Faculty of Humanities
Science and Mathematics Education Centre

Rising Waves, Breathless Wind

Lacan, Zen and Adolescence: Illuminating Śūnyatā in the Dualism of Education

Nicholas Mark Eaves

This thesis is presented for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University

May 2018

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The author would like to acknowledge the contribution of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship in supporting this research.

Human Ethics The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number #SMEC-48-13

Signature: .....

Date: 21/5/18 .....

Table of Contents

Prologue

I find myself impelled to explore the recurrence of that which might be seen as the indifference towards the authenticity of others and self in education. I seek clarification in the relationships between teacher and student through exploring the inner relationship we formulate with our selves. In my inquiry, I remain open to self-reflection and self-questioning on a deeply phenomenological and meditative level as I question and seek what is Real. I subscribe to the Zen concept of seeing one's nature (*chien-hsing* in Chinese; *kensh* in Japanese) or seeing True-nature (Kraft, 1992, p. 89) as I contemplate the authenticity in truth of the other, founded in the emptiness of *śūnyatā*. Emptiness should not be misunderstood as nothingness, rather selflessness (Yoshiro, 1989, p. 39)—that is, I find myself oriented towards a philosophy that suggests individuals possess no independent or fixed nature. Our comprehension of emptiness assists us in understanding the illusory nature of self and the suffering wrought by our attachment to any idea of a permanent identity.

Instead of permanence, I look to apprehend the *locus* of the other, and apprehend the other through a *locus* of being. I develop Practising Receptance, reflecting a topological situatedness of us, moving away from the possibility of modern subjectivity that places us in a realm of temporality, isolating us.

Practising Receptance allows a topology of the living subject to explore the element of our isolation and its effect on us entering into the sphere of an other. Hisamatsu Shin'ichi illuminates our isolation,

> In our aloneness, in isolation, we suffer the weight of the human condition which burdens us all 'As I am-however I am-will not do. Now what do I do?' (in Shore, 2002, p. 32).

Topology in this thesis refers to the ways in which we consider ourselves and others reflected in a spatial relationship. It is a mathematical term referring to figures that retain their original properties regardless of their manipulations. The metaphor for us follows—we have an original 'shape', an unbreakable and formless authenticity, yet this is changed over time by language and others, stretched and diverted from our originality. For the reasons mentioned, topology and not topography is a better description of the process of us, a clearer explanation as to the *locus* of us, situated in a space at a specific time, disregarding any notions of a fixed location.

To see an other within a topological paradigm assists us in answering the question of 'where' we are situated, rather than 'who' we are. The advent of a spatial dimension to us allows a fluidity of self, unencumbered by the potentially superficial explanation of who, which might be answered by a myriad of responses, none of which reflect our relationship to the other, and our inherent isolation from others. The where of us requires deep and fundamental reflection on our topology, requiring meaningful questioning as to how we are located. Practising Receptance is a Zen-like way of thinking, allowing us to act in Reverence with the other, helping us to locate the topology of the other, in a proximal and spatial relationship, to apprehend one's profound beauty. Practising Receptance requires an association between self and other, to

ascertain the topology of that other. The topology of the other requires an interaction to ascertain the other's *locus,* to enter into the sphere of that other and apprehend the profound beauty there is.

I situate myself in a critical and fundamental reassessment of relationships between adolescent students and teacher. My ideas are based in a hermeneutics of Lacanian thought, Zen Buddhism and Practising Receptance as I attempt to demystify possible hidden truths in student narratives as situated texts. In exploration of thinking, my ideas are from a number of texts from Jacques Lacan including *Ecrits* (1966, 1977, 2002) and *The Language of the Self. The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis* (1968) translated by Anthony Wilden. I also look to the ideas of Dan McAdams in his *Life Story Model of Identity* (1985, 2001) in my inquiry, which may offer insights into our *locus*. I wonder if we find *locus* in the narrative story of 'me', the construal of our story through conscious adherence to a figurated self. In our attachment to a self, do we confine and define ourselves, and then become isolated by our definition?

In our aloneness, in isolation, we suffer.

The ideas of Lacan, French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, are represented extensively in this thesis. Lacan appeals to me in his unique application and thought—a seemingly courageous and rebellious figure, with an almost impenetrable writing style. I am particularly drawn to his Mirror Phase (1936), where we gain an understanding of the apprehension, objectification and development of the self, through identification of an 'imago', or ideal image, linking the 'I' to socially elaborated situations (Lacan, 2002, p.7).

Our understanding of two different forms of *other* is a key concept in Lacanian psychoanalysis and a central understanding in this thesis. In my understanding, Other (capital O) refers to the original unknowable individual, originally the mother, in her radical unknowable difference to us, or Otherness, and also as authenticity in others (that is, Others). The mother encapsulates both Real and Symbolic Otherness, in her alterity and authority. The mother becomes an unknowable and omnipotent presence, placing the infant in a position of questioning what the mother/Other wants. As the mother interprets our cries, essentially messages are imbued upon us by her interpretations, not necessarily corresponding to our needs. A lacuna remains between what is needed and what is provided, as our attention turns outwards seeking respite from that which is unanswered, initially from the Other, then from others.

Lacan's ideas, obscure and difficult to grasp, distill and clarify over time, though much of his writing remains challenging to fully comprehend. I feel a likeness in his writing to that of a Zen *kōan*—wise and obfuscated, revealed through deep introspection. I am drawn to Lacan's ideas of forever seeking beyond what is presented to us, in that we cannot accept a student's behaviour or speech as self-evident—actions and reactions to situations are the end result of a complex and interwoven series of experiences and thoughts. Lacan's writing in *Écrits* (1966, 1977, 2002), taken from lectures, rather than written for the purposes of a text, spoke to me in a way I cannot fully explain. Words seem piled on top of words, in a dense incompressible whole—a perfect metaphor for us illustrated in Lacan's writing, whether he meant it in this way is unclear to me.

I read with interest, as the rigidity of *matheme* and clinical coolness of his writing transformed into an emotional subscript that spoke to me, through many

years of deciphering the writing of young children and adolescents. In the process of uncovering, I retranslate a contingent awareness of self and other as applied to the praxis of teaching. In this way, of retranslating a situatedness, I embed myself in a hermeneutical phenomenological inquiry as I reach towards understanding the human being as adolescent, who yearns for self-understanding as well as understanding from others. In my undertaking, I invite the reader into a radical hermeneutical heuristic through forming and reforming a questioning (van Manen, 2014, p. 376)—a rolling embodiment like waves that draw energy in, curl it under, up and over until it crashes, subsides and gathers it again in ever iterative motion. I see this repeating as a meditative, contemplative questioning essential to the enigmatic nature of my thesis. In my attempts to engage and instil wonder in the reader, I endeavour to mirror a Socratic method of maieutic questioning, "of leading men to knowledge by question and answer" (Plato, 1961, p. xiv), pursuing clear consciousness without necessarily resolving answers and holding inquisitiveness, rather than passively attending to information. I see further parallels in the writing of Jacques Rancière, through our questioning of explication of knowledge and enforced stultification of intelligence (1991, p. 8) in our students.

I engage in a study of the adolescent psyche and enlighten the journey I take with the reader into Reverence, as a means to apprehend the profound beauty of that Other as adolescent. In our realisation of the profound beauty of others, we might also gain a greater comprehension of our selves, in ways that deepen and transcend our current understandings.

Our journey becomes based in the understanding of Buddhist *dukkha* as something profoundly unbearable. *Dukkha* comes from our never-ending "desire or craving to have or be something" (Shore, 2002, p. 32). Our desired object and

our desiring self are both illusory according to the tenets of Buddhism. What are we to do in the face of suffering because that object of our desire is so utterly unattainable? Shin'ichi reminds us of our human situatedness, as a desiring self, and "often presented this ineluctable human situation as a fundamental kōan: 'As I am-however I am-will not do. Now what do I do?'" (in Shore, 2002, p. 32).

From a standpoint of authentic self, in openness to the other, in empathy with inherent suffering, to glimpse a genuine and pure light within, I am struck by the profundity that escapes words. Immersed in the development and journey of the other is a reward in education, perhaps a reward of life itself—to situate ourselves as open and authentic beings within the world of teacher and student is to reveal one of the great and inexplicable wonders of our world.

Hermeneutic themes and questions

To understand the process of fostering authenticity of self and other several key concepts and questions are central to my thesis.

> **Mirror**—I am moved to apprehend the 'I' emphasised in Lacan's Mirror Phase (1936/2002) and ask how we might overcome our limited ways of being and our situatedness in isolation from others.
>
> **Other/other**—In Lacanian thinking other people or 'others' are indicated by the use of a lower case 'o'. The Other is initially referred to as the mother, in her unknowability and authority (the Real and Symbolic Other). I look to investigate and apprehend the other of our daily interactions, and witness profound beauty in the Otherness of the Real, in formlessness beyond signification.

Lacuna—In understanding the process by which we become figurated, our knowledge of self, and ultimately liberation in being, I enquire about the ways we cross lacunae, one to the other.

Locus—Our *locus* reflects the position we occupy in the world relating to others in a spatial, topological relationship. Much of what I have witnessed as an educator shows a temporal relationship of self and other, reinforced through a model of education placing us in transient relationships, positioning us in otherness, as distant and unreachable. I pursue, somewhat relentlessly, reflection about the nature of our human topology, questioning the multiplicity of possibilities in which we might find our selves located.

A soteriological study forms a central, underpinning idea in my writing. Although soteriological literature usually pertains to religious salvation, I find parallels with the Buddhist idea of release from suffering caused by adherence to an inauthentic self and the Lacanian idea of a constructed self, reinforced in the dualistic paradigm of Western education. I ask whether absolution from alienation is possible—Lacan says we can never escape desire or alienation—and could the idea of a 'no-self' release us from the illusory nature of desire and free us to apprehend the profound beauty of the Other, in a relational ecology of Reverence and compassion?

Practising Receptance—I use Practising Receptance rather than the Practice of Receptance as it suggests acting in thinking.

Receptance is a Zen-like way of thinking, allowing us to act in Reverence, helping to locate the topology of the other, in a proximal and spatial relationship. As we look to others, we look to ourselves in a dynamic existing between two or more people. It is important to note that I use the syntactical verb form, Practising, rather the noun, practice. Both Lacan and the scientist-philosopher David Bohm address the role of language in bringing about fragmentation through

its tendency to work in fixed, non-fluid ways. Bohm asks us to take a step towards experimenting with language. Lacan favours the *matheme* and poetic sensing, outside language. In *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Bohm asks, "Is it not possible for the syntax and grammatical form of language to be changed so as to give a basic role to the verb rather than to the noun" (2002, p. 37)? Following Bohm and using the verb forms such as 'Practising' we suggest moving, acting, flowing towards others in the Zen-like impermanence and formlessness of true-mind.

