10 basic emotions, Eckman then clusters them into “families” each of which allow for a multitude of variations to be expressed on a continuum of varying intensity (Goleman, 2003). This construct allows for cultural uniqueness to occur and helps to explain differences that arise between groups while simultaneously working to explain similarities. The identification of the experience of basic emotion also serves to indicate when an individual or group is engaged in an activity or activities that may relate to or be directed at evolutionary change. Additionally, the existence of emotion “families” points to the increasing complexity of sentient existence, and allows us to appreciate the many layers of being that have unfolded during our evolutionary experience.

Also presenting at the 8th Mind Life Conference was Jeanne Tsai, who spoke to the impact of culture on emotions (Goleman, 2003). In her work, she has found a significant impact of culture on both expressed identity and on the expression of emotion. She finds that individuals from the West relate to the world in what she terms an “independent” manner, where the focus is primarily on the self and the way that the individual self achieves isolated aims, desires and goals. She finds that individuals from the East tend to relate to the world in an “interdependent manner” with a focus on achieving group or family goals, desires, and congruencies (Goleman, 2003).

Of necessity, these separate ways of being lead to very different life goals, with a Western orientation dedicated to separation, expression of the individual self and

self enhancement and an opposite Eastern orientation focused on self-effacement, harmony within a group or family, connection with others and the pursuit of well functioning relationships (Goleman, 2003). Tsai highlights her observations with proverbs common to Western-European cultures and Japanese cultures; from the West we have “the squeaky wheel gets the grease” while from the East we have “the nail that stands out gets pounded down.” Such proverbs certainly reflect opposite world views that must be translated into culturally specific attitudes and behaviors.

The fascinating components of Tsai’s work, however, are the connections made between culturally specific behaviors and the expression of emotion. For example, in studies involving infants, Tsai finds that Western infants function from a state of greater emotional arousal than do their Eastern counterparts (Goleman, 2003). In adulthood, she finds that individuals from Eastern cultures, with their focus on the *other*, experience emotional arousal when relating to the experience of members of their group, and the individuals from Western cultures experience greater emotional arousal when relating to an experience that they themselves have participated in. While she has not identified whether this is genetic, cultural, or a combination of both, we see that individual developmental trajectories are bound to an affective pattern from the earliest moments of life. This finding lends credence to the component of the definition of group consciousness that states, *It is the emotional experience that most strongly binds the group and that provides the impetus for any meaningful mobilization directed at collective action, including those actions that*

lead to change and evolutionary adaptation. Group consciousness may be present as an active and cognitive awareness, or it may exist as a collection of unconscious impressions, beliefs, impulses and attitudes. There is a strong presentation of cultural emotional uniqueness in Tsai's work, which serves to highlight the importance of emotional functioning as a foundational part of the unconscious self that exists individually as well as in group form.

The Different Moon Shapes

*In this river the soul is a water-wheel
that no matter how it's facing, water
pours through, turning, returning to
the river. Even if you put your side*

*or your back to the river, water still
comes through. A shadow cannot ignore
the sun that all day creates and moves
it! The soul lives like a mercury drop*

*in the palm of a palsied man. Or say
the soul is the moon that every thirty
nights has two so empty, in union, that
it disappears. The other twenty-eight*

*it endures separation, wretched but
laughing. Laughter is the lovers'
way. They live and die tickled, and
always fresh-faced, knowing the return*

*that's coming. Don't question this!
The answers and then more questions in
response will cause your eyes to see
wrongly. Live the laughing silence.
From *The Soul of Rumi*, (Coleman Barks, 2001)*

Group Consciousness and Emotion

This exploration points to the existence of a group consciousness that is active in both conscious and unconscious domains. This group consciousness is a function of an extended consciousness that has come into being as a result of a complex pattern of metaphorical image, emotional expression, cultural specificity, interactive human activity and language that exists within a specific population. This population may be identified through the expression of unique norms, language, traditions, beliefs, attitudes and emotional engagement with the broader world. It is noteworthy that the group in question may not consciously recognize that they are bound by this collection of attributes. This finding is congruent with Damasio's (1999) observation that one aspect of consciousness is a unified mental pattern that brings together object and self, and takes it a bit further to posit that this pattern may extend to a group autobiographical self.

This initial exploration provides a starting point towards validation of the construct of group consciousness and a beginning from which to critically examine its foundational components. The primary elements presented here, metaphorical image, emotional expression, cultural specificity, language and interactive and evolutionary human activity, all require further exploration. This is a significant task as each element represents separate (and sometimes multiple) academic domains, each with a unique and complex epistemological and ontological tradition. Additionally,

each of these elements must be woven together to produce a cohesive explanation of group consciousness that can be validated in each of their respective fields.

An excellent starting point will be to expand the exploration of how a group autobiographical self might be formed through the experience of primary, secondary and social emotions. This exploration may provide important information on how group norms can be developed that are unconscious in nature and that produce a cohesive metaphorical structure. Examination of current trends and findings in the field of neurolinguistics will be invaluable, and will serve to provide important linkages between neurological systems and the experience of language, metaphor and culture.

