

# The Gold at the End of the Rainbow

**A Hermeneutic Study of a Therapist's Spiritual Experience**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the concept of spirituality in as it arises organically within the therapeutic session. It explores the spiritual aspects of one therapist's experience while working with clients. Its conceptual framework includes the notion of the spiritual in the mundane as it appears within the context of psychological and spiritual practices. The study explores concepts from Buddhist cosmology, with a particular emphasis on those that correspond with concepts and practices from the psychological tradition, specifically the Process Work paradigm. Within this qualitative approach to inquiry, an exegetical, hermeneutic approach was applied as the interpretive method by which to analyze the data. The three aspects of enlightened mind; knowledge, compassion, and wisdom, as defined by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939/1991) were used as the comparative framework for analysis. Findings showed a "romantic" element in this therapist's spiritual experience of communion with the divine, including devotion, prayer, reverence, formlessness, intrigue, longing, and grace. For the purposes of this dissertation, "romance" was defined as "A mysterious or fascinating quality or appeal, as of something adventurous, heroic, or strangely beautiful". Poetry was used to name the themes in the findings, as a method by which to express the romantic, ungraspable aspect of this therapist's experience, which cannot be sufficiently expressed in linear language alone. Outcomes suggest that spiritual and romantic aspects can potentially be accessed through the practice of therapy, bringing a greater sense of meaning and inner fulfillment that could act as an antidote against the burnout and mild depression that practitioners in the helping professions often face, perhaps as a result of attempting to be useful to the client rather than to the spirit.

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## PREFACE

There are many different views about how therapeutic and spiritual practices interface, overlap, are identical, should be separated, and can not be separated. I have always been interested in finding an approach for working and being with people in which spiritual and psychological aspects are integrated, and every day problems are avenues for accessing spiritual experiences. This need was satisfied with my discovery of Process Work. At that point, I became interested in what the integration of psychology and spirituality meant in terms of a therapist's work.

Traditional religions prescribe rules for appropriate behavior, based on their ideologies. Similarly, many psychological paradigms prescribe programs for attitudes, feelings, and behaviors, either directly through methodologies, or indirectly through diagnosis of "healthy and functional" verses "pathological and dysfunctional". At the outset of this study, my interest was in the experience of the therapist, regardless of whether or not this experience could be called spiritual, or whether it would have any effect on the client or the overall process. The literature suggests that in many traditions, even spiritual teachers are required to uphold certain attitudes. Part of what has fascinated me in the therapeutic experience is a sense of communion between the therapist and the client, and I wanted to start out by studying the experience of the therapist. In the following pages, I will describe the details of this study. This study focuses on the experience of the therapist, especially those aspects that might be referred to as spiritual. I have researched this experience through an in depth, single case study of one therapist,

studying his works with participants during seminars, and interviewing him immediately following the works. The interview data was analyzed using a hermeneutic, exegetical approach, comparing the data with the three aspects of enlightened mind, knowledge, wisdom, and compassion, as defined by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the Tibetan master who was largely responsible for bringing Tibetan Buddhism to the West. In the first chapter, I will describe in detail my reasons for following this approach. Please refer to the glossary following the text for definitions of terms that are specific to this study.

My effort to uncover in depth the experience of one therapist was inspired by a desire to learn more about the potential meaning for a therapist of being a therapist. I was also interested in how the role of the therapist is part of the larger developmental process of the person playing that role, and how this person can use the role as a meditation technique for self-actualization, and for assisting others in actualization.

This study was personally significant for me in many ways. It was inspired from the depth of my heart, and out of a life long search. Since I was a child, I dreamed of one day becoming a therapist. I remember a significant moment in high school when I realized that a need to help others, motivated by a need to fill an emptiness in myself, would not satisfy the deeper quest, to be closer to the world outside, the world inside, and something beyond all of it. In the end, a therapy based on helping others would be more of a band-aid approach both for me and for the clients. Although bandages are wonderful and very much needed at times, there are many occasions in which other interventions are also needed. I dreamed of learning a discipline that includes bandages, but is not limited to them. I dreamed of living in a place where the world stopped, time stopped, and there

was only you and me, together on an explorative journey into new worlds and dimensions of unlimited possibility.

This research project is a single case study of the work of my husband, Dr. Max Schupbach. A detailed explanation of my decision to study his work will be presented in chapter three. I will refer to him as Max throughout the work, to reflect the personal nature of our relationship. Because Max is a man, and he is the primary subject of this study, I have used the male tense of pronouns throughout the work to refer to both the therapist and the client, unless I refer to the work of an author who has used the female tense. I have used the female tense to refer to the divine and to awareness, as Max did in all of the interviews. When grammatically appropriate, I used both male and female pronouns.

When Max works publicly as a therapist with a client during a seminar, he applies process work methods to work with the issue that the client brings forward. When I witness his work, I study the methods that he applies, and at the same time have an uncanny experience of entering into another world. I find myself deeply touched, and transported into a timeless place. I look around and see others in the seminar room with moist eyes, and I know that something very precious is taking place. Traveling throughout the world with Max, I have witnessed time and time again individuals approaching him to tell him how their work with him in years past changed their lives. I sense that what touches the client with whom Max works also touches me and others in the room. This study was inspired by a calling in me, and a deep urgent need to know more about how Max is able to bring into form this aspect that is almost indescribable. In my subjective experience, he is doing what I have always dreamed was possible, he is

bringing love into form. My search was to find out in depth about his experience as a therapist while working with a client, both for myself and for others, with the hope that this study would inspire further studies of the works of other therapists, as well as a framework for the inquiry of other therapists into their own work. I am honored to have been the vessel for this study.

I believe that being a therapist involves not only the ability to work with a person, but also the inner development of something that could be called a spiritual teacher in the therapist. The interviews from this study substantiate this point. The data suggest that part of the inspiration for becoming a therapist might be based in a desire to develop one's own inner teacher, and to develop an enlightened mind. The practice of therapy can be a dojo (practice ground) for one's own psychological and spiritual development.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
PREFACE .....	iv
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Research Problem .....	1
Buddhist Cosmology .....	2
Knowledge.....	3
Compassion .....	3
Wisdom .....	4
Scope of the Issue.....	4
Transpersonal Psychology .....	5
Process Work.....	6
Client/Therapist Relationship .....	9
Significance of the Field.....	10
Social Relevancy of this Study.....	11
Love, Spirituality, Research, and the Practice of Therapy .....	12
Definition of Terms.....	13
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>16</b>
The Realm Beyond Words.....	16
Intersection Between Spirituality and Therapy: An Overview.....	18
The Spiritual Experience of the Therapist .....	20
Previous Studies of the Therapist’s Experience.....	22
Ethics of Combining the Roles of Spiritual Teacher and Therapist .....	25
Crossovers between Psychotherapeutic and Spiritual Techniques .....	28
The Role of the Therapist’s Reactions in Process Work .....	29
Therapist and Spiritual Teacher as Roles.....	31
Levels of Experience .....	32
Spirituality in Therapy: Compassion, Care, and Feeling Attitudes .....	34
Metaskills .....	36
Creating a Conducive Therapeutic Atmosphere .....	36
The Actualizing Tendency .....	37
A Comprehensive View of Compassion .....	37
Playfulness and Detachment.....	38
Personal and Spiritual Development of the Therapist: Accessing the Spiritual .....	39
Basic Goodness.....	41
Buddhist Cosmology, Awareness, and the Bodhisattva .....	41
Process Work Theory and Practice as Related to the Bodhisattva .....	45

Comparative Analysis of the Bodhisattva as Therapist .....	48
The Bodhisattva in the World .....	51
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	55
Transpersonal Research .....	55
Hermeneutic Approach to Inquiry .....	58
Statement of the Problem.....	60
Research Method .....	60
Trustworthiness.....	61
The Question of Bias in Research .....	62
Transference.....	64
Passion Inspires Research.....	64
Uncertainty Principle.....	65
Discovery and Subjective Experience .....	66
The Role of Personal Relationships in Research .....	68
Ethics .....	72
Data Generation .....	73
Data Analysis.....	76
Follow-up Interview.....	78
Writing as Analysis.....	79
Poetry and Creative Expression in Research .....	79
Contribution to the Field.....	83
CHAPTER 4: INITIAL FINDINGS.....	85
Preliminary Analysis.....	85
Section 1: Knowledge (Prajna).....	86
Unfolding Initial Experiences: The Path to Finding Bearings.....	87
Mushin Free Mind .....	88
Jewels From Experience.....	90
The Samurai Principle .....	90
Seeing; Transcending Mundane Analysis through Creative Categorization.....	91
Section 2: Compassion (Karuna) .....	93
Detachment, Friendliness, Joy.....	93
Humility and Receiving the Gift .....	94
Need for Deep Encounter with Spirit Seeking the Divine .....	94
The Tantric Path, Reformulated .....	95
God is Where the Joy Is.....	96
Section 3: Wisdom (Jnana) .....	98
Communion .....	98
Enlightened Mind: (Vajralike Samadhi).....	99
CHAPTER 5: THEMATIC OUTCOMES .....	101
The Gold End of the Rainbow .....	101
The Right Question is the Look into the Eyes of the Beloved.....	103
M&m's on the Awareness Path .....	103
Awareness: In time and Out of Time, Now, Then, Before, and Always.....	105

Free Floating Down the River .....	108
Categorization and Experience: Stacks from the Awareness Library .....	110
The Right Question is the Endless Longing to Know.....	111
The Right Question is the Reverence and the Awe .....	112
The Right Answer, Takes No Solid Form; To Speak It Would be to Reduce It .....	115
The Right Answer Admits its Own Ineptitude .....	116
The Right Answer Never Knows the Way .....	119
 CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION.....	 122
Metaphor.....	123
The Right Questions and the Right Answers.....	125
Knowledge.....	126
Compassion .....	127
Wisdom.....	128
Enlightened Mind; Vajra-like Samadhi .....	129
Romance .....	130
Devotion: “The Look into the Eyes of the Beloved” .....	133
Peak Experiences .....	135
Intrigue: “The Endless Longing to Know” .....	135
Humility: “The Reverence and the Awe; Admitting One’s Own Ineptitude” .....	139
We are all Baby Messiahs; the Bodhisattva Principle and Celebration.....	141
The Bodhisattva Principle and Admitting One’s Own Ineptitude.....	142
Mystery: “The Right Answer Takes No Solid Form”–The Gold that Can’t Be Grasped .....	144
The Limitation of Concepts: “To Speak it is to Reduce it” .....	145
Faith: “The Right Answer Never Knows the Way” .....	147
Grace.....	149
Giving and Receiving; in Service of the Larger Spirit .....	150
Conclusion .....	154
Implications for Practitioners .....	155
Methodological Limitations .....	158
Implications for Further Study.....	159
 REFERENCES .....	 162

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a discussion of my research problem, the social relevance of this study, and its personal significance for me. It will include a presentation of the problem, an overview of the chosen methodology, an analysis of the problem in the context of social trends in the field of psychotherapy, and an exploration of its social relevance both in terms of content of the problem and findings, and the uniqueness of the applied methodology. In the discussion of the problem I have presented the three aspects of enlightened mind as defined by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and my reasons for choosing these aspects as a comparative device for the therapist's experience, to provide an initial framework for the text to follow. The chapter will conclude with a chapter outline for the dissertation in its entirety.

### Research Problem

There has been very little research on the subjective experience of a therapist while working with clients, and even less on the spiritual experience of the therapist. My research explores the spiritual experience of a therapist while working with a client, using the delineations of enlightened mind as described in Buddhist cosmology (Trungpa, 1939/1991) to help to distill and further understand this experience. What does it mean for a therapist to have a spiritual experience, and what is the meaning of the sacred in the mundane in practice? Merriam Webster defines sacred as, "devoted exclusively to one service or use." Is this therapist having a devotional experience to a source that cannot be seen from the outside as he works? Does this therapist experience something like the divine that is the guiding force behind the skills, metaskills, and interventions that he

uses? My research explores the spiritual experience of a Process Work therapist while working with a client, using the delineations of enlightened mind as described in Buddhist cosmology (Trungpa, 1939/1991) to help to distill and further understand this experience. I used these delineations to help accentuate the spiritual aspect of this therapist's work, with the focus on the question: How does Buddhist cosmology help us to understand this therapist's spiritual experience?

Buddhism is one of many spiritual disciplines which could be used as a comparative device for studying the experience of a therapist. Further studies might explore a therapist's experience within the context of another spiritual paradigm.

For investigation of this question, I used a single study case analysis of one Process Work therapist. The therapist that I studied is my partner, Dr. Max Schupbach. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to him as Max, to reflect the intimate nature of our relationship. Process Work, an awareness based, psychological approach, is appropriate for the investigation of this question because its methodology and theory incorporates psychology and spirituality. Within a transpersonal framework, well suited for the study of numinous experiences, I applied an exegetical, hermeneutic method for data generation and interpretation.

### *Buddhist Cosmology*

Buddhism delineates three aspects of enlightened mind: knowledge, compassion, and wisdom. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939/1991) offers a unique experiential interpretation of these three aspects of mind, which might be comparable to moments in the work of a Process Work therapist. I chose Buddhism because of its awareness based approach. Process Work is an awareness based, psychological model. A detailed

description of the Process Work approach and the reasons for this comparison will follow. These aspects provide a framework for exploring the spiritual experience of the therapist in the present study, providing possible categories for spiritual experiences that emerge during his work with clients. My intention was to use these categories as a tool to bring forth new information about the therapist's experience. In the following paragraphs, I will provide a brief overview of Trungpa's definitions of these aspects, explaining the features that might correspond with the experience of a Process Work therapist. Process Work, with its awareness-based approach that integrates psychology and spirituality for practical phenomenological application at various levels of experience; psychological, physical, spiritual, and world, provides the appropriate framework for this study.

*Knowledge.* Trungpa suggests that the experience of knowledge is one of effortlessness. An individual of knowledge no longer has to try to understand another person or situation but can read the person or situation with ease, without striving to acquire this knowledge (Trungpa, 1939/1991). A therapist might have a comparable experience when working with a client, if for example the signals of the client appear to him without an effort to latch onto them. Both verbal and non-verbal signals appear clearly on his screen of awareness, ready to be read.

*Compassion.* Trungpa's definition of compassion is unique, as it does not imply charity or doing good deeds. Instead, he describes a detached and relaxed state of mind, out of which a person enjoys a sense of knowing exactly how and when to act, and also an innate sense of curiosity (Trungpa, 1939/1991). Compassion defined as such might be experienced by a therapist as a sense of timing, and an innate knowing about which track to follow.

*Wisdom.* Wisdom is the aspect of enlightened mind in which the individual has a detached intuitive overview of a situation, but also sees things very precisely. The practitioner enjoys a panoramic overview of the situation, and has no need for external reinforcement (Trungpa, 1939/1991).

Although these definitions are intriguing, they lack sensory grounded information about how they might be experienced in daily life. In conducting this study, I hoped that these definitions would provide categories that would help to order and elaborate on aspects of a therapist's spiritual experience in greater depth. I also hoped that a comparative analysis of the therapist's experience in relation to these three concepts would bring greater clarity to both.

#### *Scope of the Issue*

The field of psychotherapy has developed, changed, and expanded since its birth in the era of Sigmund Freud. The idea that the environments that we grow up in affect our mental/emotional states, and that our dreams are meaningful, is now widely accepted, while before his time, there was very little pattern for thinking of ourselves in terms of personal psychology. We now have the ability to think about our problems in terms of our conditioning and upbringing, and the experience of working on these issues with a therapist can be very helpful in dealing with relationship, inner and outer problems.

As society changes and develops, so do psychological and spiritual needs. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, problems with addictions, eating disorders, and depression abound, and traditional psychology is often unsuccessful in working with these issues. Although there is controversy about the effectiveness of twelve step programs, they are clearly helpful for many who struggle with addictions, as they have become popular throughout a variety

of populations since 1939 when the concept was first presented. This positive feedback could be due to the essential aspect of these programs that encourages people to give up personal control of their lives to a higher power. Bringing a spiritual component to therapy, and to the therapist/client relationship, could be an important next step in the development of the field of psychology, addressing needs that might be unknown even to the client.

*Transpersonal psychology.* Transpersonal Psychology is an umbrella term that encompasses many different paradigms. However, all of them share common aspects. The primary distinguishing factor is the belief that the life path takes place upon a spiritual background.

Transpersonal psychotherapy views all psychological processes against the backdrop of spiritual unfolding. The psyche is no longer seen as an endpoint or a final term, rather it opens into a vaster spiritual reality, a spiritual existence that exceeds and contains this process of psychological development (Cortright, 1997, p. 22).

Regardless of the approach that is used, the many Transpersonal Psychological paradigms share a common belief in something unknown and mysterious in the background of our lives that transcends personal history, and brings meaning to everyday problems, viewing them within the context of a larger framework. The possibility exists to transcend the limits of individual identity and to find a connection with a unifying consciousness that goes beyond the confines of separation in time and space. A variety of different Transpersonal schools are geared towards helping people to access this realm, drawing on

methods and theoretical paradigms from a variety of different spiritual traditions, such as Hinduism, Shamanism, Buddhism, Kabbalism, and Christian Mysticism, to name a few.

*Process work.* Process work is a psychological paradigm that studies the manner in which an individual uses her or his consciousness. It does not differentiate between the spiritual and the material, as both are concepts created by the mind and therefore not outside the scope of what is known. Less known and therefore more significant in Process Work theory is awareness about what is in the center and what is on the margin of an individual's awareness at a given moment. With its primary focus on awareness, Process Work can be distinguished from many other psychotherapeutic models which focus above all on objective measures of behavioral change. In this sense, Process Work can also be considered a spiritual paradigm. Its phenomenological approach aims towards bringing awareness to experiences that are unknown and sometimes disturbing. Process Work suggests that this process can itself bring meaning. Often the struggle to avoid problems can be disheartening, as it can foster a feeling that life and its suffering is not something to be enjoyed, but rather to be wrestled with and overcome. Many psychological paradigms are based on treating problems in order to do away with them. Therapeutic success is measured through the absence of symptoms. While this is of course a valid and necessary approach in many cases, it does not include the possibility that disturbances themselves might hold information that is meaningful and useful in the creation of a diverse and inspiring life. From a Process Work perspective, exploring the problem more deeply with an attitude of curiosity can be an enriching experience that might potentially question the question of meaning itself - creating something that could be called "meta-meaning" - while at the same time possibly answering it. For example a

person who is depressed might suffer from a feeling that life is meaningless. If his or her experience of depression is unfolded, the depressed person might discover a physical experience of power, which was previously split off from his or her identity, and experienced as a pressure pushing him/her down. If he is able to access this power, becoming the pressure maker himself, and discover how it can help in his life, the experience of power might itself be enriching enough that the notion of meaning and meaninglessness becomes irrelevant.

A Process Work point of view might attribute suffering to an attitude about life and one's personal experiences that is not working, and awareness might be all that is needed. A similar attitude can be found in the *Abhidharma*, the *psychology and philosophy of Buddhism*, which is based upon the idea that suffering is the result of our own ignorance about the true nature of our minds and existence. It suggests that release from suffering can be achieved through waking up to the patterns of our conditioned thought forms, and realizing the illusory nature of everything. Buddhist psychology is less interested in the personal roots of problems and disturbing emotions, and more interested in getting to know the nature of our own consciousness, defined as the relationship between subject and object, by learning to work with our emotions and thought forms. The Buddhist path of waking up to the nature of consciousness directly addresses the collective psychology of human beings.

According to Buddhist Psychology (Scotton, 1996), there are three ways in which the subject can relate to the object: desire for the object, aversion towards the object, or indifference towards the object. Consciousness that is not influenced by aversion or desire is considered free, and is called directed consciousness, while consciousness that is

bound to worldly desires and aversions is called undirected. Ultimately, the Buddhist path aims towards release from the hold of worldly manifestations be they thought forms, emotions, or things. The practitioner finally discovers a transcendent place of oneness with all beings and the universe. Ego development and individuation are only stages along the path, but not the end. All individuals have the potential to access this awakened mind, “bodhi”, but cannot realize it for one of three reasons: greed, hatred, or ignorance. Buddhist meditation and other psycho-spiritual practices work with these three aspects of the mind (Scotton).

The stated goals of Western psychotherapy and Buddhist psychology differ from each other. Western psychotherapy aims to strengthen the ego. Buddhist psychology aims to transcend it. However, the two are complementary or similar in various ways. For example, just as Buddhists consider the ego to be a mirage born of deluded perceptual thought forms, creating an illusionary distinction between people and the larger universe, Freud believed that the ego was a tiny part of the infinite sea of the unconscious. In addition, Freud’s therapeutic awareness tool of free-floating attention is comparable to the state of mind that can be reached through meditation techniques (Epstein, 1996).

The Process Work therapist also uses awareness in his work with the client. He attempts to step outside of himself far enough that he can observe his experiences, as well as those of the client. In this sense, the therapeutic practice of Process Work can be considered a type of meditation, which brings a detached awareness to thought patterns, experiences, and other occurrences. The therapist’s goal is to notice, and to notice what he notices. He uses a range of perceptual and attitudinal skills to follow what he notices, and to help it to unfold, bringing awareness to the depth of the experience at hand. In

chapter two I will explore the connections between Buddhism and Process Work in further depth.

### *Client/Therapist Relationship*

Studies have compared the effectiveness of different psychotherapeutic schools, and have shown that the relationship between the therapist and the client is one of the most important factors in therapeutic success (Bozarth, 1998). Humanistic psychology focuses primarily on the therapeutic relationship, specifically elucidating the importance of compassion and positive regard for the client on the part of the therapist (Cain, 2002). Transpersonal psychology has added a spiritual dimension to this equation (Scotton, 1996). It suggests that the spiritual development of the therapist is important for working effectively with the client. It also recommends that the therapeutic process be considered a spiritual path for both the client and the therapist. However, across the field of professional psychology as a whole, there is discrepancy and uncertainty about what a good therapeutic relationship actually entails, and what the therapist must do to create one. The literature suggests that more research is needed in this area.

In traditional Freudian analysis, a personal relationship between the client and therapist is contra-indicated. The therapist is viewed as a blank slate upon which the client projects personal material, thoughts, feelings, and reactions. The personal feelings of the therapist are thought to interfere with the client's development through the process of transference. Neo-Freudians have different ideas about this, suggesting that there are some cases in which the therapist's reactions are needed by the client, and should be expressed. Similarly, Process Work suggests that the therapist's personal reactions and experiences may serve the developmental process of the client, and may be brought into

the therapeutic encounter if this is the case (Goodbread, 1997). This requires a developed awareness and therapeutic skills for deciphering whether or not the therapist's reactions will be beneficial for the overall process of the client, as well as detachment combined with the ability to be personal and to express personal reactions in a way that is useful for the client.

### *Significance for the Field*

The very fact that the therapist's experience has been so rarely studied might be reflective of a commonly accepted attitude in therapy that the therapist is beyond having problems and a personal human experience of his own. It is possible that this attitude is not further examined in part because it is considered inherent to the discipline, like flour is to cake, or notes to music. Although the notion of selflessness and the giving of one's focus to the process of another is one of the fundamental necessities of working with another person, it carries within it the potential of de-humanizing the therapist while at the same time pathologizing the client. This attitude could suggest that the client has the problems and the therapist is the savior, the healer, the helper, the scientist, or the doctor, and not another person with ordinary feelings and reactions. This attitude might encourage a belief system that victimizes clients and problems, and forces therapists into savior roles that disavow the rest of their human experience. The very setup of the client-therapist relationship could potentially be disempowering to the client, the therapist, and their relationship to the divine. Increased focus on the work of the therapist could help to diminish the notion of pathology in therapy, which in some cases might inhibit the impulse towards personal growth and development, possibly revolutionizing the practice of therapy. In addition, it might help to diminish the syndrome of burnout that affects so

many practitioners in the helping field, by virtue of the fact that the helper is no longer asked to put aside his/her own experiences.

*Social Relevancy of this Study*

The unique nature of this study, a single case study analysis of an intimate partner, also has important implications for the field of research methodology, and for society as a whole. Traveling together, preparing, debriefing, and sharing the seminar experience provided an exceptional position for me to research Max's work. Our emotional closeness and degree of proximity created a natural situation for me to interview him after his work. Because of the nature of our relationship, he was able to talk freely with me; the intimate atmosphere of our relationship was conducive for discovering his experience. The relationship allowed for research and discovery that would be otherwise inaccessible to other researchers. As I will demonstrate in the methodology chapter, this advantage has been pointed out by other researchers in the field of social science, who worked with close friends and relatives. Most importantly, my relationship with Max and my interest in particular aspects of his work inspired the formulation of this research question, and delineated the aspects of my own therapeutic work that are most fascinating for me.

Social scientific culture decides upon the structure of inquiry, limiting its possible results, and demonstrates how traditional academic culture itself is an aspect of the existing social culture and dominant discourse (Jones, 2000). Because this culture does not focus on margin and center, it has a tendency to replicate its own world views. This showed me that my initial insecurity regarding the formulation of an appropriate research design and questions was not only due to a lack of understanding on my part, but also

reflected an aspect of the marginality in psychotherapy of some of the issues that I was working on, which are very much connected to methodology and interpretation.

*Love, Spirituality, Research, and the Practice of Therapy*

With this research project, I question the notion that “love is blind.” I believe that love allows a person to see, feel, and experience things that others can not. My research is also a study of this phenomenon, and I hope that it will contribute to new developments in human sciences research, that consider love and human relationship as crucial aspects in research.

This introductory chapter has presented the governing paradigms in the field of Transpersonal Psychology, addressing the interface between psychology and spirituality. It has outlined the details of this particular study, the methodology that I have chosen, and the reasons for this decision. Chapter Two will present a review of the literature, including Maslow’s description of a peak experience, and how peak experiences can manifest in ordinary life situations. The review will address the similarities and differences between a spiritual teacher and a therapist, using the spiritual figure of the bodhisattva, from the Buddhist tradition, as the primary representation of a spiritual teacher. It will also address the ethics of combining the roles of spiritual teacher and therapist. I will show the sameness and differences between the various approaches, and the possibility of more interface between the two. The third chapter will outline in detail the methodology that I have chosen for this study, placing the methodology in a lineage in terms of research methodology, science, philosophy, and psychology. In the fourth chapter, I will present the findings from the initial analysis, and the resulting follow up questions. The fifth chapter will present the final findings from this study. The sixth and

final chapter will provide a discussion of the findings, including implications for practitioners, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further studies.

#### Definition of Terms

*Absolute peak experience.* A term first coined by Maslow to define an ecstatic experience in which an individual becomes one with the universe, or something divine, and temporarily loses the concept of a separate identity.

*Bodhisattva.* In the Buddhist tradition, an individual who has taken a vow not to leave the planet for enlightenment until all sentient (living) beings have become enlightened.

*Buddha nature.* In Buddhist cosmology, this is the essence of every sentient being that remains stable and unchanging in the midst of impermanence.

*Channel.* Pathways through which we send and receive information. The channels most commonly referred to in Process Work are: visual, auditory, movement, proprioceptive, relationship, and world.

*Consensus reality.* Within a culture or group, the reality that is agreed on by the majority as being valid and true.

*Double signal.* a term from Process Work to define a signal that appears in any channel which does not go along with the content of one's primary intentions.