Reverence—This is deep and profound respect for the other. My Practising Receptance is founded on deep respect, or Reverence, in hoping we might close the space between us and apprehend the profound beauty of the other.

The moon—As in Zen tradition, I use the moon as a motif for true illumination—a goal for our apprehension of authenticity. I use the beautiful and moving imagery created by Matsuo Bashō, Rainier Maria Rilke and others, to help us see new ways of being. St. Augustine helps us to reveal a hidden truth about self and other—his *actus signatus* and *actus exercitus* assist us in our discernment between our inner and outer worlds, through the duality of figuration and authenticity. The *actus signatus* is an interpretation of our inner world through words and the *actus exercitus* is the language of the heart, of direct and authentic experience.

Śūnyatā, Mu—Nāgārjuna is considered one of the most important philosophers of Mahayana Buddhism, and largely credited with developing the concept of *śūnyatā*, about which Professor Thomas Kasulis states, "awareness that all ideas, their pragmatic usefulness notwithstanding, stand on emptiness (*śūnyatā*)—a gap that conceptual thinking cannot span" (1981, p. 25).

My thesis intends to illustrate the importance of formlessness, as we might live in a fluid and organic exegesis of Zen Buddhism and Lacanian psychoanalytic thought. Lacan's words elucidate notions of a figurated self through his idea that "Man thus speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him a man" (2002, p. 65). If we can see that it is the words that define us, even as simply as our name or gender, we find ourselves fully immersed in the world of the symbol, the realm of the Lacanian Symbolic, where our dualistic system of signifiers and signified assure every action, thought, and being is tied to language and tied to words.

So, what are we without words, these tiny, heavy anchors? Kitaro Nishida, in his exploration of the subject as constituted, inspired by Zen Buddhism, found another way of apprehending the subject, "This is the precise point where the Lacanian and Japanese ways of thinking meet: a theory of the subject that relies on topology" (Blondelot & Sauret, 2015, p. 174).

Through Practising Receptance we apprehend the *locus* of the other through a topology of self, in an action of thinking that fuses elements of Lacan's ideas and Zen Buddhism. I look to achieve a kind of soteriological vision of emancipation in education and seek illumination in different ideas of self and other. My deep moral and ethical questioning leads me to examine the process of teacher as Other, the unquestioned adoption of or attachment to identity, and the suffering this causes to our students from the never-ending "desire or craving to have or be something" (Shore, 2002, p. 32).

Considering new insights into our ways of being, I feel this thesis to be a valuable teacher resource that might guide teachers, rigorously, in deepening

understanding of self and other, in ways they might apply to both classroom and everyday life. I consider the thesis that emerges a metaphor for the Zen *keisaku*, an awakening or encouragement stick—used in Zen meditation to assist in lapses of concentration. *Keisaku* is a compassionate means to reinvigorate the individual and my hope is that this thesis will help us awaken from our uncritical adherence to externally imposed and internally appropriated structures, and to reach out to our students. Like Koji Sato, in *The Zen Life*, "Both before and after the *keisaku* strikes, both the striker and the struck bow to each other in Reverence" (1977, p. 97), and this is how we must be with one another—to act with Reverence, with our ultimate aim the apprehension of our formless and timeless beauty.

I utilise Practising Receptance as a means for philosophical hermeneutics, a topology of the self that might deepen our understanding of what it is to be human. The practice is a study into being, as it applies to education, illustrated by ontological dichotomies, in ways that reveal themselves as both obvious and hidden—self and other, metaphor and literality, conscious and unconscious, emptiness and wholeness, words and silence, teacher and student, success and failure, presence and absence, Other and other.

I seek what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a "question of Being" as fundamental to our existence. Practising Receptance, as we move into Reverence with the Other, authenticates "What is alive preserves itself by drawing into itself everything that is outside it…The fundamental fact of being alive is assimilation" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 253). In listening to the Other, the wordless and formless truth of Being cannot be founded in language—any movement towards that Other, is beyond words, beyond the permanence of words, and reflected only momentarily in a *locus,* as quicksilver*,* fleetingly and momentarily, in the sublime beauty that Bashō conveys through his haiku,

Dragonfly—

unable to hold on

to the grass blade

(2004, p. 114)

My question remains—how does Being speak to us? Openness to dialogue with the other requires an understanding of the Lacanian Other—the self imbued upon us, which obfuscates the formless authenticity of 'me' as a void, or Real. In understanding the process by which we become figurated, our knowledge of self, and ultimately liberation in being, involves crossing a lacuna to the other. Before we enter into Reverence, a deep and profound respect for the other, might we require a critical and fundamental awareness of self, attained through Practising Receptance? I suggest that without critical self-reflection, dialogue has the potential to mislead us, through words and a self not of us. We seek this language of the heart, of the true mind, that which presents before the language of the Lacanian Other—the language imbued upon us from the original Other, the mother. In my exploration of Being, I look to question ways in which we might open others and ourselves to authenticity, to show our true mind and apprehend the true mind of others.

In Lacanian theory, the *matheme* alone reaches the Real—the realm beyond words. I am drawn to the *matheme* and its aspiration to produce new knowledge through integral transmission (Nobus, 1998, p. 142). If the Lacanian *matheme* reaches the Real through mathematisation, might there be other ways in which we might apprehend the ineffable? Are we able to grasp direct experience arising from emptiness*?* Both haiku and *matheme* attempt to grasp the fleeting moments

of a formless, authentic life through words and symbols in simple yet profound terms, in the same way Taneda Santōka reminds us that "the primary purpose of the poem is not to describe the scene, but to convey the inner feelings of the writer" (2003, p. 11).

A wren of a single branch:

The fragrance of its plum blossoms

Throughout the world

(Bashō, 2004, p. 49)

Unless language exists strained through meaning into haiku or symbols, it might not grasp the Real, or life as it is. In both haiku and *matheme*, symbols and words are used in almost isolated purity, not reliant on related terms or ideas. Is this not a metaphor for us also? Is grasping the authentic in this way, devoid of a signifying chain, leaving words unreliant on others for meaning (Lacan, 2002, p. 145)? More than words, it is in discourse that we are truly lost, through a system into which we are born, into which we must fit. This universal movement ensures a place is already inscribed for us, even if only in the form of our names (p. 140). "I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it as an object" (p. 84).

We seek the apprehension of the Real, devoid of the linguistic structures that seem to place stones on the path of understanding. Are the places of student and teacher inscribed, their roles internalised? In adherence to absolutes of self, we remain distanced from one another, isolated. I look to enrich understandings of others and find ways in which we might enter into authentic relationships, transcending our seemingly unconscious interactions. Of particular interest is the dualism in education, apparently caught in an interplay between fear, objectivity

and voidness. I subscribe to the fundamentals of Zen Buddhism that view all things as formless, described as *śūnyatā*—I question our fear of non-being or non-understanding and its potential to lead us to attach or cling to concepts and phenomena or objects. I look to what Yong Zhi calls the four Zen mottos, as a cornerstone for my thoughts—special transmission outside doctrine, not to establish language, directly point to the mind, and seeing into one's nature. Zen opens itself to the experiences that go beyond what can be established in ordinary language (Zhi, 2013). I question how notions of going beyond what ordinary language can convey affects our sense of self. If seeing one's nature is beyond words, do we attach to a self as a reaction to the potential voidness of a 'no-self'? Zen Master Huang Po helps us to understand that perhaps our fear of a 'no-self' is based in dualistic thought, experienced from the moment we are born. We think of the world in terms of opposites—of big or small, hot or cold, wet or dry, male or female, and not as formless. Our entrance into the Symbolic necessitates a world of classification in discourse, where things must be one or the other. "The phenomena of light and dark alternate with each other, but the nature of the void remains unchanged" (Po & Hsiu, 1959, p. 31).

Are our simplistic notions of self, based on dualistic systems of comprehension learned from infancy, reinforced in the relationship between teacher and student, and at its core a fear of 'no-self'? In exploration of Lacanian theory, our development from infancy sees us driven by a self not of us. I am drawn to understanding the Lacanian 'I' emphasised in his Mirror Phase (2002, 1936)—a self reflected and adopted to cover our infantile helplessness setting a course for assuming the external throughout our lives. I am led to seeking ways in which to overcome our limited ways of being—a situatedness in isolation from others. In Martin Buber's conception of the *'I-Thou'* (1923 in Herberg, 1956) we might see our potentiality to move into Reverence with the other, so

that we might apprehend an other's profound beauty. Adapting Lacan's ideas and elements of Zen Buddhism, I look to new insights into our ways of being and offer this thesis as a valuable source for teachers and others to help deepening understanding of self and other, if woven into pedagogical practice and everyday life—the role of pedagogue assumed by us all.

Practising Receptance

Practising Receptance becomes a means of enacting phenomenological hermeneutics in adolescent narrative where we might be open to exploring our understanding the lived experience of what it is to be human, and amplify our understanding of adherence and faithfulness to self. Practising Receptance sees the self in *locus* and not the self as figuration. A distinction between self in *locus*, as *topos* and self as figurated, in *logos,* leads us open to the authenticity of the other and open to that Other's profound beauty.

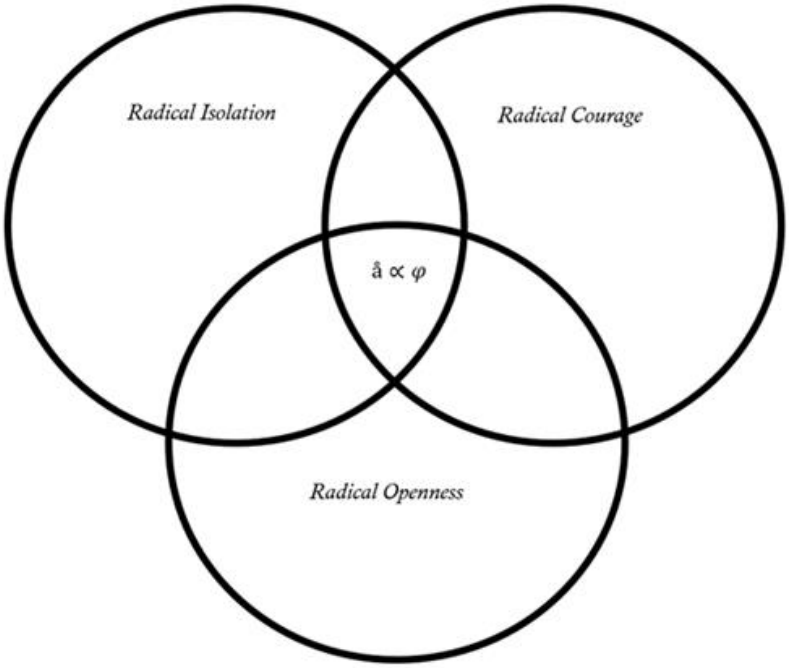
I come to understand what apprehending Reverence might entail and that without critical self-reflection, words have the potential to mislead us to a self not of us. In understanding Reverence, we might look to ways that lead us into an authentic and faithful relationship, in which our apparent clinging to a self illuminates us, leading us to disregard the fear of a 'no-self' and embrace a formless authenticity.