The implications for the field of Leadership are clear as we move from a cognitive conceptualization of group consciousness to normative concerns. Through understanding how a group consciousness forms and functions, leadership activity has the potential to become extremely influential for both individual and society, leading to advanced regions of development and increasingly sophisticated and reflective moral behavior and norms. It also has the ability to become domineering and manipulative, seeding emotional behavior, metaphorical images and attitudinal norms into unsuspecting populations for the purpose of individual gain. A deep exploration of ethics is thus required for such knowledge carries with it a heavy responsibility. From the perspective of the individual, a constant vigilance regarding the limitations of the individual self is needed in order to temper the allure of power that comes with

the ability to markedly influence others. This vigilance is grounded in the ability to effectively understand and mediate emotion in both self and other, and is a vital component of poetic consciousness and the beauty it carries into the world.

A family of five
Waiting to welcome a friend
At the Seoul airport
Will never meet on this earth -
A terrorist bomb explodes.

Father Neal Henry Lawrence OSB, 1998, "Poet of Peace"

An Aesthetic Ethic

A poetic consciousness, of necessity, reflects a deep concern for the welfare and dignity of all beings. This concern thoroughly twines through every element of the individual self, influencing all of the activities of daily life and living. Informed of the power of influence regarding group consciousness, the bearer of a poetic consciousness deliberately chooses embodiment of peace and restraint, (the outcome of successful embodiment and negotiation of conflict) which is reflected through an aesthetic expression or way of being. There is an explicit emphasis on the achievement of harmony and unity, produced by an underlying awareness of the interdependence that binds sentient beings to one another. This awareness serves as a foundation for virtually all expression of self, both inward and outward, and is reflected through a keen attunement to all three forms of emotional experience in the self as well as in others.

Poetic Consciousness and Ethical Conduct

While a poetic consciousness displays an ardent sensitivity to all the emotional groupings, the broader world is certainly replete with other, less than exemplary models of emotional attunement. Behaviors of dominance, power wielding, and assertion of rigid control, which are associated with individual ways of being concerned with self-aggrandizement and an aggressively self-referential world view, abound within our human history. Such individuals persistently function from an orientation of separateness and emptiness, which easily leads to deep feelings of deprivation, suspicion, alienation and anger. The emphasis on experience grounded in primary emotions of anger and fear is reflective of a primitive selfhood, incapable of attunement with a broad range of social emotions or sensitivity towards background emotions. When coupled with sophisticated knowledge (or even brute intuition) regarding control and influence over group identity and process, the results can be disastrous.

Power and the Group – Influence and Manipulation

The potential for deep harm being perpetrated in the world through manipulation of group activity is made clearer upon even the briefest examination of Paulo Freire's work, particularly *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this work we are presented with further evidence for the existence of a group consciousness in oppressed populations as well as in those populations that are oppressors.

It is quite interesting to note that both *emotion* and *images* are key factors in Freire's work, combining together as primary elements that form varying states of consciousness that in turn initiate a wide range of activity (Freire, 1970). When considering the oppressed-oppressor continuum, Freire notes that fear is the primary emotion involved in triggering activities that contribute to the maintenance of this continuum. Pulling from Damasio's work, we must then recognize a wide range of feelings (or family grouping of feelings) that are produced from this emotional experience, that in turn immediately act upon cognition. While the primary *emotion* of fear is generally transitory in nature, the associated *feelings* of helplessness, discontent and resentment have a much greater longevity, thereby keeping elements of fear alive and active over time. (Or at least preparing a fertile ground for it's return.) This longevity helps to explain the deep and destructive power of fear upon the individual psyche, and demonstrates how insidious it can be in priming the individual for a self image which is predicated upon powerlessness. When extended to a group, fear becomes a primary tool of control as it is impressed upon a population and the population loses varying degrees of cognitive autonomy as their activities become increasingly bound by this primitive emotion and the metaphorical images that support it. The shared sense of helplessness is reflected back into the group by members of the population itself, insidiously turning the oppressed into unwitting agents of their own harm.

Additionally, Freire (1970) notes that images and metaphors are intimately connected to the oppressed/oppressor continuum through myths, images of strength and weakness, and a conditioned belief system that binds individuals to the continuum itself. To demonstrate this he provides us with the example of the oppressed individual who, when liberated from an oppressive experience, adopts the attitudes, belief systems and behaviors of the former oppressor, and quite often to a greater extreme than was demonstrated by the original oppressor. This, Freire notes, is a common trap that newly liberated individuals fall into, thereby unknowingly continuing a cycle of oppression that binds a society or a community to a destructive pattern of existence over a multitude of generations. He further notes that the only way that this behavior can be transcended is through a process of *conscientization*, which is a process by which the individual learns to perceive social, political, economic and educational contradictions, to reflect on them for the purpose of taking constructive action, and to take constructive action that supports the humanity and humanization of all people.

In order to accomplish this task Freire immediately thrusts us into the world of metaphorical image. He states,

Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world, (Freire, 1970, p. 79).