*Dreaming.* A term used in Process Work to define any experience that is out of a person's conscious control.

*Edge.* The boundary between the primary and secondary processes.

*Enlightenment.* In Buddhism, a term that describe the momentary experience of awakening to the true nature of oneself and the universe, in which a person is no longer blinded by the illusion of this world, and realizes impermanence.

*Exegetical approach.* An interpretive, comparative approach for analyzing data.

*Feedback oriented interventions.* An essential aspect of Process Work therapy which bases interventions on verbal and non-verbal communications from the client and modifies them accordingly.

*Guru.* An Indian term for beloved master or spiritual teacher.

*Hermeneutic research.* A cousin of phenomenology, it aims to uncover the meaning of an experience using an interpretive approach which makes use of personal bias in attempts to understand the meaning of the subjective experience of another, rather than striving to eliminate it.

*Impermanence.* In Buddhist cosmology, this is the notion that everything is transient, and in a constant state of flux; there is no experience or entity that is solid and unchanging.

*Primary process.* A Process Work term to describe the more known aspects of oneself, those with which a person would most likely identify.

*Shaktipat.* In Hinduism, a momentary experience of enlightenment instilled by the Guru into the disciple through touch.

*Relative peak experience.* A term coined by Maslow to describe an experience that is distinguished from an absolute peak experience by virtue of the fact that the person remains aware of her or his own separate identity, but has a meaningful and deep personal experience.

*Role.* A term used in Process Work, originating from Sociological theory, that refers to impersonal behavior patterns that emerge in groups and manifest temporarily through individuals, but belong to us all. The psychology of an individual can also be broken down into roles.

*Secondary process.* A Process Oriented term to describe the less known aspects of the personality, those that are further from a person's primary identity

*Sentient.* A term used in Process Work to describe a realm of experience that is beyond polarity and cannot be clearly defined.

*Sentient essence.* In Process Work, this term refers to the seed of an experience or thing, before it became manifest in the realm of polarities.

*Spiritual in the mundane.* The transcendent aspect of ordinary problems. Within every day reality, and the manifestation of every day problems in the physical world, exists the potential for access to the unknown, which some might call God or the Divine. The divine is not outside of the ordinary manifestation of everyday reality.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

In this chapter, I establish the historical and present context of this study of the therapist's spiritual experience, and the complexity of this endeavor. Because the study ventures into the realm of numinous experiences, considered indescribable by many spiritual traditions, I first discuss the problem of using words to describe an un-namable realm. I then bring forth the notion of a spiritual experience in the language of psychology, introducing the concept of "peak experiences", and how peak experiences might appear in the experiences of spiritual practitioners and therapists. Next, I discuss recent studies that have addressed the general topic of the therapist's experience. Because the study suggests a possible crossover between the spiritual teacher and the therapist, the review includes a discussion of the similarities and differences between them, and the social, psychological, and spiritual implications of combining them. I then expand further on process work concepts as compared to theories from other psychological models, specifically in relation to the therapist's feeling attitudes. Finally, I explore the bodhisattva concept, highlighting possible correlations between the bodhisattva ideal and attitudes that can be applied in the practice of therapy. In this review, I strive to establish a meaningful framework for the culmination of the various fields that are involved in this study, and to position my research within the context of each of these fields.

### The Realm Beyond Words

For the purposes of this research, I define the spiritual realm as the immaterial realm, which is formless, but whose essence can be sensed and experienced. It is outside

the realm of worldly concerns, which exist in time and space. According to Buddhist philosophy, the experience of enlightenment is beyond words and can be pointed to but never definitively described. This is due to the nature of the Buddha mind, which is non-definitive, impermanent, and ungraspable. Alan Watts explains this problem in his book, What is Tao? He says that our difficulty in getting along with life is due to our attempt and need to put the Universe into words. He says that both Taoism and Buddhism recognize that experience is different from words. “If you have tasted a certain taste, even the taste of water, you know what it is. But to someone who has not tasted it, it can never be explained in words, because it goes far beyond words” (Watts, 2000, p. 59). We are challenged by experience to expand our vocabulary beyond the limitation of words.

With the knowledge of this dilemma, I will try to describe an indescribable experience that transcends human frameworks. One difficulty is that using phrases such as “state of mind” or “way of being” does not quite work. The nature of this unnamable something, described by the Taoists as the Tao that can’t be said, or by the Mahayana Buddhists as emptiness and impermanence, is that it cannot be grasped. It disappears in thin air at the very attempt to grasp it, though it is always there and is also implicit in the grasping. This is also an experience, for lack of a better word, that is beyond bliss, and beyond the desire for bliss. Similar to the peak experience described first by Maslow, it is a place of oneness with everything, but in this place there is no such thing as separation, therefore no concept of togetherness. It is everywhere and nowhere, it is non-local and non-residential. It is pure awareness, yet there is no self to be conscious of the awareness, or even to be aware. It manifests through us effort free.

Can anyone actually be in a state like this? The answer of a Mahayana Buddhist might be that we all are, but we do not know it. This is the very simple incredibly complicated truth of the matter (although the concept of truth is also an illusion, created by the mind of attachment). The confusion is that we tend to think that if we fulfill our desires or create seemingly solid and safe situations for ourselves, if we achieve in the world or become significant people, we will be released from our suffering. This is the hell of the ignorance of the human condition. We get stuck thinking we have to get somewhere, and the somewhere that we think we have to get is not the place we are truly longing for. My research will explore a therapist's experience of this dilemma as he works. How does he notice and deal with the attachments of human desires as they come up? What is his experience of awareness in action?

#### Intersections between Spirituality and Therapy: an Overview

These questions about the world of the therapist, including his experience of awareness and his relationship to human desires, imply the possibility that the therapist could also be considered a spiritual seeker and teacher. Because the notion of the therapist as a spiritual practitioner and teacher is a relatively new one, and most of the literature regarding this topic explains the philosophical dilemma without actually delineating the terms that would qualify a person to be considered both, I have explored this notion from the points of view of Buddhism and various psychotherapeutic schools, highlighting the crossovers between the disciplines as they manifest through the role of the teacher. In addition, I present the current debate about spiritual practice in therapy, to contextualize my research within the present climate of the field.

This review also describes philosophies about the importance of the therapist's attitude for the healing of the client from the point of view of Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology, and from the Buddhist tradition. It describes the bodhisattva, the Buddhist figure who has taken a vow not to leave this world for enlightenment until all sentient beings have become enlightened, but instead to take responsibility for facilitating the awakening of others. The bodhisattva attempts to live Buddhist principles within the material world, and to apply them in relationship to those around him. In this sense, the bodhisattva is the appropriate figure for comparison to the therapist, who is also working towards the benefit of others through interaction in direct relationship. I explain how the bodhisattva principle can be understood in terms of Process Work theory, the psychological approach that is applied by the therapist in this study, and how an awakening experience might be defined in Process Work terms. With this comparison I attempt to highlight a possible crossover between attitudes that can be applied in therapy, and attitudes exemplified by the bodhisattva, providing a further framework for this study, which is using Buddhist cosmology to understand the spiritual experience of a therapist.

### The Spiritual Experience of the Therapist

My research explores the spiritual experience of a therapist while working with a client, using the delineations of enlightened mind as described in Buddhist cosmology (Trungpa, 1939/1991) to help to distill and further understand this experience. In the field of psychology, "peak experience" is a term, first coined by Maslow, which is commonly used to describe experiences that are out of our ordinary realm of experience. It is a term from the field of psychology that describes a "spiritual" experience. Because my interest

is in how spiritual experiences manifest during the therapeutic session, this is an appropriate area of investigation. An overview of different thoughts and ideas about these experiences and their worth within both the therapeutic and spiritual framework is needed. I will describe the equivalent of mystical or peak experiences from the viewpoint of both Buddhism and Process Work, and methodologies specific to each for accessing them.

Although this study does not focus on the peak experience of the client/student, many researchers agree that the therapist's access to the spiritual realm affects his work with his clients (Cortright, 1997). The description of the spiritual experience of the practitioner implies potential effects of the therapist's or spiritual teacher's personal development upon the student/client. Each of the above paradigms defines an equivalent of a peak experience that can be catalyzed by the interventions and style of the practitioner. An in depth description of both the equivalencies of the peak experience as well as the interventions, attitudes, and styles that might inspire them will follow in this review.

The term "*peak experience*" as defined by Maslow, refers to spontaneous, ecstatic, non-religious but often divine experiences in which a person can feel momentarily united with all things. Maslow (1964) distinguishes two types of peak experiences, absolute and relative. Absolute peak experiences are those in which a person transcends the notion of personal identity, existing within time and space, and becomes one with everything. More common are relative peak experiences, in which the person becomes deeply inspired about life but maintains a sense of personal identity and

boundaries. According to Maslow, everyone has the capacity for peak experiences, though they are more likely to occur in healthy, mature individuals.

Maslow (1964) highlights the religious aspects of peak experiences, which bring a new perspective about one's personal psychology and individual path through life:

To have a clear perception (rather than a purely abstract and verbal philosophical acceptance) that the universe is all of a piece and that one has his place in it – one is a part of it, one belongs in it – can be so profound and shaking an experience that it can change the person's character and his *Weltanschauung* forever after.

(p. 59)

Peak experiences can bring a sense of detachment about ordinary human concerns, as well as a sense of egolessness and a corresponding connection with all things. They can momentarily heighten concentration, in an atmosphere of time and spacelessness. The individual is no longer confined by human problems. This experience often provides the individual with a sense of meaning about life and an inspiration for going on; it can give the individual the feeling that life is worth living purely for the sake of certain experiences, which are a means and an end in and of themselves.

As a matter of fact, so many people find this so great and high an experience that it justifies not only itself but even living itself. Peak experiences can make life worthwhile by their occasional occurrence. They give meaning to life itself. They prove it to be worthwhile. (Maslow, 1964, p. 62)

These experiences have a profound effect upon the psychology of the individual for a number of reasons. First, they relativize the pressure of the need to succeed in consensus reality for the purpose of satisfying the personal ego's obsession with

validation from within the measurable world of form, showing that experiences can be worthwhile regardless of their worth in the material world. At the same time, they bring direct experience of one's own uniqueness and inspiration for going on. In Process Work terms, it can be said that the individual becomes more connected to his or her own life myth. Life myth is a term first coined by Jung, which refers to the larger purpose or meaning of one's own individual life, which stems from his or her deepest, unique self, and is reflected in his or her childhood dream. This connection with the life myth brings a sense of meaning to both one's problems and one's accomplishments. The self-concept is no longer based upon measures of success and failure; life has a larger purpose, and is now inspired by a sense of his divine potential rather than ego-driven goals.

Spiritual experiences with such profound effects must also influence the therapist's work in regard to his attitude about his work and about the people that he works with. This review is based on the assumption that teachers have trained in the paradigm in which they are practicing, and their skills and methods reflect the philosophies and goals of their approach. Based on this premise, studying the approach will bring insights into the methods by which its practitioners access the spiritual realm, and vice versa.

A researcher who has devoted much attention to this realm is Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). His concept of the "autotelic experience" can be understood as a peak experience. He frames it as an activity that is so enjoyable in itself, regardless of the initial inspiration for the endeavor, that one would continue to enact it for the mere sake of having the experience as the only reward. According to his view, everyone can learn to have optimal experiences, which are related to the ability for self-consciousness,

and the potential to embrace the experience of flow, a sense of effortless, timeless, total immersion into an activity in which the identity is lost, and experience takes over.

### Previous Studies of the Therapist's Experience

The notion of studying the therapist's experience is a relatively new one. Few researchers have conducted in depth studies of the therapist's actual experience while working with a client, and even less on the therapist's spiritual experience. In the following section, I will discuss scholarly works that have laid the foundation for the quest into this realm.

Dr. Fraelich, former graduate of the Union Institute, wrote a compelling dissertation on the therapist's experience of "presence" while working with a client. This was a phenomenological study in which he interviewed six therapists on their experience of presence, defined in his study as the therapist's ability to be fully with the client in the present moment. In his findings he defines fourteen psychological categories to delineate a therapist's experience of presence, which are grouped into four basic categories: presence as spontaneous occurrence, immersion in the moment, openness of being, and living on the cutting edge (Fraelich, 1988). These basic categories contain a spiritual flavor, reminiscent of the well known concept of being in the moment that originated in East Asian religions. However, the study does not explore how the therapist arrives at such spiritual experiences.

The therapists in Fraelich's (1988) were asked to reflect on their own experience of "presence." This generated rich information about the experience of presence, but did not venture deeply into the particular experience of the therapist while working with specific clients, at a specific time and place. Fraelich's study supports the notion that

certain psychological, philosophical, and spiritual attitudes are important in therapy, opening the way for subsequent researchers to explore ways in which the therapist may arrive at such experiences.

In another study, Dr. Amy Mindell (1991) conducted a single case study of the work of her husband, Dr. Arnold Mindell, the founder of Process Work. In this study, Amy Mindell studied the underlying spiritual attitudes behind Arnold Mindell's work. She identified various spiritual attitudes, or "metaskills", that were reflected in Mindell's work with clients. She classified metaskills, or feeling attitudes in therapy, in three ways: metaskills of focus, metaskills of feeling, and metaskills of time. The present study elaborates on Amy Mindell's (1991) research by focusing on a therapist's personal experience of spirituality while working with clients. It delves more deeply into the feeling states and spiritual attitudes behind a therapist's work.

R.A. Heckler (1981) conducted a phenomenological study of the therapist's experience of healing, Reaching for the Sun, in which he interviewed four transpersonal therapist's about their experience during moment's of a client's healing. His results showed three main categories of experience: (a) healing for the client is also healing for the therapist, (b) transcending the ordinary limits of ego identity and perception are healing for all involved, and (c) therapist's reconnection with a higher functioning of awareness and a greater range of possibility in "letting go" to the unexpected (Heckler, 1981). Although he does not use this specific term, these findings reflect aspects of the "peak experience" described above. This study invites further exploration of the therapist's spiritual experience while working with clients, regardless of whether or not a healing experience for the client is taking place.

### Ethics of Combining the Roles of Spiritual Teacher and Therapist

The problem of defining the difference between therapist and Guru<sup>1</sup> reflects a problem in the discipline of psychotherapy, and in Western society as a whole. The term “spiritual” often implies religious beliefs, or practices that are purposefully geared towards accessing something called God. These ideologies are split off from daily life and human problems. There is a commonly accepted attitude that spiritual aspects of life can be separated from ordinary life. This problem calls to question, what is spirituality, what is psychotherapy, what is a guru, what is a teacher, and what is a therapist? Is it possible to practice as a therapist, a lawyer, a baker, or for that matter, to butter toast, without expressing spiritual beliefs? The notion that God and spirituality can be separated from ordinary life inspires further questions: who is it that lives and expresses spiritual values and beliefs, and where is that process played out, if not in the daily aspects of work and life here on this Earth?

Cortright (1997) addresses this issue in “Psychotherapy and Spirit.” He differentiates the transpersonal approach, with its spiritual context, from the Freudian approach, which purposefully keeps religion out of therapy, but also suggests that both orientations reflect an underlying belief system about religion. It is not possible not to have any opinion about these issues, and he brings to question the extent to which the therapist’s belief system is conveyed in the process, regardless of whether or not the beliefs are made explicit. He then presents a number of ethical questions related to this issue. Is it the therapist’s responsibility to make his views explicit? To what extent do the

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<sup>1</sup> A Hindu term for spiritual teacher or guide on the path to finding God

therapist's beliefs come through in his work? If he is seen as a spiritual teacher, how should he deal with issues of transference and counter transference?

These questions lead to further, more general questions, about when it is appropriate to work at the spiritual level, and when not, and who is qualified to give spiritual teaching. Ethical issues around therapeutic abuse and dual relationships are brought forth. These are important questions that I will address in further depth in this dissertation, specifically around issues of: (a) the rank of the therapist in relation to the client, due to the power differential resulting from the hierarchy in the configuration of the two roles; (b) transference; and (c) counter-transference. In answering these questions, it is necessary to investigate first the differences between a spiritual teacher and a therapist. This is a rather subjective question, which has been addressed by many psychological and spiritual scholars: there are as many different viewpoints on this issue as there are therapists.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I have focused specifically on the difference between a spiritual teacher and a therapist from a Buddhist point of view. Future research might address other spiritual systems, particularly the Kabbalistic teacher and the Rabbi. Berzine (2000), a Buddhist scholar, highlights some basic similarities and differences between the role and expectation of a Buddhist teacher versus those of a therapist. He suggests that both center upon an acknowledgement of human suffering, and a hope to lessen it. Both recognize the importance of understanding the causes of our problems and methods to work with these causes, and both emphasize the importance of a good relationship between the therapist and client, or mentor and disciple.

Berzine (2000) also suggests that there are some fundamental differences between the two. For example, the client expects that the therapist will listen to his problems and focus on them, while the disciple listens to the mentor who speaks wisely of general problems. It is the responsibility of the disciple to apply these truths to his or her specific individual problems. Most importantly, Berzine suggests that disciples emulate their mentors, seeing them as embodiments of who they would like to become. They acknowledge and respect the admirable qualities of the mentor. The client, though he might hope to reach a similar degree of emotional stability as his therapist, need not see and admire the therapist for other aspects of his personality or his particular way of being in the world. The role of the therapist is to focus on the therapeutic needs of the client.

This differentiation is based on the assumption that if one works at the spiritual level there are specific spiritual tools that are used, and raises the question of whether or not the necessary steps towards finding God are the same as those needed for bettering our everyday lives in terms of relationships, work life, etc. The separation of the destinations and the steps along the way implies that there are different selves going different places. This dilemma might reflect the influence of a Judeo-Christian Worldview that tends to separate the spiritual from the mundane, but also a general human tendency to do so.

If a therapist were to see his clients as fellow seekers on the path, and as children of God, as many therapists most likely do, then should he be considered a spiritual teacher, a Guru, or a therapist? Does it matter if the therapist is working on a mundane problem or a spiritual one, and is this therapist qualified to work on both? From a viewpoint that is not concerned with cultural definitions or norms, these questions are

irrelevant. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that there is no license that qualifies an individual to be a spiritual teacher. In his words, “You are a Lama because you have students” (Dalai Lama, retrieved April 10<sup>th</sup> 2003 from <http://www.mandala.hr/5/6-worlds.html>). In this statement, he might be suggesting that it is the development of the teacher that qualifies him as such, and nothing else. He is focusing on a realm that goes beyond human rules.

However, the power that is instilled in a teacher also requires a heightened state of awareness and morality, and relies on the teacher’s integrity and abilities. These abilities are not static; they are contextual. We need rules and ethics to safeguard against this natural fluctuation. However, rules and ethics cannot replace the feeling a therapist has for the well being of the client.

#### Crossovers between Psychotherapeutic and Spiritual Techniques

Freud was the first to say that the psyche was not an incomprehensible entity to be worked with through witchcraft or such irrational practices, but something that could be analyzed, studied, and understood scientifically. In this sense, therapy was a step beyond spirituality or religion. However, as Epstein (1996) writes in his article, “Freud’s influence on Transpersonal Psychology” from *Textbook of Transpersonal Psychology*, his notion of evenly suspended attention is similar to the meditative state of awareness described by many Eastern Spiritual traditions, such as “mu-shin”, the Japanese term for free mind or empty mind. He encouraged practitioners to suspend judgment, giving the mind in undifferentiated attention, while listening without trying to keep anything in the mind. This was a big shift in terms of the moral teachings of Judeo-Christian religion around the turn of the century, when value judgments about thoughts and behaviors

played a central role. Freud believed that this type of attention was the most important therapeutic tool, as it allowed for a kind of psychic communication between the therapist and the client. The benefits of this type of attention that Freud emphasized, however, applied only to the therapist. He did not speak of the effects of this type of attention on the client, which has since been found to be beneficial for its un-intrusive yet present quality, which does not pressure the client with expectations or desires that the client must respond to, either with compliance or rebellion (Epstein).

If a therapist applies evenly suspended attention in his work, he is using a tool known in Freudian terms as a psychological technique. However, the same type of undifferentiated attention is a meditative state (Epstein, 1996), aspired to by Zen practitioners in their meditation. A Zen Roshi has mastered the ability to keep this state of mind. Depending on the viewpoint, this state of awareness could be categorized as a spiritual technique, or a psychological one.

#### *Role of the Therapist's Reactions in Process Work*

Process Work has some theoretical similarities and some differences from the Freudian model. Unlike the classical Freudian model, which states that the therapist's reactions should be kept out of the therapeutic interaction, Process Work theory suggests that the feelings and reactions of the therapist may also belong to the client, and can be useful in facilitating the client's process. However, to make these reactions useful for the client, the therapist should ideally have the same kind of suspended attention, or awareness that brings a detached overview of the process, and allows him to see how his own reactions belong to the structure of the Process (Goodbread, 1997).

The Process Work concept of “dreaming up” is significant in the therapeutic relationship. Dreaming up is a phenomenon that happens within every relationship, but I will focus on it here as it occurs in therapy. When two people come together, they enter a shared dreaming field. Unintentional communications from one person can create feelings and reactions in the other person that might seem unrelated to the explicit content of their relationship, but actually result from the unconscious interacting of their personal psychologies. Their feelings and reactions begin to intermix.

Dreaming up occurs when my dreams unwittingly provoke your feelings- without you or me realizing that your feelings are related to my dreams. In other words, your feelings are not created by your personal psychology alone, but are temporarily provoked or dreamed up by things that I do unconsciously and that you can see in my dreams. (Mindell, 2000, p.147)

From this perspective, it can be said that the field is dreaming up both the therapist and the client to meet and interact with one another. It cannot truly be deciphered who is creating the signals, as there is a larger field in the background that is organizing the whole process. What happens between them is personal, and also not. If the therapist recognizes the experience of being dreamed up, he can use it consciously by understanding how his experience is not only personal, but also belongs to the process of the client and to the field between them. He can use his experience to get to know better the wisdom of the field that is dreaming them, and how this information can be useful for his client. For example, if he becomes aware of the experience of feeling irritated, he can try to discover how his experience of irritation belongs also to the client. Maybe the client has a constant sense of feeling irritated with himself that he is not able to accomplish his

goals, but he is more identified with being depressed. In this case, it would be useful for him to get to know better the figure that is irritated. Maybe in the background is a very powerful and creative thinker with a lot of potential who is being held back by the primary process, and the client is unconsciously irritated at himself for not integrating this part. If the therapist can recognize this figure that first emerged through an experience of irritation, and help it to unfold, he is supporting its incarnation.

The concept of dreaming up brings a new slant to the Freudian notions of transference and counter-transference. In traditional Freudian theory, the therapist was meant to stay out of the scene altogether, so that the patient could have a blank screen to project upon. A personal relationship between the therapist and patient was considered a hindrance in therapy, and something to be avoided. Any feelings that the client had toward the therapist were considered part of his psychology. The therapist was never meant to enter into the relationship channel with the client, but was to remain completely objective. Process Work theory, like modern psychoanalysis and self psychology, transcends the notion of objectivity with the inclusion of the possibility that the feelings in the relationship between the therapist and the client are potentially meaningful in the therapeutic encounter, and could be important for the client's development. The objective mind, the awareness that brings a detached overview to the process, can be applied to notice and discern the benefit of including feelings in the relationship between the therapist and client, depending on the situation.

#### Therapist and Spiritual Teacher as Roles

According to the Process Work paradigm, roles in the field are constantly shifting. If in a moment, or a particular period of time in the process, the therapist is identified as a

spiritual teacher, he/she can play that role, all the while remembering that he/she is just a role, and the disciple is just a role, believing that we are all part of a field trying to get to know itself. Process Work theory might suggest that the role of the spiritual teacher is in the field, and the job of the therapist is to help the client to get to know this role better, and to find out how this role is present in their relationship. To identify with one role as if it were ones self, and ones own, no matter what that role might be, would be to lose awareness of the larger picture. This is one of the dangers that Cortright (1997) refers to, which applies to an even larger extent to transpersonal practitioners. If the client regards the practitioner as a spiritual teacher, the therapist is likely to identify with this role, without seeing it in context of the client's process. The therapist's conscious relationship to his own inner spiritual teacher is crucial for avoiding this pitfall. Not only will the therapist's dreamed up inflation tempt him to abuse his power, it will also inhibit his ability to support the client to develop this side himself, which could be equally as damaging.

Cortright (1997) also questions whether or not a client will be free to project upon the therapist if he also considers the therapist to be a spiritual teacher. In this case, will the client still feel free to have negative feelings and reactions towards the therapist? This is an important question, which also asks that we define more clearly what people are looking for when they come to therapy. However, it also assumes that negative projection is a necessary aspect of therapy, without considering that it might be momentarily important for the client's process to have only a strong positive projection onto the therapist. Process Work theory might suggest that it is the job of the therapist to study the client's signals. If there were negative feelings towards the therapist, the therapist should

eventually notice and pick up on these signals, helping the client to bring them out. However, in my view, it takes a high degree of awareness and personal development to catch and recognize such a process, and courage to support the client to bring these feelings forward. Spiritual power is at least as compelling as consensus reality power, if not more, and the temptation to identify with that power is great.

### *Levels of Experience*

In this discussion about spirituality and therapy, it is important to define the levels at which the therapist or spiritual teacher is working. One might assume that the spiritual teacher is working on the spiritual level, and the therapist on a worldly level. However, this differentiation depends upon the cosmology of the particular paradigm. Some paradigms, such as Christianity, separate the spiritual from the mundane, while others, such as Buddhism and many other eastern spiritual traditions, consider them interconnected.

Process Work cosmology distinguishes between three levels of experience that occur simultaneously and are mutually dependent; consensus reality, dreamland, and the sentient realm. Although they are all present at all times, different levels are in the foreground of our awareness at different moments; this process is also in a constant state of flux. Consensus reality is a term that refers to the perceptual reality that is agreed upon by the dominant group within a given context. Most of us agree to call a tree a tree. There is a solid thing called a tree that can be seen and touched, and it exists in the world of form. Anyone who believes otherwise is considered strange or somehow disturbed. Dreamland is the next level, which is further from awareness and subjective; however, it still remains within the realm of sense experience and polarities, and can be described in

words. The sentient realm is the realm of essences that is similar to the realm described in the previous section, which can be felt, sensed, and experienced, but not formulated in words. It is beyond the realm of polarities, and is pre-signal, meaning at this level, there are no overt manifestations in form. The sentient realm holds the information that is expressed through signals both in the dream level, and in consensus reality.

A Process Work practitioner works on each of these different levels, depending upon which is in the foreground in a given moment. A problem in consensus reality can lead the process into a deep sentient experience, and into dreaming, and vice versa. The level that is most apparent at a given moment is constantly shifting. A problem, whether it is a relationship problem, a problem with work in the world, or a problem with finding spirituality or meaning in one's life, is formulated at the consensus reality level; the content of the problem is irrelevant for distinguishing the realm. This basic cosmology links back to Maslow's original belief, that the spiritual and the mundane are interconnected, and that one should not apply specific techniques in therapy for accessing the spiritual realm; these should arise organically out of work with ordinary problems.