In Radical Openness we look to our internal dialogue, towards what St. Augustine presents as our pre-conceptual innermost thought, *actus exercitus,* or

pure language, which arises from emptiness, enlightening the difference between the internal and the external (Bauer, 2012). From our beginning as we step away from the Real, we seek the language of the heart, of the true mind, in stillness. I intend to illustrate authenticity as formlessness, in a *topos* disregarding ideas of permanence, apprehending the "One that contains multiplicity" (Lacan, 2014, p. 224).

I am moved to apprehend the 'I' emphasised in Lacan's Mirror Phase (1936) and wonder how we might overcome our suffering—our situatedness in isolation from others because of our adherence to a figurated and permanent sense of self. Continuing deep moral and ethical questioning leads me to explore our unquestioned adoption of, or attachment to a constructed identity, the "absence of which would make us completely and utterly a Buddha were he not there, but he is there this manifold form that took a great deal of trouble" (Lacan, 2014, p. 225).

Practising Receptance builds on the foundational layers of my coming to understand Buber's concept of the *'I-Thou'* (1923 in Herberg, 1956), the Lacanian Register Theory and the Zen Buddhist conception of *śūnyatā* enabling us to reflect upon the relationship between three domains—Radical Courage, Radical Isolation and Radical Openness.



Practising Receptance (Eaves, 2018)

Practising Receptance locates us topographically, transcending purely temporal or transient relationships traditional in Western modes of perceiving education. Practising Receptance is action in thinking—intentional without prescribing, permitting us to look into the eyes of the Other and realise fleeting yet permanent and profound beauty.

Falling from

A grass blade, and flying away:

A firefly

(Bashō, 2004, p. 76)

To reflect on the relationship between the three domains—Radical Courage, Radical Isolation, Radical Openness—which enable Practising Receptance, fear (φ) is an element that affects our ability to move outwards from ourselves in Radical Isolation. I use the symbol (φ) for fear, from the Greek *phobos* (φόβος), which is proportional to our formless authenticity (å), reflecting the topographical nature of us, rather than one based solely in *logos*, which sees us attach to a figurated self.

We look to Radical Courage to release ourselves from notions of a self to which we might be clinging, and move into Radical Openness—a space we share with the other. In Practising Receptance we gain a deeper understanding of self, moving us to revere and see others with greater clarity, in *topos*. Our clinging to a figurated self, based on fear of the 'no-self', leads us to Practising Receptance as we employ Radical Courage and Radical Openness to move into authenticity, beyond our position of Radical Isolation, beyond *logos*.

Lacan favoured the *matheme* to convey ideas, unspeakable in *logos,* mirroring the traditions of science. He warns us, "If experimental science derives its exactness from mathematics, its relation to nature is nonetheless problematic. Indeed if our link to nature incites us to wonder poetically, whether it is not nature's own movement that we find refined in our sciences, in

…cette voix

Qui se conait quand elle sonnne

N'etre plus la voix de personne

Tant que des ondes et des bois

(Lacan, 2002, p. 73)

I align my thinking with that of Lacan in his suggestion that "it is clear that our physics is but a mental fabrication in which mathematical symbols serve as instruments" (2002, p. 73).

Here I propose a mathematical equation to convey my ideas in a structural and non-dualistic way, to perhaps attempt to grasp the ineffible. My representation of the self is as follows,

$$I \because f\{in(\text{å}) - in(\varphi)\}$$

My *matheme* reads—I am because of the function of the influence of authenticity minus the influence of fear. Put more simply, any notion of an 'I' is because of authenticity (å) and its relationship to fear (φ). Do we fear the formlessness of authenticity—are we driven to adhere to a self not of our making?

Hermeneutic Layering

Considering new insights I gain into our ways of being, this thesis might contribute to valuable educational resources in guiding teachers' rigour to understand self and other, illuminating the illusory desire for affirmation driving everyday interactions of teachers and students. We look critically to the nature of student figuration, and use topological mapping to locate our students so that we may move into Reverence with them, Practising Receptance that allows faithful engagement and authentic relationships with our students.

In our use of words, do we fall into what haiku master Shiki Masaoka (1867-1902) termed *shasei* or 'the sketch from life' (Beichman, 2002, p. 54) to attempt to depict life as it is, through translating directly what is seen? From his revival of the short form '*tanka*' poetry, Masaoka devised the term '*haiku*' as a derivative of the '*hokku*'. Kenneth Yasuda tells us,

> intuition is immediate, as the perception of colour is immediate…any work of art can be enjoyed through this act of immediate perception without conscious effort or reasoning. The same holds true of poetry and, to a degree undreamt of in the West, of haiku in particular. (1973, p. 4)

In our translations, through words, we remain bound to the Symbolic and bound to our own experiences. How might we attain a deeper level of comprehension of the other and ourselves in the same way haiku apprehends in immediate perception, to move into authenticity? In ideas that perhaps reflect Masaoka's *shasei*, boys' self-portraits in the beginning of each chapter visually apprehend the Other to also show a progression from figuration to emancipation of our inner-being. Can we notice how the colour of the faces appear and disappear? In this pictorial re-presentation we evolve a metaphor for the voidness of self—from allusion to disillusion to a self no longer fixed in the determinacy of colour. Our last portrait is almost transparent—a goal perceived in an apparition of formless truth that emanates from each of us in our simplest form.

Can we independently and authentically make a 'sketch from life', in adherence to a figurated self? In my use of haiku, I sense the directness of the author, in conveyance of the everyday, yet it is deeply profound. In his use of *shasei*, was Masaoka referring to the language of the heart? Was he attempting to capture the authenticity that escapes us? In our comprehension of the *actus exercitus* do we see a connection to ideas of formless authenticity, contrasting with ideas of figuration through the Lacanian Other? A constructed self makes language external, an Other, leading to a kind of alienation of self. Might we pursue a critical and fundamental self-awareness, seeking the pure nature of mind before the Mirror and before the Other? Can we find answers in the Buddhist idea of direct experience of the fundamental nature of mind itself, our own mind as inherently embodying pure awareness, as *Tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha nature (Rinpoche, 1987, p.77)?

We seek the release of suffering wrought upon us by discourse.

Misoto Ueda tells us Kobayashi Issa, one of the 'Three Pillars of Haiku' with Bashō and Yosa Buson (2004, p. ix), appears to continue Masaoka's *shasei*, as "producing descriptive poems that sketch external objects and scenes with the exactitude of a master painter" (2004, p.107). In following, I want to believe that in each portrait there is poetry within the Other and a truthfulness I attempt to apprehend in this thesis. Each portrait becomes a *shasei* and a metaphorically wordless haiku. Each portrait is a poem, in that a "poetic statement as such is speculative, in that the verbal event of the poetic word expresses its own relationship to being" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 486).

I seek an authenticity of self and others in truth, as a fidelity rather than a conformity, in that "the I appears veiled, indistinct through consciousness like a pebble at the bottom of the water. For this very reason the I is deceptive the start" (Sartre, 1957, p. 52). I outline key concepts to assist the reader to navigate my thesis, as a fundamental and repeated enfolding of ideas continue to be framed by, and revealed through, student narratives. In an overarching theme, I am layering Lacanian and Zen Buddhist thinking, rather than opposing the two schools of thought—I use the light and shade of each to reveal each to the other. Within these two larger schools of thought, smaller elements emerge as vital in the understanding of the whole. These smaller elements that follow, elements as a cartographer's key, are used to navigate our surroundings.

An infant's needs misunderstood as demands are assigned meaning (signified) by the mother (Other), and so, our unarticulated messages as an infant become essentially from the mother (Other). As needs cannot be articulated in demand, only interpreted and given meaning external to us, a resulting presentation is desire, substituted for demand. Desire is not an "appetite for satisfaction nor the demand for love" but the result of subtracting the appetite for satisfaction from the desire for love (Lacan, 2002, p. 276). Desire is a central process in each of us, not directed at anything specific, but a drive for the nebulous 'something'. Frustration in needs not being met gives rise to the perpetual search for satisfaction—a search for what has been lost, never to end, replaced by the words of the Other. Our desire leads to a drive for affirmation and for validation, but we cannot articulate precisely what this means.

In Lacanian thinking other people or 'others' are indicated by the use of a lower case 'o'. An 'other', situated in the Imaginary Register, is subject to transference—we imagine what others are, based on ourselves, and transfer these

thoughts accordingly. Our initial fabrication is also based on an image—that which we see in the Mirror. I question our categorisation of others as simple transference of self, and look to ways in which we can introduce Real elements to others, making them Others. I hope to develop ways in seeing past the superficiality of a layered image and look to the authenticity hidden beneath us all. I look to investigate the Other of the Real, beyond signification, beyond words. We see our students as others, of the Imaginary, in our daily lives. Can we look more closely and hermeneutically and see our students as Others of the Real, that is seeing transcendentally?

Zen maintains that any ideas of a person never capture their full reality as descriptions only serve to highlight one aspect while excluding others. We act and interact with a basis in self that might preclude us from entering into authentic relationships with others, unless we critically and fundamentally reflect on our actions and situatedness.

In exploration of Lacanian thinking and Zen we look to why we are isolated from others. It is my intent to illuminate our co-dependency in finding true meaning within ourselves, to see the profound beauty of the Other. In interactions with the many students I have taught over nearly 20 years, most present a façade that, once removed, or seen beyond, brings the highest rewards. I seek ways in which we might remove ourselves from isolation and move into openness with others. We become withdrawn and reluctant to move into the space with the Other because of fear—we have learned that our figurated selves cover a perceived inadequacy, first seen in the Lacanian Mirror. Lacan sees the self as a protectorate of our original uncoordinated, helpless fragmentation, "a donned armour of alienating identity" (Lacan, 2002, p. 6). We learn to cling to our protection, in *logos*, and so we recoil against the void of selflessness, "fearing

to hurtle down through the void with nothing to cling to or to stay their fall" (Po & Hsiu, 1959, p. 32).