Here we are presented with metaphors of mechanization and commodification in order to describe individuals who are oppressed and the systems that oppress them. Individuals and systems so objectified are stripped not only of private and personal identity, but of the ability to interact in a self-determined manner with other individuals and systems. These images, juxtaposed against a feeling, vibrant image of aware and active human consciousness, gives us a clear choice in our existence, albeit one that surely threatens the owners of the machines! The universality of the mechanistic and commodification images clearly resonates negatively across cultures, and both are highly depersonalizing and reductionary in nature. In these examples all of one's humanity is subsumed into a mechanized or commodified existence where feelings, human cognition, personality traits and a broader social existence are all minimized or removed. Transformed from human to the status of a trade good, we await the bidding of a higher authority to engage our efforts, totally at the mercy of the direction of another and subject to evaluation, economic and social ranking based on the perception of non-human elements. Adaptation to these norms reinforce their existence, perpetuating belief patterns that further encourage social, economic and educational systems to adhere to depersonalizing norms. This mechanization is the product of numerous systems of powerful activity against which the individual must struggle in an effort to achieve a genuine sense of humanity. The struggle against the systems of such activity becomes the means by which the individual may reassert their own unique humanness and re-establish the reality of a conscious, feeling self.

Freire (1970) seeks to displace the mechanization metaphor through a process of increasing consciousness that is achieved through praxis (an activity by which individuals create culture and society through reflection, action, intentionality, creativity and rationality), and problem-posing education that is based upon dialogical relations. He notes that it is essential that individuals become increasingly conscious of *being conscious and working with this consciousness*, noting that the absence of such awareness simply perpetuates the oppressed/oppressor continuum, even in the face of the acquisition of knowledge. Here he notes the distinction between a way of being and simply being a vessel for knowledge, dismissing the latter as being nothing more than a state of existence that perpetuates the destructive continuum of oppression. To avoid falling into this harmful continuum, one must first have cognitive knowledge of one's oppression, then address the feelings of fear that accompany leaving a familiar role behind, making an effort not to harm the oppressed self nor to become an oppressor self in the process. In Freire's work, this attentiveness to being is the foundational component upon which genuine change rests. It is this attentiveness to being that has the power to challenge the emptiness of an externally imposed metaphor whose primary function is to reinforce and support existing and dominant systems.

Neurological Underpinnings of Ethical Reasoning

Freire', in his call for the development of conscientization, was working from a deep place of intuition that touched upon sophisticated neurological realities that were

many years away from his early conceptualizations. Indeed, it would take science nearly three decades to catch up with and provide science-based validation for his theories. For by asking for the practice of reflection, particularly upon one's own consciousness and the dualities of one's world, he was in reality setting the stage for a neurological intervention aimed at challenging negative or false perceptions and the emotions associated with them. Such a practice mirrors a simple yet elegant model that neurologist Richard Restak (2004) presents, which demonstrates the difference between acting upon an impulse (what he terms "low road" behavior) and acting upon reflection ("high road" behavior). This model is primarily concerned with the limbic system and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (located within the prefrontal cortex, commonly known as the region of executive functioning).

Neurologically speaking, "low road" behaviors are those actions that are directly generated from the activation of the limbic system, which is primarily responsible for our fight-or-flight instinct. This instinct, part of the primitive neurological system aimed at species survival, is intimately connected with impulsivity and the failure to appropriately regulate emotions (Restak, 2004). In "low road" behaviors the impulse to action is immediate; the limbic system is activated and action based upon excitatory neurotransmitters released from this system occurs regardless of resulting consequence. Such action is frequently unacceptable in modern society, and often results in negative outcomes for the individual and society at large.

Alternately, “high road” behaviors begin with the activation of the limbic system, but the impulse to immediate activity is suppressed as other, more sophisticated neurological systems and pre-existing neural maps deploy (Restak, 2004). The aforementioned ventromedial prefrontal cortex activates, detouring immediate response in favor of a significantly slowed, rationally based set of action options that require choice and decision making. These action options are influenced by neural maps associated with future memory (the ability to project likely future outcomes based on past experience) and value sets associated with internalized social codes, moral tenants and perceptions of self.

In returning to the concept of neuroplasticity, it is clear that the more a specific neurological region is used, the stronger it gets. Such a region develops complex neural connections with other neurological regions that it frequently associates with, forging sophisticated communication pathways across and between these regions. Alternately, the less a neurological region or system is used, the weaker it becomes. The old idiom, “use it or lose it”, is often used to describe this unfortunate scenario, which generally negatively impacts those individuals least able to afford it. Alternately, it supports individuals willing to engage in reflective practice.

Individuals who habitually engage their ventromedial prefrontal cortex thus may eventually develop the capacity for a highly sophisticated ability to manage intense emotion and the experience of conflict. This capacity includes the

neurological ability to move rapidly from emotional experience to behavioral *choice*, laying the groundwork for masterful emotional regulation and impulse control. They are thus at home in the territory of executive functioning, and with the negotiation of complexity, including the complexity introduced by the experience of relationships.

Individuals who habitually function from highly impulsive states are at a considerable disadvantage in comparison, as they frequently function in states primarily driven by the limbic system. They are thus constantly at risk for impulsive behavior that may seem inexplicable to both themselves and others, and frequently appear to be at the mercy of their emotions. As these individuals necessarily spend a great deal of time preoccupied with their emotional states, there may find little of themselves left over for engagement with external relationships.

From the perspective of the group, the implications are clear and ominous, particularly when considering the possibility of lengthy experiences of oppression. A population that has been exposed to long-term stressors, especially experiences of sustained fear, may have large numbers of individuals who have become neurologically sensitized to states of high emotional arousal. Neuroplasticity informs us that even individuals in the population who have previously developed sophisticated neurological structures involving the prefrontal cortex will experience a re-specialization of neural structures emphasizing the primitive limbic system.