#### Spirituality in Therapy: Compassion, Care, and Feeling Attitudes

People come to therapy for a variety of different reasons, but it is usually a problem that first gets them in the door. The problem is the vehicle through which the unknown search begins. Buddhist philosophy suggests that perception is limited by the bounds of our language and known thought forms. From this viewpoint, we cannot know what we are looking for if we have no concept of it, and no prior experience of it. One cannot really know love without experiencing it, and might travel many divergent paths looking without even knowing of the desire to find it. The client himself may not be

aware of what he is looking for. He has a primary concern, which is important and needs to be addressed, but this is not always the end of the story. Therapy can potentially answer questions that were not yet asked. Is there an organizational force in the background that helps the therapist to provide an adequate vessel for the answering of these unspoken questions?

Research regarding the work of the therapist has focused more on therapeutic skills or metaskills as they manifest in interventions that can be seen from the outside, and ideas about beneficial attitudes that the therapist should ideally maintain while working with clients. Both Humanistic and Transpersonal psychological schools acknowledge the importance of the therapist's personal development for his effectiveness in working with clients. Carl Rogers, one of the forefathers of Humanistic psychology, believed that it is the attitudes of the therapist rather than specific therapeutic techniques that are the most effective in therapy. The therapist's congruence and unconditional positive regard for the client are fundamental in the therapeutic exchange, and the therapist's ability to understand the experience of the client and to reflect this back to him are essential for accessing the depth of the client's process (Cain, 2002). In this sense, Rogers places great importance upon the personal development of the therapist, as these qualities cannot be feigned. However, there still remains an unknown area regarding the method by which the therapist gets to the point of having these types of genuine feelings for the client as he works during the session.

### *Metaskills*

In coining the term “metaskills,” Amy Mindell (1995) suggests that the therapist’s feelings and attitudes about life create the background out of which all of her skills arise, and have a deep effect upon her clients.

What a therapist feels and how she uses these feelings in her work defines who she is and how she responds to life. Her deepest beliefs and feelings are the Earth out of which all techniques spring. (Mindell, 1995, p.23).

Metaskills reflect feeling attitudes, and there are as many metaskills as there are feelings; however, Mindell highlights and defines in detail seven metaskills that she views as central to the practice of Process Work; compassion, recycling, playfulness and detachment, fishing, shamanism-science, creativity, and fluidity-stillness. All refer to ways of working with individuals that reflect her deeper attitudes and beliefs about the path through life. I will describe these metaskills in further detail in the pages that follow. Metaskills have a dual function, reflecting and transmitting deep attitudes and beliefs about life, while at the same time influencing the therapist’s work with the client in terms of interventions and style. Some metaskills develop over time through personal work, while others are natural born gifts. Metaskills help to create the foundation out of which the depth of the therapeutic work can unfold.

### *Creating a Conducive Therapeutic Atmosphere*

Other alternative therapeutic schools also focus upon the attitude of the therapist to potentially create a therapeutic atmosphere that supports healing and personal development. For example, the Hakomi practice emphasizes the ability of the therapist to create a supportive and caring atmosphere for the client. Mindfulness and the non-

judgmental attitude of the therapist are essential for the process to unfold. Transpersonal psychology acknowledges a place beyond definition that can be experienced in therapy when the distinction between therapist and client fades. In *Transpersonal Psychology*, the client is not perceived as the “other” but as a companion along the path. “But a transpersonal approach (in agreement with the humanists) views the client, just like the therapist, as an evolving being and fellow seeker” (Cortright, 1997, p. 20).

Martin Buber (1958) has written extensively on the potential of the relationships between people to mirror to one another the divine in each of us. In his book, *I am Thou*, he suggests that we objectify one another within time and space. The term, “It” exemplifies this concept. He uses the term, “thou”, to describe a way of perceiving the other as God, to see the eternal spirit in the everyday world, as they are one in the same. Thou is non-alienated, spirit, meaning to perceive the other as God, and to see the eternal spirit in the everyday world as they are one in the same. He suggests that relationship sacred, I am you (Buber).

#### *The Actualizing Tendency*

Humanistic psychology is centered upon the concept of the actualizing tendency, which suggests that human beings are naturally inclined towards growth. A positive therapeutic relationship fosters the client’s ability to make choices that are good for his development, which creates a positive internal feedback loop for the client that stimulates continuous development and growth. The role of the therapist is to help facilitate this process. The therapist’s belief in the client’s ability to change helps the client to develop confidence in his ability to create his own life, rather than to be a victim of circumstance.

#### *A Comprehensive View of Compassion*

One of the complications that could arise in a therapeutic approach such as Client Centered Therapy, which encourages positive regard and a compassionate attitude, is that awareness might bring the therapist to notice experiences that are not loving or supportive. Acting loving in these moments might hinder the process of getting to the core of an issue. Trungpa Rinpoche calls this type of compassion “idiot compassion.” Being compassionate does not necessarily mean being kind. In some situations, tough love is needed, and kindness will only perpetuate a problem. Sometimes, the most compassionate thing you can do for a person is give them a good shove. A common example of this point is the codependent person, who enables an alcoholic to keep drinking, in an effort to be supportive or to avoid confrontation. This type of compassion could actually end up seriously hurting a person, who might actually need a very strong and direct interaction (Trungpa, 1939/1991).

In her book, Metaskills, the Spiritual Art of Therapy, Amy Mindell (1995) expands on the more mainstream definition of compassion, as it has an inclusive attitude of love, care and concern for all the aspects of the self, both the “desirous” and the “undesirous” ones. This is an attitude that gives equal relevance, concern, and energy to all parts, and is undifferentiated in its attention. She also names other metaskills that can be used by the therapist to deepen and enliven the therapeutic work, using representations of teachers from different spiritual traditions to help define these qualities. In partnership with the metaskill of compassion is the metaskill of recycling. Recycling means to notice and bring attention to even the subtlest signals, such as a drop in tone of voice or a slight movement. It is an attitude of taking nothing for granted.

*Playfulness and detachment.* Playfulness and detachment manifest in a variety of forms, and reflect the attitude of a Zen Master or a Taoist sage, who has nowhere to go and nothing to do. A therapist who can be at times playful shows that life is not only about achieving goals and becoming someone, and that therapy is not only about getting somewhere. A therapist who can detach from the drama of what is happening can also gain perspective that will help her to see an overview of the process without becoming consumed by it. Another Taoist attitude that is useful in therapy is that of “*fishing*.” Fishing involves both concentration and the ability to relax and wait. The fisherperson is ready if there is a bite, but waits patiently in the interim with attention for the moment to act. These metaskills show how spiritual attitudes of the therapist can be consciously applied in therapy, to help facilitate and deepen the process for the client (Mindell, 1995).

#### The Personal and Spiritual Development of the Therapist: Accessing the Spiritual Realm

The personal development of the therapist is a key element in his ability to work effectively with clients, as these qualities emerge partially as a result of working on himself. This concept is well stated in an article comparing the ideas of Rogers, Maslow, and Buddhist Psychology (author unknown): “Therapy exists within a therapeutic relationship, the special relationship between the client and the therapist. The more in touch the therapist is with their own Buddha nature the more the therapist can assist the client.” (“Compare the Ideas” <http://www.schoolofurbanzen.com/Insight/Maslow.html>)

There is a common belief among many Transpersonal and Humanistic practitioners that the spiritual development of the therapist is essential in the therapeutic

process. However, the question still remains; what allows a seemingly ordinary human being to manifest these extraordinary qualities, regardless of the situation, and what is the therapist's experience while working?

Many therapeutic and spiritual schools provide tools for accessing deep spiritual states, but these do not arise spontaneously out of the therapeutic work on a problem; one must consciously seek out these experiences and apply certain skills for accessing them. There are various therapeutic schools with a spiritual base that incorporate meditation techniques for reaching higher states of consciousness. These practices could apply both to the therapist and the client.

Although these methods can be very useful and important, they are based upon a dualistic framework, suggesting that one must try to access something spiritual out of the material. This idea separates rather than integrates the different levels, spiritual and material. Like the mystics, Maslow (1964) himself believed that one should not seek out these experiences, in order not to separate the sacred from the ordinary. "What has been called the unitive consciousness is often given in peak experiences, i.e., a sense of the sacred glimpsed *in* and *through* the particular instance of the momentary, the secular, the worldly" (Maslow, p.68).

Similarly, Process Work does not differentiate between the sacred and the mundane in practice. The focus is instead on awareness about how the client uses his consciousness in regard to which experiences are closer to the center and which are more on the margin at a given moment. In Process Work, spiritual and material, or sacred and mundane, are considered two sides of the same coin. Likewise in Buddhism, form and formlessness are also regarded as one in the same; both are merely concepts of the mind

and illusory. The challenge is to live within the world of form while maintaining an awareness of the illusory nature of everything.

### *Basic Goodness*

Humanistic Psychology and Buddhist Philosophy are both based in a belief in the inherent goodness of all beings. The Buddhists believe that everyone has Buddha nature at the core. There is a trust in this basic goodness, and a trust in the potential to access this and to bring it to form. The idea of basic goodness can be compared with that of the inner core from Humanistic psychology. In this paradigm, the inner core is the very essence of a person that can be accessed through personal work for an experience of self-actualization, which is thought by some to be the psychological equivalent of the realization of Buddha nature in the process of enlightenment. In Process Work, information holds the equivalent role. There is a trust in the “rightness” of whatever is happening, and a curiosity about getting to know it. Waking up to what is happening is the path and the way.

Although Process Work tends not to define experience as good or bad, the metaskill of compassion, which welcomes and honors whatever is happening in the moment, reflects a fundamental belief in the rightness of who we are, which is similar to the idea of basic goodness. In Buddhist psychology, the role of the therapist is to awaken the Buddha nature inherent in the client. The therapist can aid in this process not only through the use of tools and skills, but also through his own process of development. (“Compare the Ideas,” <http://www.schoolofurbanzen.com/Insight/Maslow.html>) As he comes closer to his own Buddha nature, he will naturally manifest an interest in the happiness of others, and this attitude is essential in helping the client to realize his

Buddha nature. In Process Work terms, it could be said that his inner work helps his to develop metaskills.

### Buddhist Cosmology, Awareness, and the Bodhisattva

In Buddhist cosmology, the bodhisattva is a figure who has taken a vow to reincarnate into the suffering of this world until all have become enlightened: no one is left behind. In this sense, the bodhisattva gives herself completely for the benefit of all beings. The path of the bodhisattva is one of compassion; recognizing the suffering of all beings, the bodhisattva devotes his life to helping others. Although he may have contact with the world of enlightenment and the developmental insight necessary to go there, he chooses not to leave his human friends behind.

I would first like to explore the concept of help from this point of view. From the Buddhist perspective, life is suffering. Suffering is due to attachment and ignorance about the impermanent nature of existence. As a result of this ignorance, we are constantly trying to solve a problem that can not be solved; we are like dogs chasing our own tails. From this viewpoint, the concept of helping expands. Feeding the hungry might be considered helpful by some, but it does not address the real problem in the background that confronts us all. This is not to say that one should not feed the hungry, but rather, that feeding the hungry is not going to solve the problem. Release from suffering is achieved through a change in perception about the nature of mind and reality.

Due to the nature of our minds and our misperceptions, we become victims of the world of “maya”, translated as illusion. According to Buddhist cosmology, there are six realms that compose the wheel of life. These are the hell realm, the animal realm, the realm of the hungry ghost, the God realm, the human realm, and the realm of the jealous

gods. Mark Epstein (1995) writes extensively about these six realms. He makes it clear that it is not the realms themselves but our distorted perceptions of them that create our suffering. All of them must be recognized and worked with for the achievement of an enlightened state of mind. He notes that in western psychology, different schools have tended to focus primarily on one of the six realms: Freud on the passions of the animal realm, Klein on the hell realm of anxiety and aggression, Winnicott and Kohut on the narcissism of the human realm, and Rogers and Maslow on the God realm. He suggests that mastery of one realm and repression of others is insufficient; all affect our minds and must be worked with and addressed accordingly for release from suffering. From this point of view, the notion of spiritual teacher or therapist dissipates. What distinguishes an effective teacher is a comprehensive knowledge of all the different realms and an ability to work with them.

In each of the above stated realms, the bodhisattva has different methods for serving the same function, to raise the awareness of the individual who is stuck in the suffering of his own limited perceptions (Epstein, 1995). His spiritual development and practice allow him to transmit his own awareness of the illusory nature of our perceptions, releasing the other from the suffering of illusion, and providing him with a brand new perspective about life in which he is no longer bound by the limits of personal identification.

The bodhisattva's work is inspired by his sense of broken heartedness. His heart has not been broken by a single event, but by an ongoing sense of tenderheartedness about life, suffering, and the state of our vulnerable souls. Sensei Robert Joshin Althouse (1999) captures the essence of the broken heart in his article, *Cracked but not Stained*. "If

we have the courage to open our eyes to our world, we will experience real despair. We all love this beautiful and fragile world of ours so much that our hearts ache.” Waking up implies perceiving the beauty and suffering of our world. Our hearts break in intimate tenderness, loneliness, sadness, vulnerability, hope, and despair when we open up to the touching experience of our fleeting lives here on Earth.

The awakened heart of the bodhisattva perceives the pain of the human predicament. The bodhisattva is on the path to enlightenment. Personal experiences of pain and suffering are initial openings into the perception of the shared pain of the world. At the Buddha’s enlightenment, he cried over the anguish of the human predicament, in which all are striving to achieve happiness but end up hurting themselves and others through the ignorance of their striving. His wakefulness about the situation inspired in him tears of compassion. His distance from the situation allowed him to see it and perceive it in a way that others who are consumed by it cannot (Kornfield, 2000). His awakening came directly out of his experience in the material world.

The work and the attitude of the bodhisattva can help others with the process of awakening. Everything is constantly slipping away. As life unfolds, it passes. Life is an ongoing experience of hello and goodbye. In looking for a stable solid existence, we miss the one that is happening now. This is the cause of further pain and the striving to end it. The path of the bodhisattva is one of transcending the need for solidity and individualism. The bodhisattva is not motivated by a need to achieve, to gain outer or inner recognition, or to help. Just as a song or a poem can inspire a transcendent experience, the action of the bodhisattva can manifest the paradox of formlessness in form, and takes us out of our

limited minds. Life has the potential to wake us up, and the bodhisattva can help us with the cobwebs of the waking process by example, and through the action of skillful means.

The Bodhisattva manifests his wisdom and inner development through the practice of skillful means. In a conversation with the Buddha, a bodhisattva asks how to transmit the teachings of prajnaparamita, or the wisdom of the teachings. The Buddha answers that the bodhisattva should practice a concentration technique called “skilled in means like the sun.” The effects of this concentration are compared to the effects of the sun. First, the bodhisattva helps to develop the seed of enlightenment in all beings, just as the sun helps the seeds to grow. Second, the sun’s rays are similar to the concentration of the bodhisattva, which creates a container of compassion for all. Third, the wisdom and insight of the bodhisattva burns away the pollution from the kleshas, or negative defilements, while knowledge of the antidotes, like the sun, melts their excess frost. The sun eradicates darkness, just as the bodhisattva dispels craving, and the sun is undifferentiated in its delivery of warmth, just as the bodhisattva brings happiness through his skillful means (Iyer, 1983). This analogy could help to describe the therapist’s work with the client, specifically with reference to the concentration and the sun as holding the space for the work to unfold.

#### Process Work Theory and Practice as Related to the Bodhisattva

There are three aspects of the bodhisattva that I will explore in terms of Process Work as they manifest within the therapeutic process. All are interconnected and mutually dependent. At the core and inherent in the other two is the sense of broken heartedness referred to initially. The second is the giving of oneself for the benefit of others, and how this translates into the work of the therapist. Finally, I would like to

explore the ability to go between two worlds, to be in this world but not of this world, having access to something beyond the known world while at the same time having experiential knowledge of what it means to be human and to suffer within the bonds of our perceptions. The bodhisattva has the ability to stand outside, but also to get right into the mess of it all. I will discuss current and related research on this topic in the section to follow, and will contextualize my study with a brief overview of Process Work theory.

Although Process Work does not delineate different realms, and there are no set programs for intervention, the work of the therapist requires the fluidity of the bodhisattva for a number of reasons that I will describe in the following paragraphs. Process Work theory suggests that most people are relatively attached to their identities. If a person identifies as a sweet person, he will most likely find it difficult to be critical, or to recognize his own critical side, because so much is invested for him in the notion of being a sweet person.

The same theory applies to all identities. Identities are solidified for good reason, and it is usually quite an effort for most of us to expand beyond our limited perceptions of who we think we are. However, if a therapist is too attached to his identity, he will not have the ability to give himself to the process of his client, because he will not have the option of detachment from his own identity. For example, if the therapist identifies as a very understanding and compassionate person, but the process of the client clearly calls for a strict hand, the therapist will not have the ability to recognize and to serve this process, too concerned with his own need to uphold the identity of being compassionate.

In her book, *Look at My Ugly Face*, Sara Halprin (1995) illustrates this point in an in depth study of the feelings, attitudes, and worldviews around

appearance, which can reflect personal identities. She describes the power behind both beauty and ugliness, which is most often marginalized in our individual experiences as a result of collective and personal edges. She defines wholeness as: "...the ability to have access to many roles, being able to acknowledge those parts in ourselves and others that disturb us and seem foreign to our natures" (Halprin, p. 24). Halprin suggests that if we embrace both the beautiful and the ugly aspects of ourselves, we can access the jewels that are inherent in each, enjoying inner and outer freedom and fluidity with our various parts, which we can then highlight by means of disguises, outer costumes that we wear to accentuate certain aspects of ourselves that are present in the moment, and can be celebrated through the use of appearance. She shows how fluidity around identity can be expressed on a daily basis, using appearance, an aspect of daily life, to bring out our deeper parts.

This fluidity described above also allows the Process Worker to trust the process and follow "*dreaming*", rather than prescribed programs for how things should be. In Process Work, *dreaming* is a term used to describe the subjective experience of being out of control. Patterns that are found in night dreams can also be found in relationship problems and body symptoms. The primary process refers to the more known aspects of the self, with which we most easily identify. In the example above, the primary process would be, "I am a sweet person." The secondary process defines the less known aspects of the self. The experience of connecting with these secondary aspects is called dreaming.

Dreaming manifests through unintended communications, called *double signals*, which can be recognized through physical or verbal signals that do not go along with the

intended communication. Everybody sends double signals. In the words of Process Worker Dr. Max Schupbach, “If you do not double signal, you are either enlightened or dead!” The therapist uses his awareness to notice these double signals and to try to unfold them. Double signals are the doorways to the dreaming, and also, perhaps, to a momentary experience of enlightenment, or a peak experience.

#### Comparative Analysis of the Bodhisattva as Therapist

Translated into the practice of therapy, the path of the bodhisattva takes on a slightly new slant. Although there is no assumption of death and rebirth in the western world of psychotherapy, there is, metaphorically, a constant process of death and rebirth within the therapeutic process. The process of change, itself, depends upon the passing of some parts to the periphery, and the emergence of others into the foreground. The therapist must have some ability to facilitate this process of change.

The path of self-discovery is a rocky one, full of peaks, valleys, and sharp stones that are sometimes tripped over and sometimes admired. A deep experience of well being may be one of many along the path, but all are passing and impermanent. In his book, “Thoughts Without a Thinker”, Mark Epstein (1995) writes that a sense of alienation can be momentarily suppressed by experiences of deep mystical union with everything, but this is merely a temporary situation of relief. The antidote to alienation is purpose and meaning on the path, which result from becoming familiar with the experiences that happen in the moment, unfiltered by moralistic concepts of good and bad. The mystical experiences that he refers to are not the equivalent of peak experience as defined above, as they do not bring larger meaning into the profane. However, the experience of being in the moment without the filter of good and bad, could be a peak experience for some, and

a therapist who is not based in a moralistic value system might have the ability to help facilitate this process.

David Brazier (1995) writes about the concept of the therapist as bodhisattva. He states that the Bodhisattva of compassion, appearing in female form as Quan Yin and in male form as Avalokita, relates to the world's suffering, and is always there for anyone who seeks her assistance. He suggests that the job of the therapist is the same. "In the same way, we as therapists need to detect the part of the client that turns to a more enlightened, that is compassionate, life" (Brazier, 1995, p.193).

Brazier (1995) implies that everyone has this innate potential, and that the job of the therapist is to help his client to access this potential and to bring it to form in life. He suggests general programs for achieving this goal, some of which contradict a more mainstream western therapeutic paradigm. For example, western psychology has traditionally emphasized ego development and self-appreciation. Buddhist psychology sees this aspiration as counter productive, as true happiness and satisfaction result from putting the needs of others before ones own; he defines compassion as such.

Process Work theory applies the concept of selflessness at a deeper level, considering all of the experiences that happen to both the client and therapist as belonging to a larger dreaming field, as discussed in the previous section on ethics. Brazier's idea might be based on the notion that our experiences are personal and individual, which would explain the differentiation between the needs of self and other. This belief rests on the assumption that it is the self and not the field that is creating experiences, and that the self knows better than the dreaming. It is also based on an idea

of separateness. If, at a dreaming level, there were no separation between us, then our processes would be shared, and there would be no such thing as “mine” and “yours.”

Brazier (1995) also suggests that the therapist acts as a mirror for the client, and a large part of his job is to reflect back to the client who he is. The concept that the therapist’s role is to help the client to access his own potential by seeing it and reflecting it back to him is interesting, and calls for further research that delineates the manner in which this goal might be achieved, and the details of the inner process from the point of view of the therapist. Brazier describes a process in which he is working with a client when he becomes aware of a feeling of irritation. When he mentions this to the client in what he considers to be a non-judgmental manner, the client is able to recognize this irritation as part of his own process. However, in the same description, Brazier mentions that the therapist can become “infected” with the client’s experiences. This term is itself judgmental, and also implies some type of God like purity that could potentially cause the client to feel insufficient and pathologized. Although an attitude of acceptance and non-judgment is wonderful in moments that it is truly felt, attitudes cannot be programmed. The question still remains, “How should the therapist deal with her feelings if they do not fit the protocol?”

This concept is illustrated in a famous Zen story (author unknown) in which a master cries when his student dies. His other students ask, “master, why are you crying, I thought that you said we should be detached, that everything is impermanent.” The master replies, “I am crying because I am sad.” What is happening is what is happening, we can not always say why. Often our feelings and reactions do not always comply with our value systems, and in these moments, to be genuine means to go against our

prescribed ideas about how we think things should be. There might be times when a judgmental attitude is temporarily needed. According to Process Work theory, our reactions do not belong to us alone. We cannot and should not know what needs to happen in a given situation, we must instead become familiar with what it is that is already happening. Our reactions are part of the information of the field that is trying to come forth. The attitude of non-judgment that is needed is one of curiosity about getting to know the experiences that unfold before us (Mindell, 1995).

### The Bodhisattva in the World

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche describes the bodhisattva in terms of his work in the world and his attitude towards life and others. With his understanding of the impermanent nature of everything, the bodhisattva relates to others as if they were his guest; his perception of impermanence allows him to see and appreciate the relationship and the other. He says that this attitude is the starting point of compassion. Compassion, from his perspective, is much deeper than the compassion that most of us think of in the west. Compassion does not mean feeling sorry for others. There is no element of pity in compassion. Rather, he says that compassion has three components, which he describes as follows.

A sense of warmth in oneself, a sense of seeing through confusion, and a sense of openness. But this process happens very abruptly; there is no time to analyze. There is no time to walk out or to hold on. There is not even time to refer back, to note that “I am doing this.” (Trungpa, 1939/1991, p. 120)

In his description, Trungpa uses the word, “sense.” There is a sense of the experiences that he describes. Compassion is something that is felt and sensed, it is an inner experience that also manifests in relation to the outside, but is not defined by specific acts of moralism; it is not something that is self-conscious, fabricated or planned.

The role of the bodhisattva is explained in terms of the six paramitas, or transcendental virtues: generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and transcendental knowledge. I will focus on a few of these six aspects as he describes them and as they relate to Process Work. The first, the paramita of generosity, states that the bodhisattva should not disintegrate in self-doubt, embarrassment, or selfishness with his ideas, hindering his ability to teach or to learn to teach. His sense of unworthiness must be abandoned, or he will be abandoning others by not sharing what little or extensive knowledge he might have to offer. In this way, he is offering not only his knowledge, but also his ego. The act of giving and detachment is worked on through the practice of mentally offering ones food before eating, symbolically giving up ones need for personal gratification. This idea can be translated into Process Work theory as follows. The Process Worker’s equivalent of offering food might be offering his primary thoughts about how things should be, and instead placing the unknown ahead of his own programs and preconceived ideas about life. With this attitude, he is also willing to notice and be curious about his experiences and to share them, believing that his experiences are not his own, but are part of the field and meant for everyone.

According to Trungpa (1939/1991), discipline stems from a sense of trust in oneself. A bodhisattva should not indulge in feelings of inadequacy, or operate out of an attitude based in morality and guilt. This will hinder him on his path. He should instead

foster a sense of trust in himself, which will allow him to work in various situations. The sense of trust in oneself allows the bodhisattva to work skillfully with whatever is happening, to the point of being willing to commit immorality out of compassion for sentient beings (Trungpa). The bodhisattva gives up everything, including the need to do things right, and to be a good person. Likewise in Process Work, the practitioner trusts the process of the individual and the experiences that arise between them. He is willing to follow and to trust the unknown.

In this review, I have described attitudes and experiences of practiced therapists and spiritual teachers. I have delineated aspects of ideals for working with people, either as a therapist or as a spiritual teacher, or both, and discussed the current debate about possible complications of combining the roles of spiritual teacher and therapist. I have presented past research regarding the therapist's experience, and explained pertinent aspects of Process Work theory in relation to other psychological and spiritual approaches, specifically in relation to Buddhism and the role of the Bodhisattva. The framework has now been set for an in depth exploration of how these attitudes do or do not come into play in the work of one Process Work therapist. The following chapter will introduce the philosophical assumptions underlying Transpersonal Psychological research, which provide a broad methodological frame for this study. It will then briefly trace the emergence of qualitative methods in the human sciences, and address the general propensity in science towards quantifiable research methods, presenting postmodern theories that contradict traditional viewpoints. The chapter will then describe the methods chosen for this study, and the rationale behind that choice, including a detailed description of the data collection and analysis. Finally, it will delineate the

evaluative criteria used to establish the soundness of the study, and a discussion of some ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Interdisciplinary Research Methods

Because my research question ventures into the area of consciousness and altered states, I used a transpersonal framework for its exploration. Transpersonal research is a relatively new field designed to study aspects of human experience that are not amenable to qualifications in the tradition of positivist science. The field of transpersonal psychology has emerged and grown over the past three decades, and within that field, the limitations of positivist methods have become increasingly apparent. Traditional scientific research is geared towards the study of natural science based upon its laws. More recently, epistemologists maintain that methodology should be developed according to the problems that are being researched, and that the notions of objectivity and bias are dependent upon individual contextual factors, which in turn are organized around research intent, and possibly societal and political factors. This work combines a unique synthesis of insights from quantum mechanics with qualitative, hermeneutic, and transpersonal research methods to understand the phenomenon.

Perhaps social science has historically overstated the function of objectivity. Karl Popper (1935) put an original curse on social science as a whole and on psychology in particular, when he deemed psychoanalytical theory unscientific based on the fact that it cannot be falsified. Many social scientists understood him to be suggesting that only objective “pure” observation that takes place in controlled circumstances can provide legitimate data that can be used for scientific theory building. Popper, however, believed that the very concept of pure observation is itself naïve.

