A Formative Evaluation of a Psycho-Spiritual Education Programme and its Effects on the Lived Experience of the Students.

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Abstract

This research starts by defining the related areas of psycho-spiritual studies and gives the background history to the subject and the researcher. It relays the educational influences of contemporary spirituality and introduces the work of a psycho-spiritual learning programme. In the literature review it discusses seminal and current writing on the subject theorising the validity of educational practises in this field, it also compares and contrasts known models of spiritual development. The thesis argues the case for the methodology and methods of a qualitative formative evaluation of a psycho-spiritual programme that uses intuition as an instrument for spiritual Self-development. The thesis discusses the implementation of the mixed methods. The data is analysed by the collection of experiences of the individuals who have undertaken the programme and the effects it had on their personal lives (lived experiences). Finally it locates the work within contemporary environment and looks whether it has any value for spiritual education in the future.
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INTRODUCTION
This section gives a history of psycho-spirituality, definition of key areas and the researcher's background

*Psychic does not necessarily mean paranormal although some texts suggest that certain paranormal events may more likely occur here. Rather it refers to psyche as a higher level of development than the rational mind per se* (Wilber 1996, p.247)

DEFINITIONS:

**Psycho-spiritual Education:** Spiritual development is increasingly attracting scholarly inquiry which has grown in a postmodern climate that has allowed us to examine individual values, choices and cultural notions (Rodger 2000a). Psycho-spirituality has its philosophical roots in the mystical traditions of both East and West, also in modern psychology (Heron 1998), psychic and healing practices. It suggests that we all possess an inner divine nature (McGinn 1998) that once acknowledged, accepted and actualised will lead the individual towards spiritual advancement. This inner essence, or core, is akin to the classical notion of the soul (Willard 1998). In mystical tenets (Stace 1960) and some psychological disciplines, including humanistic (Maslow 1971) and transpersonal psychology (Whitmore 1986), the individual is seen to actualise progressively through dissolution of the different ‘states’, ‘layers’, ‘masks’ or ‘personas’ that cloak this inner being. In mystical literature (Underhill 1999) and theosophical thought (Besant 1903) these outer layers are referred to as ‘veils of illusions’ or ‘sheaths’. This unfoldment is seen to need an awareness and understanding of one’s psychological processes (Borstein 2000) through which one can allow the spiritual aspects to emerge. It therefore necessitates the individual developing holistically (Forbes 2003). Through the work of the School of Insight and Intuition (The School) I am investigating a spiritual programme that embraces these mystical concepts, alongside the theory that the individual’s own intuition can assist spiritual development. This research...
is not, however, attempting to authenticate psychic phenomena; parapsychology (Kelly 2001) can be found through other academic and psychical research (Morris 2001).

The use of intuition in the psycho-spiritual process is thought to put the individual in command of their own spiritual journey (see Chapter Two). Spiritual Self (see page 10 for explanation of ‘Self’ with capital S) development is seen as a pursuit of a higher form of knowledge which may be much better understood by more subtle means and therefore requires different methods of learning. It is believed that a psycho-spiritual teacher cannot give the student the information but can ‘give birth’ to the inner knowledge of the highest Self. This concept is true to the etymological meaning of ‘education’, *educe*: to draw forth, or, lead from a latent condition. This ‘drawing forth’ suggests that some potential, dormant, hidden or veiled state is already in existence. Psycho-spiritual education therefore is seen as an emancipation of the spiritual nature or highest Self (Welwood 2000) and it involves leading a person through the process of finding deeper relationship with God and consequently finding greater truths and morality. However, the moral judgement of the individual is seen as being specific to the individual and does not necessarily need to be grounded in the sacramental and corporate life of a religion (Rogers 2001).

*Psycho*: In this research the prefix *psycho* is being used as the dictionary definition; of or pertaining to the mind, body and spirit and hence the holistic person. Its derivation from Greek roots of *psyche*; to breathe, life, soul. Its meaning is allegorically echoed in the Greek myth of Psyche and Eros (Campbell 1968). Aphrodite, Goddess of love, gives the mortal princess
Psyché many tests and trials to establish whether she is acceptable for Aphrodite’s son Eros. When Psyché succeeds, she is given the cup of immortality to drink, upon which she sprouts wings. This, for the ancient Greeks, was a symbol of the soul and transformation. Behind this seemingly romantic story lies the principles of psycho-spirituality, as it suggests that through tests and trials of life and supreme love, a personal transformation can occur.

Psyché: is the soul and logos means ‘the word’ or ‘sign’, from which we derive ‘psychology’, but for many years psychology has concerned itself largely with aspects of the mind and behaviour. This was due at least in part to Freud (Jones 1982) who directed psychology away from the spiritual aspects with his strong antipathy of religion. Freud stated:

a person’s relationship to God depends on his relationship to his father in the flesh and oscillates and changes along with that relation and that at bottom God is nothing other than an exalted father (Epple 2003, p.177).

This statement is apparently removing God from the transcendent into personal relationships. However, there is some suggestion that the German word Seele is lost in the translation and was always referred to as the ‘mind’ as opposed to the ‘soul’ which according to Strachey (1974) is the correct derivation of the German word. Jung (1960) uses the word psyche interchangeably with the same German word Seele. It seems therefore likely that Jung included ‘soul’ in psyche’s meaning, as he propounded that it pertained to the ‘numinous’, meaning it has a spiritual quality and suggests the presence of divinity. However, Jung also used the word in much broader terms to include the ‘totality of all psychic processes conscious as well as unconscious’ (Samuels 1986).
Spiritual Self-awareness: Currently the Oxford English Dictionary has a long list of definitions related to the self, which describe emotional, mental, physical or spiritual aspects of ourselves. Rowan (1993) also cites dozens of types of self. The psychological perspectives on the self have a long history (Silvia, Duval 2001) Cooley (1902) James (1890) and Mead (1934). In his seminal work, principles of psychology, James (1890) posited three aspects of a personal self-awareness: 1. A material self; society and the family. 2. A social self; perceptions of oneself by others and 3. A spiritual Self; important emotions and motivations (Pedersen, Williams, Kristensen 2000). It is interesting that James cites emotions as a definition of the spiritual self because emotions are generally thought to be very different in quality to spiritual ones (Heron 1992) and are believed to obscure the deeper, spiritual senses; however, it is possible that by using the word ‘important’ James may be referring to some deeper sense or feeling.

In the last 20 years a vast industry has grown up around self-help groups and therapies (Roof 1999) and the meaning of self has become somewhat of a jargon term. In psycho-spiritual studies, the spiritual aspect of self is seen to be the higher aspect of self. However, the term higher self can also be confusing because the ‘higher self’ can also be seen as the innate, core and soul aspect of self which can also be referred to as the inner self, nature or being. Conversely, the lower layers of self include the more mundane or known aspects i.e. the social, emotional, mental, psychological, ego or personality selves and in contrast with the higher Self they do not necessarily make contact with the essence, spirit or soul of the person. The Western cultures’ concept of the self can be ‘really the outer layers of personality and
not their true inner selves' (Haynes 2000). However, psychologists such as Jung (1983) Assagioli (1974) and humanistic psychologists such as Rogers (1994) and Maslow (1987) have sought to incorporate this 'higher' aspect of Self within their work.

(Note: To differentiate between the various aspects of self in this work, reference to the higher self will start with a capital S and any to lower self will start with a lower case s).

The negative aspects of self which include the physical, lower mental and emotions, are seen to be like veils that obscure the true inner nature or highest Self which need to be parted or drawn away as the individual journeys deeper and deeper towards the core of spirit. Spiritual development is not so much concerned with accumulating information as understanding it experientially. Jung’s definition of the 'higher' self is:

The self is the God within and the individual in seeking Self-realisation and unity becomes the means through which God seeks his goal (Jung 1983, p.20).

Although Jung (1960), like his early mentor Freud (Jones 1982), largely denied anything connected to religion, nonetheless he wrote extensively regarding the spiritual, seeing it as ‘infinite spaceless, formless imageless’. In the Dictionary of Critical Analysis of Jung, (Samuels, Shorter and Plaut 1986) state:

he also linked spirit with having a purpose, a kind of intuitive force which connects and influences disparate events. He not only believed in a spirit world full of discarnate beings, he also made use of dreams and he highlighted the necessity of man’s conscious relationship to spirit (Samuels, Shorter, Plaut 1986, p.141).

In the New Age Movement (see Chapter Two) ‘self spirituality’ (Heelas 1996) is used as a common phrase and although many of its concepts can seem
similar to psycho-spiritual studies, there is little consensus on how to obtain depth Self exploration. In this work the term Spiritual Self-awareness refers to the ‘deepest’ or ‘highest’ core aspect of Self.

Personal Growth: Personal comes from the Greek persona, meaning ‘mask’. Personal growth is seen to deal with the outer or lower influences; the mask or persona self. Personal exploration can lead to varying degrees of awareness, and, although the end result of this personal search might lead towards what the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers (1994) calls ‘the fully functioning person’, this may not take you into any depth spiritual areas. Confusion arises regarding the understanding of these terms as it is possible to undertake personal growth without necessarily being spiritually Self-aware as described earlier. In psycho-spiritual practices there is a belief that a student can break out from the lower personal psychological patterns, wherever they originated (Byram 1999), but the student is advised not to linger on these levels but move swiftly towards more in-depth awareness.

Spiritual: During the years of my research the whole subject has expanded and currently has much scholarly attention. Spiritual (see also chapter two) relates to the non-physical, and can be thought of as ‘the realm that lies beyond the physical reality’ (Klimo 1988). Spirituality can also refer to an awareness of one’s inner self and a sense of connection to a higher being (Stranahan 2001); it might be perceived to be common to all religions, but need not be connected to any. A Catholic theologian describes it as ‘the way we orient ourselves toward the divine’ (Bruce 2000). It is also described as ‘the personal link to the higher self and the universe’ (Tosey 1996). Religion is described as:
a particular doctrinal framework that guides sacred beliefs and practices that helps structure how people worship (Stuckley 2001, p.70).

Conversely spirituality can also pertain to:

intense and profound inner experiences that a spiritual person is characterised by such traits as awareness, breadth of outlook, a holistic outlook integration, wonder, gratitude, hope, courage, energy, detachment, acceptance and love ... that which enables the growth of positive and creative values in the human being (Borman 2000, p.125).

In the context used within this work, spiritual is not confined to any particular religion or dogma, but rather it is used according to its Oxford dictionary definition, which refers to the 'essence' or 'core' of an individual.

Ontologically every individual, regardless of their culture, has a core deep part of self which is considered the highest aspect of self and spirituality is thought to be realised through personal encounters and experiences with the numinous. This concept is integral to psycho-spiritual practices and in this sense learning is achieved, not just in the head or even the heart but actualised in the lived world of the individual.

**Intuition:** Some assert that intuition is 'not a magical sixth sense but a sophisticated form of reasoning', an 'understanding without rationale' (Lamond 2000). Others suggest intuition is 'subjective, non-scientific, unmeasurable and perhaps unteachable' (Effken 2001). Some Schools of thought claim a connection between reasoning and intuition (Baylor 1997) and according to mystical traditions, contact with intuition is often seen to be achieved by a state of stillness, or meditation (Wilber 1996). There are a variety of meanings about intuition including:

Koestler (1964) characterises it as the sudden emergence of a new insight. Baylor (1997) describes it as the integration of immediacy, reasoning and the sensing of relationships. Bruner (1960) portrays it as the intellectual technique of arriving at plausible but tentative
formulations without going through the analytical steps by which such formulations would be found to be valid or invalid. Jung describes it as the psychological function that explores the unknown and senses possibilities and indications which may not be readily apparent (Baylor 2001, p.237).

All these give some sense of availability and accessibility, not something learnt, but like sight, smell and taste, readily present. Maybe its very immediacy is the very reason it goes unnoticed, ignored or taken for granted and therefore becomes hard to analyse.

Intuition is sometimes associated with psychic practices, unseen or unexplained forces, and, by association, intuition, have often been denigrated to being seen as a fantasy or unreal state, which obscures deeper possibilities. It is therefore unsurprising that science has been reluctant to investigate what seems a nebulous, dubious and unscientific subject (Claxton 1998). Yet, although intuition is, by its nature, a psychic experience, using it for personal insight does not make it a fortune-telling device, nor a form of spiritualism i.e. talking to the dead. For the purpose of psycho-spiritual learning we are endeavouring to reach to its highest or deepest level which might be described as the in (ner) tuition, or the inner voice or nature of the soul and spirit. Jung (1983) thought that ‘psychic reality may be a form of self expression’ leading to personification of the self which for Jung was ‘an empirical demonstration of psychic reality’. By this token acknowledging a psychic reality, which includes intuition, as part of Spiritual Self-Development might assist the self-awareness process.

Postmodernism: In the modern era it was believed that truth was out there waiting to be discovered, however, postmodernism (Elkins 1998) questions
basic assumptions about knowledge itself and challenges this view. Postmodernism suggests that knowledge paradigms are social constructions. In a global world where many realities intermingle there are multiple realities and, as such, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain one reality as the only truth.

However, Baruss (2000) argues that society itself is a cult, as people often abdicate responsibility to any number of religious organisations, doctrines, political persuasions, families or sects and feel safer in doing so believing in a permanence. With instant communication world wide, we now live in a world not just of one culture and religion but to a world of many voices. One of the main objections to the postmodern idiom is that it deconstructs and disintegrates any grand vision of coherence, sense and meaning with which we might wish to live by (Howard 2000). If this is so who, or what can be our authority in this postmodern world? This thesis inquires into this question, asking can a form of contemporary spiritual Self-awareness assist the individual in their personal spiritual development?

Psycho-spiritual Historical Background:
Psycho-spirituality has many strands stretching back to ancient times, all of which this thesis is unable to explore to any depth. The ancient canonical Vedic text of the Upanishads written 800–200 BC was concerned with the mystical nature of reality, and includes much the same kind of spirituality as that which is in evidence today (Heelas 1996). Gnostic philosophical ideas occurred in Plato and are present within the New Testament and came to prevalence in the 1st and 2nd centuries and were held to have some influence
over the early church (Wilson 1978). Gnosis is a Greek work meaning knowledge or insight; it takes the notion that humans have divinity within, and through being receptive to this we can achieve spiritual redemption and restore contact with this highest or inner being (Roukema 1999).

In the fifth century Dionysius the Areopagite coined the phase ‘Mystical union’ (Underhill 1999). The renowned Christian mystic Hildegard von Bingen had many visions and contacts with an inner voice which Eugene II, the Pope of the time, proclaimed was the voice of God (Klimo 1988). In the twelfth century, Thomas Gallus took up the notion of the ‘spark of the soul’ and Thomas Aquinas (1945), perhaps one of the best known Christian mystical scientists, gave us a very modern psychological concept of the integrated man (McGinn 1998).

Mysticism from various cultures has had an influence on contemporary spiritual practices. These include Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism and through the esoteric Hebrew doctrine know as Cabbala (sometimes spelt Quabbalah, Hebrew for ‘tradition’). This Jewish mystical model found form in Spain and Southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD, but its roots can be traced back to Gnosticism and the prophetic mysticism of the Old Testament, in which man is able to speak directly to God (Wilson 1978). These themes sometimes stand apart from the doctrine of religions but are arguably at the heart of all faiths. However, some mystical ideas were classified occult in the West, in particular the notion that one can communicate directly with God. Occult means hidden or secret and the need for keeping practices hidden was a necessity on pain of death in many eras (Hinnells 1991). Occult
teachings adhere to the idea that man has endless possibilities through direct contact with God but this concept often came into conflict with religion. It was primarily to emancipate this knowledge that Theosophy (which means knowledge of divine nature), emerged and it is here that we can pick up our current focus.

The seeds of the theosophical ideas can be traced to sayings and beliefs mentioned in the Talmud, the Jewish literature of the Compendium of Learning (Hinnells 1991) which derived from the Gnostics (Wilson 1978) and is also influenced by ancient Eastern teachings. The London Theosophical Society was founded by the Rev. Jacob Duche in 1783 and probably included William Blake. Towards the end of the 19th century the Theosophists began to bring Eastern traditions into the West, believing in the education of perfecting man's hidden power. Of great importance to the movement was H.P. Blavasky (1888), who lived for many years in the East. Her major work, 'The Secret Doctrine' (Blavasky 1888) is seen as seminal and it paved the way for others. It was the first time that occult or hidden information of an oral tradition, handed down via word of mouth, was published in the West. It was Blavasky that coined the term higher self, she wrote:

It is the spiritual evolution of the inner immortal man that deforms the fundamental tenet in the occult sciences (Heelas, 1996, p.44).

She was closely associated with Colonel Olcott, who was the president of the Theosophy Society until his death in 1907. He said:

Theosophy professes to exclude all dialectical process, and to derive its whole knowledge of God from direct intuition and contemplation. This Theosophy dates from the highest antiquity of which any records are preserved, and every original founder of a religion was a seeker after divine wisdom by the theosophical process of self-illumination (Olcott 1885, p.246).
Through her personal acquaintance with Blavasky, Annie Besant (Colville 1896), a prominent champion of free thought in England at the turn of the twentieth century, became a key advocate of theosophy. She was well known in English society and worked tirelessly to help industrial reform. In her autobiography she outlines her main reason in promoting this work:

To found a Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race or creed and to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the physical nature latent in man (Besant 1908, p.350).

Also of influence to the growth of psycho-spirituality was Gurdjieff (1873-1949) (Peters 1976), a controversial philosopher, mystic and educationalist who was widely followed in the 1920s and 1930s and his influence remains potent to day. His method was based on the concept of an individual being conscious as opposed to being led (Peters 1976). Gurdjieff devoted his entire life to the study of Eastern esoteric teaching and passing it on to the Occident. He formed groups called ‘Seekers of Truth’ for developing Self-awareness and they were influenced by Sufi teachings, western psychology and synthesised within an original version of Gnosticism and an ‘alchemy of inner experience’ (Hunt 2003). It was perhaps Gurdjieff that did most to introduce transformational techniques and his ideas included T-groups, encounter groups, and transactional analysis. Gurdjieff groups (including Ouspensky Schools) still exist in many major cities in America and Europe and they have developed in Britain as the School of Economic Sciences and the Emin Foundation. In the USA the Arica Institutes Gurdjieff is probably responsible for the contemporary notion that radical measures are required to effect a transformation shift.
Since its inception, various groups have branched out from Theosophy and it was out of its tenet that the German, Rudolph Steiner (1861–1925), developed his Anthroposophy (Easton 1980). Steiner was a sensitive intuitive himself, and his educational system was designed for those who 'truly seek to advance human development' (Steiner 1997). His educational theories challenged the established education system of the time and during his life he set up several Steiner Schools that aimed to educate through connection with the spirit. Today there are several hundred 'Steiner' Schools and their affiliated 'Waldorf' Schools world-wide. Like many involved with the pursuit of spiritual knowledge at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, Steiner took an active interest in the notion of life after death (Easton 1980) and it was the long held belief of the continued existence of life that led to the growth of the modern Spiritualist movement. From the Spiritualist tenet came 'development groups' or 'circles' created primarily to train mediums or channels. Mediumship is a term first used by spiritualists in 1843 (Bechhofer 1932) to describe the work of people who are believed to act as channels. Channelling is the ability to:

communicate with some sort of intelligence, the nature undefined whose purpose is to promote spiritual teachings and philosophical discussion (Klimo 1988, p.6).

A form of channelling has been mentioned by many artists and literary authors who have had experience of having an 'inner voice' or hearing the words being dictated to them. Plato argued that a poet is able to create only that which the muse dictates, and even today people sometimes refer to their own 'muse' as a source of inspiration. The writer Rudyard Kipling referred to 'the Daemon that lives in the writers pen.... when your Daemon is in charge do not think consciously, drift, wait and obey' (Sternberg 1996). Federico
Ruiz described his own experience as a creative composer as follow: ‘If I had to reflect on everything that I do none of my works would ever be completed, intuition always precedes reflection because it operates more rapidly’ (Policastro 1993). There are numerous references to some inspired force that works through, not just creative individuals such as writers and artists but also scientists and inventors: Albert Einstein said ‘to some elementary laws there leads no logical path, but only intuition supported by being sympathetically in touch with experience’ (Holton 1988). Mathematician Henri Poincare (Miller, 1992) stressed that ‘it is by logic that we prove, it is by intuition we invent for logic remains barren unless fertilised by intuition’ (Policastro 1995). Evidence of intuition and inspirational connections abounds through history, and therefore it questions, if its influence can be so productive why is it not more widely used in both self-development and education?

Societies:
In the past occult practices were mostly performed in secret through different groups such as Templars, Rosicrucians and Druids which are echoed in modern Masonic Lodges. ‘Circles’ or groups are training grounds to develop self-discipline and inner growth and although, historically, these groups are shrouded in secrecy, most of their contents can nowadays be found in local libraries (Baigent, Leigh, Lincoln 1986). Without the need for the secrecy of the past, an increasing number of societies, groups and organisations have sprung up since the Second World War all contributing to the spread of psycho-spiritual type activities. Sir George Trevelyan (Farrer 2002), historian and teacher, often referred to as the ‘Father of the New Age’, in the 1940s and
1950s made use of ancestral homes as weekend spiritual training centres, running workshops in related subjects, receiving a government grant towards their upkeep. This developed into the Wrekin Trust, an organisation set up as an educational charity concerned with the spiritual nature of man and the universe (Trevelyan 1991). Currently the Wrekin Trust is looking to establish a University for Spirit.

The Scientific and Medical Network was founded in 1973 by a distinguished group of scientists to broaden the framework of understanding in science, medicine and education, arguing for the intellectual plausibility of a wider and deeper world view. Leytham, who was a trustee of the Network for many years, explains his understanding of such views:

I regard the self as being outside time and space, and as animating the whole individual through an all-embracing psychofield. This is not unlike Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious. Finally I regard all individuals as being immersed in the sea of Divine Energy, or Cosmic Consciousness ... A spiritual and paranormal experience such as telepathy would seem to follow quite logically on this assumption of such a universal system of consciousness (Leytham 1999, p.201).

In the past most of these groups have evolved outside the body of mainstream organisations, but some aspects of psycho-spiritual work, often under such titles as Stress Management, Alternative or Complementary Medicine and Personal Growth, are now present in educational bodies including a growing number of universities.

Personal Biography:

Following a medical operation in 1973, I received some spiritual healing where I was urged to join a ‘development group’. Although I had been aware all my life that I possessed some intuitive abilities, I never discussed them with anyone and prior to this meeting I had no previous connection with any
psychic or healing movement. I sat throughout the first evening wondering why I was there and fully intending not to attend again, however, at the end of the evening, we were talked through a closing meditation after which, I was aware of my own feelings, thoughts and senses as never before, and I was aware of a sense of solidity of self. I returned to the group the next week and stayed for 18 months. The group was run as a fairly typical spiritualist ‘circle’ which undertook to develop Mediumship, for which I had no personal desire. However, the reason to stay can be best explained by a comment from a fellow student: ‘I know I will never be a medium, but I also know this is making me a better person’. The question then arose: how did a few meditational psychic exercises instigate self-awareness that was often profoundly transformational?

This group had given me techniques for healing and intuitive work and had taught me to be in control of my own subtle energies, but fell short of giving me any understanding of how attuning to energy centres (see Chapter One) and the intuitive connecting with others could so effectively change me. My appetite for spiritual knowledge was activated and it brought me consciously to embark on a life-long spiritual journey. I continued my training at The College of Psychic Studies (CPS) in London, after which I worked as a practitioner, and teacher. In the twelve years at CPS I developed many courses, published five books and lectured both in the UK and abroad, for various groups and organisations including The National Federation of Spiritual Healers (NFSH), Findhorn, Mensa and The Bristol Cancer Centre.
I have observed an enormous change both in myself and my students, recognizing psychic and healing development as an effective change agent. Over these years, the work has begun to emerge from the fringe into mainstream organisations and, seemingly by osmosis, there is a growing psycho-spiritual culture. However, I became increasingly frustrated by the recognition that, although there was an expanding amount of work of this nature being carried out in a large number of centres around Britain and the world, these were of mixed quality. The public were becoming increasingly curious and wanted substance and competence in courses but, to my frustration, no one seemed to be supplying an educational process in the field which takes the student through their development, and students had to find different short courses in random fashion. Facilitation skills were also patchy due, either to a lack of experience, or having no real form of facilitator and teaching training.

A need for further research into the whole area of psycho-spiritual training and possibilities for use in spiritual education was not being satisfied in my position at CPS, which at the time functioned much more as a centre for a bringing together of different New Age practices, rather than forming a cohesive educational unit. In 1996, I left to set up The School of Insight and Intuition (the School) to explore and research deeper into these areas and endeavour to implement an educational programme in psycho-spiritual studies. I have also collaborated closely with several adult colleges and the programme is now part of the BSc in complementary medicine at Westminster University.
CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT TO THE RESEARCH

This chapter underpins the research, relaying the application of psycho-spiritual learning as practised by the curriculum of the School of Insight and Intuition (the School). It also identifies research areas, and questions in what way this form of training might assist a theoretical framework for psycho-spiritual education.

1.2.1. PSYCHO- SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

1.2.2. Adult Education:

Education is more than just the didactic imparting of knowledge; it is:

any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis, directed towards the participants’ learning and understanding (Jarvis 1995, p.26).

Describing the educated man and advocating the concept of Life Long Learning Peters (1973) says:

An educated person is not one who simply goes on engaging in such activities when he leaves such institutions, he is one whose whole range of action, reactions and activities is gradually transformed by the deepening and widening of his understanding and sensitivity. There is no end to this process for ... to be educated is not to have arrived at a destination, it is to travel with a different view (Peters1973, p.20).

The notion of a constant change of perception is integral to psycho-spirituality, each step or stage changing the reality and consequently the experience of the learner. Dewey (1944) said:

morality must be actively lived and practised to be truly moral. Just knowing the ideas doesn’t count ... to posses virtue does not mean one can recite the ten commandments; it means one can live in association with others habitually as a fair, sensitive and contributing citizen. (Webber 2003, p.42)

Equally, it is thought that psycho-spiritual growth cannot be learnt as a set of rules or ideas, it can only be realised through its manifestation in the personal lived world. Therefore one cannot strive for it in the normal sense, it has to be genuinely spontaneous (Fosha 2000). This concept is also present in
psychotherapy, which sees actual realisation as vital for real progress.

Personal experiences therefore become a necessary part of psycho-spiritual
development which is mirrored in Dewey’s definition of education:

It is that reconstruction or reorganisation of experience which adds to
the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the
course of subsequent experience (Dewey 1944, p.76).

Similarly, educationalist Knowles (1990) also states:

People attach more meaning to learning they gain from experience
than those that they acquire passively ... people become ready to learn
something when they experience a need to learn it in order to cope
more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems (Knowles 1990, p.44).

In this way the Psycho-spiritual programme, as practised by the School, is
seen as a ‘Course For Life’ and uses real life experience as part of the
educational procedure. Dewey (1944) wrote about the necessity to
acknowledge experiences as part of the educational process and his anti-
traditionalist leaning came from his belief that true morality must be actively
lived and practised as just knowing the ideas does not count (Webber 2003,
p.42). Dewey said:

morality is given a sentimental goody goody turn without reference to
the effective ability to do what is socially needed and ...
overemphasising conventions and tradition so as to limit morals to a
list of definitely stated acts (Dewey 1944, p.357).

In similar vein with psycho-spiritual ideas, Dewey believed that:

students must acquire knowledge through experience, through feeling
sympathy and the joys and struggles of living in a genuine not false or
fabricated community with their peers (Webber 2003, p.47).

Psycho-spiritual learning is therefore considered a type of holistic education
(Forbes 2003) which includes wide genealogies:

Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel but then over through both Tolstoy
and the Transcendentalist culminating in Montessori, Steiner, Dewey
and AS Neiff. What joins these somewhat disparate philosopher,
psychologist and social theorist is their shared insistence on the total
growth of each person, physical, emotional, social, intellectual and
spiritual (Mayes 2003, p.4).

1.2.3. Experiential Learning:
The use of real life experiences calls for a different mode of learning: with
Kolb’s ‘Experiential Learning Cycle’ (Kolb 1984) learning is seen to be
achieved by having an experience, reflecting upon it, formulating concepts
and generalisations and testing the implications of concepts on new
situations. Kolb defines experiential learning as ‘the process that links
education, work and personal development’ (Kolb 1984).

Group input is thought to assist experiential learning, which has similarities
to the concept of ‘Action Learning’ (Brockbank and McGill 1998) whereby the
student brings real issues into the class set up, for the whole group to
contribute. This enables the person to take action on the issue and to reflect
upon it within the group. All this is then conceptualised, synthesised and
integrated in the individual’s system of constructs which he imposes on the
world, through which he views, perceives, categorises, evaluates and seeks
experience which takes on added meaning (Boy dell 1976). In this way the
students effectively provide their own text books, with information and
examples illustrated through their own life, creating a real learning situation
as the week by week progress helps them get closer and closer to their inner
Self. This procedure draws students towards what Maslow refers to as
‘Intrinsic Education’:

The goal so far as human beings are concerned is ultimately the self-
actualisation of a person, the becoming fully human the development
of the fullest height that the human species can stand up to or that the
particular individual can come to ... helping the person to become the
best that he is able to become (Maslow 1971, p.169).
Finding one’s potential is an important part of this work, but first this involves a series of releases of unwanted aspects of self which is seen to open the door to depth awareness and greater possibilities. This takes courage on the part of the individual and requires a sense of adventure for their own journey, as Maslow says:

One cannot choose wisely for a life unless he dares to listen to himself, his own self at each moment in life (Maslow 1971).

The decision to dare to look at oneself no matter what that will reveal is seen as one of the most important elements towards advancement, and one that cannot be stage-managed.

1.2.4. Liberal Education:

Many of the School’s practices have commonalities with Liberal Education (Peter 1977), a phrase first coined by Plato regarding the ‘free’ or ‘educated’ man.

The unifying idea behind liberal education is that of the unimpeded and unconstrained development of the mind (Peters 1977, p.4).

Liberal education means education for its own sake, and not for some qualification or status. Its main functions are in the expansion of knowledge of self and the advancement of the individual. Liberal education puts the emphasis on autonomy as well as authenticity and places focus on the individual’s own experience:

For if autonomy is to be anything more than a pious hope, the individual must be possessed of relevant information to make realistic choices and have his imagination stimulated so that he can envisage all sorts of possibilities (Peters 1977, p.63).

To envisage all sorts of possibilities and have imagination stimulated psychospiritual learning, also advocates the use of altered states of consciousness which is seen to open the student to different perceptions and potentials.
(Heron 1989). Although the School also offers more standard forms of knowledge such as lectures and experts' input as part of its courses, it primarily sees the student as a co-worker in the experiential educational process.

1.2.5. Psycho-spiritual Educational Styles and Application:

Elements in psycho-spiritual learning include: **Explanation**: Students receive information on systems of subtle energy work in the early classes. **Observation**: Students are trained in the art of detached loving observation of self through use of meditational methods. **Peer Feedback**: Discussions and suggestions emerge spontaneously. Peer involvement is seen as 'liberating' by having shared knowledge (Gregory, Tosey 2000). **Change of Perceptions**: Meditation and psychic attunement exercises are implemented to assist altered states of consciousness (see Chapter Two) **Action**: Students apply 'knowing in action' (McGill, Weil 1989) by taking the inspiration gained in class and practising it within their lives. **Reflection** on experience, as well as here and now experience within the group provides the basis for insight and change (McGill, Weil 1989). Rogers (1994) regards reflection as a transformation processes as it is only when the learning is consciously acknowledged that it becomes actualised.

The School implements three approaches to teaching:

1. **Teaching**: We teach fundamental aspects of subtle energies systems and rudimentary psycho-spiritual knowledge. Scheffler (1973) describes three methods of teaching that would be utilised in psycho-spiritual classes: Firstly, the 'Impression Model' which describes more orthodox forms of teaching:
an accumulation in the learner of basic elements fed in from without, organised and processed in standard ways, but in any event, not generated by the learner himself (Scheffler 1973, p.121).

The second ‘Insight Model’ draws out knowledge:

The teacher’s words prompt the student to search for realities not already known by him and finding these realities, which are illuminated from him by internal vision he acquires new knowledge from himself, though indirectly as a result of the teacher prompting activity (Scheffler 1973, p.125)

The use of intuitive questioning to encourage self learning is used extensively in psycho-spiritual classes which has similarities to Socratic teaching which consists of:

the teacher directing a logical sequence of questions at the learner, so that they are enabled to respond and to express the knowledge that they have, albeit implicitly, but which they have never crystallised in their own minds (Jarvis 1995, p.123)

Mayes concurs:

The Socratic image of the teacher as an intermediary between the student and the universe of prepositional ... is one of the most ancient archetypal forms of teaching in the Western tradition. It is also an archetype that underlies many current visions of what the teacher and student should be or may become (Mayes 2002a, p.704)

Finally the ‘Rule model’:

The knower must satisfy a further condition beyond the mere receiving and storing of a bit of information ... it does not deny the psychological phenomenon of insight. It merely stresses that insight itself, wherever it is relevant to decision or judgement is filtered through a network of background principles (Scheffler 1973, p.130).

Psycho-spiritual endeavours to communicate to the deeper part of the person. Wilson (2003) explains:

Deep teaching reaches below the surface of information and involves the sharing and igniting of ideas ... that which is most intense or profoundly involved. The act of deep teaching requires that teachers become deeply absorbed or immersed in the moment ... it is steeped in
imagination, emotions and ideas. Minds are captivated. Ideas soar. Such learning touches and enhances the soul of the student. The result is a level of learning that goes far beyond definitions and facts. At times it brings about a change or transformation within the student (Wilson 2003, p.26).

This describes a connection between teacher and student, mind to mind, heart to heart. At its best it could be described as a form of mediumship whereby there is total connection knowing, sensing and understanding on a deep level that has profound consequences.

2. Training:
Intuition is a skill that requires developing; therefore we require trainers who are not only fully competent in these skills, but also have the ability to impart them to their students. The ability to train in this field is seen to be like a good parent who guides and is sometimes firm, but also enables the student the space to freely investigate the self (Ryle 1969). The notion of freedom is important to the task of depth study, and at the culmination of their study perhaps the best thing teachers can hear from the students is that they do not need us any more (Soskin 1996). The skills required in psycho-spiritual training are specialised and as such they require the competence of a knowledgeable professional practitioner.

3. Facilitation:
The educative aspect of drawing out the inner nature of Self necessitates that the psycho-spiritual leader requires intuitive facilitation skills which help the process of change. Heron (1993) describes facilitation as ‘tutelary authority’; form of protective guardianship of the students learning. Facilitators must:

have a holistic grasp of the subject and can reveal it in a way that shows its interconnections with all aspects of the person and with other interdependent subjects (Heron 1993, p.63).
Like depth teaching Heron describes an interconnectedness between leader and student, which when it occurs creates an energetic link that transcends normal communications. Psycho-spiritual learning is one of personal discovery based on one’s own insights (Dakenwald, Merriam 1982), and therefore any undue authority could seriously impede growth, so all the pupils are seen as equals. Facilitators guide the students’ progress and when relevant will gently but firmly steer them towards personal understanding. It is unrealistic however, to suppose that any leader or teacher, by their position, is void of authority. Basic frameworks to minimise authoritarianism and dependency include:

- Relaying basic concepts at the beginning of the courses
- Direct question back to the students to think for themselves
- Encourage the students to question the facilitator
- Ask them to examine any notions manifesting within their own world
- Revealing one’s own vulnerability
- Being vigilant to signs of dependency

Facilitators carry with them their own unique personality and experiences; however spiritually aware and mindful of good practice they may be they are not infallible, and it is not uncommon for psycho-spiritual facilitators to discover that their students assist their own spiritual Self-development.

1.2.6. Therapy as a form of spiritual education:

Being a more healthy individual is not just physical wellness, but holistic health. Therapy means healing and health and in the context of spirituality the goal of therapy is to face emotional pain and find a resolution with the inner light ... often, part of the old self dies so that an integration with the new can be born. The source of the new is the spirit within (Epple 2003, p.175).

Equally psycho-spiritual learning is seen as an education of Self; the drawing out of the true identity to become a more autonomous educated person, so it could be argued that by its nature it is therefore very relevant to bring some
form of therapy into spiritual education. Examining the problems of bringing spirituality into education, Miller (2003) says:

I think people oppose spiritualising education because they feel that educators shouldn't address issues that involve individuals' inner most thought, feeling or values. They insist that Schools don't have the right to teach students about anything that is so personal. ... Holistic educators' stress on spirituality and students' inner lives undoubtedly challenges how most people think about education. Holistic education focuses on meaning, connection and the search for wholeness. It is the yearning for human wholeness for meaningful connection for mutual relationships and for a caring society (Miller, Koegel 2003, p.13-14).

This notion suggests that as the individual feels whole and un-threatened they are likely to be a more useful and productive individual who will be better able to help society and the community. In a world that is radically changing, spiritual education needs to reflect this and Moffett (1994) calls for:

A new educational system ... that rests upon a thoroughgoing holistic approach which tends to be spiritual whether one thinks of it that way or not, because identifying with other people and creatures, and ultimately with the All really defines spirituality in a non-sectarian way. The more inclusive the wholes that individuals dwell in the holier the society they create together (Moffett 1994, p.xix).

Over the last year (2003) the School has been contacted by two universities and one adult education college who are seeking to implement spiritual education in their course in a non-denominational way. I have subsequently taught in all three and there seems to be a growing desire evident in associated literature and research for a new type of non-denominational holistic spiritual education.

Insight and Intuition Course Design and Management:

The transformative nature of the subject calls for a curriculum that functions not as some rigid structure that might restrict, but more like a scaffolding allowing the student the framework for movement and growth. Methods
employed therefore act as a highway code for the journey, but do not dictate the destination of the individual’s journey. For instance they may be able to help extrapolate intuition, but can never lay down an authority on the contents of intuition itself.

Like Plato (Peters 1959) we believe that although:

- there are truths to be grasped and standards to be achieved, which are public objects of desire, he claimed that coercing people into seeing them or trying to imprint them on wax-like minds was both psychologically unsound and morally base (Peters 1959, p.92).

Psycho-spirituality as practised by the School also does not seek to imprint anything, only to assist the individual to find their own value and codes.

The School runs weekly courses rather than trying to condense the curriculum into short periods, as it is thought that first-hand experiences cannot be hurried or contrived and the self-development process matures at its own rate. The courses are now made up of modules which mainly consist of 12 weekly evening classes of two hour duration, three terms a year. Each module provides a course in itself which then combines with the other modules that are run in four stages or levels as part of the ‘Spiritual Consciousness Programme; Courses for Life’. If completed the whole programme takes a minimum of three years.

As much as possible I wanted the programme to develop in an organic fashion, that is, allowing it to emerge naturally. During the first years we experimented with an array of methods, exercises and courses consistent to the work, with exercises and subjects moving in and out of the curriculum.
Out of this evolutionary process we established the major contents of the programme and wrote learning methods and outcomes. Aims for psycho-spiritual studies include:

1. A Composite Sequential Education Training:

Previously most of the classes in this field were in short workshop format and because of the lackadaisical nature of some institutions, the emergence of self-knowledge and personal problems either went unnoticed or were ignored if they surfaced. Implementing a 'spiral' process is thought to lessen the likelihood of this happening, as aspects of self are re-visited progressively in more depth throughout the programme. So basic functions can be built upon earlier learning, to help create more mature depth understanding. As a form of educational process it is similar in principle to Bruner’s (Bruner 1960) ‘spiral curriculum’, which means that subjects are revisited over and over each time delving deeper and deeper into advanced learning. Bruner also presents us with the notion that:

A curriculum ought to be built around the great issues, principles, and values that a society deems worthy (Bruner 1960, p.52).

One could argue that there could be no greater principle than emancipation of the spirit; whether society deems this worthy is something yet to be realised.

2. Basic Standards of Practice:

At the time of opening the School very few programmes had set any standards of practice in intuitive and/or psycho-spiritual studies. There are persuasive arguments against formalising the work with set standards as ‘spontaneous’ knowing is seen as counter to the structural approach. Yet this attitude is clearly open to abuse. Although I was aware of the dangers of fixing a curriculum, at the same time I felt there must be a way to keep the
contents flexible and intuitive within an appropriate professional framework. Recently, there has been a growing desire to safeguard members of the public through implementation of good practice and the creation of formal standards within the complementary therapy field. This was focused by a paper in the House of Lords on 21st November 2000 asking complementary health practitioners, including spiritual healers, to organise themselves or Government would do it for them. To this end an organisation, now called UK Healers, a lead body development group, was set up, of which the School has been an active member. The School has implemented these standards within the healing practitioner course (not part of the research) which in turn has affected the standards for the intuitive psycho-spiritual programme.

Basic standards as per the social science encyclopaedia are:

- Possession of skill based on theoretical knowledge
- Provision of training and education
- Testing of competence of members
- Organisation
- Adherence to a code of conduct
- Altruistic service.

(Waddington 1985, p.650–651)

Even though these standards may suggest a reversal of spontaneity, Darkenwald/Merrian (1982) argues that:

* if the desire for professionalism is motivated by a commitment to improving the quality and quantity of adult leaning opportunities, then the resulting changes will be in the best interest of all

(Darkenwald, Merrian 1982, p.234)

3. Implementation of Spiritual Self Development:

Unfortunately most religions have been antagonistic to any intuitive and psychic practices, often going in for ‘outright denial and declaring the whole field off limits, forbidden and dangerous territory’ (Heron 1998). In many faiths, psychic practices have at best been seen as a by-product of spiritual
growth but not really worthy of consideration. Of course it depends on one's definition of psychic practices; it might be argued for instance that prayer is a form of psychic practice. However, increasingly in the last two decades a new climate is emerging, which is helped, in part, by practices such as Transpersonal psychology. The election five years ago of a medical doctor as president of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers and an active doctor-healer network implementing an increasing number of spiritual healers in GP surgeries throughout the UK has brought an air of legitimacy to spiritual healing. Spiritual healing is now being implemented as part of complementary therapies BSc degree courses and as spiritual healing uses similar methods of attunement to the subtle energies, it may positively affect psychic and intuitive training. Heron (1998) acknowledges the value of working within the subtle (psychic) realms as:

an important aspect of the realm of the high subtle, an interior association which is deeply valuable for processes of spiritual transfiguration (Heron 1998, p.270).

4. Education for Spiritual Self-awareness:
Given the mixture of faiths and practices in a postmodern world, who should be our teacher? Heron (1998) refers to an ‘authoritarian blight’ in Eastern religious teaching, and in exploring who or what should dictate our true validity in these matters he states that:

Religious training everywhere from the remote past to the immediate present, means believing and doing what an authority prescribes ... no authority resides in anything external unless you first decide to confer that authority on it. Nothing out there is accredited and definitive until you first elect it to be so (Heron 1998, p.32-34).

Is it relevant to use religious or spiritual practices for spiritual Self-awareness where the students may not be ready or desirous to live a religious life?
Nonetheless, to ignore the successful spiritual practices or methods built up over thousands of years could be counter productive, so which practices should be utilised? A question also arises, what purpose can following a specific spiritual practice hold for spiritual Self-awareness? For instance, Buddhism, which has been particularly influential to psychologists such as Jung and Wilber (see Chapter Two) has the belief that the self is ultimately an illusion anyway so what value does exploration of self achieve? Nonetheless, Wilber states that self can be used as:

the vehicle of development, growth and transcendence, or to return to our simplistic metaphor the self is the climber of the rungs in the ladder of structural organisation, a climb destined to release the self from itself (Wilber 1996, p.274).

If this is the case there is an argument for self-exploration to further our spiritual progress.

5. Design and Implementation of Facilitators' Training:

Previously there has been very little training in teaching or facilitation skills with psycho-spiritual leaders. Developing intuition and guiding students through their personal spiritual journey can be fraught with difficulties and illusions, for instance, inexperienced leaders may fail to pick up serious psychological cases that might need other forms of professional help and they may not be able to identify fanciful illusionary experiences from genuine ones. Learning by making mistakes may be good for the teacher; it may not however, be so valuable for the student. There is also the almost inevitable projection (transference) from students onto the teachers. 'Transference' (Pargament 2000) is the Freudian concept in psychology where a patient, or, in this case, a student, displaces on to others their own thoughts and feelings from their own past experiences (Freud 1953). Projection onto someone,
without understanding and strength of self, might inhibit or even destroy learning. Brockbank and McGill (1998) identify basic facilitation skills that can assist difficulties:

Attending and accurate listening
Listening skills i.e. what is the student really saying
Reflecting back
Dealing with the management of emotion in self and others
Being able to confront without fear if necessary
Empathy of a non attached kind
(Brockbank and McGill 1989, p.179-188)

These skills are seen to be needed alongside intuitive abilities to understand the students’ progression and help draw out or ‘educate’ the true self. The student’s unfoldment process often requires layers of negative patterns to be acknowledged, accepted and dissolved or integrated to the higher self, which is not a glamorous procedure, and it could in effect be called an un-learning and can be disruptive on the life of the individual. To guide, not influence, to help emerge without use of the leader’s will, and to encourage discernment to all students without being judgemental is important:

Interior development can only arise as a consequence of the mastery of the self in the midst of friction and this is known to all authentic teaching sources (Thomas 2000, p.13).

1.3.1. CURRICULUM: COURSE FOR LIFE.

PSYCHO-SPiritUAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

This programme consists of four Stages:

Stage One: Foundation of the Philosophy and Practice of Psycho-spirituality

Stage Two: Unfoldment: The Self and Healer Revealed

Stage Three: Psychic Sensitivity

Stage Four: Esoteric and Consciousness Study group.
### Fig. 1. Stages of Psycho-spiritual Learning Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE ONE</th>
<th>STAGE TWO</th>
<th>STAGE THREE</th>
<th>STAGE FOUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DURATION</strong></td>
<td>24 Hours</td>
<td>24 Hours</td>
<td>96 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIMS</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge of the basic principles of P/S development. Develop meditation skills and sensitivity and tolerance towards others. Provide methods of basic self-observation techniques.</td>
<td>Attunement to subtle energies; Chakras, etc. Basic principles of; use of will, the concept of transference, unconditional love. Identify and release inappropriate patterns. Gain tolerance and understanding of peers, working in a group, self healing and group healing</td>
<td>Awareness of psychic techniques Use of intuition. Ability to monitor and adjust own energy. Regularly achieve and maintain a meditative state Obtain helpful personal insights. Demonstrate appropriate level of self awareness. Act as a spiritual channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTENTS</strong></td>
<td>History and basic principles of energy Use of energies Accessing psychic faculties Self-awareness Observation techniques Meditation Rudimentary principles of good practice.</td>
<td>Meditational and trans-personal exercises Assistance in clearance. Good use of will and personal responsibility Personal observation exercises Use of dreams Psychic attunement.</td>
<td>Use of psychic and healing techniques Attunement exercises for psychic and healing Group and self meditation Channelling insights for self and others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Course Content:

Concepts offered within the programme include:

**Transpersonal psychology:** This recognises the spiritual and transcendent states of consciousness (Lajoie/Shapiro 1999). Revelation of the lower selves are thought to aid the conscious decision to dissolve outworn negative patterns from wherever they originated (Whitmore 1986).

**Shamanism:** Healing by being able to interpret and communicate with both the world of everyday and the world of subtle forces:

What we would term development and psychological issues are often the types of problems brought to the Shaman. Issues are always articulated within a social fabric and are not seen simply as one individual’s problems. Often healing is done with a circle of caring persons present to witness and lend support. The client is helped to find a stable place of identity and existential meaning congruent with life, connected with the natural and social worlds on which to stand and view his or her predicament. (Sinnott 2000, p.6)

Groups at the School effectively become the ‘social fabric’ with students finding assistance as described above.

**Karma:** Contrary to popular belief karma is not just an Eastern theory; it was also integral to Christianity until the fifth century (Rinpoche 1992). Karma suggests that every action produces its inevitable result (Hinnells 1991). There is a misconception that karma is something from which one has no escape or control; but by consciously acknowledging it, the individual is able to operate more effectively and implement more informed choices. Karma also acknowledges the possibility of reincarnation, a notion that some part of us is immortal and continues not only after death but into other lives. The belief of karma or any other concept is not mandatory; however the student is asked to observe the cause and effect of their own actions, thoughts and emotions.
Synchronicity: Jung (1997) studied the principle of 'synchronicity' or meaningful coincidence of outer and inner events that are not causally connected. According to the principle of synchronicity inner unconscious knowledge links a physical event with a psychic condition so that a certain event that appears accidental or coincidental can be physically meaningful. (Ratter, Bursik 2001, p.434)

The observation of any possible synchronicity is thought to assist the students' awareness of themselves and their world.