Such an occurrence significantly inhibits the ability of individual group members to engage in Friere's prescription of praxis, as the neurological

underpinnings of self required for such activity may not be functioning at levels appropriate for such an effort. Reflection, which requires prefrontal executive functioning, may be diminished, along with the corresponding ability to hold two vantage points in cognitive awareness at the same time. The insidious nature of oppression becomes quite clear from this vantage point, as science has gifted us with the understanding that such immoral activity may impact an individual's very neurology, and thus their foundation of aware and individual selfhood.

This negative impact extends to an individual's ability to engage with their world, and to adapt to change, as the ability to engage in future memory and deploy corresponding behavioral acts may become diminished as activity in the limbic system becomes primary and higher, executive region functioning becomes secondary. In this manner the cultural and social evolution of a population may be significantly interrupted and altered. Quite simply, the long term experience of terror or brutal suppression potentially entralls a population to the limbic system and the accompanying surges of panic and fear that correspond with living under such circumstances. This cascade of negative emotion may then cycle in a vicious feedback loop, embedding associated cultural images and metaphors as traumatic memory that binds the individual self to the overwhelming emotional experience visited upon them.

An Aesthetic Ethic

The need for an explicit ethic regarding poetic consciousness, its interplay with group consciousness and associated leadership activity is clearly needed. Such an ethic, being inextricably bound up with aesthetic experience, must honor this tradition, and so may not be a simple set of values or judgements, or a grouping of stages which an individual passes through on a course of individual development (although the development of such an ethic does *not* explicitly preclude such a journey). Such an ethic must deeply look to, and appreciate, the complexity and mysteries of the aesthetic craft and the human experience that it evokes.

The renowned physicist, David Bohm (1917-1992), provides some insight into this process when musing on why scientists pursue knowledge. He offers us this reflection,

I suggest that there is a perception of a *new basic order* that is potentially significant in a broad and rich field. This new order leads eventually to the creation of new structures having the qualities of harmony and totality, and therefore the feeling of beauty, (Bohm, 1996, p. 6).

Bohm, in this lovely thought, captures an important essence that is essential for an aesthetic ethic, namely the *feeling of beauty* associated with something that inspires one to the pursuit of new knowledge structures. He also points to the draw of those elements of our world which are complete and unified, and an inherent human desire to be a part of this process of unification.

An aesthetic awareness is equally inspired to *share* new discoveries or awarenesses even as it discovers them, yet the *feeling* associated with the creation or unveiling process remains a central consideration. There is a truth, or felt sense of rightness, that is experienced in the creation process that defies traditional methodology and epistemological approaches. Hans-Georg Gadamer captures this sense in his observation regarding experiences of philosophy, art, and history; “These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science,” (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxi). He goes on to emphasize that, in the domain of aesthetics, a work of art must be experienced, that it cannot be understood by means of applied theory alone. He further states,

The fact that through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all attempts to rationalize it away. Hence, together with the experience of philosophy, the experience of art is the most insistent admonition to scientific consciousness to acknowledge its own limits, (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxi).

The meaning that Gadamer points to is that the experiences of some elements of our world transcend boundaries of methodology and theory that would serve to explain them, and thus bind them. Thus a magnificent painting may be thoroughly analyzed by a traditional theoretical approach, with concern for composition, color and brushstroke, and yet this analysis will still fail to convey the *essence* of the painting itself. The very life of the painting transcends traditional judgment.

Robert Henri (1984) brings a discussion of artistic ethics directly into focus during his discussion on the craft of the artist. He shares,

For an artist to be interesting to us he must have been interesting to himself. He must be capable of intense feeling, and capable of profound contemplation. He who has contemplated has met with himself, and is in a state to see into the realities beyond the surroundings of his subject. Nature reveals to him, and seeing and feeling intensely he paints, and whether he wills it or not each brush stroke is an exact record of such as he was at the exact moment the stroke was made, (Henri, 1984, p. 3).

As Gadamer so clearly asks, in seeking truth, how is such a work to be evaluated? How does one catch hold of the heart of what Henri was getting at? When we are concerned with matters of essence and spirit, with seeing beyond apparent realities, traditional structures of understanding become limiting. Yet it is naïve to observe that method and epistemology are unable to comprehend what is before them, and simply leave it at that. A more comprehensive view of truth and ethical behavior is needed.

The search for this view begins with Gadamer's admonition not to attempt to reflect oneself out of the tradition to which one's knowledge domain belongs. The purpose of this admonition is to remind us that the endeavor to find deeper and more comprehensive truths and meaning must go *beyond* current understanding, not simply *around* it. The first step in this process is to gain a historical understanding of one's knowledge tradition for the purpose of situating critical concepts and principles in the current *now* (Gadamer, 2004). While seemingly simple sounding, this practice can be quite difficult, as it requires "truths" to be submitted to the lens of current

affairs and understandings, an analysis activity that may require that old belief systems are rejected in favor of newer ones more suitable to current temporal elements.