Popper (1935) argues that the Baconian, Newtonian insistence on the primacy of 'pure' observation in the formation of theories is misguided: all observation is selective and theory-laden. There are no pure or theory-free observations. In this way he destabilizes the traditional view that science can be distinguished from non-science on the basis of inductive methodology, suggesting that there is no unique methodology specific to science, which like virtually every other human or organic activity, is based largely upon problem-solving. His objection to psychoanalytic theory is simply that it is too generalized to bring forth predictable outcomes, and is not falsifiable (Thorton, 2002). In this regard, he has left a stigma for many psychological researchers, who have since been attempting to use quantifiable data that might possibly lead to generalized causal theories, in hopes of elevating the status of social research into the realm of "real" science.

In the meantime, feminist and other "liberation theories" have questioned the oppressive trend that is inherent in this definition of science. As Mindell (2000) clearly states, "... the rise of science, the devaluation of women and nature, and the rise of patriarchy were all part of the same movement" (p. 127). Mindell continues with a quote from Carolyn Merchant in her Death of Nature:

...the new world-view... by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women. The contribution of such founding 'fathers' of modern science as Francis Bacon, William Harvey, Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and Isaac Newton must be reevaluated. (Mindell, 2000, p.127)

At the core of the Process Work paradigm is the claim that classical scientific disciplines, such as physics and chemistry, do not include the concept of consciousness and therefore produce a limited and one-sided account of what happens in the universe.

It is assumed that phenomenological research should defend its methodology and the bias of subjectivity in relation to classical science. The viewpoints quoted above suggest that classical science should also defend and explain its bias, which disregards consciousness and all of the “non-measurable” experiences that occur during research.

Arnold Mindell writes in *Quantum Mind*:

The weakness of the scientific viewpoint is that it inhibits the investigation of those aspects of reality (such as imaginary numbers) that cannot be directly measured in a Consensus Reality, repeatable manner. The reality explored by physics is a consensus reality in which observations are discussed only if they can be measured in terms of real numbers, photographed or recorded, or agreed upon by a majority as existing. The bias towards consensus reality pervades other sciences as well. (Mindell, 2000, p 128)

The goal of positivist research is to create generalizable theories or sets of theories that can be falsified through observation and experimentation, as Karl Popper states in the opening sentence of Logic of Scientific Discovery: “A scientist, whether theorist or experimenter, puts forward statements, or systems of statements, and tests them step by step. In the field of the empirical sciences, more particularly, he constructs hypotheses, or systems of theories, and tests them against experience by observation and experiment.”

(Popper, 1935, p. 3)

The exploration of transpersonal elements of human experience, those that go “beyond the mask”, or the more overt aspects of our experiences, requires an expanded system of research methodology including theoretical orientations and qualitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a; 1998b; 1998c) that allow the researcher to capture the subtleties and complexities of human experience.

Because these experiences lie outside of the quantifiable world, and in some cases outside of the world of form, they must be studied within a framework whose scope also transcends the realm of quantifiable, sensory experience. Transpersonal research methodology is intended for the study of extraordinary, subjective human experiences, for a more comprehensive and holistic view of what it means to be alive.

#### Hermeneutic Approach to Inquiry

Within this broad disciplinary orientation of Transpersonal Research, I adopted a hermeneutic approach to inquiry. Hermeneutics is a cousin of phenomenology. Both seek to uncover the meaning of an experience. However, unlike phenomenology, whose purpose is to discover the essence of a lived experience, hermeneutic research is an interpretive approach; therefore, the aim is not to eliminate bias in hopes of accurately representing the subjective experience of another person, but to use personal bias and interpretation in an effort to reach a deeper understanding of the meaning of an experience.

Hermeneutics was originally used for the interpretation of religious texts, and is commonly used in literary interpretation. More recently it is being applied in human science research. Hermeneutic inquiry is based on the premise that our perceptions are inevitably interpretive, as a result of our subjective experiences of being alive. According

to hermeneutics, there is no way around this, nor need there be. Hermeneutic research uses personal bias, attempting to deepen and expand the process of interpretation in an effort to understand an experience or phenomenon. “Hermeneutics is necessary when there is the possibility for misunderstanding, said Schleiermacher (1977)” (Van Manen, 1990, p.179) It involves the combined effort of both the researcher and the co-researcher. This interpretive, descriptive, and meaning based approach is well suited for the investigation of my research question, which focuses on the subjective experience of a therapist while working with clients, and seeks to understand the therapist’s experience. My own subjective experience as a researcher is central to the design and implementation of the study, in formulating the research question, in data generation, and in the interpretation of the data representation of findings.

The Transpersonal framework adds another dimension to the hermeneutic approach, as it addresses a realm beyond polarity. The hermeneutic methods are implemented in this study for discovery about phenomenon that belong to this realm.

Transcendent awareness, on the other hand, seems somehow “prior to” this reflective-prereflective realm, presenting itself as more of a space or ground from which our more common experience and felt-sense emerge. This space of context does, however, present itself in awareness, and is, thereby, known to the one who is experiencing. Moreover, implicit in this awareness is the direct and undeniable realization that this foundational space is not of the phenomenal realm of perceiver and the perceived. Rather, it is a noumenal, unitive space within or from which both

intentional consciousness and phenomenal experience manifest. (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p.100)

This realm can be pointed to but its essence cannot be captured in words. Manifestation in form depends upon polarities. Words can be seen on this page thanks to the polarity of black and white. The researcher must use polarity as a means by which to describe this unitive space beyond polarity out of which all experiences are birthed. Historically, with its use in the interpretation of religious texts, hermeneutics has addressed the challenge of trying to communicate about this spiritual realm that can't be captured in words, using words in an innovative and analytical effort to further highlight the essential meaning of the text. The hermeneutic approach is therefore particularly suitable for this study, with its focus on understanding spiritual experience in the context of the therapeutic relationship, using words as the medium by which to describe the findings.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to understand the spiritual experience of a therapist as he works with clients. In the midst of the many different types of problems that he encounters in the work, and behind the different interventions at especially poignant moments, does he have a consistent and unchanging experience, which could be called "sacred"? My research is centered upon this final question: How does Buddhist cosmology help us to understand this therapist's spiritual experience?

### Research Method

In my attempt to answer this question I used a single case study method of a Process Work therapist. Process Work is a phenomenological, awareness-based approach

to individual and collective change. Awareness is also at the core of many spiritual traditions of the East, specifically of Buddhism. In this sense, Process Work can be considered a spiritual discipline for the therapist, whose most essential tool is her or his awareness. Single case study is well suited for research of extraordinary, unique individuals or events. Special characteristics can be studied in depth, rather than more superficially through methods such as standardized testing.

I chose Dr. Max Schupbach, who is also my partner, to be the subject of study. Max is one of the co-founders of Process Work. He has been traveling throughout the world teaching Process Work in many different cultures, and has developed, co-developed, and sustained training programs in ten different locations worldwide. He is one of the most experienced Process Workers, and is considered by many as a leading expert in the field. He is known in numerous countries as a facilitator of individual and community processes. He has been working in this field for thirty years.

Born in the Swiss mountains, Max often says that the mountains are his true parents. He loves nature and lives a life of following the natural flow of events that emerge within and around him. In his experience, he has “stumbled upon” all the best things that have happened to him in his life, and he believes that it is grace and not the will of his own doing that continually paves his path through life.

### *Trustworthiness*

My research purpose was to find out about the way in which this therapist experiences awareness as he works. In the following section, I will first discuss the issue of bias in regard to this research project. Next I will address this particular situation of the marital relationship between the researcher and the researched, using examples of other

researchers who have studied intimate friends and relatives, and the potential pros and cons of this practice in terms of trustworthiness and ethics. Finally, I will investigate the social, political, and spiritual implications of this research project, in terms of feminist research, action research, and transpersonal psychological research.

### *The Question of Bias in Research*

Phenomenological research assumes the presence of bias (Merriam, 2002). Bias is an unavoidable aspect of the process, which does not need to be counteracted or avoided, but merely related to by the researcher. Bias can actually enhance the research process if it is properly addressed.

However, the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study. Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or “subjectivities”, it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of the data. Peshkin (1988, p. 18) goes so far as to make the case that one’s subjectivities “can be seen as virtuous, for it is the bias of researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected.” (Merriam, 2002, p. 5)

Merriam suggests that bias can be a useful tool in the process of gathering and analyzing data, but it must be made explicit for this fullness to manifest.

I will describe my personal experience of bias in regard to this study to exemplify its potential importance for many research projects. The very word “bias” is questionable to me in regard to this problem, as it is too much focused on the things that I can not see

because I am biased, and not enough on the springboard that catapults me into all that I can see. The lover's "bias" is the window that makes this research possible.

My "bias", for lack of a better word, is that I continue to be astonished by the uncanny ability that Max seems to have to see deeply into people. It appears that he can intuit a person's personal history and current life situation within a short period of time, and his perceptions are frequently confirmed. I am in awe of this quality in him and based this study on finding its actual source. I was and still am passionate about finding out everything about what allows him to be in this place from which he can see so deeply into people, and what this is like for him. I would like to know where he is getting his data, and how he is working with it. I was biased as a researcher with my single-minded focus on this aspect. This is a quality that is based on my own perception and experience of the way in which he works, relates to the world, and relates to me. I feel I have ex-ray vision into his inner states, and I endeavored with this study to put that ex-ray vision under a microscope. I was biased because I think that this access to awareness and penetrating insight is what finally allows a person to bring love into form, and to give that gift to another person. To me this is the most important thing in life, and it is all that I am looking for.

*Transference.* Process Work theory, expanding from classical transference models, suggests that we fall in love with aspects of ourselves that we do not yet understand, and with which we do not yet identify. (M. Schupbach, personal communication, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003) Unlike other more classical models, Process Work considers this process not only a projection of one's own unrealized potential, possibly triggered by a signal of the therapist, but more significantly as a shared, "non-local"

experience to which both parties have only partial access, and need one another to discover all aspects. This reflects the quantum element of Process Work theory. In this sense, all researchers can be considered lovers, who fall in love with aspects of the other that they do not understand about themselves. This must be what Einstein felt when he said (Thornton, 2002, ¶ 11): “There is no logical path leading to [the highly universal laws of science]. They can only be reached by intuition, based upon something like an intellectual love of the objects of experience.”

From this point of view, it is logical that I would research my partner’s work (and that others would also study their intimate friends) knowing that the “spiritual” aspect in him that I am interested in researching is the same aspect that interests me the most in Process Work, and also connects to my early interest in Buddhism. I have been attracted to Buddhism since I was first introduced to it in the sixth grade, and find it to be the most useful framework for understanding the world around me because it places awareness at the center of its moral teachings. The aspects that I see in Max that are most interesting to me are not necessarily of most interest to Max. I created the structure for the study based upon my perception of the different aspects of the data, which I organize in a particular cluster that is representative of patterns that are emerging in me.

In short, Process Work theory suggests that the intimate relationship reflects a love that is actually indicative of a love for an emerging pattern that goes far beyond the personal connection between two people in a relationship, and can be used to bring out new things (M. Schubach, personally communication, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003). Maybe the relationship is the vehicle of a larger force that is asking to be discovered.

## Passion Inspires Research

What inspires a person to research any phenomenon? Research is a huge and all encompassing task, and I believe that for many, it is the love of a particular aspect in nature that calls the researcher to endeavor on such a journey. One could even go so far as to say that there is often a kind of love affair between the researcher and the researched, and that the relationship between the two is an essential aspect in the research process. Some of the best and most creative researchers, such as Heisenberg, Einstein, Feynman, and John Nash, to name a few, were completely enamored by their objects of research. They forged into unknown, impossible-to-reach territories into which one would only venture if he were either mad, or deeply inspired. Discovery implies an exaggerated and seemingly impossible leap into the unknown, propelled by a force of irrational inquisitiveness.

### *Uncertainty Principle*

In the attempt to justify subjective research, Heisenberg is often used as a reference to prove that all experiments are influenced by the observer. The Heisenberg Uncertainty principle states that in the study of events in the micro-world, the more exact we become with measuring one aspect of an event, for example a particle's speed, the more blurry another aspect becomes, such as location.

Philosophically, this is true in so far as events in the micro world can only be expressed as statistical trends, which shatter the dream of a deterministic cosmos. These statistical trends are also more complex than those of conventional statistics. Hans-Peter Duerr, the Heisenberg pupil and winner of the alternative Nobel Prize for physics, formulates it in this way:

But the statistics used for quantum physics is a degree more sophisticated than the conventional statistics that we apply in cases of insufficient knowledge of the facts of a case. For quantum statistics is based on the “as well/as” potentiality, and not on an uncertain “either/or” reality. In contrast to the probability with which we are familiar, which can assume any value from 0 (impossibility) to 1 (certainty), the potentiality of quantum physics is not absolute-valued. It is complex valued and can vary in a wave like fashion from +1 to -1. If several waves are superimposed -- which is the characteristic nature of waves -- it cannot only be reinforced, but -- depending on their phase relationship (the relative position off the crests and troughs of the waves) -- it can also be weakened, even completely extinguished. (Duerr, 2003, p.13.)

These uncertainty relations seem to be deeply imbedded in nature. Popper points out that Heisenberg was formulating the fact that some aspects in a particle's life remain hidden from the observer (Thornton, 2002). Falsification is therefore the preferred method for establishing scientific theory, because it does not take into account all of the individual data. Heisenberg did shake the foundations of causal theory by introducing the possibility that this phenomenon is more widespread than previously considered. The uncertainty principle nags in the background of the consciousnesses of many research methodologists. Its effects on causal Newtonian thinking have been similar to the effects of Gödel's theorem on mathematical theory forming, “On formally undecidable Propositions of Principia Mathematica and related systems”, which is disturbing to those who would like to continue believing in the overall value of the Falsification Theorem.

Both principles belong to a group of discoveries that have led some scientist to believe that there is no such thing as an objective experiment, and no such thing as a static and objective truth.

### Discovery and Subjective Experience

The famous mathematician John von Neumann, who among other things developed the mathematics that allowed for the development of the nuclear bomb, formulated the Heisenberg Principle in an interesting way with his declaration that mathematically, the division between the observed, the instrument of observation, and observer is arbitrary. It is possible that subjective experience may be a central vehicle for discovery of the world around us, as it brings out new patterns. Falsifiable theories present one axis of reality, which is measurable, while blurring other immeasurable aspects. These problems are present in all research. For example, if we focus on body temperature and amounts of different types of blood cells in order to describe a fever, we marginalize the individual experience of the fever, which can be rich with imaginative experiences and altered states. By the same token, if we study the meaning of the altered states that arise during the fever episodes for the life span of a particular individual and compare them to her or his night dreams, the importance of the temperature changes diminishes. Both aspects play an equally important role in the process of healing.

An additional factor that I would like to introduce is the notion that consciousness and the manner in which we use it fixates aspects of the data that we look for and measure. Modern brain research suggests that we see the patterns that we are looking for. For example, if there is a page with a large collection of dots, different people will see different patterns in these dots, and connect them in a variety of ways. One person might

find a dog, another a cat, and another a star. Maybe all of these different constellations exist, but before they are perceived by an observer, they are simply random dots on a page. There is a touching passage in the movie “A Beautiful Mind” (Harris, 2001), which is a narrative of aspects of the Nobel Prize winning mathematician’s life, John Nash. In this scene, he woos his wife to be as they are looking at the stars together. She names an object, and he creates a pattern for it by connecting stars. In the film, this scene demonstrates Nash’s ability to see new connections and form new patterns that were not previously seen by others, who unlike him, did not see beyond traditionally accepted interpretations of phenomenon.

The research process is one of differentiating the world around us, and using our own perceptions as the vehicle for discovery. The very act of creating a framework for the research of a particular question depends on this process of personal differentiation.

All of these theories suggest that every research is geared towards one particular area, and in return trades off accuracy in another area. This is important for my research project. For this specific project, which is part of the foundational research in psychotherapy, statistical evaluations and quantifiable data generation methods are not useful. The fact that the research object in psychotherapeutic research in general, and in this project specifically, is a human being, calls for a methodology that both includes the discussion from hard science of the relationship between observer and observed, and exceeds it through practical application with an attitude of heart.

#### The Role of Personal Relationships in Research

Positivist science has viewed relationship as a hindrance in the gathering of data. The relationship between researcher and researched was something to be controlled. At

best, the relationship could be used to maneuver into a closer position to the researched, but emotional connections have been and still are largely discouraged. The research relationship can be a source of empowerment, and can have a beneficial effect on the interview experience (Jones, 2000). She developed a list of positive feeling characteristics of the researcher which were identified by the participants. Her results showed that: “mutuality in the relationship was valued. Respondents expressed appreciation about getting to know the researcher as a person, and not being treated as a research subject by an impersonal observer.” (Jones, 2000, p. 245)

Neutrality has been widely accepted as the most valid and acceptable viewpoint for the researcher. We are coming to an age of a paradigm shift. Not even double blind studies do justice to many non-linear synchronistic aspects. From the perspective that we are all connected, regardless of whether or not this belief is based upon a mythical worldview, as in many Indigenous cultures, or on a quantum mechanistic view, as proposed by David Bohm (1980), relationships exist not only between people, but also between objects and people, and cannot be controlled simply by keeping them hidden from consciousness, as studies of synchronicity have long been suggesting. One example of this phenomenon is known as the Pauli Effect, named after the Nobel Prize Winner Wolfgang Pauli, whose sheer physical presence in a building was said to have created a negative if not disastrous effect on many physical experiments, leading many research institutes to forbid him from entering without prior notice (Mindell, 2000). This effect formed the basis of the development of his friendship with CG Jung, and inspired further studies of synchronicity (Mindell, 2000).

A paradigm shift is becoming increasingly apparent in the field of social science. Homan (as cited in Perrition, 2000) speaks of this transformation, and the inevitability of friendship as an aspect of research.

Friendship and research are a potent mix. And it is a mix that we should perhaps stop being so surprised about. Homan asserts that all social science researchers start to suffer from a 'persistence of research habits' and that 'one's subjects become one's friends [and] one's friends become one's subjects.' (Perrition, 2000, 3.7)

Common sense also plays a role in this situation. Relationships are at the core of the structure of society, and are unavoidable. It has been proven scientifically that the relationship cannot be controlled. If two people in a close relationship share feelings of appreciation or empathy, their heart rates can begin to synchronize, as well as their blood pressures and other vegetative functions. Studies suggest the possibility of a similar trend within the therapeutic relationship (Kenny, 2004).

Based on the findings describe previously, it can be assumed that the relationship is a necessary and significant component of the research process, one that should not be disregarded. The nature of the relationship, whether it is distant, intimate, tense, or all of these things, could be an important and potentially useful piece of information in that process. Feelings and reactions will inevitably arise against all efforts towards neutrality, since we are human beings and not robots. Why not explore them further rather than dismiss them?

In the field of Anthropology, there are differing views about the ethics of forming personal relationships with subjects, the value of these ties, and their possible hindrances.

Coffey (1999) goes so far as to address the issue of sexual intimacy with research subjects, and its role in the research process. In her view, whether or not sexual feelings are acted upon or made conscious, they are often present between researcher and researched. Because they can play a significant role in the research relationship, they should be made explicit in the data analysis. “Sexual intimacy clarifies the boundaries between object and subject, researched and researcher, and helps us make sense of them” (Coffey, 1999, p. 93).

Coffey (1999) also discusses the role of friendship in fieldwork, pointing out complications that can arise when the boundaries of the friendship within the research relationship are not made explicit. These dual roles need negotiation, but the friendships that emerge spontaneously out of the fieldwork are not often named as such, and therefore complications regarding the purpose of the relationship can arise during data analysis, and problems around power differences due to the nature of the research relationship might not get addressed. As a result, feelings get hurt, and the research suffers for the purpose of protecting feelings. However, Coffey does not suggest leaving friendship out of the research; in fact, friendship can enhance the research. “Friendships can help to clarify the inherent tensions of the fieldwork experience and sharpen our abilities for critical reflection. Moreover, they firmly establish fieldwork as relational, emotional, and a process of personal negotiation.” (Coffey, 1999, p. 47)

In this particular research, some readers might expect that the marital relationship would diminish the soundness of the study, based on the assumption that neither partner would be free to unfold the “real” experience, because the relationship was standing the way. This concern is understandable, given the many forms of relationship paradigms

that exist between couples. In our case, however, the opposite is true. Together Max and I share a desire to uncover the depth of whatever is happening between us. Our ongoing passion for accessing this depth is the glue that holds our relationship together. In this sense, our relationship was the catalyst for the research project, as well as its container.

### *Ethics*

An earlier paradigm suggests that one person holds the knowledge, and the other is trying to get it. For example, in the field of Anthropology, beliefs around knower and known, and objectivity and subjectivity, are also shifting from a more positivist paradigm to a phenomenological one. Van Manen (1988) describes the problem of the relationship between the knower and the known, and speaks of the dilemma of proper representation in his book, *Tales of the Field*:

It should be clear in the chapters to follow that I do not regard fieldwork as the simple observation, description, or explanatory technique that radiates from the older, objective, laws-and-causes view of human behavior. The matters are covered in various sections of the book, but for now I should note that my stance is opposed to the power of positivist thinking, since I regard the relation between the knower and the known to be a most problematic one and anything but independent in cultural studies. This is a phenomenological war whoop declaring that there is no way of seeing, hearing, or representing the world of others that is absolutely, universally valid or correct. Ethnographies of any sort are always subject to multiple interpretations. They are never beyond controversy or debate. (Van Maanan, 1988, p.35)

This is a new paradigm, forwarded also by Paulo Freire, Bell Hooks and others. It suggests that the process of accessing knowledge is a shared project by all involved that does not belong to one participant alone. Research in this paradigm is not a passive extraction of data from a disempowered objectified person, but rather a mutual relational process in which learning, researching and understanding blend, and in which analytical thought processes are aided by the concepts of eros and love. “Real” life outside of the classroom is not to be separated from studies within the classroom: each is influenced by the other. As stated by Bell Hooks:

Feminist education for critical consciousness is rooted in the assumption that knowledge and critical thought done in the classroom should inform our habits of being and ways of living outside the classroom. Since so many of our early classes were taken almost exclusively by female students, it was easier for us to not be disempowered spirits in the classroom, concurrently it was expected that we would bring a quality of care and even “love” to our students. Eros was present in our classrooms, as a motivating force, as critical pedagogues, we were teaching students ways to think differently about gender, understanding fully that this knowledge would also lead them to live differently. (Hooks, 1994, p.194)

Hooks is suggesting that both life outside and life inside of the classroom are codependent. In the end it is this process of inter-relationship that can potentially change the social climate around learning and research in times to come. From this viewpoint, the intimate relationship between the researcher and researched increases the trustworthiness of the study.

## Data Generation

Conversational interviews are one hermeneutical method by which to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Because my aim in the study was to understand the nature of this therapist's experience from the vantage point of my own subjective observations, I used conversational interviews as one method of data collection. A hermeneutical interview attempts to understand better the phenomenon of study. The interpretation of each view that is expressed in the conversation is seen as an answer to the topic of study, and the aim of the conversation is to get to closer to a new understanding of this topic through an ongoing back and forth conversation of interpretation upon interpretation (Van Manen, 1990).

The goal in these interviews was to discover something about the therapist's spiritual experience while working with clients. My aim was to discover if he was accessing a consistently similar experience, regardless of the outer manifestation in content. The interview questions indirectly explore the spiritual realm, in an attempt to discover the influence, if any, of spiritual or peak experiences that the therapist has during the actual session that we are speaking about, or in previous times, on the manner in which the therapist works with and views the problems that are encountered in the work.

The data were gathered during his work in three different seminars, at which I was present. For purposes of confidentiality, I have not published the names and dates of these seminars, nor the complete interview data. This information is archived and can be accessed for transparency purposes if needed. In these seminars, Max worked with

individual volunteers on a particular issue, as other participants gathered around and observed the work. The works were videotaped.

After the experiential sessions, I interviewed Max about his experience of the process, using three set questions:

1. What was your experience of noticing signals when the process began. What did you notice, how did you notice it, what was it like to notice it?
2. How did you decide to follow the direction that you followed?
3. What happened at the point that you felt you understood the process? Did anything change in terms of your experience of the person you were working with, or of yourself?

Additional probe questions were asked to clarify, deepen and expand upon initial responses. All interviews were audio-taped. The cumulated interview data amounted to 419 pages of written transcripts. Because my research focus was on the therapist's experience while working with a client, I did not inquire about the client's experience per se; however, the therapist's perception of the client, based on the feelings and inner experiences that arose during the work and were seemingly related to the client's experience, were an important aspect of the data.

I chose therapeutic sessions to represent a variety of content; working with an individual on an addiction, working with a couple on a relationship issue, and working with an individual on a mood disturbance, in attempt to learn about this therapist's experience in a diversity of situations, and to find out if there is an aspect of his experience of awareness that stays the same, regardless of the content of the work.

The interviews were held immediately following the work. After conducting and analyzing three interviews, I began to notice repetition in the themes and emerging patterns. We continued with one final interview to ensure the point of saturation. At this point, I was confident that we had reached the point of redundancy, which according to Patton marks the ideal sample size. “Sampling to the point of redundancy is an ideal, one that works best for basic research, unlimited timelines, and unconstrained resources”. (Patton, 2002, p. 246)

### Data Analysis

I organized and analyzed the data using an exegetical approach, in which I used the three delineations of enlightened mind as defined in the previous pages; knowledge, compassion, and wisdom, as categories by which to compare and arrange the interview data. An exegetical approach is one that is used to compare an interpretation of an experience that has already been formulated with the data collected from a lived experience, in an attempt to come to a more thorough understanding of each.

This method was useful in the initial analysis, as it provided a clear framework for distilling particular aspects of the data. I clustered together corresponding answers to each question from all four of the interviews, first looking for themes that might relate to the three aspects of enlightened mind. The first interview question<sup>2</sup> was intended to bring forth data relating to the first aspect of enlightened mind, “prajna”, or intellect. With the

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<sup>2</sup> What was your experience of noticing signals when the process began. What did you notice, how did you notice it, what was it like to notice it?

second question<sup>3</sup> I aimed to gather information related to “karuna”, or compassion. The third interview question<sup>4</sup> was loosely geared toward accessing information that might relate to the third aspect of enlightened mind, “jnana”, or wisdom. The obscure nature of this final question was specifically intended to mirror the slightly ambiguous nature of the content of the third delineation. Because the intention of this research was not to study in depth a particular work of this therapist, but his spiritual experience while working, I combined the data from each of the interviews, and organized it in terms of these three aspects. I used color coding to identify sections of the text which addressed each of the three questions, and then assembled text segments by color. I then looked for themes and patterns within these three categories. I present this information as preliminary findings in chapter four, to reflect the linear progression of findings and analysis. The final findings are presented in chapter five.

I noticed that information pertaining to each aspect of enlightened mind could be found in answers to each of the questions. This was most evident in the last two questions. This finding is in keeping with the ultimate definition of enlightened mind, which implies that these three aspects are mutually dependent; they can be defined and differentiated for purposes of understanding better the whole, but the existence of one is dependent on that of another.

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<sup>3</sup> How did you decide to follow the direction that you followed?

<sup>4</sup> What happened at the point that you felt you understood the process? Did anything change in terms of your experience of the person you were working with, or of yourself?