In ideas of rational thinking, do we become figurated over a true mind, over an emptiness precluding us from an authentic definition on an individual level? Do we arise from a composite universe, with interconnectedness at its heart? In Buddhist philosophy, existence is relational—we are nothing without the other. In classrooms do we ignore the profound beauty of the Other? *Śūnyatā* overcomes problems of duality, of being person A or person B, through our relational existence of voidness or openness. The subject/object or mind/world dichotomy renders both illusory—it is only by cognising their interdependency, and thus their emptiness as autonomous entities, that each person attains the Real (Shinkei, 2008, p. 331).

Hermeneutic questioning

I attempt to engage the reader in provoking thought. I attempt to change the potential *locus* of the reader to find a different perspective, illuminated by Zen *mondo,* in the critical confrontation between Zen master and disciple. I use written narratives as everyday life moments, observations of student-teacher interactions upon which I meditate deeply. I deconstruct themes and ideas repeatedly, as a teacher would, in my hope to give understanding its best chance. A primary or early childhood educator needs to know many different ways of teaching for understanding—you might know 100 different ways of teaching numbers to 20, for example. I write as if I teach. I use maieutic questioning to draw meaning out, to coax the reader into understanding through analogic and dialogic means—every question becomes an invitation to think.

My Practising Receptance is a study of the lived experience of being, as it applies to adolescent students in topologies of education and inherently linked to the concept of releasing self from fear, to move beyond the figurated self, and into deep respect, or Reverence with the other. Practising Receptance formulates a means of enacting philosophical hermeneutics to deepen our understanding of what it is to be human. In actualising Receptance our task is not to clarify meaning, rather, clarify conditions under which understanding takes place, specifically, between teacher and adolescent student (Gadamer, 1975, p. 306).

Practising Receptance as a thinking paradigm to interpret experiences of self and other, I look to other hermeneutical devices to explore our situatedness. I use the notion of voidness to interpret experiences and present them in different forms such as emptiness, space, gap or lacuna, all with the view to help us understand our isolation from others. As a lens through which we explore our experiences, we must first realise the voidness that occurs between us. How many of us journey through our lives with an unquestioned and fixed image of ourselves? Receptance allows us to move beyond our isolation, embracing voidness yet crossing a space to be with others in authenticity. Emptiness becomes something we might embrace internally and overcome externally. Practising Receptance we gain the ability to see ourselves and look to others empathically considering whether they experience the same fear or feelings of inability to shed a figurated self. Through our deep respect, or Reverence to the other, we become able to cross the vertiginous lacuna that prevents moving into the shared space of the other. As educators, we become equipped with a method for greater understanding of our selves and a deeper understanding and respect for our students.

My writing conveys both literal and metaphorical elements that deepen our appreciation of Lacanian thinking and Zen literature and their layering of ideas. I use these styles of writing as a metaphor for the dualistic interplay between concepts that appear to figurate us, and to frame the ebbing and flowing of one idea or another, to show we are not bound by any one register. In the use of this writing technique, through dualistic metaphor, I hope to illuminate the formless beauty of Zen and of us. In this way, of formlessness, I hope to show my thesis lives as a fluid and living exegesis of Zen Buddhism and Lacanian thinking. In following Gadamer, I wish to "develop the melody of my own thoughts and although I do not think I am a bad writer, there always is the living voice behind the writing" (Gadamer, 1992, p. 66).

If human awareness is interpretive and "a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 282), we look beyond who appears, to the *how* of others, and hope to gain glimpses of the profound beauty that lies within the other, devoid of figurated and value-laden notions of self, perpetuated by a conditioned mind. In *Zen Training: Methods and Philosophy*, Katsuki Sekida suggests we overcome the illusion of self through looking simultaneously into one's own nature and into universal nature only when consciousness is deprived of its habitual way of thinking (1975, p.100) based in self-centered desires and views. "The point is very simple: if only the habitual way of consciousness falls away, everything will be all right" (p. 102).

Rising Waves, Breathless Wind

The Buddhist concept of *śūnyatā* reflects a negation of duality, and accepts a state of emptiness as natural. In our negation of duality, in *śūnyatā*, we relinquish attachment to a self and regain a self lost through attachment (Yoshirō, 1989, p. 39).

If we understand the emptiness of all things, we may also comprehend our fear of non-being or non-understanding, attaching ideas and concepts to things, in attempts to control an influence upon us. In our clearing of illusory thought, through our awareness of attachment, we arrive at a realisation of the nonsubstantiality or emptiness of self and other (Yoshirō, 1989, p. 39).

Śūnyatā regards emptiness in the negation of duality whereas the Zen concept of *Mu* refers to the absolute and derives from Taoist doctrines. "It is Truth itself, the Absolute itself" (Kasulis, 1981, p. 13). The concept of *Mu-shin*, favoured by Zen Buddhism, refers to the state of no mindedness, illustrated by the masterful poet-monk Shinkei who states that *Mu-shin* "literally means 'not to be grasped by the mind,' that is to say 'incomprehensible'" (2008, p. 93).

In Buddhism, true emptiness in being relates to the idea that existence is relational, and so, all things arise in a connectedness that sees nothing separate and fundamentally empty of their own independent value. Emptiness or *śūnyatā* refers to the notion that we are connected in our co-dependency—mind is a construct of our limited understanding of the world in which we live, manifesting as an attempt to control our environment. In our connectedness we share

emptiness or true mind, becoming clouded as we grow and attach to the world of things—education becomes a great vehicle for the perpetuation of attachment to a self not of our own, through ideas of duality and value.

As my inquiry proceeds through the following chaptered layers of questioning and understanding, philosophical works by Lacan**,** Buber, Gadamer, Rancière, Po, Albert Camus, Eihei Dōgen, Paul Ricoeur, Jerome Bruner, Seung Sahn Soen-sa, D.T Suzuki and Shunryu Suzuki have aided me in deep explorations of meaning making. Rilke and Bashō are poets I bring to elucidate the canvas of understanding I attempt to portray.

Chapter 1: The Truth of Us

In this first chapter, I approach my inquiry developing a certain hermeneutic style of questioning as an opening up of possibilities for understanding. In a similar way to which Gadamer suggests "conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth" (1975, p. 401), I look deeply into the language of self and other, as I attempt to apprehend the *locus* of others and witness their truth, in authentic and formless Otherness. I look to the poetry within self and other, beyond the storied self.

I was waiting outside a bookshop in the city with my 8-year-old son, Jack. We had just been inside and used a voucher he had received as a belated birthday present from an aunt. As we sat in the warmth, leafing through the pages of this new treasure, a figure approached me.

"Hey, Eavesy!" went the cheerful voice. I looked up and it was Larry, a Year 11 student. "Hey, Larry!" I said as I shook his hand. "Are you coming back this year?" "Nah. I'm starting to regret it a bit," said Larry.

We shook hands again and I wished him good luck. "Maybe I'll catch you down at Clifton sometime," said Larry.

Every Thursday in Terms 1 and 4, a group of about forty boys head down to the beach between 4pm and 6pm for surfing. We offer surfing as a school sport for Years 7 to 12 and Larry had been one of the boys who came with us—in parting I remember feeling that words never seem to capture the sentiment that we are trying to convey. Instead, there are absences in our words, interpreted by others, never quite arriving at an intended meaning—

> we find a lot of our communication in our lives is like this, whether we acknowledge or understand it. As Larry walked off I thought about his time at school—what we, as educators saw, as Larry appeared to us—as others looking in. I wondered about the locus of Larry, not just who. I deeply contemplated the topology of Larry and how we, as educators, seemed so distant from him. Why had we not tried to approach him, in an authentic and reverential way? I felt it was the failure of us, as teachers, to enter into the sphere of Larry as Other, ultimately leaving him isolated and withdrawn.

He had started in Year 7 and soon received a reputation for defiance, for going against convention. Poor reports of his repeated indiscretions often led to Larry being in trouble. I felt these reports were not true reflections of who he was, but I also wondered how he had reached this point. Had words failed him time and time again, isolating him perhaps in a state of despair or melancholy of the kind that Rilke echoes?

> *Loneliness is like a rain. It rises from the sea to meet the evenings; from plains that stretch into the distance it goes up to the sky, that always has it. From the sky it falls upon the town.*
>
> *It rains down in those mongrel hours when all the streets are turning toward the day, and when those bodies that got nothing from each other go separate ways, sad and disappointed; when people who feel hate for one another must sleep together in one bed; then loneliness goes down into the rivers.*
>
> *(Rilke, 1994, p. 26)*

I wondered if Larry experienced loneliness, as so many of our students remain others, separate and distant, our interactions inauthentic, and so, safe.

Words have the ability to isolate us and separate us from one another. Is language, in its essentially self-reflexive system of meaning, the rain that falls onto the town? Does isolation exacerbate an attachment to inauthenticity, blinding us and turning us from our inherent wholeness in authenticity? Is our wholeness an absolute necessity to make life worth living, as Bohm suggests (2002, p. 4)? If our isolation somehow removes us from our authenticity, how does this happen to us? Do we knowingly turn from what is real, and instead embrace the safety of the apparent?

I taught Larry in a Year 10 English class, and soon saw he was a gifted writer and thinker. One day, we discussed philosophy, and coincidentally, I had a copy of Camus' *The Stranger* (1954) in my bag. I showed the book to Larry and suggested he should give it a read—he gratefully accepted. A few weeks passed and I asked him how the book was going. Larry told me that he had finished it and through our dialogue I saw the depth of understanding he possessed. We discussed Camus and philosophy instead of Macbeth that day. In a small way perhaps I had helped to change Larry's perception of himself—no longer the boy in trouble, defiant and belligerent. In that small space, that tiny fragment of time, the dynamic changed between that of student and teacher, as a peeling back of layers to what was real, what felt authentic and somehow very difficult to put into words. Was it a recognition between us, something that emerged from the variable circumstances and grasped in its essence (Gadamer, 1975, p. 118)? In that moment of recognition, I had allowed myself to occupy a different space from that of teacher—it was not in the words that determined our interaction. I sense the basis of our recognition in the lack of words.