Prayer and Meditation: Hardy (1979) advocates prayer to find solutions. Alternatively, Gurdjieff (Tart 1989) dismissed most prayer as 'useless fantasy'; nonetheless he advocated a process of what he called 'conscious prayer', but to do this Gurdjieff states you must 'know yourself'. Prayer in its usual mode might be thought of as petitionary and a form of 'supplication' to God or other deities, whereas meditation is seen as 'attunement' or 'at-one-ment' to a higher force or God. The terms 'prayer' and 'meditation' can cause confusion. Tart (1989) describes:

A theist can meditate even if he or she cannot pray. Meditation properly refers to internal psychological practices intended to change the quality or state of consciousness of your mind, its efficacy comes exclusively from the meditation. Prayer on the other hand is effective insofar as there is a supernatural or non ordinary order of Being or being who might respond to it (Tart 1989, p.182).

Meditation has multivariant benefits including enabling the student to be in a relaxed, calm state, open to looking within with less apprehension, it allows the outer 'noise' of the world to subside, which is seen to enable contact with the inner or higher soul Self (Orme-Johnson 2000). It also enables the person to be focused in the present in a state of mindfulness which is the ability to observe one's own moment-to-moment changing experience.
Altered States of Consciousness: Tart (1989) describes altered states as:

Significantly and discretely different from some baseline to which we want to compare it. Since we usually take ordinary waking consciousness as our standard of comparison a state like nocturnal dreaming is an altered state ... and states that can be induced by meditative practices (Tart 1989, p.194)

Transpersonalists (Tisdale (1994) and Shamans (Sinnott 2000) use altered states of consciousness as a tool in the psycho-spiritual process.

Not only do different states provide different information to the experiencing individual, some may in fact provide more information than is available in the usual state. In that sense then they are also higher or even better states. In these higher or most inclusive forms of consciousness the most important single transformation is that ones usual sense of self is expanded. One’s sense of identity comes to encompass more than that of a single isolated human being. With expanded awareness one becomes more clearly identified with cosmic processes (Tisdale 1994, p.34)

Achieving altered states is thought to give students a different view on themselves and others.

Healing: Healing and self healing (Page 1992) is seen as integral to the psycho-spiritual process as, without the release of anything that obstructs this inner connection, clear insight and in (ner) tuition (intuition) cannot take place (see literature chapter). This release in turn is seen to open the door to clear intuition.

Individuation: This was a key concept of Jung’s which he stated was:

nothing less than to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona on one hand and the suggestive power of primordial images on the other (Samuels 1986, p.77).

Lawson (1979) describes it as ‘self discovery and self development’ stating that ‘people tend to dislike and be suspicious of anyone who fails to conform within limits to the groups norms’ (Lawson 1979). Individualisation necessitates
examination of self, separate from the opinions of person's tribe or sociological group. There are however strong arguments against individualism:

Doing your own thing i.e. following the idea of living an authentic self-determined life has led us away from moral social and religious obligations and towards wallowing in the confines of our own heart..... The one sure thing a college professor can expect from new students is that they do not believe in moral obsoletes (Webber 2003, p.41).

‘Wallowing in the confines of our own heart,’ suggests self-indulgence which is a common argument against self-development work as it is thought that without a strong moral frame of reference the student has nothing to measure or guide them in their spiritual journey. But does giving a set of morals, however important, possibly impair the individual in finding authentic spiritual concepts and ethics first hand? It might be that only by depth knowledge of self that one can really know and ultimately be in union or integrated with god. Self knowledge is thought to bring autonomy and autonomous people have been shown to have a distinctive awareness of, and confidence in their own inner identity, integrity and moral vision. They are highly stable and self reliant and not easily overshadowed by stress from their environment. On the other hand autonomous people are also said to be capable of great intimacy with others. This is because they know who they are and are not threatened by being different from others (Orme-Johnson 2000).

Knowles (1990) also believes there is a need for the individual to find themselves:

Increasing evidence is appearing in psychological literature that complete self development is a universal human need, and that at least a feeling of movement in this direction is a condition of mental health (Knowles 1990, p.28).

What Knowles means here by ‘complete’ is unclear; however, psycho-spiritual studies would certainly concur to these basic sentiments and also take it further,
believing that self exploration is an essential part, not just of mental health, but the holistic health and education of the individual.

Stage One: Foundation of the Philosophy and Practice of Psycho-spirituality

Stage One’s prime objective is to set out principles of learning including the ancient system of subtle energies called Chakras which is revisited throughout the programme on deeper and deeper levels.

Chakra: Chakra is a Sanskrit word meaning ‘wheel’ or ‘disc’ and relates to seven vortices of energy, for the reception, assimilation and transmission of life energies (Ozaniec 1996). In recent times the Chakras emerged in the West through the theosophy movement. In the preface to the first edition of the seminal Chakra work, Leadbeater says:

When a man begins to develop his senses, so that he may see a little more than everybody sees, a new and most fascinating world opens before him and the Chakras are among the first. It is simply an extension of faculties with which we are all familiar. And to acquire it is to make oneself sensitive to vibrations more rapid than those to which our physical senses are normally trained to respond (Leadbeater 1996, p.x).

Chakras are a system of spiritual evolution both on a personal and global level, and their subtle makeup can only be explored through different means, including meditation, yoga and self development. In the Indian tradition the centres are referred to as lotuses. Analogously, like the flower we are rooted in the mud and darkness of the depths but ultimately we flower under the light of the sun. The lotuses are allocated a certain number of petals to each centre describing the rate of vibration or frequency of the energy of that Chakra. The number of lotus petals assigned to each centre illustrates the increasing energy one associates with the seven vibrational energies of the Chakras. These also
correlate to seven colours which the Chakras throw off depending upon the speed of their revolution. Colour is light vibrating at different frequencies, and the analogous notion is that as the pure white light of spirit comes down into the physical world it splits like a prism reflecting the colours or energies through the human energy fields, breaking into the corresponding colours of the Chakras. There are quite technical aspects to the flow of energy connected to the Chakras which are not applicable to this thesis, however, it is worth noting that it is seen that the current of energy which flows creates a pattern like the Caduceus or Stage of Hermes symbol of healing. This current of energy is called the *kundalini*. The kundalini concept of the unfolding serpent has long been associated with healing and its Caduceus logo is still being used as the symbol for medicine.

*Fig. 2. Caduceus Logo*

Quoting from the Kundalini yoga teachings, Wilber (1983) explains:

Mankind does indeed contain all the higher levels of consciousness as a true potential known in general terms as Kundalini energy which is said to lie dormant, asleep in the unconscious of all men and women and the lowest state of kundalini the state wherein it initially slumbers waiting to rise which is said to lie coiled at the base of the human spine the lowest Chakra (Wilber 1983, p.33).
Once this dormant kundalini energy is activated it starts to unwind from the base Chakra centre. It is thought to travel in a figure of eight like path, rising up through pathways or meridians of energies to which the Chakras are connected. This spiral like unfoldment process is thought to (O’Keeffe, Singh Khalsa 2002) change the energy of the individual.

This transformative process creates a series of shifts or initiations, until the kundalini’s pathway leads to the top centre where connection is made to the highest spiritual energy bringing union to source or god and in turn bringing profound consciousness change leading to enlightenment. These qualities or centres interrelate to the physical by psychic subtle essences or energetic attraction which are activated by life force or ‘pranic’ energy. This ‘pranic’ (Indian) or ‘chi’ (Chinese) energy has various names globally; in the West we simply call it ‘subtle energy’ (Snitcher 2003). The raising and heightening of this subtle force through the seven Chakras therefore could be perceived as stepping stones towards higher consciousness and spiritual integration. Tosey (1996) uses the Chakra as an illustration of change in organisation and as ‘a heuristic device, a learning tool intended to enable insight and personal exploration’ (Tosey 1996). In psycho-spiritual development we use the system for similar reasons.
**Fig. 3. The Chakras in Connection in Self-learning with Levels of Intuition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chakra</th>
<th>Key Aspects</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Statement of Intent</th>
<th>Levels of Intuition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base or Muladhara</td>
<td>Survival, Physical safety</td>
<td>How to survive in the physical world.</td>
<td>I learn through what I have.</td>
<td>Instinctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacral or Soudhisthan na</td>
<td>Emotions, Creativity.</td>
<td>How one understands and uses feelings. Creative force and drive.</td>
<td>I learn through what I want.</td>
<td>Tribal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Plexus or Manipura</td>
<td>Self worth. The lower mind. Sympathetic connection with others</td>
<td>How we measure ourselves within the community.</td>
<td>I learn through what I can and can’t do.</td>
<td>Personal /auric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart or Anahata</td>
<td>Love without judgement. Balance.</td>
<td>How to understand and forgive.</td>
<td>I learn through love.</td>
<td>Balance Mediumship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throat or Vishadha</td>
<td>Spiritual connection. Communication.</td>
<td>How to communicate without fear.</td>
<td>I learn through communication and truth.</td>
<td>Inspirational Channelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brow or Ajna</td>
<td>Insight. The higher mind.</td>
<td>How to perceive higher qualities and potentials</td>
<td>I learn through clear perception and intuition.</td>
<td>Clairvoyance (clear seeing) Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown or Sahasrara</td>
<td>Higher consciousness. Depth Inner knowledge.</td>
<td>How to surrender.</td>
<td>I learn through knowing.</td>
<td>Alignment/Knowing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over the years I have watched the different levels of intuition in operation and linked them to the Chakra centres as below.

**Fig 4. Levels of Intuitive Perception**

| 1. **Base:** | Material | **Instinctive** |
| 2. **Sacral:** | Emotional | **Tribal** |
| 3. **Solar Plexus:** | Lower mind | **Personal, Auric** |
| 4. **Heart:** | Love | **Loving awareness/Balance** |
| 5. **Throat:** | Communication | **Inspirational/Channelling** |
| 6. **Brow:** | Higher mind | **Vision** |
| 7. **Crown:** | Divinity | **Alignment** |

1. Instinctual senses are those that put us on our guard from danger, most often equated with an animal sense of knowing.

2. Tribal senses connect with care for our group whether that is family, society or the environment. A sense of knowing what is the tribe or family needs or fears.

3. Personal intuitions alert us to people’s feelings, thoughts and what they are emitting i.e. their emotions, thoughts etc. A sense of sympathy towards others, but can also be a sense of fear or threat.

4. Loving empathy senses assist any healing and balancing processes whether that is for self or others. A sense of being able to help or heal.

5. Inspirational links takes us towards attunement to unseen forces, a sense of linking to some spiritual entity which is likely to be dictated by the
beliefs of the individual, i.e. a catholic might feel the presence of Mary, or Jesus, a Muslim might feel the presence of Allah. These senses can also feel like some angelic presence and may be acknowledged as some form of information, advice or guidance beyond the mundane.

6. Vision gives us a sense of the greater picture beyond the selfish personal concerns, metaphorically seeing situations beyond the clouds. People that exhibit these type of traits are Dali Lama, Ghandi etc.

7. Alignment to the highest divinity is rare to see, but could be equated to the greatest and best, Jesus, Buddah, Allah etc.

Stage Two: Unfoldment

Contents have similarities with ‘T groups’ or ‘Encounter groups’ (Miller 1993) where leaders facilitate the recognition of personal imbalances which naturally arise. Miller (1993) provides us with an appropriate set of rules for this kind of experiential work.

- Minimise and simplify structure
- Use inter-group as well as inter-personal communication
- Import bits of the real world into environment
- Encourage intervention through the asking of questions & self-disclosure
- Use metaphors to explore interpersonal behaviour
- Remember the past and future are experienced in the present (Miller, N. 1993, p.138).

At this stage the students are being trained to be detached observers of themselves and these groups have a distinctive Gestalt flavour; this is:

When the learner faced with confusion in the form of a problem, restructures his perceptions of the situation and hence gains insight or learning (Boydell 1976, p.200).
Psycho-spiritual students can go through confusion and progress may come with resistance. Experiential exercises (Assagioli 1980) are thought to aid the student in the letting go of unproductive elements of self which can take courage on the part of the student as they are peeling away any façade that often is a form of protective layer of Self. Facilitators help students to feel safe through their own transparency, often exposing uncomplimentary aspects of themselves to assist confidence (Heron 1993). This helps to facilitate the students' ability to implement and self govern their attunement to the inner or higher Self and also adds to the equality between student and facilitator. We all need a guide, a handbook for life's journeys and one can tread in the steps of the masters but until we find our own steps we can never be truly emancipated. Intuition is seen as a way of stabilising the movement within one's own life, acting as a practical guide and serving as the navigator for the student's own psycho-spiritual journey.

**Stage Three: Psychic Sensitivity**

Most of the exercises revolve around attunement to subtle forces which, like the learning of any craft, requires regular practice. The use of altered states of consciousness is seen to help the individual become a clear channel for accessing intuition. The exercises at this stage often put the student on the spot, in a form of exposure from which they find it difficult to bluff. These can be personally challenging as feelings of self-doubt and worth emerge. However, it is thought that if the student can persevere, abandon their reticence, and begin to trust their intuitive qualities, they will have access to an invaluable tool for life.
Stage Four: Esoteric and Consciousness Study Groups

This is an advanced esoteric study group in which in-depth philosophy is discussed both of a personal and global nature but the main purpose of this stage is spiritual integration within the personal lived world of the student. This is a self-directed group and the students are actively involved in their own learning.

Authority in Spiritual Self-awareness

Thomas (2000) cites many valid points on the difficulties incurred over the last twenty years with the plethora of spiritual therapies that have emerged. She says that at present anyone can set himself or herself up as a spiritual teacher or master with little or no training.

It is folly to ignore the essential safeguards and preparation that authenticity demands. ... we are told to learn to turn inwards and all else shall be added unto you. Unfortunately, this is only a very partial truth, and a dangerous one, as until a certain level of development is reached, delusion is almost inevitable. What happens here is that the psychic faculties so readily activated by techniques are mistaken from something much more rarefied and refined (Thomas 2000, p.5).

Although Thomas is harsh on current spiritual therapies, her thought could have some validity as it can be extremely easy to give a student an experience of an ecstatic, altered state, taking them on a high, only to discover that they need another ‘fix’ the next week and that no real illumination has occurred. But is this not then an argument for bringing the work out into the open arena for discussion and professionalisation, not to drive it underground to the area of occult again?

If we look to the East we see a long history of the master and pupil tradition from an elite master, priest or guru, the student is totally under the control of the
teacher, which would probably necessitate the student spending considerable years connected to an Ashram; a monastic type environment, in spartan conditions to concentrate the whole being to the will of the master. This strict discipline does not sit comfortably with modern Western students; consequently, although some Eastern techniques are used, the practices have been modified.

Spiritualist training is the other source of our psycho-spiritual practices but strict teaching approaches in these fields have been an anathema to current ideas in education. However, just as when teaching someone to drive a car it is dangerous to allow the student to veer off the road, leaders of psycho-spiritual groups have to sometimes be firm also. This is balanced without creating dependency on the teacher and therefore a combination of teaching elements is employed throughout the School. Alongside the powerful notion in liberal education of the student’s freedom, psycho-spirituality shares the concept that any leader takes a non-authoritarian approach.

Facilitators endeavour to help students develop the ability to formulate their individual world view and to be fearless in approaching changes of the inner and outer worlds. Any knowledge that is acquired enables us to make choices (Lawson 1979). Paraphrasing Scheffler (1973) to believe something simply on the basis of authority or hearsay is indeed possible; to know it, is not; for knowledge requires the individual himself to have a grasp of the realities lying behind the words. Quoting Pick Rodger (1991) relays:

‘Knowing’, Pick says, is an intuitive opening to what is already there. He asks, how do we know it is there and not an illusion we choose to accept? At the very heart of spiritual development are those moments when you
know in yourself something you formerly only guessed or thought or believed. There is nothing mysterious about this. At one time you may read something and it means little or nothing. Weeks or months or years later it comes back to mind and you realise immediately what was intended. So that was what it meant. The words are the same but your consciousness has changed. (Rodger 2000b, p.5)

This notion of ‘knowing’ something is often treated with scepticism, as why should anyone give up the rational and logical mind on what might seem to be some whim or a fantasy? And yet many great minds down the ages have spoken about this ‘sense of knowing’ (see Chapter Six) which can supersede any possible logic or reason. Psycho-spiritual teaching, as practised by the School actively encourages the students to question and think rationally alongside their intuition, utilising both logic and intuition as important tools in the understanding of Self.

Psycho-spiritual education might be seen to be at odds with academic study, however it can promote insights and stimulate students’ motivation to any other form of practice.

1.4.1. Formation of Research Questions:

I have observed with fascination the change process of students throughout this form of learning and my work within the School has acted as a catalyst in the formation of the research questions:

- What are the individual’s processes of change?
- What learning processes are helpful for implementing personal awareness and change?
- Are changes always beneficial to the individual?
- How do the effects of change manifest within the individual’s lived world?
- Can educational processes assist psycho-spirituality?
• What life-long learning aspects and possibilities are there in using this type of education?
• How effective is the student's intuition as a navigator for spiritual growth?
• Do psycho-spiritual courses aid spiritual Self-awareness?

Psycho-spiritual development groups have organically grown from public demand and we are now seeing them enter the medical and educational arena. An open discussion and research into a form of practice that has been in operation in some way for over a hundred years in the West and very much longer in the East is now well overdue.
CHAPTER TWO

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter informs and discusses psycho-spiritual studies, exploring different aspects of the subject. These include New Age practices, modern transpersonal psychologies, mystical religious influences and spiritual education. It also discusses and analyses three models of spiritual development.

2.2.1. PSYCHO-SPIRITUALITY

Contemporary psycho-spirituality has evolved and progressively developed for over a hundred years from various different spiritual disciplines (see Introduction) and in the process different faiths, cultures and practices have coalesced into a form of contemporary psycho-spirituality. The associated literature is vast, so in this chapter I have concentrated on the current literature and authorities, from increasing scholarly inquiry with this growing subject.

2.2.2. Contemporary Spirituality:

Spirituality is a nebulous term which is often challenged. Bauman (1998) says it 'mainstream and obfuscates while pretending to clarify'. Although, to date, a definitive definition of spirituality is still inconclusive, effort is still being made to establish a definition so we may be able to embrace the subject effectively.

As described in the first chapter, the word spirituality is derived from the Latin word spiritus, spirit, the essential or core part of the person. Spirit could therefore be thought of as:
the vital life force which motivates people and influences one's life, health, behaviour and relationships (Balacchino, Draper 2001, p.834).

However, spirituality is not just thought to be an inner quality. Cunningham (2000) relays spirituality as:

an approach to understanding one's relationship and connection to something outside of one's self that provides meaning (Cunningham 2000, p.68).

Nonetheless, Cunningham also says the spirit could reflect:

the very essence or deepest feeling ..... In spiritual terms it refers to the client's soul ... the Soul is genuineness and depth, the inner self. And the deepest level of the self that one can experience one's truest, deepest feeling, beliefs and experiences or the core or essence of the self (Cunningham 2000, p.68).

From these quotations it could be deduced that an individual may identify the spiritual sense as something that could be either an external or internal experience. However, these do not have to be mutually exclusive and whereas usually in psycho-spiritual education, the individual is thought to link to a higher power which is generally accessed through the deepest core of self; immanent, but there can also be a connection with a higher power outside the self; transcendent.

Acclaimed biologist Alister Hardy (1979) drawing from the fields of psychology, animal behaviour, psychic research and anthropology propounds the hypothesis that:

spirituality is natural to the human species and has evolved because it has biological survival value (he describes this as) 'numinous': that is a direct awareness of a sacred or divine presence (Narayanasamy 1999, p.279).
Evolving might suggest some form of purpose in the process but Hardy seems to suggest that there is a direct, intuitive awareness that is ever present or innate. This is a contentious issue. Are the building blocks of spirituality within us at birth or do they develop? If the definition of spirituality is that we have a ‘core’ or essential part of self, by that definition it follows that spirituality is present in everyone and like all our faculties it therefore has the potential to be developed.

Historically speaking, being spiritual has largely been commanded by organised religions (Morgan, Yarhouse 2001). In this thesis, it is not possible to go into the intricacies of theological arguments, but it does seem that some parts of the Christian church are uncomfortable with the word ‘spiritual’:

Protestants have tended to avoid using the term spirituality. Stated in the Westminster shorter catechism is that a person’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.....Therefore, spirituality is God-centred and seeks to bring glory to God rather than credit to oneself (Morgan/Yarhouse 2001, p.64).

It might be argued that the strong belief in the glory of God would seem to detract from any self-exploration; however, presumably it is both possible to honour God and love and improve oneself, which concept is explored later in this chapter.

Although the word 'spiritual' usually suggests religious beliefs of some kind, Hardwig (2000) suggests that ‘being spiritual’ does not necessitate having a any set faith and the ambiguous nature of the concept is noted and often taken to mean something outside religious context relating it to ultimate meanings and
values in life. In this way atheists can also have spiritual concerns just like everyone else.

There may be various differing opinions of the meaning of spirituality but one of the commonalities in the relevant literature is that there is a difference between spirituality and religion. Religion means to tie together and is therefore seen as the organisation of spirituality and facilitates making meaning of our world (O'Connor 2001). Religion usually has a set structure that teaches people about God and the way to live their lives. Therefore, it need not be a personal lived experience but a set of values to underpin society, life and living. Religion could therefore be described as following the axiom of God whereas spirituality might be described as the personal connection or the experience of God.

Nevertheless, both the religious and spiritual concepts relate to qualities of life that go beyond the ordinary physical and material states: the quality that there is something more to life than the material existence. These qualities instigate prefixes such as meta, trans, super, and extra when describing the spiritual and religious states (Bouma 2003): religions organise, and provide deep and rich traditions for the practices of being spiritual. They also have social structures and officials in the form of priests and elders to ensure the purity and propriety of practice. Alternatively, contemporary spirituality:

relates to the experiential journey of encounter and relationship with others, powers, forces and being beyond the scope of everyday life. To be spiritual is to be open to this 'more than' in life, and to expect to encounter and to nurture a relationship with it. Being spiritual can be done alone and often is (Bouma 2003, p.626).
taken from the more orthodox position, developing one's own spiritual truth ‘alone’ is often used as an argument against spiritual Self-awareness, for where is the comfort of the society, the tribe and practices that have been built up over hundreds and thousands of years? Religions offer support to the community and often hold the society together and having a shared culture has allowed growth and progress of the peoples involved. Nonetheless, although the structure of religions and religious leaders may give support to their own tribe or sect and propound moral ethics, they have also used their ideals and teaching as an excuse to execute abominations throughout history. Willard (2000) says that there is:

a growing suspicion or realisation that we have not done well with the reality and the need. We have counted on preaching, teaching and knowledge or information to form faith in the hearer and have counted on faith to form the inner life and outward behaviour of the Christian. But for whatever reason this strategy has not turned out well and the result is that we have multitudes of professing Christians who may well be ready to die, but obviously are not ready to live and hardly get along with themselves much less with others (Willard 2000, p.254).

Contemporary spirituality however, demands authenticity, a need to ‘live’ our beliefs, not be told what they should be. Being able, with more immediate and efficient communications around the world, to watch apparent insanities in the name of God or religion, should it surprise us that religions seem to be losing their credibility?

Do the discrepancies of the definition of spirituality suggest that the subject falls within the postmodern idiom (Giddens 2002) whereby a multi-varient view of the world is accepted? Generally psycho-spiritual practices do not stipulate the student has to follow any particular belief system, and are sympathetic to any
tradition that aids the individual in their spiritual progress. They do, however, encourage the mystical notion of the transcendence of human understanding and the ability of the individual to communicate directly to God or a higher force. They also propound that spiritual unfoldment is possible for everyone (Israel 1974).

Although for the focus of this thesis the meaning of spirituality as the core and essence of a person is used, because of the personal nature of contemporary spirituality it seems likely that any common definitive definition will continue to be elusive, nonetheless, increased intelligent debate and discussion on the whole area is encouraging the emergence of spirituality as part of the mainstream agenda.

2.2.3. Spiritual Psychology:
It was as early as 1911 that Roberto Assagioli (1980) began developing a form of spiritual or ‘transpersonal’ psychology which he labelled ‘Psychosynthesis’ (Basanta 2000). He maintained that we possess a super-consciousness described as the ‘psyche’ which contains our deepest potential, the source of the unfolding pattern of our unique human path of development. This super-consciousness or deeper aspect of Self continually invites us to levels of healing and wholeness, hence the word *trans* meaning beyond or above the personal. Among the antecedents of transpersonal psychology the major influences are William James (1982), Carl Jung (2002) and Roberto Assagioli (1980). Also the consciousness research of Stanislav Grof (2000) and the view of Ken Wilber (2000) are pertinent.
The transpersonal approach pushes out the boundaries of psychology. Grof (2000) states:

Transpersonal psychology seriously studies and respects the entire spectrum of human experience ... It also honours the spiritual dimension of existence and acknowledges the deep human need for transcendental experiences. In this context spiritual search appears to be an understandable and legitimate human activity (Grof 2000, p.217).

Although there are various interpretations of transpersonal psychology, Tart (1992), Rowan (1993), Wilber (2000) hold we must accept that we are all spiritual beings. The question then arises, wouldn't the title 'spiritual psychology' be more appropriate? Rowan (2002) suggests that transpersonal is a more clearly defined term because it is better stated than spirituality and more widely researched, and cites refereed journals in the subject such as Journal of Transpersonal Psychology (Edwards 1999) where it was defined as:

the systematic study of non ordinary states of consciousness especially when such states may be considered religious or mystical experiences and the models of human personality, belief systems and therapeutic practices that are pertinent to such states (Edwards 1999, p.4).

However, Benner (1988) suggests that the psychological and the spiritual are interwoven and often cannot be separated and that we need to address the whole person as a 'psycho-spiritual unit' and he suggests that the word 'psycho-spiritual' can be used as an alternative to 'transpersonal' (Benner 1988).

The main focus of psycho-spirituality in this thesis is the development of the spiritual Self-awareness, and in common with transpersonal psychology (Fontana 2001) it deals with aspects of the individual beyond the personal state. However, although there are many similarities between transpersonal and
psycho-spiritual practices, not every transpersonalist openly embraces the worth of subtle energies, intuition and the psychic, nor do they always utilise them as an integral part of its learning. Psycho-spirituality can draw on and acknowledge practices outside the psychology remit, such as ancient rituals, meditation, chanting and yoga.

2.2.4. Consciousness Psychology:
In the pursuit of spiritual self development, can there be an effective map of spirit to assist the process? Susanne Cook-Greuter (2000) 4 tiers pf development follows:
**Fig. 5. Four Tier Model of Human Development Correspondence of Levels of Mind and Ego Stages in the Four Tier Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Tiers of Development Stages</th>
<th>Level of Mind</th>
<th>Ego Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Miller &amp; Cook Greuter; Wilber)</td>
<td>(Alexander et al)</td>
<td>(Loevinger; Cook-Greuter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Postpostconventional</td>
<td>Unity Consciousness</td>
<td>Transcendent self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ego-Transcendent</td>
<td>Refined cosmic Consciousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Postconventional or Postformal</td>
<td>Ego</td>
<td>Unitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings/intuition</td>
<td>Construct Aware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autonomous/integrated</td>
<td>Mature, connected self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Conventional</td>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>Conscientious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Separate, individual self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self aware,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conformist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communal self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Preconventional</td>
<td>Desires</td>
<td>Self-protective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behavior/senses</td>
<td>Impulsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical world</td>
<td>Presocial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undifferentiated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is not a necessity to investigate the whole of this model; I draw attention to it here particularly for what Cook-Greuter calls the 'Construct Aware Ego Stage'. In short, she is saying that everyone develops to the second stage, named conventional, but at some point there must be some deconstruction where the individual comes to 'reject the overall stands of the systems thinker' (Cook-Greuter 2000):

By turning further inward, they start to see through their own thoughts and language habits and become aware of the profound splits and paradoxes inherent in rational thoughts, in many ways they individually rediscover the dictum that the map is not the territory (Cook-Greuter 2000, p.234).

Greuter calls these people the 'Construct Aware individuals' who consciously experience the 'ego's clever and vigilant machinations at self preservation and the ego is fully aware of its own defensive manoeuvres'. The individual needs to come to this stage where:

The ego becomes transparent to itself ... At this stage they consciously uncover and face their own habit of mind and heart based on memory and life long cultural reinforcement and amplification realising the bankruptcy of one automatic way of meaning which can be profoundly distressing and frustration (Cook-Greuter 2000, p.235).

It is the deconstruction of beliefs, thoughts and social patterns by psychospiritual students that is thought to be an important part of the process of unfoldment. When this occurs a great deal is happening with the individual, but having 'profound splits' can create uncertainty and fear. According to Nobel Laureate Ilya Prigogines (Gordon 2003) change and uncertainty is inherent in cosmic expression and Heiegger (Hunt 2003) proposed that the authentic self is that which is aware of the ambiguity and uncertainty of its existence. Similarly Buddhist thought (Rinpoche 1992) says that the primary cause of human
suffering is the persistent belief in permanence. Cook-Greuter's research states the process of self-awareness deepens and reasoning becomes further differentiated at the Construct Aware stage and access to intuition, bodily states, feelings, dreams, archetypal and other transpersonal material increases. She also states that towards the end of the growth trajectory in the personal representational realm people welcome insights from these experiences rather than defending against them (Cook-Greuter 2000). Cook propounded that when people welcome these intuitions and insights they can become an active tool and map in their own development, and intuition becomes their own personal teacher. If a period of uncertainty is almost inevitable for spiritual transformation, and intuition is noted to help, using intuition throughout the spiritual development process might seem preferable and desirable.

2.2.5. Intuition:
The argument against intuition is that it is unpredictable and unreliable. DePaul, Ramsey (1998) cite many cases of apparently incorrect intuitions and Perrig (2000) takes up this argument asking how we can deal with the inconsistency that

in one type of investigation intuition is considered to be irrationality serving as the source for errors in judgement while in another series of studies intuition guides people to correct responses or to detect coherence they could not identify (Perrig 2000, p.110).

He goes on to say that it has been discovered that 'intuition is better suited in a context of discovery than in a context of justification'. However, intuitive information can be seen as eccentric in nature, as it rarely follows any set model or format. So given the uncertainty of this subject, why choose intuition as a
navigator for a spiritual Self-awareness programme? Is it a reliable source of truth? It could be argued there are many better ways to find one’s spirituality; following a religious practice, or finding an authentic spiritual teacher, for instance. Another criticism is that intuition is deterministic (Epstein 1992) and therefore does not give the individual room for free will or expression. However, the reverse could just as easily be argued, because as intuition comes directly from the person in the moment, the individual is therefore free to choose their own direction. Tart (1992) says:

Many spiritual psychologies conceive of intuition as one or more powerful cognitive faculties that work on principles other than logical rationality, and that work outside of conscious awareness ... further intuition is seen as something that can be cultivated and as something that can give a more profound understanding of many things other than reason (Tart 1992, p.94).

This idea that intuition can be cultivated is not common and one that has rarely been addressed, but it could be argued that like any quality; mental, physical or intellectual, it must be possible for it to be trained and developed.

De Quincey (2000) draws attention to research on indigenous peoples and notes that prior to conquest people worked with what ‘felt’ right; however, once reason is introduced, ‘feeling strives to please and the result: obliteration or suppression of liminal consciousness by reason’ (De Quincey 2000). Quoting from Standford anthropologist Richard Sorenson’s (1998) paper he notes:

Tribes lived with a heartfelt rapprochement based on integrated trust – a sensual intuitive rapport between the people. Their communication was spontaneous, open and honest. For them truth-talk was affect-talk because it only worked when personal feelings were above board and accurately expressed which requires transparency in aspiration, interest and desires (De Quincey 2000, p.13).
This does not mean that reason was not in existence in some form before the arrival of Western man, but if, as this suggests, there is some truth that 'logic and reason' can seek to please and consequently distort one's actions, the person stops being honest to themselves and others. Authentic spiritual Self-awareness is thought to require openness. We need therefore to ask what stands between our truths? The educationalist Peters (1973) tells us:

Our wishes and fears limit how we see the world ... If this becomes too structured in terms of our own personal wishes and fears, it can lead to windowless tunnel vision, to a peep-hole on the world determined by our own preoccupations (Peters 1973, p.109).

If fear limits our world, could it cloak our truth, and if so might it affect our communications with the inner being or self? If we throw light on our fears, negative patterns and assumptions could it bring us closer to our inner self and enable contact with our inner being? Accessing intuition is thought to provide a readily accessible decision-making tool which might aid the process of unveiling aspects of self that cloak the core or true self. And even if sometimes this turns out to be incorrect, it is one's own decision made in awareness. Decisions born out of logic can just as easily turn out to be incorrect. However, just as there are different types of intelligence (Vaughan 1979) I suggest there are different types of intuition (Rowan 1993) ranging from the animal survival instincts to the highest or deepest level; the inner authentic nature and voice of spirit.

Referring to the inner nature, Maslow (1971) suggests it is:

cloaked and weak, it persists underground, unconsciously, even though denied and repressed ... It speaks softly but it will be heard, even if in a distorted form ... It has a dynamic force of its own pressing always for
open uninhibited expression. This force is one main aspect of the will to health, the urge to identity. It is this that makes psychotherapy, education and self improvement possible in principle (Maslow 1971, p.192).

So how can we hear this soft inner voice that often is obscured? Can religious notions guide us through? Can logic discern its elusive nature? Intuition may not be all that is needed for this task but it might give access to this inner sense.

**Therapy as Part of Psycho-spiritual process:**

Mystics through the ages (Hunt 2003) concur that depth insight and intuition comes in the spiritual unfoldment process and can, with care, be utilised to assist, not hinder, the journey. Rogers (1994) says:

> As a psychological function, like sensation, feeling and thinking, intuition is a *way of knowing*. When you know something intuitively, it has the ring of truth; yet often we do not know, who we know, what we know ... learning to use intuition is learning to be your own teacher. (Rogers 1994, p.37)

Can this ‘sense of knowing’ or higher intuitive knowledge really be employed to act as the pilot which drives the person forwards enabling better understanding of themselves and assisting their own spiritual transformation? And can it give a person a better connection and understanding of their inner spiritual nature? If so, where do we start to find this elusive inner nature? Maslow (1971) suggests that, in the majority of individuals the inner nature is there unconsciously and that it can be obtained by a state of stillness. But how does the individual obtain the required state of stillness to perceive the inner nature? If we take the mystical approach, making a connection with the inner or higher self may require us to uncover or dissolve the veils that obscures contact. To assist this, Transpersonal methods (Assagioli 1980) are believed to move and dissolve these outer persona
and lower self to assist the process but in the past this has been largely left to therapies.

Recently integrating spirituality and psychotherapy has become a significant area of interest (Tan 2003) and one of the reasons for this could be that the individual’s spiritual journey is not always straightforward and affects the students in very personal ways. The growing literature reflects this and suggests some form of therapeutic input in the learning process. Quoting Whitmore (1986) Sutherland says:

The spiritual path and the therapeutic path do not contradict each other, in fact they complement each other beautifully; here the therapist has two roles. One is the role of psychotherapist which we all know of. The other belongs to the priest, the teacher, the spiritual guide. In the past we went to one or the other. In transpersonal therapy there is a fusion of the two roles (Sutherland 2001, p.387).

One could argue that combining the roles of psychotherapist and priest would present all sorts of problems, not least of all because however good the training of the therapist, it might not provide them with the spiritual disposition to take on the role of priest or spiritual director. West (2000) quotes Gergen (1996) who suggests that:

With the disappearance of communities ... therapeutic community has everything to gain. It is a requirement of postmodern culture. We stand in for lost communities, lost friends, lost intimates and that I think is highly understandable to the culture (West 2000, p.37).

Whereas there is little dispute in the value of therapy, is it really possible that therapists may also ‘stand in’ for lost religions and faiths? It might be argued that a form of spiritual education that embraces aspects of psychotherapeutic practice is not so surprising in this postmodern climate (Giddens 2002), but this fusion of
roles might make some uneasy. For instance would this mean that spiritual teachers (Forbes 2003) need to be psychotherapists as well? Previously, ‘being spiritual’, has been left to organised religions and the concept of learning to be your own teacher, which stands at the heart of contemporary spirituality, equally does not seem to lend itself to the use of a therapy. However, employing therapeutic methods in psycho-spiritual learning might assist the student to understand themselves.

Over the last 50 years with the upsurge of interest in transpersonal psychology, and psychotherapy, together with a much greater awareness of other cultural religious practices, the importance of the person is being acknowledged and it is increasingly thought that the more healthy concentration on the self, far from removing the person from God or spirit becomes the very means that allows a first hand communication with a higher power. The Self therefore takes centre stage in our observation and inquiry and knowledge of some aspect of psychology may not just be an advantage; it might be a necessity.

In a study of intuition in psychotherapy Rea (2001) identifies;

>a phase of letting go during which the participants have: a sense of release of self collecting and quieting of the internal chatter of their thoughts and feelings which in turn enables them to access, ‘intuitive listening’. Intuitive listening is characterised by the absence of any precise intention, or research of a defined goal. On the contrary it is being open enough to let the unexpected come, in a relaxed, detached light. It does not involve any effort, it is peaceful, waiting, patient, which is not expecting anything in particular (Rea 2001, p.100).

This passage poses a couple of interesting points, firstly, it seems to suggest the need for some form of meditation or quiet contemplation to allow the intuition to
be heard. Secondly, it promotes the question that as any ‘letting go’ of negativity can be very psychologically messy and uncomfortable, this being the case, someone untrained in the psychological process may either not be able to assist or may even exacerbate the problem. This promotes the argument for some psychological input. Nonetheless, for any form of spiritual development it logically must require this to be balanced by someone with some in-depth spiritual knowledge.

Psychological and spiritual work has usually dealt with different levels of human existence. Maslow (1999) says

people are products of their biological structures and their environments, personality has come to be regarded as the individuality that emerges from the interaction between a biological organism and a social and physical world ... personality consists of individual observable behaviour (Maslow 1999, p.xxxiv).

But as Maslow himself investigated we are much more than this and though we may have established patterns of behaviours, these are thought capable of change. Arguably the personality part of ourselves is not the core, real or authentic self, and it might mask or confuse our deeper connections, needing careful teasing out with the help of an expert.

Psychological inquiry addresses personal meaning, and spiritual practice looks beyond our ordinary human concerns towards the realisation of the ultimate. Welwood (2000) suggests that:

Psychological work might serve as an ally to spiritual practice by helping to shine the light of awareness into all the hidden nooks and crannies of our conditioned personality, so that it becomes more porous, more permeable to the larger being that is its ground. Of course what I am
describing here is a special kind of psychological self inquiry, which requires a larger framework, understanding and aim than conventional psychotherapy. I am hesitant to call this psychotherapy at all, for the work therapy has connotations of pathology and cure that place it in a medical rather than transformative context (Welwood 2000, p.196).

Welwood is describing some form of loosening effect on the whole psyche, possibly in line with the classic notion of the dissolution of the ‘veils of illusion’ or in contemporary parlance ‘unfoldment’ but, as he says, this needs a special kind of therapy. So can psycho-spirituality marry the necessary elements for the task?

Austin (2000) also suggests the notion that as the lower aspects of self dissolve, the higher or inner self emerges giving access to an inner knowing not based on learnt knowledge but on a higher state. He also relays the different state of consciousness when an ‘awareness awakened to this world is transfigured’.

Austin (2000) says that basic elements now perceived afresh seems exempt from any desires and distortion of the old intrusive self. When their perceptions are unveiled they yield the impression of being directly in touch with the more intrinsic qualities of other things.

Welwood (2000) criticises the split between the spiritual and worldly life calling for what he describes as ‘psycho-spiritual integration’.

The increasingly desperate situation of the planet that human beings are rapidly destroying cries out for a new kind of psycho-spiritual integration which has only rarely existed before namely, an integration between liberation the capacity to step beyond the individual psyche into the larger non person space of pure awareness and person transformation ... thereby fuelling the development of a fuller richer human presence that could fulfil the still unrealised potential of life on this earth (Welwood 2000, p.197).
This combination of the psychological and the spiritual is a relatively new concept, as is using intuition and psychic faculties for personal and spiritual growth. Buddhist doctrine (Hanh 1988) in particular is very suspicious of this, but unfavourable attitudes exist in other faiths, with some factions of Christianity still seeing any psychic perception to be evil, ignoring the fact that any communication with God could be considered some form of extra-sensory perception. If we are talking about lower forms of psychic work, that may inflate the ego and consequently lead people away from their spiritual depth, I have some sympathy with the caution. Schlamn (2001) echoes these concerns:

While he (Wilber) is impressed by the somatically based, ecstatic experiences of yogis and shamans (often accompanied by extraordinary, paranormal powers over the laws of time and space) of psychic level mysticism, he regards them as only the expression of an instrumental, transitional phase of spiritual development, to be passed through as quickly as possible (Schlamm 2001, p.17).

As much as any stage of development is not permanent I would concur; however, this does not take into account the different levels of psychic and intuitive awareness as there is a big difference between the lower forms of instinctual intuition and the higher form that encompasses a profound sense of the spiritual.

2.2.6. Self in Spiritual Practice:

It was William James (1982) who first provided the enduring conceptualisation of identity development naming ‘the material, the social and the spiritual as aspects of self’. James described, this as the ‘spiritual me’:

The true, the intimate, the ultimate, the permanent me which I seek ...the core and sanctuary of our life. It may be understood as strictly
psychological and physiological process but also more metaphysical explanation provided through the concept of the soul ... Understanding the nature of the knowing creating and connecting 'I' may also require the idea of a soul (Poll, Smith 2003, p.130).

The Hebrew word for soul – *nephesh* – is mentioned 754 times in the Old Testament, but it has no consensus definition and although one of its meanings is *breathe*, it is thought the soul unites with the divine spirit and is therefore seen as an important component in maintaining a state of wellbeing (Heintzman 2000). In the New Testament the word *psyche* which originally meant 'soul' appears frequently. However, it was Plato who gave us the notion of 'the divinity of the soul, its imprisonment in the body and its need to purge itself of all bodily desire (Beck 2003). Whether or indeed how we have to 'purge' ourselves is debatable, but the notion of ultimate truths is still alive within the psycho-spiritual movement.

With the triumph of democracy over authoritarianism post World War Two and the development of the already established belief in the spiritual and moral goodness, individual salvation was promised through the liberation of self and in this climate Carl Rogers (1994) and Abraham Maslow (1971) were able to convey:

> the concept of self actualization as the directional trend evident in all organic and human life. The urge to expand, extend, develop, mature, the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism (Van Schoor 2000, p.438).

However, these ideas came under criticism with people caricaturing the emphasis on self to be some sort of 'narcissistic preoccupation'. Maslow (1971) states:
self was not some self subsistent isolated ego but a potential, a tendency and that as it develops becomes an ever more open engagement with the world and others ... without exception self-actualized people are deeply involved with larger causes beyond themselves (Aanstoos 2003, p.125).

By this token, the development of Self, as opposed to being self-obsessed, would ultimately take the individual towards higher aspects of Self and God. Others concur: Maslow's (1971) concept of 'Self-actualisation' is similar to the mystical idea of a pathway to spiritual illumination. This notion is also echoed in Gurdjieff's 'self remembering', Jung's 'individuation of Self', Almaas‘ ‘personal essence’ and Maslow’s ‘self-actualisation’ (Hunt 2000). However, Kuhm (2000) complains of the arrogance of humanistic ideals and says it is based on ‘irrational faith in the limitless power of humans to dominate the world’ (Kuhm 2000 ).

Whereas it is certainly true that inherent in humanistic psychology is the notion of human potentials, this however, in itself, does not automatically suggest one would have ‘limitless power’ nor that one would want ‘world domination’, but rather refers to mastery of Self, which is thought to instigate greater understanding of others and a greater propensity to engage in the good of all mankind.

Daniels (2001) also has delivered an attack on the concept of Self-actualising suggesting it might advocate an ‘individualistic self seeking approach to life and a concern with purely personal gratification’ although he admits that Maslow does not implicitly say this. He describes Maslow’s preoccupation with mystical experience reflecting that:

a Dionysian i.e. non-rational impulsive and romantic bias that actively encourages ...emotional excess and anti intellectualism (Daniels 2001, p.19).
Whereas I have some sympathy with what might be seen as the excesses of self-spirituality, I cannot subscribe to the notion that one has to embrace only the Dionysians' non-rational, intuitive ideas or indeed just the Apollonian, i.e. rational, orderly ones. As Maslow relays in his 'hierarchy of needs' (Maslow 1971), people are multifaceted and have many complex aspects of self. Therefore the argument being made here is: why can't we embrace both? The rational mind is profoundly useful to us and can monitor our excesses and, although the intuition may seem impulsive, it has an immediacy that logic and rationality rarely provide. It may be perceived to be sometimes defective, but then so can the logical mind.

Daniels (2001) is also concerned by what he see as the 'ideals of a life' and yet is it not deemed that ideals and visions push out the boundaries allowing the human race to progress towards greater potentials? He says that 'the concept of self actualisation may easily encourage hedonism, crude physicality and a preoccupation with that self'. Whereas it might be true that, like almost anything, if taken to extremes it will have extreme consequences, but Rogers (Rhoades, McFarland 2000), believed that with a self-actualisation process individuals become more 'self responsible, creative and flexible'.

The problem for me with Maslow's concept of Self-actualisation is that it does not go far enough into the higher and highest reaches of self where the 'selfish, egoic and hedonistic tendencies' that understandably worry Daniels and others, might be left behind. However, Maslow himself recognised that there were higher, spiritual or transpersonal levels of man (Soudkova 2002), and further
reaches of the self to be discovered. It was out of the tenet of humanistic psychology (‘third force’) that transpersonal (or ‘fourth force’) psychology grew, with Abraham Maslow (1971) being a major influence in that transition.

The orthodox faiths are also generally thought to be uncomfortable with what they see as self-serving spirituality believing that because it is self-based it is therefore at odds with God. Paraphrasing Maslow (1971) the word self seems to ‘put people off’ and therefore is ‘often helpless before the powerful linguistic habit of identifying self with selfish’. In some circles, any mention of self becomes almost a heresy of the Christian value to ‘love thy neighbour’, seemingly forgetting the next part of the phrase is, ‘as thyself’. Also the Christian emphasis on compassion for the weak often overrides acknowledging the positive aspects within us and ‘generates hatred for the strong’. This fear of godliness that comes with maturity stands at the heart of acknowledging the individual’s great importance in the spiritual development process. In psycho-spiritual practice (Soskin 2003), self-respect and self-love are not thought to remove the person from God but rather become the very means by which a first-hand communication with a higher power is reached, and from that, it is believed that emancipation and autonomy can occur.

2.2.7. The New Age:

The term New Age was created by the German philosopher, Schmalenbach (Possamai 2000) in the 1920s but it lacks a clear definition. Nonetheless, the New Age generally is seen to promote the concept of the importance of self as a way to higher knowledge. Heelas (1996) relays that as:
an internalized form of religiosity the new age is detraditionalized. That is to say autonomy and freedom are highly valued, and authority lies with the experience of the self or more broadly the natural realm so new agers attach great importance to the self ethic (Heelas 1996, p.29).

Possamai (2000) has explored the possibilities of the New Age being a cult and his research found that it is not a religious movement and New Agers move through fluid networks rather than settled collectives. Although some New Agers join cults it is noted that others also go to church or are interested in Buddhism and visit temples. They are not a unified organisation and often meet each other in lectures, workshops, conferences and fairs. Because of their ideal to live for, and in the present, they are classed post-modern but the genesis of this culture can probably be traced back to the turn of the last century with the influence of the Theosophists (see Chapter One). However the movement began to take shape soon after World War Two and accelerated at the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s when the youth culture and the ‘anything goes’ culture arrived. The educationalist Trevelyan (Possamai 1999) who had an influential effect in the UK promoting New Age beliefs from the late 1940s up to his death in 1996 stated New Age concepts:

change man and you change society. Try to change society without the inner change in man and confusion will be the sole result. (Possamai 1999, p.113)

Nonetheless the title ‘new’ is technically incorrect, as much of its influences and practices are revisited not age-old disciplines:

The New Age is a term used rather imprecisely to describe a broad group of contemporary movements, therapies and quasi-religious groups which have in common a concern with personal self realisation, liberation or fulfilment. Some explicitly draw on Eastern or other non-European spiritual traditions and most could be described as rejecting the dualistic
mind-body distinction which underlies much western thinking about the human person (Sharma 1992, p.221).