### Follow-up Interview

After this initial analysis, I realized that the Buddhist delineations of enlightened mind had served a useful purpose in guiding the formulation of questions that brought forth data relevant to my question, and in organizing the initial phase of analysis. Referring back to my original question (“How do these Buddhist delineations help us to understand the experience of this therapist?”) the ultimate purpose of the research was not to compare and contrast the Buddhist delineations of enlightened mind with the therapist’s spiritual experience, but to use these delineations to assist me in understanding Max’s experience more deeply. The Buddhist framework served its purpose for the initial phase, by creating a springboard into a new pool of information. This became the basis for a follow-up interview, which was not confined to these three Buddhist delineations, but ventured further into areas that they opened up.

In the conversational interview, I asked Max for his feedback and reflections regarding the themes from the initial analysis. This is a hermeneutic method of interpretation by which both researcher and co-researcher together strive to get closer to the nature of the experience being studied (Van Manen, 1990). It reflects the concept of the hermeneutic circle, a process “in which parts and the whole of a particular text are considered in cycles or spirals of understanding and elucidating meaning” (Jones, 2000, p.42).

Applying this interpretive approach, I based the follow-up interview questions on my analysis of the first set of interviews. In the follow-up interview, Max first affirmed initial findings from the first data analysis. In addition, his answers to the questions

deepened themes from the initial reflections and brought out new information about his spiritual experience while working with clients.

These interview questions were the stepping stones to the emergence of the final findings. Max confirmed my initial impressions and elaborated on them, while at the same time answering additional questions that arose out of the initial analysis. This interview catalyzed the final analysis, which led to the findings that are presented in chapter five.

### Writing as Analysis

The final stages of my analysis involved a process of analysis and rejuvenation. My findings were shaped by the writing itself, as is common in qualitative inquiry. I first analyzed the data and came up with initial themes, using the analogy of a path down a river, and a river guide, which Max used in the final interview. The analogy of a river to describe the flow of a process has been used in Process Oriented texts, such as *Metaskills* (Mindell, 1995) and *The Rivers Way* (Mindell, 1995). Although the information made sense, it did not capture the essence of what I had been looking for, or of what I had found along the way. Through my process of frustration around this issue, I discovered the final structure for themes. Out of a stream of consciousness writing process came a poem which captured the main themes of the findings. Stream of consciousness writing is one hermeneutic method of analysis (Moustakas, 1994). I realized that my frustration about not being able to capture the essence of the findings was in part due to the fact that the findings contain an aspect which can only be expressed through poetry. This portion of the analysis was in keeping with both my chosen method of investigation, hermeneutics, and with Trungpa's aspects of enlightened mind. Hermeneutics was

originally used for analysis of literary and religious texts, and one of the methods of hermeneutic analysis is literary writing. Trungpa's definition of enlightened mind includes analogies to music and dance, because its poetic nature cannot be captured in dry linear analysis only.

### Poetry and Creative Expression in Research

The concept of using poetry in research has been introduced by the well-known philosopher, Heidegger, who revolutionized the field of philosophy with his suggestion that all philosophical theories that have arisen since Plato and Aristotle are merely footnotes to them. He states that the anthropomorphic manner in which science has perceived the world is too limited, as its method excludes the expression of the unknown and the mysterious as we experience it in our lives, which hold the answers to our most fundamental questions about life and why we are here (N. Shabahangai, personal communication, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004). Poetry, he claims, is the highest expression of human thought. Poets live on the edge of curiosity about these issues, asking others to do the same (Heidegger, 1971). Heidegger himself uses a poetic style of writing to express his ideas.

Actually, Heidegger writes in the manner and with the poetic tone of the mystics, as for example Meister Eckhart, to whom he refers. Thus his enterprise might be conceived as similar in difficulty to the task of the mystics who, by an extraordinary and poetic use of words, want to take us with them beyond the ordinary and the familiar, to what is ultimate.

(Anderson, 1959, p. 14)

Heidegger suggests in his writing style and in his theory that poets can remind those of us who are caught in our limited perceptions, of life's awesome mystery.

In Heidegger's Discourse on Thinking, he delineates two kinds of thinking, meditative thinking, and calculative thinking. Epistemologically, the word "thinking" is derived from the word "thanking." A monk who is in a state of thanking, is in a state of prayer, thanking God and receiving God's gifts. This could be considered a state of giving and receiving love; the prayer is the communication line between God and the monk. Meditative thinking requires an open and receptive state of mind, like that of a monk in a thankful state of receiving. From this state, poetry and divine insights from the realm of the divine, or the unknown, can emerge through the person, who is a channel. This is the type of thinking is essential in transpersonal research, as the questions address a realm outside of linear reality. Calculative thinking, conversely, is directed by preconceived thoughts and ideas, with a specific goal in mind. Though this type of thinking is also an essential aspect of research, it is less useful in discovering the unknown (Heidegger, 1959).

Throughout the analysis and in the discovery of the findings, the process of inquiry reflected Heidegger's theory about poetry and the discovery of the unknown. In a meditative state of mind, I was a receptive channel for information that arose surprisingly from a mysterious realm and spoke through me in the language of poetry, insights and thought forms that could otherwise not be expressed. Heidegger's philosophy suggests that the poet can act as a mediator between the realm of the Gods and the human realm.

The poet is sent from the "between", from that poetizing element which opens itself upwards towards the heavens and gods while at the same time

covering the chaotic abyss of the earth and mortals. The “between” is the realm of the birth of the being of the poet and of the art of poetry. The poet, if demi-god, is born, or cast out into the between in the wedding festival which abides in the supreme isolation of the poetic mission. In solitude the poet stands in the open which mediates the relations between all reality. (Allen, 1998, p. 75)

In the process of reflecting on the poetic themes that emerged, I realized that they captured the essence of that which I had found. Heidegger suggests that the rules of grammar and the pre-programmed thought forms of language block access to the unknown. He refers to Hoelderlin’s questions about discovering the unknown, suggesting that through poetry, we can access and express information from unknown realms, such as those named by Buddhism and many other spiritual traditions, that cannot be defined or captured in words, but merely pointed to.

...Yet – and this is what we now must listen to and keep in mind – for Hoelderlin God, as the one who he is, is unknown, and it is just as this *Unknown One* that he is the measure for the poet. ...But if it appears, it is known. The god, however, is unknown, and he is the measure nonetheless....God’s manifestness – not only he himself- is mysterious.

(Heidegger, 1971, p. 220)

Poetry can potentially express the appearance of the mysterious, reflecting its mysterious manifestation.

### Contribution to the Field

This work is an original contribution to the field of psychotherapy for two reasons. The notion that the attitudes of a therapist are significant for the client and within the context of therapy is largely accepted within the field. However, a grey area still remains in terms of how a therapist experiences these attitudes, and how these attitudes come alive within the experience of a therapist; the complexity of a therapist's inner processing system has not yet been examined. In addition, there are implicit and explicit standards within the field of psychology that qualify therapeutic attitudes as good or bad. As a result, some therapists might feel pressured to repress their actual experiences out of fear of deviating from these norms. These issues have been largely avoided, in part perhaps because the focus has been on the well being and experiences of the client and not on those of the therapist. Secondly, the study suggests new categories for the therapist's personal self-evaluation and self-reflection, based upon criteria which have not yet been named, and have therefore been considered non-measurable. These new categories support the emerging formulation of the practice of therapy as a spiritual path for the therapist as well as for the client.

This chapter has outlined the research methods applied in this dissertation. It has outlined the problem and the chosen methods for data generation and analysis. The chapter also included an in depth discussion of the ethics and trustworthiness of the research, especially in terms of the special nature of the relationship between the researcher and researched. The following chapter will present findings from the initial analysis in terms of the three aspects of enlightened mind, with a brief definition of each

aspect preceding each section, the question that was asked based on this aspect, and the resulting preliminary thematic findings.

## CHAPTER 4: INITIAL FINDINGS

### Preliminary Analysis

This chapter presents findings from the preliminary analysis. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to present the link between the final findings and the initial findings, which resulted from the comparative analysis with the three aspects of enlightened mind, and to show the relationship between these aspects and the interview data. The chapter is intended to portray initial themes which are significant findings both in and of themselves, and as the background for the final conclusions of the research. The chapter is arranged in three sections, each representing one of the three aspects of enlightened mind; knowledge, compassion, and wisdom, and the corresponding findings. However, just as the three aspects of enlightened mind are codependent and overlapping, so are the details of Max's experience that I have categorized according to each of them. As a result, the initial themes presented in this chapter and arranged according to each category of enlightened mind share common characteristics which extend beyond the boundaries of the categorizations. This discovery further highlights a similarity between the three aspects of enlightened mind and Max's experience; the three categories are mutually dependent, as are the various corresponding aspects of Max's experience, and though their separation is useful for a deeper understanding of the experience of enlightened mind, it is also somewhat artificial to separate them as if they existed within a linear framework. In the final findings, this natural interweaving culminates in the emergence of new themes, based on these preliminary themes and their overlapping. The

significance of these preliminary themes does not lie in the content of the details of Max's experience, but in the fact that the categories of enlightened mind proved to be useful as an aid in further understanding his experience, and led to the discovery of aspects of his experience which reflect additional concepts from different spiritual traditions. These concepts, which are presented in this chapter, in turn formed the basis for the final findings.

### Section 1: Knowledge (Prajna)

*Interview Question #1: What was your experience of noticing signals when the process began? What did you notice, how did you notice it, and what was it like to notice it?*

The first interview question was intended to gather information that might be related to this aspect of enlightened mind. Trungpa defines knowledge as the aspect of enlightened mind that is completely intuitive as well as intellectually precise. It manifests in paying proper attention to persons or situations, who then automatically give us answers. During the phase of paying proper attention, Trungpa says that the practitioner is getting his "bearings", or finding his "ground." He suggests that at this level of experience, we no longer have to analyze or cultivate our intelligence. Our analytical and scholarly work has been done (Trungpa 1939/1991).

I was unclear about what it actually means to "pay proper attention" within the context of an interaction in the physical world. My hypothesis was that a comparable situation in the work of a Process Work therapist would be the experience of noticing signals, in the case that signals just appear, without a special effort from the therapist to look for them. This definition holds the implication that the knowledge base has already been established through study and practice, and is readily accessible. One no longer has

to think things out, as thoughts appear automatically on the awareness screen; knowledge now manifests automatically through skills and actions.

*Unfolding Initial Experiences: The Path to Finding Bearings*

In the answers to the first question, I noticed a trend in which Max talked about his initial feelings and reactions to the person he was working with, as well as his inner experience of the person and of working in the middle. He described noticing details about the person he was working with, including how they entered the middle, the verbal and non-verbal content of the presenting problem, and the possible implications of these details on both feeling and analytical levels. A key aspect in Max's experience of noticing initial signals was related to the way in which he used his awareness in order to find his bearings. In many instances, Max's first reactions did not make rational linear sense to him; he noticed that he was surprised by the reactions that he noticed, became curious about them, and used them for further discovery. Initial experiences of noticing signals included unanticipated interest in behaviors that seemed trivial, boredom or disappointment at the thought of working with a person who actually presented what appeared to be an interesting problem, excited anticipation for no blatantly apparent reason, and fear in a situation that seemed safe and predictable.

Boredom and disappointment referred to a feeling that the experience with the person would be one of work, not an extraordinary meeting between two people.

*"...I was disappointed, and thought this is going to be work. Nothing will happen for me, I will just have to follow signals and edges, and I will be bored - I won't get that sense that I am in the stream with him, and it is a real encounter of souls."<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> It was revealed in this work that the man was furious at himself for being boring.

Max's experience of fear related to trepidation about the atmosphere in the group, as well as a concern that the process would remain at a mundane, linear level. "*I was scared – I thought there was a chance that this would end in a linear discussion.*" In another work, however, excitement came over him from the start. "*...I was already excited when he came in the middle - I liked his seriousness and his centeredness.*" Max was looking forward to working with this person, experiencing an initial curiosity and interest in him, based on his perception of the person's basic character, seemingly unrelated to specific overt content about the person's presenting problem. These initial experiences, though varied in content, all arose spontaneously for Max in the beginning of each work, and were then unfolded in his inner work to access their deeper meaning.

*Mushin, free mind.* When I analyzed the data and compared it to the definition of knowledge, I thought that one way that "getting one's bearings" and "finding one's place in space and time" might manifest in the therapeutic setting was in Max's experience of taking his own initial thoughts and reactions seriously, and unfolding them to discover their depth and meaning for him in the work. This process included gathering content about the person by noticing outer signals, while at the same time noticing inner experiences. It seemed to require an openness to his own experiences, however politically correct or incorrect they might have appeared to be. This openness reflects the Zen Buddhist concept of "mushin", or "free mind" – a mind that opens up to the inner and outer experiences that are encountered, even morally dubious ones, and then soberly relates them back to the personal process (Wirth, 2003).

The conscious mind picks up a multitude of signals which can either be put into a framework that makes sense in the moment, or can be noticed and further unfolded at a

later point in the work. Signals can also be picked up by the unconscious mind through the process of dreaming up, in which the therapist's own behaviors, feelings, and focus become organized in part by the field that he has become part of, in this case the client and the group atmosphere. This first aspect of enlightened mind, in practice, suggests the ability to consider all experiences as keys to unlocking the process at hand, without judgment or censoring. In this sense, the therapist has an impersonal attitude towards his own experiences. For example, if a therapist gets sexually turned on, he might think that he is reacting to the signal of the other, who needs to be supported in the feeling that he can truly excite those around him, and himself. If the therapist is bored, he might be reacting to a need in the client to transcend a relationship paradigm that suggests he must entertain the other in order to maintain the relationship. The shamanic<sup>6</sup> skill of finding one's bearings through the process of recognizing one's dreamed up reactions requires an inner freedom that supports the ability to remain at peace with the reactions that arise in a given moment, knowing that these reactions are not to be acted upon, but rather to be applied in the process of getting to know more about the person on the other side.

The variety of inner experiences that occurred for Max, the points of meaning to which each was unfolded, and the corresponding process of the client, are discovered through comparative analysis with the first aspect of enlightened mind, and bring forth further aspects of his experience which could be considered spiritual in their apparent association with aspects of Zen Buddhism. A significant aspect that arises out of the

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<sup>6</sup> In this context, "shamanic" refers to the ability to discover something about another through the process of picking it up and experiencing it personally on a first hand basis.

experience of getting his bearings, is an experience of “mushin”, free mind, and the quality and depth of information that can arise out of this experience.

*Jewels From Experience*

Another aspect of knowledge that emerged in the data related to the idea that Max’s knowledge base and particular style has been established through his extensive years of study and practice. Many of Max’s thoughts about the person and the presenting issue, or lack of presenting issue, were based on his years of working with people, sensing group atmospheres, and reading signals; often decisions that he made in regard to his work were based on his learning from this experience. These jewels seem to be present and manifesting throughout a large majority of his work.

*The samurai principle.* Max spoke of an ongoing need to recognize and work on his own edges during his work with clients. He felt that his inability to do so would result in a minimized outcome for the client. The principle of approaching one’s greatest fears, or edges, is central to the practice of bushido, and is sometimes referred to as the samurai principle<sup>7</sup>. The application of this principle seems fundamental in Max’s work. - “*When I am giving a seminar, if I notice I have an edge against something and I don’t go into it right away, it is the end of the seminar for me.*” - This statement implies that the “unknown” paves the path of the seminar, and is the final organizer of the work. Max’s experience has taught him that if he avoids the unknown, he avoids the unseen organizational spirit behind the work. This spirit then seems to withdraw from the interactions, leaving a sense that the proverbial “boat” has been missed. The Samurai once believed that in moments of doubt, one should opt for the path of death, as the

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<sup>7</sup> The Samurai are of the Japanese warrior class, who live by strict ethical and spiritual principles.

purpose of battle was not to reach a particular outcome, but rather to force the samurai to confront his attachment to his present identity, which would be challenged at the point of death. The purpose of life was preparation for death, practicing fluidity by moving through identities. The path of death in this context refers to the path of crossing edges into unknown aspects of experience, and requires an openness to venture into mysterious territory and new identities. Max has practiced this principle and discovered its personal significance for him in his many years of experience. The practice of this principle has been a fundamental aspect in inspiring the continuation of his work with clients over the years, as it provides the ultimate practice ground for fluidity and detachment in an ongoing process of discovery and surprise.

*Seeing; transcending mundane analysis through creative categorization.* Another way in which Max's years of experience manifest in his work can be seen in the analytical connections that he makes while he works. From my perspective, he seems to make connections that negate both common sense, and the traditional psychotherapeutic model. He recognizes complex edge structures through patterns, and makes hypotheses about emerging patterns based on this recognition. For example, he describes a peak moment of realization during his work with a participant by combining many difficult and seemingly overwhelming issues into one category:

*That all comes together - sex, suicide, addiction, creativity, self-absorption, devotion and sacrifice, manipulation and relationship messes – they are all different expressions of the same spirit of creativity, and he needs them all. Only through the variety of these experiences can he reach the formidability of his life.”*

Max automatically categorizes qualities that the untrained eye might not even associate together. This categorization provides additional, implicit information about the depth of

the client's process, while at the same time organizing the information in such a way that Max does not get lost in one particularly compelling aspect, but sees the connection of the different compelling aspects to an even more compelling, larger whole. He shows an ability to mismatch categories, which leads to the formulation of new theories which transcend more overt, obvious conclusions which might result from linear thinking, verifying them through feedback, and using them to discover and enter new worlds of possibility. This "out of the box" type of thinking manifests in what appears to be an almost psychic ability to see deeply into the world of another.

The extra-ordinary ability of "seeing" has been named and practiced by South American Shamans, and has been written about extensively by Carlos Castaneda, who studied "seeing" with the Shaman teacher Don Juan. "Seeing" is the ability to see beyond common perceptions of the world from a viewpoint that is no longer hypnotized by the world of consensus reality. For the "seer", the world is never predictable and never the same.

*Seeing is for impeccable men. Temper your spirit now, become a warrior, learn to see, and then you'll know that there is no end to the new worlds for our vision. (Castaneda, 1971, p.154)*

The ability to "see" suggests a shift in worldview, in which the "seer" is free of the need for a solid and comprehensible world, and has given himself to the unknown. In the case of Max's work, this implies the ability to wander into new realms of perceiving and categorizing the signals of the person that he works with, and using these to catapult them both into new worlds.

The first category of enlightened mind culminates in three new spiritual aspects of Max's experience: "mushin", "samurai principle", and "seeing."

## Section 2: Compassion (Karuna)

*Interview Question #2: How did you decide to follow the direction that you followed?*

The compassionate aspect of enlightened mind is defined as spacious, wise, and resourceful. The practitioner looks into situations dispassionately, and can prioritize which situations should be handled immediately and which can afford to be put off. There is a sense of warmth and friendliness towards oneself and the world. The compassionate mind does not need to fight for its position, but instead celebrates the joy of knowledge and understanding (Trungpa, 1939/1991). The second interview question referred to this aspect. My idea was to focus on a particular point in each work, to study Max's experience in the moment that he took a particular track. My hypothesis was that the "decision making" process might have correlations to the experience of looking into things dispassionately.

*Detachment, friendliness, joy.* I discovered three different themes that seemed to relate to different aspects of compassion; detachment, friendliness, and joy. The first theme of detachment related to the process by which he chose to take the path that he took. In one of the works, he said that a signal popped out. Max used the exact phrase "Pop goes the weasel." In another work, he made a conscious decision about the track, based on the group environment and many different aspects of the particular situation in the moment. In yet another, he said that he chose the direction that was the most unknown, furthest from the person's primary identity, and therefore held the most sense of the nagual (the unknown). In this particular case, it was an experience of being strangely repulsed by the person.

*I felt strangely repulsed by her, and that is not an openly repulsive person. I had an intuitive feeling, as if I was sitting in front of a snake, one of those beautiful snakes that undulates, and is very pretty, but you are too freaked to touch - and I thought that has to be brought out, there is a lot of power in that, and that is what she needs to connect with.*

This feeling of repulsion pointed the direction for Max in this particular work.

*Humility and receiving the gift.* In my analysis, I thought that all of these different paths showed a sense of detachment, and a knowing about what needs to be addressed immediately. In the first, Max was waiting for the signal to pop out, implying a sense of detachment in the ability to wait. Making a conscious decision about the track to take also expresses to me a sense of detachment, looking into the situation dispassionately. The practice of detachment in regard to the decision about the path to take assumes that the psyche is non-local, and that the mind of the observer, in this case the therapist, is organized by the field. This is an art and a fine balancing act; letting go of an attachment to an outcome, while at the same time maintaining a burning interest and complete focus on the other person. If something does happen during the work, for example a signal pops out, or a particular path of action seems to call, then the practice is to accept it humbly, without questioning its face value, but accepting it as a gift from the field.

*Need for deep encounter with spirit seeking the divine.* The next theme is related to Max's feeling of friendliness towards himself and the surrounding world, inspired by a true love of diversity in people, rather than a sense of "goodness" or spiritual "duty." This friendliness is combined with a deep need to meet the spirit behind the person, beyond the realm of good or bad. Max used the analogy of delicacies that require an acquired taste for their full appreciation, to explain his love for the many different aspects that he meets in people.

*“I like that I am repulsed...that’s fun, it is like when you start to eat uni. That kind of a person is like an acquired taste - not someone you just take to - that is an acquired taste. I like it if someone hates me, or if I feel hate between me and someone, it’s interesting and also painful, there is a strange sense of intimacy and fun in that pain, its what the spirit is creating between us, and finally it’s a matter of loving God”*

From this viewpoint, there is no differentiation between like and not like or good and bad, but rather an appreciation for the spirit in the background of a person. Max spoke of a sense of gratitude about the experience of getting to know the person and the deeper motivations of their psychology and spirit. The aspiration to connect with a realm of ultimate acceptance beyond good or bad is central to many spiritual traditions, and is commonly referred to by the mainstream as unconditional love - an ideal that remains just that for most of us, an unrealistic, idealistic dream that we can only hope for.

Unconditional love is an ambiguous term, but is often defined as a love that does not depend on actions or good deeds; it is the complete acceptance of another, regardless of anything he or she does or does not do. Max’s love for the spirit behind a person has aspects of unconditional love, coupled with an additional passion to meet the spirit behind the other.

*The tantric path, reformulated.* This intense desire to know the spirit behind the person that Max works with combined with his love for the diverse manifestations that he meets in them can be considered a tantric path, but not in the traditional sense.

Technically, tantra refers to an intense relationship between the teacher and the student, in which the teacher guides the student on a path of relating to all aspects of experience, including earthly ones both “good” and “bad.” The power of all obstacles and energies encountered on the path is utilized, rather than avoided. These energies are transmuted

into their ultimate essence through practice, providing the means for realization and ultimate liberation. The powerful affects of engaging within the world of form necessitate the close guidance of a teacher, who is considered the singular authority to whom the student must completely submit. It is believed that the teacher carries the wisdom of a long lineage back to the original source of the teachings, the Buddha (Blofeld, 1970).

The tantric relationship reflects traditional concepts. At face value within the modern world, it is potentially abusive, in its lack of awareness about power differentials and its insistence on the unchanging roles of teacher and student. However, the heart of the teaching, the complete surrender and giving of the student to the teacher, could be reformulated from a process oriented perspective, and understood as the passionate giving of oneself to the spirit of life in all its forms. The teacher comes in many forms, including but not limited to spirits in nature, and strange, complicated, or seemingly challenging or unappetizing behaviors in others. From this viewpoint, the tantric path can be updated and reformulated as one of meeting life as a lover, passionately embracing the variety of experiences that life offers in its miraculous unfolding. Max describes the ultimate teacher as a mutual seeker who facilitates the learning process between the “student” and life. Intimate relationships between two people often challenge both partners to love the apparently complicated aspects of the other as much as the more seemingly pleasant ones. The tantric path that I have defined encourages this practice with life as a whole. In the words of Fukushima Roshi, everyday is a good day, even a bad day is a good day (Fukushima Roshi, lecture in Yachats Oregon, August, 2000).

*God is where the joy is.* The third aspect of this theme is a sense of joy and celebration of what is happening, free from the need to prove oneself or fight for a

position. This joy and celebration was represented in many different expressions and themes. Max spoke of an enjoyment of the unfolding, rather than a pressure to work or to get somewhere. He was guided by a sense of ease and swing, and being on. He often referred to his enjoyment of the process of getting to understand the person he was working with, an awe for the spirit behind that person, and a feeling that the meeting was a gift. The excitement was expressed in terms like “home run” – “...*from then on it is like a home run - you have a structure, you have a signal, you have a channel...*” – which he used to describe the thrill of discovering the underlying process structure. Related to this experience of thrill was one of being done.

*“I was done. Until then I was unsure about whether or not I would get to it. The moment I did, I realized I had gotten the whole thing, I got the figure, I got her fury against that figure, I got the creative, fun-loving, interesting, fluid, hip-hoppy, hey you, sister, brother – and I got the jealous sour miserable figure, who never knew happiness. I got how they were relating with each other during the work, and the role that I was playing in it all...I got the whole thing, it was really good!...and I felt done, not with assisting the person in completing the process, but with the torment of trying to make sense of all the contradictions in front of my eyes”*

With the sense of being done comes an absence of worry, coupled with an enjoyment of the unfolding of the many aspects of the client’s personal story and its meaning. I am reminded of the most fundamental spiritual belief of the Australian Aboriginals, that God is where the joy is. The path to God is not an arduous one of doing good deeds and forcing oneself into supposedly “correct” behaviors and attitudes, but one of enjoyment of the miracles that surround us in life. The path to God is the path of joy; God lives in happiness, thrives on happiness - God IS happiness.

### Section 3: Wisdom (Jnana)

*Question #3: What happened at the point that you felt you understood the process? Did anything change in terms of your experience of the person you were working with, or of yourself?*

The third aspect of enlightened mind is a culmination of the other two, and brings an omniscient overview to individuals or situations. The practitioner no longer needs to study each detail, as he enjoys a sense of the complete panorama of a situation, without need for external reinforcement.

From my experience of witnessing Max's work with individuals in seminars, I was already aware of the fact that there is often a certain point in the work that is particularly touching, both to me, to the person working, and to many others in the group. If I look around at this point, I see many moist eyes. With this question, I hoped to find out if there was a moment for Max in which his experience changed, and what this was like for him. I wanted to know if there was something "other worldly" coming in at any point during the work, as is vaguely described by Trungpa in the third aspect of enlightened mind.

*Communion.* When I analyzed the data, I found a number of themes that seemed directly or indirectly related to an omniscient overview, but much more differentiated. As mentioned previously, Max often spoke of discovering the spirit in the background of a person, which he called a nature spirit. He spoke of his love of nature, which is itself an omniscient presence. He also referred to an experience of connecting with the divine spirit in a person, and of an intimate knowing of the inner world of that person.

*“...I feel I have known her, I feel I am inside of her apartment - that is my childhood dream<sup>8</sup> - I feel I know what it looks like in there I feel I know who is living there, I feel I know why she can't get out, or why she can, or what will get her out, I feel I know her inside out...”*

This statement expresses a capacity for understanding beyond an ordinary human potential, also reflected in his reference to his experience of a Jesus figure, a sense of home, and the concept of love, all themes which imply an entity or spirit larger than oneself. His common use of phrases such as “someone inside of me” implies that there is an inner figure with whom Max is not personally identified who comes out during his work in an experience of communion. I use the term communion in this context to describe an experience of meeting the divine in the intimate sharing of experience with another that is sacred, for the miracle of the fact that it is happening. The term communion implies a holy experience of humbling accepting grace, in gratitude, and through this experience, merging with the divine.