Such a process challenges beliefs, and principles to remain fluid and dynamic in response to changing norms, an activity that may generate significant resistance from individuals who would maintain the status quo. Yet this process injects a sense of vibrancy into these same beliefs, keeping them fresh and alive in response to the passage of time.

With this perspective in mind, our beliefs regarding ethical and moral conduct must now include data from the neurological perspective, which clearly demonstrates that activity involving emotion is more far reaching than ever before imagined. Adopting norms that forbid harmful behavior becomes more encompassing than the practice of a simple established code of conduct, as our understanding of what “harmful behavior” might encompass has significantly expanded. In order to avoid such behavior, we must now be attentive to the subtleties of not only our behavior, but of our language and use of metaphor as well. We are moving into a new territory of intentionality, as well as and concern for our conduct and its potential impact on others.

And, rather than using a codified set of laws and rules for conduct, we are urged to be attentive to our *feelings* and *intuitions* of what is right and good, and our cognitive judgment of how these feelings and intuitions need to be translated into real

word action. Such attentiveness calls for a serious and purposeful engagement with ourselves, mirroring Henri's observation that the capacity for profound contemplation is required for genuine aesthetic expression. It seems a very small step to take this practice and apply it to ethical reasoning.

An aesthetic ethic is thus comprised of four key components that must dynamically interact with each other in the practice of daily living. The first is a historical awareness of ethical standards and norms that have shaped society and that are still in existence to dictate standards of right and wrong. These standards and norms represent our social structure and cultural norms, and should be understood in light of *why* they came into being, their purposefulness in both the past and present, and their likely purposefulness in the future. Such understanding requires the ability to analytically consider the existence of norms, rules and laws, and to place them accurately within historical and cultural continuums.

The second component is the ability to *feel* the rightness or wrongness, the truth or beauty, of decisions made and life situations. It is this feeling that must guide the conduct of the individual within (and occasionally without) the broader social structure. This ability is clearly not impulsive emotion generated by the limbic system, but the deeper, reflective feeling that comes from the long and vigilant contemplative practice. Such practice couples a genuine commitment to the search for truth along with increasing attentiveness to the emotions and welfare of both self and other.

The ability to deploy this intuitive sense rests upon the ability to face the world with a certain courageousness that is reflective of both emotional maturity and stability. The expression of this courageousness is certainly not fearlessness, though it may wish to be so! Instead this is a courageousness that, when faced with conflict and genuine options, consciously takes action, even in the face of fear. This is true embodiment of conflict, where intuitive feeling and raw emotion must confront each other in a dynamic of change and choice. Such decision making may be guided by the broader social structure in which the individual exists, but, in some cases, such a structure must be transcended in the pursuit of truth and rightness.

The final component of the aesthetic ethic is a deep and abiding commitment to promote the well-being of the self and others, and to act from an explicit orientation of harmlessness. This is an action oriented commitment that requires a balance of reflective and intentional activity, and a keen awareness of when *inactivity* may be the best course of action to take. It also requires active reflection upon one's own activities, and the ability to hold oneself accountable for choices made as well as the corresponding outcomes.

The practice of an aesthetic ethic requires enormous personal commitment and the willingness to dedicate the necessary time to bring such practice to life. It also demands an intentional way of being that must be developed and fostered through contemplative practice and open and honest engagement with emotional life. While the development of such an ethic may initially present as a significant

challenge, the way of being that such ethical practice brings about takes the individual practitioner to new and deeper places of human existence. It also offers an engaged and contemplative method of conduct to the world, which serves to encourage the pursuit of new ethical norms and standards of conduct.

The Dream of Now

*When you wake to the dream of now
from night and its other dream,
you carry day out of the dark
like a flame.*

*When spring comes north, and flowers
unfold from earth and its even sleep,
you lift summer on with your breath
lest it be lost ever so deep.*

*Your life you live by the light you find
and follow it on as well as you can,
carrying through darkness whenever you go
your one little fire that will start again.*
William Stafford

Poetic Leadership and the Activity of Self

Poetic leadership, which rests squarely on the foundation of a poetic consciousness, is a leadership activity concerned with transformation of both self and society. Deeply grounded in an aesthetic ethic, and possessing a lyrical intellect, it gracefully moves through the world in pursuit of harmony, justice and beauty. It is charged with expressing these same traits, and thus is committed to bearing hope even into those places that know the greatest darkness.

The Eight Elements of Poetic Leadership

The basic structure of poetic leadership is comprised of eight elements. These eight elements form together to create a template of self and being that demands active, continuous engagement with one's own emotional and cognitive awarenesses

as well as mindful activity with the world at large. Such engagement is critical as these elements are not fixed, but are fluid and changeable upon an evolutionary continuum. Some of these elements are bound to historical concerns, such as scientific knowledge or the understanding of cultural norms, and some of them are bound to human development and growth, such as the ability to actively deploy a stable attitude of compassion over time. Without active engagement and practice, any of these elements may begin a process of diminishment and decay.

In addition to possessing a lyrical intellect and an aesthetic ethic, the practice of poetic leadership is also neurologically aware. As the experience and expression of poetic consciousness is inextricably bound up in the presence of emotion and feeling, it is imperative that these sophisticated neurological processes are understood. For the more completely we understand these mysterious and sophisticated mechanisms of expression, the better able we are to understand humanity at large. As Bernard Baars so eloquently notes, our new age of science can be humanizing, and thus serve the greater good through sophisticated programs and scientific interventions that support the continuing development of social structures and individual well being.