This movement has undoubtedly had a social and cultural effect; however, in the media it is still common to find reference to the New Age alongside the 1960s 'anything goes' attitude. To paraphrase Rowan (1993), it is common in New Age practices for one to believe everything, accept anything and not question or deny anything. Unfortunately, in my experience of lecturing and teaching some New Age groups, there is some truth in this statement. A study within the rubric of New Age thought, says it is

unchurched therapeutic religion practised informally and that it is post religious. It is individualistic and free of social pressure and authority; the gods whose help it draws upon are more like accepting friends than powerful benefactors (Gallagher 2002, p.19).

This derogatory-sounding statement is not an unusual criticism as contemporary spirituality is seen to remove people from the authority of religion and the safety of authoritative leadership.

Heron (1998) picks up this criticism and asks who does the teaching in this apparent free for all New Age attitude. He argues that although one might need an experienced teacher to find a way through the 'thick undergrowth of egoic narcissism', yet equally a dynamic teacher could be thought to be counterproductive. Heron is particularly tough on Buddhist teaching which has seen some resurgence in New Age circles:

This kind of induced spirituality sets up dependency with chronic spiritual projection and consequent process to become subject to authoritarian direction and indoctrination (Heron 1999 p.115).
Heron is scathing when talking about Buddhist type training Schools:

Expressions of an exclusively male and rigidly authoritarian oriental system in which masters have an all powerful role imported in the West. I think it is highly dubious metaphysically. It is dubious too in the way it is used to legitimate spiritual power over people, by telling them what an impossible, unregenerate mess they are in without direction from those who claim to know the road to liberation. Authoritarian abuse has run amok with the spread of Buddhism in the UK and USA (Heron 1998, p.6).

Clearly Heron is not enamoured with the revival of Buddhism and he may well be correct that in the strict Oriental systems they are male-dominated; however in my experience over the last twenty years, firstly, the revival of ancient practices has been subdued to accommodate Western minds and also, far from being led by, or indeed filled by, ‘exclusively males’ have a heavy percentage of females. Some New Age writers even actively propound the ‘Rebirth of the Goddess’ (Bloom 1991) suggesting that the feminist movement is a spiritual movement as well as political, because it addresses the ‘liberation of the human spirit’ by healing the ‘fragmentation’ of the male and female energies within.

In spiritual practice it was believed that men prefer ritual and structure and women unstructured and intuitive styles. But, although male principles have tended towards the group or tribe some recent research (McFadden, Ray 2001) indicates that some women value group identity over individualism, finding power and agency in collectivity. It is believed that women find spiritual truths through sharing their own experiences and whereby it could be argued that women tend to be more generally social:

Their lives and life stories are more communal than individualistic and more heavily populated that the solo quest narrative (McFadden, Ray 2001, p.201).
However, this is contrary to James Fowler (McFadden, Ray 2001), who suggests that women's faith depends on socialising, and that they are dependent. Conversely, Ramsey and Blieszbner (McFadden, Ray 2001) strongly criticise that view and relay that women:

reviewed the suffering and losses of the past as well as the joys and cultivated the present by remaining open to growth, pursuing meaning, and retaining a sense of humour about life's contingencies (McFadden, Ray 2001, p.206).

The argument for New Age practices is that there is value in the multi-variant spontaneous coming together of different faiths and practices which puts power in the hands of the individual and find what suits them best. However, some New Age practices can be diverse and unstructured with little real desire to intelligently examine themselves. Therefore I share some sympathy with the scepticism towards the more dubious New Age practices. Nonetheless, some of the more reputable therapies involved in the New Age movement including Homeopathy, Naturopathy and Spiritual healing, have gone a long way in the last few years to bring themselves in line with professional standards.

2.2.8. Spiritual Direction:

With the cornucopia of different faiths, beliefs and cultures coming together, where can people find real spiritual direction? Spiritual direction (Whitlock 2002) is usually referred to as mentoring, spiritual counselling or spiritual guidance:

An interaction between one person, trained to listen for the movement of God and another who desires to develop and cultivate an intimate, personal relationship with God. This process requires commitment to openness and honesty. The discipline of spiritual direction uses various entry ways for insight and understanding including the imagination, dreams, gospel or other faith stories, memories, life crises and especially
prayer, meditation and theological reflection (Tisdale, Doehring, Lorrain-Poirier 2003, p.53).

Tracey describes Christian spiritual direction as contact with a higher power and he describes classes that meet weekly that could just as easily describe psycho-spiritual groups:

"it was more or less a democratic forum where rich and poor, the educated and the illiterate could meet as peers ... The design of the class is to 'inspect their outward walking, to inquire into their inward state and to learn what are their trials, and how they fall by or conquer them' (Tracy 2002, p.327).

Because of the often informal way many psycho-spiritual groups work, very different social, academic and ethnic backgrounds come together, which, although presenting some challenges, is thought ultimately to be an advantage as people discover different perspectives of life through other class members.

The informal and personal aspects of these groups often naturally encourages some forms of therapy, but Rev. Gregory-Rogers (2002) argues that spiritual direction and psychotherapy are not done with the same goals in mind. He sees psychotherapy as:

"helping people to help adjust to the circumstance of life, and where any healing involves recognising the source of the problems and coming to terms with what happened, adjusting and building a life that is not controlled by the unresolved conflicts of the past." (Gregory-Rogers 2002, p.286)

He suggests that in Christian terms these need to be added to the 'healing grace of God', repentance, forgiveness and spiritual strength. If one was to take away the rather religious terminology that would deter most modern spiritual aspirants, the intentions and inspiration behind these notions are in line with
psycho-spiritual practices. But how can one reach the ‘grace of God’ if one is clouded by the ‘unresolved conflicts’ that colour that person’s world? Without their dissolution the individual is likely to find it much harder, if not impossible, to see the clear light of spirit. Most psycho-spiritual practices endeavour to take both paths, using the inspiration of spirit, directed through the individual’s own intuitive process, alongside addressing any negative psychological aspects of self with a view to dissolution.

Reading through the recent literature on spiritual direction I am struck with the commonalities in concepts between both psycho-spiritual and classic Christian notions albeit that they each have their own terminology. To illustrate, I have compared a Christian article to contemporary spiritual notions in a paragraph from a recent journal article, ‘The Process of Authentic Transformation’, a term well understood in psycho-spiritual circles:

The initial step of spiritual transformation is conversion and a radical realignment of one’s commitment and perspective. Coming face to face with the insurmountable guilt of one’s own sin genuine repentance combines with faith in Christ as the way to forgiveness and restoration to fellowship with God. Conversion initiates the process of spiritual growth towards the goal of maturity. The process involves the cognitive, behavioural and affective each of which through an integrative process is to become conformed to God’s will. (Whitlock 2002, p.5)

If we remove the particularly emotive word ‘conversion’ and replace it with words of similar meaning that do not suggest persuasion or dictation, like ‘transformation’ or ‘change’, no one in psycho-spiritual groups would find this concept out of place. The next sentence is seemingly very outdated: ‘Coming face to face with the insurmountable guilt of one’s own sin, genuine repentance combines with faith in Christ as the way to forgiveness and restoration to
fellowship with God'. It is unlikely that anyone involved in contemporary spiritual practices would accept the draconian words ‘sin’ and ‘guilt’; however if we change the words to a phrase ‘a feeling of doing wrong’, coming face to face with oneself and seeing and accepting oneself allowing the renewal of connection to the highest essence of the spiritual Self, it would be well understood. The word God is sometimes considered to be derogatory as it is often made in connection to the notion of religious dictates and few people in contemporary spirituality use it. Alternative terms include ‘universal light force energy’, ‘All that is’, A higher power, ‘The source’ or ‘Highest spiritual energy’. ‘An integrative process to become conformed to God’s will’ suggests union with a higher force or God with the personal will. In contemporary spirituality this might read ‘alignment to light’. If we put the whole paragraph into modern spiritual parlance it might read:

The initial step of spiritual transformation is a shift in consciousness and a radical realignment of one’s commitments and perspective. Coming face to face with the insurmountable lessons from the past with acceptance, aids forgiveness and restoration to the Spiritual connection bringing emancipation which initiates the process of spiritual growth. This process involves taking the holistic self through an integrative process to become aligned to universal light force.

One of the major differences between Christian and contemporary spirituality is that Christian dogma says one can only come to God through Christ. Yet the word ‘Christ’ means, ‘one who is anointed’, i.e. someone who has the essence, the substance of holiness; therefore if the personal contact with Christ as a person is changed to Christ as the highest substance of spiritual energy we might reach some agreement.
Genuine seekers in contemporary spirituality have a need for first-hand authentic experiences; to be told about 'God' and the spiritual is not enough. Coming to it through a third party, even an evolved soul as Jesus, Buddah or any other divine being is perceived as knowledge second hand. The contemporary need seems to require personal experience. Allowing the highest self to speak and guide one to God, would, to some Christians, be an anathema, but if you take away the personal aspect of Jesus and use the notion of Christ, the sacred heart, unconditional loving force, are the energy and concepts not similar?

With many Christians still using the emotive words of repentance, virtue and the devil they do little to encourage people to see Christianity as non-judgemental and truly loving, and therefore the gulf remains. Nonetheless what the current literature regarding spiritual directorship is informing us is that there is a view that practitioners, i.e. spiritual directors, need to ‘view all issues as psychospiritual in nature’ and to take into account the holistic aspects of self to assist spiritual growth (Tisdale, Doehring, Lorrain-Poirier 2003).

2.2.9. Spiritual Health and Wellbeing:

The whole area of spirituality is also branching out to many different areas including health care journals and research and the subject has literally flourished as a ‘hot topic’ (Thoresen, Harris 2002).

Many articles including one in The British Medical Journal of June 2002 state some correlation with religious and spirituality practices and better health.
Cunningham (2000) discusses the real value in the healing process for spiritual involvement. She argues that:

any holistic approach to working with clients includes recognition of the interconnection of the body, mind and spiritual and the need for integration if true healing is to occur (Cunningham 2000, p.68).

Treloar (2002) concurs and says, ‘Despite the medical establishment’s bias to the contrary’ religion and spirituality are positively associated with both physical and mental health (Gioiella, Berkman, Robinson (1998):

The spirit is a dimension of holistic humanity characterised by personal meanings that define one’s identity, vocation, life’s purpose, wellness, illness and relationships ... health professionals and volunteers can provide specialised services under the leadership of the spiritual professionals (Dudlt 2002, p20).

Other comments refer to the use of religiosity or spirituality in helping patients to gain a sense of control over their lives. Patients say they feel ‘enriched’ and ‘empowered’ (Siegel/Schrimshaw 2002). The spiritual dimension is thought to integrate all other human dimensions, mind, body, emotions and spirit and also increases a sense of wholeness and wellbeing, incorporating a sense of hope and self-worth, a sense of meaning, purpose and interconnectedness with others (Davies 2002). Spiritual resources are also seen to be particularly relevant in dealing with situations of severe stress (Gall, Cornblat 2002). Previously the medical profession has been suspicious of the spiritual aspects of their patients, however Musick’s (2003) research even suggests that spirituality be included as part of doctors’ training:

a greater exposure to certain types of educational material on spirituality may influence the attitudes of medical students and might give a more positive attitude on the part of the students (Musick, Cheever,Quinlivan, Nora 2003, p.71).
Conversely, however, one article asserted that certain religious beliefs and activities can adversely affect both mental and physical health, and that it can be restraining rather than freeing and life enhancing. Aspects of spirituality or religiousness that is hypocritical or self righteously that separates people from the community and family, that encourages an unquestioning devotion and obedience to a single charismatic leader or that promotes religious or spiritual traditions as a healing practice to the total exclusion of research-based medical care is likely to adversely affect health (Larimore, Parker, Crowther 2002, p.71).

It could be said that any belief that restrains is likely to be counterproductive both to health and spiritual growth. Nonetheless, the same article makes a distinction to what is called ‘positive spirituality’ i.e. ‘an emphasis on relationship to a transcendent force to others and to self, which is said to have important positive health consequences especially in regard to coping with difficult life circumstances. If spirituality is seen to have a positive effect on the physical aspects of a person, might it not follow that it can have a positive effect on their other aspects of self?

2.2.10. Mysticism:
Contemporary spirituality has some concepts in common with mysticism but like spirituality the meaning of mysticism appears confusing (Stace 1960). Indeed the very word 'mystic' has in some circles come to stand for something nebulous, inconsequential and sometimes just nonsensical. It generally is thought to mean a belief in a personal union with God, and being mystical refers to a transcendence of human understanding.
Hoods (2001) Mystical scale (Mercer and Durham’s 1999) reports that there is an increase of mystical experiences, ‘among females, the educated, the affluent and older persons’. Further research on the correlation of aspects of the spiritual person suggests that mystical experiences attract extravert and sociable people, ‘excitement seeking, carefree, optimistic personality traits’ (Maltby, Day 2001, p.190). Historically however, the mystical type is introverted and reflective. More research needs to be implemented with other samples to examine the use of personality type mysticism, as my direct experience of students with a mystical bent is that they vary widely in personality traits.

In Happold’s (1970) authoritative work he suggests there are three types of mysticism:

**Nature Mysticism** is the sense of oneness with nature and the world. It has pantheistic meaning in the sense that all is in God and God is in all. A sense of immanence especially in nature.

**Soul Mysticism** is the hardest notion for the Western mind as it is the notion that the soul is put into a state of complete isolation from everything that is other than itself, the main objective being the quest of its own self and right knowledge of itself.

**God Mysticism** is when the ‘real’ self is thought to be absorbed into the essence of God and ‘the individual personality and the whole objective world are felt to be entirely obliterated’. In the West it is seen that the soul or spirit is deified so that it becomes God without losing its identity by a process of union and transformation (Happold 1970, p.43/44).
There are elements of all three types of mysticism as described by Happold present in contemporary spiritual Self-awareness, although the latter notion of the processes of union and transformation of Self is most frequently expressed. The one quality that binds all the definitions of mysticism is that it is something experienced by, and through the individual. It is perceived as an inner sense whereby;

The mystic puts aside the game of conceptual counters. He relies not on deductive reason but on intuitive unifying vision to pierce to the secret. As a result of direct intuitive experience he finds not only a coherent pattern, which is not contrary to his reason but also a certainty of a sort which cannot be given by philosophy (Happold 1970, p.42).

If Happold is correct that we come to spirit or God through direct intuitive experiences might it suggest that the conscious use of intuition may be helpful to spiritual development? The ‘internalisation of spirit’ (Pederson, Williams, Kristensen 2000) is at the heart of psycho-spirituality and although contemporary spirituality shows strong inclinations towards the Eastern mystical traditions, similar notions are to be found within Christianity, for example the Christian mystic St John of the Cross (John 1990) and St Teresa of Avila (1989). St John drew on his own experiences to reveal ‘important stages in the believer’s developmental progression towards union with God’ (Howard 2000, p.310).

Mysticism is described as having both an extrinsically personal quality with a belief that one is in communication with a divine being, and also a sense of impersonality, with a strong sense of timelessness and oneness. The former experience has often been related to a religious experience connected to a deity within the individual’s faith, so the experience could just as easily be seen as a
unity with Allah or Yahweh or Christ (Mercer, Durham 1999). Mystical experiences however are often seen to transcend religions, research showing the described experiences to be cross faith and culture.

Maslow (1999) wrote extensively about ‘peak experiences’ and some of the descriptions are not dissimilar to descriptions of mystical experience. As with mystical experiences there is often a feeling of a profound connection to something beyond the mundane, something powerful and intrinsically divine. Maslow says peak experiences are:

only good and desirable and are never experienced as evil or undesirable. ... the experience is complete and needs nothing else. It is sufficient to itself. ... It is reacted to as wonder, amazement, humility and even reverence, exaltation and piety ... peak experiences may be seen as neutral or good and evil or pain or threat is only a partial phenomenon a product of not seeing the world whole and unified and of seeing it from a self-centred or from too low a point of view (Maslow 1999, p.92)

The good feeling associated with these experiences, as described by Maslow, differs from some mystical experiences that can be traumatic to the life of the individual and although may not be thought of as ‘evil’ may completely deconstruct the person’s life which the phrase ‘dark night of the soul’ (John 1990) so aptly describes. Peak experiences seem to have the effect of softly calling the individual’s soul, showing him or her another perception and a promise of better things to come. Conversely, some depth mystical experiences can sometimes seem destructive to the present status quo and although they too may reveal a different way of being they can have the effect of disrupting the person’s life.
It is not applicable to go into any depth as to the differences between mystical experiences and psychotic ones. Grof (1995), Nelson (1994) and Wilber (1996) have written extensively on this subject. But it is worth relaying that the outward signs of what Grof calls ‘spiritual emergence’ and psychotic illness are remarkably similar. Psychiatrist Nelson (1994) gives case histories where clients have been given the incorrect treatment when their symptoms have been wrongly diagnosed, with disastrous consequences. Grof (1998) says;

Since modern psychiatry does not differentiate between mystical or spiritual states and psychotic episodes, people experiencing these states are often diagnosed as mentally ill, hospitalized and subjected to routine suppressive pharmacological treatment. My wife Christina and I have suggested that many of these states are actually psycho-spiritual crises or spiritual emergencies (Grof 1998, p.8)

The difficulty in assessing what is correct when someone experiences transpersonal and mystical experiences is fraught with difficulties. Under the heading of the ‘pre and trans fallacy’, Wilber (1996) relays a similar difficulty when assessing real spiritual awakening.

He says:

The point is simply that for example since pre-rational and trans-rational are both in their own ways non-rational then they appear quite similar or even identical to the untutored eye. Once this confusion occurs (the confusion of pre and trans) then one of two things inevitably happens, the transrational realms are reduced to prepersonal status or the prerational realms are elevated to transrational glory. Either way a complete and overall world view is broken in half and folded in the middle with one half of the real world (the pre or the trans) being thus profoundly mistreated and misunderstood (Wilber 1996, p.199)

By this token it could make the psychotic think the voices in their head are really the voice of God, or equally make truly transformative inspiration seem like madness. Wilber states:
Wilber alerts us to the difficulty for the untrained to differentiate the real mystical experience from mental illness. These short references open up a much bigger problem which we cannot discuss in this thesis but it seems clear that modern psychiatry and indeed spiritual facilitation needs to become more aware and trained to observe the differences if we are to avoid unfortunate consequences.

William James (Daiber 2002) lists characteristics of mystical experience as: ‘indescribability, spiritual experience of ultimate truth, instability and passivity.’ He describes his own experience by saying: ‘I was in heaven, an inward state of peace and joy and assurance indescribably intense, accompanied with a sense of being bathed in a warm glow of light’ (Daiber 2002). Under the description of a noetic quality, which generally means a form of mental perception, James (1982) relays that these experiences are not related to the intellect in the usual sense:

Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority (James 1982, p.380).

This description of ‘being in heaven’ and the state of peace sounds more like the descriptions of ‘peak experiences’ as described by Maslow but because many
mystical experiences are obscure in nature it may be problematic to decipher the differences. Nonetheless, both mystical and peak experiences seem to share what James called this ‘curious sense of authority’. It might be argued that the best way to deal with these experiences would be in a religious context, however, religious practice might interpret the experience within its own creed, maybe even giving prescriptive answers to something that may be intrinsically personal. And if, as we have seen earlier, they are interpreted by psychiatry they could equally be misinterpreted. James (1982) suggests that intuition is the key to depth transformative mystical experiences, but different aspects of intuition also can be misdiagnosed. Nonetheless if it is a possibility that in the right hands intuition can assist some spiritual transformation, maybe the time has arrived to actively train and utilise it.

2.3.1. MODELS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

In this next section I compare and contrast three spiritual models alongside different levels of intuition to further discuss any possible potentials of the assistance of spiritual Self-awareness development. The word development suggests movement, evolution, change and improvement without an end or a point of termination. Moran (1992) argues that development might be a competitor or even a substitute for Christianity and describes the theory of development as a:

fervent belief, backed by scientific data, that human life will get better if we do our part by clearing away the obstacles to continued growth. Potential is there from the start. We have to get it out of the envelope and let it blossom (Moran 1992, p.150).
Moran’s assumption is that we cannot develop within ‘the narrow constraints of Christian piety’, yet people might argue that humanity has developed considerably over the last two thousand years of Christian influence. Rowan (1993) suggests that every individual is on a spiritual pathway whether they are conscious of it or not. He says that there is:

a process of psycho-spiritual development which we are all going through, both as individuals and as members of a historically located culture (Rowan 1993, p.100).

If, as Rowan says, psycho-spiritual development is a natural process, should we bother with any psycho-spiritual techniques or groups? Teaching in this field generally takes a different approach (see Chapter One) and is seen to ‘facilitate’ as opposed to impress upon or ‘teach’ the natural spiritual growth but has not yet stabilised to encompass a definitive map or model of Self development. Nonetheless, there have been some attempts at structuring development in this field including Wilber (1996) and Heron (1998). The argument against following a model is that it may lose the spontaneous, intuitive experiential aspects thought to be essential for authentic spiritual learning. Spiritually orientated educationists such as Steiner (1997), Gurdjieff (Ouspensky 1987) and Assagioli (1980) have created exercises and programmes, and the seduction of being the one to find the ‘Holy Grail’ of the ultimate contemporary spiritual map or model continues.

I have deliberately chosen diverse models from very different mind-sets and cultures, endeavouring to create some breadth of age, culture and circumstance. I have done this because, if the theory that the highest spiritual truths are innately within us all, it should be evident in all cultures and all times. I have correlated
the three as closely as possible using the Chakras system as the basic structure and have also inserted comments to the relevance of intuitive levels.

1. The Chakra System: The Chakra system (see Chapter One) has a long, legitimate legacy and is frequently used in psycho-spiritual experiential exercises. It is a dynamic system acting as an energetic spiral pathway of personal and spiritual growth. Its purpose includes: to describe and cause spiritual evolution, to define and direct consciousness and also to describe and change our behaviour. It can be perceived as initiation stages upon the mystically spiritual paths (Myss 1997), which indicate shifts of consciousness and change of perceptions for personal spiritual growth.

2. Mansions. A mystical theology of the soul's journey by a sixteenth century European Christian nun and mystic, St Teresa of Avila (1989). Teresa spent the majority of her life in a closed order and was educated in art, literature and basic reading and writing. She wrote treatises for the edification of her peers and whilst at prayer she received the inspiration for the mansions: she saw a very clear crystal globe, made in the shape of a castle which contained seven mansions. Teresa interpreted the castle as the soul, where there were seven rooms called mansions. This model was used to describe the course of the mystical life and the soul's progress from being outside the castle where there was no communication with God and where life is 'foul and dark', through to entering the first mansion and up to the seventh where the soul transforms from an 'imperfect, sinful creature' coming in from the outside finally into the 'bride of the spiritual marriage' (St. Teresa 1989).
3. *Fulcrums.* Self-related nine stages created by Ken Wilber (2000), a contemporary writer, psychologist and comprehensive philosophical thinker and leading theorist in the study of human consciousness. There can be little doubt that Wilber is a mystic as he urges us to look deep inside for the real self. Conversely not, because the ultimate answer is inside you, but as you look deep within yourself sooner or later you will find what’s outside, and you realise that the ‘inside and the outside, the subject and the object, the seer and the seen are one’ (Wilber 1998). Wilber (2000) sees the self travelling a journey that is taken step by step through the layers as a ladder of self growth. Each level is ‘suggestive only’; a broad guideline of what may be expected on the road to self-development. He describes the stages as the ‘archaeology of spirit’ seeing the more superficial layers of self being peeled off to expose increasingly deeper and more profound waves of consciousness.

Other spiritual models that influence psycho-spiritual studies include the Christian mystic St John of the Cross (Stace, 1960) who gave us three major stages of spiritual progress. Also The Qabbalah; the mystical side of Judaism, has 22 levels or stages of growth (Wilson 1978) and in Wilber’s work *Integral Psychology* (2000) there are eleven charts with well over 100 models or maps of spiritual self-progress defined by various systems, philosophers, psychologists, mystical and religious writers.
Alongside Rowan (1993) I believe that intuition differs depending on where we are in our psycho-spiritual development, so I have also inserted different types of intuitive experiences that might occur at each stage.

### Fig 6. CLASSIFICATIONS OF SPIRITUAL / SELF DEVELOPMENT (CSSD)

<table>
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<th>CHAKRAS (Subtle Energy)</th>
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### Stage One: Base or Root / Humility / Physical

The *Base* Chakra indicates an awareness of the self in the physical, mundane world. Likewise Wilber calls his first stage *Physical* and both the Chakra model and Wilber tell us that these levels are states we have when we are born. Wilber sees levels 1–3 as natural states that are present for every human being and it is only when we move past the fourth that we enter the subtle and spiritual worlds.
Teresa’s *Humility* speaks of a resting time having crawled into the mansions, needing time for any temptation from the outer world to subside. This might suggest that Teresa did not think we are all automatically on a spiritual pathway, which differs from the Chakra attitude that we are all journeying to God whether we are conscious of it or not.

For Teresa, there have already been major movements and change for an individual to reach the first Mansion. She speaks of the grace from God, which may have many different interpretations but could suggest some random unmerited favour from God. This concept may have been acceptable in the sixteenth century but is unlikely to be believed now for there have been plenty of indications that people have profound spiritual experiences who know little or nothing about the concept of God, and who, in Teresa’s terms, lead sinful lives. But is spiritual progress really arbitrary as Teresa suggests? Wilber says,

> however we have come by these higher potentials doesn’t change in the least the simple fact that those higher potentials are now available to all of us (Wilber 2000, p.11).

Intuitive experiences at this stage also have a physical aspect as they are closely linked to physical survival and could be defined as ‘instinctual’; being put on alert to a ‘sense’ of physical danger as animals in the wild. Rowan (1993) suggests that child-like qualities are useful here, i.e. people who are uncluttered by complex thoughts are often most open to this type of intuition.

**Stage Two: Sacral/Sin/Emotional**

The *Sacral* second Chakra is connected with creativity and emotions as is Wilber’s *Emotional* stage where the self treats the world and others as mere extensions of
itself. It is interesting to note the title of Teresa’s second stage *Sin* as each Chakra also correlates to physical areas of the body and the second centre is the reproductive area. Given that in Teresa’s time most sexual encounters were deemed as the ‘sin of the flesh’ could the title be connected? The second Mansion also implies an illusionary state when she talks about the problems of putting desire into practice and the horrors of the ‘confusion the devils brings about’. For Teresa this is a time when temptation is still apparent and yet she encourages us not to lose heart or cease striving to make progress, for ‘even out of your fall God will bring good’.

The Chakra model shows that personal ego and what are seen as the lower desires are still very strong here and any learning of self is likely to be achieved through relationships with others. Intuition here might develop through the sense of unity between the family, tribe or society in which we live. In shamanistic terms this would include departed ancestors.

**Stage Three: Solar Plexus/Charity/F3 Self-concept F4 Persona**

Teresa calls this stage *Charity*, and the solar plexus Chakra speaks of the ‘little’ or ‘lower mind’. Teresa acknowledges the mind here also with some degree of disparagement when she says ‘its love is still governed by reason and so its progress is slow’. In Chakra terms the lower mental self, could also be said to be governed by reason.

I have included both Wilber’s third and fourth stages here as both *self-concept* and *self-role* describe aspects of the third Chakra centre. The elementary mental
levels described by Wilber's F3 Self-concept is when the 'the mental self is beginning to emerge and differentiate from the body and its impulses, feelings and emotions'. Wilber says the negative aspect of this stage leads to neurosis, anxiety, depression and excessive guilt. Fear is also an element in the third Chakra connected to how we think about ourselves. Wilber takes up the concept of self roles in his F4, comparing them to mythic stories and archetypal roles which are associated with the collective roles such as 'strong father', 'caring mother', 'warrior', 'anima' and 'animus'. He sees this as a crucial stage of development when the self can, through the uprooting of existing mythic links create a more positive identity, beginning to change mind-sets and beliefs. The Chakras, Fulcrums and to a lesser extent Mansions also all warn of dangers here of identification with our roles in life. Intuition here could be developed through empathy, and deeper understanding of self and others. It is felt as 'a sense', having 'a hunch' and might feel uncomfortable because paraphrasing Rowan (1993) it is as if we had no right to know things without proper evidence to back it up and we need to separate those intuitions we can trust from those that are fantasies. Nonetheless, he also advises that by regular use of this faculty we can begin to discern intuitive fact from fiction.

Stage Four: Heart/Love/Mature ego

Straight away we can see the correlation between Teresa and the Chakras model in the titles. The fourth Chakra is the Heart and Teresa's fourth stage is Love. However, do we know to which form of love Teresa is referring? Would the heart for her have the same connotation as the heart Chakra which is experienced as love without conditions; beyond emotions. Or does she mean a more personal
emotional Love? She says ‘It is where love is now free from servile fear ... has broken all the bonds which previously hindered its progress, it shrinks from no trials and attaches no importance to anything to do with the world’. These words apparently also imply a non-personal, form of love.

In Wilber’s model, we also move to a much less personal state moving beyond the ‘egocentric and ego social aspect of self’. Likewise in heart Chakra terms this is the first stage where the independent spirit is emerging. It is seen as the bridging point of departure between the lower mundane worlds and the higher spiritual realms (Soskin 1996). Similarly Teresa says this is ‘where the natural and supernatural unite’. In the Chakras and mansions the self is re-defining itself, beginning to receive glimpses of the transcendent. For Wilber this does not occur until F5, however, we see the similar bridging energies here, where, as Wilber describes, the self’s centre of gravity shifts from the ‘conventional conformist to post-convention individualistic’. He states this can present the self with problems when it is faced with ‘identity versus role confusion’ and the self needs to discover who or what it really is, once it no longer depends on society. The Mature ego at this stage is therefore asking the question, Who am I? Wilber sees instigation of the deepest conscience of the person, creating an identity crisis of self as it moves from one state of consciousness towards a very different one.

Many faiths in some way express that one can only reach God through embracing some form of divine love leading to the emergence of mature abilities. This is personified in Christianity as the ‘sacred heart’ and as the Buddhist concept of ‘middle way’ and ‘unconditional love’ of the Hindu traditions (Clarke
1997). So this stage for all these authorities appears to be guiding us towards a higher nature. Intuition here therefore senses inspiration through love and acceptance. The intuitive traveller begins to sense the presence of subtle energies and other inspirational elementals. Conversely, Rowan (1993) puts some of these inspirational aspects at a higher level.

Stage Five: Throat/Infused Contemplation/F6 Centaur & F7 Psychic

Wilber acknowledges that this *centaur* level removes us from the ego and that it is about the highest level of consciousness taken seriously by Western psychology. Likewise the fifth *throat* Chakra takes us to a level of consciousness beyond the normal realms and it is associated with a higher form of spiritual communication. Equally, according to Teresa we have ‘completely died to the world so that we may live more fully in God’. Her description seems similar to a form of what the theosophist spiritual teacher Krisnamurti calls a ‘living meditation’ (Lutyens 1991) which means being in a constant state of spiritual awareness, where the spiritual connection is so ingrained it cannot be removed. Teresa concurs, talking of a union with God that is not the same as ultimate union but one that has little chance of dissolving. She says the soul sleeps for a while giving the person, ‘a joy that is greater than all the joys of earth’.

Interestingly Teresa emphasises sleep here, as Wilber also suggests that:

> dreaming and altered states gives us one type of access to states of the soul and deep sleep gives us access to formless or causal spirit (Wilber 2000, p.13).

God, it seems, and the higher spiritual forces call, but often can only be heard through dreams or outer worldly voices. Intuition at Stage Five is a form of
channelling of inspirational concepts. Teresa agrees but gives strong warning to discern whether the inspiration is truly godly and not ‘from the devil who can make good use of imagination’.

It appears that as we go further up the ladder of consciousness we unpeel layer after layer receiving longer and longer glimpses of the authentic self, what Rogers (1990) calls the fully-functioning person, Perls (1976) calls ‘the self as opposed to the self image’ and it is here that Rowan (1993) places Maslow’s concept of self-actualisation.

Both Wilber’s Centaur and Psychic relate to a transpersonal transcendence: the Centaur is described as the stage when ‘the personal realm’s exclusive reign is coming to an end’. The Centaur image of half man and half beast is used to illustrate the integrated self; the animal body and the human mind existing in a state of harmony. Conversely, Teresa’s has no thought of animal as her integration is of man and God. Yet both give a sense of transmutation whereby we can unite higher and lower states. In the Chakras it is at this stage that one receives profound contact with the unseen or psychic world and it is for this reason that I have included Wilber’s F7 Psychic stage here. All the models seem to accept a multi-layered perception of truth. Wilber makes a pertinent point saying whereas people will be drawn to learning and therapies on the same level or lower:

the therapy at one level will usually acknowledge and even use all of the therapies from lower levels but rarely from any higher, in whose existence in fact they often pathologize (Wilber 2000, p.98).
I would also suggest that this concept is just as relevant in spiritual Self-awareness because until someone has had the experience themselves they are unable to understand or ‘know’ them in any depth. The danger these models relay is not so much that higher inspiration can be found but in the translation of the message. Nonetheless, intuition is thought to be more frequent and dependable here (Rowan 1993) as the individual moves towards a greater trust of its authenticity.

Stage Six: Brow/Vision/F8 Subtle

Wilber’s descriptions of the subtle are sketchy which Rowan (1993), who personally communicated with Wilber, agrees. He calls F8 the transpersonal self. Although I agree the self is transpersonal here, I believe the self has already begun reaching beyond the personal from the heart, 4th stage onwards. For Rowan’s F8 is ‘the cultivation of intuition or healing’.

Eventually as contemplation deepens the self differentiates from its psychic moorings and ascends to an intuited identification with that presence. Gradually we realise the divine form or presence is (the) ... image of our own essential nature (Rowan 1993, p.140).

Intuition here is coming from a source other than self and Rowan says it is linked with the muses and archetypal energies but the Brow centre is beyond the shadow and personal side of self. Wilber (2000) makes a direct comparison of the ‘high subtle’ stage to the sixth Brow or Chakra. Wilber describes this as including and dominating psychic events and mystic-like experiences and he sees this as ‘archetypal form marked by transmental illumination, intuition and gnosis that brings profound insights’. As the archetypal image of this centre is the third eye;
an ancient Egyptian motif which depicts visionaries, it appears concurrent with Wilber.

The sixth Chakra state is the evolved person; the saint, the seer or sage. The third eye symbol illustrates the possibility of seeing beyond the clouds of the material worlds, to greater spiritual heights and therefore having access to greater visions and insights. Wilber's *Subtle* level says this is a state which is totally beyond any influence of society or family, and I would concur, but I would also go further and suggest that here we are now moving beyond even the transpersonal, with greater and greater alignment with our spiritual natures.

At first Teresa's title of *Vision* is perfectly in line with the Chakra third eye visionary state, however, the sixth Mansion is very much more difficult to either compare or contrast as Teresa presents us with a long narrative on the perils of this stage with several meandering pages which are self-indulgent in nature. Nonetheless, she also talks about visions and again advises that they may not always be what they seem and relays that the ability to see beyond the material is not always a happy state as the ‘true reality of our world overwhelms’.

That we can experience difficulties at any and every stage of development is clear but Teresa labours the point, to the extent that it has the effect of distracting thoughts away from the spiritual back to the personal. Teresa’s description here is full of conflict, pain and anguish and so personal is the writing, it occurs to me that Teresa believed herself to be at this stage. Intuition here is also of a visionary nature and what Wilber refers to as ‘vision logic’, meaning the individual
embraces the intuition as a greater form of truth. Similarly, Rowan also alerts us to the difficulty in making sense of visions when they can be so different for different people. Nonetheless, it could equally be argued that true visionaries are profoundly transforming to themselves, their communities and the world.

Stage Seven: Crown/Union/ Causal

In Wilber’s Causal stage it is clear that the self as a separate entity has gone; ‘there is no God, there is nothingness other than consciousness’. For him it is the deep core within the quiet mind, where the soul begins to ‘whisper’ and there is a permanent enlightenment. The soul here is detached from everything personal and illusionary states. Being pedantic however if the soul is totally attuned it would not ‘whisper’; it would be fully integrated and ‘know’. In Chakra terms everything is known here, there is no doubt, no fear, and intuition here leads us into the higher realms beyond the view of the mundane to where visions and reality are aligned.

Teresa suggests a similar notion to Wilber with her description of the spiritual ‘marriage’ or ‘union’ being the deepest centre of the soul’ but unlike Wilber she places God firmly within this state as the soul for Teresa, ‘must be where God himself dwells’. It is the divine mystical union of oneness with God which many mystics describe. Wilber does not use the word God and his concept of depth spirituality might be best described as highest consciousness, however the concept of union appears similar. In whatever way all these models describe this last stage it is clear that all of them agree, it takes us to a consciousness state so different from the average consciousness it can bear no resemblance to the
mundane world. In the Fulcrums and Mansions it is the total dissolution of the personal through the absolute 'union' or 'marriage' with the void of pure consciousness. In the Chakras it is the total integration of spirit within our lives. It is where the divine or higher will and the individual will unite.

2.3.2. Discussion:
Although the spiritual journey is not always chronological, all our models see spiritual development as some form of journey and with the exception of Teresa seem to imply there is some intentionality of self from the individual towards this process. Teresa says she puts the action completely in the hands of God with constant reference to God’s grace and 'if God is willing'. She even says that no matter how strong one thinks one is, one cannot enter all the mansions by one's own efforts. Yet this statement is contradicted throughout when she implores us to make our own effort, in resisting temptations and becoming discerning, implying that the individual as well as God has some effect on the spiritual journey and she describes a very contemporary stance in self-awareness:

it is absurd to think that we can enter heaven without first entering our own souls, and without getting to know ourselves and reflecting upon ... our nature (Teresa 1989, p.53).

It seems, therefore, that she also acknowledged the individual as an active part and not a submissive role in the process. Teresa clearly equates the final union as being so complete there is 'no difference between self and God', so for Teresa the soul has in effect been acting as a magnetic force throughout, drawing the individual towards the divine union. Teresa writes of the spiritual union
I used unexpectedly to experience a consciousness of the presence of God of such a kind that I could not possibly doubt that he was within me or that I was wholly engulfed in him (Sayers 2002, p.105).

This ‘unexpected’ experience is noted by spiritual aspirants, however few people are in permanent contact with it. As Teresa perceives the soul in its true state as God, we can draw the conclusion that God for Teresa has been present within the individual all along.

As I delved deeper into the meaning of these three spiritual models I was struck by the similarities particularly between the seven Mansions and the seven Chakras, so much so I was forced to ask the unlikely question whether in fact Teresa could have come across the Eastern concepts in her lifetime? It is believed for instance that yoga was carried through India into China by Christian missionaries in the fifth century (Temple 2002). Clarke (1997), states that communication between East and West was much more prevalent through the ages than we imagined largely through trading and missionaries. Whether Teresa had some Eastern knowledge we may never know but if she did not it is either a coincidence, or alternatively it might give credit to the notion that there is some immortal universal collective consciousness. Does this then give credence to Huxley’s ‘perennial philosophy’ (Huxley 1994) and evidence of a possible transcendent unity of religions?

2.4.1 Perennial Philosophy:
Perennial philosophy is a phase associated with Huxley (1994) but originally coined by Leifniz (Possamai 1999) meaning that universal knowledge shows up
around the globe across the ages, reported by men and women having the same insights and teaching and the same essential doctrine. Huxley described the essential character of this philosophy as:

1. The metaphysics that recognises a divine reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds: a single ultimate principal force underlying all reality.

2. The psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with divine reality: the inner adventure which is not necessarily that of searching to become divine, but as a realisation of a higher self.

3. The ethics that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent ground of all being, as in gnosis which is involved with the soul's transformation and the knower himself being a partaker in the divine experience (Possamai 2001, p.85).

Conversely, humanistic writer Heron (1998) finds it 'astonishing that such a notion as perennial philosophy can be taken seriously'. For although he acknowledges that some people have a perennial propensity for mystical aspiration, he finds the argument that there may not be any consensus among past mystics i.e. an 'insufficient basis for predicting the basic structure of all spiritual development for all future times'. Amongst his several objections he says that there could not be a true consensus as the many authorities have never met each other and therefore cannot properly be said to agree about anything. Yet this statement misses the point, as the consensus stated is not necessarily one of verbal discussion but through an energetic collective consciousness. Heron's main objection to any form of perennial philosophy seems to be that the mystic's
desire of a single transcendental aim and 'denies the many flowering of the embodied immanent spiritual life.' This is not the case in our selection where many of our stages reap their own reward and even Teresa, who is the most severely critical of worldly things, finding joy and peace along the way.

Whether there is, or is not, an ultimate collective spiritual philosophy is possibly something we may never discover, but that there are undoubtable similarities of experience cannot be denied. In a world that is increasingly becoming a global village where traditions and faiths are being examined in a more open way, it would be remiss not to look at possible similarities in the hope of understanding, not just one religion or tradition, but the greater desires of all humankind.

It is evident from the literature that people's faith is moving beyond taking belief at face value. But where does that leave spiritual teaching and education? Can experiential spiritual learning be brought into education? And what is spiritual education anyway?

2.5.1. Spiritual Education:
In an increasing multi-cultural society the question of spiritual education is a pertinent one. However, Hand (2003) says:

as yet spiritual education has no normal or established use either in ordinary English or in the professional discourse of education. Discussions have yet to be made about what should be counted as instances of spiritual education (Hand 2003, p.391).

Carr (1996) discusses the difficulty of giving some content to the idea of spiritual education without identifying it with either religious or moral education, suggesting that spiritual education as different from religious education may
include experience and understanding available through 'enquiries and
activities'. He opens up discussion on the need for teaching of what he describes
as the 'big questions' i.e. the meaning of life etc. but in another article in the same
journal MacKenzie (1998) argues this by quoting Aquinas (1945) in *De Pot; De
Potentia Dei*, 'God cannot be understood, words cannot contain him and no name
can lay hold of him. He is not one of the things that are and he cannot be known
in any of them.'

Carr wants more inquiry into spiritual truths but can teaching spiritual ideas and
various different beliefs help a person find first hand the experience of God? And
so the discussion around the question, what is spiritual, carries on and five years
later in the same Journal, Wringe (2002) is still asking the question, Is there
spirituality? Can it be part of education? Literature coming out of the USA says
spirituality is considered a 'hot topic' (Piedmont 2001) with an increasing
professional interest paralleling the growing prevalence and salience of
spirituality among the general public. In the USA far from denying its presence,
there has been an explosion in the number of scales available to measure
spirituality. Focus groups of theological experts from diverse faith tradition
including Buddhism, Hinduism, Quakerism, Lutheranism, Catholicism and
Judaism have identified aspects of spirituality that were common to all of these
faiths. Items identified were:

**Prayer Fulfilment:** A feeling of joy and contentment that results from personal
encounters with a transcendent reality.

**Universality:** A belief in the unitive nature of life e.g. a feeling that on a higher
level all of us share a common bond.
Connectedness: a belief that one is part of a larger human reality that cuts across
generation and across groups (Piedmont 2001, p.5).

The 1997 Deering Report in the UK promoted the idea of lifelong learning
(Gopee 2001). The background philosophy of this seems to be humanism,
existentialism, liberal philosophy and spiritual development of some kind and
the need for some form of ongoing learning in a changing society is thought to be
essential for people to keep abreast with contemporary developments
(Jarvis 1992). But people changing effects the society in which they live, so as the
needs of the individual change, is not some form of spiritual Self-awareness
learning throughout life advisable? Implicit in the phrase life-long learning is
education for adults. Knowles (1990) considers the adult self is reached when

- individuals can take responsibility for their own lives becoming
  autonomous, independent and self directing and adults' learning will be
  optimal when they are enabled to be self directed using their experience as
  a learning resource, studying in areas which they consider relevant and
  applicable in real life situations (Hewitt-Taylor 2001, p.497).

Psycho-spiritual studies by their nature (Chapter One) relate to the real life
personal lived experiences of the individual which promotes the argument
Towards a holistic form of education. Holistic education (Forbes 2003) aims to
reconnect each person to the contexts within which meaning arises; the physical
world, the biosphere, the local community, the culture with its many layers of
meaning and the cosmos itself (Miller 2001).

The 1998 Education Reform Act (HMSO 1988) promotes the spiritual, moral,
cultural, mental and physical development of pupils. This questions what
spiritual development might be in a multi-cultural world if it is to be a subject
separate from religious studies. There is an argument for instance that to have a
better understanding of all faiths it is preferable to have depth knowledge of one.

To learn one foreign language at School makes it easier to learn further
languages after School. It may be that acquaintance at School with one
spiritual tradition makes it easier to get inside another that having learnt
to look at the big question from one point of view makes it easier to
understand them from another (MacKenzie 1998, p.421).

I have some sympathy with this notion as I have noticed with students,
particularly in the under 40 age group that those who have had little or no
religious education often have no frame of reference in which to evaluate their
own experiences. This could however, be perceived as a good thing as no
prescriptive elements will have been indoctrinated, which means they have to
decipher the experiences for themselves. Everyone is entitled to their faiths and
beliefs, however, there may be a growing need
to believe that the values we serve are discovered not invented and
therefore we need an actual not merely an ideal or 'as if' God (Griffin
1997, p.275).

This being the case perhaps we need to teach our spirituality from an open
perspective accommodating and facilitating the emergence of the individual’s
own beliefs. Whithead says:

Nothing is more curious than the self satisfied dogmatism with which
mankind at each period of its history cherishes the delusion of the finality
of its existing modes of knowledge. Sceptics and believer are all alike. At
this moment scientists and sceptics are the leading dogmatists. Advance in
detail is admitted, fundamental novelty is barred. This dogmatic common
sense is the death of philosophic adventure. The universe is vast.
(Whithead 1948, p.127).

This view might appear rather strong as, by this token, all beliefs would be
considered dogmatic. Everyone has a right to their faith but arguably no right to
transcendent knowing. The contention is that in some altered states of consciousness, those variously called mystical or transcendent, another way of knowing becomes possible, one that perhaps supersedes both sensory perceptions and ratiocination as an effective means of knowledge particularly with regard to existential questions. That is to say, altered states of consciousness, many have noetic value. Maybe those for whom transcendent events have occurred really are enlightened. (Baruss 2001b, p.65).

The trouble with this as we have seen earlier in the chapter is that mystical experiences can be misdiagnosed and that being the case could take one down very difficult paths of illusion. Establishing whether people's experiences are really transcendent can present problems as Wringe (2002) says;

Spirituality is no longer thought of in terms of a relationship with a supreme being who surpasses human understanding. To the secular mind it is tempting to dismiss all this as mystification. The ignorant multitude may have accepted that the high priest had been granted a vision describable in worlds beyond their ability to comprehend but this will no longer do when asserted by individuals whose powers of linguistic expression do not much exceed their own (Wringe 2002, p.165).

Whether someone's linguistic ability has very much to do with spiritual knowledge is doubtful as spiritual growth may not be possible to judge in the normal sense. It seems however, that people want to be able to understand and experience it for themselves, not necessarily taking on board any teachings whether from 'high priests' or not. This suggests seeing the transcendental experience as possible, not just for saints and gurus but for anyone who has the inclination.
Psycho-spiritual concepts might seem very postmodernist; postmodernism (Giddens 2002) deconstructs and therefore presumably cannot be a friend to any one religion, notion or faith. Post-modern ideas

Question our basic assumptions about knowledge itself ... It (postmoderism) focuses on how knowledge and belief systems are constructed and suggests that what is regarded as truth depends on the assumptions operating in a particular culture ... postmodernism reminds us that all knowledge systems, including our own are social constructions. And our cultural assumptions have much to do with what we decide to accept as truth (Elkins 1998, p.13).

For the religiously-minded the notion that their beliefs are socially constructed and not from God may not sit comfortably, yet this attitude lifts the lid on hitherto taboo issues such as alternative religious views acknowledging that there can be different beliefs, which is seen to be an advantage in a shrinking and globalised world (Giddens 2002).

Out of the surge of interest in the above subjects whole new paradigms are opening up. King (2004) talks about what he describes as a postsecular society saying that:

It hints at a world that is prepared after long abstinence, to re-engage with the spiritual ... (he lists these as) a spiritual impulse that is innate, multifaceted. Renewed interest in the spiritual. Growing recognition of legitimacy of spiritual question. Recognition that secular rights and freedoms of expression are a pre-requisite to the renewal of spiritual enquiry. Spiritual and intellectual pluralism East and West. A cherishing of the best in all spiritual tradition East and West while recognising the repression sometimes inflicted on individual or societies in the name of religion (King 2004, p.6).