*Enlightened Mind: (Vajralike Samadhi)*

The culmination of the three aspects described previously is the enlightened mind. It is characterized by a state of openness without beginning or end, but with wakefulness and precision. This state of mind combines a stillness of intelligence with a psychological indestructibility (Trungpa, 1939/1991).

In my analysis I have compared Max's feeling that he is a home<sup>9</sup> for others with the enlightened mind. The open house might be a product of his openness towards his own experiences and those of others, and the ability to provide a home for all of them,

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<sup>8</sup> In Max's childhood dream, he is looking into other people's windows, seeing the private aspects of their lives.

<sup>9</sup> This concept is reminiscent of the sufi guest house principle, explicated in Rumi's poem “The Guest House” (1207-1248), Amy and Arny Mindell have used the guest house principle to describe an attitude of openness to all parts.

even those that are most unwanted by primary identities of individuals and cultures. The complexity of becoming and preserving such a house involves the application of psychological skills and spiritual attitudes which are described in detail in the following chapter. This chapter has presented the preliminary themes which laid the foundation for the findings which follow.

The next chapter begins with the poem that came to me and includes the findings from this study, based on the culmination of all of the interview data, and my analysis of this data. I have used a different color of the rainbow to highlight each theme. I have presented the themes in color as well as black ink for readability. A total of six themes will be presented. The length of the descriptions of each theme varies according to the theme, as well as the number of sub-headings. The themes have been presented in the language of poetry, although the description of the themes uses academic prose. The use of poetry is meant to describe an aspect of the findings which cannot be captured in linear language alone. The first section of this chapter will begin to explain the reasons for the language that has been used in the description of the findings. The final chapter will provide a more thorough discussion of this issue.

## CHAPTER 5: THEMATIC OUTCOMES

**The Gold at the End of the Rainbow**

Gold: The Gold at the End of the Rainbow

I was looking for an answer  
 Hoping to find  
 You said ask the right questions  
 And you will see the way

*The right question is the look into the eyes of the beloved*

*Red: The right question is the look into the eyes of the beloved*

*The right question is the endless longing to know*

*Orange: The right question is the endless longing to know*

*The right question is the reverence and the awe*

*Yellow: The right question is the reverence and the awe*

*The right answer takes no solid form*

*Green: The right answer takes no solid form*

*The right answer admits its own ineptitude*

*Blue: The right answer admits its own ineptitude*

*The right answer never knows the way*

*Purple: The right answer never knows the way*

The foundation of this therapist's spiritual experience is his relationship to his own awareness process. For Max, awareness has both a sensory grounded aspect, and a romantic aspect. In this study, I have applied this definition of romance: "A mysterious or fascinating quality or appeal, as of something adventurous, heroic, or strangely beautiful." Max's experience cannot be sufficiently articulated in an academic writing style, which would leave out the romantic aspect<sup>10</sup> that is central to his experience. For this reason, the thematic findings are expressed in poetry, and described in academic prose. Although this research project did not focus specifically on the experience of the client, Max's experience is that he and the client embark together on a shared journey

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<sup>10</sup> Please see discussion page 129 for a thorough description of how the term "romance" is being used in the context of this study.

seeking the divine, whose manifestation is miraculously unique in the unfolding of each moment.

It is ineffective to venture into the realm of the sacred as a researcher, with linear questions such as how do you experience this or that, what was it like for you, or what is that realm like, etc. One of the big insights for me out of this research project was the practical realization that the questions themselves, as well as the attitudes of the questioner, actually structure the answers that emerge. Although the methodology was based on the theory from Quantum Mechanics, that the results depend on the tool (for example, if you look for a particle, you will find a particle, and if you look for a wave, you will find a wave) it was another step for me to realize the implications of this concept in practice. My in depth rationale for the importance of the researcher's love for the topic did not include a comprehensive view of the details of its application in the research process. Although I understood these concepts in my head, my personal experience as a researcher showed me that my initial questions were not sufficient to evoke the answers that I was searching for. A large part of this project was waking up to the questions that have been in me since childhood but couldn't be formulated, because in the classical linear way of thinking, there are no words for them.

The questions of a researcher who is investigating a transcendent realm and trying to accumulate knowledge are all the wrong questions, as they ask from outside of the realm into which they are investigating, and therefore cannot and will not be sufficiently answered. Answers can not be expressed if they are not addressed by the corresponding questions, and questions only get answers to what they actually ask. The "right question" is not only what is asked, but how it is asked, and why it is asked. The term "question" is

used figuratively in this sense for the expression of these themes. The “right questions” are asked through the look of a lover, in awe and reverence for this sacred space. The “right question” is looking for the gold at the end of the rainbow, knowing it is there, and knowing it can not be grasped. The “right questions” and the “right answers” admire all of the colors of the rainbow, each stunning in its own way, each needed by the whole for the total beauty of the rainbow, and all together leading to the pot of Gold. The “right questions” for the researcher are the same “right questions” for this therapist, whose work is itself the rainbow leading to the gold, and whose experience is a shimmying up one side of the rainbow, and a slide down the other, landing in the pot of Gold.

**The Right Question is the Look into the Eyes of the Beloved**  
 Red: The Right Question is the Look into the Eyes of the Beloved

Awareness is the first, foremost, and final tool for many Process Work practitioners. Awareness has a sensory grounded data aspect to it, but not only; it is also poetic. The look into the eyes of the beloved, based on the in depth study of this therapist’s experience, refers to the honoring and study of one’s own awareness process, and includes both the sensory grounded and the romantic aspects of the experience. Action in time is a prayer to awareness. To pay homage to one’s own awareness is to follow what it notices. Max not only experiences his awareness; his awareness notices what he experiences, and he follows it. Like the most unthinkably loving parent, our awareness appreciates our experiences by noticing them, and our experiences can honor her by dancing for her, making friends with her, knowing her through paying attention to her, and following her. This is the meaning of the sacred in the mundane in practice. The mundane is all of the experiences that are noticed, and the dryness of the noticing. The

sacred is the prayer to the one who is always there, noticing, which manifests in form through the practice of following one's own awareness process.

*M&m's on the Awareness Path*

*Red: M&m's on the Awareness Path*

Max suggests that one of the essential aspects of his training has been the process of making friends with his own awareness process, through the practical application of the steps which allow him to notice his experiences and unfold them. Over time he has developed a sense of friendliness towards his own awareness process, or “the one in him that notices”, and with this a sense of friendliness towards that of others as well. He uses the analogy of the steps in the tango, to show how learning each of the steps, and making friends with the steps, helps to use them for an understanding of the whole, an experience of the entire dance.

*...kata<sup>11</sup> is the original tango steps that you practice. When you practice them to the point that you make friends with them in your awareness, and when you really understand how they represent the whole, they can help you to recognize patterns. This is a large part of the process, making friends with the one in you that keeps track.*

He enjoys and celebrates the one in him who notices, and appreciates and honors this one by paying attention to those aspects that are noticed, and working with them. This friendliness is part of what allows him to embrace and get to the depth of even the seemingly most complicated feelings or reactions, such as being momentarily repulsed by a person, or angry with them, in combination with his deep seated belief and feeling that none of his thoughts or experiences are really his own. He does not identify only personally with the thoughts and feelings that come through him. This has a two-fold

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<sup>11</sup> A martial arts term referring to the form which is repeatedly practiced, comparable to a drill, on the path towards mastery.

effect on his work: first, it helps him to bring them to life without being blocked by moral judgments about them, and second, it creates a feeling in him that his experiences are also meant for those around him. Max uses the analogy of a safe cracker to express his detachment about his own experiences.

*I want to be helpful to her, so I am using my own experiences to guide me in working with her. I am interested in them like a safe cracker is interested in the tensions of his fingers - he knows if it starts to pull a little bit more on his fingers, that is usually where the number five is, before the number that opens in it... So I don't relate to my own experiences like, is that nice or not nice. My own experiences are just helping me to crack the safe, to get the path of the system.*

Max uses his experiences to guide him, and in this sense he is detached from them. His experiences are not defining him morally, nor are they defining the other in such a way. They are merely form manifesting itself in time, and he celebrates them by noticing them and using them.

*Awareness: In time and Out of Time, Now, Then, Before, and Always*

*Red: Awareness: In Time and Out of Time, Now then Before and Always*

Being a therapist is a spiritual practice for Max, but not one of sacrifice or moral goodness; it is a meditation practice. I will use the analogy of a river guide on a river, which came out of the final interview, to describe aspects of his experience. In this analogy, the river is the process of the person that Max is working with, and the river terrain is the inner and outer world of the client that he or she encounters on the path. The analogy has a timeless quality which is set in time. A river travels through time and space, but a dream river exists in a timeless place - it is always flowing only now- and in this space, it carries within it the information that plays out in time and space.

Information that plays out in time, manifesting in historic and future events in linear time,

can be expressed in no time. For example, the signals of a client carry in them stories of times past and times to come, and the “dream river guide” can relate to these signals as part of a dream map, and unfold them to find the background patterns behind the manifestation of events in form.

In practical application, this means that the client’s signals are dream doors into the dream river, they carry within them information that relates to the past and the future, the entire river path. This dream river guide uses his awareness to discover the nature of the river, to discover how the client navigates his boat down the river, to find out why he navigates in such a way, and to reflect this back to him.

He gets into the river with the other person and allows himself to be pulled into the dream stream of the client, while at the same time maintaining awareness of where he is in the moment, in relation to where he was a second ago. All of his feelings and experiences are indications of the nature of the river in which the client is paddling. Max remains oriented by tracking in detail his inner experience. This is a multi-track awareness process of being pulled down the river, while at the same time noticing himself getting pulled, and studying what the river does to him. For example, at moments he might have feelings of repulsion, or intense love, etc. At the same time, he is noticing the experience and thinking about how it might fit with the overall process of the person, the larger view of the river. This point is exemplified when Max describes his experience after being shoved by the person he was working with.

*...that shove created two things; one was the shove - but then I also really felt getting pissed inside, you can't help it. You get shoved and the shove has something ruthlessness in it. Somebody inside of you will pick it up. So I don't care then, did he do it or not, is he nice or not....I am just glad that*

*it happened because it is a way in, there has got to be something ruthless there...*

His experiences help him to get to know the river, and in that sense they are impersonal, providing information for him to discover the context of the river. Through the process of allowing himself to become entangled with the other person and all of the person's signals, while at the same time maintaining awareness, Max gets to know the river, which provides him with the necessary information to help the other person to get to know better the river in which that person is paddling, and to get along with it.

*Free Floating Down the River*

*Red: Free Floating Down the River*

As Max travels down the river, he experiences his awareness in a state somewhat like what the Freudians call “free floating attention”, from which he notices different aspects; the signals of the other, his own reactions, a sense of the group in the background, etc. These different aspects correspond to the rocks and tributaries in the river. There is someone in him who is watching and noticing as these different aspects pop up.

*...so I think it is a mix, it is a free floating experience. I am noticing different signals, flirts, etc. A signal might flirt with me or a group might flirt with me, and then the one who thinks and puts those patterns together and puts them into a context flirts with me. I think the practice is to trust that I can go with the strongest experience in the moment, and then check for feedback.*

The experience of awareness is a complex process for Max which involves his experiences in all of the channels; if he observes how a person looks down, he does not simply watch them looking down with his eyes. He feels what he feels when they look down, he listens to his thoughts as they look down, he notices everything that happens in him while the person looks down, while at the same time noticing exactly what the person does in outer physical form, in the process of looking down. This is a complex multi-dimensional experience of the person looking down. A movement that takes a fraction of a second to complete itself in time contains in it a depth and richness of information and material that cannot be measured in time. He notices what he notices, and gives all of his attention to notice what he notices. This is a subjective experience which is not measured for accuracy by the use of a machine, but is tested instead by noticing the feedback of the person he is working with.

Part of what allows him to keep contact with his inner experience, wisdom, and sense of flow while working, is his practice of noticing and going over his own edges. This is something that he has learned through experience, and from the samurai principle<sup>12</sup>, which advocates a practice of choosing the path of the highest probability of death. He says that he always attempts to go to where the biggest edge is; otherwise, it is the end of the seminar for him. In explaining this point, he describes his inner work around this issue before a seminar in which he had a fear of working with someone in the middle on the first night. He imagined the critical people in the room, who in this case were mainstream clinical psychologists, who would be assessing his work. He explains that if he doesn't work on this fear and then cross his edge to work in the middle, he will lose the sense of flow, and will instead experience himself as "worker" who is bossed around by his "inner mainstream."

*...then I know that if I then don't do it, it gets bigger, because I know that my inner mainstream will dominate me - it's a projection, not only but also - and I will give the workshop to the mainstream, instead of to my inner impulse - instead of following what is inside of me - I will give it to the mainstream, and then it's the end. I am going to be sitting there, I am going to try, I sound like I'm not there, like I am talking to an audience instead of to friends. The people that I work with don't feel I am working with them, they feel I am working for someone. So I learned that from the Samurai principle; if in doubt, always choose the option with the highest probability of death...*

Max's work can be seen as a continuous process of encountering death. To follow an inner impulse requires a willingness to leave behind the illusion of a solid identity. Following one's awareness is itself a heroic act, and as complex and complicated a process as it is simple.

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<sup>12</sup> The Samurai are of the Japanese warrior class, who live by strict ethical and spiritual principles.

*Categorization and Experience: Stacks from the Awareness Library*  
*Red: Categorization and Experience: Stacks from the Awareness Library*

In the beginning of a work with a client, he often has the experience of being overflowed with a multiplicity of signals; he jumps into the river and all in the same moment gets wet, notices a temperature, a direction, a speed, and a drift. Part of his work is to discover an underlying experience of the river which is the sum of these many different qualities, instead of getting lost in one aspect, such as the temperature, or the speed, etc. What does the person work on, how does he feel about the person, how is the group atmosphere, how does the person relate to him, and what happens inside of him in response to this? What aspect flirts with him the strongest? How is Max able to keep from drowning in the midst of this abundance of sensory information? Experience helps him in this process of differentiation and distillation of the deeper process. The study of his own awareness process has at the same time created for him an internal library, which is categorized in a much more accessible manner than the dewey decimal system.

*...maybe that is what experience actually amounts to; the ability to recognize basic patterns in singular events, and the ability to abstract from singular events to basic patterns. That is why experience in working with people is irreplaceable.*

The ongoing practice of studying signals and his own awareness process has established a default mechanism in his whole being which brings a sense of effortlessness to his work, and a consequent ability to dance with the experiences that come to him, and through him. This ability allows the perception of new worlds and possibilities, which can potentially emerge as a result of their recognition.

**The Right Question is the Endless Longing to Know**  
 Orange: The Right Question is the Endless Longing to Know

Max is endlessly driven to encounter the spirit of the person he is working with. This theme reflects and highlights the motivating force behind his work. The “endless longing to know” refers to a deeper calling that is driving him to give everything he has and more to his work. Again, his work is not inspired by a desire to do good deeds but by a deeper calling, which he has no choice but to answer. He must get to the “nature spirit” behind the mask of the primary identity. It is this spirit behind the mask that really excites him about people, and his work is to discover this spirit.

*I want to meet who they really are underneath, and the spirit in the background. I want to meet that spirit - I want to meet the other part too - but it is their spirit, it is the divine in people that really turns me on. In that sense those are nature spirits - they are amoral, in the same way a tiger is amoral.*

What inspires Max’s work, as he is working, is not a desire to help or to heal or to change, although these might come up as side-effects or aspects of what he does, but a deep need to know who it really is that he is working with. His interest is not moralistic on either end. He isn’t looking for “good” spirits, and he does not have “good” intentions. He is a nature lover, since birth, as he was brought up in the Swiss Mountains, and in his words, “by the Swiss Mountains”, and he is “spoiled” by them. “*A snow storm is a snow storm - no snow storm thinks it is a spring breeze. The intensity of nature is so wonderful, it spoils you.*”

This is not a side interest for Max, a Sunday hike, so to speak. He is driven beyond the point of his own comprehension to “get in” to the world of the person he is working with.

*I feel I have such tenacity, I feel I am like a bull dog. Once I work with someone, I can't give up until I am in. Like in those movies, there is a safe, and the safe cracker doesn't care what is in the safe, he just has to get in. I feel that is really me. There is such a tenacity in me, I have to get in! I don't care how or what it takes, I will do anything. I just want to get in and find out who is underneath...*

The analogy of a bull dog suggests that he has been bred and trained to go for that one thing, and nothing can stop him. It is not his intention that is doing the work, but a driven spirit that is deeply ingrained in him, and that he follows because he has no other choice.

When Max has found the divine aspect of the person, the nature spirit in the background, his work is done. *"I feel I reached what I was in for. I feel that is the divine aspect of her, it is the thing that is really moving her in the back..."* This means that he has both met the one who lives behind the mask, and that he understands the details of how this one remains hidden. He might not know the details of the personal history that helped to create this system, but he understands how the system works in the moment, and understands how the signals that he followed to get into the system make sense in terms of what was found. He understands the complexity of the system, in terms of the relationship, world, movement, and proprioceptive channels. His longing to know this particular spirit of the moment is satisfied, but the endless longing to know is present as long as there is nature to be discovered.

**The Right Question is the Reverence and the Awe**  
 Yellow: The Right Question is the Reverence and the Awe

The reverence and the awe in Max's work can be seen both in his work, and in the way that he describes his experience of working with people. He uses the term awe to describe some of his experiences of working, but the reverence and awe can also be seen in the way that he describes his experience. He attributes his access to the states that

come up in him to the people he is working with, suggesting that through working with them, he gets to enjoy a spiritual figure in him. It is not him, but someone who emerges inside of him, who comes out in part because of the people that he works with. He loves and appreciates both this figure, and the participants that bring it out in him.

*Something comes over me, like a sense of tenderness and the ability to hold them, and I don't usually feel that to such an extent when I am on my own. In that moment I do feel something very quiet and strong, loving, caring - something like a Jesus figure inside of me that says to them, "I see you and love you" - not love in the romantic sense, but with a sense of tenderness, a sense of tender appreciation, and I enjoy the opportunity to get in touch with that sense. Part of what I love about working with people is that the people I work with give me access to all of these rich inner states. There is something in me, a spiritual figure that comes up, and I feel she is then the home for these two, and also for Max, and I enjoy her. I enjoy being in her presence, and I am happy...*

Joining the River with another is an ecstatic experience which creates a sense of intimacy and sharing in a realm beyond the personal. There is a reverence and awe for the nature spirits that are encountered on that path. The path down the river is a lover's path. The divine is calling in every twist, turn, eddy; "come meet me, I am right here, get to know who I am!"...and the river guide answers the call, as the fellow boat person at the same time discovers the river that he has always been traveling, but might never have seen, and shares this moment of meeting with the river guide. This is a joyous meeting of travelers finding their shared home.

Max does not identify himself as being the creator of these special moments, but instead experiences them as a gift. He is filled with gratitude for the privilege of this encounter.

*I have these experiences - I am not identified with them - I more receive them as a gift. That whole experience with that person was a gift. I felt given to, overwhelmed and in awe about the fact that I could partake...*

It is uncertain now who is the guide, as the initial guide, Max, was led by the river of the fellow traveler, to this place. The traveler held the map, and Max was reading. Both were striving to discover the river, both celebrate its discovery, and Max receives this entire experience as a gift.

Max describes how a basic love and reverence for nature in all its forms allows for its discovery. Nature feels the intention of the discoverer. If the intention is to conquer, then nature will keep herself hidden. He uses these analogies of discovering nature, and of psychologically breaking through a security system (what some paradigms might call resistance) to describe his experience of helping to discover new parts in the person that he is working with.

*We are just about to destroy the last untouched nature on the planet, and I think that is good, because this will force us to find the untouched nature which is in everything that we marginalize. The reason we have been the most careful with the untouched natures in ourselves is that they encompass our dream-spaces, and we understand that these are the most precious ones. The idea of breaking through a security system refers to the discoverer, who is discovering new territory in a person, while at the same time realizing that the territory is being defended for a good reason. What eventually will let you into the system is that the territory itself - it is an old native paradigm, this is what I learned from my mountain guides - the mountain feels the underlying feeling that you have for it. If you are there to conquer the mountain, it won't work. If you are there to prove to the mountain that you can beat it, it won't work.*

This statement exemplifies Max's deep feelings of reverence and awe in his work. His acknowledgment of the rightness of keeping the dream-space protected shows his respect for this space. It is this feeling for the spirit in the background that ultimately opens the lines of communication. His reverence for life, death, and God, and his ability to see the

formless, God, or the divine, in its manifold manifestations on this planet, is the boat that carries him down the river, even when he is underwater spinning.

**The Right Answer, Takes No Solid Form: To Speak It Would be to Reduce It**  
 Green: The Right Answer, Takes No Solid Form: To Speak It Would be to Reduce It

*One of the ways that I adore the formless, is that I get to the point where I don't even want to get to the form. That is the form, that is the form that is formless. I love it for its formlessness, and for its omnipresence everywhere - in every stone and color, in the kid that winks over there, and in the bird in the garbage and in the misery and in the fury of the killer - I love it everywhere, and I don't want to name it or frame it in anyway because that would be reducing it. It is the Tao that can't be said.*

An essential aspect of these findings is the knowledge that no matter how well I manage to express them in words, the very nature of the thing that I have been studying, the source of its richness and beauty, is that it cannot be captured in words. If these findings are not read with this understanding, then their most important aspect has not been portrayed. The only way to adequately express this aspect is to name the limitation not as a limitation in itself, but as part of the findings. This is in part due to the fact that the realm that I am describing is beyond the form or limitation of words, but not only. If something is described in words, then the part that wasn't described is marginalized; this is the very nature of form, it exists because of polarity, in polarity, and/or as a result of polarity. If I try to describe something that is beyond polarity, I must already know beforehand that I will only be pointing to it, and pointing without clear direction or accuracy, because of the very nature of the tool that I am using.

To use an inadequate analogy: If I am a fish in the water trying to describe what it is to run on land, but my only research tool is observation of people moving about on glass bottom boats, then I will have the possibility for merely a glimpse of what it is like

to run. I will be able to describe something about movement, through the visual channel, from one perspective. I will be able to say something about movement in general, from my own experience of moving in the water, but I will not even have the language to say, the leg bends, the knee comes up, the foot hits the ground - which is solid - pushes, and then comes the next, nor will I be able to capture the nature of the spring from one foot to the other. The experience of walking on land still remains a mystery to me, but now I know that there is a way of moving that is different from my way, and this knowledge then changes my viewpoint, perception, and maybe even my path through life.

This analogy is meant to show that the tools we use reflect our own narrow perceptions, and therefore our findings will also reflect this limitation. If words express that which already exists within our perceptions, then we will need new words to describe new worlds. But what if there is no equivalent of words in the new realm? Then words can be used to describe what is wordless about the realm beyond words. Poetry begins to try to answer this problem, expressing feelings and atmospheres through a particular use of language. In this context, it must be noted that Max's work and his answers to the interview questions are replete with poetry and humor. He is able to capture and amplify a depth of feeling that cannot be captured in his use of poetry, and he often creates an atmosphere of ease and lightness, even in the most difficult moments, through his use of humor. A future study could focus specifically on this aspect of therapy.

[The Right Answer Admits its Own Ineptitude](#)  
Blue: The Right Answer Admits its Own Ineptitude

I am using the word "admits" to refer to the acknowledgment of faults, rather than the avoidance or concealing of them. I notice this self-revealing quality in Max's work,

which he expresses both directly in many statements that he makes during the interviews, and indirectly as a side effect of the way that he describes his experience. In many of the interview descriptions, he discusses his experience of compassion, or feeling for the person that he is working with, and the difficulty of what they are going through, while at the same time acknowledging that he too has his own struggles with life on this planet.

He speaks of this phenomenon generally in the follow-up interview.

*I think the compassion that I experience is first of all for the tough spot of being caught in a difficult situation like that, without having much trust in the river, and without ever having learned to swim. The other part of the compassion comes from my personal experience; me too, I am in the river of life, and me too, I do things that I can't explain to myself. I wake up with feelings that I can't explain to myself, I am torn over many things – so the second kind of compassion is that we are all in that river, trying to use our awareness to make it a somewhat fun and celebratory experience, including getting bumped on the head a few times...*

Max meets the experience of the person that he is working with, in part by finding an analogous experience from his own life. Although his ability to trust the river reflects a detachment from human problems, he also knows very well the earthbound struggles that we all face as we walk our paths through life. He has been there, he is there, and he will be there again. Not only is he not beyond having human problems of his own, he embraces them as part of the exquisite experience of life on Earth.

This ability also allows him to notice moments while he is working that he feels the direction that the work is taking is not quite “on.” If he is trying a particular direction and it doesn't seem to be flowing, he drops it and tries something different. *Admitting one's ineptitude* includes a detachment from ideas, interventions, and paths, and the ability to acknowledge if something isn't working and drop it. Max's experience of following feedback exemplifies this theme. One of his main parameters for following

feedback is a sense of flow. As Max follows a particular path, he notices feedback, and differentiates the feedback by an inner sense of flow. He describes this process in relation to his work with a man during a seminar.

*...then I gave up and thought this starts to feel too cramped. It doesn't have enough swing and ease and rhythm and fun in it - it starts to feel contrived, psychotherapeutic. So I decided to try the opposite direction and said, "that is a good direction but it doesn't have enough fun in it" - and I got good feedback for that - I started to feel it was like dragging, so we dropped that whole thing, and then it all flowed...*

In this statement, Max shows that he is happy to give up a direction, admitting it doesn't work. This is part of the experience of following feedback for him, an openness to noticing when it is flowing and when it is not, and following that. His ability to "admit his own ineptitude", and a corresponding lack of identification with his own ideas, allows him notice both.

Another aspect of this theme is Max's lack of identity with only one role. He does not experience himself as a teacher and a guide, only, but also strives to see and appreciate the wisdom and teachings of others. He is not only bound by consensus reality definitions of himself or others. Therefore, he is fluid around his role as a teacher, and around the role of the other as client.

*I am with whoever is part of that experience - is it me, is it the kid, is it the interaction between the two? We don't really know, and I feel so given to by that - that is why I continue to work. So I also did feel I found a teacher in him. He is my lineage too, I come from him. In that case, he is older and closer to the root than me; it is both....*

"Admitting his ineptitude" allows Max to truly celebrate, appreciate, and therefore highlight the wisdom of others. He is not personally attached to any one role that he

might occupy in a given moment, and this allows him to see and appreciate these roles as they manifest in others, and support their development.

*The Right Answer Never Knows the Way*  
Purple: The Right Answer Never Knows the Way

Max's experience of working with a person is a walk into the unknown. What they will find together is unknown, how they will find it is unknown, and if they will find it is unknown. The moment to moment awareness process is the path which is unknown to everyone, perhaps including even itself, until it takes shape in form. Potential exists until form takes shape, and although we can guess at the possible potentials, and which will take shape, the moment will decide which one comes into fruition in this time and space, and how.