Many witnessed misunderstandings of many students over many years, compels me to write for Larry and for students like him. I write for those who are

mistaken and misjudged because of our isolating system of language that never quite grasps our intended meaning. It is morally imperative, compelling us in critically examining our pedagogy and our thinking, to question the potentially isolating effects of language. In our examination, might we develop our ability and our students' ability to gain insight into an authentic or true self, open to moments of recognition and apprehension of Otherness? Questions of isolation, loneliness and even indifference to others drive my thinking and my writing. I contemplate the idea of our situatedness in space, our *locus*, in a worldview of self as topologically apprehended, and as a movement away from the popular view of self as *logos*. Ideas of self as permanence, in *logos*, defy our formless truth or authenticity.

Asking for an answer to the *locus* of us, in seeking our location, rests in the possibility of becoming. Much of what I see and hear is a closing door on children—definitions imbued upon them by external means. Results are often seen in boys like Larry—students who become disaffected and disengaged because they cling to a construct of the fixed and figurated self. Had Larry encapsulated the sentiment resonating in the words of Camus? "I only meant that the hero of my book is condemned because he does not play the game" (1982, p. 118). We are encouraged to play the game of pursuing an identity at school—an identity figurated outside of us, through constructs not of our making. The alternative to non-pursuit in education is alienation and failure—even when some children pursue the ideal self of successful student, they do not succeed. The stories of these children are the hardest to bear witness to.

Beliefs in figuration, layering and manufacture illustrate so much of what schooling is to me, sentiments that continue to echo in my dialogues with the boys, particularly those who are trying to see the sense in it all. I encourage the

boys to look deeper beneath what presents and discover how they might reframe tightly held beliefs and ideas about teachers and their fellow classmates. Somehow, students know I will listen to them, and remain open to and empathise with their concerns. If I reflect on why this might be the case, my mind is drawn back to Camus and the condemnation of his hero who refuses to lie. Meursault (Camus, 1954) embodies the authenticity that enables us to connect with one another—the same authenticity that some find so difficult to embrace, perhaps preferring to hide behind a façade of someone or something else—safe, withdrawn and ultimately alone.

> Yesterday, we took the school inflatable, or RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat), out for a professional development day. As we walked down to the marina, there were a group of boys from school, on their last few days of holidays, some fishing and others waiting to take boats out.
>
> "Hey Mr Eaves!" came a voice from a lad on a skateboard as he approached me.
>
> As he skated past, I put my hand out for the low five, and as he reciprocated, I meditated on these types of interactions which are always more than a mindless exchange—in that act, I recognised, engaged, and entered into a wordless dialogue far more powerful than I can express in writing. I sometimes wonder if it is myself which I see in these boys— perhaps a younger version long ago left behind, misunderstood by those teachers around me so, perhaps it is ultimately a sense of my self which drives the understanding I long to have—a self once misunderstood by others, perhaps invalidated or lacking in affirmation. I asked Rod if he had sailed much in the holidays, to which he explained that he was travelling to Melbourne on the weekend for a race. Rod is another of the boys who participates in school surfing, and so I asked if had been in the surf.
>
> "I've caught a couple," he said.

"Nice one. I'll catch you next week," I said.

"Yep, mate. See you then."

I continued walking past the fishing boys, all around 15 or 16 years old.

"Haven't you blokes got any homework to do?" I ask in mock seriousness.

"Nah, Mr Eaves," they respond.

"Well, you soon will!" I laugh.

All of their heads drop, knowing that I am right.

In my exchange, I acknowledge these young men and I enter into a kind of sonorous dialogue with them—sometimes with words and sometimes without, a reverberating dialogue that resonates long after I have left and I sense that it is still sounding between them and me. My humour is based on the desire to relate to them and with them. Teachers, as most people, look at others through experiences and a unique perspective of self, entering a state of being as unthinking and reactive. In many ways, we are separated from the thoughts and feelings of others, because our own construction prevents an adequate comprehension or understanding of them. Rilke grasps the essence of our separation—

> *And hours at a time by the big gray pond, kneeling with a little sailboat there; and to forget it because those other sails more interesting than yours are cutting circles, and then to have to think about the small white face that sank away and shone out from the pond: oh childhood, oh disappearing images, where to? Where to?*
>
> *(Rilke, 1994, p .22)*

I ask myself where these small faces of childhood go, replaced by young adults and the selves that are yet contained within them. Like the sailboats in the

pond are we distracted from looking at our reflections, until we have changed so much, our image disappears, replaced by another? It is my hope that through deeper meditation and exploring ways of thinking and forming ideas, our understandings of our students will broaden, through Practising Receptance leading us to apprehend our students in Reverence. In our deepening understanding of self and other, we might gain a greater understanding our students and ourselves, in apprehension of the *locus* of us.

Lacan and Zen

To understand the core questioning of my thesis, I look to Western ideologies that bind and determine relationships between teacher and adolescent student. I fundamentally question educational systems that constrict and stultify (Rancière, 1991) the intelligences of both teacher and student that once freed, can lead to emancipatory relational encounters enabling teacher and student to apprehend the truth of the other. In seeking authenticity of the other, and ourselves, my thesis attempts to disclose potentialities for the flourishing of human goodness.

Investigating an apparent reality resulting from attachment to ideas of a fixed self is to seek the *locus* of us. Ideas in Lacanian psychoanalytic thought, and in particular Lacan's Mirror Phase developed in the 1930s, suggest humans are born prematurely compared to many species of animals. Because of this prematurity, humans are born into a state of helplessness, making us dependent upon others for our survival. We look outwards for care—our food, warmth and love, as input from outside of ourselves. Reliance on the external leads us to an inclination for acceptance of the input of others. In the Mirror Phase, Lacan

postulated that the infant, at around six to eighteen months of age, is helplessly dependent on the support of those around him. He gains mastery through identifying with an image outside of him, the identification being the first step in gaining autonomy from our state of helplessness. An image of us, founded outside of us, has profound effects on the topology of us. Lacan suggests we are literally figurated from the outside in—in image and in language. If I adhere to Lacan's metaphor of creation in the Mirror, through the external, I question our possible figuration upon formless truth.

Lacan's Register Theory might help us to answer questions of mechanistic manufacture over an authenticity or possible 'true self'. Lacan's model involves three co-dependent registers of the psyche (The Real, The Symbolic and The Imaginary) as scaffolding to help us understand the individual and ourselves, in our manufacture through language, leading to ideas of a fixed self that have been perpetrated in Western traditions, and that we can identify in the struggles many of our students face. If we turn to Buddhist philosophy, encouraging us to meditate on what is real, we find a world of suffering linked to such misaligned ideas about what reality might be. As educators, we are often responsible for the perpetuation of these ideas. Pursuing liberation from our attachment to ideas of a fixed self becomes a central orientation for my thesis because in acquiring certain insight into who we truly are, and how we have become what we perceive, we might find ways to free ourselves from a non-seeking mind, a mind that does not attach to material or non-material things (Yokoi & Dōgen, 1976, p. 126), that is free from a mind that retrains us from the fullest possibilities of our human-ness.

Following Bohm (2002) and using the verb forms in our language, we suggest moving, acting, flowing towards others in the Zen-like impermanence and formlessness of true-mind. Loosening the bonds of what seeks to define us, we

are searching for a freedom from structure. Language as a defining structure can imbue a self upon us, not of our making. Zen Buddhism illuminates possible ways to release us from the structuralist paradigm by which language might bestow an identity upon us. Thomas Merton tells us, Zen is not something that is grasped by being set apart so we might identify and apprehend it. And so, Zen is not understood by being in its own category, separated from everything else (1968, p. 3). Like Zen, in our separation from others and from ourselves, might the isolation we experience as an existential lacuna, become part of the human condition under which we live, explained by the Buddhist concept of suffering or *dukkha* and its link to desire? The Lotus Sutra, one of the central documents in Mahayana Buddhism, of which Zen is a major tradition, elucidates such suffering by showing us that suffering is caused by craving and that by our release from craving we may also gain a release from suffering (in Watson, 2002, p. xviii).

Buddhist understandings of craving or desire are similar to the desire illustrated by Lacan in his Mirror Phase. Lacan's desire is essential in understanding our *locus*—the situatedness of each of us. Through Buddhist philosophy, specifically Zen Buddhism, with ideas of Lacan, I explore in my inquiry the central element of desire and suffering, and its potential alleviation through adopting an orientation of hope in Radical Courage.

In consideration of our own potentiality, within the boundaries of what is considered possible of becoming, we face a deeper consideration of who decides what we become. A vexing existentialist issue within education is referring to our core being, or 'me', and who decides what is possible for me to be who I am. Within this puzzle, my inquiry seeks some clarity through working with the thoughts of Lacan and key concepts in Zen.

Ryōkan Taigu, Zen monk and poet, introduces us to the concept of *Mu-shin*—the idea of 'no mind', or the absence of clinging to a self. In essence, 'no mind' is the Zen response to categorisation, as an inherent problem obstructing oneself, through the negation of being person A or person B. He tells us "Don't cling! Don't strive! Abandon yourself! Look beneath your feet!"

> With no-mind, blossoms invite the butterfly; With no-mind, the butterfly visits the blossoms. When the flower blooms, the butterfly comes; When the butterfly comes, the flower blooms. I do not "know" others, Others do not "know" me. Not-knowing each other we naturally follow the Way.
>
> (Taigu, 1758-1831 in Stevens, 1977, p. 16)

In challenging notions of clinging to a self not of our making through words, we challenge fundamental concepts of self, in which I base my writing and thoughts. To build a foundation of understanding concepts of self and of our figuration by the Other, I deem comprehending of Lacanian thought as essential to my inquiry. For this reason of comprehending, I outline key ideas that gain us a deeper level of understanding in the hope that we might apprehend the loss that occurs through our entrance into language. Sentiments of loss resonate in Rilke's poem.

And sometimes I am like the tree which,

ripe and rustling above a grave,

fulfills himself the dream the boy

(round whom the living roots entwine)

once had and lost

(Rilke, 2001, p. 7)

In our conception of loss, we consider radical changes that occur within others and within each of us that engage us with the concept of loss. I use the Lacanian Register Theory, evolved between the 1930s and the 1970s, to develop this idea. It comprises three parts in an overall structure of the psyche—the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic, in which our psyche is reliant on the interrelationship of the functioning of all three registers in a healthy individual.