The practice of poetic leadership, with its need for emotional attunement, must function from a place of deep understanding regarding how neurological processes support human activity. This necessitates understanding how these processes develop, change and grow, as well as how they may be suppressed or

damaged. Such understanding supports ethical and mindful conduct in individuals who are dedicated to the well being of their fellow human beings.

Poetic leadership is explicitly contemplative, being grounded in a poetic consciousness that has a contemplative attribute as a foundational element. Engagement in reflective and introspective practice is vital in becoming deeply aware of one's feelings, often which are hidden, and thus reflective action becomes key to understanding one's own motivations and attitudes. Such understanding leads to an increased ability to understand the emotional experience of others, and thus to a heightened capacity for engagement in relationship and a deeper experience of empathy and compassion.

A host of practices lend themselves to this activity, coming from a wide variety of cultural, spiritual and religious traditions. Eastern practices of meditation, pranayama (breathing exercises), japa (repetition of mantra) or bhajan chanting may serve, or, equally effective, Western contemplative prayer or the praying of the rosary. The key to the development of a contemplative way of being rests less in the specific choice of practice and more in the development of a consistent routine.

This is an important neurological point, for, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama notes in his introduction to *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*, (Begley, 2007), which is a collaboration between Buddhist contemplatives and Western cognitive and neuro-scientists, Buddhist practitioners have long believed that the mind can be changed through contemplative practice. The fact that the hard sciences have

definitively proven this has far reaching implications for the effects of habitual behavior in our lives, particularly the potentials related to spiritual practice. The neurological malleability evidenced through research is revolutionizing the very way that we perceive of the brain.

This malleability, examined earlier using the neurological term *neuroplasticity*, becomes particularly important when engaging in contemplative practice, as such practice supports positive neurological interactions such as the continuing development of the ventromedial prefrontal cortex. (Remember, this neurological region supports the mediation of emotion through executive functioning.) A contemplative way of being understands explicitly that the mind can be transformed, and that it is up to the individual to direct this process in an intentional and meaningful manner. Through regular and fully engaged practice, the contemplative aspirant models a disciplined approach to mental activity. Such modeling is an important component of the embodiment of poetic consciousness, and reflects a lived commitment to individual growth and change.

The practice of poetic leadership is concerned with the creation of containers and settings that provides opportunities for the growth and development of the individual. This is a sophisticated practice, involving the accurate perception of others (including, but not necessarily followers), and the ability to create a suitable setting or situation to meet growth needs. Such practice requires a deft hand, as the creation of a setting or environment involves choice of setting, structure of

responsibilities, duties or expectations, attention to working or practice conditions and possible choice of associates, partners or subordinates. It also requires an awareness or intuition of one or more growth trajectories, the desire of the individual moving into this setting or situation to pursue this growth, and an unwavering commitment to the potential present in the other. An implied or explicit agreement between parties that such a container is present is a necessity, along with clearly defined boundaries and expectations of conduct regarding the responsibilities of each participant. The activity of poetic leadership in this situation demands the establishment of a social contract, with responsibility for outcomes situated with all parties involved.

Attentiveness to the role of stress in the creation of such a setting or situation is critical. For, while a poetic consciousness demands the public embodiment of conflict, the introduction of stressors into the lives of others is fraught with ethical concerns and potential ethical pitfalls.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1991), who gave us the model of Flow, or optimal psychological functioning, points out that some levels of stress or challenge are required in order for these peak states of functioning to occur. The key is in knowing how to balance new challenges with skill sets possessed by the individual. Determining this is a process that relies heavily on relationship, knowledge of one's environment, and ability to detect early signs of stress overload (or underload) and react to such occurrences appropriately. Structuring suitable challenge also requires

attentiveness to the need for the provision of new skill sets to offset or compensate for emergent stressors that threaten to overwhelm the individual.

An example of such a container might be the structuring of a leadership position or opportunity for a colleague, or for a subordinate. In such a situation attentiveness would need to be paid to the exact responsibilities the position entails, supports offered, and outcome measures to be applied. Beyond this, though, is the need for a good match in the first place, one that meets not only the practical needs of the organization or community and the professional or educational aspirations of the individual involved, but the needs for deeper personal growth and development as well. Perceiving and acting upon these concerns is a key responsibility inherent in the activity of poetic leadership, and go significantly beyond concerns of organizational responsibility alone.

The sixth element of poetic leadership is a vision that is directed towards wholeness and unity. Such envisioning requires attunement with the *feeling* of unity, that Bohm describes as “the feeling of beauty”. Here we find ourselves back within the domain of the aesthetic ethic, where exact description of the feeling state is one that cannot be adequately produced, only experienced. This place of “the feeling of beauty” draws on emotion and cognitive understanding, but it also comes into being from another, more existential realm of intuition and understanding that transcends pure analysis. This realm appears to be linked with the balance of self and activity

produced in Flow states, which, when experienced over time, sets the stage for reaching regions of human development.