A sense of flow is one of Max's inner navigation tools on his path into the unknown. However, he further differentiates this point; if the river is not flowing, he embraces the stuck-ness, opening up to that experience and relating to the river to find out why it is keeping him there. In his words, "*the river has an intelligent mind; it is not just flowing, stupidly.*" His task is to align himself with the intelligence of the river. The task in his work is not to overcome the river, or to create a damn in attempts to stop the river from flowing as it is, but to join the river; "the river always wins."

Following the unknown always carries with it an element of risk, because the outcome is also unknown. With this comes a corresponding sense of happiness and relief, when it all works out. Max describes this process after his work on the first evening of a seminar, in which he worked on and crossed his edge to work in the middle, despite an

initial fear to do so. He refers to a moment in the work when the solution came, after suspenseful moments in which the direction that the work would take was unclear.

*The relief of taking the risk, going over the edge – having the fear, then trusting that the whole thing would work out - it was like sitting there with mouth open, and the chicken flew right into my mouth! I am not kidding, that was the prize for following my own dreaming. The chicken popped up out of nowhere, killed itself, grilled itself, and flew right in my mouth - out of nowhere, the solution came...*

In this analogy, Max is referring to a principle of Australian Aboriginals; if you follow the dreaming, the details of consensus reality will fall into place, there is no need to struggle in the material world. The only task is to follow the dreaming of the moment, and to trust the unknown. The “chicken popped out of nowhere” implies an element of surprise and of magic, that does not come from hard work or struggle. It is the reward from the cosmos for the courage to follow the dreaming, and delve into the unknown, unknowingly, and with no guarantees, other than what happens will happen! The skill and the experience help to navigate the way and amplify the thrill: Shimmying up the side of the rainbow, sliding down the other, and landing in the pot of Gold.

*Who gives the gift? Who is the source of the magic? Who cooks the chicken? Who creates the reverence and the awe? Who has the awareness? Who is the Tao?*

*The gold at the end of the rainbow: finding God in therapy.*

***Gold: Who gives the gift? Who is the source of the magic? Who cooks the chicken?***

***Who creates the reverence and the awe? Who has the awareness? Who is the Tao?***

***The gold at the end of the rainbow: finding God in therapy.***

This chapter has presented the findings of the study, using poetry for their expression, as well as linear language to explain them. These styles were used to describe both the romantic aspect of awareness, which cannot be captured in linear language alone, and the dry, grounded aspect of awareness. The final and most significant finding is the gold at the end of the rainbow, which is the culmination of the aspects outlined above, represented in the colors of the rainbow. The gold, intangible and ungraspable, unclaimed, unknowable, and in this sense known, is experienced in the discovery of the mystery itself. The themes from the findings, each represented by a color in the rainbow, and their combined effect represented by the gold, will be discussed in depth in the following chapter. The chapter will provide a discussion of the possible implications of the findings from this study, including an analysis of the meaning of the sacred in the mundane in practice based on the findings from this therapist's experience, highlighting aspects of Buddhist philosophy from the findings, specifically the delineations of enlightened mind described by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, as well as aspects from therapeutic traditions.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The findings from this study show that the sacred and the mundane are interlinked in this therapist's experience of working with a client, and might imply a similar connection in other therapist's experiences as well. For the purpose of this study, "sacred" has been defined as "devoted to one service or use." The term "mundane" will be defined as "concerned with the practical details of everyday life." The following discussion will explore in further depth the possible meaning of these findings in terms of the practice of therapy, and the living of daily life. It will address the question of how the three delineations of enlightened mind have helped to understand this therapist's spiritual experience. The analysis will return to the bodhisattva concept, and how the essence of this concept has appeared in the practice of this Process Work Therapist, as the Bodhisattva is the Buddhist figure on the path to help others and him or herself to reach the state of enlightenment, reflected in enlightened mind. Although the nature of this research project does not legitimize generalizations, this chapter presents a speculative discussion about how these findings might also apply to other therapists. These speculations might later be backed up with further research.

A significant component of this study addresses dichotomies and attempts to bridge gaps between objectivism and subjectivism, spirituality and psychology, psychology and everyday life, the spiritual and the mundane, love and research, romance and reality, and the bodhisattva concept of being in the world but not of the world, showing how the practice of therapy itself can potentially be a form for the expression of these paradoxes. The discussion will first address the notion of using metaphor as a

research tool, and how this method can provide a solution for the expression of the polarities of existence. It will also explore how romance might be an aspect of spirituality and also of the practice of therapy. Finally, this chapter will include implications for practitioners, and implications for further study.

### Metaphor

Because Trungpa (1939/1991) used metaphor in the description of enlightened mind, I used metaphor to represent the findings, and Max used many metaphors in the interviews to describe his experience, I will first address the topic of metaphor as a research tool and expressive device. Lakoff (1980) describes the conflict between objectivism and subjectivism, suggesting that both hold one-sidedly to their positions regarding the “best” way to perceive reality. The objectivists, in short, believe that reality follows rational linear rules which can be discovered and tested to prove validity. The latter suggests that imagination, feelings, and intuitions show us the superior reality, which is often concealed by the general propensity towards objectivism. He suggests that metaphor can potentially bridge the gap between the two.

Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness. These endeavors of the imagination are not devoid of rationality; since they use metaphor, they employ an imaginative reality. (Lakoff, 1980, p. 193)

Metaphor is born of our imaginations, in the context of the physical world around us. Our imaginations cannot be separated from the objective physical worlds in which we live. However, an objective truth is impossible, as truth and reality are necessarily based on

the perception of the observer. Imagination and feelings need the objective world, not only for its challenges and solid forms to contend with, but also to give it a framework for existence. The world, however, does not exist separate from the realm of the observer, with his or her feelings and intuitions about it, they are mutually dependent.

Dr. Sara Halprin's book, Look at my Ugly Face, is replete with metaphor. She shows how our physical appearances can be used as metaphors for our fluctuating moods and feelings, demonstrating how the objective, physical world can itself be used to create metaphors which reflect our deeper feelings and the more subtle aspects of our personalities that cannot be sufficiently expressed in a few simple words.

Some days I am a motherly, nurturing therapist with a mischievous gleam in my eye. Some days I am a hermit, writing with my door closed, dressed in whatever sweatshirt comes to hand. Some days I dress to kill, and go out to slay demons in the world. (Halprin, 1995, p. 275)

Halprin uses metaphor in her writing, to express the concept of metaphor in dress, showing how the objective world can be used to express subjective experiences.

Trungpa used the analogy of a dance performance on a stage, to show the three aspects of enlightened mind, and their interconnectedness. Each aspect of mind was represented by an element of the performance, the stage, the music, and the dance. When combined, the three create together a beautiful celebratory show. The findings from this study, coupled with my personal experience of discovery, suggest to me that this analogy was used because it helped to portray the romantic, glorious, celebratory experience of enlightened mind, which would not be sufficiently expressed in linear language, alone,

while still representing concepts and ideas born of an objective reality. The metaphor allows expression of both.

The analogy of the gold at the end of the rainbow serves a similar purpose. The imagery and dreamlike associations implicit in the rainbow carry within them an atmosphere that helps to exemplify the heart of the findings, which can not be sufficiently expressed in an academic writing style. Rainbows appear when there is sun and rain at the same time. The broken hearted heart of the bodhisattva feels the joy, the suffering, and the tenderness of the human experience, and the heart breaks. The heart breaks when it wakes up to the suffering that we all face as we inflict pain upon one another in ignorance, out of a blind search to find happiness. The heart breaks in tender love for our struggle, and for our wayward, lovely souls. The heart breaks in the tragedy of the drama. The heart breaks in the beauty of the drama. None of us really knows why we are here or where we are going, but in the experience of the broken heart it no longer matters. In the broken heart, the opening up to the totality of the human experience, is the gold at the end of the rainbow.

#### The Right Questions and the Right Answers

An aspect of each of the delineations of enlightened mind can be found in each of the themes. In the following discussion, I will match corresponding themes with delineations that are most representative, knowing that this is somewhat of an artificial categorization, as all aspects of the themes, and all aspects of the delineations, are mutually dependent and interwoven in the experience. For purposes of a more thorough understanding of each of the categorizations, I have connected those that have the strongest correlations.

The concept of “the right questions” and “the right answers” expresses the attitudes that are needed by any researcher to investigate a realm that is sacred. It points to the realm of the poet, who accesses the unknown realm and expresses the inexpressible.

The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed *as* that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain what it is – unknown. (Heidegger, 1971, p. 223)

“Right questions” refers to a way of looking, feeling, and perceiving the other, with the heart and mind of a poet as defined by Heidegger, and “right answers” refers to a feeling about the realm that is discovered: it cannot be captured and boxed within a static framework. This concept is also reflected in the delineations of enlightened mind, and in the findings from this study regarding the therapist’s experience. The following section will provide an overview of how the three delineations of enlightened mind are reflected in the themes from the findings. An in depth description of each of the themes will follow, with connections to other paradigms; however, the foundation of these themes is established in this first section, which is an umbrella for the expansion of concepts and ideas that follows.

### *Knowledge*

The poetry in the themes of the findings is meant to express a shift of perception that is needed in the research of this sacred realm. “Paying proper attention”, one of the characteristics of the first aspect of Trungpa’s definition of enlightened mind, might

mean asking the “right questions”, shifting our perception so that we can see what it is directly in front of us. Paying proper attention means looking with the eyes of a lover, out of a deep need to know (“the right question is the endless longing to know”) with reverence and awe for the space that is being discovered (“the right question is the reverence and the awe”). The first three themes of the findings are an expansion on the meaning of paying proper attention, and the complexity of how this manifests in the work of this Process Work therapist. As a result, the answers appear on the screen of awareness, without effort.

Although the three delineations of enlightened mind are meant to describe a complete momentary experience, the first aspect results from study and practice. At this level of knowledge, there is no more effort involved in understanding or acquiring knowledge. By the same token, “stacks from the awareness library” refers to the years of practice and study that influence perception and allow for categorization of signals and experiences that create a clear picture on the screen of awareness without momentary effort. The effort came through time over years, but at this point the benefits of this effort are readily accessible and arise naturally with ease.

### *Compassion*

The themes mentioned above also include aspects of the second delineation of enlightened mind, compassion. Paying proper attention requires friendliness towards one’s own awareness process. Friendliness, love, and appreciation for what is present is one aspect of compassion, which is reflected in this aspect of the first theme, “m&m’s on the awareness path.” This is an inner and outer process, which receives anything that comes up on the awareness screen or in the signals of the other with curiosity and

openness instead of within a framework of good or bad. The warmth and friendliness of compassion is an element that is reflected in many of the themes, both in the therapist's attitude toward his own awareness process, and in that of those that he works with, but is specifically highlighted in the first theme.

Another aspect of compassion, the ability to look into situations dispassionately, is also present in many of the themes, specifically in the fourth theme, "the right answers admits its own ineptitude." This theme highlights the ability to surrender the ego need to be the one who knows the right way to do things, and is most happy to drop his own ideas to follow the flow of what is happening, setting the stage for theme four, "the right answer never knows the way", an expansion on this point.

The third aspect of compassion, rejoicing in what is present and in the happiness of being a part of this great knowledge, also manifests in many of the themes. Theme three, "the right question is the reverence and the awe", results in this sense of celebration of the spirit that is encountered on the path. Reverence and awe include celebration. To revere a person or spirit is to celebrate them.

### *Wisdom*

The third aspect of enlightened mind, wisdom, is characterized in the fourth theme, "the right answer takes no solid form; to speak it is to reduce it." This theme reflects the omniscient overview, which is also present throughout each of the themes in the one who is watching everything that happens, the awareness. However, this aspect focuses particularly on the view that is large enough to perceive at once the form in the formless and the formlessness in the form. It does not get stuck in either perspective. Out of this view comes thoughts, ideas, and words of wisdom about life in general that reflect

an overview of the person's process, which includes the present moment within the context of the larger picture, and how this particular story reflects universal themes. These words of wisdom often come out in prophetic or poetic statements, which can be found both in the interviews with Max, as well as in his actual work with people. This aspect contains Berzine's definition of the spiritual teacher, which speaks general words of wisdom about life that apply to many of us, not just the one who is working in the center.

*Enlightened Mind; Vajra-like Samadhi*

Combined with the intelligence of awareness and the wisdom of an omniscient overview, a detached observer who notices everything, the therapist can experience a state similar to that which Trungpa defines as enlightened mind, psychological indestructibility combined with the stillness of intelligence, which manifests through the therapist's awareness process in a divine dance between reality and romance.

Psychological indestructibility might be the equivalent of a combination of all of the themes, but particularly "admitting ineptitude" and "the look into the eyes of the beloved." The first implies that Max has the psychological strength to be fluid between roles and pathways. His self perception does not depend on a particular identity, which allows him freedom to become whoever is needed by the process. In addition, he is not attached to the thoughts in his own mind, and happily drops them in service of the larger process. Finally, he has the psychological tools for working with whatever comes up in his awareness. In this sense, nothing can throw him from his center. The stillness of intelligence is present for him throughout each process in the one who is watching the unfolding of the entire process, noticing everything and remaining centered and quiet in

the midst of the unfolding. The following paragraphs describe in depth my interpretation of the manifestation of the enlightened mind through the work of this Process Work therapist.

### Romance

Romance is a central aspect of spirituality which is often forgotten, in the effort towards disciplining the mind and human impulses to find wakefulness. For the purposes of this discussion, I have chosen this definition of romance: “A mysterious or fascinating quality or appeal, as of something adventurous, heroic, or strangely beautiful.”

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/ahd/r/r0292600.html>

Perhaps romance is at the core of our spiritual and worldly longings, and it is in this longing that we find our deepest connection with the divine. In this longing is something so deep and intrinsic in our natures, it can hardly be spoken. It is not only researchers, artists, and poets who are enraptured by the mysterious. Whether it is experienced in our personal relationships, in nature, in research, or in our curiosity about ourselves, the element of being entranced by the mysterious is central to many of our experiences. A main source of depression could be due to a lack of contact with the romance of life. Romance is clearly associated with love affairs, but maybe this is too limited a view of it. Romance is everywhere. Many poets and artists are inspired by a romantic longing only. What is the longing for? This question is its own answer, as the question itself contains that mystery.

Tenisha Mehrotra describes her romantic relationship with herself in her article, “An Enduring Romance with the Self.” She expresses her experience of the joy of solitude, and explains that her most ecstatic moments are quiet ones that cannot quite be

expressed. She quotes a 16<sup>th</sup> century philosopher in the end of her article, expressing the essence of her teaching.

So here I am, still, silent and filled with an exquisite joy. A sense of peace and serenity is stealing upon me; a feeling that all is right with the world. It feels entirely good, “this gift of privacy; this jewel of loneliness.” My heart echoes the sentiments of Fray Luis De Leon, who wrote in the 16th century: “And so while others miserably pledge themselves to the pursuit of ambition and brief power — I will be stretched out in the shade, singing.” Indiatimes, retrieved March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004 from <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com/articleshow/303098.cm>

As many of us struggle with the madness of humanity, others drop out and enjoy the ecstasy of union with the divine, out of the material world. Is it possible to do both, to be in the world, but not of the world, enjoying exquisite solitude in the midst of the human struggle? Is it possible to reflect the romantic joy of this solitude while participating in everyday life, not only in terms of the daily chores of everyday life, but also the turmoil of everyday life? This is a central question which the bodhisattva concept attempts to answer, and will be addressed in the following pages within the framework of the practice of therapy.

The suggestion that the practice of therapy contains a romantic aspect is potentially controversial. Often this romantic element is either worked with psychologically, in terms of transference or counter-transference, or it remains unnamed and therefore not unfolded to its deeper meaning. Perhaps it is this aspect which has created so many well-needed rules around therapeutic relationships. An element of

romance might emerge in the therapeutic setting, resulting from the combined effects of the deeper eros and romantic aspect of the spiritual journey previously mentioned, the heroic path to become oneself, and the numinous encounter with the therapist, in which the therapist meets the allies and demons that the client encounters on the path. If this aspect is not honored, but rather marginalized within the therapeutic setting, then a perverted sense of eroticism might enter the situation, expressing itself as a love relationship between the client and therapist.

The element of romance that surrounds us can be constellated specifically in a therapeutic setting, in which the sole purpose is to focus on the experiences happening in the moment. The very act of paying close attention to anything, with all of one's senses and feelings, is an act of giving oneself over to something other than one's own limited identity, and this act of giving is one of romance. It is an answer to a larger call than the completion of a task, which requires all of one's faculties.

The term "romance" could also be misleading, implying something out of the ordinary, rather than extra-ordinary. The romance of simplicity must be highlighted in this context, as it is the foundation of the awareness process, and of the process of waking up. Actually, as Sogyal Rinpoche writes in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*:

Spiritual truth is not something elaborate and esoteric, it is instead profound common sense. When you realize the nature of mind, layers of confusion peel away. You don't actually become a Buddha, you simply cease, slowly, to be deluded. (Sogyal Rinpoche, 2002, p. 53)

Life as it is, and the ability to perceive it without looking through the cobwebs of our own perception, is itself the mysterious and the fantastic. To look for it is to miss it. Life

stands before us, and our task is to work with our minds and our awareness processes to the point that we can perceive it.

An element of romance can be found in each of the themes from the findings in this study. In the following pages, I will describe in further depth the romantic and spiritual aspects as they manifest in these themes as devotion, intrigue, humility, mystery, and faith.

#### Devotion: “The Look into the Eyes of the Beloved”

The first theme, “the look into the eyes of the beloved”, shows that the act of giving one’s attention to what one notices is an act of devotion and a prayer. The romantic aspect of this prayer is related to the fascination with the mysterious, that which you notice, not that which you know. The act of devotion is a complex process both psychologically and spiritually. Trungpa outlines three stages of devotion in the relationship between a student and teacher, which he says also reflect the student’s relationship to life. In the first phase of devotion, the practitioner is merely looking for a life-vest, a way out of the misery of the world in an emergency situation. At the next level of devotion, a personal component is added. The spiritual teacher becomes a spiritual friend, who relates to the situation of the student directly and in the moment, reflecting what is happening now, not what might happen later or what has happened before. The teacher embodies the teachings and brings them to life in form. This relationship has a heavy handed component, as it forces the student to relate to what is happening in the present situation. This is not always pleasant for the ego-identity, which wants to stay safe and unchanged. Finally, at the highest level of devotion, is complete surrender of body, mind, and speech. There is no room for personal space in which to

hide. The practitioner shows all of his or her most embarrassing and tender aspects to the guru. In this manner the practitioner has opted for death, death of the identity and the right to its safety (Trungpa, 1991).

The different aspects of the awareness process are comparable to the stages of devotion in the student/teacher relationship described by Trungpa. In the first phase of development, there is no other choice but to begin following one's awareness. This is an urgent matter for a Process Work therapist, as awareness is the most essential tool. In this process, the practitioner encounters aspects of his awareness that are difficult to open up to. He might find characteristics that he is ashamed of, or afraid of, or in some way disenchanted by, and be tempted to ignore or repress them. In the outer relationship with the teacher, the teacher's role is to hold the student to these edges.

In the inner relationship with the awareness process, the practitioner makes friends with her or his awareness process, incorporating the outer teacher by staying with experiences that are difficult or challenging. Making friends with one's own awareness process involves learning to befriend and open up to the different aspects that one encounters along the awareness path, even if these encounters are difficult for an aspect of the personality. The friendliness towards the awareness process allows the practitioner to cross the edge and identify with aspects that are discovered which are contrary to the primary identity's viewpoint about how things should be. In the ultimate act of devotion, all of one's faculties are in service of the awareness process. The struggle to follow what the awareness notices is transcended, and in complete devotion, the practitioner follows his awareness as a lover, surrendering even the need for recognition or approval.

### *Peak Experiences*

In this first theme, “The look into the eyes of the beloved”, we find that the looker is the lover, and the looked upon is the loved. Through this look, the one who is seeking is allowed in, and can discover. It is a romantic look of honoring and awe, which is both impersonal, and deeply personal. This is prayer and religion, and might be at the core of what allows us to get to know ourselves and each other. This is both an inner and outer process, manifesting internally within the awareness process of the therapist, and externally in the relationship with the client. In the experience of this look, with its complete attention, welcoming, and focus on the details of experience, personal inhibitions and doubt momentarily disintegrate. This could be considered a peak experience, perhaps for both the recipient of this focus, and the one who is focusing in such a way, in which the rest of the world drops away, at least for a moment, as the two are transported out of limited thought perceptions into a sacred realm of honoring all experiences by noticing them.

Intrigue: “The Endless Longing to Know”

*Remember God so much that you are forgotten.*

*Let the caller and the called disappear; be lost in the Call. (Rumi)*

The second theme, “the endless longing to know”, portraying the deep yearning to know the spirit of the client, speaks for itself in its exemplification of the fascination with the mysterious. Who is calling and who is the called? The question disintegrates in the longing to know, and the sound of the call is all that is seen, felt, or heard. Love poems and the poems of spiritual seekers are often inspired by this mysterious longing.

“Beloved

I am waiting for You to free me

Into your Mind

And Infinite Being.

I am pleading in absolute helplessness

To hear, finally, your Words of Grace:

Fly! Fly into me!

Hafiz,

Who can understand

Your sublime Nearness and Separation? (Ladinsky, D. 1996, p. 97.)

This poem, translated from the work of the renowned Sufi poet Hafiz, exemplifies the depth of the eternal longing, which is paradoxically both always and never satisfied. The line, “Who can understand your sublime Nearness and Separation”, implies that God is right next to us, but we cannot grasp the spirit, and cannot get enough of it. The yearning for this unnamable something is perhaps a stronger need than any other in earthly expression, which can never be fully satisfied. This is an aspect of “the endless longing to know”, a deep-felt, romantic urge towards something unknown and mysterious, so close that it can nearly be touched, so far away that it can never be grasped.

The desire to connect with the divine spirit is reflected in many spiritual traditions. Each has a different approach for satisfying it. In many religions, such as Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism, one goal is to transcend earthly desires in order to find the “pure-ness” of something more spiritual. Whether this goal is achieved through asceticism, following the Ten Commandments, prayer, or repentance, the background philosophy remains the same; earthly desires must be overcome for the experience of

closeness with the divine. However, some traditions also hold that the spirit of God lies within each of us, and to love one another is to love God:

“It has been said that it is not man who is the seeker but it is he who is being sought.” <http://www.sufismjournal.org/psychology/psychologylonging.html> (Athar, S., 2001)

This statement suggests that it is the spirit calling in the background, and as seekers we are hearing the call. Is this call coming from inside of us, or outside? Who is hearing and who is calling? In the practice of therapy, problems might be comparable to the call of the spirit who is seeking. Problems and disturbances provide the map to the spirit in the background. The hound dog tracker, as Max referred to himself in the final interview, is smelling the track of the divine in following the trail of signals, hidden in the problem or disturbance, which lead to the Gold, the Spirit, that unknown aspect in the background of the client, longing to be found. If the problems are the call of the divine spirit, are they not then sacred? At the core of Process Work theory is the notion that in our disturbances lay the jewels. The disturbances need not be overcome, but unfolded to find their underlying meaning. They are the call of the spirit.

In regard to the therapist's experience, this also applies to his own experiences, which help mark the path to the spirit in the background of the person he is working with. If the sacred is considered the spirit in the background of the client, and of the therapist, and the call of the sacred is the disturbances in each of their consciousnesses, then the disturbances, too, are an aspect of the sacred, pointing the path to the revealing of the spirit. If “sacred” is defined as the service or use is to access something divine, and “mundane” as the details of everyday life applied in this service, then the distinction

between the two becomes illusory. The sacred and the mundane come together in the practice of therapy with the concept that disturbances are an expression of the spirit; the two are mutually dependent and intimately connected. In this way, the practice of therapy can potentially bridge the gap between spirituality and earthly human existence, both for the therapist who is practicing, and for the client.

The attitude that regards all experiences as sacred also belongs to Buddhist philosophy. Chogyam Trungpa defines the Tibetan Buddhist concept of “sacred outlook”, as an experience of “perceiving the world and oneself as intrinsically good and unconditionally free.” (Trungpa, 1939/1991, p. 132) This viewpoint suggests that we do not need to change our natures or the experiences that come our way, but embrace them. Here in lies the path to freedom.

Pema Chodron also describes how disturbances can wake us up. In her book entitled, “Start Where you are”, she outlines various Buddhist techniques which help the practitioner to discover the wealth of everything that she encounters in her inner world, both the “good” and the “bad.”

There is a richness to all the smelly stuff that we so dislike and so little desire. The delightful things – what we love so dearly about ourselves, the places in which we feel some sense of pride or inspiration- these also are our wealth. (Chodron, 1994, p.3)

The contents of our personalities and our personal lives are our material for waking up, and in this sense they are precious. These crossovers between the sacred and the mundane and psychology and spirituality come together in Process Work Theory. In his book, 24hr Lucid Dreaming, Arnold Mindell explains how dreaming is happening all of the time,

both in our sleeping and waking lives, and the spirit of God manifest through our dreaming.

You do not need to be a mystic to find God. Everything that happens to you is happening to God. God sleeps and wakes. God argues with herself; God has financial problems; God is the bank that will not give you the money. (Mindell, 2000, p. 215)

Mindell shows how the dreaming, the larger field in the background which could be called God, the Tao, the unknown, or the mysterious, is manifesting through the three levels of experience, sentient, dreamland, and consensus reality. Everything that we encounter in our waking and dreaming lives is a reflection of this spirit in the background. There is no separation between the sacred and the mundane; the sacred manifests through ordinary experiences, and vice versa.

Humility: “The Reverence and the Awe; Admitting One’s Own Ineptitude”

“The reverence and the awe” couples with “admits its own ineptitude.” In the face of God we love our ineptitude, which allows us to look up to something greater than ourselves, in reverence and awe. In sheer delight, we can lose ourselves in the mystery of this awe. At the same time, the reverence and the awe reflects a spiritual attitude that is well explicated by Alan Watts. He suggests that in the West, many of us are trained to mistrust nature and to mistrust our experiences. We feel we must overcome our inherent natures, and the world around us.

The problem is that we have been brought up in a religious and philosophical tradition that, to a great extent, has taught us to mistrust the

nature that surrounds us, and to mistrust ourselves as well. (Watts, 2000, p. 25)

Inherent in the definition of romance is the element of heroism. This attitude reflects one aspect of the hero-journey, to conquer the demon that stands in the way of goodness for the benefit of all. The hero's journey has been well explicated by Josef Campbell (1948), and broken down into a multitude of phases which correspond to our personal journeys on the planet. The details of this journey could be further researched in terms of the path of a therapist. For the purposes of this discussion, I have included the notion of the hero to highlight a romantic aspect of the therapist's experience of awareness, and will focus on this aspect of the hero's path.

From the point of view of this therapist's experience, it could be said that the demon that must be conquered is the one that continually tells us that our experiences are not valid, and we must change our fundamental natures. In the reverence and the awe is the ability to appreciate what is present, and the desire for a genuine encounter for the spirit, not a desire to overcome it. This is a reformulation of the hero's journey as applied to the inner experience of the therapist, which highlights the heroic feat of conquering inner and outer demons that stand in the way of awareness and innate wisdom.