Figure 1:The Lacanian Borromean Knot (Seminar XXII, 10th December, 1974)

Central to the topological configuration of a Borromean Knot (Lacan, 1975-76, p. 5), a term favoured by Lacan, lies the object *a*, the object that is the cause of desire in all of us. Lacanian thinking tells us as the infant enters the world of language, the world of the Symbolic, its cries are interpreted and given meaning—the message is interpreted by Others, resulting in the infant never getting exactly what he wants. The object *a*, or (object-cause of desire) is the goal of the search, and a solution for the corresponding need, but it is a need that can never be adequately met. In Lacan's description of the origin of desire, as an infant, our needs subjected to demand are returned to us from the Other (the mother) in alienated form. It is from the Other's *locus* that the original message is

emitted (Lacan, 2002, p. 275) and it is the Other's *locus* that remains inapprehensible to us—from the initial moments of the original misunderstanding we drift away from the Other. Words begin their work as we become inert, our world and ourselves objectified as nouns, as we move into Radical Isolation.

Desire

In following the thinking of Lacan, need is not adequately met and presents as desire. He suggests, as an infant, needs are manifest in demand—needs become misunderstood demands by the mother, where they are assigned meaning (signified) by the mother (Other). Messages become essentially from the Other and not the infant. Misrepresentation of the infant's need, returning unrecognised, cannot be articulated in demand, and so, Lacan states that the resulting presentation from the infant is desire, as substituted for demand. Demand already constitutes the Other as having the "privilege" of satisfying needs, that is, the power to deprive them of what alone can satisfy them. The Other's privilege here thus outlines the radical form of the gift of what the other does not have—namely what is known as love (Lacan, 2002, p. 276). To Lacan, demand creates a specificity out of the many potential avenues for placating need, by turning it into the singular, proof of love. However, this generalisation of demand in relation to need is not a true representation of the needs of the infant.

Lacan believes that the generalisation brought about in the proof of love, ignores the specificity of need, which must reappear—as loss. From the

generality of demand, desire substitutes as the absolute condition, replacing the general condition of proof of love in satisfying unique needs of the infant. Desire is a result of the splitting of satisfaction (needs met) and demand (for love). Frustration (demands) of needs not being met, combined with the realisation of separateness—no longer a whole or unity as once understood—gives rise to the perpetual search for satisfaction, a search for what has been lost and replaced by the words of the Other, which will never end (Lacan, 1968, p. 296).

Our desire is a drive for affirmation, "seen in the fact that he wants to be loved for himself" (Lacan, 2002, p. 278), driven by lack or loss, produced by separateness from the mother, from demands being interpreted and not adequately met. Our pursuit of wholeness, centred around the loss or lack, arises from a feeling of being a separate entity to the mother, but also through realisation of uncoordination or fragmentation, clashing with an ideal image seen in the Mirror. Our felt, uncoordinated bodies are given autonomy through the apparent mastery as seen in our reflection but the result of this incongruity is dissonance from identifying with an image that is not 'me', an unattainable ideal (p. 17).

Is the same principle applied in the classroom? Do we present an ideal that is unattainable for our students? Do students attempt to take an image that is 'not them'—an ideal of others? Is dissonance felt between their 'real' selves and the self as adopted through the Other of education? Is the ideal self an illusion representing the wishes and desires of those outside us?

In following Lacan, is our ego founded on a 'lack' or incompleteness, as we find the image of us does not match with the helplessness of 'me', a fragmented

and uncoordinated self? He suggests deception becomes a central function of the ego, as a protectorate of fragmentation, which sees us identify with the image and that which is outside of us. I wonder if our noun-based objectification is in response to our 'unable to do' in our uncoordination, thus highlighting our inability to be verb-based? If we cannot 'do' then we must 'be'. An illusory ego, constructed outside of us, leaving us open to external input, the pattern set by the initial moments in the Mirror, creates a lack by fuelling the anticipation of completeness as 'promised' by the Mirror. Do we see the beginnings of identifying with, and clinging to, something, which is not of ourselves? In the Mirror, we divide between who we feel we are and who we should be—our conception of 'me' created by those around us. Do we see our students as others—an objectification we have based on ourselves? Perhaps we need to look deeply, and focus our seeing towards our students as real, authentic Others. In understanding our students as Others, we would be looking beyond signification, beyond words.

I question the nature of education and its role in creating the individual. To be aware of a fundamental process in becoming, we must be questioning our teaching pedagogy. I explore how language organises and leads individuals to understand relationships with themselves and others, and disregards the absolutes of 'self' or 'truth' (Lacan, 2001, p. 283), perhaps making us aware of the nature of the external, and its influence on the figuration of us.

Language as construction

In Lacanian thinking, speech is central to the Symbolic order (or Other with a capital 'O') (Lacan, 2002, p. 33), which sees the infant born into a world of language as a fundamental structure of society. If language is a self-referential system with meaning derived from a chain of signifiers, each relating to the next in an interconnected system (Lacan, 2001, p.63), structures of sentences or sequences of signifiers determine meaning. As each chain of signifiers is unique to each of us, might we see how isolated we become?

Being born into a pre-existing structure, we are in many ways made to fit within this system of language, which causes "a deviation of man's needs due to the fact he speaks" (Lacan, 2002, p. 275). We attach to something not of us, created and unaware of our attachment to the societal structure, perhaps reflected in the poetic words of Santōka (1980, p. 41),

I have no home; Autumn deepens.

Are we a creation of society, rather than an authentic and formless 'me' that is to be revealed? In our understanding of self, as an ideal created rather than revealed, are we left homeless? As a teacher, I witness the creation or manufacture of self in the stories of our students—to see over years an unfolding of humanity in such a powerful way is both intriguing and humbling, the effect of which, is always to look deeper within the 'story' of each individual. We look beyond the who to the *locus* of each of us, in a topology to apprehend the Other, in the same way Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes of the intimate contact with oneself, *'le sentiment de l'existence'* leading to salvation (1992, p. 27). How might we become aware of our authenticity and that of the Other beneath a layering of figurated self? Is it that, in the thoughts of Gadamer, in every conversation, each person opens himself to the other (1975, p. 403)? Is this the way we apprehend

our authenticity and that of others? Entering Radical Openness releases us into Practising Receptance.

We begin to see the luminous moon.

In looking to openness, we ask ourselves if we are built on a core 'me' obscured by language and misrepresentation? In our social manufacture of our individual self by our alienating ego as a false representation of us, the Mirror reflects our ideas of the ways we come to attach to an inauthentic self. In a search for authenticity, how do we see what is real? How can we see ourselves and Others? Is it possible to remove ourselves from Radical Isolation caused by external figuration, seeking affirmation from others? Might Zen assist in our path to meaning?

The *Shōbōgenzō* or *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye,* a collection of Dōgen's work, profoundly influences my ideas of authenticity. He provides profound insight that reverberates through my inquiry, offering an answer to the perplexing issue of Radical Isolation. Dōgen presents the 'middle way', in which emptiness and existence of all things are simultaneously realised (1991, p. 24). To approach our students in this way, to realise the middle way, as 'no you and no others', might we close the space between us? To be open to our authenticity and the authenticity of others, do we apprehend the profound beauty of the Other?

We question how to apprehend the other—does the answer lie within us? Perhaps our liberation lies in our ability to discern mind. The concept of 'mind only', where objects in the world are manifestations of the mind (Suzuki, 1960,

p. 50) are countered by the realisation of Buddha-nature (Tathāgatagarbha) in *śūnyatā*—an absence of an independent and substantial self, achieved through a realisation of our figuration, and replaced by ideas of emptiness or voidness. Is our highest form of self, an absence of independent self? In mind only, or true mind, do we lose reliance on the external? In mind only, or in *śūnyatā*, are we able to loosen the yoke of suffering? Suzuki tells us that a higher intuition provides the realisation of our 'self nature' as an illusion. Our ordinary experience takes the world for something that has its own nature, and exists independently of us. He states, what really exists is Mind or *śūnyatā*, which being absolute, knows no second (1960, p. 51).

I seek an understanding of the relationship between *śūnyatā* and Lacanian thinking. Lacan gives us a way to understand the inevitable figuration of the adolescent mind and being, in dualistic systems of education. In those systems of the West, there is little interconnection with Zen philosophy, which offers a way to release, in the adolescent, his highest form of self, freed from constrictions of falsely constraining ideologies. The intentionality of this thesis is to understand both forms of wisdom (Zen and Lacan) in ways that might release adolescence from inherited conventions and traditions that bind them and hide true mind. "In many ways, it does not seem possible to dissociate Lacan's reading of Zen…and his depiction of the subject as sustaining or supporting itself by a void" (Blondelot & Sauret, 2015, p. 174).

This thesis explores possibilities for releasing adolescent selves, but does not offer strategies for how this release might be achieved in school systems as instituted in the West. Though in many ways this thesis, I hope, is going to offer courageous ways to think about and alleviate the weight that these systems press upon our adolescents. This means there is yet a great deal to do in education.

Self-making

To consider different ideas that help to 'create' the individual, particularly from the perspective of the external, I look to the work of Bruner. In sentiments that reaffirm Zen, Bruner believes there is no such thing as an essential self to know, rather the self becomes a fluid construct assembled and reassembled to meet the needs of our daily lives, based on memories and experiences. Zen philosophy, Bruner and Lacan reject the notion of a fixed identity—Bruner and Lacan focus on the concept of 'self-making', in that "it can never be the case there is a "self" independent of one's cultural–historical existence" (Bruner, 1986, p. 67). Further, Bruner states, "We have come to reject the view that a "life" is anything in itself and to believe that it is all in the constructing, in the text, or the text making" (1991, pp. 67-68). Alternatively, as McAdams suggests, "We are all storytellers, and we are the stories we tell" (2006, p. 3).

If students' core beliefs about themselves revolve around the idea that they are amazing mathematicians, for example, then interpretations of what others say develop around this (and other) beliefs about self. Following the thoughts of Bruner (1991), our stories are constructed by us to make sense of the world and of our place within it. Because we have constructed and internalised these stories, they become real to us—the stories are true to us and these stories become us. Might attachment to the story of us fill the Lacanian void by becoming us? Do we lose the unity with the original Other, but gain security through the clinging to an identity? We find ourselves drifting further away from an original authenticity, somehow lost.

Do schools provide an environment where we become constructed further by language, perhaps cast further adrift from an essential or authentic self, reduced to fit within society? Is it "because of the nature of our minds", as McAdams states, "we are impelled as adults to make sense of our lives in terms of narrative" (1993, p. 134)? In a realisation of the original loss, do we need to cling to something? Following McAdams, are self-awareness and self-knowledge constructed to a significant degree through narrative, as we compose and assemble stories for ourselves and our world? But these stories about ourselves and others are of limiting and self reflexive systems than cannot adequately reflect our uniqueness. In denying our uniqueness, through attachment to a system of language are we attaching to a fixed notion of self?