King (2004) is saying we need to accept that people see their worlds in unique ways. If so, does it not follow they will also experience their own spiritual
development in unique ways? The need to follow one's own truth seems to be gaining momentum through the desire for the genuine, and the expansion of the spiritual notion of unlimited knowledge and love. This being the case, educationalists may need to make a shift of paradigm from being exclusively rational and intellectual to experiential and intuitive.
CHAPTER THREE

3.1. METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATIONS.

This chapter outlines the Naturalistic approach within a Constructivist paradigm. It
discusses the decision to use a Formative Evaluation methodology and examines the
rationale for use of mixed methods. It also relays the triangulation of interview,
questionnaire, narratives and focus group.

Research Question: A Formative Evaluation of a Psycho-spiritual Programme: its
Effects on the Lived Experience of the Students and the Relevance for
Contemporary Spiritual Education.

3.2.1. PARADIGM

3.2.2. Naturalistic approach:

A paradigm is a model or world view; a way of relating to complicated situations
which is often innate and unconscious, born out of the individual’s own assumed
world views. Cited in Denzin, Lincoln (1998) these beliefs:

shape how the qualitative researchers sees the world and acts in it. The
researcher is bound within a net of epistemological and ontological
premises which—regardless of ultimate truth or falsity—become partially

It could be argued that to some extent all researchers are ‘bound within’ their
own perceptions and notions. Desire for truth cannot be measured, and one can
only be alert to the possibilities of distortion. As the researcher provides the lens
through which the material is evaluated they therefore become a variable in the
process. However, if rigour is implemented throughout, and the researcher is
mindful of their input, uncontaminated material will emerge.

In recent times movement has been implemented within social sciences to break
down old positivist views and develop new methods of inquiry (Reason,Rowen
1997). This has left the researcher with a cornucopia of methods to decipher and
choose those appropriate to their study. Generally paradigms fall into two
Schools: firstly, the logical and scientific paradigm (Guba, Lincoln 1981) which
relies on being able to demonstrate the truth with the basic structures of the
system, the latter concentrating on experimentation, viewing truth as
confirmable by the theory or hypothesis employed. This is contrary to the second
more naturalistic paradigm which relies on:

Field study as a fundamental technique, which views truth as ineluctable
that is as ultimately inescapable. Sufficient immersion in and experience
with a phenomenological field yield inevitable conclusions about what is
important, dynamic and pervasive in that field (Guba, Lincoln 1981, p.55).

Quoting from Wolf and Tymitz (1977) Guba and Lincoln state that:

naturalistic inquiry is an inquiry mode aimed at understanding actualities,
social realities and human perceptions that exist untainted by the
obtrusiveness of formal measurement or preconceived question. It is a
process geared to the uncovering of many idiosyncratic but nonetheless
important stories told by real people, about real events, in real and natural
ways (Guba/ Lincoln 1981, p.78).

Formal measurements are not usually applicable to measure individuals
experiences, as the detail-rich data uncovers non-systematic stances and
unorthodox narratives. A naturalistic inquiry is therefore thought to be more
appropriate for this research.

The naturalistic postpositivist and constructionist paradigms emerged during the
1970s and 1980s especially within education (Eisner 1979) . However, in the mid-
1980s a ‘profound rupture occurred’ which ‘blurred genres’ (Denzin, Lincoln
1998) and brought into question the validity of data collected in the field.
Methods began to rely more on the individual’s experiences and the progress of
the story told, which in turn was developed by the researcher.
This paradigm is in line with Campbell’s (1968) study of myth which is not dis-similar to Jung’s (1960) work on archetypes; both authors discovered that patterns and themes are similar from ‘story to story, culture after culture’ (Henderson 2000). This reveals a time-honoured life journey, ‘one of profound purpose and meaning’ which Campbell called the ‘hero’s journey’. This is a meaningful experience of life that allows an opening and a blossoming of human potential. It is the individual, the ‘hero’s, journey’ or story that is thought to require respect here, and immersing ourselves in the culture and story of that person is seen to give greater understanding of that individual. Using a mixed genre approach alongside the movement of the research journey, gives breadth of understanding to the learning inquiry. My presence within the process, means I am one of the major stakeholders of this evaluation and therefore my own experiences also need to be explored. Qualitative researchers stress the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied. Having first-hand contact within the field is deemed to be preferable if not essential by many of the new methods within social science (Braud, Anderson 1998).

Qualitative researchers are:

seeking innovative and rigorous research methods to explore both the experiential and transformative nature of human experience. (Baud, Anderson 1998, p.27)

By the emergent quality of the learning process the research necessitates multifaceted and pluralistic methods allowing a more integral approach. New methods allow us to explore and expand on the nature of human experience, self-development and psycho-spiritual studies. In this way the researcher is able
to explore a research question that has great meaning to the researcher and to the research participants.

3.2.3. Constructivism:

An individual’s understanding, changes the way they relate and react to their world, with even a slight shift of perception instigating movement that may alter the whole trajectory of their lives. Therefore, it is important to establish the student’s own views and experience in this programme, to establish their change and growth. It is thought that exploring the student’s own life experience necessitates embracing the multiple perspectives of the individual, hopefully leading to greater understanding of that individual’s world. The work consequently takes a Constructivist stance (Denzin, Lincoln 1998) whereby the researcher follows the lead of the students themselves.

The research is asking what, if anything, it is about the psycho-spiritual programme that instigates changes in the students’ lives. It is important therefore, to have some understanding of how the students see themselves and the experiences they have gained, and to investigate their reported perceptions, truths, explanations, beliefs and world view. On what basis have these students constructed their reality? And what are the subsequent reactions to them? To arrive at these answers the research endeavours to draw out the relevant inputs from the programme and their subsequent responses into the lived experiences of the individual.
The positivist's paradigm is that there is a real world in which truth is absolute and all things can, in time, be checked (Taylor, Bodgen 1984). There is a belief in a concrete reality and they are constantly seeking for external causes for explanation. But when you are dealing with the multiple realities and perceptions of different people, a fixed world where everything neatly slots into place and can be verifiable is less likely. Alternatively, understanding students' experiences from a constructivist stance means that their perceptions may not be real in an absolute sense but are created by their own personal experiences (Gubrium, Holstein 2003). A person responds to their own world from their own unique personal experiences, therefore the research argues that when dealing with the individual's life experiences there can never be a set reality or truth in the positivist's sense (Denzin, Lincoln 1998), only the truth as the individual perceives it. The research therefore embraces the multiple perspectives of the individual, hopefully leading to greater understanding of that individual's world and making the individual nature of constructivism a more relevant paradigm for this study.

Constructivism varies from the confusing and similar title of constructionism. Whereas constructivists are looking to the individual mind and experience of a person, constructionism is focused in the 'collective generations' (Patton 2002) emphasising the effect society and culture has on us. Constructionism might argue that everyone is affected by their society and the world around them, and that this has the greatest hold over the person, shaping the way in which they view their world. Taking this stance it would follow that everyone within a culture would react in similar ways to any given situation, but history reveals
this is not always the case. Constructivists, however, see society’s influence as one of the many multiple realities of which the society is only one to be taken account of, but not necessarily in any greater importance than any other influence. Both constructivism and constructionism share the belief of the subjective nature of human perceptions, and a scepticism about the possibility of objectivity. Consequently constructivism could be seen as similar in quality to the post-modern age (Giddens 1990) which:

focuses on how knowledge and belief systems are constructed and suggests that what is regarded as truth depends on the assumptions operating in a particular culture. Postmodernism reminds us that all knowledge systems including our own are social constructions (which) have much to do with what we decide to accept as truth. In other words we construct or invent truth rather than discover it (Elkins 1998, p.13).

By this tenet knowledge and belief systems are constructed by the individual and in the constructivist paradigm we observes the various individual perspectives and their diverse points of view.

3.3.1. METHODOLOGY

3.3.2. Formative Evaluation:

Evaluative research requires some degree of assessment, and as the descriptions needed for this research revolve around people’s subjective accounts of personal experiences, their issues requires examining in depth and detail. The research consequently requires informative, rich material that a qualitative study provides.

Qualitative research emphasises process and meaning, endeavouring to get inside the subject, as opposed to a quantitative study that measures and analyses
relationships between variables. Qualitative inquiry employs field workers who, enter the worlds of the people they study instead of bringing those people to a laboratory or asking them to answer a structured interview or questionnaire.

Qualitative data aims at capturing what actually takes place (Patton 1990). It allows the research to extract rich explanations derived from direct quotations, thereby getting close to the essence of the experience. Silverman (1985) however argues that you may never get to the essence of the experience but only to the account of the experience. This may be the case; however, psycho-spiritual development can only be authentically achieved through the experiences of the individual, and even if these descriptions of these experiences are fanciful or faulty, that person has perceived their own world through them and it therefore is their lived reality and they will respond to it accordingly. Truth is often an emotive and ideological point, but qualitative research means:

acknowledging different possibilities concerning what knowledge is considered to be; how it is obtained, recognised and relates to ‘truth’ and to the extent to which ‘truth’ reflects reality (Sikes 2000, p.258).

Individual experiences create the daunting task of getting to the truth which sometimes feels almost unachievable, particularly in a post-modern world where it is recognised that ‘there is a multiplicity of voices, views and methods present in any representation or analysis of any aspect of reality’ (Savage 2000). Each individual has their own reality by which they judge their world. Investigating their reality therefore is the focus of the research. Allowing the research to evolve as it unfolded, and in line with using mixed methodologies, as the research progressed it became clear that to clarify the
whole operation I must use evaluation as the key methodology of the thesis.

Evaluation:

Means the study of an organisation or curriculum in such a way that contributes to decision making and review. Studies will often include reviews of the purported merits, problems, advantages and negative side-effects of the programme's policies (Parlett 1981, p.221).

Evaluation is a form of measurement of amount or value. The student is the chief stakeholder in the research process and therefore needs to be seen as the major participant in the inquiry.

From the earliest days of the School and the initial skeleton programme it was clear that the programme would need to grow as a dynamic process, in line with both a naturalistic and formative evaluative approach.

A primary interest of qualitatively naturalistic evaluators is describing and understanding these dynamic program processes and their holistic effects on participants so as to provide information for program improvement (Patton 1987, p.18).

As much as possible I wanted this process to be flexible, watching and observing and altering as we went along. The designing of the programme in its formative period gave me an opportunity to study the effectiveness on the sequential programme and what the individual modules were doing to assist this process.

This process should:

Enable the formative evaluator to fulfil one of her major functions – to persuade the staff to constantly scrutinise and rethink assumptions and activities that underlie the program (Tayor Fitz-Gibbon, Lyons Morris 1987, p.14).

To this end there were many meetings, trials and discussions with the staff in line with a formative evaluation approach which is greatly aided by small pilot
tests and short experiments (Taylor Fitz-Gibbon 1987). Throughout its history the School has implemented exercises to enhance the programme’s contents, as well as constant communication with the students, within and without their classes, individual meetings and email communications, alongside on-going teachers’ discussions and meetings. The process of this examination had the effect of greatly aiding my concentration towards more educational implementations within the programme. Over time the process enabled comparisons to be made for the justification of formative recommendations, taking the research forwards to establish further paths of inquiry for the next set of interviews. Programme evaluation is:

the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programmes, to make judgements about the programme, improve programme effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programming (Patton 2002, p.10).

This research is concerned with how the programme can be improved and aims at assisting the shaping of the programme (Patton 2002). The School has created and is constantly adapting its courses to aid an active ongoing process of unfoldment and self-discovery. The research therefore needs to be formative in its approach.

Formative evaluation can provide depth and detail about the program’s strengths and weaknesses. What’s working? what’s not working so well? what are the perceptions of program participants? and of program staff? (Patton 1987, p.29).

Alternatively, a summative evaluation (Patton 2002) is expressly implemented to render an overall judgement about the programme, the main question being: should the programme continue? Although evaluation of the student’s progress requires the research questions to accommodate the merit and value of the
programme, the School's programme is on-going, and changes are implemented as a continuing process, as, and when necessary. The research is therefore more in line with formative evaluation.

Formative assessment cannot function in a vacuum, and in the evaluation procedure it is important to have some source of comparative information. Aims, objectives and outcomes of the School were implemented in 1999 by the teachers and were updated in June 2002 and July 2003 (see Chapter Five). The process of teachers working together for this purpose created discussion and changes within the programme. The programme has constantly been through an ongoing developmental process; bit by bit we have changed the manner and content of the programme throughout. Changes have been brought about through various causes, including practical ones, but most of all from the feedback from the students themselves. Because of the individualistic needs of the students it has never reached a state of stabilisation, and on this dynamic programme it may never reach that state. In common with a developmental evaluation (Patton 1997) there are multiple causes and a diversity of outcomes and interactive effects at every level. The School is aiming for the most effective model but because of the nature of the subject that may never become static. Although I am constantly looking for improvements it should perhaps be noted that changes in the developmental evaluation processes need not be about making the programme better;

you do something different because something has changed – your understanding, the characteristics of participants, technology or the world. Those changes are dictated by your current perception but the commitment to change doesn't carry a judgement that what was done
before was inadequate or less effective ... Change is adaptation (Patton 1997, p.106).

Adaptation and change are seen to be necessary ingredients in an intuitive programme that is involved with the individual experience and therefore form part of a formative evaluation.

3.3.3. Evaluation Fieldwork and Observation:

The often-quoted phrase of Louis Pasteur’s is applicable to any social scientist, ‘in the fields of observation, chance favours the prepared mind’ (Patton 1987).

Quoting from Lofland 1971 Patton (1987) says:

Participant observation, field observation, qualitative observation, direct observation or field research. All these terms refer to the circumstance of being in or around an on-going social setting for the purpose of making a qualitative analysis of that setting (Patton 1987, p.72).

As social systems involve routine, participants in those routines may take them too much for granted and therefore cease to be aware of important nuances that are only apparent to the observer. Direct observation enables me to learn about things that programme participants would normally be unwilling to talk about in an interview setting, due to the sensitivity of some of the topics, however it should be noted that all the data collected is done with the full permission of the students involved. As a worker in the field of spiritual self awareness, facilitators in this field have to be fully present within the learning experience as a type of intuitive research evaluator, consequently we are always seeking under and beyond the obvious. Therefore, it is thought that by making my own perceptions part of the data, I am able to present a more comprehensive view of the programme.
The open-ended interviews are a key elements in this research, however the day-by-day contact and observation in the field is also part of an holistic inquiry that has allowed me to compare and contrast the experiences of all stakeholders as, and when they occur. Lampert (2000) makes a convincing case for the researcher to be an active part of the evaluation procedure:

If teachers write about their work from the inside, including both personal and professional perspectives on the problems of practice, their work could substantially alter what we now think of as appropriate conventions in the discourse of applied research. As they communicated about their inquiry, teachers would develop a new syntax and a new semantics to add to those of the academic disciplines in the study of education phenomena (Lampert 2000, p.89).

Lampert goes on to advocate the use of the first person in the writing of academic texts in teacher research:

Who the teacher is has a great deal to do with both the way she defines problems and what can and will be done about them. The academician solves problems that are recognised in some universal way as being important, whereas a teacher's problems arise because the state of affairs in the classroom is not what she wants it to be. Thus practical problems in contrast to theoretical ones, involve someone's wish for change and the will to make it (Lampert 2000, p.91).

My position might be seen as a disadvantage; might I, for instance, contrive the changes to suit myself? However, suiting myself in this case means making sure that the programme works and therefore changing it accordingly. I have a vested interest in the School functioning and expanding with integrity and excellence. My vested interest is the vested interest in the students' achievements and the good name of the School. It is a vested interest in achieving a solid grounding in spiritual education, and as the ultimate authority in the School's work it puts me in a key position as an action evaluator in the developmental process of the evaluation and the programme.
We need I believe to recognise the contingent character of education practice, to savour its complexity and to be not afraid to use whatever artistry we can muster to deal with its problems. For the curriculum planner this means a life of continual uncertainty, the contingent is inherent in educational planning yet these emerging contingencies need not provide a sense of discomfort but an array of opportunities to exercise one’s imagination to cope with new problems (Eisner 1979, p.33).

It became increasingly apparent as the programme changed and progressed that using different methods in the evaluation of the programme as, and when necessary needed to be a flexible process. Moustakas (1994) concurs:

As long as the method is congruent with responsible ethical concerns, any course that a researcher’s ingenuity is capable of suggesting is an appropriate method for scientific investigation (Moustakas 1994, p.44).

3.4.1. METHODS:

In qualitative research in the last few years there has been an explosion of methods advocated, and it is suggested that a contribution to greater reliability and validity of results in social science is aided by the use of multiple data methods, investigations and theories (Bazeley 1999). Patton’s (2002) suggests the notion of objectivity and subjectivity is ‘outdated’ and he quotes from Barone (2000) arguing for ‘the criterion of critical persuasiveness’. This suggests that by giving clear descriptions which are relayed intellectually alongside methodological rigour, enabling the researcher to argue their point and allow the use for ‘emotive labels’ such as objectivity and subjectivity to disappear and consequently different methods are being created to accommodate these new paradigms. Bazeley (1999) quotes Denzin and Lincoln (1994) saying that qualitative research is ‘inherently multimethod’ and the qualitative researcher is a, ‘bricoleur; a practical person who works with what ever strategies, tools and
material are available to piece together an emergent solution to a puzzle or problem’ (Bazely 1999).

In Patton’s (1997) ‘Utilisation Focused Evaluation’ edition 3, he gives us a menu of 58 alternative ways of focusing evaluations, which, he says, are, ‘by no means exhausting all the possibilities’. Many of the experiential methods employed within the School are shamanistic in character, (see Chapter One), which, by its nature, is ‘subjective and participatory’ (Raalte 1998), and coupled with other unusual aspects of this study (see earlier chapters), in an attempt to extract as much valuable material as possible I have employed various methods towards the evaluation process.

The nature of psycho-spiritual work requires the student to use their lived reality as a dynamic measure for change of self (Chapter One), actively observing themselves during the process of development, which means they are already in a constant state of evaluating and researching. The students’ perceptions and insights are therefore a valuable resource in the process and as they often emerge unexpectedly, consequently they cannot be contrived, and it is deemed therefore that the use of spontaneous tactics are a relevant way of progressing the research.

In the past any acknowledgement of intuitive or psychic experiences would have been at best, marginalised or at worst deemed irrelevant:

*taken at face value as human experiences provide an inside view, ... when confronted by psychic experiences, the Cartesian-based impulse is to explain them away but it may be more constructive and life potentiating to realise we live in a world in which they can occur (White 1998, p.132).*
Some would argue that they should be explained away as these type of experiences do not fit neatly into a positivistic paradigm, but however one regards them, they exist for many individuals and will consequently affect and change their world. Psychic feelings are often left unspoken, but as part of the programme students acknowledge these feelings and they students are used to being in contact with their thoughts, feelings and subtle senses, which are all used as part of the data-rich collection.

3.4.2. Open-ended Interviews:

The research interview is an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two people about a theme of mutual interest (Kvale 1996). This informal technique allows the participants to be put at ease with no pressure to deliver and is implemented in order to go deep into the senses, attitudes and intentions of the student:

Questions can be individualised to establish in-depth communication with the person being interviewed ... The conversational interviewer must be able to interact easily with people in a variety of settings, generate rapid insights, formulate questions quickly and smoothly (Patton 1990, p.282).

In this way it may be possible for the person being interviewed to forget the interview situation. The benefits of the unstructured approach is that the researcher can follow the lead of the participants, thereby allowing a relaxed and more open discussion. The interviewer is thought to need an empathic access to the world of the interviewee, which opens up the data to vivid expression aiding the whole data analysis process (Massarik 1981). The ability to listen, not just to the words, but to listen with a complete openness gives permission to the
interviewee to reveal themselves. This is not a new theory and it is advocated in professional counselling (Mitchell 1998) and is also present with a good intuitive.

Contemporary spirituality (see Chapter Two) is thought to be the essence, the real and authentic self, it therefore has to work in real life situations. Accordingly, I was initially interested to find some phenomenological evidence from students and to this end in May 2001 I implemented five open-ended in-depth interviews in a phenomenological fashion. Although, there were some set questions, the participants were allowed to dictate the flow and content of the interview. Mindful of trying to remove myself from the process, I said very little. The result of this, however, was that the interviewees often rambled off at a tangent and only provided nebulous material about the actual content of the courses. The interviews proved rudderless and lacked direction, interviewees often slipping into personal revelations that, although giving insight into the student themselves, did not reveal much about the programme’s curriculum. Although it is known with open-ended interviews there can be a great deal of irrelevant data, in these particular interviews there was little left over to compensate for this, consequently, these early interviews did not reveal any comprehensive analysis of the programme contents. Although these interviews did little to evaluate the programme, they effectively acted as a pilot for the research and taught me what not to do, helping me to refine better approaches. Nonetheless, it is relevant to state something of them here as these interviews affected the way I subsequently progressed with my data collection and had an effect on the way the School was run. They had value for me personally as a facilitator as it supplied information on the way individual students process
experiences, but what they also inadvertently highlighted were deficiencies in
the facilitators themselves. This led directly to the furthering of the development
of a facilitator training course, (not part of this study), and the ongoing
professional development of the tutors, which still continues. The students’
learning appeared patchy, which led to much discussion and cross pollination of
information between teachers, and its direct result was the coalescing of
individual courses into a more structured programme.

3.4.3. Power Issues in Interviews:

Like Marshall (1991) ‘I can’t imagine doing an adequate analysis of data if I
haven’t participated in collecting it’. Psycho-spiritual growth is not a quantifiable
subject, and leaders of the classes endeavour to work as transparent intuitive
facilitators encouraging openness out of which a strong rapport between fellow
students and facilitator occurs (see also Chapter One). A qualitative strategy in
interview approach is the need to encourage openness, so to this end facilitators
often refer to personal biographical accounts of their own development, ‘for
example they share experiences, attitudes or tastes with the informants in order
for the latter to be more trusting’ (Powney 1987). This is a strategy the School
employs as part of the psycho-spiritual unfoldment process. Yet, Powney (1987)
also suggests that this could backfire by bringing too much of the interviewer’s
bias into the open. The argument then emerges: how can one question an
assumption if it is not revealed? By bringing any thoughts, opinions, and
intuitions into the open they can be aired and discussed with any depth. I have
endeavoured to retain an open mind at all times as thoughts, theories,
assumptions and bias can be proved to be incorrect. That possibility needs
always be freely acknowledged by the researcher, seeing his or her own ideas more as a springboard for further development, not an end in themselves.

In new paradigms of qualitative research the researchers themselves are often considered ‘critically important’ (Amlani 1998):

The researcher’s special sensitivities can suggest innovative approaches to the conduct, analysis and reporting of a the study (Amlani 1998, p.179).

In line with new methods, I also feel it is important and relevant to share thoughts and experiences with the interviewees who are co-researchers in the process of self-discovery. In this way aspects of the student’s lives are used positively to learn more about themselves and to enable release of outworn patterns. This has some similarity with other transpersonal procedures. In Heron’s co-operative inquiry for instance:

He or she is dealing with old emotional fixations in the basement of the psyche, developing integrated functions on the ground floor in interpersonal behaviour and in promoting cultural and ecological change, and acquiring psychic, subtle and spiritual perspective on the upper floors which begins the process of self-transfiguration (Heron 1993, p.92).

Students often have a desire to please, which is a well-known concern in data collection and generally accepted as being present whether the interviewer is known to the interviewee or not. However, given that the student and I have an existing co-operative relationship and a vested interest in any self-inquiry discourse of which the interview would be one, we are in effect both researchers, and therefore knowledge between interviewee and interviewer is a valid if not vital aspect to the research. Silverman (1985) suggests that somehow different interviewers with different approaches produce similar responses and he
concerns that ‘It does not follow that it is illegitimate to carry out our own research interviews’ (Silverman 2001).

The necessity to have the fullest co-operation from the participants is the reason why I sent out a letter to all students asking for volunteers for the study. Of course it may never be possible to absolutely rule out some volunteer bias, but this would be the case whoever led the interview and asking those who were not willing to be interviewed would be self defeating. In evaluating the programme that is itself so completely interwoven with the life of the individual, an in-depth knowledge of both the training and the individual is thought to be invaluable:

Being part of the culture could have the effect of dulling the investigator’s powers of observation and analysis. But it also has the advantage of giving the investigator an extraordinarily intimate acquaintance with the object of study. This acquaintance gives the investigator a fineness of touch and delicacy of insight ... This is an exceptional analytic advantage and the long qualitative interview must be prepared to harness it as fully as possible (McCracken 1988, p.32).

It could be argued however, that the individual stories are often difficult to confirm, and in some cases can be found to be, at best inaccurate, and, at worst, the informants ‘can be found to routinely lie’ (Sikes 2000). However vigilant we might be, every now and again some researcher may be misled or even lied to by their informant:

They lie because they want to appear more glamorous, intelligent or to seem to have overcome more difficulties in their lives. They lie in order to give a desired identity coherent antecedents. They lie for social and psychological purposes (Sikes 2000, p.262).

In our interviews the most likely scenario for this possibility would be for the student/interviewee to present themselves in a favourable light to me as
principal of the School. It may also be an opportunity to construct an identity of their own making. However, to what extent the untruth reaches is what Powney and Watts (1987) describe as ‘the informant making a decision as to which layer of truth they will make accessible’

Doing this may be more likely to involve missing bits out or putting a positive spin on some aspect through the choice of particular words and phrases, that it is to mean outright lying (Sikes 2000, p.264).

Sikes (2000) suggests that because of these difficulties it would be preferable to have some prior insight into the participants’ perceptions. This is something with which I concur, and one of the reasons I stipulated that one of the main criteria for interviewees would be to only use students that had been at the School a minimum of two years. The purpose for this decision was, not only for the student to have sufficient knowledge of the studies to understand the questions to a degree of relevance, but also to give an ample opportunity for their own in-depth work on self, and for any need to beg favour with myself would more likely have receded. Sikes, quoting from Henry Giroux (1983) explains, ‘methodological correctness can never guarantee valid data’, and that would be true of any and all rigorous items one puts into place, however, one can minimise the possibility of soiled data in open-ended interviews, in particular with the ability to return to the participant several times if necessary, to unpick and get deeper into details which would uncover discrepancies. It also presents revisions and updates as new information emerges and allowing for any possible deception to be revealed. Heron (1981) concurs with the notion of familiarity with the interviewee:

Experiential knowledge is knowing an entity, person, place, thing, process etc. in face-to-face encounter and interaction. ... Empirical research,
precisely because it is empirical, necessarily requires some degree of experiential knowledge of the person ... Experiential knowledge through encounter or acquaintance with what is before me involves more than just brief or minimal perception. It involves familiarity with the encountered entity through sustained perception and interaction (Heron 1981, p.24).

In interviewing my own students it is felt that it will minimise the students creating censure or interview desirability because as I already have a depth understanding of them and that is thought to give a unique value to the open-ended interview in the in-depth knowledge of the student.

Interviewer and interviewee respond to one another as total persons ready to actively examine and disclose both remote and accessible aspects of their lives, including experiences, present responses and imageries (Massarik 1981, p.203).

The narrative of the participants (see Chapter Five) unfolding psycho-spiritual journey gives a series of first person accounts and in this way endeavours to accurately relay their story locating any change points that signal some transformative learning on the part of the student. Illustrative quotations from the interviews provide evidence for the investigator’s interpretation, so that as much as possible of their own voice rings through. In close co-operation with the interviewee we have together, progressively unfolded their journey and in this sense we have become co-authors and co-researchers. Working alongside the participants as students in group settings has similarities with a co-operative inquiry as per Heron (1992) and Reason 1994), where a community of people engage together in cycles of action and reflection referred to as critical subjectivity:

The research cycles repeatedly through phases of prepositional knowing (knowing about something) experiential knowing (through direct, face-to-face encounter, practical knowing (knowing how to skills and competencies) and presentational knowing aesthetic expression of
experiences as groups of persons with focused interest meet and interact (Braud, Anderson 1998, p.268).

It is thought that the constant in-depth self exploration in the groups within the School, can only add to the richness of the research, and me being part of that examination can assist the data collection.

3.4.4. Transference:

It is acknowledged in counselling and psychology that working closely in any therapeutic practice can bring about transference. This is when the patient, client or student displaces, on to others their feelings and ideas which derive from previous figures in their life. This term was first discovered and described by Freud (1953):

A whole series of past psychological experiences that are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment. Some of these transference have a content which differs from that of their model in no respect whatever except for the substitution. Other are more ingeniously constructed, the content has been subjected to a moderating influence ... And they may even become conscious, by cleverly taking advantage of some real peculiarity in the physician’s person or circumstances and attaching themselves to that (Freud 1953, p.116).

Heron (1989) says:

When transference occurs, participants unconsciously transfer to the group leader, from the hurt child within, hidden and repressed feelings about a parent or some other important authority figure from the past” (Heron 1989, p.36).

Rather than ignoring or dismissing transference, the School has openly adopted it in the classes to aid the self-awareness process, helping the student to see what is occurring using it as a mirror for what they need to observe about themselves. Like Heron we believe that: ‘a positive transference can be put to work and used
to motivate learning' (Heron 1989). Drawing interviewees from the 2nd or 3rd year, who have actively worked with transference, means it is more likely that negative aspects of the transference process would have been dealt with and it is seen as very much less likely that the student will project onto me during the interview. Of course it is never possible to know what might surface in an in-depth interview; in my pilot study one participant described the interview as 'feeling like a therapy session', however, by interviewing the students from further along the course with the self-development process already in full operation I hope to minimise this particular potential problem.

One should not overlook the possibility of some counter-transference from me occurring. To minimise this I must also look at my fears and projections.

Generally:

People's fears are often associated with sudden and or unexpected movements and the change from feeling reasonably in control of things to losing control of them when suddenly it's in the room, it's come alive and none of the available options are desirable (Smith 2003, p.233).

I cannot be complacent as to this possibility, but during the course of my work as facilitator I have come to expect the unexpected and respond to it as it occurs. It is here that intuition can be of most service. I must however, take my perspective into consideration in the interpretation which makes this participatory mode so valuable as it gives a better chance to pick up any differences of impressions between the interviewee and the researcher.

3.4.5. Method of interview analysis:

Fischer (2003) says:
The only ways humans can know are human ways, that don't have access to an independent reality and that perspective and interpretation are inescapable (Fischer 2003, p.102).

This being the case how can the research procedure get close to the truth or essence of this person's story? How can a formative evaluation of a programme tell us when it is really working when the results actualise within in the personal lived world of the student? Any personal story belongs to the owner, in this case the student from the School. It is told from their own eyes, their beliefs, fears and motives. I have allowed the research methods to develop organically and intuitively, with what was needed and/or what seemed right at the time, starting with the pilot phenomenological interview, followed by questionnaires, in-depth interviews, inductive content analysis, narratives and a focus group. All these methods are brought together to culminate in the final analysis.

Over the course of the programme, students have by various methods explored themselves and have evaluated their own truth as part of the process. Therefore a participatory approach is implemented (see below) which has brought about a theorising reflection emerging from the interviewing. Paraphrasing Berg, Smith (2003) the process of self-scrutiny undergone in participatory methods can yield information about the intellectual and emotional factors that inevitably influence the participants' involvement and activity, this in turn provides information about the dynamics of the individual or social system being studied; in this case the School (Smith 2003).
To see the world from the students perspective it is imperative to get inside their story. However:

The outraged realist who in the face of constructionist argument thumps the table with his fist and asks his opponents to deny that this is indeed a real table ... the table now functions as a rhetorical statement in a debate rather than say as a table to be eaten off......a physicist could claim that the table has no solidity at all because at the subatomic level it is made of strings of particles that have no fixed or solid appearance. However the question can then be raised about how it is that as everyday actors we believe ourselves to be in a world of solid and stable things as well as in a world composed of contested discourses (Burkitt 2003, p.324).

As this quotation implies researchers cannot assume our perspective on reality is the same as our interviewee, but by being with the interviewee over a period of several encounters it is hoped to find a way into their world and understand them accordingly.

When receiving the script of the narratives from the participants (see Chapter Four) and being sure I had interpreted their story correctly, I created the final text using extracts of the original interview. I have explained and described their journey, drawing in their own explanations in quotations as part of the interpretation. Once again it was returned to the participant for any further comments. The commentary hoped to connect the disparate elements together and determine how the reader is to understand the student's experiences. It configures the excerpts so that the student's experience of the School moves through time.

I wanted to get as close as I could to the person's world, how they perceive and interpret it. To that end the analysis of the unfolding story of the participant's
journey gives a series of first person accounts endeavouring to approach the narrative as their story. I located any change points that signal some transformative learning on the part of the student. Illustrative quotations from the interview provide evidence for the investigators interpretation together with copious use of direct quotations from the text and subsequent meetings so as much as possible of their own voice rings through.

The final manuscript was given to them to validate, making any final comments. I chose to implement the narrative in this way as I believe the story must be their story and, as much as possible, interpreted by themselves. By constantly asking the informant what they meant, the language can be scrutinised and not treated as self-evident. In the critical analysis I tried to bring different ideas and perspectives to broaden the possibilities. As the writing is mine it is of course an interpreted piece, however, that interpretation has emerged from many conversations, and feedback from the participants themselves. In this way it has co-authorship and is more the essence of their journey not mine. Yet any description of someone’s experiences is, by nature, subjective and therefore we may not ever obtain the complete truth. However, it can be said that this participatory narrative is a trustworthy piece, in the sense that via the constant collaboration with the individual throughout I can be sure it is true to the participants version of reality, which is perhaps the most we can ever aspire to in the research of someone’s perception of their world. I have used copious quotations alongside the block contents of the interview to illustrate their journey.
3.4.6. Questionnaire:

In the first two years of the School we increased the amount of classes, bringing in outside facilitators in the hope of broadening aspects of the curriculum. However, at first gradually, and then increasing up by the early interviews, as stated, we drew these aspects into more focused courses which by 2000 had evolved into a four-stage Spiritual Consciousness Programme. During this process the number of students fell, from a range of around fifty students per term to under thirty. The goalposts were moving and although we tried to do this with the least possible ill effect to both student and teacher, it seemed a likely reason for the drop in numbers. Obviously this caused some concern. But, were the students really leaving because of these changes, or because they were not happy with the courses? Were we not achieving what we set out to achieve, which was a comprehensive sequential programme in spiritual development? How were we to find out where and what the trouble was? Phoning or writing personally to ex-students might intimidate and therefore not necessarily give us the real reasons for their leaving. It was carefully considered and decided that a questionnaire would be sent in such a way that they could return it anonymously. The advantages of the questionnaire are its simplicity, its versatility and its low cost (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-shaw 2000) and although there is probably no such thing as the perfect questionnaire in this case we asked questions that would allow the student to put their replies in their own words so we could extrapolate their own perceptions. We were looking for data from students that had left the School to establish what did not work, and in-depth interviews seemed an inappropriate way to extract this possibly sensitive material where confidentiality might be the only way to get some truthful
comments. The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish what helped or hindered the students and why they did not complete the programme.

3.5.1. NARRATIVES:

Todorov (1969) coined the term narratology in ‘an effort to elevate the form to the status of an object of knowledge for a new science’ (Riessman 1994). Since the ‘lived experience’ of the student is integral to the psycho-spiritual learning process, in order to evaluate there is a need to look at how the work of the School reflects into their actual world. According to Polkinghorne (1988), ‘narratives are the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful’. He quotes Aristotle’s famous assertion that a narrative has a beginning, middle and end. In the beginning of our story students enter the programme with all their experiences, social and cultural, and with their educational background and unique personalities. However, in the process of psycho-spiritual learning their constructs might alter and if their perceptions on the world alters so does the way they respond to it. How can the School’s programme assist this process of change? How does the student acknowledge and work with these changes? Are the changes always positive? The research into the process of learning of self endeavours to get to the essence of that self through the individual’s journey of their time at the School.

Any personal story belongs to the owner; how then can the researcher get close to the truth or essence of this person’s story? Over the years through the work of the School students have, in a number of different ways, had the opportunity to look at themselves. They have sought their truth and therefore have a vested
interest in it, and in this sense they have become researchers of themselves, and whether or not this is always effective they are practised at looking. A narrative must be the student’s story, and not mine and therefore the student is the best person to relay their own journey. To extrapolate the student’s truth there needs to be close co-operation from that student to verify if the story is accurate. A participatory approach (see later in this chapter) has therefore been implemented which gives us a theorising reflection that emerges from the interviews.

In qualitative research a narrative honours people’s stories as data and they have become widely used in all sorts of research projects, although there are different ways to implement them. It is generally thought that to extract a story from a participant, the more open-ended the questions are, the more likelihood of gaining a story from the interviewee, (Riessman, 1994). This is often the case as many people illustrate even a direct question with a story of their lives.

Students’ understanding of the spiritual is woven into their world view, their circle of meaning and their network of resources (Black 1999):

We can witness through their narratives how the circumstances of their lives inform their religious expression (Black 1999, p.453).

If the student completes the whole programme they will have spent a minimum of three years of conscious self-examination. The research therefore looks at their story of growth and progress within that period. It examines their psycho-spiritual journey for evidence of the success or otherwise of the programme in the assistance of this process.
How someone perceives themselves and their world is subjective and may not necessarily be the truth, so realistically the research cannot expect to find an absolute truth. However, it can endeavour to do its best to understand and find the essence of the truth as that person perceives it. How someone perceives his world dictates how he responds and reacts to it therefore to get to that perception is crucial to identify change. Consequently questions to ask are, what are their reported perception, truths, explanations, beliefs and world views and to then extrapolate the consequences of their construction, for their behaviour and for those with whom they interact (Patton 2002). This constructivist approach studies the multiple realities constructed by people and the implication of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others. Constructivism respects the world view which is unique to every individual and therefore looks to the individual experience as a unique story.

The narratives are described and written up in a format similar to a Ginsberg’s (Riessman 1994) model, using passages from the text to explain and allow the interviewee to interpret their own experience. Consistent with the life story method the story is a mixture of direct quotations from the interview with longer summaries of the content of speech statements.

Riessman (1994) is critical of this Ginsburg style, saying that there is too much of her own interpretation, ‘taking bits and pieces, snippets of a response, that supported her evolving theory’ (Riessman 1994). Yet in the Ginsburg story style there is a clear accessible flow that involves its reader which is applicable to a
psycho-spiritual learning experience which is, in itself, is an unfolding journey of self.

3.5.2. Inductive Content Analysis:

Born out of the need to really 'live' with the transcripts and tapes of the students' interviews, during the immersion with the data I found that individual students used certain key phrases multiple times and that various words were exaggerated and emphasised with different students and consequently, various key words strongly emerged. For instance participant T2 used the word *difficult* 20 times and T8 constantly emphasised and referred to things being 'profound' whereas T9 used the verb 'thinking' 140 times and the word 'feeling' 32. Students generally use the word *feel* instead of *think* when describing any psycho-spiritual experiences. This aroused my curiosity as to what else might occur and what, if any, relevance a content analysis might reveal.

In a study so obviously qualitative I initially did not think any quantitave data was appropriate; however, I explored the possibility that emergent themes might reveal something of interest. In line with the paradigm of the research I used an inductive content approach whereby categories of the studied topic are defined and separate utterances of the text are extracted, classified and gathered into these groups, and (Chase 1995), categories are determined by the actual concepts of the interviewee. By using the participants' own words to create the categories the utterances of the text are extracted, classified and gathered into natural groups. The emergent categories have been counted and divided into positive
and negative statements (see Appendix). This method aims to identify the patterns of participants' experiences in general observations, what patterns characterise their participation within the content of the programme, and what patterns of change are reported by and observed by the participants in their lived world (Patton 2002). By doing this I hoped to bring more depth to the research.

Mindful that this research is primarily an evaluation of the programme and its effects on the lived world of the student and to bring clarity into what can sometimes be an involved and messy procedure, to unpack the data and allow for cross-case examination, I have implemented the content analysis (Chase 1995) from the interviews. In this approach it is common to look for metaphors or how frequently a topic or concept emerges. The data is content analysed to identify the patterns of experience participants bring to the programme, what patterns characterise their participation in the programme and what patterns of change are reported by and observed by the participants. The process of unpacking the themes or perspectives of the participant means that other categories emerged. A matrix of the four stages is put in place with simple categories: Observations, Negative Contents, Positive Contents and Changes Made.

Many qualitative researchers dislike any methods that show any quantitative data. Silverman, (2001) argues that because content analysis data is based upon a given set of categories they 'furnish' what is described as a 'powerful conceptual grid' from which it is difficult to escape, deflecting attention away from uncategorised activities. However, allowing the interviewees' own phrases to emerge minimises the data getting locked into set patterns. Moreover, in this
research the content analysis is used as a subsidiary method and not the main retrieval of evidence. By bringing a shift in perspective into the research it is hoped to reveal elements one might have otherwise missed so its role here is to help identify aspects of assistance or concern, which will then be triangulated with other data collection methods. There are documented arguments as to the value of implementing any form of content analysis with more natural narrative methods, the main one being that it imposes extra textural realities on the data through its methods of classifications. But increasing textural realities can be a useful tool in cross-referencing the data.

3.6.1. Focus Group:

Focus groups are often used to carry out descriptive research and are valuable to evaluate programmes and to investigate the adequacy of theoretical models. Silverman (2001) relays some of the benefit of using what he describes as practitioners:

The real opportunities for sociological influence lie closer to the coal face than they do to head office they lie in relations with practitioners, not with the managers of practice (Silverman 2001, p.221–238).

He goes on to argue that practitioners rather than policy-makers are the most reliable and eager audience for social research. In the School’s case the practitioners are the facilitators.

I had wanted to implement a focus group for the School’s own purpose and initially did not envisage it being part of the research; however, its contents lent to the bringing together of the other data which is why I have included it here. In
the search for further information on how the courses were proceeding, I examined several options on how I might implement an appropriate focus group. Should I select a group of people throughout the School? But if I did, might that not confuse the issues with different students being on different levels of understanding? I then considered implementing one focus group per stage of the programme, at least this way they would all have some similar understanding; however, this might not give an overall account of the programme that I required. It was while I was practically considering the most effective participants to use for a focus group that the notion occurred that the small group of trainee facilitators would provide an ideal resource: we run facilitation training for some of the students who have successfully gone through the programme and as part of the practical aspect of their training they create exercises for groups, shadow the existing teachers and lead part or all of a class. It seemed to me therefore that these people were an ideal resource for a focus group, bringing a more comprehensive view of the programme born from, not just attending the classes as students, but also looking at the programme as potential facilitators.

There are arguments for and against using focus groups where the people involved know each other well. However the success of the groups depends at least in part on the dynamics between individuals within the group, so having people who are already comfortable with each other is a bonus (Bloor, Franklin, Thomas, Robson 2001). It is thought that bringing together a diverse range of people may mean a diverse range of views that could be so dissimilar that no aspect of the topic can be explored in depth. It could also crush discussion and
inhibit debate and with different types of people there could be a variation in status, power and understanding. Morgan and Yarhouse (2001) also argue that focus groups consisting of strangers may be less likely to express taken for granted opinions, views and experiences. And Kitzinger (1999) argues by stating that utilising groups of people who know each other the researcher may be able to tap into interaction that one would not find with people unfamiliar with each other which ‘approximates to naturally occurring data’.

Above all it is useful to work with pre-existing groups because they provide one of the social contexts within which ideas are formed and decisions made (Kitzinger 1999, p.103-121).

As I examined the alternatives I reached the conclusion that the ‘pre-existing’ group of trainees facilitators was the best unit for the task and indeed just as Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, Robson (2001) reports, I found that discussions were generated as one person reminded another about an experience relevant to the discussion which might otherwise have been overlooked (see Chapter Five). Prior knowledge of each other enhanced discussion that simply would not occur in more contrived group.

It might be argued that these trainees could be trying to court me as a possible employer in the future. They are aware however, that doing the facilitation course does not guarantee a job at the School or anywhere else, and all of them have expressed a desire to use these facilitation skills as part of their own work. Two are professional teachers, one is a counsellor, one a spiritual healer and one a therapist. It could equally be reasoned that they actually have a vested interest in exploring the value of the programme as they may want to set up courses of
their own, indeed two of the participants who live nearly 200 hundred miles
away from the School would never have been available to teach at the School,
and have expressed the desire to do just that. I felt that these students having
experienced the whole programmes themselves and now revisiting it as
facilitators, gives this group a unique perspective on the programme as feed-back
for the classes, which I use in conjunction with quotations from the nine in-depth
interviews.

Patton (2002) says, 'Constructivist criteria offer perspectives and encourages
dialogue among perspectives rather than aiming at singular truth and linear
prediction.' Using the description and analysis of the focus group I endeavour to
draw all the elements of data together.

3.7.1. Triangulation:
Triangulation is a surveying term whereby you 'know' something by the
measurement in relation to something else. It is a form of testing your theories
and broadening the picture. Triangulation is a means to confirm the reliability
and validity in any research, by the use of different methods or data to
strengthen a study design and give weight to any formations of material. Patton
(1990) identifies different types of triangulation in qualitative study including
making use of 'combining multiple observers theories methods and data
sources', so that:

researcher can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-
A point of comparison is needed within an evaluation inquiry, however, some research writers have taken issue with the use of 'any rigid fixed two-dimensional triangle as a central image for validity for post-modern test'. Quoting Richardson (1994), Kvale (1996) suggests the central image, rather than being a triangle should be more like:

a crystal which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutation multi-dimensionalities and angles of approach (Kvale 1996, p.244).

I would concur with these sentiments particularly when dealing with the multi-varient aspects of the lived reality of the student. Similar to Patton's (1990) advice, I have checked the consistency of what people say over time. After classes, the teachers often want a sounding board for something that has occurred within the class. I make a point of listening and being open to suggestions as, and when they occur, which puts me in a unique position to spontaneously acknowledge, question and home in onto critical emerging issues and if necessary implement necessary improvements to procedure and programme content. I also frequently test emergent theories on teachers and students, often discussing these within the class setting. This falls in line with the form of intuitive, post-modern mixed genre explorations that endeavours to contain a deepened, complex understanding of the topic. I have taken the approach that multiple questions to the various stakeholders in this form of mixed-method inquiry can only increase the continual transformation of the programme, as well as providing the necessary rigour from different sources of data.
For triangulation purposes in the narratives I use methods similar to Reason's (1997) 'feedback loops'. This enables the data analysis to evolve into a series of the students' own stories, entailing a composite of all the data, as much as possible using the students' words (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Feed-back loops mean going around the research cycle several times; asking pertinent questions, analysing and being critical of them, returning to the interviewee to confirm or deny my interpretation, going back to the student again theorising on feedback and interviewing some more, if necessary checking theories with other teachers. As the analysis got more intense, I continued until the information got deeper and deeper and I unpacked the core aspects of experiences and the value of the programme in implementing them. I have encouraged the friendly working partnership in the research material, seeing the interviewees more like research colleagues as in the methods of Heron (1998), Reason (1997) and Rowan (1981). The narratives are given to the interviewees to confirm and comment on their own stories before submitting them. The evaluation is achieved by this process when the valid description of the essential structures of the phenomenon of the students' experiences was developed and it allowed me to compare and contrast them with the set aims of each stage of the programme.

In the last twenty years qualitative research methods have continually produced various methods in a Naturalistic framework. Many of these have similar features and advocate an openness in line with the ethos of in-depth open-ended interview techniques. I have also implemented content analysis of the interviews to add focus and issued a questionnaire to students who had left the School to
establish which aspects of the programme that were problematic. Finally, I use a focus group to act as a comparative analysis of the whole process.

3.8.1. Participatory Inquiry:
Paraphrasing Berg, Smith (1988) the process of self-scrutiny undergone in participatory methods can yield information about the intellectual and emotional factors that inevitably influence the participants' involvement and activity, which in turn provides information about the dynamics of the individual or social system being studied, in this case the School (Berg, Smith 1988).

Participatory approaches (Pain/ Francis 2002) did not originate as a methodology for research, but as a process by which communities can work towards change. In our case the School is the community where change occurs and when employed or adapted as a means of research may retain this fundamental principle.

as participatory research truly disrupts hierarchies, including the role of academics. It often throws up practical and political obstacles and dilemmas, and professional as well as intellectual challenges (Pain, Francis 2002, p.47).