At the same time, the metaskill of compassion highlights the importance of giving voice to all of our various parts, even the ones that we most dislike. (Mindell, 1995) This would then include the voice of the demon. On this hero's journey, the demon is met, and perhaps even tamed rather than killed. The taming of the demon might mean transforming its manifestation by getting to know it, and hearing its message. Maybe the demon actually brings a dry and sober element to the awareness process that needs to be

incorporated. The message of the demon would need to be unfolded in each particular case. However, the underlying concept of giving voice to all sides leads the way, and through the application of the method, does kill a certain demon, the one that cuts off particular experiences. It is a heroic journey to endeavor on the path of discovery. The romance of this journey is reflected in the mythic component, in which inner and outer demons are wrestled with and overcome, in an effort to complete a difficult and necessary task.

The Bodhisattva concept embodies the central aspect of the hero archetype, facing challenges and overcoming treacherous situations out of compassion for others. The bodhisattva who has already achieved enlightenment, but remains in the world to help others do the same, brings the notion of the hero journey to another level, as he or she is now helping the gods with their work to help humanity. (Young, H., 1999)

*We are all Baby Messiahs; the Bodhisattva Principle and Celebration*

From one perspective, we live in a world of war, oppression, suffering, turmoil, grief, competition, and betrayal. For some of us, war is a reality that we live with every day. For others, we feel its effects but it is farther from our everyday experience. For all of us, the feelings of suffering, competition, hatred, and grief, are all around us, in our inner worlds and in our relationships. The Bodhisattva knows this well, but also knows there is a way out, which is waking up to one's true nature, and to whatever little or large degree, can help to find the way to this discovery, if only in expression of a hopeful attitude which holds an alternative view that includes the possibility for liberation. In this knowledge is such celebration and hope. We are on a journey in the midst of hell, but we know we're going somewhere good, that there is somewhere good to get, and that we can

even find that place here now. Some of us just need help in finding it. The bodhisattva is a beacon on a cold and stormy night.

The bodhisattva knows the human dilemma intimately, sees the home that we are searching for, and through the action of skillful means, brings the reality of this place into form on Earth now. The celebration comes inevitably out of the joy of being part of this knowledge. Waking up to the realization of where we are, that there is a way out of our suffering, that the way out starts right where we are, no matter how wonderful or hellish a place, and that there is someone right there showing the way, creates a sense of joy that transcends the world of suffering, and can even be found in the midst of it. This may be why some of us continue in moments of utter despair; someone is there to show us how our path makes sense in the larger view of things. From this larger view, a seemingly meaningless and often miserable journey transforms into a romantic, heroic, celebratory path towards freedom from suffering.

*The Bodhisattva Principle and Admitting One's Own Ineptitude*

The figure of the bodhisattva gives everything of him or herself, no matter how skilled, without getting crushed in self-doubt. The focus is not on morality, on doing good or being good, but in giving all of oneself without judgment of the worth. The need to be good is actually an ego driven goal, which relies on preconceived ideas of good and bad, and does not trust the wisdom that is present. In this sense it reflects a kind of self-importance. The ability to “admit one's own ineptitude” is similar to this aspect of the bodhisattva, who must give up the desire to solidify the ego in the act of being appropriate and doing good deeds, and instead trusts in whatever he has to offer the situation in that moment. (Trungpa, 1991)

The bodhisattva is in the world, but not of the world. Ideally, this could mean that the bodhisattva accepts his human nature and human fate, willing to stand with instead of above, recognizing his human aspects without trying to defend them by looking good or being better. At the same time, the very fact that the bodhisattva has perspective on his thoughts, feelings, and reactions, allows him to reflect on them, and to know something of his experience that is truly not of this world of human suffering. It is perhaps this aspect that allows the bodhisattva Process Worker to work with himself and with others. The center of his identity is elsewhere, and this allows him to be fully here, knowing that everything is impermanent and fleeting, especially his individual identity in the moment.

If the bodhisattva's center is not here, then where is it, and where is the here that he is not, only. The here, that he is not, only, is that place which thrives on competition, self hatred, disavowing of the spirit, the desire to get ahead, misery about the state of things, a refusal of all of it, and a desire to repress the misery by making it in the material world. In this world nothing is ever enough. There is always a need for more approval, more stuff, and more acknowledgements. This is the hell of the human existence, so well explicated by the Buddhists in the description of the various realms that we get stuck in, the hell realm, the animal realm, the god realm, the realm of the hungry ghosts, the realm of the jealous gods, and the human realm. The bodhisattva can live in the midst of these realms, while not being quite part of them; he does not get swallowed up by them to the point that he loses perspective of the journey.

As Max explains in the final interview, he has been to these places of confusion and despair and knows them well in himself. He is right there sharing problems with the best and the worst of us, but he is not stuck there. There is also someone inside of him

who watches all of it, and knows that there is a way out. The way out is working with what is present, and the destination is a glorious place. This is the action of skillful means which can manifest in different ways on Earth. Through the path of this Process Work Therapist, the skillful means include but are not limited to the ability to work with one's awareness, and to follow the awareness process of the client. This ability can help to show the light through the crack in the window, however small, the flicker of hope promising the possibility of change.

Mystery: "The Right Answer Takes No Solid Form"—The Gold that Can't Be Grasped

Theme five, "right answer takes no solid form; to speak it is to reduce it", again highlights the mystery, which is amorphous and cannot be grasped. It doesn't allow us to get stuck in it; we are instead invited to dance with it. From the point of view of Process Work, the process is constantly changing. It is not a state oriented view of things, but is rather constantly in flux.

The very idea of process contrasts with the idea of a fixed state, which is a static picture, an unchanging description of a situation which has been broken up into parts. (Mindell, 1985, p.11)

Even if patterns can be recognized, the way in which they will unfold, and whether or not they will take form, is unknown. There is no program for life, for working with yourself, or for working with others, other than to apply the tools that help to bring awareness to what is happening in the moment. Even if the moment takes shape in form, and can be named as a part of a picture along a path, that moment is gone, and the picture is a memory.

Thus all things in this contingent world depend on causes and conditions.

The mystic knows the heart of reality and sees the lesser things as empty, without power. (Iyer, 1983, p. 46.)

This is a romantic relationship with this ungraspable, untamable, unnamable something that teases us like a lover, who plays the eternally hard to get. The formless takes shape in form, and we can admire her there, but she will soon disappear, because she is not that form. The seeker never stops looking for her, because the smell of the divine produces a constant salivation for more. For Max, and perhaps for other therapists also, working with a person could potentially be a meditation on this aspect only; where is the process now? Where is the divine now? Where is that formless amorphous spirit now?

*The Limitation of Concepts: "To Speak it is to Reduce It"*

The most important aspect of this theme, however, is the fact that the most valuable finding in this study is one that cannot be sufficiently described in words. There are many spiritual paradigms which could be used to explain this therapist's spiritual experience. I have used concepts from Buddhism, Transpersonal Psychology, and Hinduism to explain some of his experiences. However these concepts cannot capture the essence of the study or of the findings, because they are only concepts. They are not new, nor is the idea that these concepts could manifest in a therapeutic setting, or in any other setting.

Most ideologies and concepts are not new. In the years of life on the planet we have as a species managed to come up with the most magnificent ideas about life and its meaning, and countless effective ways for getting along with it. Religions, spiritual techniques, and therapeutic schools of course focus on these aspects, but currently even

more mainstream forms like sports teams and some businesses, are working towards incorporating them. Regardless of personal beliefs, the Bible, the Bhagavad-Gita, the many written teachings of the Buddha, and the countless updates on these texts which apply them to the present day and to our relationships with one another, should be enough for the enlightenment of every last one of us. We have enough information for a great feast of the hearts and the intellect.

It is not information that is lacking, but the living examples of this information, and the activation of these concepts. Ideologies and paradigms that provide methods for psychological and spiritual growth within a conceptual framework, in the end have little worth if they are not applied in practice. For example, if I have a new watch that comes with directions, and I don't use the directions to set the watch, then the watch is useless and so are the directions. Concepts in themselves, though interesting to ponder, are not ultimately satisfying to the total being. Poetry can express concepts in a way that moves us to tears, providing an actual experience of the concepts being portrayed. In the same way, a person can embody concepts through interactions with others, work in the world, art forms, or other expressions, as living examples of their teaching. Human models that inspire us through the embodiment of intellectual and spiritual concepts might be the greatest agents for world change.

The awe cannot be found in conceptual descriptions, because they are merely conceptual descriptions. The awe is in the walking of the path, the meeting in this moment in space and time between two people, in which the therapist applies everything of his abilities, including the methodology of his training, his meta-skills, his deeper feelings about life and death, and all of his natural gifts and abilities, for a once in a life-

time encounter with a companion on the path through this life. The awe of this moment is the aspect that I want to highlight in the largest print. This is the moment that calls poets to speak. It is the expression and application of these principles through which the remarkable beauty of the spirit manifests on this earth in time. Concepts can help to point to, highlight, and possibly deepen experiences, but should never be confused with the experience itself, which they are meant to describe.

Faith: “The Right Answer Never Knows the Way”

The romantic aspect of theme six, “the right answer never knows the way”, resides in the joy of following the path of something greater than ourselves, giving up the need to know out of complete faith in the one you are following. Who could do this but an enamored lover? Alan Watts writes about faith in Buddhism The Religion of No-Religion (1999): “Faith means that we know grace will happen, only we don’t know when, and we’ve got to wait. But we mustn’t work too hard on waiting, because that will be an ego effort, and the ego will stop the grace from happening.”

He continues with an explanation of various spiritual techniques which are designed to help a practitioner to walk this fine line. In the practice of therapy, the methods for remaining in a state of waiting and faith might be the act of following one’s own awareness, and noticing signals. The faith is in the process, and the unknown, but the signal awareness allows the practitioner to remain centered in the discipline of noticing what is happening, while waiting. This might even involve noticing fear and nervousness that it won’t work out, and staying with that experience without trying to

overcome it. The line is a fine one and requires faith not only in the unknown, but in one's own awareness process.

The metaskill of fishing addresses this aspect of waiting. Fishing is an analogy to describe the attitude of a Taoist, who waits in a relaxed manner until the moment to act comes forth. Until that moment, she is easy going and relaxed, while at the same time ready to act when the moment calls for grabbing the line. (Mindell, 1995) Heidegger explains the essence of waiting as a state of mind and a mode of thinking, called meditative thinking, in which the recipient is not waiting for something in particular, but resides in a state of openness to a realm beyond what is human.

There is a sense in which we can wait without knowing for what we wait.

We may wait, in this sense, without waiting for anything; for anything, that is, which could be grasped and expressed in subjective human terms.

(Heidegger, 1959, p.23)

He implies that to access information, wisdom, and experiences that are out of the known human world, we must reside in a state of waiting that is free of expectation. It might be similar to "Waiting for Godot", only the one waiting already assumes in advance that Godot isn't coming, and happily waits anyway.

Martin Buber writes about critical moments in which the therapist is called to leave the safety of methods and personal identity and enter the abyss of the unknown with the client.

...What is demanded of him is that he draw the particular case out of the correct methodological objectification and himself step forth out of the role of professional superiority, achieved and guaranteed by long training

and practice, into the elementary situation between one who calls and one who is called. The abyss does not call to this confidently functioning security of action, but to the abyss, that is to the self of the doctor, that selfhood that is hidden under the structures erected through training and practice, that is itself encompassed by chaos, itself familiar with demons, but is graced with the humble power of wrestling and overcoming, and is thus ready to wrestle and overcome ever anew; (Buber, 1999, p.18-19)

Leaving behind the safety of the known realm and a solid identity, described by Fraelich as living on the cutting edge (1988), or by Heckler as “letting go to the unexpected” (1991), requires faith in the wisdom of the abyss, and in the gift of one’s own personal power to make it through. This gift is not of one’s own accord, it comes from a place beyond the limits of a personal identity with its own definitions and boundaries. The will and ability to overcome the challenges that are faced in the abyss come from a larger source through grace. Human will alone cannot bring us to the heart of things, it merely provides the channel for this gift.

*Grace.* Max describes the grace that falls upon him in his work with people as a reward for following the dreaming. In the second interview, he suggests that after crossing his personal edges during and before the process, following the most unknown and auspicious aspect for him, he is rewarded by the grace of a signal appearing and unfolding before him, without any effort on his part. This experience could be seen as a deepening of Fraelich’s concept, “spontaneous occurrence” (1988). It includes the fear that it won’t work out, and the relief and thrill when it does! He follows the Aboriginal principle, that if you follow the dreaming, the details of consensus reality will fall into

place, referring to his theoretical teaching in the seminar, that no matter how desolate a place you might find yourself, if the spirit has guided you to go there, and you have followed, you will be cared for. The chicken will fly into your mouth, kill itself, and cook it self to feed you!

*Giving and Receiving; in Service of the Larger Spirit*

This entire research process for me was a gift, and a great challenge to adequately acknowledge and accept the gifts that were falling into my lap on an ongoing basis. In formulating the research question, ideas came to me seemingly out of nowhere. In moments that I was close to a sleep state, an idea would just appear on the screen of my awareness, and I would know that was the one to follow. The best ideas (in my mind) were those that came to me effortlessly. The gift of studying Max's work was unfathomable, and still is now. Studying the one I am deeply enamored by, and using love as my method to discover more about that which I perceive to be the most sacred space imaginable, is a truly remarkable gift. The list goes on. In countless moments throughout the process, magical encounters provided the next step. In moments of despair when I was ready to give up, the answer would appear, either through an idea that came to me, or through a helping spirit on the outside who was the carrier of the next piece of information that I needed, and was happy to pass it onto me. I was helped in amazing ways. The generosity that was bestowed upon me from the spirit realm and from the human realm was unthinkable.

It sounds like an absurd challenge, but it remains one of the largest ones for me. How to accept these amazing gifts that come my way, and do justice to them through my expression? How can I sufficiently express my gratitude, in service of the spirit and its

carrier? I become nervous, and rightly so. I on my own am unworthy of these gifts, and no matter how much I work on myself, I will never feel that I, Ellen, “deserve” these gifts, because no one person does. But I am not only Ellen, I am a vessel for new information to be brought forth into this world. If I push the gifts away, I am saying no to the gifts of the universe, I am saying no to God. In my mind, this is perhaps the only sin. I have sinned many times in this process and throughout my life, in all of those moments that I was too blind to see the help that was knocking at my door, because I was too busy thinking that I am a person named Ellen, only, forgetting that I am a messenger for God.

The essence of this teaching is expressed in the words of an aboriginal elder and beloved teacher of mine. She and her husband and family were living in a small crowded space, with no electricity or amenities. When we visited them we had to make sure that we didn't so much as look twice at anything they had, because they would give it to us. Their generosity was unfathomable. Her body was very sick at the time. We brought three cooked chickens for them, because her husband told us that she would like that. As we were leaving, we said to her, “We brought you some chicken” and she replied with enthusiasm, “We'll take um!!” Her words remain in my heart and in my soul, as the final teaching for receiving. My heart smiled when she answered, I felt she had given me those chickens tenfold, in her definitive, unapologetic acceptance of them. She was not confused about identity boundaries, as I am, and she understood that giving and receiving are one in the same. If you really receive, you actually give, and if you really give, you actually receive.

These stories relate specifically to this project. First, they reflect Heidegger's theory about the meditative thinking style. If you are in a receptive mode, you can hear

answers to questions that you barely knew you had asked, and the divine speaks through you. This research project was divinely inspired.

Second, in my opinion this is a central aspect in the findings regarding Max's experience of the divine when he is working. Max's work is a gift for him. He is receiving, in an open state, the insights of his awareness, and the experience of meeting the spirit of the person that he is working with, in a divine encounter. He is receiving the gift of his own inner experiences. He is receiving the chicken as it kills itself, cooks itself, and flies into his mouth. In the process of receiving, Max is also giving, giving himself to the process before him, giving himself to all that he notices, giving himself in a prayer to his awareness, and giving himself to the divine.

The Tibetan Yogis of dream and sleep differentiate between three types of dreams. They believe that all of life in form is a dream, it is just easier to see the illusionary nature of dreams when we wake up from them out of sleep. The first and most common type is the samsaric dream. This type of dream is a reflection of our lives in the illusory world of samsara. Even when aspects of these dreams refer to the teachings or to one's teachers, they still exist within the realm of polarity and illusion, resulting from the projections of the limited mind of the dreamer, and are therefore considered superfluous. To focus on this type of dream is to focus on illusion. The second type is a dream of clarity. This type of dream is born of a transcendent or divine realm. Although still manifesting within and through the realm of polarity, this type of dream is experienced as a gift, rather than the result of the dreamer's projections. Clear Light dreams are the most uncommon type of dream, in which the dreamer and the dream have transcended the

realm of polarity; there is no longer separation between the two, the mind is experienced in its purest form. (Rinpoche, T.W., 1998)

In the same way, it is possible that a therapist's work occurs on one of these three dream levels. A therapist who applies tools, skills, and even feeling attitudes that might be spiritual in nature, is still operating at the samsaric dream level if these tools and attitudes arise out of the therapist's own projections onto the client and onto the world. However, if the therapist receives his knowledge as a gift, the therapist might be working at the second level, which is a step beyond ordinary perception. Although the content or manifestation in form might appear the same, the quality of the dream is very different, and carries with it the sense that it is emerging from another world, perhaps the same world from which Heckler would describe a perception of healing for all, both the therapist and the client (1991). This level might over time help both the therapist and the client to glimpse the third level of pure light, although at this level, all content born of polarity would be non-existent, including the relationship between the therapist and the client, and all of the content of their work. This would be an official ending to the work between them, although there would be no one there to frame it!

The notion of being a vessel reflects aspects of various spiritual traditions. In the Buddhist tradition, this concept is exemplified by the Bodhisattva principle, the giving of oneself in service of something larger. At the same time, it is also the heart of Process Work, the heart of Buddhism, and the heart of Heidegger's philosophy. In Process Work, the practitioner is ideally a servant of the Tao, or the process that is unfolding in the moment. The experiences of the Process Worker are an aspect of the field and belong to

the process. In this sense, the Process Worker is a vessel for the information of the field, as is the client or the group that he or she is working with.

Individual experiences are meant for the whole, and Process Workers are trained to help to bring out this information. Heidegger believed that it was the poets who were channeling the information of the divine, sacrificing the linear rational mind in the service of mystery and the unknown. The Bodhisattva, the Process Worker, and the poet, are servants of something larger than themselves. These are all different versions of a similar act, the giving of oneself in service, whether this gift is for all sentient beings, for God, or for the process of another. This act of giving ourselves completely to something larger than our own personal limited identities, paves our roads to freedom, and points the path to the divine.

### Conclusion

Romance might be a large aspect of what carries us through, in the midst of the madness and suffering of this world. Romance might even be part of the reason for transference in therapy: the romantic aspect is needed by the person as a source of inspiration. Romance happens spontaneously. It cannot be produced. Spiritual experiences are also most often spontaneous occurrences. Perhaps spiritual, romantic experiences are happening always, but we must shift our perception to see them.

In the midst of a treacherous life, it is somehow a miracle that any of us manage to make it through some of the hardships that we encounter, and create something meaningful out of the experience of being alive. It is something truly magnificent that gets us through, and this magnificence must be celebrated. If we can find a way to get along with life and with ourselves, without getting eternally stuck in our identities, we are

truly blessed. There is an old Buddhist parable about a burning house. A wise woman yells, “the house is burning, you have to get out!!!” and the people inside say, “but what is it like out there, what is the weather like, who is there, how will we make it there?...” So many sit in the house as the fire burns. Those that are part of the rescue force, those that see the fire and say “yes, get me out of here, get out of here, I’ll help you” - are all potential bodhisattva heroes, who say in the midst of the fire, even if they themselves are getting burned – “I will make it and help you too, because I can’t make it if you don’t.” The bodhisattva knows there is gold at the end of the rainbow, and in seeking it, reflects it in the here and now, inspiring others to do the same.

#### *Implications for Practitioners*

This study highlighted certain aspects of this therapist’s experience of awareness. Included in this topic is his experience of following the unknown. This therapist’s experience exemplifies concepts from many different spiritual traditions, yet the therapist does not consciously try to have these spiritual experiences. He follows what happens inside and outside of him, and this brings experiences similar to those described in many spiritual traditions. The spiritual realm can be accessed through working with everyday problems.

Following the unknown is not a new concept in Process Work, but getting to know more about this therapist’s experience brings greater clarity for others who are less comfortable with the unknown! It is a paradox, because the unknown is by definition unknown, but some know themselves better in this area. For example, if you are a runner, you might have the experience that in the first ten minutes, you feel you can not go on and you want to quit. After this ten minutes, you are warmed up and could go an hour,

but if you didn't know this was your pattern, you would stop after two minutes and think today isn't the day for you. The same might apply to the experience of following the unknown. If you are get uncomfortable, and do not know this is just part of the experience, you might freeze, or feel the impulse to control things. For students of Process Work and of other spiritual disciplines it may be helpful in the learning process to know that the experience of the unknown, for one Process Work therapist, is one of thrill, fear, surprise, and grace, that is always new.

These qualities might be considered by some to be a product of youthfulness, and are often looked upon with nostalgia by long-time practitioners in any field. It could be relieving and also helpful for those who have experienced burnout, that this is the case. Romance is also something that is associated with youth, and with love affairs between young people, but this study shows that in this therapist's experience, romance is an aspect of the divine, the divine is an aspect of daily life, daily life is an aspect of therapy, and if we follow the joy in our hearts, we will find God.

For therapists who struggle to create, cultivate, and sustain attitudes that are considered "appropriate", "good", or "correct", this study could be useful and relieving. Findings might show that it is not the actual manifestation of the attitude that matters, but the attitude towards the attitudes that manifest! With this realization, therapists could instead attempt to cultivate openness to their own inner experiences, regardless of the "goodness" or "badness" of them. For example, if a therapist notices a feeling about a client that could be considered unloving, the therapist might now enjoy the freedom to explore that feeling, without simply trying to repress it, transcend it, or become better. This shift in perception could potentially relieve the burden of self-control and

manipulation, which is at best exhausting, and at worst fatal for the life of the therapist, the client, and the experience that was marginalized in the process.

The findings from the study of this therapist's experience could provide new categories for self reflection and personal evaluation, and for studying one's own awareness process both during the work with the client and after. In addition to studying the client's linear process and discovering possible interventions that could be applied in following sessions, the therapist could use these categories to further understand what happens in his own personal experience, which might affect his ability to work "effectively." This awareness would allow further exploration of these issues, which could assist the therapist in his personal development both in terms of his own psychological and spiritual growth processes, and his work with clients.

An important contribution from this study is that each research method on its own would have been insufficient; the combination of research methods from humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences was necessary. Interdisciplinarity is manifested not only in the content of the subject but in the methods of inquiry.

The practice of therapy can be a meditation practice, an ecstatic dance, an extreme sport, a journey home, a prayer to the divine, a helping hand, a meeting between friends, an encounter with nature, and a journey into the unknown. Life itself is a journey into the unknown, and the practice of therapy for both the therapist and the client can help to bring awareness to this journey. Through this awareness comes a recognition of the mystery, of the joy, the pain, and the sorrow, the most strange and wonderful experience of waking up to find out not who we are, but where we are, how we are, and who we are here with. In its simplicity it is the most magnificent journey of discovery, and the joy of

the discovery and the recognition and sharing of this joy along the way is the spiritual in the mundane in practice.

If all of us believed deep down that we were bodhisattvas, and that our lives and talents, however great or small, were needed by the whole, we would express something different in our demeanors and in our work. I can feel it now as I write, the idea that my life is meant for the service of the larger whole makes me want to interact with people and with the world in a fresh new way. It changes my feeling about who I am in the world. Already I feel I have nothing to prove. This attitude would have to affect those around me, creating a domino effect. Maybe life is as simple as a game of dominoes, and the bodhisattvas are set up to win!

#### *Methodological Limitations*

Data that is gathered through interviewing is based upon the subjective perspective of a single individual, and is therefore susceptible to flawed or skewed recall on the part of the interviewee, resulting in omissions, additions, or a lack of precision in the process of later reflection. As a result of the above-mentioned problems, as well as limitations in sample size, findings from this study are not generalizable. In addition, findings might reflect experiences of many other therapists, but the limited sample size may give the false impression that these experiences are unique to this therapist and cannot be accessed by others. Information is also subject to misinterpretation by the interviewer, due to human inadequacy and personal bent (Braud, W. and Anderson, R., 1998).

Conclusions from this type of inquiry rely on the participants in the study. Although this method provides an in depth interpretive understanding of a particular

experience, it is not set in context of the events that precede or follow it. An additional limitation unique to transpersonal inquiry is the difficulty in describing numinous experience, whose essence exists outside the realm of definable thought form, and cannot be captured in words.

The interview questions were based on the idea that there is such a thing as a linear process. I imposed a distinction on different phases of the work based in part on linear time. I hoped that this would help me to hone in on particular aspects of Max's experience at particular moments. Although the interview questions were effective in generating data, the imposition of this artificial categorization onto the work might give the false impression of a linear process, when in fact, these aspects that I was studying are present throughout the work at different moments in the therapist's experience. Much of the data that related to the first aspect came out of the question which I asked about the second aspect. This could also be due to the fact that the aspects of enlightened mind are also fabricated categorizations. They are mutually dependent, and presented in a linear manner as if one leads to the next, when in fact the expression of enlightened mind, according to Trungpa, is a three-fold process arising concurrently.

#### Implications for Further Study

This study uncovered new topics of interest that could be investigated by future researchers. A further study could investigate the possible correlation between romance, meaning, and depression. Another study might investigate how the therapist uses poetry in interventions to express timeless wisdom, studying how the therapist a poet, channeling information from a divine and unknown source, and using poetry in interventions. This research brought me into uncharted waters. It did not investigate the

possible effects of the therapist's experience upon the client, nor did it investigate the experience of the client. This is an interesting topic for further research. I hope that the findings will provide possible categories or structures regarding the therapist's experience, which can later be compared to the experiences of other therapists, and linked to their effects upon clients. Many researchers agree that the therapist's attitudes affect the client, but have not ventured into the study of the therapist's experience behind these attitudes.

Finally, this study suggests the possibility of a mirroring process between the researcher and the researched. For example, my personal findings as a researcher from this study could actually be called my spiritual experience of research. It might appear that my most significant findings as a researcher, about being a vessel for information from another realm, correspond to Max's experience while working. This is an essential topic of discussion, which includes the question, what is the source of inspiration? Is a mirroring of the source of our inspiration the thing that binds us, and bonds us, and brings us that sacred, intimate connection with another? Further studies could investigate mirroring between therapist and client, beyond transference and counter-transference, studying personal myths, how they might be reflected in the mirroring processes between therapist and client, and how this aspect affects the therapeutic process.

It is my hope that this study will also inspire further studies of the experiences of other therapists, validating an emerging trend in the field, which shows that the practice of therapy can be a spiritual practice for both the therapist and the client, in which both endeavor on a spiritual journey towards awakening. I will conclude this analysis with the words of Milarepa, though the collective path has just begun.

From now till enlightenment's attained  
May I accompany you, lord of yogis,  
Inseparable always like body and shadow.

In your company may I realize the essence  
Of natural state, and win enlightenment unexcelled.  
May I then work for others' welfare  
And thereby liberate all beings.

(Milarepa, translated from oral texts, p.100)

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