In our attachment, we cling and we suffer.

In choosing the events that help to define us, we reinterpret and extract lessons learned, integrative themes, and other personal meanings that make sense to us as we consider the past and anticipate the future. Do our autobiographical stories reflect who we are, and do they also reflect the world in which we live (McAdams, 2001)? The independent narrative we tell ourselves each day makes up our life story (McAdams, 2004), which is who we tell ourselves we are. Does this mean that it really is who we are? And, if this is who we are, how did we become this person?

Can we move topologically from a position of isolation of our appropriated story, and into openness, to shed our figuration, to release ourselves from the burden of pursuing affirmation through words, not of our own, becoming a self

not of our making? Through Zen Buddhist philosophy I hope to illuminate much of my thinking and so much of what I propose—that there must be a way to release us, and particularly our students, from what we feel we have inadvertently become. I hope to find ways to release us from a layered and static sense of self, isolated and confined.

In Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) schoolteacher Joseph Jacotot, driven into exile during the Restoration, developed ways of emancipating illiterate parents by showing them how to teach their own children to read. Jacotot shows us a way of closing the distance between us, in Radical Courage, in ways that challenge our views of what education is, or could be. In essence, Rancière presents us with a tale "that enacts an extraordinary philosophical meditation on equality" (p. *ix*).

Jacotot's method of rejecting adherence to any set curriculum and teaching without prescription, rather than turning to the prevailing worldview of explication, takes its stance from uncovering the myth of explication in pedagogy (p. *xix*). We ask ourselves if we might take more risks like Jacotot, and in doing so embody Radical Courage. In self-illumination and self-awareness are we able to emancipate one another and ourselves from the external powers dictating to us? Just as a sudden illumination highlights to Jacotot that which is blindly adhered to in any system of teaching, in the necessity of explication (p. 4), are we able to be truly liberated from the elements that appear to construct us? Teaching and comprehension through explication—through the logical progression of instruction and reason—limits and figurates us. In the words of Rancière, "it's a matter of making the emancipated: people capable of saying, me too, I'm a painter…which means: me too, I have a soul, I have feelings to communicate to my fellow men" (p. 67).

Are we able to give others hope in releasing from attachment to a self not of our own? We search for a clearer picture of who we are and not a picture thrust upon us by a society, imbued upon us by the Other, internalised and attached. Do we cling to the static noun of permanence in self, reflected in a storied individuality? Can we understand a fluid notion of *locus*, of a living grammar, a poetry of the Other?

Rather than any position of permanence, our *locus* reflects the position we occupy in the world, at any time, relating to others in a spatial relationship. Much of what I have witnessed as an educator shows a temporal relationship of self and other, reinforced through the linear model of education placing us in transient relationships. Through a position of spatiality, might we apprehend the *locus* of the other, and move to decrease this proximity between us? In the words of Paolo Freire, "[Man] comes to accept mythical explanations of his reality. Like a man who has lost his address, he is uprooted" (1974, p. 31). Through our external figuration, do we adopt then adhere to these mythical explanations of who we are? Do we become uprooted?

Through deep understanding of the humanity of each of us, we become aware of the processes of us—through vigilance, introspection and meditation on the nature of layering, in the *locus* of us, do we understand the processes of self on a deeper and more illuminating level? Recognising 'I' as an authentic selfhood, according to Lacanian thinking is an error. Our ego, or 'me' is an inauthentic agency, "the nucleus given to consciousness—though it is opaque to reflection" (Lacan, 2002, p. 17), originating in infancy and growing through the input of others, further transformed by the advent of schooling.

Our attachment develops and so our suffering.

In Lacanian thinking our image taken as 'I' creates an image that "alienates him from himself" (Lacan, 2002, p. 21), the dissonance created by the 'I', results from identifying with an image that is not 'me'. Is our 'I' an attachment to an unattainable ideal, taking us further from our authenticity? In avoiding adherence to a 'not-self', Zen strives to go 'underneath words' to dig out what is there (Suzuki, 2002, p. 24).

In our pursuit of authenticity with our students we endeavour to 'dig out what is there'—to always seek the *locus* of us beyond what we see.

> In a discussion with my Year 7 class, one of the boys raised the topic of individual versus a group. This led to a conversation regarding their own insights about how they felt 'as individuals' or 'as a group' in classes. Their responses reinforced the idea that they felt they were treated as a group, rather than individually. When I probed the issue further and asked why this might be the case, many felt it was probably due to 'ease of transmission of information' or similar responses.

In our construction of efficient and well-run classes, do we also construct the individual by our use of formal and efficient language? Is our enthusiasm for expediency at the cost of the individual?

I look for ways to emancipate our students from the language that has constructed them. We encourage our students to identify with the image as 'me' created by Others around him—the image of the ideal student. As we have

previously discussed, the result of identification with, and attachment to the image, is a life spent pursuing a state of harmony and mastery promised by the Mirror (Lacan, 1968, p. 160).

Do we find ourselves severed through language and adrift—each of us separated from our true selves or authenticity, attached to a self, of Others? In education, scores and judgements layering upon layer provide inauthentic identities for our students to adhere to. Our use of inauthentic measures moves us further from *locus* and towards *logos*—from openness to isolation. In our definition of the other, we fixate them as immovable and inert, as the immobile noun. We somehow deny the formless fluidity of the Other, as verb, and fixate them. Let us listen to Rilke (1994, p. 19), who likens our fluid authenticity to the will and our eyes to the nature of our attachment,

And as your will takes in the sense of it, your eyes can gently let it go.

Illuminating our understanding of the nature of attachment to a constructed self, I aim to peel back the layer of the hidden, the inauthentic and the stultified (Rancière, 1991), to reveal the authentic and the beautiful, to appreciate and to cherish our uniqueness, and shine a light on this observation to see our children and ourselves in different ways. I echo Rousseau's (1782, 1991) sentiment that man becomes estranged from his natural existence by living externalised in the gaze of his fellow man. Our children learn to strive for the affirmation that is attached to the self, and, as we cling to the constructed ego, we suffer in pursuing the validation of us—the self of the Other, external to us, and is not of us. We become embodied in a living grammar of the static noun, longing for transformation through a limitless understanding of self, unencumbered by objectification.

As educators, can we apprehend the *locus* of our students, in the spirit of Zen, beneath and beyond *logos,* in words? In a recent conversation with the class, we spoke openly about the affect grades have on us. I was interested in the relationship between assessment and layering of self as it contributes to the ways of being of our students. In the dialogue we had together Jim said,

> I think marks do affect the way I feel about myself they can make me feel less confident and sometimes I'm quite self-conscious about my marks if they are bad. Then again when I get good marks I feel quite proud of myself and I enjoy the feeling, which sort of makes me want to get good marks more often.

And Gerry added,

> How a grade affects me varies on what grade I get. If I get good grades I feel pretty good about myself. But if I get bad grades, especially if I thought I did better, it makes me feel pretty sad and down about myself.

There seems a clash between the ideal image and the self that Jim and Gerry internalise. Educators as Others present an image for us, just as the fragmented and uncoordinated infant sees a whole in the Mirror. Students witness the ideal academic image in the Mirror and see the lack in themselves—little by little, our students are manufactured further. As others, are we objectifying in a fixed and limiting understanding? In otherness, do we deny the formlessness embodied in Otherness? In education, we seem to prefer the static classification of others, perhaps turning away from a fluid and formless apprehension. Is the unknowable presence of Otherness too much for us to bear? Do we keep others at a distance through our objectification and our classification? We move through our daily lives in Radical Isolation, removed from the authenticity of the Other.

Can we look to our students as unique Others, and not as others, transferred upon and distant from us? If so, in seeking authenticity of our students, might we

see past the figuration of language? So much of where we find ourselves is obscured, hidden, even protected from the gaze of others. In what Buber terms the '*I-Thou'* relationship (1923 in Herberg, 1956), in which our presence with one another is unclouded by manufactures and judgements, we might truly see our true selves illuminated in our relations with others.

> I talked with my class yesterday regarding the nature of education and schools. The desks were all facing the front of the room and I asked why this might be the case. No one answered me. This was a pre-tertiary class, bright young men on the verge of adulthood—intelligent and eager to move forwards—winners in this game of school. As I looked over the class, it was in a sense looking back at my teaching career—there were boys in this class that I taught in Years 1 or 6, Middle School and now Years 11 and 12. There was a beauty to this which I felt I should share with them, an idea of a bigger picture or a sense of belonging to a larger whole resonates with me and yet I could not remove from my mind the idea that these moments of organic, living authenticity are so few, often obfuscated by a static relationship with others, in which we are situated in isolation.

I wonder if "Our schools are in a sense, factories in which raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life" (Seidel & Jardine, 2014, p. 73). If the situation exists that our children learn to hide their uniqueness, then we might ask why. Is fear as a central concept in the compression of our authenticity, greatly influencing us by directing us to conform to the norm? Could our dichotomous ways of thinking be based on control and the fear of the loss of control, founded in the original desire for affirmation or love? In Zen philosophy clinging creates suffering—do we cling only to what is known and reject what we do not understand?

We still find ourselves clinging and suffering.

When we consider the question of 'who we really are', do we choose the events that we consider most important for defining us and providing our lives with unity and purpose? Is the process of self-defining so conscious, or is our adoption of a self beyond what we might consider our control? We look to the idea of *locus* in ascertaining a deeper understanding or ourselves and others, because it is not simply a question of being person A or B, but understanding how we became person A or B and how we become located, as person A or B, in a topology of self. In these brief, fleeting moments, we might apprehend ourselves and others in what Rilke calls these rare moments of perception, only uttered through poetry (in Yasuda, 1973, p. 177). Is it not poetry, but stories created by ourselves amongst and amidst the chatter of daily lives, as a storied self? What of the poetry of us?

Rancière tells us, "It has been said that if something is well-conceived, it will be clearly articulated. This sentence is meaningless" (1991, p. 68). How do we articulate our ideas embodied in feeling? What of emotion? Can we truly suggest our teaching is divorced from feeling and emotion?

> The instantaneousness of these ideas and feelings that contradict each other are infinitely nuanced—this must be transmitted, made to voyage the wilds of words and sentences. And the way to do that hasn't been invented. For then we would have to suppose a third level in between the individuality of that thought and common language. (Rancière, 1991, p. 68)

I wonder what it might take us to see and perhaps utter these brief moments of perception. And then, what of an authentic self? Is this the poetry of us?