It could therefore be argued that a participatory method, however well-intentioned and well-executed, is not necessarily capable of delivering equality, sustainability and the empowerment of the people. So why choose this approach? By the time they are interviewed the students have already gone through intense self-observation. The task is to work towards authenticity and although a spiritual facilitator shows compassion and understanding he or she has a task to do which is the uncovering of deeper aspects of self which may
require an uncompromising approach. Facilitators, of which I am one, and students work closely together within the programme, and to extract their truth a hierarchical position is not taken by the leader and much of the work by the third year is self-directed. So the revelation of self is already well underway by the time the participants were interviewed, therefore using a participatory approach merely carried the methods already in place in the School, through into the research.

Finally, the use of different methods is thought to have allowed the very real possibility of a spontaneous emergence of the learning process of all the stakeholders. It also brought the breadth needed for the evolution of the research journey, and the evaluation of the psycho-spiritual programme.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.1. DATA COLLECTION

In this chapter the data methods are described and documented: Questionnaire, Semi-Structured Interviews, Categorical Contents, Narratives and a Focus Group. The chapter also includes extracts from four narratives.

4.2.1. Background to the Data Collection:

The purpose of the formative evaluation is an ongoing learning, internal improvement to programme development (Patton 2002), whereby different methods of evaluation have been employed at various stages throughout the programme’s life. However, this thesis is not able to describe the numerous teachers’ meetings, nor can it relay the constant week-by-week verbal communication with the teachers and students; it describes in chronological order the main data collections and the reasons behind them.

4.3.1. Summary of Data:

October 2001      Pilot interviews
May 2002          Questionnaire sent to 100 ex students
July 2002         Open-ended depth interviews 9 students
September 2002    Narratives x 4
November 2002     Inductive content analysis of interviews
December 2002     Focus Group: 5 participants

4.3.2. Pilot Interviews: In 2001 (see Chapter Three) I implemented six interviews which effectively served as a pilot, highlighting the need for a more direct
evaluation process for this study. This included having more direct and structured questions whilst still allowing the information to emerge naturally.

4.3.3. May 2002 Questionnaire:
One hundred former students, all of whom were no longer at the School, were sent a questionnaire with a stamped addressed envelope which they could reply to anonymously. The questionnaire asked them to list each class they had completed and give us a résumé of their experiences in it, with aspects of the modules they found helpful or unhelpful, why they had left and whether they had subsequently attended classes at other organisations and any other further general comments. We received a return of 37%.

Because the questioned students left at different times we do not have a extensive view of every class and nothing related to the last stage, as none of the students who completed the questionnaire had attended it, so, in terms of content of courses, this data is not comprehensive. However, what it did give us was some evidence of where in the programme the students had struggled, which in turn led to further data collection.

Comments were put into categories of ‘Very Helpful’, Helpful, ‘Unhelpful’ or ‘Elements of both’. In classes that are now part of Stage One 68% (Graph [G] p.331) found it either helpful or very helpful, for Stage Two 85% (G. p.332) found it either helpful or very helpful. In the first part of Stage Three the figures were also high at 75% (G p.333) helpful and very helpful with the second term class of this stage scoring 100% helpful. However, the difference in the later classes of
Stage Three, with none being recorded as very helpful, 50% given the helpful mark and the remaining 50% being in the unhelpful category (G p334). When we look at what point the students left the School, we find the highest percentage at 42% in Stage One but almost as high with 39% leaving during Stage Three (G p336). If we break this down to the various terms of Stage Three, 9% left after the first term, 15% the second and 12% the third. It should be noted however, that the first two sections of Stage Three are only one term each, but the later part can be anything up to six terms. When one looks at stated reasons, only five students stated they left to go to other courses. Alternatively, in a later question 18 students said they had attended other courses subsequent to leaving the School (G p337).

There was a high drop out rate in the first stage, but this loss of students at an early part of the programme corresponds with my experience whilst working for other organisations where there is often an early drop in participants. The reason for this is usually interpreted to be that people join the classes before fully realising what the work entails. We have had several meetings revolving around this question and have subsequently tried clearly to state our aims and contents in the programme. However, given the nature of the work which is so intrinsically wound up in the students' actual lives, until students experience it, the work may never be completely understood before it is undertaken. The questionnaire alerted us to possible difficulties in Stage Three. Can we locate the difficulties within the course content? And does this relate in any way to any personal transformation taking place? Alternatively, what makes some students
continue through the programme? What value if any, does it have for them? To gain more in-depth information different methods of retrieval were needed.

4.3.4 June-September 2002: Open-ended in-depth interviews:
I asked for volunteers, the main criterion being that the participants must have either completed the programme or be in their last term of the School. I interviewed the first nine students who volunteered. The aims of the question are recorded below, with the questions in bold:

1. To find if there were any commonalities in the level of spiritual understanding the students have when entering the School.

Q. Had you had any psychic, spiritual or peak experiences before coming to the School?
Q. If so please describe?

2. To unpack each of the four stages of the School’s curriculum and to be able to compare and contrast the students’ experiences with the aims of each module and to evaluate the success of each stage.

Q. What techniques/exercises helped you during each stage?
Q. What were your personal experiences during each stage?

3. Where are they now? Are they more self aware/autonomous/spiritual? Also to look at what might further assist them.

Q. How have you integrated psycho-spiritual learning into your lives?

It was during the interviewing that it became increasingly clear to me that an appropriate form of analysis for this type of study would be to create a narrative using the progress through the School and the story that emerges from it as their own psycho-spiritual journey. I asked four interviewees, no one refused and narratives of four students have also been created. Extracts are at the end of this chapter and full narrative in Appendix 2.
One cannot look at part of someone’s life in isolation, as the student arrives at the School with a life story that will influence how they respond to their learning. I expected therefore aspects of their lives to emerge and indeed looked for these to be able to locate the data in their lived world. I selected statements that are connected to the studied topic which need to be extracted and analysed, but, although some holistic consideration of experiences outside the time of the School is relevant, they are only referred to in direct reference to the effect on the response to the programme.

4.3.5. Categorical Contents of Interviews:
For greater depth as described in Chapter Three, I implemented an inductive content analysis. I have identified each respondent by a numerical code and I sectioned them into simple positive and negative statements to elicit what stage was most difficult and why. I went through each of the transcripts marking general observations, descriptions of contents and any stated changes in the participant’s life, stage by stage I then correlated them all to create a cross-case analysis.

A matrix of the four stages is put in place divided into the simple sections of: General Observations, Course Contents, Personal Changes Made (G p.338). Taking a simple diagram of the positive and negative comments it can immediately be seen that the positive categories outweigh the negative, with the exception of Stage Two in the ‘General Observation’ section (G p.340) where there are more negative than positive responses. Twelve commented that they found it difficult and struggled; they also commented that they felt exposed and
some of the observations hurt. However, Stage Two (G p.341) also sees the highest positive score in the ‘Changes’ section with 24 interviewees referring to their ability to implement exercises to manage their own lives.

The most negative elements present in the Course Contents are in Stage Three (G p.342), however, some comments are seemingly contradictory. For example two people said that personal issues were not addressed where another two said they did not like exposure of self. Other negative categories in the ‘Course Content’ in Stage Three include, exposure of self, and painful to look at shadow self. One could argue that these types of comments in a programme specifically designed to reveal the self, are exactly what would be expected and therefore should not be seen as negative. However, the way that the individual presented these statements were in the context that they found them difficult enough to be considered negative at the time. In the section on ‘Personal Change’ in Stage One and Stage Four there are no negative comments. In Stage One this may be because they have not had long enough to consider or notice any. In Stage Four (G p. 345) no negative comments might suggest that the difficult elements of the programme have come to an end. In Stage Three (G p.343) there were 18 references to general positive effects, but Stage Three had the most negative amount of changes within the students' lived reality. Alternatively there are few negative statements at all for Stage Four (G p.346) with only five negative examples in the ‘Course Content’. With comments that mostly revolve around struggle and difficulty between Stage Two and Three, it seems to suggest that at somewhere during this period of learning the student needs to make some movement and change to finish the programme. This corresponds to our questionnaire where Stage Three was the
stage where a large majority left. Can our data in some way assist the discovery of what makes some students go through this process so they can reach a turning point in their progress, whilst others find it just too hard? Or do they just leave because they have reached an appropriate level for themselves?

There are only 24 positive statements regarding the exercises in Stage One however, Stage Two, Three and Four respectively are 40, 49 and 43. This is fairly evenly matched, so where is the movement that takes place for the student? If it is not within the classes themselves might it indicate that changes take place within the lived world? The highest amount of changes came in Stage Two with 71 examples cited for positive changes as opposed to only seven cited for negative changes. Out of the positive changes here 19 described that they were open to new thoughts and ideas. Does this suggest that the very willingness to be ‘open’ is a crucial ingredient for spiritual transformation and if so is there any way that we can encourage this openness? Interestingly four of the comments in the same section that were classed negative, indicate some form of withdrawal from society, becoming anti-social etc. however, withdrawal from society can often be classed as part of the spiritual journey, which might therefore be seen as a positive part of the process. Further analysis both from the narrative and the comparative analysis in the next section will, it is hoped, expand upon these questions.

4.3.6. October - December 2002: The Narrative Process:
Each interview was audio taped at a length of between 1hour – 1.5hours. After ‘living’ with the initial interviews, and transcribing them, I summarised the
content of the interview out of which I drew a critical analysis and gave it to the participant for feedback. I then had face-to-face interviews with them lasting on average 50 minutes whereby we picked over the whole text getting deeper and deeper into their own meanings. Some changes of wording of the original manuscript was sought by the participants to make more clear the original wording and there were further explanations to expand on their stories. There were further short phone calls, emails and face to face conversations to confirm the validity of the descriptions after which I once again gave the document back to them for comments. When they returned them with their own annotations I created the final narrative interjecting the original text with examples of their own words. I have explained and described their journey drawing in as many of their own explanations in quotations as part of the interpretation. Once again it was returned to the participant for any final comments. I then gave to them the conclusion of their story asking for any final comments.

4.3.7. December 2002: Focus Group

The focus group consisted of five trainee facilitators (see Chapters Three and Five). To preserve anonymity I have changed their names. The group discussion was audio taped and videoed and was held in an environment where this group of people regularly meet as part of their training in facilitation skills and the members of the group have worked closely with each other for over a year. As we started the meeting the body language of the group indicated an openness and relaxed stance. There were no arms crossed and three out of five had uncrossed legs; I have worked with all these students over a minimum period of four years and I have found each of these people to be very forthright in their
opinions, and I believe they have long since gone past the time of trying to please me. The content of the focus group which covered the entire programme lent itself for use as a cross-case analysis. Extracts of these with analysis in Chapter Five.

4.4.1. Narratives:
The full version of the finished narratives are in the Appendix 2. For discussion I have extracted some pertinent aspects of the numinous; a strong religious or spiritual quality, extra-sensory perceptions, mystical and spiritual experiences alongside references to evidence of change or movement through the exercises in the programme and in their personal lived world and throughout I evidence self management in their change process. To preserve anonymity, each interviewee was labelled ‘T’ followed by a number. Direct quotations from the narrative transcript are interspersed in italics.
T2 Psycho-spiritual Journey

Numinous and extra-sensory experiences: Prior to joining the School and whilst receiving healing T2 says she saw lots of colours and I felt certain sensations and I thought I wanted to pursue that. Also she saw white light, like a sheet of ice. Despite her efforts to find logical explanations for these experiences, she could not explain them away.

Stage One:

Evidence of change from class content: T2 states that the vague feelings she had, which she now identifies as intuition were verified in this unit by doing simple psychic attunement exercises which allowed her to trust her intuition more. She says sceptics might argue that this type of experience might be explained by all manner of things, people might explain it all away, put it down to anything else, even eating the right food!

Describing a psychic exercise in class she says I thought this isn’t going to work. This is fairground stuff, I thought this is mumbo jumbo magic and very silly. But I thought well I’m here and I’ll have a go and I was scared because ... I’m going to fail and I’m not going to be able to do this. ... I had all these images and so obviously I was linking to something and thought, oh that’s a bit strange, I can do this. ... this taught me to trust more, go with the flow not immediately to have a rational explanation, a logical explanation. T2 says she was initially not sure of anything and she found it all very difficult but the fact that she received positive confirmation of her own intuition was the major factor to her continuing the programme and she relays that deep down I knew there was something in it.
During this period T2 describes an inner tug of war happening. It was a fight between her logic and rational thinking, to which latter she still has allegiance. The rational mind told her not to continue, which was counterbalanced by her own inner feelings that drew her back to classes week after week.

Stage 2:

Evidence of change from class content: She relays the effect of learning about the use of will: I think that very much came out of the class and my will, what do I want. Ironically that's how I work constantly in scripts (T2 is a drama teacher) I'm constantly saying to actors what do you want, but it never occurred to me to do it for me. It was about discovering energy, it was about trusting and it was about trying not to be in your head the whole time. Rationalising, is this logical? is there proof? am I going to look like an absolute twit? I'm still dealing with this. Are people going to think I'm stupid not dealing with this in an intelligent way, an academic way? There was a lot of struggle, however, she began trusting intuition even though this was not the kind of intelligence she was brought up with.

Evidence of change in lived world: She often went home full of questions thinking, I do not know what I'm doing here. And yet there was enough classes that she felt oh yes I do know what I'm doing here. Prior to attending the classes T2 had been very dismissive of any form of therapy. She had known friends who had had therapy and she felt it was a waste of time and consequently the School's concept that she had to work on herself first was a very difficult idea. I think one of the things that struck me was I was given permission to talk about myself, and this was a very different idea for me ... Because I'd had friends who'd been in therapy for years and all the rest of it and my judgmental attitude to it was, I'm much too busy looking after my family and I
thought it was self-indulgent ... And it was a breakthrough that you could actually think about yourself, that it was actually a good idea to think about yourself.

She also learnt how to be in a different way, and now she can come at life from a different angle, not abandoning logic but using another faculty (intuition) alongside it.

It was good and bad. There were some times when I went home and sometimes I was so churned up that I would have to deliberately put it aside otherwise I wouldn’t be able to sleep. Looking at oneself is probably healthy, however, T2 felt uncomfortable and it created confusion out of which there was awareness of hitherto untouched aspects of self. She began to ask questions about herself and she now admits she needed to look at this and she felt that being able to let it go in class helped. Also letting people talk without getting all uptight about it and thinking, and acknowledging that, other people are different from me. After thinking it all through she speculated, well maybe I could deal with it in little bits.

Stage 3:

Numinous and extra-sensory experiences: Because of making the connection to her own experiences and her work she began to feel that the work was something she could catch hold of and she really enjoyed it. She describes connecting to a type of channelled state, an attunement to a higher power. She confirms that she has obtained the inner stillness although it was not with her all the time, and when it happens she often sees white and nothing else which she describes as being in the whiteness.

Evidence of change from class content: If I wrote an academic essay at that stage it would have been much easier for me, I’d look up my references I’d write my essay and I
would be on familiar territory. PG (Psychic Growth) put me into unfamiliar territory and some of that was worrying for me and some of it was exciting, stimulating. A common theme throughout T2's narrative was her sense of difficulty; however in this stage she states that the experiential work on Chakras helped her as it was something she could hold on to by reading about it, and everything started falling into place. Breakthrough came for her when week by week things from the classes were obviously setting things in motion in between. At this time she began to make connections with what she was doing at the School with her work as a teacher and she realised she led similar exercises to stimulate the imagination. She begins to integrate everything at this point. She says; I made a link through the imagery because I'd always done visualisation and suddenly in meditation I thought Oh I thought meditation was something else, ah this is meditation.

T2 says she utilises both types of meditation for herself; the visualisation type that can be used to set a meditation off and the purer form which makes immediate contact with the inner stillness. There were some very positive aspects to this course for T2, although the scary side for her was working with spirit and also the mention of past lives by other students as prior to coming to the School she had totally dismissed it as something very weird that strange people believed in and I sat in this room surrounded by people who obviously did believe in it. I thought, just a minute, and I found that very difficult. Now I'd say I'm not totally atheist in it but I'm probably an agnostic maybe. On this level she says she never felt strong, she describes it as like something smoky that might be there and might not and I'd try and have a go and it never worked. She accepts there are angels and people in spirit but she is not so sure about talking to dead people. She was brought up to believe that
such practices were wicked and we just weren’t meant to do it. T2 says she did not fully engage in these exercises and although she had felt the presence of her dead father, she would never say she clearly spoke to dead people. Nonetheless, as the classes progressed she lost much of her fear and was intrigued with what other people said. When asked if these concepts had a purpose or if they assisted her at all, she said it was through linking with people and realising you’re linking with something completely different. Yes I think it taught me a lot.

T2 describes the unpicking of psychic information whereby the student has to say exactly what impression they see without interpreting or judging them. T2 felt this process allowed her to become very much less judgmental in her day-to-day life. She also learned to use her intuition differently. This section of the programme taught T2 to listen to others, including her own students: you have to listen and you have to ask questions, to get them to think for themselves by asking intuitive questions, getting them to use their intuition. She enjoyed the group as she found herself being good friends with people she would never normally meet.

Evidence of change in the lived world: It was at this point that T2 experienced what she described as the eureka moment. Things started falling into place as she started building new constructs, she also acknowledged the difference between intuition and imagination by relaying that intuition comes in quite sharp and clear whereas imagination can go hither and thither at which point she waved her arms around forcefully and dramatically. Imagination can be nebulous and difficult to hold onto. Intuition by contrast is quite direct and cuts through that and it can occur when a person reaches rock bottom and there is in an awful turmoil but in that moment there is an awareness and realisation occurs. T2 says: I think anything that makes you think
beyond where your mindset is stuck at the moment assists you because it broadens the way you look at things, even if it's only to look at it and then say no. That has to be preferable to not looking at it. So I feel that the whole thing, by confronting me with things and making me reassess things has actually made me reassess other things as well, the whole nature of belief if you like. T2 says the psychic exercises made her less judgmental, because when we linked with people and said things we must never try and impose anything. Whatever you came up with was theirs not yours, so you weren’t there to judge and you were never there to say you should do. That was a very difficult lesson for me. I am in a position every day of my life to tell people what to do, not just in terms of the work but in terms of their lives, they bring the most ridiculous things to me and expect me to solve them and just through doing this and also through the discussion I hope I’ve learnt to do it less, to say this is your journey, even if not in those words.

There is also evidence of self-management as T2 now sits quietly for a few minutes each morning as a form of meditation and she sometimes asks for help if she is worried about anything, and visualises light around it. Sometimes she just sends the thought out into the ether and sometimes, although I’m not quite sure exactly what God is she sends the thoughts to God.

Stage 4:

Numinous and extra-sensory experience: On a spiritual level she has identified, and works within a beingness which is not mind. It is for her a form of channelled state which she had previously occasionally observed only when she felt inspired. There would be a gear shift of energy and a sense of moving from one level to another as some information would flow from her at which time she would feel I am safe here. This is described not about power but as an energy. T2 evidenced self-
management and change here and she says, finally the outcome of the work she has done at the School has allowed her to find the stillness within herself.

Evidence of growth from class content: We had to take responsibility as we weren't like pupils in School when somebody had to do it for us. Sometimes we had to accept that sometimes somebody would totally monopolise the class. Sometimes there'd be a week and you'd think well that person really needs this time and needs to talk and we are learning from listening or helping. T2 said We are learning from just listening, which might have worried her in earlier classes when there were bigger numbers.

There were sometimes conflicts between people and sometimes she was totally at loggerheads with someone, which was good because it gets you stimulated. Whilst discussing issues like September 11th, she realised what a dangerous area belief is; she then realised that I have a belief that you have to respect other peoples beliefs. She had found great resistance by some students in talking about the occurrences of September 11th that occurred at the beginning of her time in this stage. As the main criterion of the class is to discuss and integrate things that are relevant within the individuals' lives at the time, she felt it was very important to talk about it and she thought afterwards that she was glad they had, I think it would have been a complete cop out otherwise and the whole group would have gone down in my estimation'.

Evidence of change in lived world: T2 feels that the programme has definitely made her more autonomous. This work does help you stand on your own two feet. She also speaks of how they have integrated this within her work in a very practical way to her as a teacher which she hopes to develop more in the future and it has
encouraged T2 to bring aspects into her work, using elements of meditation and visualisation. I've got a very little way with this and I'd like to take it further, something like Intuitive/Creative workshops. She says even on bad days she can rise above the little self and get some help and just try and see things a bit differently. T2 describes the little self as the one that gets kind of cross and sorry for itself and moans because life isn't fair, it sees the bad side of life and can't do things'. So that is? on the bad days. And on the good days I suppose it's a sense of linking in and being thankful and seeing those good moments as part of much bigger moments, so it's definitely a different kind of awareness.

Comments from T2 suggest some form of self-direction in her own life, linking in means she can connect with a higher source, which shows some link with the numinous. She describes her beliefs at the time of starting the class as in a complete flux T2 hopes she is now more open and she can accept that there is more than one way of living life. She didn't know what that one way was, but previously she thought all she had to do was just find it. Her beliefs have also changed and now she realises there are potentially many different and valid ways to live one's life. She can now more readily open to people of different political persuasions and she can think well, actually, they have got some quite good views.

T2 Discussions: T2 expresses her difficulty and struggle throughout the course with particular reference to her fight between the logical and intuitive, identifying that this struggle could have accounted for her looking more closely at herself which initially she dismissed as self indulgent. It also raises the question, if this student found it so hard why did she continue when others have abandoned the course? However, in her case she stated there were enough
classes where she felt she knew what she was doing being in the programme and she was greatly helped by positive confirmation in the psychic exercises coupled with her deep sense that it was all right. T2 emphasises changes of belief and the psychic exercises allowing her to think beyond where your mindset is stuck. For T2 it was the state of stillness that she can obtain, not all the time but some of the time, that she finds most helpful. Her description of inner stillness is described as being in the whiteness, which suggests purity and clarity. She is safe here which gives rise to the question as to the importance of this sense of safety in the process of change.
T7 Psycho-spiritual Journey

Numinous and extra-sensory experiences: T7 had experienced a few unexplained psychic occurrences whilst growing up: He had always been very afraid of the dark and a few months before starting the course he had a vivid experience; this woman came from the kitchen in the place I was in, something like a guardian angel, but bearing in mind that I have always been terrified of ghosts and things like that. Even though I was having a dream I felt I was awake and I wasn’t frightened at all and this sort of radiating presence just came towards me and I was never scared of the dark after that day.

Stage One:
Evidence of growth from course content: He describes this stage as like planting a seed which with hindsight you can apply. It was setting the scene and the impact of this stage was that I felt I was going somewhere, but I wasn’t sure where that was. The course started to expand my mental capacities, and I was starting to think about things. I wasn’t thinking about my own emotions at this time but I was starting to think that my world was not just my work. With hindsight I was looking for something, I won’t say something deeper; I don’t want to get caught up in that kind of cliché but I was looking for an experience that was more. He benefited from the focused breath exercises, because a person has an experience within that focused breath which allows them to relax from everything that is going on in their head or around them and even if they can just go and do that for 5 minutes a day they are going to have a positive experience, it’s a good starting point. He was receiving something that wasn’t all coming from his head he realised that it was important for him to get away from the mental level. He explains that when you give someone an experience they don’t initially have a language
in which to describe it. He thinks the experiential aspect, quite significant and that this aspect to the course is really important. For most people it is so new on one level that we don’t have structures to deal with it. If you were doing it in an academic institution you would be putting it into a mental rational framework and actually a lot of people are beginning to work with something outside that framework.

Evidence of change in the lived world: He began to think about other things in the universe and asking is there a greater role in what I do? I felt like I was opening myself to something completely new for me but it was right. It did have an impact but it had an impact at a pace that I could cope with. He was excited about being able to see the world differently.

There is evidence of self management towards change with T7 as he states, When you started talking about the Chakras I hadn’t a clue what you were talking about and for quite a while I was confused.

He states that the confusion was mine and I was too embarrassed to ask. He admits that all the way through his life he always found it very difficult to ask for things, but at some point in the course he began to ask. He then realised that this reluctance to ask for things was holding him back. The process goes on for different people at different levels, but the concept of learning to trust yourself requires you to examine yourself, to understand your own energetic context and being able to distinguish between what’s yours and what’s not.

Stage Two:

Evidence of change from course content: T7 discovered that listening to others talk and hearing their experiences is a very powerful tool which gives you the permission to look at yourself. ... What was fascinating was that a number of things were being flagged
up in other people that were relevant to myself so I was able to watch other people and to reflect on myself, it was actually very powerful for me.

Stage Three:

Evidence of change from course content: We did a lot of work on auras, we always started with an opening which turned into an exercise about yourselves and then straight into working on somebody else. I managed to progress really fast in a very short space of time, but now I realise I was just getting snippets but I was quite happy to get snippets and it was correct and that was OK. I was really pleased with myself. I think probably because of that I wasn’t completely embracing it in the way. I wasn’t looking at myself as much because I was more interested in the tuning into the energies, I was taking away my snippet and it charged your batteries which stayed with you for the week. Through the meditation he was taking the time to tune into the energy. He describes the energy as; more calming, powerful energies and my perspectives were different and my mental processes were different and my tiredness had always disappeared, and this lasted quite a few days: I was able to be aware that something was staying with me and working with me but I wasn’t saying I was able to manifest it in a physical practical sense.

You spent a lot of time focusing on the kind of brass tacks of being a good reader and I think that was incredibly valuable. I understand the benefit of it now and I feel that just coming in and repeating it every week has a benefit because it reminds you of where you are supposed to be.

Evidence of change in the lived world: In around the third term in this stage he started to go into another process when I couldn’t concentrate. I felt like I was drifting and falling asleep and I think now when I look back it was part of the process; meditation was difficult for me. I wasn’t happy about this and I seemed to be seeing things in terms
of getting it right or wrong. I would remember that I started to be kind of vague and drifty. T7 believed at the time he was just focusing into other people, later however he realised he was really tuning into myself. Prior to this he hadn’t consciously considered the self awareness aspect but somewhere at this time it began to dawn on him that he was actually uncovering himself. T7 started asking questions about all areas of his life. He wondered what was the point of him coming to the School? What was the point of him doing the job he was doing? and more than that he started to wonder what was the point of the life I was living? These dilemmas lasted a long time and he was becoming increasing uncomfortable with himself. He thinks that these questions led directly to his unease and whereas before he had been a regular and dedicated student, in his second year, his attendance dropped. It wasn’t very pleasant because it was all about me wasn’t it? I did every possible thing I could to mask it, avoid it, whatever, but I now recognise it as a valuable part of my personal process. I might have learnt a lot more if I came along all the time and I might have got through the School quicker. I can say that now but I learnt it the hard way.

He had started to feel he had saturated something on one level. I also noticed a lot of changes going on and it was a stage that I was unprepared for. Physically my body started to come out in different kinds of rashes and things. He loved his work and he was fulfilled but he became really angry, very irritable and emotionally slapped a lot of people around at the time and I kept blocking it and I realised that something strange was happening. He says that he had lived quite an escapist life at times and he admits to having blocked off emotions as a teenager. T7 thinks the School was a catalyst for change, but it might have happened anyway but it may not have happened when it did.
He says; it all built up and finally culminated on a particular day when everything in my life turned upside down in one morning. It was a catalyst point when everything that had built up just came out. It turned me upside down as several aspects happened at once. There wasn’t any more blocking off to do. I was not in control. My world fell apart mentally because that was where I was holding most of these things and things could not have got any lower. I couldn’t physically or mentally cope with that moment so I just had to surrender to it.

T7 also relays Evidence of self management towards change as, at the end of his tether finally he just sat down and thought I’ll ask for some help. He felt that the only way to understand it was to let go. Through this experience T7 learned that when you let go all fear evaporates. He says; I just had to surrender to it and when I did that I had this overwhelming experience of peace ... and that for me was quite a turning point .... the most difficult bit was learning to be more of who I am and actually taking away all of those thing that I thought were right. This was a crisis point in my mind in my fears and they evaporated almost as fast, but at the same time but it didn’t mean that some of the situations disappeared. And I think that’s quite important because many people come looking for solutions to things but the solutions aren’t necessarily the way they expect them to be and it doesn’t mean that you look at the world really differently but it is different if you feel different or see it differently but actually the same things are happening.

T7 says this experience affected him to the very core, but he had a sense that he would have to go through it. Although ostensibly he had been all right before coming to the School, i.e. he was doing a job that was very fulfilling and had a
strong sense of purpose, and yet he felt a lot of things coming together at the same time and he says he feels the School speeded up the process. He had been:

allowed to trundle along as much as I wanted to, in my kind of, scratch the surface kind of way but then at one point I was actually faced with myself. I wasn’t expecting that aspect of it.

I didn’t have anybody else to talk about it to, people would understand some of the things that I was feeling but from a completely different perspective and I needed to talk about it with somebody that was undergoing or understood the kind of things I was doing. T7 thinks that it would have been good for the teacher to see every one of the group separately, including himself as, at this time, T7 felt he did not have anyone to talk to and he needed to speak to someone who was also going through the process. At the time he would have liked a chance to talk to somebody on a one-to-one level for maybe 45 minutes 1. To listen 2. To understand and 3. to give some advice and pointers to help me persevere. However T7 acknowledges that nobody could make it completely right. I think there is also an onus of responsibility on you to decide what is right for you. You can provide an opportunity for them (teachers) to be supportive but they’ve got to ultimately make the choice.

Stage Four:

Evidence growth from course content: The process that I was describing to you lasted more than two years and there are still lots of residues to it, but I’m much more settled in myself. So ironically Higher Consciousness was a chance to talk about it and the opportunity to talk about it was actually really important. This unit was a chance to articulate it.
Although he notes that at this stage there was no set structure and no conscious plan, he felt that, *Every week tended to be incredibly relevant to what was going on and in fact most people found things to be relevant, while there didn’t seem to be a plan, you thought wow! and much as we kind of pretend to despise Bailey (text book) it was always fascinating that the page we seemed to be working on that particular week was incredibly relevant, seemingly coincidentally to what we’ve been discussing to what was going on. It's given me the strength to forge on in my life seemingly taking away everything I've built up that makes sense to most people.*

**Evidence of change in the lived world:** *When you do begin to realise that you can do it for yourself you begin to notice a difference in all aspects of your life, and in comparison to other people who aren’t doing it you feel so much stronger. T7 says that everyone has dark times and his were very important for him because he realised that if I want to help anyone else I needed to have the experience.*

Regarding any support he may have received T7 states that it is *not just a question of what you can teach in a curriculum, it’s also being aware that people do go through processes you can’t necessarily control or support.* He thinks the best way of someone helping with this is to let people get on with it, because *only I could make the choice to become responsible for all that.*

**Discussions:** T7 expressed a shift in mental capacities and progress quite early on in the programme but this can occur through any educational process and is not necessarily unique to psycho-spiritual work. However, the major feature of T7’s narrative comes in Stage Three where his descriptions indicate a powerful
experience (see also Chapter Six) where all his constructs changed and it affected him to the very core. What makes people come to such a traumatic occurrences is rarely clear and whether this situation would have occurred if he had never come to the School is never going to be ascertained. T7's experience was extreme and it brought great change to his life, so how crucial is some sort of challenge to the process of spiritual self-awareness? How important is it to come to the point of struggle to breakthrough? At this time he identified a need to talk to someone but also realised that the choices were ultimately his. Whilst implementing the psychic exercises in Stage Three the self-awareness aspect of the exercises permeated into his consciousness. Why it took him so long to realise this is unclear but the observation was an important turning point in his learning.
T8 Psycho-spiritual Journey

Numinous and extra-sensory experiences: T8 had experienced spiritual flashes and sparks that were a mystery to him but he figured the universe is a mysterious place and one never expects to understand it. Also T8 had some personal psychic experiences which persuaded him there might be something worth investigating, the strongest of which was when he was visiting my mother, our conversation shifted to my aunt and at one point I stopped and I was aware of my aunt momentarily, I could see her and there was a feeling like a rush of wind around my shoulder, I could feel her, sense her for about 30 seconds, a very, very strong feeling and I was completely unaware of what was going on in the surroundings ... the following day I got a telephone call to say my aunt had died unexpectedly at that time. T8 felt this was beyond coincidence as he was not particularly close to this aunt. He believes he had contact with her spirit and this incident encouraged him to investigate and develop his intuitive side and become a competent practitioner as a sensitive healer and medium.

Stage One:

Evidence of growth from course content: It is a matter of trying to open up and meditate and then getting instantaneous responses. I did manage to get something which was rather satisfactory, it confirmed that I was picking up some energy that I wasn’t aware of before. I think psychometry is a nice experiment to do because often people can be surprisingly good at it who don’t really realise what they are doing.

The foundation course was done in a slight hurry really I suppose, it was over 2 days and I already had a reasonable idea of what the work would involve I suppose ....what was
new to me was the learning to breathe into different centres and to visualise light moving. I think that was important in understanding how the mechanism works but there were no real surprises in terms of content because I'd already read quite a bit and then it was another 6 months before I started doing the courses full time. T8 also attended a separate unit (Opening the Heart) which we used to run as a prelude to Foundation but he found the exercises were a little bit slow and did not have enough content, and he felt that this course was more disparate than other courses and the people in his class did not seem to know where they were going with this. He also thought that one or two people in this group were allowed to monopolise and he felt the class was perhaps too passive on direction. I did not do the foundation course in a term, I did it in a long weekend and I suppose that may colour my views … I think that they (Opening the Heart and Foundation) probably could be combined and that probably the Opening the Heart course was a little slow, it didn’t have enough content in it perhaps. … It may be harsh criticism.

Stage Two:

Evidence of change in lived world: T8 says here that he thought the development was incremental and accumulative. However, there was one occasion that upset him in this class when a student told him his energy was concentrated in the higher centres and the mental energy was dominating him. I was very perturbed on one occasion when I was told that all my energy was concentrated in the higher level, the sixth seventh Chakras and it was all mental energy dominating. This information shocked him and at first he could not accept it but in retrospect he concedes there may be some truth in it. He was upset because he felt it violated his own code of presenting information in a positive manner and he recollects being rather offended by
the directness of the comment: at the time it made me seriously question whether I could do any more work in this area and I was wondering whether I was cut out for it. Nonetheless, the comment made him look into this aspect and admits that things changed. He tried to open up in a different way. He admits that it’s a challenge in a way to marry all these different bits of information that come into you energetically and he says you have to learn to get used to them.

T8 thinks his life has changed as a consequence of doing the work and he think it’s the accumulative of a set of experiences. I don’t think any particular thing triggered a huge change. T8 says he finds himself slipping between the accepted rational and energetic approaches quite easily as he feels different senses are used for different tasks.

Stage Three:

Evidence of growth from course content: The Chakras are very important and the experiential work in this class was good and valuable. T8 relays that an important turning point in his development came after the leader spent some time with him one-to-one and he actually managed to link with some guidance in a very satisfactory way for the first time – it was a breakthrough. T8 seems to be able to learn more from either one-to-one or very small units as he feels he got a great deal out of an unusual master class where there were only three people.

During the following term there were some particular readings that were very helpful and affirmative and made him feel as though he was getting somewhere. He also welcomed practising on people he never met before and thinks that the open evenings, where the students get a chance to practise on members of the general
public, were very valuable. I seem to have been drawn more and more towards psychological explanation of people’s conditions and healing things come up

Stage Four:

Evidence of change in the lived world: I think it’s extraordinary to think how much we’ve all learnt and how far we’ve come and the concepts that you consider you take for granted, thought leads to energy and the influence of the kind of material in the book that we discuss. T8 has also noticed that he doesn’t care so much about what people think any more. He cites an example of a family member who is a professional genealogist and recently he was telling me about how traits were passed on from one generation to another and I said to him well really not many are as we can often see a child which doesn’t seem to be a likely product of their parents so totally different and he thought what the hell why don’t I just do it and I said what you really want to do is spiritual genealogy, why don’t you find out what the spirit life was and how that affects it. ... he [the family member] was blown out of the water ... and he’ll never think of me the same again in future and furthermore I don’t care. T8 says usually he is careful with people I work with not to tell them my views, on the other hand it irritates me that some religious dogma is considered sacrosanct from criticism whereas people feel comfortable to criticise spiritual/psychic views and he says he now feels everybody’s viewpoints are not sacred exactly but worthy of respect.

He relates that some of his beliefs have altered, for example, the ability to link with spirit, which he now thinks is a very natural thing to do and I think a lot of people do it all the time and possibly I’ve done it all the time without realising it. But the fact is I now believe that I can do it and have experienced it and it is a very profound thing, and in the
Western world a lot of people would deny it. This particular belief has changed through his experience of linking with spirit. T8 now doubts the validity of lots of religious instructional views when it is facts and dogma to learn without having any direct experience. It's an extraordinary thing to show that a reality is different, it's really very extraordinary.

I don’t know if it is related or not but I seem to have got in all modesty quite an ability now to analyse political events, what the political stage is worth and I am always disappointed really by the level of emotion and lack of logic that comes into people’s analysis and my ability to do this seemed to come at the same time as doing these courses. The word coincidence isn’t in my vocabulary any more so one has to say synchronicity whether it’s direct causation I don’t know but I think I’m quite good ... you know all the political stuff you’re seeing in any situation in the universities I work in. I think I can analyse it much better than I used to. T8 emphasises his gradual development all the way through. He sees it as a continuous thing. It’s not a 9-5 or one day a week business. I think that it’s incorporated in my life more and more, interacting with people and work tasks. Whereas at one time I used to think of people’s motives in terms of a physical planes issue and form a sort of psychological physical plane point of view, I now almost inevitably go to the spiritual connection with them and what their spiritual mission is and why they are doing it. And I do believe you can combine it with logic as well, I think that it’s just a new set of information that comes into you and I find myself asking; does it make sense? does it seem right? I think I can approach it intuitively and logically. The important thing is to combine the two.
T8 now sees his work as having a broader mission, not just earning bread and butter money, because my profession is researching things, so instead of trying to publish another paper I sort of think of things in a bigger frame now and I feel I have a mission to somehow combine the psychic and spiritual work with other professional work. He thinks that before he was too wrapped up with this plane and these spiritual flashes, sparks that were a mystery, I suppressed the full extent of their meaning I think. The physical plane is to present ourselves in terms of different roles: Parent, teacher, child, however, I no longer feel I have to require any status from my profession so much because now I feel I have something else I can identify with and also an understanding of how I fit into life. It does give peace of mind and I feel sorry for those who don’t have this and T8 feels this work can help everybody. He says he is a much calmer person. And he now finds he is dealing with much older people who are close to the end of their lives and it has influenced my views on this subject.

Discussion: As a professor in mathematics T8 comes from a very academic and logical background and he felt the difference very strongly in the first two stages and he felt personally challenged by this. Is there perhaps a necessity to push through set thoughts and beliefs to breakthrough into different perceptions? He identified lack of focus in a module we used to run, which has now been amalgamated into the stage one module. A breakthrough came for T8 when he received a one-to-one from the teacher and attended a one-off master class. Later in the course he relays he was able to speak up in usually quite threatening environments, where his professional position might come into question, which indicates greater confidence. There is some evidence here that the courses helped to open him up to new ideas, however although T8 talks about changes of ideas
and his work, despite trying to draw them out in the interview process, and several times trying to prompt him, I was struck by how little T8 talked about personal issues, so to what extent those have actively entered his personal lived experience is not clear.
T9 Psycho-spiritual Journey

Numinous and extra-sensory experience: T9 had experienced several psychic experiences before attending the School and she also describes an acknowledgement of an inner awareness emerging. It was something that was sort of coming to the fore, that I knew that I had to experience and then events made it happen because I wasn’t voluntarily able to do it. Everything conspired if you like, so it sort of pushed or I pushed myself in that direction. She had an awareness of something much deeper being around, and also that there was something that was really missing and something yet to be done that didn’t rely on any events or any one else. T9 felt a connection to something far greater than herself. T9 found herself starting to meditate naturally, and she intuitively connected to a higher state through her breath and linking to, what she now realised were the Chakra points.

Stage One:

Evidence of growth from course content: I remember quite vividly actually the connection with other people and when we started doing meditation in the group that was immense. Suddenly it felt like an electricity and it was such a strong feeling and it was … I mean I didn’t stay at that sort of you know illuminating state but initially it was and it felt fantastic, it felt really brilliant. To be part of a group where everyone was meditating and having a sort of energetic connection with each other. It was a really strong feeling. T9 was able to give precious time to herself which brought some positive effects, and she especially liked being part of a group. One of the early experiential meditations that affected her was the linking with the Chakra system; When we started working on the Chakra system, that was, incredibly powerful.
Evidence of change in the lived world: I felt it was like an unfolding and what I was experiencing at the School was aiding me to unravel things in my life or they unravelled in conjunction with it and that’s what I felt all along the School actually. I went through immense changes and ups and downs and bringing up lots of negativity and all sorts of things happened to me but I was still going through this process at the School which was invaluable. I was allowing myself to have these experiences to become a person that was able to grow.

Stage Two
Evidence of growth from course content: T9 particularly remembers the exercise of cutting the ties which was very significant at the time. She also realised the benefit, not just for her, but for the others in the group. She was able to implement the meditational exercises for herself. However, T9 found that exercises when they were focusing on other people were both frightening and illuminating. I remember it being quite frightening just because you were sort of, it wasn’t just about being internal, the emphasis had shifted a little bit and it was about directing some kind of energy and, I hadn’t really sort of envisaged that if you like at that stage. It was a bit nerve racking actually when you are focusing on other people. You were on display and I was being watched by everybody else and of course I felt judged initially, you know what people were thinking. T9 felt on the spot whilst doing the exercises in this class but the benefits were that she became aware that you could focus energy with your mind. This was a new experience and the discipline of having to do it was good. She always had a good feeling about it and looked forward to it every week. I used to feel quite nervous about saying how I felt. Other members of the group gave her permission to speak. It was the first time I was able to reveal personal and very strong things in a group which was initially scary. T9 was seeking a validation of both her feelings and actions,
she needed the reassurance of the group, she was insecure and very vulnerable at this time. Due to the conditioning of her parents, she was used to keeping her feelings to herself; being part of a group gave her permission to speak for the first time and she found herself able to reveal personal and very strong things in a group. Extremely difficult things were emerging regarding her relationship with her father around that time, and although she felt supported by the group there was a growing awareness that she needed some one-to-one attention. Things were continuing to emerge regarding previous relationships, especially her relationship with her father which she describes as being extremely difficult all through my life. It was a major source of anger and frustration and at this time all sorts of thing came up, to a point she realised she needed to do something because there's no point in being able to do things for people if you can't get yourself in order and that was also an incredibly profound realisation.

We were starting to open the heart, which was quite new. It always felt fantastic to me to actually focus on that part of my being, to be honest and it really had, over a period of time, quite a profound effect to me, you know focusing on your heart and understanding that things worked though the expansion of consciousness though your heart and that was an ongoing process. I understood it mentally, but it took a while for it to actually physically manifest itself, I felt you know it was definitely was quite a strong feeling. She says that this feeling has enabled her to move forward and she gained strength. She felt she was connected to both something more powerful than herself and at the same time it felt incredibly strong.
As she had recently split up from her husband she was going through tremendous turmoil outside and at times she felt incredibly depressed and she felt on the edge of things. But the classes were a real focusing point and it made her more disciplined at home and she would sit down and have time to herself and try to centre herself which helped her go through the things I was going through at the time.

**Evidence of change in lived world:** I started to become aware of people having energy and myself having energy and then everybody else having energy which I didn’t really realise before and then actually what they were then doing with their energy. It made me feel a bit more withdrawn, because I still felt very exposed I think and it made me feel sometimes quite uncomfortable with some kind of new knowledge if you like and I remember I did go through a phase of being quite anti-social, I didn’t want to be around lots of people and I felt quite energetically manipulative because I then started to realise how people managed that. She became aware of other people having energy and herself having energy and also what she and others were doing with this. This initially made her feel withdrawn and exposed and it made her feel sometimes uncomfortable. Although she said that she had needed communication with others at this time yet she noticed that she started getting discerning about the people she mixed with. She felt a bit odd, and she questioned whether she was normal as she was not fitting in well enough as everyone else seemed to be. So all her feelings of being different and odd came up to the surface.

T9 acknowledges that at various stages during the training she found it very difficult but I never wanted to give it up, it was so compelling. This stage helped her to understand herself but I do remember feeling a tremendous amount of fear. I felt I had
to confront things and this felt right and I felt spiritually connected and that wasn't a feeling I was getting in any other area of life at the time. I hadn't felt such depth before and it was a feeling of knowing it felt right. It felt tangible and I felt an energy and connected to everybody in the group as an energy it was joyful, an uplifting of ones spirit. T9 says that the outcome of this stage was that she feels much more spiritually connected in more area of her life' she also says that 'it had transformed her life.

Stage Three:

Numinous and extra-sensory experience; I never felt alone and I felt the presence of energies and it was very strong and it gave me a lot of strength that I wasn't on my own the things I had to go through or were going through, it just wasn't me so that was incredibly comforting on a lot of levels personally. Although she found these exercises difficult however, she would have never run away, and she did not want to be defeated by it and she wanted to prove she could do it. She was challenged by it. Evidence of growth from course content; Working with spirit at this time added another dimension and she found she was able to do it and she found it extremely uplifting. It felt very good. It was fascinating for her. Although she had had a sense of spirit all her life it was much more personal in class and was different to connect with other people and for other people. It gave her a complete understanding of spirit and different kinds of energy it gave her an inlet to a completely different world. It helped her as a person and there was a growing feeling that occurred when she was meditating that she felt a sense of being a part of a group energy, which was profound because I never felt alone. It gave her a lot of strength and help and this was comforting on some levels. She had a very strong feeling of the energies. However, she
often felt exposed doing the psychic exercises which was quite hard, she felt vulnerable and they were frightening for her. I started feeling people's energies more and that was sometimes a bit uncomfortable and feeling people's emotions and feeling more and I didn't like it. I mean it was incredibly useful and I think it's something that I have always been able to do but it was highlighted and I didn't like feeling what people were feeling because it wasn't me ... I was vulnerable, that's what it felt like, being made to feel vulnerable. When asked what if any value there was in this, she said it gave me an awareness, it gave me another awareness of myself, so in that way it was helpful. I didn't want to be defeated by it .... It was definitely a big challenge to be able to do it.

T9 found this stage the most difficult part of the programme as she felt exposed. I felt extremely put on the spot and had to deliver so to speak but that was really hard and every week we used to talk about it outside the class and think, you know, it wasn't as bad as we thought this week. I actually felt determined to do it, I really wanted to do it, I knew I could do it.

There is also evidence of self management towards change when T9 says,
Sometimes I used to think to myself the more fearful it is the better it is, so I knew that if I pushed through enough fear then it would be really helpful ... and it seemed to me that I was slowly working through the worst fears in my life. Every fear that I think I have ever had started came up over a period of years it was so horrible but actually facing them wasn't as bad as I thought in the end ... What I gained from it was tremendous ... I felt like for me anyway I needed to pursue things as they came up and I couldn't not look at them So when it was a horrible fear, although it was so horrible and I wanted to run away, yes I gritted my teeth.
T9 really emphasises the word *horrible* to give the impression of it being the worst thing possible. However she says that *after every set of awful circumstances something wonderful happened, either, in my own transformation or, in actual events.* She relays her very strong determination to see it through.

She felt supported by the School and the implementation of it the work into her work helped her. However, at this time she felt that she also needed some one-to-one help. She says that without the counselling course she also attended at the time, *it would have been much tougher.*

**Stage Four:**

**Evidence of growth from course content:** She *enjoyed the discussions and anything that people brought up.* It was the first time she felt *really involved* when everybody felt the same and she felt that she wasn’t being judged and it was *really nice to progress thoughts and feelings and ideas.* I wasn’t being pooh poohed or being judged, *it was really nice to be able to progress thoughts and feelings and ideas actually, so I really enjoyed that group.* It was so interesting what people brought to the group and what was said and the sort of discussions and the material we have. Just being able to think about it because it was very much of a thinking to me, it was all the thought processes attached to it which then again was different to the rest of the things we had learnt because before it was going through feelings, a lot of feeling and energy where to me higher consciousness was about verbalising your beliefs and mentally being more aware so that was helpful.