A vision that is directed towards unity sees from a holonic perspective; that is, it views small parts of self, other and activity as templates that carry wholes within their beings. A holon is an element that is quite small and often non-descript, yet it bears within it the complete pattern for a larger object or entity. The ability to see complete wholes within these small parts requires a deep perception, one that is keenly attuned to potential futures and that draws upon future memory.

An important activity of Poetic Leadership becomes the unification of the practice of creating containers or situations that provide a platform for potential fulfillment with a holonic vision. This ability is developed through experience and the cultivation of the ability to perceive truths and realities that lie well below surface appearance. The practice of this ability requires a certain optimism that change and growth is possible, and faith that, given the appropriate circumstances, it will occur. Such optimism needs to be coupled with restraint, as, once a container is established, further involvement should be minimized.

The development of these traits, optimism, faith, and restraint, link back into the practice of a contemplative way of being as they clearly require high degrees of mental discipline, impulse control and emotional regulation. Mental discipline is essential to the practice of restraint in action, particularly during times of stress or crisis. And, as it is so essential for the practice of poetic leadership, the development

of this ability must be carefully cultivated so that it grows over time. Additionally, it must be noted that optimism acts as a background emotion, and so has a pervasive influence over daily life and the attitude that influences associated activities. In light of this fact its development and maintenance is particularly important.

The activity of poetic leadership, resting as it does on a poetic consciousness, has a keen ability to hold paradoxical situations in active cognition. This translates into an ability to deeply and courageously see the vicissitudes of life, the triumphs, the turmoils, and the tragedies. This is so even when others might look past them, finding it easier to ignore the misfortunes and calamities of life than to confront them. Such vision serves as a call for action, for, with its aesthetic ethic and emphasis on wholeness and unity, poetic leadership cannot ignore the presence of pain or suffering.

Such a call is not interpreted as a call to fleeting intervention, or the offer of a single charitable act, but to a sustained commitment and effort to alleviate the pain of fellow beings. Poetic leadership activity thus moves squarely into the realms of social action and social justice.

Such work is easily overwhelming, as there is enough pain and inequity in the world to occupy lifetimes. The activity of poetic leadership, with its emotional maturity and introspective stance, is uniquely positioned to be effective in the pursuit of social justice, as it comes equipped with tools of self that allow for the individual to function effectively in the midst of turmoil. Indeed, it is in such places that poetic

leadership offers its greatest gifts, as it has long practice dealing with conflict, stress, and paradox.

The final element of poetic leadership, the experience and expression of compassion for all sentient beings, is the central point from which all of the other elements emerge. It is such an important attribute that it stands alone in its ability to motivate action, behavior change, and attitudinal change. It also stands alone in its ability to provide the required courage to embody conflict for the purpose of pursuing the welfare and well being of others.

In practice, this attribute of self becomes quite complex, particularly when put into practice. Henri Nouwen (1932- 1996) is an excellent example of this. A Dutch Catholic priest and author of over 30 books on spirituality and the spiritual life, he was also a noted scholar who taught courses in divinity at the University of Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard. Noted for his teaching talent, intellect and linguistic gifts, and during what many would consider the peak of his academic career, he received a spiritual call to serve the mentally disabled residing within the L'Arche Daybreak communities of France and Canada (Nouwen, 1993).

In his book *In the Name of Jesus, Reflections on Christian Leadership*, Nouwen talks about the difficulty of his adjustment to his new life away from the academia, and the need to find a secure place in a community that recognized none of the gifts which had previously brought him such acclaim (Nouwen, 1993). In a new and alien world, he wrote of experiencing doubt and helplessness. Yet it would

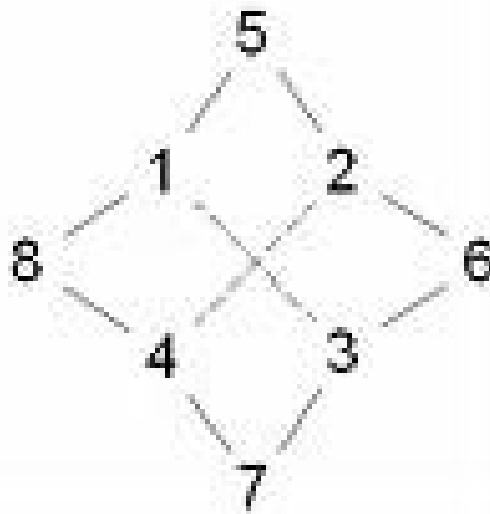
be his care and compassion for those unable to emotionally respond to him that allowed him to overcome the feelings of emptiness and loneliness that threatened to overwhelm him. These feelings of care and compassion did not always come easily. There were many times when Nouwen had to work at keeping his feelings of care and compassion alive, and when he prayed for guidance. Eventually this persistence in developing an empathic connection brought about a change of being for him, and a deeper sense of connectedness with his spiritual tradition.

The experience and expression of compassion towards all beings is a vast concept, much like Kenny's definition of beauty, which has no place for smallness of mind or heart. Limiting structures of evaluation and judgment have no place in these conceptualizations, as they exist to express unity and wholeness of being and to unite all beings in a common experience of grace

A mature view of compassion means that it must be expressed towards those who are different from us, who may be indifferent to us, and even towards those who would wish us harm. Developing this ability comes from the discipline of first being able to hold two opposing thoughts or views in one's mind, then progressing to holding various emotions in varying intensity. It is further enhanced by meditation practice focused upon the experience and practice of compassion, which has been definitively linked to an increase in gamma wave function in the brain (Begley. 2007). Gamma waves are attributed with integrating complex neurological information and with providing the individual being with a unified experience of consciousness.