**Evidence of change in the lived world:** The major turning point for T9 came at the beginning of Stage Four when there was a *huge healing with my father* who
had died. One day when she was with her mother she felt the need to contact him in spirit. Suddenly he was there. He gave me the feeling of so many things that I never experienced with him while he was alive and it was almost as if the whole thing had gone round full circle and he was able to open his heart to me completely which was absolutely fantastic and I never in a million years would have anticipated that would have happened and so on a spiritual level, it was absolutely amazing. Then what happened was my relationships, especially with men, completely changed, and actually I'm now with somebody who is so different from anybody else I've been with before and I felt the whole thing had completely healed and it was an immense realisation that actually you can heal very difficult things in your life and they do come right. This connection to spirit had a positive therapeutic element as she was able to be present with the energy and watch it transform. After this experience she said, I felt more open, more loving than I had ever felt before to people and circumstances.

T9 says that in her personal life it made her be a little bit more bold in other circumstances and not to feel it was odd. The work of the School had manifested in her life without a shadow of a doubt. She had previously gone though a long period of thinking nothing would get any better, but as time went on her relationships started to change. I became much more aware that things were working through the heart and I felt more loving than I had ever felt before to people and circumstances. She reached this conclusion through a series of things that had happened, which worked through firstly, from her subconscious then to my conscious and as it surfaced she confronted it, dealt with it, and was able to clear it. She states that they were also looking at how we could help, and how it might help the world and what it brought to all of us. It was taking it higher to a more compassionate level.
It was an incredible lesson to me that being emotionally involved with people does not work, even with my daughter ... It was incredibly difficult to realise that at the time and you had to let go and then it brought up the questions of what am I doing? and who am I doing it for? and if you have this kind of ability or skill then surely you must be able to use it for people that you love the most? Now I realise you have to do it with complete and utter detachment and you can’t do it for the people that are close to you. That realisation was hard; I wasn’t aware of my own limitation and that’s something I’m probably still learning.

Realistically it’s only since I started on this spiritual path and started at the School that everything has changed, my path of life and my intention have all changed definitely for the better’. Because of that I’m very grateful to all the horrible experiences I had and most definitely won’t have been the same person had I not gone through them all because I don’t think I was living a full life as I now understand it. She increasingly feels that spirit is in everything and is active in every area of life. I think for me it is probably the manifestation of bringing it into my everyday life and that’s most definitely how it feels now to bring it into my relationships to bring things into my work in every area. To bring more love and that is what it is for me, it’s the manifestation of love and that something which I think I have learnt, I think I’ve learnt to love myself to be able to give love to myself and probably because of that I’m able to give a bit more love to other people so that is what it is to me.

Discussion: T9 had a lot of personal issues at the start of the programme which coincided with her marriage break-up. The comment regarding the need for emotional detachment sounds good sense with a client, but should it spill over to
her personal life? Her comment of being detached emotionally to a daughter seems unlikely.

Becoming aware of other peoples energy, which means sensing a force or movement from someone, gave her another perspective on life. She describes looking at herself as _horrible_ and it challenged her, but she engaged her will and was determined to see the course through. Her major breakthrough came in Stage Four when she able through psychic means to clear a long-standing problem with her father. Whether this could have occurred with more orthodox therapy is unclear, but T9 expressed she could not have done without her mediumistic training. T9 had counselling whilst attending the classes, so this must be taken into consideration and as they run side by side from Stage Two onwards, so it is difficult to unpick what was the major influence of change caused by the School’s programme. Both her comments and other students who also attended counselling alerted us for the need for mentoring one-to-one sessions.

**Opening discussions on narrative research:** Although all the narratives show some indication of enhanced self-awareness, this may not always be _spiritual_ Self-awareness. For instance T2 speaks of change of beliefs, which in itself may not affect the spiritual aspects of self. T8 also talks of obtaining different perceptions. T9’s psychic experience certainly changed her perceptions also, although all these indicate changes of a more mundane nature. It might be argued that T7’s traumatic experience was affecting the mundane also, except that for him it was the surrender to a higher power that enabled him to emerge from the dark
experience. However, if we go back to the definition of spirituality as the ‘core and essence of self’, T2 through her connection with inner stillness, T7 with his surrender to the inner being, T9 expresses that her psychic experience affected her to the core. This leaves T8 with some indication of change but less of a spiritual quality. Nonetheless he also reveals that the work has made him look to more altruistic meanings and purpose of life, which might indicate a more spiritual attitude to life.

The exercises that the participants found most difficult and most challenging were the psychic ones in Stages Three that felt intimidating and exposing. It also seems to be the time of most change. Could this just be because Stage Three is the longest part of the programme or is there real evidence of profound change here? Although the intuitive approach is not always given as a reason for this change it has occurred in the personal lived world of all our participants and in all cases the participants have indicated assistance through the use of psychic experiential techniques. T2 in her opening up to new beliefs and letting go of fear, T7 in dealing with his dark night, T8 when dealing with personal challenges and T9 with the profound experience with her dead father that she says completely changed her life. Utilising the focus group in the next chapter we progress the analysis bringing a comparative analysis of our methods to further our investigation.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.1. DATA: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Alongside verbatim extracts from the focus group and a collection of all the data, a simple summary of the aims and students' expected spiritual understanding of each stage of the programme is utilised. This is relayed to assist in the process of understanding and interpreting the cross analysis of the data collection.

A Formative Evaluation of a Psycho-Spiritual Education Programme and its Effects on the Lived Experience of the Students.

5.2.1. Cross-Case Analysis:

In this thesis I have used a number of different methods of data collection and in this chapter, I have drawn together the contents from the data to act as a triangulation. Because the focus group systematically revealed each stage of the programme, and participants shared their experiences and any outcomes, it has lent itself as a tool to break down all the data into a cross-case comparative analysis. Using extracts from the focus group and by utilising a simple summary of the aims and spiritual understandings of each stage I have triangulated the whole data for evaluation.

I have endeavoured to use as many verbatim accounts as possible throughout, and together with all the other data my comments are interspersed throughout indented in a different type face. To maintain confidentiality the focus group members have assumed names and the other interviewees retain their T numbers.
Fig. 7. 5.3.1. Summary of Aims of the Curriculum and the Anticipated Spiritual Understandings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage One:</th>
<th>Stage Two:</th>
<th>Stage Three:</th>
<th>Stage Four:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aims:</strong> To provide a scaffolding type curriculum to assist the individuals own psycho-spiritual learning process.</td>
<td><strong>Aims:</strong> Aiding dissolution of unproductive aspects of self. To guide the students' internal spiritual self-development journey.</td>
<td><strong>Aims:</strong> To facilitate the individuals own contact with their 'higher self' through exposure of self. Increasing training of the intuition, allowing it to become their main navigator for self-development.</td>
<td><strong>Aims:</strong> To be able to independently and effectively self-manage their energy and change. Integration of the work into their lived reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individuals’ understanding of spirituality:</strong> There is something more than the physical mundane world. A sense of a world beyond self.</td>
<td><strong>Individuals’ understanding of spirituality:</strong> A need to reveal and develop the inner or higher Self.</td>
<td><strong>Individuals’ understanding of spirituality:</strong> Increasing and persistent glimpses of spirituality.</td>
<td><strong>Individuals’ understanding of spirituality:</strong> Spiritual connectedness, serving humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key words:</strong> Observation. Meditation. Information. Self-awareness. Change Transformation</td>
<td><strong>Key words:</strong> Clearing. Healing. Intuition. Self-awareness.</td>
<td><strong>Key words:</strong> Expansion of spiritual learning. Intuition. Exposure. Energy management. Self-awareness.</td>
<td><strong>Key words:</strong> Integration. Intuition. Spiritual growth and Self-awareness.</td>
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Focus Group with Cross Data Analysis

I started by asking the focus group how the four-stage programme assisted them in their personal development. Cathy said 'It's clear, very clear now but I did not perceive it as stages then.'

**Researcher's comments:** Looking back now it must have seemed quite uncoordinated when we started the School as the classes originally ran in a way which allowed the students to 'pick and mix' their route. The theory behind the original approach was that intuitive courses should be left to the intuition of the students. However the pilot interview (see Chapter Three) revealed the need for more regular and focused courses and led to us creating a more structured four-stage programme.

Ali relayed that although she had attended many other courses in the past, she had not developed in a focused way and she had, 'now become much more aware of my thoughts and how I was affecting other people and so I was more aware of how I conducted and reacted to myself which brought up personal issues'. Cathy concurred and said that the work 'challenged a lot of beliefs'. Scooping her hand upwards Cathy said, 'it (psychic work) was going against what we are all trained to believe' which she found 'personally very challenging'. Martin said he had also asked himself the question of 'what was I doing there'? But it felt right, and he enjoyed coming, so he continued.

**Researcher's comments:** T11 had already completed some personal awareness work, and so for her, 'it seemed quite elementary'. T9 said the
courses created ‘real problems with her marriage which was in part caused by shifting awareness and changing beliefs’, and T7 said that ‘I hadn’t a clue what you were talking about for quite a while, I was confused’. Early stages of self-directed work can often lead to confusion (see Chapter One) however, these comments also suggest that for some people even early on in the course the work can have repercussions in the day-to-day life. Causing ‘real problems in a marriage’ is a serious statement. Do our courses really do this? Much of the work of the self-awareness aspect of the School could be defined as a form of therapy and in any therapy it is known that the individual’s self-examination can have the effect of shifting the power base in a relationship, which can create personal difficulties. This aspect is something to be aware of in any such programme.

Ali said that it brought up the question of trust for her: ‘trusting her own judgement and dealing with fear’: ‘Going through the School creates steps, and each step becomes a further trusting step and I feel the way the School was set up you didn’t need to take that next step until you were perfectly happy about doing it. I might have been apprehensive about it but I always felt safe when I was taking the next step.’

June said ‘this comment underlines that we are all coming from very different places’ as she didn’t have that background at all. I then asked if the different background of the students helped or hindered progress. They all agreed that it helped. Martin thought that when you get to Stage Three ‘everybody’s aware
that there is some integrity for themselves so people don’t really go around judging too much’. He had observed that ‘the worst culprits were people who claimed they knew what they were doing when they arrived at the School or people who were involved with other practices, they really talk rubbish; people who say things like, I know all this, so I think, well what are you doing here then? or people who’d say I’ve only got 10 weeks so please give me some answers’.

Researcher’s comments: Martin’s impatience with people who want to be ‘spoon fed’ suggests that some students simply miss the point of intuitive facilitation, and although he implies that by Stage Three people have settled into the course which is nearly one year, does this identify the need for better explanation in the early stages? This is a difficult question as it is considered important for the student to intuit and self-direct their learning even early on. How to measure this with giving the necessary information to students that come from very different backgrounds as June identified is something to be aware of. In the first stages of the programme three of our interviewees consciously questioned what were they doing there and what should they be thinking and believing. This is echoed in the narrative stories: T7 recalls ‘I wasn’t sure where I was but the course started to expand my mental capacities and I was starting to think about things, I was looking for something’. The question then arises: can all the students have the necessary ability or the confidence to take spiritual self-direction on board, particularly at the early stages, and if not what action should be taken?
Cathy says that she thought some students leave 'because it is really, really hard; it brings up lots of issues and a lot of the time people can’t deal with them'.

Martin said, ‘in any form of learning it was important for people to make a firm intention to the work and sometimes people needed to leave, because the people that stay are making that intention’. ‘It's not possible to be supportive to everybody’. Cathy says ‘It's hard in a group when people don’t always actively ask, so you don’t always know when there are problems’. ‘So there may have been missed opportunities.’ June said ‘I think some people, including myself, get impatient and they wanted answers and they said, well I’m coming here every week, what am I coming here for?’ ‘They want to feel they had achieved something, they wanted to see they were making progress.’ June thought this problem was eased in the students who are going to be practitioners as there are ‘more defined outcomes’. Ali said, ‘These illusions would be very quickly shattered’ and that ‘you couldn’t escape the personal aspect of the work regardless of being a practitioner or not’. Martin confirmed that he will continue ‘to use the techniques learnt in the programme’ as ‘it has set something in motion which I will use all my life’.

**Researcher’s comments:** The concept of the programme being ‘hard’ is echoed throughout, (see also Appendix I) so is it possible that for some this difficulty means they feel unable to deal with it and therefore abandon the course? Could the programme do more to assist the necessary shift to make the transformation possible? Martin identifies that people need to make an ‘intention’ and awareness and that they need to engage some personal will in the process but, whereas I have some
sympathy with the idea that it's no good spending time on people who have not engaged in the psycho-spiritual process, and may never properly commit themselves to the work required, I would not agree with Martin that it is not possible to support everyone. Cathy picks up on this by saying that there have been 'missed opportunities for personal contact'.

June makes an important point when she relays the perceived need for some people to feel they have 'achieved' something. However, achievement implies measurement, and because spiritual development is so much apart of the unique world of the individual, is it feasible to have specific defined achievements apart from the general aims of spiritual development? Setting goals of learning in the usual way is already implemented through our stated aims, however spiritual goals that have to be actualised in the lived world would be difficult to implement.

Freud observed that his clients were initially very resistant to heal their difficulties and in my experience there is some truth in this, for the work sometimes creates an inner turmoil and this struggle takes very careful handling. Whether the School has always succeeded in helping each student is open to question. How to implement the necessary challenge needed for any in-depth work in a safe environment continues to be monitored and discussed.
Martin thought the exercises were ‘quite cunning, because if we just sat and worked on ourselves all the time we probably wouldn’t do it.’ ‘People gradually reached the awareness that it was about themselves’. He thought that some people dropped out of the School when they discovered it was about working on themselves. He said he thought that ‘a lot of people were also dipping in and out of other workshops as in the current new age climate it can be easy to avoid the issue of self, as all you have to do is pay money to go to a New Age weekend workshop which will be flowery and rosy’. Pip agreed, with the comment, ‘workshop junkies!!!’ Martin felt that the point of having it as a course was that ‘it’s not just something you go away with thinking that’s really great without having enough time to really get into it. It’s challenging’.

**Researcher’s comments:** Many of the psychic exercises are designed to allow the student to get a glimpse of themselves. ‘Workshop groupies’ is an expression that refers to people who flit from course to course, seemingly using courses more as a form of entertainment and not necessarily for serious learning. This concept can sound prejudicial, however, there is little accreditation available in this field and the workshops can be of widely different standards. So how can the inexperienced student know the difference? Leaving the novice to find their own way might put the students in danger not only of not receiving bona fide study but could also run the risk of them avoiding challenging and looking at themselves. This is a concern and one of the reasons for creating a more structured programme. We wanted to set standards but
without compromising the intuitive aspect of psycho-spiritual learning.
The argument against this that say it is not possible for the programme to
achieve educational standards and at the same time leave room for the
spontaneity needed for the intuitive abilities to emerge.

Cathy was grateful for the glossary of terms she received in the Foundation
course on the meaning of words which she had not come across before, to which
June agreed. She also thought it was important that ‘there was a mixture of
things and that there was a certain amount of theory in the teaching. There was a
lot of doing and there was variety’. Ali agreed.

**Researcher’s comments:** In the interviews, both T8 and T2 suggest that
they were encouraged when getting some of the attunement exercises
correct, T8 said ‘I did manage to get something which was rather
satisfactory, it confirmed that I was picking up some energy that I wasn’t
aware of before’. T2 also relays that receiving positive confirmation of her
own intuition through the exercises was the ‘major factor’ to her
continuing the programme. This being the case, one wonders if the
students who left got this confirmation? In the content analysis some of
the data contradicted, for instance, two said they thought it was ‘too basic’
while another two ‘did not understand’. Also one said it was ‘too quick’
and another one said it was ‘too slow’. The discrepancy in experience is
hard to un-ravel but it may be because students come into the School with
very different backgrounds and experiences. We have no formal test or
interview, believing that anyone from any background can benefit if they
are willing to put in the necessary work. However, this does have its drawbacks which are most notable in the early stages of the programme. In T8’s narrative he clearly states that the difference in background was a problem for him and it seems probable therefore that we have lost students directly because of these discrepancies. Should we have some kind of testing procedure? The theory is that anyone can develop their spirituality as this form of learning cuts right across the social, intellectual and culture divide. However, although this may be the case people have their own prides and prejudices which can put up resistance towards others in the group. The question then that arises here is: is having a mixed ability class in this type of programme always advisable?

Martin said ‘they are coming in with all their own stuff so they are projecting this whether they realise it or not, and you’re most likely to have conflicts at the beginning. I don’t think it’s a good idea to tell people too much at this stage. There needs to be a balance of laying out some kind of ground rules and letting people say things that maybe a year later you may change.’ Cathy emphasised the point that it needed to be ‘non-judgmental’ to which Martin replied ‘you have to manage with a group of people who may take offence very easily with the comments people make’. Ali said she thought ‘the School held her beautifully’ and she had been ‘aware of mirroring her own stuff on people’. She felt she ‘was gently made aware what was her own stuff’, but it never made her ‘feel insecure although I would go home in tears’. June makes a big shushing sound which prompts me to say, ‘Is that true for everyone?’ to which Jane answered she agrees with having a mixed group and letting people speak, but
the other side of it was that 'people were talking and saying things that I found disturbing and I thought, 'who are all of these weird people I'm with!' Martin thought that when you 'open students up' they become very sensitive to everything and because of this, reaction from the students comes in very quickly and the skills you need to employ in Stage One are greater than higher up the School where people are already into a pattern. 'It's a complicated thing when people are sensitive to everything.'

Researcher's comments: June's worry and disturbed feeling indicate she was feeling very sensitive at this stage and, although Ali is reluctant to admit it, it seems likely that she was disturbed also, as she says she 'often went home in 'a rage' and yet she relays that she 'felt safe and held'. Here we have a markedly different reactions; they were both disturbed but Jane described her reaction as 'worried' and Ali describes being 'held'. Both these responses support Martin's theory that reaction in the first class comes in very quickly and that it can be 'complicated' to facilitate everyone's needs in the early stages. T9 described even more of a challenge as she recalls, 'I didn't know anything about my feelings at all, I know that I repressed huge amount of feelings in every direction and I operated probably a third of how I actually was as a human being. Before I didn't express anything that was negative because I was brought up not to express a lot of negativity and always to be nice.' Being nice is often believed to be the spiritual way but is that really what spirituality means? Doesn't connecting to the core, the essence and the authentic mean
sometimes things are not nice and need to be addressed however awkward or difficult that might be?

Any form of change can create problems; whether the School deals with these effectively is constantly under discussion. T9 said that ‘a routine was helpful’: meaning the routine of meditations each week and it was also stated that beginning to experience or access different levels of energy was helpful. As all these are connected with some form of meditational exercise, this suggests that the very process of regular meditation was assisting the learning. T8 would concur as her description of meditation was that it was ‘a really strong feeling, it was immense as it enabled precious time which brought positive effects’.

**Summary of Stage One:**

The aims of this stage are to **provide a comprehensive curriculum to introduce and assist the individual’s own psycho-spiritual learning process.** According to the questionnaire in May ’02 (see also Appendix 1) there was a drop out rate of 37% in Stage One might suggest the need to change aspects of the course. Negative comments in this questionnaire did not unify with a range of different comments such as ‘sessions too slow’, ‘not enough depth’, alternatively, ‘too advanced’ and ‘students were allowed to dominate discussion’. The balancing act between holding the student and at the same time challenging them can be problematic. In the past we had erred towards being a bit more prescriptive with the view to setting up some good foundations. For more experienced students this
may be too didactic, however, in any group work one often has to progress at the speed of the slowest and as Cathy indicated it is believed that a certain amount of theory is good to set the scene and provide a secure base. It seems a possibility from the feedback of the drop out rate, that we did not always provide enough personal support.

Individuals' awareness of spirituality at this stage requires that there is something more than the physical mundane world and a sense of a world beyond self. All the interviewees were asked if they had had any spiritual, psychic or peak experiences before they came to the School, all but one said they had. Does this mean therefore that some psychic, spiritual or peak experiences are essential to bring students to some form of psycho-spiritual work in the first place? There are few negative comments throughout our data of this stage, which is somewhat surprising with the high dropout recorded, so it is not easy to establish any particular cause of difficulty. Some students however seemed rather 'shell shocked'; and they indicate that they are not sure 'what it was about' but decided that they wanted to find out more. In the content analysis there are 12 comments regarding change which are mainly positive, for example, listening and observing intuition, better able to communicate, more confident, more loving, greater understanding of self etc. with the only negative comments related to change in relationships. However, a change in relationships can bring enormous repercussions in that person's life, so this is something to carefully consider. So when dealing with the psyche is it a necessity to
have more than just one-to-one tutorials? Data reveals that some form of therapy, counselling or other such support might be advisable.

**Stage Two**

June relays that she took the Stage Two courses a lot later than the normal Stage Two phase so she was more secure in herself, but ‘still stuff came up’. She had recently sat in one of Stage Two classes as a trainee and she says, ‘the classes have changed now and there is a lot more information and discussion on personal issues than when I did it as a student and I was very aware that the group could handle this. I think this was very good; I liked that structure’. Cathy agreed and added that it was extremely valuable for her as she became more aware of energy and it gave her techniques that really helped and it brought up so many other things. ‘It was the technique stage.’ Everyone agreed.

**Researcher's comments:** The word ‘stuff’ usual refers to indeterminate things often relating to one's belongings or 'baggage' and might mean things that are worthless which might have a negative connotation implying nonsense or rubbish, something to be discarded. Baggage is a colloquial word used to describe carrying old or outworn mind-sets or emotional patterns so these comments might reveal some emotional distress. So by the common occurrence of the word stuff, we might deduce that June felt she had plenty of things to clear. This is backed up by comments from the narratives: T9 says it 'brought immense changes and ups and downs which brought up lots of negativity'. T2 says, 'If I'm honest this was quite a troubled time'. T8 says 'it was a little bit
uncomfortable' and T7 in describing another person in the group says she was ‘challenged by it and was most resistant to going into things, a lot came out’.

June had sat in this stage as part of shadowing the teacher and she comments that ‘they seemed to be able to handle it’. This comment is based on one class and clearly it cannot be the whole picture. The content analysis revealed that at this stage there was greater awareness both of others and self but one person relayed they did not understand the material.

Martin felt that ‘everybody benefited individually on a weekly basis no matter what level they were’. So he concluded that ‘it didn’t really matter what stage you were at yourself as there was always something you were getting from it’.

**Researcher’s comments:** T7 also attended this group later and says ‘it might be good to have done it earlier but actually doing it later on was good. I don’t think it’s wrong to revisit things at any level and it was relevant to me at the time.’ This comment may support the theory that psycho-spiritual development works well as a spiral model (see Chapter One).

Speaking about a fellow student Martin observed that they went from saying that the issue had been dealt with, to ‘bursting into tears, and then having the realisation that forgiveness wasn’t just about something on a mental level, and her physical reactions to the whole experience was proof that there was a lot
more to think about and work with. 'There was an awful lot coming out and I was watching this woman and I couldn’t help applying it to some of my own feelings. And the synchronicity was that these things seemed to come up every week and there seemed to be a process and it gave a lot of people a lot to walk away with on an experiential and emotional level. ‘The leader of this group very gently but very directly asked her (the student) to look at herself and question whether that was forgiveness and she and everyone else could see that she had not forgiven her father, so it became a very graphic example of awareness and these things seemed to come up every week’.

**Researcher's comments:** Martin highlights the effectiveness of observing other people and their reactions and that 'being within a group environment is often an important part of the process, and observation and listening techniques should begin to engage at this stage'. Observing others and relating it to our own experiences is deemed to be one of the values of group work. The main point that was drawn from this example and which the whole group concurred with, propounds the theory that cuts at the heart of experiential psycho-spiritual learning, which is we can deal with personal issues on an intellectual level, but that does not mean you have dealt with, let alone transformed it, until it manifests within the real lived world. T9 describes uncomfortable feelings at this stage when she was ‘put on the spot and I was being watched by everybody else and of course I felt judged initially, you know, what were people thinking’? She ‘felt very exposed’. This comments implies some lack of feeling safe; however, in any awareness work it might be expected that some exposure
of self is part of the process of authentic self-awareness, the theory is that if you are exposed you have nowhere to hide and have no alternative but to face up to one's truth, however, facing the truth about oneself is not easy. Is this method too harsh and do we need to be more alert to ‘holding’ the student through the process of self-revelation?

T4 said, ‘Once I worked through the hurt and looked at myself unconditionally and said OK that is in the past so next time let's do it differently’. This student had consciously engaged in the transformational process and shows a positive attitude to exposure. However not all students find this easy or possible. Martin had highlighted the benefits of listening to other members of a group and T9 concurs saying that she ‘really liked listening to people, because everyone else’s experiences were so interesting and so different’. This suggests the need for the application of more listening skills.

Pip concurs saying, ‘this was important, it was a big thing that point you have made, the difference between a mental concept and an energetic reality, we all have areas where this suddenly strikes home. It happened to me a lot and you think oh I know about all this, and on a mental level you do, but all of a sudden the reality happens and you actually have to work with something and its not just enough to look at it and see what is going on you actually have to go through the process to change it and I think this is a key thing when people realise this.’ Pip particularly remembered the ‘cutting the ties exercise’; (to which there was a murmur of agreement from the whole group) where people realised
how much the influence of family or partner and there comes a realisation that they can really change things'.

Researcher's comments: Having experiential exercises in classes does not necessarily translate to experiential learning in the students' lived world. The focus group alludes to this and emphasises the need to totally engage with the learning that has to experientially manifest in the life of that individual. This takes time to establish and as Martin implies later it could be days, months or even years before this is realised. T13 acknowledges this and says, 'it affected my personal life gradually over a period of time'. This lived reality cannot be contrived and is less commonly realised during the class itself but whilst actualised in the students' lives.

We received no negative comments about the exercise of 'cutting the ties' from any of the data and the frequent mention of this exercise in the data seems to add to the theory that there is a need to let go of, dissolve, or remove a layer or 'veil' of unwanted aspects of self to be able to expand spiritual awareness. As already alluded to, this requires the willingness from the student themselves as it is thought that no matter how good the techniques employed, if there is not an engagement to the process nothing will change.

I asked the group how might we assist the student to any spiritual depth but Martin said he thought the answer was not about 'getting to a depth at a prescribed moment.' Pip agreed with this saying that getting students to the
depth was in fact the process itself. Ali thought it was important to be aware of your ‘heart energy so that there can be a realisation that there is a level deeper than the emotions’. Martin reinforced the notion saying ‘that as long as a seed has been planted, even if you have been a poor student and you didn’t catch on at the time, the sign posts are there and then when you think back you know that’s what they meant’.

T11 states ‘there were a number of things that affected me, one was the sense of loneliness but I knew I was going forwards and I couldn’t go back’. T10 says ‘it revealed that I was very frightened of being alone. I worked through it over a period of time and I’m not afraid any more’. The comments about isolation indicate that they might need to re-address their lives, however, some withdrawal from life is discussed in spiritual literature and I have observed it in many students throughout my years of teaching in this field. It is the point where the individual needs to withdraw into themselves to gain greater understanding of self and their connection with God. This can be acknowledged as a type of the bereavement process (see Chapter Six) that occurs throughout any change or death not just in a physical sense but a death of any aspect of life. Whether this is perceived as positive or negative depends largely one’s own perspective. Contemplation and isolation from the material world is common in religious orders and practice and its value is known. In the material world however it can be construed as ‘unhealthy’. Is it a necessary part of the psycho-spiritual process for some people? The alternative interpretation might be that this withdrawal was caused by the students simply not being able to cope. But although the
difficulty caused by this withdrawal was expressed none of our participants stated that they could not cope with it.

The need to be aware of one’s heart energy, means the ability to love and be true to oneself. This notion of unconditionally loving is commonplace in contemporary spirituality but the danger of this concept is that by believing in being nice and good, it may detract the individual from looking at the very personal issues they need to address. If not addressed properly it could bring about a denial of the more negative aspects of self.

Cathy said in this Stage ‘you suddenly become aware of the responsibility that is yours and yours only; it was up to you to implement the work’; to which Martin concurred. He continued, ‘you can devise a course with tools and techniques but when that person actually understands it, is in their own process.’ When asked if they thought the tools were doing the job, they all agreed they were. I asked if they thought this when they were students? Martin said it was ‘hard’. Pip concurred, ‘you can’t take them deep or not, you can offer it but those who have a deep experience are ready and they will have it and those who are not ready, they may take it on board and deal with it later on or they may never. Some people are ripe and some are not, but equally if people have these big issues that are brewing then the sooner they deal with them the better because they would be pretty serious blocks to any kind of self-awareness.

Researcher’s comments: The issue of taking responsibility and therefore directing one’s learning is repeated here. In psycho-spiritual practices it is
believed that nothing can be implemented in the life of the individual if they do not take the necessary responsibility for themselves, but as Pip identifies some were not ready to do this.

Martin thought it was ‘remiss in any organisation that brings out emotions or personal things that did not have support’, (there was a lot of interjection here in agreement) and he felt the School did have it on one level; ‘you do have it as leaders always make themselves available before and after class’. However, he thought you needed to define what you meant by counselling and whether to give it carte blanche to everyone as he thought this might be open to abuse because plenty of people just ‘want to talk about themselves’. Cathy said that just by virtue of having a group there was counselling going on and it was very healing but she thought it was good to have more ‘one to ones’ as ‘when stuff comes up, you need personal counselling’. She relays that she did have counselling but ‘I had to go somewhere else’ and she emphasises how ‘incredibly helpful’ it was, stating that some people do need to talk and that ‘sometimes it might be missed when someone is struggling’.

Ali said ‘a lot of the struggle is what gives you the strength to work through it and it pushes you onto the next stage of learning’. She thought it would occur by ‘working through them personally and in this way you find the answers’. Martin concurred saying that for him it was acted out every day; ‘I used life as an experiential reflection for things that were coming up’. He said that it gave him ‘a lot of strength’ and he felt his ‘real life was walking side by side with this work’. However, when he ‘went through a period of feeling empty’ he needed
some help with someone who understood the work. 'I couldn’t just talk to a
friend, I needed to talk about it in the context of the things we did at the School
and that was absent'. At this period of his development he says that ‘five minutes
wasn’t enough’. Ali said that she and Pip were lucky as they ‘were able to off
load on the journey home with each other. Pip said that he thought ‘it would
have been uncomfortable to walk home on your own carrying that emotion; as a
single person I would have needed someone at some point’. June did find it a
problem as she had no one to talk to throughout the process as no one else in her
life is involved with this work. Martin thought that the need to have someone to
talk to had forged relationships with other students. Ali thought ‘it was
conducive to go to the pub and talk’, at which they all laughed.

Researchers comment: Martin’s comments about students just wanting to
talk about themselves sound derogatory, but how else can the facilitator
help unpick what is occurring if they do not talk about personal issues
even if this leads some students to be self-indulgent in the process? Martin
also identifies a greater need for personal one-to-one contact at some
stages of growth which we did not provide for him.

There is some evidence of positive change in the content analysis at this
stage, with descriptions such as ‘opened to new thoughts’, ‘dealt with
emotional issues’, ‘let go of fear’, and ‘having more confidence’, however,
any movement either positive or negative within the lived world of the
individual can be disruptive, which prompted me to ask the question to
the focus group about the need for counselling. It revealed an interesting
cross-section of different experiences, four out of five finding some kind of regular counselling or ‘off-loading process’ and one not at all. In the narrative T2 was opposed to any form of therapy and would not at this stage have considered it, alternatively, T9 started a counselling course at this time and suggests that it might have been very difficult if she hadn’t. Although there is support within and outside the classes from the Schools facilitators, is there enough for everyone? How to measure this with Ali’s point that there is a need for struggle at some stage, and any method that holds the student too tight might disallow the authentic self-awareness process. The stated benefit of one-to-one sessions suggests that at some stage a form of counselling, mentoring or more individual space may be required.

Summary of Stage Two:

The stated aim of this section of the programme is to guide the students’ internal journey, aiding dissolution of unproductive aspects of self. The categorical content reveals that there were many more comments relating to the students’ feelings and aspects of self, than in Stage One, with four students saying they were challenged by the material and four saying that they engaged with it.

Personal changes that occur can come with great struggle, and are often uncomfortable and evidence of this includes the comments; ‘nervous of speaking’, ‘needed more therapy’ ‘felt invaded’(see also Appendix 1).

However, in the categorical content it reveals 71 positive changes and only
seven perceived to be negative, five of which refer to the need to withdraw as already stated.

Other comments regarding support from the group said, ‘I always felt very safe in the group and they helped me to talk about my experiences’, and ‘I knew that there would be a lot of acceptance.’ We cannot state that the necessary dissolution always takes place, however, there is evidence that personal issues are at least sufficing at this stage and being observed here.

Understanding of the individual’s awareness of spirituality in this section is described as A need to reveal and develop the inner or higher Self. Ali’s comment regarding the heart energy is an important one. The heart energy refers to the concept of unconditional love. This concept is not an easy one; it often conjures up the notion of being nice to others whether that is truthful or not. The deeper aspect of this concept of unconditional love is about being ‘true’, being ‘authentic’ and to be authentic, you must know yourself, your motives, your desires, hopes and fears. Therefore the Second Stage, Unfoldment, has been designed to promote the unfolding of the outer and less productive aspects of self to gain access to the inner or higher aspects of self. There are many ways one might address this and many other therapies assist this clearance without any reference or concern to the spiritual aspects. Connection with spiritual energies is thought to elevate self-awareness to a transpersonal level of higher consciousness that will eventually take over as the main navigator in the
individual's world. Much of the School's work is about exposure and exposure can cause concern, so again the balance between challenge and safety is most pertinent.

The theory of getting students to be open to new thoughts is brought about through implementing stimulation through intuitive questioning and generally drawing information and ideas from the diverse members of the group to share and discuss in the hope that it will assist them think about themselves in different ways. There is evidence of movement and change in all the data collection of this stage with 19 comments in the Categorical Content referring to the importance of being open to new ideas.

**Stage Three**

Martin said at the time he was questioned why we were 'so picky with giving readings' as he questioned 'what had this to do with knowing ourselves'? However he said, 'I took this home with me, I obtained discernment, so questioning in a healthy way is a very powerful tool to have and to check with yourself so you can be clear'. Ali felt she was 'quite strong about knowing herself and knowing her energies at this stage' and others agreed. However, with an emphatic 'no' June indicated she did not agree and she 'certainly did not know' what she was doing. She was unable at this time to self-direct her learning as she said for her it was 'too quick' because she had the intensive two-day course and one term of Unfoldment and 'then suddenly into psychic stuff'.
Researcher’s comments: Martin’s comment, he ‘took it home’ suggests he was implementing some self-direction, but T9 says she ‘felt extremely put on the spot during this time’ and T7 ‘says initially he managed to progress really fast in a very short space of time but then he began questioning everything; he says he has allowed himself ‘to trundle along as much as I wanted to but then I was faced with myself’. However, then I could begin to give substance to the things that I’d read theoretically and I was able to use the things that I’d learnt in the School’. Asking questions of oneself could be seen as a productive part of the self-awareness process as T13 implies, ‘it was the most effective session in terms of personal growth. I found it very challenging and it brought up lots of issues. Some old fears came up, I have cleared some fears but I wouldn’t claim I have cleared them all, but most of the changes happened here’.

The evidence from the data suggests that personal transformational change is more prevalent in Stage Three. But is this just because of the greater length of this stage or is it that they have reached a point whereby they are comfortable enough to allow difficult things to emerge? All the narratives also describe some point of departure and breakthrough in Stage Three and seven out of the nine interviewees relay this. Intuitive and psychic exercises are implemented throughout, and with meditations, transpersonal healing work and all the other exercises prior to this, we try to bring the student to a point where they have cleared enough negative aspects to feel safe enough about themselves to make some constructive movement and change. Because of when June started the School this did
not occur, she said, it was too quick, which seems to reinforce the theory that the students need time to build up to any breakthrough. Could it be that as described by T7 when ‘I was actually faced with myself’ is the point of breakthrough? And if so is there more we could do, or should do, to bring this about? T13’s description of this stage illustrates the processing: The occasional flash of: yes, I can do this, I understand this, sometimes confusion, sometimes complete frustration and sense of I can’t do this, you know some weeks I would be inspired, other weeks I would feel dreadful.’ This comment gives a sense of gradual movement backwards and forwards until there is some clarity.

The psycho-spiritual premise is that one needs to address one’s fears. The exposure exercises in Stage Three are one way of giving the students the opportunity to overcome these fears. I have often observed that those who allow themselves to go through this have some form of personal transformation and emerge from the process far stronger, and there is some indication from the data that this occurs for some students.

June thought it made her ‘question her own beliefs, and it made you ask where is this coming from? and what exactly is it?’ Martin agreed, ‘Now we’re sitting down talking about it, it sounds so structured and organised but at the time it was quite a turmoil.’ I asked if it could have been made clearer to students. June said it would have helped her if she was more aware of the self-development aspect, she just thought it was about psychic development and it was only subconsciously that she was working on personal development.
Researcher’s comments: A common comment the School receives is, ‘I don’t want to be a psychic or medium so why do I need to be doing this’? However, the students are informed of the self-awareness implications of psychic work in the programme, and it is reinforced throughout, so it is a puzzle why this message is not always heard. T2 told us that getting these exercises right helped her to feel she was achieving something. But are there other things that could push the student through this process? Or maybe the apparent fear of failure is just too hard to deal with?

T2 highlights the problem of allowing a novice student to do the Intensive version of Stage One which was designed for those with former experience. This also may give credence to our formalising the stages so everyone goes through the programme in a sequential fashion.

Further difficulties in this section of the programme are described by T9 when she felt she had to ‘deliver it and it was really hard’. However, she says, it was linking to spirit that instigated the ‘major turning point’ for her as she had ‘a life-changing experience’. Asked what, if any, value it gave her she said, ‘it gave me an awareness of myself. I didn’t want to be defeated by it (the psychic exercise) and it was definitely a big challenge to be able to do it’. So here, once again the aspect of implementing intentionally to look and then work with change occurs. T11 said ‘we’d go and do a public reading and the same fear would crop up. You go through the loop of your own learning and some of that has been brilliant and some of it has been so painful’. T11 also says ‘it gave me an opportunity to
become the person that I always wanted to be, to come back to my soul and get back in touch with my true self, my authentic self and it's the only kind of place that has helped me to do that'. T9 felt much more at ease with the spiritual links made in this class and said 'I never felt alone and it gave me a lot of strength'. T8 also describes a movement when he says he 'actually managed to link with some guidance in a very satisfactory way for the first time; it was a breakthrough'. T10 said she'd had a lot of fear since the age of 13. However with her personal experience she was able to work through the grief of her father's death.

From the data in this section of the programme there is evidence that, for some at least it is a time of change in the awareness, leading to change in their personal relationships and other aspects of life. Echoing this June said 'you can have a moment of intuition and think you understand it but it's not until later that you realise that you don't always understand it fully'. ‘It's one of the wonderful things that I have got out of all this. Out of the struggle it has mirrored my other work as a teacher and made me realise how difficult it is for my students, and it has made me realise how they can have problems in understanding, when things that were so natural to me were difficult to relay. You can understand but you don't fully understand all of it and it's such a complex process’. This comment underlies the concept that the unravelling of self is a process that takes time.
Leaning forwards Pip suddenly said he had ‘an issue with understanding the auric material’. He said ‘there was a kick start process needed’ and he agreed you have to find it but just ‘leaving them can just leave them floating’. Pip stated he had tried to get ‘an explanation from the School’. He implied that he got the reaction of ‘it’s obvious’ but ‘it’s not obvious’ to him ‘now if I could have explained the self-awareness point of doing the aura work and where it helps my self awareness’ but he didn’t think he got that and he ‘still feels the frustration’ of not understanding the material. Martin retorted by saying that he came to understand this aspect through ‘doing readings’ because it occurred to him if he was able to look at others’ centres in their aura ‘actually I could do it for myself’. I then asked how Pip thought he might help a student if they had this problem. There was a long pause after which he said he felt he ‘needed a frame work to understand the process and then I can get a hook on it’. ‘I need an energetic drawing’. The Chakra system was suggested as a model and it was agreed that ‘this was helpful’ but June said she ‘needed to go over it and over it’ and working with the Chakras took her a long time as she had previously not heard of them. Ali emphasised the need for the Chakra term which ‘was crucial, absolutely crucial’. Pip acknowledged this and said he wished he had attended the Chakra class. Martin agreed in principle with the need to work with the Chakras as a guide; however he stated that when he was first introduced to the Chakras ‘he was very confused’.

**Researcher’s comment:** Pip’s statements caused concern; why did he not grasp an important aspect of the programme? The comment ‘leaving them just leaves them floating’ implies that Pip required more direction from
the facilitators and obviously this was not picked up at the time. Looking back at Pip’s attendance at the School I found Pip did Stage One and Stage Two, however, in the early days the contents of the programme and its subsequent sequencing, had not been fully established and as Martin relays a bit later, the leader of Unfoldment in those days never liked to work on what she perceived as ‘the lower areas’, being rather dismissive of things that were ‘not spiritual’ so Pip would not have received the rudimentary exercises that would have allowed him to make sense of the auric work. Auric attunement is generally described as the lower or mundane aspects of self i.e. the physical, emotional and mental aspects of self. He also skipped the first term of Stage Three which is now called Psychic Sensitivity and was then called the Chakra term. Pip’s anomaly seems to illustrate the need for every pupil to take every stage of the programme so as not to miss out on essential aspects of work on self. When Pip’s problems were opened up to the rest of the group they cited the Chakra model as an important aid.

Martin reminded us that Chakras were also used as a tool in the Self and Healer group, which he also found ‘really very useful’. Cathy reinforced this by saying ‘you can feel different emotions evoked from the different centres and suddenly you’re faced with all these different things coming out and they are very different’. She remembered this class being ‘really helpful’. Ali emphasised that the Chakras helped her self-awareness in ‘huge ways’. Ali agreed saying ‘it gives you something to work on’. Conversely, June reports that she did not particularly like the Chakra class. Ali said she realised that ‘I was too open, and I
learnt how to balance it, and learnt how to lift energies; it was invaluable'. Martin then said, 'You can correct me if I’m wrong but when I started doing psychic work Pauline was our teacher and I don’t believe we went into the lower Chakras, we just stayed in the heart and worked upwards'. Pip agreed with this statement and said, 'Quite right'. At this point Martin referred to another group we used to run called ‘Channelling’ which he found was ‘enormously helpful’ and he had repeated the same course again three years later and it ‘was equally powerful’. ‘A lot of the stuff we are dealing with is residing in the lower Chakras and whether we have to develop the energetic strength to look down there is one thing or do we go straight down there first’?

**Researcher’s comments:** Working with the lower Chakras means working on the physical, emotional, behavioural, self-worth and thought areas of self (auric) all of which can promote a sense of fragility in the student. However, what is made clear in this focus group is that the term on the Chakras was in Ali’s words ‘invaluable’. But the Chakra terms is not the only term we work on the lower aspects of self, the other main class is Unfoldment and looking back to our records I discover that both Pip and Martin were present in the Unfoldment group described earlier, where the teacher skipped these aspects. This raises questions about teacher training in this field of work which in the past has been very uncoordinated and patchy and sometimes non-existent. However, there is one further possibility to Pip’s problems which I have observed over the years, which is that those students who struggle most with the auric areas are often those who do not wish to address personal emotional issues.
T10 says ‘Channelling different energies each week, I felt it was helping me grow, helping me look at myself and giving me a wider perspective of what psychic development was and why such wisdom and knowledge was available. It gave me a stronger feeling of connection with spirit. I still recall and feel the place of peace we went to. It was a pure essence of love. I was taught to lift things, lift energy into my heart and transform that from pain to love to unconditional love. It was empowering’. The School does not dictate any belief system or dogma, however the exercises linking with spirit at this stage can be troublesome for some, because they assume that they must believe in a spirit world. Nonetheless, this type of exercise can be approached in different ways, and students do need to accept that there is a quality of spirit that can be attuned to. The outcome of this for T2 was that she questioned the ‘nature of belief’ and she states that this ‘helped to stretch her mind’.

June said ‘certainly the Chakras were a self-awareness illumination’ for her when she read up on it, and it made her question ‘what was happening in the different areas, what was happening in my life. With the readings: ‘It took me picking up on things and then responding and realising that here were problems and then I realised it through seeing it with other people. And others reading me would pick up on stuff related to me and you would go home and write it up; that helped, the journal’. At which point there was some contention as it was inferred not everyone had kept a journal. Pip said he had very intermittently kept a journal and I asked might that have helped?’ After a pause he said ‘yes’. Martin thought that ‘everyone’s understanding worked in completely different ways,
the exercises are like a tool or a tree, we pick it off in our own way, don’t we? You are never going to find a foolproof fail-safe way.’

Researcher’s comments: Both Pip and Martin were at the School at the same time. Martin seems to have grasped the work on personal levels, but the one difference was that Martin took the Chakra term and Pip did not, so, coupled with the fact that the Unfoldment was not comprehensive enough at that time, gives some possible explanation to Pip’s difficulties and seems to confirms the need for each student to attend all the programme. Both June and Martin relayed that through energetically linking with others (‘doing a reading’), themselves, they understood what auras and Chakra energy were about. This gives credence to the advantage of this type of exercise.

Martin states that ‘I didn’t get personal development in the actual class, I got it later in my life even in the pub and it’s hard to identify when things come in’. ‘We were opening ourselves more and more’. June agreed that it wasn’t always in the class that realisation occurred: ‘it was what happened between the classes’. Ali stated that it was also just allowing yourself to get it, ‘If you were open enough and relaxed enough and comfortable enough to let things come in’. I asked Pip what his thoughts were as he listened to everyone else. He said they were ‘spinning around a bit and I haven’t cracked psychic growth yet’. He did however feel he had learnt a lot about himself. However, Pip says ‘there were lots of occasions where the classes forced me to look at myself and it achieved
contact with higher self'. Cathy says ‘that because you link to everyone’s else’s issues for me I couldn’t fail to have it mirrored back to me’.

Researcher’s comments: T4’s says, ‘I find the psychic work helps me with the healing side, it just helps the intuition and it makes life easier’, giving some evidence of the work of the programme affecting the lived experience. June also relays that it was ‘what happened between classes’ that suggests the manifestation in the lived reality of the world. When describing a very difficult time (see Chapter Six) for T7’s he says, ‘it affected me to the very core ... I was actually faced with myself ... I just had to surrender to it.’ This surrender is understood cross-culture when speaking of union with a higher power or god. Surrender is a well-known concept in spiritual literature, meaning acceptance of what is occurring in the lived world alongside acceptance and connection with a higher power.

Observing this kind of awareness and the struggles around it was one of the reasons for bringing the whole programme together, in particular putting in place more healing and transpersonal psychology exercises to help soften the possible difficulties. It could perhaps be argued that the people who attend this type of study are inevitably coming towards this process themselves anyway? I recall T7’s processing of the described difficult time, very well. I had pondered long and hard on how to approach this; should I just let it take its natural course? Every week I decided to speak to him, he didn’t show up and when he did he was so angry, it made me cautious. In the end I took little action but using my
intuition to watch and guide when possible. The temptation to ‘do’ something is always there. However, spiritual emergence is thought to need a ‘midwife’ approach which means that we do not force the process but assist when this transformational birth-like process takes place. Balancing this is never easy and emphasises the need for expert facilitation.

**Summary of Stage Three**

The stated aims of this group is to facilitate the individual’s own contact with their ‘higher self’ through exposure of self. Increasing training of the intuition, allowing it to become their main navigator for self-development. The contact with the higher self has been stated within our interviewees and in the categorical analysis we see 18 comments (see also Appendix) of general positive effects with five specifically stating they had links to a higher power. The early questionnaires reveal that this stage is both the hardest and also the one where people most often leave. To complete the whole programme on average a student is in Stage Three for at least three terms which is a time span of one year. Obviously the more time there is, the more opportunity there is for change. There is evidence of change in all our participants here.

We are looking for increasing and persistent glimpses of the transcendent (or immanence) a connection with a higher power for the greater good. There were 14 cases cited of negative changes, and some self-awareness was evident in all but two cases when it was reported that
personal issues were not addressed. T10 relays something of the problem when she says, 'the shadow self is the area where you are holding pain, where you are denying connection with God where you are denying fear but still holding onto fear'. The 'shadow' side relates to one's negativities but one cannot be sure that spiritual transformation would not have occurred with the students anyway, so it is always debatable how much the courses allow this to happen. However, what we can look at is what can be done to assist the process when it occurs.

The numbers that leave in this section are only marginally less than in Stage One. Having gone so far, what is it that makes the student turn away? Are they running away or do they walk? Looking back at the early questionnaire some comments infer that although they did not complete the programme they gained some personal benefit. Some did go to other courses: two of them stated that they went to higher education and one stated they went to a church (see appendix). Other details of why they left are nothing to do with the course. For example; too tired in evenings, finances, too far to come etc.

T13 says, 'I doubted my ability to grasp it all but I’m too bloody minded to give up’. T9 had relayed that ‘I knew if I pushed through ... it would be really helpful’. We try to activate the student’s will and intent but are we doing enough? From our data it seems that one of the main factors to any breakthrough is dependent on the individual’s will to persist, but we have a dilemma here, as for the experience of the student to be authentic the
individual has to engage their will for and by themselves, and, if we tried to force we might be removing the self-directed aspect of this form of self-spirituality?

T11 relays that ‘the School has taught me and shown me about truth. It has allowed me to get in touch with myself.’ T12 says ‘it has had a huge impact on my relationship with some friends, maybe every walk of life’. T4 says it ‘has helped me communicate on a day to day basis’. T2 states she can now speak her truth and it has had a huge impact on her relationship and with some friends maybe every walk of life. T4 says ‘my self confidence is very different now’ and T10 says ‘I released old patterns that had held me in, it gave me an inner stillness. I still carry the vibration and feel that strength. All these statements imply self-awareness of some type but not necessarily spiritual self-awareness. Maybe we have to accept that different people have different needs and even if some do not reach spiritual self-awareness they will get some greater awareness of self on various levels.

**Stage Four**

Ali said she ‘absolutely loved’ this group ‘because you could put into words the aspects that you didn’t understand and you could bring out the questions to the whole group and you were working with like-minded people which strengthened your own ideas.’ Cathy agreed and said ‘such interesting things were discussed’. Martin thought it ‘was a way of practically relating and reflecting on things we had done’. ‘You could always bring it back to something
you had done in previous classes; this is what I meant by living it. It was proactive time for me’. June thought it ‘enabled us to have time to discuss’ and Cathy said ‘lots of personal issues came up for everybody, and it was another chance for everybody to get them out and look at them. So it was incredible helpful.’ (There is a consensus of agreement at these comments). At which point June reminded us that ‘you were prompted by Alice’, meaning the text book used; (this provoked chuckles) and ‘you could disagree violently or not’. ‘People had different ideas on the book but there was always something to say’. Martin suggested that ‘the theme of the week was always relevant and it seemed to reflect in the choices of the book, so something was at work, I can’t quite explain’. However, June relayed that another student she was in this class with did not like the group because, ‘a. she could not get on with Alice and b. she said she had not come into this work just for people to talk all about their problems’. Martin agreed and said that some people ‘were not ready to take on that kind of living it aspect and they chose with their feet that they had got enough from the School: ‘She just wanted to get out there and work and did not want to talk about herself’. Martin said he felt he ‘could not call it the end of the course because for him it was just the beginning’.

Researcher’s comments: June recalled a student who did not finish this stage and suggests that she did not want to look at her own problems. I remember this particular student and being so close to the end of the course it was unfortunate she did not want to stay, however, she had specifically joined the School to develop her psychic potentials which by leaving and setting up as a practitioner she has achieved her goal.
Martin observed that when he sat into the Foundation class again as a trainee teacher he ‘was very impressed’ but he thought the people there were ‘very raw’ which he found humorous as when he was there as a student he felt ‘he was quite accomplished’. He says ‘at this stage people couldn’t actually understand the things they had been learning.’ ‘They had the tools but actually they only had it on a mental level. And they couldn’t understand what I now took for granted’ and he realised that he had not got it at this stage. ‘Even simple breathing exercises they couldn’t yet understand that these were things they could apply in their day to day living.’ Cathy again relayed that ‘this was the importance in repetition because there are so many new ideas, you have to keep reinforcing it because of your past conditioning’. Ali agrees. Martin replied that ‘the most important thing is that they have the tools’. June also drew attention to the commonality of the students, ‘by the time they got to Higher Consciousness they all shared a common language, there were a lot of arguments but we have come somewhere together’.

**Researcher’s comments:** Martins observes that coming back to classes as a trainee facilitator was informative as it revealed that people think they are aware before they have really lived it. June alludes here to her own experience in a particularly vibrant Higher Consciousness group which often incurred heated discussions. Students being able to argue openly in a group indicates they might feel safe to do so. T7 stated that ‘when you do begin to realise that you can do it for yourself you begin to notice a
difference in all aspects of your life and in comparison to other people who aren’t doing it you feel so much stronger’.

Martin said, ‘It wasn’t just talk, someone’s problems often triggered a theme and this brought it to a more global awareness often with reference to the Alice Bailey books’. ‘So actually there was a structure to it even if it was not explicit.’

**Researcher’s comments**: We try to apply all the teachings into a practical application in the students’ own lives. At this stage there is a common language and common goals and student’s are generally able to openly discuss their issues with others without feeling insecure.

Pip found this group very comfortable, he ‘loved it, it was meat and drink to me, it was like coming home’. He expressed surprise that it was placed at Level Four. However, June retorted that they ‘were coming from different angles on this issue’ and strongly disagreed (speaking very emphatically) because she ‘could not possibly have coped with Alice Bailey (textbook) when she first arrived’. Martin said that there was ‘a need’ for people to come through this course to have a chance to have ‘reflection’ and he thought it ‘enabled them to consciously integrate what they had learnt into the day to day living, in a sense it was a perfect round off.’

June reminded us that they always had homework. ‘It wasn’t just Alice, it was all sorts of things’. Cathy agreed. Martin said that ‘there were elements of this type of discussion in other classes’. And Cathy stated that ‘discussion was always
useful’. Pip loved to ‘be able to knock it around with other people and get a feel of what people were making of it’. ‘Maybe in each course there should be an opportunity for this kind of feedback session’. Ali agreed as ‘your own ideas are coming into focus but they’re being related to others and you’re bouncing it off others’. She recalls that it can be a ‘lonely path’ and she ‘needed to talk to someone on a regular basis’. June concurred.

Researchers comments: The difference in opinion here might be because Pip and Ali had done quite a bit of work in the field before whereas June was a complete beginner. Nonetheless, given her stated difficulties throughout, alongside benefits she gained, and despite her hardship she completed the programme, which probably suggests she later counteracted any problems. The ‘homework’, was usually asking them to observe throughout the week particular aspects of their psycho-spiritual journey manifesting within their lives. My understanding was that there was always time for discussion in all the courses, so again I don’t understand quite where we went wrong with Pip, however, they all agreed on the need for having some discussion on a regular basis, was important. These discussions are often in depth and lively which may account for a comment from the T8 narrative that says he attributed to these discussion a greater ‘ability now to analyse political events’.

I reminded them of a particular stage four group when I as the facilitator felt I had to leave the room to get them to communicate openly. ‘As someone who is in education’ Martin says that ‘if it puts people off him being in the room he
leaves’. He continues that there are many ways to employ the needs of the individual and he felt the courses were ‘always consistent and in fact all the essential elements have been present in all of the classes. ‘There had always been a chance for discussion and reflection and exercise and experience, which is repeated and repeated in different levels.’ Martin says he strongly believed that ‘I don’t think you could have done it much better, you can tweak bits but the essential elements are present of good communicate experiential environments’. Cathy thought that if there were any drawbacks it was that ‘there wasn’t enough time to get to everyone’. June agreed and said that ‘an hour and a half wasn’t long enough’.

**Researcher’s comments:** T2 suggested autonomy and a better life; ‘this work does help you to stand on your own two feet’ and T9 says ‘it’s only since I started at the School that everything has changed, my path of life and my intention have all changed definitely for the better. Because of that I’m grateful to all the horrible experiences I had and most definitely I wouldn’t have been the same person had I not gone through them all because I don’t think I was living a full life as I now understand it’.

There were several comments from participants alluding to change of belief here; T4 said, discussing things in the group, ‘I could explore my opinions: What do I really believe in?’ T13 said, ‘the smallest shift can turn a problem into an interesting phenomenon and I like that, the capacity of the mind to just suddenly take one step to the side and the whole world changes and sometimes people come up with an idea or thought or
whatever and that just clicks something and perhaps we see things differently’. T12 says she has ‘refined her beliefs’ that some shift of belief might open the door to greater spiritual transformation. T7 alludes to this when he experienced a major transformation; he says ‘all my constructs changed’ meaning that the structures and beliefs he lived by, all changed, which seemed to release something crucial to his shift of consciousness and consequently the changes he brought to his life. The criticism of the class being too short has been addressed and we have also increased the duration.

I asked ‘if there were any suggestions for the curriculum for students coming up behind you’. Martin noted the changes made in the curriculum and said ‘it’s wrong to have a structure that doesn’t allow flexibility, you have restructured it and created your own structured language around it’. ‘You allow people to work with their own intuition to do it ... I think you are aware enough and you ask enough all the time.’ Ali said that ‘there is motion and movement all the time it isn’t fixed’ and she says that in the other groups she went to they ‘had to leave because it was so fixed in a subject that can’t have a fixed way of learning’. June agreed and said ‘yes, you would stop the intuition then’ (laughter). Martin agreed and said it was one of the problems about ‘monitoring too much’ and he noted that ‘people have to be allowed to make mistakes’. Ali said ‘yes it works’ to which there was a common agreement

Researcher’s comments: There was a general understanding that there must be room for spontaneous facilitation to allow the intuitive aspects to
flow. Making mistakes, struggling and being disturbed are not comfortable things, but arguably they can be an important aspect of change.

Summary of Stage Four

At this stage the School is looking for the students to be able to independently and effectively self-manage their energy and change. Integration of the work into their lived reality. In all data collected there are very few negative comments about this stage. However, no student gets to this stage without having a minimum of two years at the School and has to show they have made some clear alignment in their own intuitive applications. To this end students are required to take an active part in the students' demonstrations during this and the previous stage: Being able to put oneself on the line in this way is a very efficient way of discovering if students really are solid in themselves. T11 illustrates the difficulties they feel in doing public work, you are tested beyond measure when we'd do a public reading, fear would crop up.

Although there were few negative comments in Stage Four, there have been conflicts as we saw, especially in T2's narrative, but this is thought to bring issues, both personal and global, into open discussion for the student to examine within their own personal lives. Positive changes to self awareness are noted in 12 cases in the content analysis, seven say they are more autonomous and four feel they actively work with a higher
power. And T11 said before she came to the School she, ‘did not have a strong enough internal frame of reference inside of me so I would have to check it out with somebody else. And the change has been that my internal frame of reference, my self, is strong enough to depend on. My internal frame of reference is my intuition which says this is not right, challenge it ... what happened is that the School has integrated in every aspect of my life’.

At this stage, we are looking for the students to have a sense of a spiritual connectness that is often described as a oneness, a sense of being a part of the whole world and serving humanity. There is evidence that the School has changed people’s lives, but it could be argued that most educational experiences do that anyway. T8 says he now has ‘a broader mission’, and ‘not just earning bread and butter money, because my profession is researching things so instead of trying to publish another paper I think of things in a bigger frame now and I feel I have a mission to somehow combine the spiritual work with other professional work’.

For most of our students however, it is enough to have some greater sense of the higher self and some personal self-awareness and an expansion of some level of intuition. Depth spirituality is something we do not expect or even encourage because deep spiritual transformation is not for the faint-hearted, it can cause disruption of an intense and traumatic kind (see Chapter Six). We are looking to help the student have greater access to who they are and greater sense of spirituality within their lives. It may be
the case that people entering the School were on the way to doing this anyway, but there is no way of knowing this for sure. It is true that most students have some sense of a greater power or have had some unexplained spiritual and psychic experience before they come to the School. However, T13 said she had absolutely no spiritual or psychic experiences before she came to the School. She came to keep a friend company, the friend left and she stayed and she relays that there was a definite shift ‘... which I doubted would ever happen to me or be possible and I am living proof of that it can be learnt from scratch.’

Fig 8.5.4.1. Emergent Themes Arising from the Data (ETAD):

1. A linear four-stage educational model of psycho-spiritual learning aids the psycho-spiritual learning process.
2. A need for educational standards in this type of programme.
3. A need to implement group cohesion as soon as possible.
4. The routine of experiential exercises aids the psycho-spiritual process.
5. Transpersonal exercises help the individual’s self-awareness.
6. The spiral aspect of the educational process aids depth spirituality.
7. Students might need to withdraw and internalise things for a time.
8. The Chakra model is important to the learning.
9. Journal work helps the student acknowledge their personal experience.
10. More discussions earlier in the programme are helpful.
11. The programme can highlight problems in relationships.
12. A shift of beliefs might be useful to the process of change.
13. The student needs to feel some sense of achievement.
15. The programme promotes autonomy.
16. Experiential meditational exercises are important for spiritual development.
17. Some further form of support is required.
18. Intellectual learning is very different from experiential learning.
19. Learning is not fully achieved until it manifests in the personal lived world.
20. Mixed abilities of students might not always be helpful.
21. The implementation of personal will is necessary.
22. Openness to change is essential for psycho-spiritual growth.

**Fig 9. 5.4.2. Emergent Questions Arising from the Data (EOAD):**

1. Should we employ an entrance test of some kind?
2. Is it appropriate or possible to instigate goals in a psycho-spiritual programme?
3. Do we implement enough support?
4. Does the concept of being unconditionally loving obscure the truth about self?
5. Does this form of Self-awareness always promote spirituality?
6. Is more data required on why some students do not complete the programme?
7. How do we assist the engagement of personal will in the process?
8. Is the Chakra model an important aid to the learning process?
9. Should we always implement a hands-off facilitation approach?
10. Do psychic exercises help the student’s psycho-spiritual learning?
11. Does exposure of oneself assist the psycho-spiritual process?
12. Are there other avenues to be explored to implement will and intent?

5.5. Subsequent Changes Made to the Programme from the Data:

There are numerous subtle changes to our programme which cannot all be described within this piece. Below are the major changes born from the research.

Learning Logs/Journal work:

In the first pilot interviews the students were very unfocused in their thoughts on the effects of the classes and it became clear that the students needed some instrument to assist them for their own growth. Together with one of our facilitators who works as a trainer in business we devised a simple sheet with four direct questions which we called a learning log. These comprise four simple questions to be filled in at the end of each session, which invite the student to focus their learning each week. This practice of notation is meant to aid the students implement their own personal journal. We see the psycho-spiritual learning process as the individual’s journey towards a better life and therefore keeping track of it within a journal aids this process.

1. What were the key points of the session?
2. What have I learnt about myself?
3. How and when might I use this information?

4. Further comments

Following a successful term’s trial in Stage Two we decided permanently to implement them in Stages One, Two and the beginning of Stage Three. We made it clear that we will never want to see the Learning Logs or their journals so they can write what they like; however, periodically we ask students to write a summary of their logs for examination.

Four Stage Learning Programme:
When we started the School the classes were spilt into different levels with various modules within the levels. Because of the random way that intuitive classes have always been run in the past, we initially continued in similar vein (see Chapter One). However, the research suggests, that all our students needed to have the same information and foundation to be able to work in a synthesised fashion. This statement sounds obvious, but when students are coming from a variety of disciplines with some of them already having encountered some form of therapy, some students often believed that they were more competent than they were. Because we work in a very specific way, some students were found to be missing out on important aspects of the psycho-spiritual development. Gradually over a period of about two years we explored what was working best, what aspects we wanted to keep and what bits were surplus. The splitting of the programme into four distinctive stages by 2000 brought about the most significant major changes in the psycho-spiritual programme.
Size:
Reluctant to turn any students away, in the early days we allowed the number of students to escalate to as many as the room would hold. This meant that some classes had 18 – 20 students. For any in depth work this was clearly unworkable and although we minimised the difficulties by splitting groups, implemented exercises in pairs and sometimes have two facilitators, there was no cohesiveness within the group and it did not give a sense of safety. In Stages One, Two and most of Stage Three the limit is now twelve and nine in Stage Four.

Time:
Initially the classes were scheduled to be 1.5 hours. However, as more and more of the programme brought in depth work, it became obvious that, as one of our narratives put it, there was ‘time stress’, we therefore increased all our weekly classes to a minimum of two hours.

Contents of Classes:
Most changes that we have made are not radically different but we have shifted the emphasis as below:

There is now more:
• Emphasis on a comprehensive reading list.
• Listening skills implemented to students and in the training of facilitators.
• Exercises revolving around lovingly observing yourself and healing implemented in early stages.
• Discussion on personal issues at the beginning of each class.
• More exercises on will.
• In-depth Chakra term with emphasis on personal aspects of self.
• More transpersonal self-awareness exercises.
• Psychic sensitivity skills on a personal level.
• In-depth esoteric global discussions.

Counselling/Mentoring sessions:
Although it has always been clear that this type of work necessitates personal support throughout, the speed of changes that occurred with some students necessitated that we have available some one-to-one mentoring sessions. This has recently been implemented on a voluntary basis in Stages One, Two and Four, and at least one mandatory session in Stage Three.

Feed-back:
Because of the primarily experiential nature of the work we incorrectly assumed the students would get the feed-back they needed in a class environment. It was found that students like to have some sense of achievement so we now implement simple written projects from the students from which they receive individual feed-back from the facilitator concerned.

Copy in Programme:
As relayed in our data some students came to the School having the wrong notion about what we actually did in terms of spiritual Self-awareness. Initially, some students translated intuition to mean solely some form of psychic development, and were attracted to develop this. We have spent a great deal of time and received expert advice on the wording of our programme so that it is
clear from the start that our programme is a spiritual consciousness course for life.

Teacher training and facilitation skills:
We have considerably tightened up our facilitators’ training, using humanistic techniques and in-depth personal development work.

Further changes: The Advisory Body:
At the end of 2002, we realised that we had brought the School to a point where we needed outside expert help in promoting the School in education. We now have an advisory board consisting of two department heads in universities, a psychiatrist with a great deal of experience as a trustee in similar organisations, a consultant trainer in human resources, a solicitor and practising spiritual healer in a major London practice and an local education consultant. Through the work of this group, two universities were interested enough to invite the work of the School within their existing BSc Complementary Therapy degree courses and in April 2004 one university has accredited Stages One and Two with an optimistic prospect of more accreditation to come.
CHAPTER SIX

6.1. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter discusses the emergent topics from the thesis and relays possible areas of further research.

6.2.1. Religion Versus Spirituality:

Contemporary spirituality, as discussed in Chapter Two, is generally thought to be developed by the individual’s experience of the divine whereas religion is a set of beliefs defined by an organisation, and directs people’s lives by means of set rules or commandments. The main difference between psycho-spirituality and religious application is that with religion one is usually expected to come to God through a third person whether it be a priest or any other religious leader, conversely, in contemporary spiritual Self-awareness it is believed one comes to God through knowing and connecting to the deeper aspects of self. In the data analysis in The Emergent Themes Arising (ETAD. No. 12) it is revealed that contemporary spirituality tends to be more immanent, nonetheless some of our students do encounter their spirituality through transcendent experiences.

T10 relates a relationship with God that grew during her development.

What happened to me was that I felt that I maintained, created, accepted, and opened up to a relationship with God, that was where I take my energies to find inner peace. (T10)

‘A relationship with God’ with two separate beings in partnership suggests a transcendent experience. This follows the usual religious stance that God and man are separate. Numerous people in the past have drawn strength from the
sense of a relationship with God as Buber’s (1987) now classic, ‘I and thou’ describes, however any relationship with God in the growing spiritual climate is often experienced as a connectedness between the individual and a divine energy which may or may not be called God (Bloom 1991). This fusion is thought to become evident in Stage 4 of the data analysis Classifications of Spiritual Self-development (CSSD) which is discussed in the literature chapter, and is fully actualised in the Alignment Stage 7.

Despite a surge of interest in this subject, the descriptions of Spirituality are still multi-varied (see literature chapter). Out of curiosity I asked two different groups of students to write a definition of spirituality before we had exchanged any learning. One group was from the School’s Foundation class and the other was from a first year BSc module in Complementary Therapy at Westminster University. I am not suggesting any conclusion from these 26 definitions, but relay them here as part of a discussion tool. Although there was mention of higher Self, transcendent being, and other such general terms relating to a higher power, only one person used the word God. Consciousness was cited three times, Love four times, self or higher self; five, wholeness and connection: six but the highest number was truth at nine times, which included phrases such as ‘being true to yourself’ and ‘true self’. The search for truth is age old and not surprisingly no less strong with students joining a contemporary spiritually based course, however, the constructivist view is that there can be no truth as it changes with each shift in perception and we can only know the truth of what we understand today, which may change. Post-modern thinking (Giddens 1990) also says there
can be no absolute truth and that authority can come from various sources. T9 says:

*I had to actually look at things that were real and, I couldn’t hide from it. I couldn’t then pretend* (T9)

When asked about her notion of spirituality T12 said

*Well I come from a Catholic background although I didn’t really listen much to religion as it went over my head but it still had a lot of impact and fingerprints on me, you know about Catholicism and guilt and everything else. So to me spirituality when I was young was really to do with religion and I didn’t like it.* (T12)

This anti-religious sentiment is not un-common and is a possible reason that most people who join our type of spiritual course will use alternative words for God. When I asked T12 why she didn’t like religion she replied:

*It wasn’t speaking to me at all, then I realised that there was another side to spirituality, so finding the School I refined what it meant to me* (T12).

‘Not speaking to me’ implies there was no communication in her experience of religion; however, would religions have survived throughout history if this was the case for everyone? One of the perceived values of religion, as discussed in Chapter Two, is its consistency; teachings that hold a community, race or nation together through time, and part of a shared culture that allows cohesion and trust. Religions have also created stability, traditions and historical continuity of religious communities, which have allowed people to feel safe and grow in that environment. But with a population that now has easy access to global information, and with recent bad publicity towards the clergy, many are not prepared to accept religious truth anymore. It could also be argued that the very togetherness that has allowed a culture to prosper can also cause tribal division
towards any other culture giving rise to fighting and wars. In a recent journal article Trieschmann (2001) explains:

Although most religions were inspired by a great teacher who was directly manifesting the spirit of the universe, the less enlightened followers over the centuries created a structure to carry out the leader’s teaching. This structure was intended to provide guidelines on the path to high spiritual states. Unfortunately, over time the structure itself became the focus of attention for individuals or groups rather than the spiritual experience that the great teacher attempted to communicate. In this manner the structure may interfere with the spontaneity of the spiritual experience as dos and don’ts must and should, dominate and eventually inhibit the spiritual experience of practitioners. As a result, participation in the world religions has declined as many have felt uninspired by the ritual and dogma. It should be noted however than many practitioners of the world’s religions are deeply spiritual people but it is also true that many practitioners haven’t the foggiest notion of what true spirituality is all about and are just following the rules (Trieschmann 2001, p.28).

The point here about the structure denigrating into dogma is arguably what might have happened throughout most religions, and as Treischman relates this can get in the way of authentic experience. However the word ‘spiritual’ can evoke unsettling concepts too: T11 said that when she joined the School she thought:

*spirituality was quite a flaky word for me and you know, everybody would like to be spiritual because it’s better than religious, it’s kind of trendy and all of those kind of things.*

When asked what she considered to be spiritual now she said:

*My immediate answer is being at one, with me and the rest of the world and God. and the word harmonious comes in and it’s looking at life from my authentic self, from my soul, the way that I look at life is from a much richer perspective today because previously I would look at life from the personality. I now look at life from the deeper level of my soul and that’s what I feel to be my spirituality. I have shifted, it’s just a different way that I have looked at life. I see people at a much more deeper level, at a soul level. I kind of see much deeper into a picture, much deeper into nature and trees. You actually see them in a different way, you can hear the music of a tree, you can hear the music in water dripping, you can hear you know, you can hear sounds that you never thought you could hear, just in the silence. You can hear the world, can’t you? It’s good, isn’t it? (T11)*
T11 relates here one of the commonalities in the definition of spirituality and mentioned six times in my survey is the sense of ‘connectedness’ which can be felt as a deep union with nature, the world and others. A quotation from a recent journal explains:

The conviction that we are ultimately connected to a greater force (e.g. physical or natural), higher power (e.g. God) or others around us, defines this transcendental and relational nature of spirituality. Connecting with transcendent spirituality necessitates an inner directed examination of the deepest and most sacred of human values but is also an outward and forward directed dimension, offering a sense of hope and anticipation of things yet to be (Kaut.2002, p.227).

This ‘connectedness’ to a higher power or God is thought to be the very means by which we develop in contemporary spirituality, and appears to creep into the students’ consciousness in different ways throughout all the stages of CSSD. It seems to be brought into consciousness around the 4th Stage and increases to full measure at Stage 7. This is confirmed by Wilber (2000) and others. The data also suggests that if the student does not consciousness engage or connect with his or her spirit there is little progress, so it seems that there needs to be further debate on how we might activate this within the individual more effectively. Following a set of ideas, models or even meditative tools without engagement could be seen as acting mechanically; Huxley (1994) concurs saying ‘mechanisation is incompatible with inspiration’. Acting mechanically rather than with personal engagement is unlikely to have any authenticity of experience.

Contemporary students of spirituality seem to be craving for the ‘experience’ of God, with a need to feel a genuine connection with something greater than themselves (Stace 1960). T11 refers to this with what she calls the authentic self.
But how can anyone be sure they are connecting to an authentic self with the possibility of illusions and self deception? Equally how do we know what God, spirit or the divine wants from us other than what priests and religious texts suggest? But even if religious texts are truly the words of God, they have come to us second hand and therefore must be open to mis-interpretation. Conversely, Vaughan (2000) suggests that to seek experience for its own sake might be counter productive as:

The insatiable desire for experience commonly attributed, rightly or wrongly, to try one path after another can be viewed as a manifestation of insecurity, escapism or just plain greed. What becomes evident in time is that any experience, being transitory, is never completely fulfilling. Genuine spiritual developments reflected in how one lives one’s life not in the attainment of special experiences psychic or otherwise (Vaughan 2000, p.133).

Vaughan presents an argument here against those that have a need for experiences for their own sake, which is what Pip (see Chapter Five) in the narratives described as workshop junkies. If someone uses this form of learning more as a form of entertainment, it might mean they are not properly engaging with the material. For experiences to actualise it is likely it needs to be encountered and ‘lived’ by, and for the individual. Vaughan’s other points seem valid and the last point could be used in arguing against an intuitive spiritual programme. But whereas it may be true that not all psychic experiences have anything to do with becoming more spiritual, being pedantic, one could argue that any communication to an unseen god or higher power must, by its nature, be psychic. Psychic experiences vary, but when they are connected to a sense of the individual’s essence, the core of their being, there is evidence from our data that these experiences can sometimes assist spiritual unfoldment. Also as the
thesis has discussed there are many levels of psychic experience and authorities such as Wilber (2000) and Heron (1998) suggest (see literature chapter) that the more self-aware the individual, the less likely lower forms of psychism would occur, making a case for in-depth Self-awareness as a key for spiritual growth.

6.2.2. Intuition:

The unseen and immediate quality of intuition is by nature a psychic experience and therefore the use of intuition is thought to assist the individual in examining the self, however, as has been identified previously (Chapter Two), there are different levels of intuition and some appear to be helpful to this process and others less so.

As the data revealed, one of the reasons that students come to the School in the first place is often that they have already received some form of spiritual, psychic or peak experience, or that they have an inner directive that is a sense of being drawn to or even pushed towards investigating more spiritual aspects of themselves. T9 explains:

*Everything conspired if you like, it sort of pushed, or I pushed myself in that direction (T9).*

T9 went on to state, that *many people probably go through their lives never looking within oneself* and she felt this was an *extremely significant* aspect of spiritual growth as what was inside was *full of depth and that was the critical change*.

Thanks to the work of Freud, Jung and many others in the field of psychology, psychotherapy and transpersonal work, coupled with a keen media interest and
more accessible literature in related subjects, the opportunities to look at aspects of self are currently more accessible. Conversely, some people might argue that we have more distractions now than ever before, nonetheless, some of the distractions in themselves, for instance the Internet, may aid information on the subject of spiritual Self-awareness. T7 reports that:

*with hindsight I was looking for something, I wouldn’t say something deeper, I don’t want to get caught up in that kind of cliché, but I was looking for an experience that was more* (T7).

It is evident in the associated literature and the data that this ‘something more’ or the notion that, ‘there must be more to life than this’ is an impression one has prior to opening up to more spiritual aspects of life. This sense could be considered an intuitive awareness. T13 endeavours to explain his feeling of intuition:

*I don’t feel a dependence on it (intuition) the guidance, and yet it feels so intimate and so close that I don’t feel like anything is separate from it either. I don’t sit there aware of guidance, I would normally just try and deal with everything and yet whenever there is inspiration, whenever there is intuition I am aware in the background that there is that guidance. I’m not looking for it but I feel it is an integral part of myself* (T13).

This sense of intimacy suggests the CSSD 4th level *Heart* based type intuition.

However, following one’s intuition is not always the easiest option as T11 relates:

*I have been a very, (so they say), courageous woman, challenging in the police service, in all sorts of things, changing things internally within the police service. In the 80’s you know, I’ve instigated proceedings against corrupt police officers, I was openly gay, I set up domestic violence units, I did lots of work about rape, I challenged the police service internally about the way they operated and I was renowned for my courage in doing so. OK, now having challenged them, I then sometimes internally would wobble because I didn’t have that internal frame of reference that says OK. So my soul felt split because I challenged it and because I went with that strong intuition, others would say ‘I couldn’t have done what you did’, ‘Are you sure that was the right thing to do?’ and that’s what wobbled me, instead of going back to the very thing that gave me the courage to challenge it in the first place, I would’ve listened to ‘Joe Bloggs’ so my internal frame of reference having done it, wasn’t strong enough.*
This type of intense desire to do the right thing, could be indicative of CSSD 6th level Vision intuition, however the personal aspects of her description are also indicative of the 3rd level, where fear and self-worth can sometimes distort genuine feelings. The combination of both levels could account for the resistance and struggle. To get beyond the lower instinct it is generally believed (Wilber 2000) one probably needs to be operating on a 4th level or above as relayed in the Chapter Two. Til continues:

And my internal frame of reference or intuition would say, 'This is not right' challenge it, but there's consequences to doing this that were very disturbing and therefore I didn't stay with my initial intuition, but when I did I saw everything through, and sometimes it caused my soul to be troubled. For example, I was responsible for sending a policeman to prison, the result of that was, he lost his wife, his wife lost the house, they had four children and that was the spin off of my actions, that was the consequences of my actions. So my intuition said this is a corrupt policeman and I will do something about it, he did go to prison. But my troubled soul came because there were four children and a wife. (T11)

'Causing her soul to be troubled' indicated she was not sitting comfortably with her intuition. Nonetheless, T11 also seems to exert personal will to see this intuition through. Following what she intuitively believed was right had unpleasant side effects which on a personal level she found difficult. Intuition does not always follow any reason and might even be seen to go against rationale, common sense or even the apparent right thing to do. Intuition may give us another instrument to live our life, but, this can open us up to more possibilities, and arguably, having choices can be a double edged sword, which might at times, lead to confusion

Over the years many students including teachers, nurses, therapists, surgeons, politicians, bankers and police tell us that they actively use their intuition in their
occupation but feel unable to share this fact with their work colleagues. West (2000) relays a story about a Gestalt psychotherapist who uses his extra-sensory abilities openly to sense the presence of someone in spirit for therapeutic purposes:

On some occasions particularly when working with bereavement, I've noticed that an almost tangible third presence sometimes comes into the room, maybe the spirit, the mark of the lost person. Occasionally a presence can be felt that isn’t human, that is maybe more divine, spiritual sort of thing ... I would consider that an ideal time to invite the client to talk to such a person. Usually they would engage in a very contentful kind of dialogue. Occasionally the client decides that they are not ready, but normally it’s a good sign that it is a time for dialogue with the lost person ... Occasionally it’s God or a divine sort of presence that turns up. (West 2000, p.89)

The subjective statement that a divine presence turns up is open to debate, for how did he know it was divine? Nonetheless, linking to a presence is a form of mediumship enters at CSSD 4th level intuition. T9 had an experience that had similarities with West (2000), when she was with her mother and she unexpectedly became aware of the what was perceived to be the presence of her deceased father:

*Suddenly he was there ... He actually gave me the feeling of so many things that I never experienced with him while he was alive and it was almost as if the whole thing had gone round full circle and he was able to open his heart to me completely, which was absolutely fantastic and I never in a million years would have anticipated that would have happened and so on a spiritual level, it was absolutely amazing. Then what happened was my relationships, especially with men, completely changed, and actually I’m now with somebody who is so different from anybody else I’ve been with before and I felt the whole thing had completely healed and it was an immense realisation that actually you can heal very difficult things in your life and they do come right (T9).*

After this ‘huge healing’ experience she said, *I felt more open, more loving than I had ever felt before to people and circumstances. She also said that it was also an incredible healing for my mother as well because my father was saying things to my mother that*
were also accepted. It could be argued that this 'presence' was her imagination or some other such cause, but even if that was the case, the ability to call up an energy, archetype or however you refer to it, and work with it as a therapeutic tool, instigated a healing and a closure on a difficult pattern from childhood. No 10 of the data EQAD asks whether psychic exercises assist the psycho-spiritual unfoldment process. When questioned T9 was adamant that she would never have been able to make her peace with her father without this experience, which gives some evidence that for this student anyway, that this form of psychic ability did assist her own self-development.

In psycho-spiritual unfoldment it is thought that giving people a prescriptive way of life and living, might act as constraint on personal experience. Quoting Rogers, Friedman (1999) also argues this.

No approach which relies upon knowledge, upon training, upon the acceptance of something that is taught, is of any use. It is possible to explain a person to himself, to prescribe steps which should lead him forward, to train him in knowledge about a more satisfying mode of life. But such methods are, in my experience, futile and inconsequential. The most they can accomplish is some temporary change, which soon disappears, leaving the individual more than ever convinced of his inadequacy (Friedman 1999, p.476).

Saying that any approach that 'relies upon knowledge' is of no use, would seem rather extreme but rationality is often seen as the antithesis of intuition and it is assumed that one must either work one way or the other. Could it be however, that it is perfectly plausible and even preferable to use both the rational and the intuitive mind together? Birgerstam (2002) says:

Polarising intuition and rationality can however easily give a false picture ... They seem rather like communicating vessels on different levels. But rational thought cannot stretch beyond its compass and control or explain
the intuitive. It is probably the very interplay between the intuitive and the rational ways of acquiring knowledge that gives added value. There is a lot to be said for the idea that intuition in itself can incorporate the achievement of rational knowledge and in this way make the intuitive experience a little clearer and at least in part more communicable ... increasingly to me it appears as if rationality's greatest value is to be a servant, not a master, in intuition. We should learn to use rational thinking within what is intuitive (Birgerstam 2002, p.434).

Rationality becoming intuition's servant is perhaps a contentious issue, but can it work? T8 said:

you can combine it (intuition) with logic as well, I think that it's just a new set of information that comes into you and I find myself asking; does it make sense? does it seem right? I think I can approach it intuitively and logically. The important thing is to combine the two ... In the West it's been too orientated toward physical explanation and in the East perhaps the opposite way round (T8).

T8 believed one can combine both intuition and logic, however, working intuitively is sometimes seen as fatalistic and is believed that it can allow an individual to abdicate responsibility, but, it could equally be argued that if this intuitive decision comes from that individual the responsibility is firmly put into their hands. An intuitive decision may, on occasions, be the less easy one, as we have seen from T11's experience earlier. Nonetheless, it is that person's own decision, enabling the possibility for individual responsibility. Rogers (1990) calls for holistic methods in the combination of logic and intuition:

significant learning combines the logical and the intuitive, the intellect and the feelings the concept and the experience the idea and the meaning (Rogers 1990, p.37).

So might intuition, give an advantage above and beyond just using logic and rationale alone? Intuition in its highest form is thought to be similar to what Rogers (1990) calls a 'sense of knowing' and what is referred to in CSSD as Alignment or Knowing. This knowing state is a sense of what is true and differs
from an intellectual thought or emotion. T13 describes an intuitive sense of knowing:

There is a heart place, and there is a feeling in my heart when that energy is close and that is ok and I trust that implicitly, that is what is important rather than a perceived name, or visual image. It’s the feeling in the heart that is the key, that feels, like I’m happy to engage with(T13).

The heart place can be related to the CSSD 4th level and therefore the type of intuition called acceptance, which has a sense of trust and love, and as we have argued earlier, in some shape or form it is considered by most faiths to be the key or bridge to higher consciousness.

A question that emerged from the data was whether the exposure that was encountered through some of the psychic exercises is always the best approach, as some students found it ‘hard’. T13 explains his feeling about being put on the spot:

I think there is something about being frightened to make a mistake somewhere, being frightened of failure. Frightened of not being able to do it and frightened of doing it wrong. A feeling of being very close to something very powerful and yet not really breaking through into it. The occasional flash of, yes I can do this, I understand this. Sometimes confusion, sometimes complete frustration and a sense of I can’t do this. You know some weeks I went home feeling inspired, other weeks I would feel dreadful, I just I can’t do this and I don’t know what it was but I couldn’t always define. I could sense that something was stopping me but I couldn’t always get a handle on what it was. I felt I had made all the connections at some point to understand, have a sense in my body of understanding what it felt like but I don’t have a feeling of confidence about being able to do those things. I’ve experienced and sensed that and felt I understood in the moment whilst it was happening, but as soon as that’s not happening I still have a complete kind of, I don’t understand what it is or what I’m trying to do or why? I find I have some kind of difficulty which I quite can’t define. (T13)

There is evidence from the literature that overcoming fear is a key to Self-development and these exercises are implemented as a method of confronting it.
Also when T13 explains that he felt he understood ‘in the moment that it happened’ it suggests an intuitive response, however, this connection did not last and he became frustrated with it not being accessible all the time and not being able to make sense of it in the usual way. In intuitive development this inconstant feeling is common and suggests that one may have to suspend the rationale or at least appease it, to allow the intuition to emerge. However, to find out if intuition is an effective way of progressing one’s life takes observation over time. The process of intuition and spiritual awareness according to the data, seems to activate many insecurities which might be hard to manage. The theory is that through the type of exposure within the psychic unfoldment in Stage 2 and 3 of the School’s programme the students have the opportunity to dissolve and let go of insecurities, negativities and fears and get into deeper more spiritual aspects of self. T12 makes the analogy of intuitive education being like learning an instrument and only by constant practice and attunement can the student get proficient:

*I was just refining myself, that’s how I can put it. A bit like a musical instrument that is out of tune and I find that through doing this course I was finally trying to tune myself to something. It was beneficial definitely (T12).*

The exercises are rigorous but if we did not make it so exacting would students reach a point when they ‘know’ what is working? T9 describes the difficulty in allowing herself to be exposed and working through her own problems:

*I felt extremely put on the spot and had to deliver so to speak and that was really hard and every week we used to talk about it outside the class and think, you know, it wasn’t as bad as we thought this week. I actually felt determined to do it, I really wanted to do it, I knew I could do it (T9)*

The above quotation suggests that is was hard for T9 to confront fear, but it also describes an emergent theme from the data ETAD 21 which is the
implementation of will is important. When asked ‘how the School might have assisted him more’ T7 said people got through a process; you (the School’s teachers) can’t necessarily control or support it. This may be true for T7 but other students’ statements indicate that support should at least be available throughout the development. Many of our interviewees told us it is ‘very hard’ and as T12 recalls it takes a long time to build up trust in oneself:

Although I don’t trust myself still 100% in it I must say but I’ve gone a long way and I’m sure there are a lot of things that I hold back because I still have fear but to me it’s like going to a little home, it’s like looking onto something(T12).

To free the mind enough to be open to intuitive senses, isn’t it likely there is a need and willingness to change, to see the world differently and to be open to possibilities? T13 relates:

It’s unlikely to change radically my deepest sense of life but it does change my way of looking at things, it often offers new ways. I think the mind sets in patterns very quickly and I like when people come up with ideas that make me see the world from a different direction and I find that refreshing and sometimes just a simple thought can shift your whole attitude to the day or the week or some aspect. The smallest shift can turn a problem into an interesting phenomenon and I like that. I like the capacity of the mind to just suddenly take one step to the side and the whole world changes and sometimes people come up with an idea or thought or whatever and it’s beneficial(T13).

The ‘smallest shift’ of the mind seems to have enabled T13 to open up to further possibilities in his life which appears to be a necessary ingredient to aid his intuition. Intuition is experienced as an immediate sense, but for some a ‘sense’ is not good enough, they want proof. Nonetheless, it could equally be argued that not everything of value needs proof, for instance, if someone says they are in love we rarely ask for proof: love, like intuition, is a sense, which often only the owner can judge.
We have argued that by using psychic faculties of a lower nature (see Chapter Two) it may not benefit the student’s spiritual growth and may feed the ego to the extent it can block out the core voice of spirit. In the literature chapter, Cook-Greuter (2000) argues that it is only when the individual can step outside their existing constructs that any depth raising of spiritual consciousness occurs. This in turn gives credence to the need of some depth psycho-spiritual development to move the individual to, or at least towards, the higher stages of spiritual growth. It seems that to do this the individual needs some higher level of spiritual Self-awareness beyond the lower levels CSSD 1-3. For a psychic experience to be ‘authentic’ the student senses and ‘knows’ it is right, but how would someone who is cloaked by the lower mundane aspects of self know whether their feelings are right? It seems therefore that the quality of the ‘knowing’ is all important and this may only occur through dedicated observation of self plus the release of lower negative aspects of self (CSSD 1-3). It would follow therefore that a spiritual programme needs to assist the process of self-awareness.

There is evidence from the data that in all cases some form of intuition is being utilised, and some self-awareness does occur. However, it is seen that this does not always lead to the higher forms of spiritual growth.

6.2.3. Beliefs:

The School takes the stance that the interaction from the sometimes diverse set of beliefs from our eclectic group of students enables them to modify and expand their beliefs if they desire to do so. It is observed in the ETAD No 12 that a
change of beliefs often heralds great change and sometimes great personal transformation. T2 says:

*I think anything that makes you think beyond where your mindset is stuck at the moment assists you, because it broadens the way you look at things even if it is only to look at it and then say no. That has to be preferable to not looking at it. So I feel that, by confronting me with things and making me reassess things has actually made me reassess other things as well, the whole nature of belief if you like ... I realised what a dangerous area belief is (T2).*

Is T2 right in her assumption that belief is ‘dangerous’? If one takes the constructivist stance for instance, everyone has different perspectives and therefore we all relate to our world differently. And, if our beliefs are formed from our viewpoints it must follow therefore that if our beliefs are negative and fearful, that is how we will behave and vice versa. T9 says:

*I’m careful with the people I work with not to tell them my views, on the other hand it irritates me that some religious dogma is considered sacrosanct from criticism whereas people feel comfortable to criticise, psychic and spiritual views. If they’re going to do that they should be more free to criticise religious views and I think everybody’s viewpoints are not sacred exactly, but worthy of respect (T9).*

Worthy of respect certainly, but how can we unpick the truth if we don’t discuss it? Fast travel, satellite TV, and the Internet give greater access to other people’s worlds, other people’s ideas and other people’s hopes and dreams. Coupled with the breakdown of family life with fewer children and with women taking much more control of their lives, out of this changing culture a new form of spiritual self-development is emerging, and these are drawing together some diverse cultures and beliefs. But does one’s religious belief really matter? For example, if someone has the kind of experiences of the philosopher, Rousseau, (West 2000) when he had his spiritual transformative experience in the forest, a Christian might translate the experience to be Jesus working through him, a Muslim; Allah,
a Jew; Yahweh. The experience may be similar but the belief tagged onto it will vary. Do beliefs have to be something that are permanently set in stone anyway? The argument against that concept might be that if our beliefs are ultimately merely instrumental symbols and scaffolds, will many people ultimately take them seriously enough to make the personal sacrifices necessary for the most profound forms of spiritual growth? Having specific beliefs and standards might spur the process, giving it moral intensity and systematic grounding and maybe we sometimes need strong faith and belief for growth. Conversely, holding a particular doctrine could mean the student may feel they are absolved from the responsibility of critical interrogation. If we accept that our beliefs will change, could they be seen analogously as a device to get us from one side of the bridge to the other; to spur us on to different things and help us expand knowledge? T8 had some strong feeling on beliefs:

I don't think it's really appropriate or feasible for religions to rely on blind faith without having experiential occurrences. I believe things like the Bible were severely distorted in terms of the dogma presented. Jung said religion is mankind's way of escaping spirituality, and I suppose I feel that if you have a spiritual awareness of your own spirit and those of other people you start to think of things energetically, it leads you to many of the issues that great religious teachers were concerned with. I think that the way they presented their views was often corrupted by the dogma of the churches and that the politics of these institutions interferes with the messages of Christ and the other prophets and that, a lot of the dogma presented by religion is one of control by institutions, like the church often working hand in hand with the state (T8).

T8 is suggesting that the organisation of religions change the meanings of spiritual works to suit their own ends. Given the length of time from the original often oral exchange of these teachings, different translations over the centuries, coupled with the changing face of society, it is quite possible that the original meanings may not have been completely maintained. Even a small shift in
meaning can change our perspective on the world, and as humanity evolves, perspectives shift and consequently might our spiritual beliefs naturally change also?

Before he became Buddha, Prince Siddhartha Gautama was kept in wealth and privilege away from any pain or evil. One day whilst on a ride outside the palace he encountered beggars and disease. At this point his vision of the world was shattered and he renounced all the joys, pleasure and privileges of his birth and wandered for years as a poor ascetic monk. This experience changed his perception of the world for ever and eventually led to him becoming spiritually enlightened (Johnson 2002). This story has similar connotations to Plato’s classic caves story when it was discovered that the community that lived in the caves was only living by the shadows on the wall and there was a bigger brighter world outside, of which they were unaware. Both these classic stories suggest that breaking out from old patterns, even pleasant or comfortable ones, can transform our existence.

Those around us often affect our beliefs and making any shift that goes against our community can be extremely difficult. T11 reports:

*I had to process stuff through by talking about it because I didn’t have a strong enough internal frame of reference inside of me so I would have to check it out with somebody else. Now that I’m choosing not to do that so much, I only check it out with the people I trust. So if, I phone up six people and say what do you think? Six people would give me different views and I don’t want to do that. I actually want to get in touch with what I want and that is what’s happening to me. What do I want? And the change has been that my internal frame of reference, my self-sufficiency of myself is strong enough now to depend on myself (T11).*
The ‘internal frame of reference’ Til refers to suggests an inner knowing and a form of psychological development. With reference to CSSD it is moving out of the Tribal 2nd stage into the personal auric 3rd stage when a strengthening of the personal sense of self occurs.

Assisting the student through many layers of self to find their core spirit and authentic self probably requires some form of spiritual directorship as discussed in the literature. Current types of spiritual direction try to achieve a relationship that is one, not of master and pupil, priest and neophyte, but more like a mentor, guide, or midwife who intuitively assists any spiritual changes. Some people have found our hands off approach of the psycho-spiritual programme quite difficult. T7 relates an episode he observed with another student at the beginning of Stage Two:

*people assume they know a lot, tell you they don’t need a lot of this stuff and then have to learn the hard way that in fact they’re not exactly where they think they are and what was fascinating was the range of characters … there was a woman who was doing every course under the sun and doing other things too and said, look I haven’t got time for these discussions, just tell me what it is and what I need to know so I can just write it down (T2).*

The lady mentioned by T2 expressed her discontent many times. We simply were not able to explain the rationale for the use of self-direction and the consequence was she left soon after the above incident. This student was not happy discussing self, she could not see the point of it and she wanted to be given information in didactic form, thereby missing the point of our experiential programme. For her at least a more structured model of spiritual development was required. We work on the principle that what is right for one person may not be right for another, meaning that any set structure will not work for everyone. But is there
anything more we could do to help a student be more open? What personal traits assist this? Baruss (2000) expounds:

 Those who are most curious about the world and least concerned about what others think are those who are most likely to believe that there is more to reality than the physical world (Baruss 2000, p.98)

Whereas some people may be less concerned about others’ opinions, taking the decision to go against the family, culture or tribe, is not easy. We are after all human animals and therefore likely to have a similar herding instinct that, in the wild, helps protect the individual through closeness to the family group. One can still observe this survival instinct between factions and nations all over the world and many people abdicate responsibility to the tribe in the form of a nation, town or particular culture (Baruss 2000). To go against our race, family or tribe may be brave or foolish depending on your standpoint, yet arguably for spiritual autonomy, it may be necessary to, at least in some circumstances, be willing to do this. This may be equally true in relationships and T9 talks about the difficulties she had with her partner when she started this work:

having developed completely different beliefs it was quite difficult for my partner and he belittled it because, I think he was quite frightened really of what it actually meant or that the fact I was just changing so I think it was quite difficult for him but I couldn’t stop it. We started off going off down the same line and then I radically changed and he didn’t want to, well it wasn’t right for him to change in the same way (T9).