The Purpose of Poetic Leadership

Poetic leadership is an activity of self and heart. It comes into the world for the purpose of bringing about change and growth in the individual, and the promotion of evolutionary potential fulfillment in the broader world. It accomplishes these tasks through the embodiment of a poetic spirit that carries a mature aesthetic ethic and conceptualization of beauty within its being. Deeply concerned with the expression of compassion, it ultimately will challenge every practitioner to examine what it means to be human, and how that humanity will be expressed in service of the world.



Poetic Leadership 8 Point Diagram, containing the key elements of this construct. 1. Lyrical Consciousness, 2. Aesthetic Ethic, 3. Neurologically Aware, 4. Explicitly Contemplative, 5. Ability to create Learning/Developmental Containers, 6. Holonic Vision, 7. Ability to hold Paradox in Active Cognition, 8. Authentic and Sustained Commitment to work towards the Alleviation of Suffering in all Sentient Beings.

*How do you know but every bird
That wings the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight
Closed to your senses five?
-William Blake*

Future Directions

The mysteries of poetic consciousness are in the infancy of their unfolding. So too, is the construct of poetic leadership, which is the activity of poetic consciousness brought to bear in a world longing for change and transformation. The exploration of both offers a multitude of paths, each which lead to new places of understanding and awareness.

This exploration is possible due to the fact that we are in a unique historical period of scientific investigation. The world of science has elevated the study of consciousness from the realms of the purely speculative to the world of serious study, with numerous neuroscience laboratories populated by teams of investigators diligently pursuing her mysteries in a multitude of studies. The giants of the scientific world each have chosen their respective avenues of inquiry, and each has produced stunning information that is changing the way in which we conceptualize ourselves and our world.

This work informs the investigation of poetic consciousness and poetic leadership, and serves to validate the existence of both. And, with new discoveries

that point to new possibilities and potentials, neuroscience is clearly bound up in further development of these constructs. Emergent work on the experience of empathy and compassion is particularly interesting, and may point the way to a possible evolutionary trajectory for humanity.

The domain of creativity is also of great interest, as it is an integral element of aesthetic awareness and thus of poetic consciousness. And, as our world becomes increasingly complex and chaotic, creativity in leadership becomes correspondingly important. Old solutions applied to new problems are not viable, and the creation of new solutions demands the ability to view the world with a new and fresh perspective.

New findings in activity theory and human computer interaction have a place in the next steps of exploration as well. As our world becomes increasingly technologically based, the interplay between between artificial communication systems and the human experience becomes a critical area of study. Technology is changing our world at an incredibly fast past, with new innovations and findings bringing us cultural artifacts that were unimaginable a generation ago.

This speed of change combines with the experience of globalization to bring a host of new possibilities and problems, most of which come bound up with issues concerning culture, language, economics, religion and politics. Adaptation to this new world requires a fluidity of self never before required in our history. Sorting through it all requires a cognition that is flexible, analytical and deeply sensitive to its

surroundings. Leadership activity thus becomes increasingly important as it is this activity that will be charged with best understanding and modeling adaptive behavior, and with formulating solutions to problems of which we cannot yet conceive.

And, as the speed of change and the number of systems intersecting with each other is increasing at startling rates, the experience of conflict is all but guaranteed. This is especially true as global economic interdependence collides with vastly differing value systems based upon vastly different cultural norms. Colliding religious belief systems are particularly dangerous, particularly when valuable commodities such as oil or mineral interests are involved.

These potentially explosive combinations set the stage for conflict on a multinational level that is potentially disastrous on a global scale. The activity of poetic leadership must always maintain a keen attentiveness to this potential for conflict, and must be prepared to work diligently to anticipate and resolve potential difficulties as they emerge. This attentiveness requires all of the elements of a fully developed poetic consciousness and the lived experience of a deeply absorbed aesthetic ethic. It also requires an abiding awareness of the interconnectivity that binds us together in a unified human experience.

Interrelationship

You are me, and I am you.

Isn't it obvious that we "inter-are"?

*You cultivate the flower in yourself,
so that I will be beautiful.*

*I transform the garbage in myself,
so that you will not have to suffer.*

*I support you;
you support me.
I am in this world to offer you peace;
you are in this world to bring me joy.
Thich Nhat Hanh, 1989*

And, finally, the mysteries of the poetic tradition will continue to be a vital source for the further development of the constructs of both poetic consciousness and poetic leadership. The timeless wisdom contained in her depths seems to be limitless, unbound by temporal constraint or historical restriction. For this is the hallmark of poetic tradition, that it carries images and realities that transcend time, tradition and society, concerned instead with universal experiences of love and laughter, hope and anguish, passion and despair. The very human experience is bound up within poetic being, and patiently waits through the endless expanse of time for the graceful touch of inquiry that seeks to understand the wisdom that she carries.

Being bound up with so much beauty, and accompanied by the wisdom traditions of so many different scholarly paths, the continuing journey of poetic consciousness and poetic leadership promises to be extraordinary.

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