When asked if her spiritual experiences contributed to bring about the end of her relationship she replied:

Yeah without a doubt, but actually I’m now very pleased although it sounds a terrible thing to say, I’m really actually pleased that happened you know but it just brought it, it just brought it up a little bit quicker, because it made me see the truth about things and I couldn’t pretend that I wasn’t living a specific life on the surface (T9).
Confronting the truth, as T9 describes, can be troublesome and a change as the one described above must give credence to the need for support as identified in ETAD No 17. T8 also says that some of his beliefs have altered, for example:

the ability to link with spirit, is a very natural thing to do and I think a lot of people do it all the time and possibly I've done it all the time without realising it. But the fact is I now believe that I can do it and have experienced it and it is a very profound thing, and in the Western world a lot of people would deny it (T8).

This particular belief has changed through his experience and T8 concludes that he:

doubts the validity of lots of religious instructional views when it's facts and dogma to learn without having any direct experience. It's an extraordinary thing to show that a reality is different, it's really very extraordinary (T8).

Reality being different, from a positivist's standpoint would be hard to accept, and yet people do change their thinking, and beliefs and models of working are constantly being reviewed in all areas of life. Once this happens it can have the effect of opening up to other possibilities which in turn may have the effect of finding greater depth, which according to CSSD 7 may eventually lead to spiritual union.

6.2.4. Intention and Will:

As discussed in Chapter Two psycho-spiritual work necessitates the ability to look at self and as such has many similarities with forms of spiritual therapy where it is known that the client or student:

Must face the problem within him/herself, own the problem, believe something can change and make a decision to participate in whatever needs to occur to make the change. Part of the old self dies so that an integration with the new can be born. The source of the new is the spiritual within. The client (student) and therapist (facilitator) need humility, surrender, hope and belief in transcendence, openness, willingness and courage to face pain... It is essential to connect and
Attaining courage of the type Epple (2003) advocates suggests an inner deep connectedness or our core spirit and also the necessity for the individual to take some control over the process of change and both the literature review and the data (ETAD No 21) support this notion. In T7’s experience he acknowledged that:

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\text{nobody could make it completely right, I think there is also an onus of responsibility on you to decide what is right for you. You (teachers) can provide an opportunity for them (students) to be supported but they’ve got to ultimately make the choice (T7).}
\]

This student had made the realisation that the ultimate choice was down to him, supporting the theory that personal autonomy is required. T2 reports:

\[
\text{I remember going as a group to a Billy Graham campaign in Manchester... And I was very aware of the emotion and the emotional manipulation, it was very exciting but I felt that for me this was not the right way... I will not be manipulated by this emotion and despite my peer group being caught up in it including my best friend I was determined not to be carried away on a mass of emotion that might not be truthful. I wanted direct messages from God (T2).}
\]

This determination ‘not to be manipulated by emotion’ suggests an act of will. T2 also echoes the contemporary stance for the need for ‘direct’ spiritual connection.

I well recall this student constantly questioning, pushing and scrutinising us in her first few terms, and having long discussions with facilitators at the School. She was testing us and continued to test us for at least 18 months to two years. But she now states: ‘Deep down I knew there was something in it’. This describes some sense of inner knowing or intuition. Testing one’s counsellor or therapist is a well-known phenomenon and, to a lesser or greater extent, all our students do
the same. The School endeavours in Socrateian mode to ask the right questions, to get students to examine themselves as it is believed that by constantly passing the responsibility back to them they can take control, as we saw in T2's experiences when she progressively pushed through her fears. Yet not all students are able or willing do this. Amongst other data EQAD No 12 asks whether we need to give more attention to the engagement of will, particularly in the early stages of the programme. At the time of T2 attending the programme working with 'will' was a minor part of the course nonetheless, she states:

_The work on 'Will' was also quite a revelation because, although as a drama teacher I would constantly ask my pupils, what do you want? to get in touch with their parts in the script, yet I had never asked myself (T2)._ 

To someone who had not given herself time to examine her own personal issues, being in a group provided her with the opportunity and permission to talk about herself. T2 acknowledges:

_you would only get that working in a group and not one-to-one teaching. It helped that there were people who were very supportive and who were prepared to listen and some people were very good listeners (T2)._ 

Having support from one's peers is deemed to be an important part of the process and it is hoped that from a feeling of safety within the group the student begins to identify and implement their own focus and intention on self and be able to implement it within their lives. However, although T2's experience enabled this, it has not been the case with all our students and the reason why there should be this variance between students requires further investigation.

6.2.5. Transformation: Dark Night of the Soul

As discussed in the literature chapter, the dark night of the soul experience is prominent in mystical and spiritual literature including St. John of the Cross
(Kavanaugh 1999) and St. Teresa of Avila (1989). It is often relayed as a form of deep spiritual transformation which may come with trauma, sacrifice and even martyrdom. When it occurs it could be defined as a profound sense of loss of self, one's ideas, notions and beliefs are shattered. Elkins (1998) describes the dark night of the soul as a crisis but it can:

also mark the beginning of a new life. The spiritual quest often begins then as the old system breaks down and we are forced, for the first time, to confront the ultimate question of human existence. It is frightening to stand naked before the universe unprotected by hand-me downs and to ask who am I? why am I here?...Where am I going? and how ought I to live? (Elkins 1998, p.253)

This age old question of 'who am I?' is often asked when people are on the verge of investigating their spirituality. In Stage Three of the programme T7 had started asking similar questions to those related above, about all areas of his life. He wondered, 'what was the point of my coming to the School? What was the point of my doing the job I was doing? and he also started to wonder, what was the point of the life I was living'? And he stated that these questions led directly to his unease. Of all the interviewees T7 had the most graphic dark night experience and it is worth looking at here as it illustrates many of the difficulties: T7 was an enthusiastic student, and had progressed well in intuitive development, however around the second year his attendance waned dramatically and when he did come to class he seemed agitated and angry:

I couldn’t concentrate. I felt like I was drifting and falling asleep and I think now when I look back it was part of the process... meditation was difficult for me, if you weren't quite focused in intent and there was something about your own energy, it didn't work. It was something like a process going on in my own energy ... I wasn't happy about this and I seemed to be seeing things in term of getting it right or wrong (T7).
Around this time it begun to ‘dawn’ on him that he was actually uncovering himself. His dilemmas lasted, ‘a long time’ and he was becoming ‘increasingly uncomfortable’ with himself. But why it took until the 2nd year for these questions to emerge is unclear:

It wasn’t very pleasant because it was all about me, wasn’t it? I did every possible thing I could to mask it, avoid it whatever, but I now recognise it as a valuable part of my personal process. I might have learnt a lot more if I came along all the time and I might have got though the School quicker, I can say that now but I learnt it the hard way. I also noticed a lot of changes going on with me physically...it was a stage that I was unprepared for...Physically my body started to come out in different kinds of rashes and things. I became really angry, very irritable and emotionally slapped a lot of people around at the time and I kept blocking it and I realised that something strange was happening. It all built up and finally culminated on a particular day when everything in my life turned upside down in one morning. It was a catalyst point when everything that had built up just came out... There wasn’t any more blocking off to do. I was not in control. I had an inability to hold onto money which was my biggest problem and it had come to the point of no return on the same day. Also, the relationship, just collapsed overnight which was probably the right thing to happen but that wasn’t the way I saw it at the time and I realised the reason I was holding on to the relationship was the wrong reason. My world fell apart mentally because that was where I was holding most of these things and things could not have got any lower. All the constructs around me were just wiped. I couldn’t physically or mentally cope with that moment so I just had to surrender to it.. (T7).

‘Masking’ it and avoiding it, and then finally reaching a break-down point when his world fell apart is a graphic description suggesting some form of death of self. Would a more formal model of spirituality have helped this student go through this depth process? T7 continues:

Finally, I just sat down and thought I’ll ask for some help. I felt that the only way to understand it was to let go. And when I did I had this overwhelming experience of peace and by the evening I felt so balanced and so peaceful. When you let go, all fear evaporates. I just had to surrender to it and when I did that I had this overwhelming experience of peace ... and that for me was quite a turning point .... the most difficult bit was learning to be more of who I am and actually taking away all of those things that I thought were right and weren’t. This was a crisis point in my mind, in my fears and they evaporated almost as fast, but at the same time it didn’t mean that some of the situations disappeared. And I think that’s quite important because many people come looking for solutions to things but the solutions aren’t necessarily the way they expect them to be and it doesn’t
mean that you look at the world really differently but it is different if you feel different or see it differently but actually the same things are happening. It affected me to the very core, but I had a sense that I would have to go through it (T7).

‘All the constructs around me were just wiped, and it affected me to the very core’ are very pertinent descriptions of a dark night of the soul experience, when one’s structures of living disappear and there is nothing to hold onto. Finally, as in T7’s experience, ‘surrender’ to a higher power comes, which is portrayed in CSSD Stage 7 Alignment. This form of experience could be seen as a form of death; the death of the past and the self that belonged to it, with no turning back. This death of self process has some correlation to the known phases of bereavement: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance (Kubler-Ross 1997). T7’s experiences finally led to surrender which are thought to be necessary for healing to take place.

Elkins (1998) describing the dark night of the soul cites, Rabbi Kushner (1981). He says that after his ‘dark night’ experience he became:

a more sensitive person, a more effective pastor, a more sympathetic counsellor’ since the death of his son, but he would ‘give it all up in a second’ if he could have his son back and if he had a choice he would ‘forego all the spiritual growth and depth which has come my way because of our experience’ (Elkins 1998, p.256).

Elkins concludes:

This is how it is with dark nights of the soul. Our souls grow strong and we develop an authentic capacity to console others but we cannot celebrate this growth like an egoistic victory because the price we paid was far too high (Elkins 1998, p.256).
Losing everything that makes sense of our world is very hard and consequently can induce spiritual transformation, but Buddhist monk Sogyal Rinpoche states that change and death is part of the human condition and, says to believe otherwise is folly:

We so desperately want everything to continue as it is that we have to believe that things will always stay the same (Rinpoche 1992, p.25).

Rinpoche (1992) suggests that we meditate on the impermanence of things and ‘arrange our lives accordingly’. He says that we must learn ‘detachment or letting go’. This concept of letting go (see Chapter Two) has similarities with:

what Christians describe as ‘dying to the self’ but it is not really about dying. Healthy letting go is about letting go comfortably without force because to let go under external pressure is tortuous, traumatic and violent. It is psychologically and spiritually unhealthy to convince people to let go of their self when they have no connection with or conception of a wider life experience of which they are a part. (Gow 1999, p.158)

Gow argues the need to have a ‘deeper connection’ before letting go, however she does not expand upon what that connection might be. The data concurs with this and suggests that if there is a connection to spirit, whether this is within self or beyond, it can assist the individual over the bridge towards Self-awareness.

But letting go of any aspect of self is not an easy process. T11 explains:

*I think the depth of knowledge gets deeper with the process, almost like an onion, where you keep taking the layers off, and as another layer comes off it’s a thicker layer, that’s how it feels and so therefore in a way sometimes you think, well hold on a minute, what is it giving to me in my life? I’m not going to know the answer maybe never but invariably the answer as to why I had that lesson will be revealed in my experience. It has been revealed a few times however one is impatient in it, I have been in there in that pain. I do not know the answer as to why I had that lesson but it will be revealed and it is coming much quicker, the answers(T11).*
As described here the peeling of ‘the onion’ of the outer layers or lower aspect of self can be a painful process which the data suggests requires confrontation of difficult personal issues. T9 recalls this period:

I do remember feeling a tremendous amount of fear. I felt I had to confront things and this felt right...I hadn't felt such depth before...We were starting to open the heart and it felt fantastic to actually focus on that part of my being to be honest and it really had quite a profound effect on me (T9).

Confronting oneself is often seen as part of the Self-awareness process and ‘opening the heart’ is an expression that means finding the heart, the core or spirit, the soul of who we are to communicate with the authentic self; that part of us that is real, genuine, or pure. To reach the 4th Heart level (CSSD) it is thought to be important to be able to transcend at least some fears. As we saw in our CSSD models in Chapter Two, the heart level is seen to be the link between the physical and the spiritual worlds and it is propounded by many faiths that one cannot journey up to the higher more spiritual energies, without experiencing this heart energy; love beyond judgement and conditions. But it is thought that to arrive at this, one often has to examine oneself, and as the data and the literature confirms, the release of unproductive fears and negativities through this process can be disconcerting. T4 relates that in the early part of the programme, she was ‘worried’:

In the beginning when I didn't have anyone to turn to with the first exercises when I didn't know what was going on, couldn't talk to anyone, yes that was a worrying time and I thought, in fact I wrote it down; ‘I think I am going mad’, but I was too busy to go mad. It also had another effect when I went through a terrible patch with my husband on the marital side because even that needed looking at but I feel we have come out so much better (T4).

When constructs change it can have the effect, as T4 relays, of feeling you are going mad, and change, in some cases could bring chaos to the personal life.
Hearing that a student felt she could not talk to anyone obviously caused us concern. When asked what made her continue with the programme she said:

I think once I'm in I might as well go through it, that's my attitude, why not look at everything and sort out all the cupboards and see what's there? (T4).

'Sorting out all the cupboards' suggests looking at various aspects of self and once again the need to implement an act of will in the process. Of all the narratives, T7's dark night experience is the most extreme but, to a lesser or greater degree other students have gone through a similar process. T9 describes:

It was definitely like an unfolding, so what I was experiencing at the School was then aiding me to unravel things in my life or they unravelled in conjunction with it and that's what I felt all along at the School actually. I went though immense changes and ups and downs and bringing up of lots of negativity and all sorts of things happened to me but it was, allowing things to process, that's how I felt it (T9).

As T9 concurs here but observing negativities and what is described as the shadow side of self is rarely an easy process and takes courage and determination. T9 continues:

I have to say that the whole thing to me has been an integration so I can't really separate what has happened to me in a way because it just feels that it has all worked in conjunction with everything else. And it didn't always feel like that realistically it's only since I started on this path and started at the School that everything changed, you know, my path of life, my intentions have changed. They have definitely changed for the better in so many ways (T9).

Here again there is evidence of change and ETAD No 22 tells us that change is essential for growth which in this case only occurred after she joined the School. However, how close the changes were to surfacing before she came to us cannot be known.
Extreme aspects of this spiritual transformation as in the ‘dark night of the soul’ may be transformative but they can be terrible to live through, and even if it were possible for the School to instigate, which is debatable, one would have to question the rationale and the minefield of ethical consideration of sending someone down the road of the ‘dark night’, which has historically taken mystics close to the edge of sanity. Nonetheless, the data suggests that no depth authentic spiritual transformation occurs without change and some dying of self to various degrees taking place. T9 reveals how difficult this process can be:

It seemed to me that I was slowly working through my worst fears in my life and every fear that I think I have ever had, started coming up over a period of years, it was so horrible, but actually facing them wasn’t as bad as I thought in the end and after I got over them I realised it wasn’t as though I was being rewarded but from what I gained from it was tremendous and after every set of circumstances something wonderful happened even in my own transformation or events or you know something great happened and I felt like for me anyway I needed to pursue things as they came up and I couldn’t not look at them. So when it was a horrible fear, although it was so horrible and I wanted to run away, yes I gritted my teeth (T9).

Reading this quotation, it sounds like the programme is putting students through a form of torture, but spiritual and mystical literature also implies that any depth spiritual process may necessitate a clearance process that can at times be disorientating. This is born out in the data and I was struck by the depth and amount of feeling and the difficulties each student incurred. Change is rarely comfortable and can induce anxiety and fear. So a question that emerges is, is it possible to minimise this sense or is it essential to the development? ETAD; 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 16, 17, 21 and 22 are all relevant.

The effects the programme has made in the lived world of each student is varied from the heavy ‘dark night’ scenario to being able to have a greater sense of self
worth. The data revealed that crisis can lead to greater transformation. T7 reports:

*I was at a crisis point. It was a crisis point in my mind, in my fears, and they evaporated almost as fast (when you let go) but at the same time it didn’t mean that some of the situations disappeared. But I think that’s quite important because many people come looking for solutions to things but the solutions aren’t necessarily the way they expect them to be, and it doesn’t mean that you look around the world really different, but it is different if you feel different or see it differently but actually the same things are happening (T7).*

T7’s experience was that the external aspects of his life did not change, but his response to them did. Nonetheless, generally the data reveals that moving one’s perspectives can upset life considerably and can upset the student’s equilibrium. Our programme sets out to aid the individual to obtain a better life; mind, body and spirit but change often comes at a personal price that for some is too high to pay.

How we can, or even if we should, overcome this dilemma is an emerging question to be further addressed. From our data we see that intention, engagement, purpose and will from the individual is essential. It is not a passive development and it takes time and some are impatient. T12 relates:

*Well I suppose that’s what I’ve been trying to do but it, took me years and years and years just to get to, you know … Just to sometimes make a phone call takes me years literally. With a fear of something, it’s difficult to let go of traumas because when fear is linked with a trauma it’s just very hard (T12).*

This quotation reveals another theme that runs throughout the data which is the need at some point to address one’s fears. All these elements seem daunting, so the question arises, what could counteract these difficulties? Citing Heschel (1976), Gordon (2003) suggests we counter the anxiety of change with awe:
Awe is the antithesis of fear for in awe we are drawn toward the object of anxiety whereas in fear we shrink away. In fear we abandon ourselves. In awe we transcend ourselves in the openness and boundless generosity of ecstatic surrender, fear cannot touch us. In awe we put aside our wilful need for certainty and allow ourselves to be humble in the face of mystery. In this place where knowledge is sacrificed for the sake of wisdom we engage the unknowable and take our stand (Gordon 2003, p.17).

If we take awe to be reverential wonder and profound respect, an inspirational experience usually related to some religious or spiritual experience, it could be said that the opening to a higher power could lead one to surrender to higher forces which in turn might to some extent at least transform the life of the individual. The data revealed several descriptions of awe leading to transformation of self to varying degrees however, the School's programme is unlikely to be able to contrive the experience of awe in an actual lived experience. Nonetheless, it may be able to facilitate the opening up of the individual for this experience to occur and some of the comments revolved around the mediations exercises seem to have achieved this.

6.2.6. The Perennial Self:

Spiritual experiences of the kind encountered above seem to be cross culture and background which advances the theory that there might be a perennial philosophy that is present through all religions, cultures and peoples across the globe at all times. Walsh (2002) says:

Our true nature is not only intimately linked with, but embraced by and even one with the sacred. The worlds from various traditions are different, but they all echo the same themes. In Christianity: the kingdom of heaven is within you, in Islam: those who know themselves know their Lord. In Confucianism: those who know completely their own nature know heaven. Or, in the depths of the soul one finds the divine, the one. In Hinduism: Atman the individual consciousness and Brahman, the
universal consciousness are one. Or in Buddhism: look within, you are the Buddha. (Walsh. 2002, p.15)

Sinnott (1998) also asks an interesting question:

The spiritual seeker who experiences all persons as Buddha, all places as Nirvana and all sounds as Mantra is either totally out of touch with ordinary reality without a reality to replace it, or much more able to orchestrate the multiple ordinary and non ordinary states of consciousness by virtue of improved cognitive abilities. What if built in human possibilities include a cognitive possibility of transcending the prison of our own cognition to enjoy a God’s eye view of it? (Sinnott 1998, p.183)

Is this ‘built in’ human possibility that Sinnott refers to, what mystics and spiritual teachers down the ages have experienced? Does Sinnott’s statement suggest that we could receive the same experiences as God? There is another possibility that many mystical writers hint upon but rarely made explicit and that is, instead of the notion that we can have a direct relationship with God, we go one step further and suggest that our true authentic self, our life force, highest self or soul energy is God already? Could this then be described not so much Perennial Philosophy but a perennial Self, present within us all? And if this is the case could we by uncovering, acknowledging, and attuning to it, obtain some form of spiritual Self-awareness, with some possibility of gaining complete ‘union’ with God? To some this concept would be sacrilegious but why are we so afraid of potential expansion and power of self? At his inauguration speech in 1994 Nelson Mandela quoting from Williamson (1992) said:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us ...There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you ...We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear,
Revealing our power might be seen as arrogance and be threatening for some people. Might this be because it would alienate us from our tribe and if we become empowered it may follow that we also have to accept responsibility? In which case the individual may need to take ownership of their life, which in turn may throw a completely different perspective on how it is lived. If so, is the individual ready to take on that burden? T4 describes the feeling of becoming aware of Self:

Things come up, and that hurts. Looking at oneself so honestly, can hurt, but I found once I worked through the hurt bit by bit and again looked at myself unconditionally and said OK fine that’s in the past, not if only but let’s say next time let’s do it differently now having the tools to see things differently and to react differently (T4).

T4’s comments echo the difficulties involved and which the data has revealed throughout but also seems to answer EQAD No 4 that unconditional responses can assist the process. It has been noted within the literature and data that some form of unconditional love is to be found through all faiths around the globe. Does this concept hold the key to the perennial self? If so contemporary spiritual development that actively uses this concept as part of its programme could have many advantages, cutting across dogma into the experience of spirit for and by the individual.

6.2.7. Spirituality in a Post-modern world:

For thousands of years we have been searching for truth, visions of Utopia through different ideals and philosophies. But, could it be that the answer to humanity’s problem does not lie in the hands of any philosopher or particular
political persuasion, religious leader, ideal or even a vision no matter how good:
each regime, each philosophy, each faith has been called into question or
disappeared, they come and go, age after age. A new leader, a new idea comes
along and we are told it will be our salvation but very soon the new ideas fade,
and then another prophet in the guise of the next new man or woman at the top
comes along and the whole process begins again. Equally, it could be reasoned
that contemporary spiritual Self-awareness is another idealistic concept. Giving
power to the individual, for instance, may just be another spiritual concept. Is the
new spiritual paradigm any better than the religious models of the past?
Gordon (2003) suggests that science loves structure, models and paradigms and
that uncertainty and anxiety are necessary consequences of a creative universe.
Quoting from Kuhn (1996) Gordon argues that:

science assumes that they already know what the world is like, and is
rather concerned with the further substantiation and verification of the
existing paradigms. They often suppress fundamental novelties because
they are necessarily subversive to its basic commitments. Science dislikes
uncertainty as it can open a Pandora’s box that seriously calls into
question a model of reality that may have taken hundreds of years to
establish (Gordon 2003, p.6).

As Gordon suggests, there are strands of science that still completely ignore or
even scorn any investigation into intuitive psycho-spiritual areas, but perhaps
this is understandable when part of the process of this development often brings
up fears and uncertainties with no definitive models. Conversely Griffin (1997)
states that ‘parapsychology may turn out to be of decisive importance in moving
our culture from a modern to a post-modern outlook’. He also states
‘constructive post-modern thought provides support for the ecology, peace,
feminist and other apparent emancipatory movements’. Equally it might be
argued that any movement, group or organisation after a time often creates its own bias and structures. So is the modern spiritual movement in as much danger as any other movement from creating, structures and building up doctrines? If we look at the apparent new movements Griffin refers to above, each has already shown signs of locking onto dogmatic ideals that in their extreme give little room for an intuitive response: the Green movement that does not take on board science in its bid for the natural world could miss out on life-giving discoveries. Peace movements that state we must not draw arms at any cost may play into the hands of a dictator. Feminists fighting for their legitimate rights as women becoming anti-men. And emancipatory movements that believe so much in civil liberty they allow the worst kind of abusers free to hurt and kill again. The New Age could equally be seen as such a movement as ‘New Agers’ also create models and structures and many of their ideas seem just as biased. For instance many support alternative medicine to such an extent that they avoid medical science at any cost. Can there be a different approach that does not use set models? Hartung, Blustein (2002) report:

A post-modern perspective (like intuition) interprets true reasoning to mean different things for different people depending on their world views, decision making styles cultural value orientations and life circumstances. (Hartung, Blustein 2002, p.43)

Conversely Kant (1964) suggested that there is an absolute truth if only we could find it. Yet if one lives and works intuitively there may never be an absolute truth as each moment has its own unique meaning for the individual. Like postmodernism, contemporary spirituality celebrates people’s differences and endeavours to work with them. T2 relates:
I'm more open. I'm sure I can accept that there is more than one way of living life, I didn't know what that one way was, but I had a feeling that there was one way and I just had to find it. I don't think that is the case any more, it has made me look at things ... This work helps you become autonomous and helps you to stand on your own two feet (T2).

This comment appears to agree with the postmodern idiom of different perspectives and also illustrates both ETAD Notes 12 and 22. Nonetheless, aiding spiritual development and Self autonomy might still require some assistance and guidance. T10 relates that the School’s programme:

*helped me be more positive and I guess I felt more empowered in the sense of it, it gave me a stronger feeling of connection with spirit. When you tune in, you receive the information. The strongest feeling was being connected to my own greater guidance (T10).*

But can this 'greater guidance' really be an authoritative voice? It is easy to find authority in academia by the papers that are published. But if you wrote a hundred papers on spirituality or for that matter intuition, it might not necessarily mean you were a more spiritual or intuitive person or indeed have had a spiritual or intuitive experience yourself. You might have much diverse and informative knowledge about spirituality but if you have not realised it yourself, can you legitimately be called an authority in something so connected with individual experience? And even if you have had such experiences can you be an authority for anyone else’s spirituality given the individual nature that is required to ‘know’ for oneself?

These questions promote the need for more study. Kierkegaard (Friedman 1999) gave us the notion that each of us requires individual self-awareness before God and each of us is unique. So would this not mean that uniqueness demands
different solutions to different problems for different people? If each moment in
time is unique, and each person brings their individual perspective, experience,
needs and desires, there is unlikely to be an effective spiritual model, map or
guide that suits each and every individual. This suggests, not just the need for a
new paradigm but the necessity to be open to use different models of learning for
different phases of psycho-spiritual growth with different people. Does the
School creating a more focused programme mean we are using old methods? A
programme without any form would be hard to practise, so rather than using the
programme as a set model, it is used as a scaffolding which is movable and
flexible to the needs of the students. This mutable approach does not necessarily
mean lack of structure and the data suggests that some focus at various times can
assist.

As reported in the previous ‘dark night’ section, change often involves
difficulties and psychotherapists know that real transformation is often
simultaneous with crisis (Rowan 2002). Similarly new scientific paradigms are
embracing and even assuming unpredictability to be an inherent cosmic
expression that is deeply embedded within the core of reality. Heidegger (1962)
believed that anxiety is coincident with freedom and proposed that the ‘authentic
self’ is very aware of this: On one occasion a student came back on her second
week and exclaimed: ‘I have realised that everything that comes out my mouth is
a lie’. This sounds extreme but if you consider how we are all conditioned to
speak and live by other people’s constructs, one can see how this statement could
be more prevalent than it might sound. This particular student only came a
couple more times, saying she was just not ready to make the changes needed to
find herself at that time as it would necessitate too many disruptions in her life.

Vaughan (2000) agrees saying:

Duplicity and deception which create conflict, constitute obstacles to the attainment of inner peace and spiritual understanding, spiritual well being seems to depend on a commitment to the truth which will set you free. Truth can become a strong force for healing once the commitment is made. In psychotherapy, telling the truth about experience is an essential part of the process, but its relevance to spiritual well being is rarely recognised (Vaughan 2000, p.21).

If confronting one’s truth is essential to the spiritual process, it may necessitate asking awkward questions. This might have the effect of making the person feel vulnerable and uncertain. So what can be done to assist the process? In obvious cases of life changes, such as physical disabilities or abuse it is fully accepted that for any healing to take place it will require strength and assistance (Senter/Caldwell 2002) but, changes that are encountered in spiritual development can be every bit as difficult and often needs adjustments for the individual (Boswell 2001). T13 recalls how making spiritual connections through 'attunements' (see Chapter Two) helped:

Certainly over those first two or three years my evening attunement changed and deepened. Some nights I didn’t feel I was very still or very clear and other times I was. Sometimes it was very clear and I was very happy about what I was doing, I was very confident and clear about what I was doing and it was effective, other times I wasn’t quite so sure, it felt a little bit you know the quality of it varied quite radically. But over a period I was able to develop I guess a system of attunement so that I knew when I was in tune and although sometimes it was hard after a day’s work to do that for a period I made myself achieve that attunement however long it took so that I knew when I had reached it and when I hadn’t. There was a more consistent level of attunement that I was gaining after and during that period and since (T13).

This student felt able to create his own system of regular attunements to assist his growth, but this was developed by himself. When asked if that attunement infiltrated his day- to -day living he replied:
Yes because those nights when I felt that connection it generally made me feel more at ease with myself and more focused and purposeful when I started the next day. I felt like I was connected to where I should be whereas without the attunement I felt I was drifting slightly and passing time a little bit rather than getting to grips with something so yeah, it certainly did indirectly, I mean my ability to stay in my own energy space increased, as that system of attunement became stronger, then my ability to stay in my own energy increased. (T13)

‘A system’ might suggest a set formula, however meditation is a personal experience. The School might provide the techniques for meditations but the experience the student receives is unique. This meditational experience for T13 enabled him to stay in his own ‘energy space’ meaning he was able to be more connected with his true self. T13 and others (ETAD No 16) suggest that the regular meditational exercises in which spiritual connection is made assisted their psycho-spiritual process.

Analogously, it is suggested that humanity is the equivalent to the age of 18 – 21 (Soskin 1990). Adolescence can be a potentially dangerous age, when often the young adult pushes against society. It is an age where there is a desire to break down the existing boundaries and explore. Is humanity straining to become of age and, just like any young person it is pushing against the authority of society and religions? If so, at some point like a young adult we might need to begin to take charge of our own actions, thoughts and feelings to enable us to direct our own destiny.

One symbol of Christianity is the fishes; epitomised by Jesus calling his disciples ‘fishers of men’. The emblem for the new age is the lone water carrier (Heelas1996). Water in Greek symbolism denotes the source or spirit of life and
in this image the individual holds it in their own hands. Could this illustrates of
the ascendancy of the individual and the flow of spirit which is in our own
hands?

Since World War Two the individual has received more attention and it is
increasingly considered that the world has many voices and all are valid. This
has apparent similarities with postmodern concepts (Forbes 2003). Nonetheless,
postmodernism might be thought to be fundamentally grounded in multi-
cultural political ethics, although it could be argued that political ethics and
multi-cultural sensitivities are certainly important, but can they form the basis of
spiritual practice or commitment? One could equally reason that in adducing
postmodernism as a support for a spiritual argument it might be seen as a
fundamental contradiction as they may only have superficial similarities. Some
aspects of postmodernism for instance despite a surface pretence at spirituality in
some of its iterations may be perceived as little more than an elaborate form of
Sartrian existentialism (Sartre 1981), intellectually based on idealism. We could,
however, take the perennial view that spiritual forces are within us all,
regardless of culture, nationality, society or clan and accept that every view is of
value. By this token contemporary spirituality generally could be seen to
resonate with the postmodern notion of the freedom of working ‘outside the box’
or set structure of beliefs. In the past, for many, it was felt that there was only one
ture way to God, but in the present climate to believe that one way to God is the
only way seems myopic, limiting, and possibly just simply wrong. For all its
faults, postmodernism does at least allow the possibility of autonomy which in
spiritual terms means individuals can find their own way to God, giving, them their own an authentic experiences of spiritual truths.

6.2.8. Spiritual Authority:

Increasingly it is propounded that:

Truth, not surprisingly for those who see themselves as spiritual beings, must — at least first- and- foremost — come by way of one’s own experience. For this alone provides direct and uncontaminated access to the spiritual realm. ‘Truths’ provided by the dogmas of religious traditions, or by other people, parents, scientist, even putatively spiritual master might well be erroneous. A particular religious doctrine might have developed for reasons of political expediency; scientists, as history shows us, often get it wrong; a spiritual master might have lapsed into his contaminated ego mode of functioning. ‘Truths’ coming from beyond the Self, that is to say, cannot be relied upon. They can only be taken into account when they have been shown to be right, something which involves testing them by way of one’s own experience or (spiritually informed) intuition. (Heelas 1996, p.21).

Although there are many arguments against this approach (Chapter Two) gaining spiritual truths by way of experience stands at the heart of contemporary spiritual development. So where does this leave the spiritual teacher, indeed is there any need for one if knowledge is within us all? Could one just stay at home and meditate?

The data reveals Psycho-spiritual learning requires openness and transparency (see Chapter Two) but how can we expect our students to find their own authenticity if the facilitators have not implemented theirs? ‘Transference and counter -transference in the classroom is rife’ (Mayes 2002b), within any form of education. To counterbalance this in spiritual Self-awareness it might be appropriate if the facilitator is also required to develop their own spiritual self-
awareness. For instance, it is commonly accepted that to become a psychotherapist the practitioner must go through the same process of psychotherapy themselves. Yet despite the growing interest in implementing spiritual programmes into higher education there seems very little work in the spiritual education of the teachers involved. Mayes (1998) suggests the use of both Eastern meditative practices and techniques drawn from transpersonal or ‘fourth force’ psychotherapy. These fall into two categories; meditational techniques and transpersonal psychology mainly from Assiglioli’s psychosynthesis. He also advocates using some Gestalt therapy. He says:

Far from challenging or replacing other forms of reflectivity such as critical awareness of the political dimension of teaching and textural analysis of pre-service teacher’s life history these theoretical perspectives and practices are meant to broaden our reflectivity repertoire to enable us to tend more profoundly to ourselves and to our teacher in three basic existential dimensions, the psychological, the social and the spiritual. Caring for our students in this deep and dynamic way we will be able to see them with heightened clarity, respond to them with multivalent compassion and pass on to them a divine spark which they may later kindle in their own students (Mayes 1998, p.28).

Rogers (2001) also argues the need for teachers to explore themselves:

a focus on wholeness in the way educators teach at colleges and universities ...selfhood is a legitimate topic in education for if the teacher does not know him or herself how can she know her student or her subject. ...nurturing the soul of teacher is an important leadership talk in institutions of higher education. ... Institutions of higher education need leaders who have themselves made the inward journey and who operate from their inner power who have incorporated the spiritual dimension in their ways of leading (Rogers. 2001, p.595).

But how many teachers/leaders/ facilitators really know themselves? Although, to any depth, this thesis cannot delve into specific questions that arose from results of the data regarding the teaching in this field, it seems that any spiritual
programme and education requires much more research and discussion on the subject of training of teachers.

6.2.9. Spiritual Education:
Hand (2003) says that the phrase ‘spiritual education does not yet have a normal or established use’ (Hand 2003). Spirit means: essence, core, which indicates the real, the true. Finding truth by reaching into the depths of our core Self also propounds that we do as the Delphic motto says, ‘know ourselves’. Mystics, existentialists and post-modernists (Hunt 2003) alike have also spoken of listening to the inner voice; the divine within. Does the current environment give us more opportunity to do so? Or is it really the case as Kant (1956) believed that the truth is out there but we just haven’t found it?

Self-development implies some form of better state or person. Kant (1956) relays to us that the aspirations to become a better person is ‘our duty’, and ‘the achievement of the highest good in the world is the necessary object of will determinable by the moral law’. Kant sees this only as being possible through ‘the observance of the soul’. He argues that ‘the moral law commands us to make the highest possible good in the world the final object of all our conduct’ (Kant 1956, p.114). Commendable sentiments but with so many interpretations on what might constitute a ‘better person’, where does that lead us? Could it be for instance that a better person may not be just one who does good deeds but one who lives by their truth? Citing 19th century educationalist Pestalozzi, Forbes (2003) says:
To elevate human nature to its highest, its noblest requires developing whatever of the divine and eternal lies within its nature ... Man is someone who is developed in his innermost powers and man will only become Man through his inner and spiritual life and a spiritual life is not to be found by a person in any outward expression of religiosity but only in the inner most sanctuary of his being. It is only here that Pestalozzi believed that a person could find a genuine foundation for future love and power (Forbes 2003, p.110-111)

This ‘elevation’ to the divine which Pestalozzi suggests lies within us, is echoed in contemporary spirituality. But although these principles have been present throughout history very few examples of finding the spirit within ourselves have been identified, let alone actively used within education. Jarvis (1992) suggests ‘turning the eye inward’ to communicate with one’s deepest inner self. However, the research has shown that the ‘soul’ or ‘inner’ essence is not so much developed from reason or logical faculties as propounded by Plato (Melling 1987) but contacting our inner core spiritual Self and authenticating this knowledge by actualising it in our real lived world. In this sense it might be is seen as a ‘living education’.

As relayed in Chapter Two Carr (1996) says that spiritual education should encompass the big questions? If this includes moral ethics, whose should we adopt, as in a multi-racial society these may be conflicting. It makes sense to include different faiths and beliefs, but can any of their ideas give us an authentic spiritual experience that we can use within our individual lives? Religions, some of which are hundreds or even thousands of years old, would probably argue that their faiths hold all the keys. But if this is the case why is there such a growing desire for spiritual experiences outside a religious structure? It could be argued there are many roads to God or even that all roads eventually lead to
God or spiritual enlightenment. One of the aspects of contemporary spiritual development is that one can select different values and techniques to achieve this, but to obtain any kind of depth spirituality it would seem likely that at some point a student must choose a road and continue with it at least for a time.

Many of our students have elected not to finish the School’s experiential spiritual programme. Does their departure mean the students who left could not or would not put themselves through the sometimes abrasive experiences revealed in the data necessary for depth growth? Or is it simply that the School is not good enough? T10 expresses that she felt the programme provided her with a good structure:

*I think it gives you a safe structure to work within that doesn’t take you out into a fearful place, you feel supported, you’re supported within the group and by the teachers and so has created a feeling of safety (T10).*

This quotation describes a constant theme throughout the data that a feeling of personal safety is important. The framework of an established religion might give people such safety by following along a well-trodden road. Safety is important and yet it could be argued that any movement or change is likely to disrupt the individual’s life so any change of self may never feel safe. But why is it that students like T10 feel safe and others do not? All the interviewees expressed that they have emerged stronger from our programme. One could argue that they are bound to say this to me, the principal, but it is a private School, there are no bursaries, students sign up and pay termly, they can leave at any time. At the time of the data collections there was not any recognised status in doing our courses, so they had little to gain in an orthodox sense, they stayed
presumably because they felt they had received something of value. For instance, T8 finds his communication and critical skills have increased:

I don’t know if it is related or not but I seem to have got in all modesty quite an ability now to analyse political events ... you know all the political stuff you’re seeing in any situation in the universities I work in. I think I can analyse it much better than I used to.... Whereas at one time I used to think of people’s motives in terms of a physical planes issues and form a sort of psychological physical plane point of view, I now almost inevitably go to the spiritual connection with them and what their spiritual mission is and why they are doing it (T8).

There is also evidence from the data that other students do acknowledge the greater picture in life which can lead to living a more altruistic life. T8 also relates he now has:

a broader mission not just earning bread and butter money, because my profession is researching things, so instead of trying to publish another paper I think of things in a bigger frame now and I feel I have a mission to somehow combine the psychic and spiritual work with other professional work (T8).

The whole area of contemporary spiritual education is still forming and evidence from the literature chapter suggests several possibilities, including, education in different faiths, examining the bigger questions of life, moral and ethical issues and more experiential spiritual learning. The data reveals that a programme such as the one described throughout the thesis may provide some of these things. The programme is still undergoing changes to the curriculum and probably always will as, by its nature, a developmental programme is ongoing. Many of the School’s students found it ‘very hard’ which promotes the question why should we need to make anyone’s life harder? Nonetheless, data reveals this could be a necessary part of the psycho-spiritual learning process. The data also suggests that the full potential (CSSD 7) of depth spiritual work is not obtained
by all of our students, but that various levels of positive changes in spiritual
growth are experienced by most of our participants.

6.3. Further Research:

• Further study is required to examine what efforts could be implemented to
  ensure that all students could be better assisted in their psycho-spiritual
  journey.
• More specific research into the differing layers of intuition.
• The need to educate teachers and facilitators in spiritual Self-awareness.
• More educational standards to be implemented.
• The need for practices usually kept for therapy and counselling to support the
  psycho-spiritual process.
• Acceptance and education of all faiths and beliefs.
• Promotion of experiential learning in spiritual education.
• Research on how to balance the necessary self exposure within depth spiritual
  Self-awareness alongside the necessary support.

6.4. Conclusion:

In this thesis I have relayed the subject through literature and the work of the
School. I have implemented a formative evaluation of the School’s programme
looking for transformational change. In the previous chapter I have unpicked the
techniques, exercises and approaches which aided this process. Many recall the
difficulty in their transition however, most interviewees reported some self-
awareness actualised in the lived world and many participants believe that the
programme has assisted them to be more ethical and has given them a greater
desire to serve humanity, and a tendency towards altruism. But as the very word
spirituality still has no consensus meaning, and there are multiple ways of determining what being spiritual might mean, any definitive measurement of how spiritual someone has become, may be elusive. For who can judge such a non-definable aspect of spiritual Self? What exam board, or examining process has the qualification? Maybe only God can do this, and if God or some part of divine energy is within us, it is possible that only the individual can be the final judge. It may therefore be inappropriate to make definitive conclusions on the spiritual nature of any person, they can only evaluate it for themselves.

Prior to the development of the four-stage programme in the early years of the School we had many students leave. It is commonly known however, that there is often a high percentage of students on any course that leave, particularly in the first year. Also in any course that has different levels of learning, students often get the basis of what they need and do not want to progress to higher or more depth levels. Drop outs in the programme are very much fewer now, but one must consider that some people may be voting with their feet. At the time of writing this thesis most participants in the study believe they are, to a lesser or greater degree, better, more self-aware and spiritual people having attended our programme. Being more spiritual however, does mean different things to different individuals. To really maximise the data, their learning probably needs to be actualised in the lived world over a longer period of time with life presenting, as it always does, problems to be solved, bereavements to be grieved, and all the many myriad experiences an individual may encounter. Nonetheless, the data reveals evidence of the programme positively affecting the students' spiritual Self-awareness.
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APPENDIX
Students who found all elements very helpful: 13
Students who found all elements helpful: 8
Students who found some elements helpful and others not: 9
Students who did not feel helped at all: 1
No answer to the question: 2
Students who found all elements very helpful: 9
Students who found all elements helpful: 14
Students who found some elements helpful and others not: 4
Students who did not feel helped at all: 1
No answer to the question: 1
PSYCHIC GROWTH ONE (Chakra Term)

STAGE THREE

Students who found all elements very helpful: 5
Students who found all elements helpful: 8
Students who found some elements helpful and others not: 0
Students who did not feel helped at all: 0
No answer to the question: 1
Students who found all elements very helpful: 2
Students who found all elements helpful: 4
Students who found some elements helpful and others not: 0
Students who did not feel helped at all: 2
No answer to the question: 2
Students who found all elements very helpful: 0
Students who found all elements helpful: 2
Students who found some elements helpful and others not: 1
Students who did not feel helped at all: 1
STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AFTER WHICH STUDENTS LEFT I&I

- Stage One: 42%
- Stage Two: 39%
- Stage Three: 19%

- Foundation: 42%
- Unfoldment: 9%
- Psychic Growth 1: 26%
- Psychic Growth 2: 13%
CROSS CASE ANALYSIS OF CATEGORICAL THEMES

STAGE ONE

General Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Response</th>
<th>Negative Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased Intuition</td>
<td>Little Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt Safe</td>
<td>Did Not Understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked the Structure</td>
<td>Did Not Appreciate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed Questions</td>
<td>Did Not Commit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Made Comparison to Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received Encouragement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given Basic Tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made an Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Positive: Intuition, Felt Safe, Liked the Structure, Allowed Questions, Greater Self-Awareness, Received Encouragement, Given Basic Tools, Made an Impact, Met People
- Negative: Little Impact, Did Not Understand, Did Not Appreciate, Did Not Commit, Made Comparison to Others
STAGE ONE

Course Content

- Positive Response
  - Chakra Exercises
  - Meditational Exercises
  - Psychic Exercises
  - Opening Exercises
  - Visualisation Exercises
  - Using Symbols
  - Grounding Exercises
  - Tarot Meditation

- Negative Response
  - Too Basic
  - Did Not Understand
  - Content Predictable
  - Too Quick
  - Too Slow
  - Not Enough Content

Personal Changes Made

- Positive Response
  - Observing Intuition
  - Change in Relationships
  - More Intuitive
  - Better Ability to Communicate
  - More Confident
  - More Loving
  - Greater Understanding of Self

[Graphs showing quantitative data for positive and negative responses to course content and personal changes made]
STAGE TWO

General Observations

Positive Response
- Help with Personal Difficulties
- Observation of Group
- Engaged with Material
- Felt Safe

Negative Response
- Found Difficult/ Struggled
- Challenging Material
- Didn't Fit In
- Received Negative Comments

Course Content

Positive Response
- 'Cutting the Ties' Exercise
- Experiential Work
- Discovered Energy
- Discussions
- Linking with Others
- Awareness of Others
- Chakra Exercises
- Wall
- Astral
- Awareness of Self
- Guides
- Channeling
- Forgiveness
- Terminology
- Making Comparisons
- Reading Materials
- Healing Exercises

Negative Response
- Observations Hurt
- Group too Big
- Felt Exposed
- Too Much Information
- Working with the Astral
- Did Not Understand
- People Monopolising
- Comments from Teachers
- Nervous of Speaking
- Needed More Therapy
- Comment from Students
STAGE TWO

Personal Changes Made

- Positive Response
  - Implemented Exercises
  - Opened to New Ideas
  - Greater Self Awareness
  - Dealt With Emotional Issues
  - More Confidence
  - Able to Think for Oneself
  - Connected to a Higher Power
  - Awareness of Energy
  - Greater Love of Life
  - Let go of Fear
  - Greater Awareness of Self+Others
  - Self Reflective
  - More Positive
  - Gained Responsibility
  - Life Had More Depth

- Negative Response
  - Personal Relationships
  - Needed Therapy
  - BecameWithdrawn
  - Became Antisocial
  - More Lonely
STAGE THREE

General Observations

Positive Response
- Stimulating / Exciting
- Progress Noted
- Safe Environment
- Questioning
- Connection to a Higher Power

Negative Response
- Denial of Self
- Attendance Patchy
- Challenged

![Bar chart showing positive and negative observations](chart.png)
STAGE THREE

Course Content

Positive Response
- Guides
- Chakra
- Auric
- Able To Manage Energy
- Channelling
- Meditation
- Public Readings
- Linking With Others
- Receiving Proof
- Opening Up Exercises
- Good Reference Book
- Body Work
- Heart Exercises
- Learning About The Persona
- Received Evidence
- Questioning
- Practiced Unconditionality
- Stimulated Imagination

Negative Response
- Did Not Understand Auric
- Personal Issues Not Addressed
- Exposure Of Self
- Chakras
- Public Demonstration
- Linking With Others
- Fell Asleep In Meditation
- Discussing Past Lives
- Comparison With Others
- Time Stress
- Yoga
- Unfamiliar Territory
- Painful To Look At Self
- There For Too Long
- Wanted More Therapy
- Hard To Assimilate
- Linking With Astral
- Reference Book
STAGE THREE

Personal Changes Made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Responses</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Positive Effects</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and Set Patterns</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to Higher Powers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effected Work Life</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Confidence</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Open / Honest</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleared Fear</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed Relationships</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Makes More Sense</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Peace</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Talkative</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Intuition</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming More Conscious</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Responses</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Effects</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt Dreadful Sometimes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of Self</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STAGE FOUR

General Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactions to Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Spiritual Life / God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt Safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Judgmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Directed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Found Challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Specialised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Bar chart showing positive and negative observations](chart.png)
Course Content

Positive Response
- Discussion
- Reference Book
- Discussion Of Current Issues
- Changing Beliefs
- Connection To Higher Powers
- More Tools Learnt
- More intuition
- Meditation
- Lots Of Time
- Very Stimulating
- Angels
- Listening
- Small Numbers
- Liked Therapy Group
- Discussion Of Global Issues

Negative Response
- General Discussion
- Found Reference Book Difficult
- Personal Discussions
- Conflicts With Others
- Did Not Like Open Day
STAGE FOUR

Personal Changes Made

Positive Response
- Positive Changes to
  Self Awareness
- Changing Beliefs
- More Autonomous
- More Open and Speaking Truth
- Managing Energy
- Like/ Love Myself More
- Work With Higher Power
- Have a Different Life
- Trust Self
- Integrated Spirituality into Life
- Like/ Love Others More
- Use Intuition
- Affected Personal Life
- More Balanced
- Used Class Material in Work
- Very Supportive
- Was Not Being Judged
- More Loving
- Self Responsibility
- More Knowledge

Positive

Quantity