As the weight of a self is lifted, our minds turn to the moon.

Haiku

One of the foundations of perception and expressions of Zen is through haiku—simple poetry that moves beyond description and attempts to place the reader in a position of simplicity and introspection, perhaps removing the individual from the rigid adherence to signifiers and what is signified.

Bashō, widely considered as the greatest master of haiku, provides an illumination of the essential nature of us. Although not a Zen poet, at the heart of his writing Bashō's haiku is the very foundation of human perception of things—mind itself. True mind is recognised as the empty infinity of the universe—the person who has become empty infinity becomes emancipated and expressions of this freedom in words and actions are identifiable in spirit and character (Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 19). In the standpoint of Zen, through simplicity and everydayness, Bashō's haiku, reflecting through words and resonating deeply with the reader,

None goes along this way but I,

This autumn eve.

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 81)

In the contemplation of Zen embodied within haiku, might we find authenticity transcending individual systems of signifiers? In poetry, can we find ways in which words transcend words? Is there a language outside of language allowing us to apprehend the ineffable?

The ideal

Might we cling to identity rather than embrace the freedom of *śūnyatā*? Do we choose to suffer by clinging, rather than pursue the true self that is founded in emptiness? We might find solace in the boundaries and structure provided by the ego, as constructed by the Other, in the same way that lock step progression in the explicative method (Rancière, 1991) as a means to deliver classroom content in a highly sequential and ordered way also provides us with structure. Can we see the analogy between the traditional model of education and the self—structure and predictability, as opposed to the potential of unstructured freedom? Might we find that the attachment to the ego is a safer and more predictable paradigm than that of freedom or authenticity? Do we inwardly rebel against a notion of 'not me' but fear questioning too far? As long as we remain seated in the domain of the rationalising intellect, we pursue the shadow of the elusive self. Once we feel we have grasped our ego, it is somewhere else, just as the snake sheds its skin (Suzuki, 1957, p. 40).

Still we grasp, clutching at attachment.

Since the Enlightenment, we have been conditioned in our thinking to pursue a rationalist and reductive way of being, viewing our world as a machine with its constituent parts. Our minds were not immune from such conditioned ways of thinking—reduced to another 'thing' to be grasped and categorised according to measurement and control (Greene & Smith, 1940, p. 41). Do we seek to control and measure our environment, magnified in our curriculum, our schools and our

selves? We base our dichotomous way of thinking in success or failure—in right or wrong. Our schools' thinking is largely based around structure, systems and rigidity that appear distant from any conceptions we might have of freedom, or authenticity.

> I spent a week with a group of Year 9 boys, co-leading an expedition on the South Coast Track, a world-class bushwalk in Southern Tasmania. This expedition is part of our Year 9 program where the boys choose one expedition from a choice of four. This choice of expedition then forms a class that spends the year together, culminating in the expedition term where the boys spend this time on the Marieville Campus engaged in experiential learning and preparing for the expedition. The classroom for this 'off campus' term is an old ship chandlery, literally a stone's throw from the beautiful Derwent River. The percussive and melodic sounds of wire vibrating on masts on a windy day from the yachts moored closely by and the calling of gulls acoustically frames this idyllic site. On other days when the sun is high in the sky and the river is a glassy mirror, we gather near the water's edge to read together. It is here that conversations come easily from one another, learning becomes a novelty and engagement is palpable. We are far removed from the traditional classroom, far removed from control and fear—we share a role, rather than a traditional dichotomous relationship.

The flexibility and relaxed nature of the setting is confronting for some educators. The lack of clear boundaries, firstly physical and then metaphorical is uncomfortable for some—is it fear that the educators experience? The heightened sense of control, of losing or gaining control, hanging precariously in the balance is anxiety-inducing for some. I find this situation of fluid boundaries a perfect metaphor for the self. Some of us cling to control, out of a sense of fear, even if we are unhappy with what we believe we are. We hold on to our manufacture

because the alternative is confronting and unknown. We might ask, "What is the alternative to a self that is known?" Is it a 'no-self'? Do we cling to the static noun of permanence in self, reflected in a storied individuality? Might we turn to a fluid notion of *locus*, in brief apprehension, in a living grammar, in a poetry of the Other?

As we shall see, a 'no-self' is not the same as nothing. The idea of a 'no-self' brings negative connotations imbued upon us from our rationalist heritage. We have learned to associate the opposite of positive with a negative—metaphorically and literally. Relationships of positive and negative are a wonderful example of our dichotomous thinking—if not positive, then negative, if not good, then bad. Simplistic ways of thinking cause us much suffering by attaching ourselves out of fear. We fear the negative, the unknown, and what we cannot quantify. After all, scientific logical thinking has shown us a self that can be categorised through intellect, physical characteristics, attitude and appearance. Once we have collated these elements, we have person A or person B—we have control over our environment and control over ourselves.

A 'no-self' might liberate us from the clinging and suffering that we experience through desire, but how might we achieve this state? Some of us are so blinded to alternative possibilities by fear. My thoughts turn to Sören Kierkegaard (1844) and his appraisal of freedom and its anxiety-inducing potential,

> I spent the morning in the Kindergarten class earlier this year, arranged with the class teacher whom I knew well. I wanted to see, if I could, the beginnings of it all—this mythical and somewhat esoteric experience of what school is, so I felt best placed to go to the source. I sat in the corner of

> the room and watched as the boys went through their morning routine. As the teacher, Mrs D, sat on the chair at the front of the room, the boys knew it was time to sit on the mat. Clearly this was a structure that was followed daily—the boys knew it well. Mrs D introduced the day, asking if anyone knew what day it was—a few hands went up. Before too long, some of the boys found the task of sitting on the mat a little arduous and began moving about. It was clear that the instruction of not leaving the mat had been learned—as much as they rolled and twisted, the boys did not leave that mat. Much like a little group of Robinson Crusoe's marooned on an island, they did not dare go into the sea.

As some moved more than others, I was struck by the idea of a possible illustration of the Lacanian internal externality becoming evident, building layer upon layer of the inauthentic ego (2014, p. 102). As Others, educators assist in the construction of the self—we classify and judge our students in dichotomous ways, based on success or failure of any given task. In judging and labelling we are faced with the acceptance of that decision by others, consciously or unconsciously. Alternatively, can we transcend societal constructs and gain a deeper understanding of ourselves? In comprehension of a deeper understanding, we might ask ourselves if it is a state possible to attain.

I find myself drawn to the idea of a nexus between the defined model of the self, and how it is juxtaposed against the fluid or flexible notion of what we can be, illuminated by Buddhist concepts of attachment and suffering. In the belief of a fixed or stable self, we become closed to the inherent possibilities in each of us. Our authenticity unable to be classified by language, closing us to our limitless potentiality and places us in a position of immobility. Our uniqueness, as an idea reflected in the words of Rilke,

Nothing is like something else. What is not wholly alone with itself,

what thing can really be expressed? We name nothing. All we can do is tolerate, acquaint ourselves with a single fact: here a sudden brilliance or there a glimpse momentarily grazes us as if it were precisely that in which resides what our life is. Whoever resists will have no world. Whoever grasps too much will overlook the infinite.

(1990, p. 108)

Might we consider grasping things or ideas, illustrating the notion of clinging to the constructed or fixed self—an idea outlined in Lacanian and Buddhist thought. In Lacanian thinking, attachment to a fixed self, or 'I' (2001, p. 7) created by the original formulation of the ego leaves a void or lack in each of us. Our constant striving to fill this void leads us to pursue affirmation of a fixed sense of self, driven by words of the Other, leading to our figuration. In the grasping of fixed notions of self, might we overlook the infinite of ourselves and of Others? Does our desire to affirm our fixed sense of self lead to our suffering?

Attempts to control our environment, with the use of language to classify and quantify, we cling to notions of permanence. Does the eternal, infinite and impermanence of us stand in contrast to the current way of reductionist thinking we employ in our schools and in our daily lives? Language provides the vehicle for access to fixed notions of self and others, and through words we are constructed and defined. We use general terms for the unique and we attempt to grasp in absolute terms that which is indefinable and unattainable—people make the words. A cat doesn't say, "I'm a cat". People say, "This is a cat". The sun doesn't say, "My name is sun". People say, "This is the sun" (Seung, 1976, p. 21).

We use language in our attempts to grasp and to attach to the infinite. To deepen our comprehension of the nature of attachment to that which is indefinable, Lacan theorised that our ego maintains a façade of completeness and coherence, though we are founded on incompleteness, perhaps the infinite. Because we look outside of ourselves to find coherence, initially in the Mirror, we learn to pursue the absolute, through language—we become a self, founded on attachment to words and images. In our objectification through the image of the Mirror and words of the Other, an 'Ideal-I' or 'Ideal-ego' is created (Lacan, 1966, p. 4).

> I recently talked with a group of Year 10 boys who were involved in their course choices for Years 11 and 12. The culminating score, the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), determines the potential avenues to Tertiary choices— therefore the higher the ATAR score, the more choices a student will have regarding future avenues for study. Both the School and the student body in general prize a high ATAR score, but realistically a score of above 95% is unobtainable for most. It allows students to define themselves in a dichotomous way of succeeding or failing because of a number. Conversations with some of the boys include sentiments directed at themselves, regarding their entire time at school, based on this score, being a success or otherwise—perhaps the ultimate attachment with which to derive meaning. In my discussion with boys, one stated that, "we seem to be eternally chasing the unobtainable".

And yet, the boys continue to chase this seemingly unobtainable goal, attaching meaning to themselves because of it, in what Lacan might term an unquantifiable sense or drive, which endures.

Chapter 2: Śūnyatā within Us

In this chapter I look to emptiness as a means of apprehending our topology and that of the Other. I develop an understanding of Practising Receptance in comprehending voidness or *śūnyatā*, our emptiness as infinite wholeness, unlimited and unbound by static foundation in prescription. Practising Receptance echoes what Rupert Spira terms the "formless expanse of Presence" (2016, p. 5) through understanding our adherence to self, founded in words of the Other. In comprehension of voidness we gain an understanding of our highly fluid and undefinable *locus*, and that *locus* of others.

> I recall always being very interested in people, and, as a young boy I would sit and talk to my mother at length, about our encounters with others. The focus was often school, as my mother was a teacher—reflection was often daily, regarding who we had met that day and retelling of conversations, incidents or dramas. Deep discussions about possible motivations and behaviours of others ensued and these discussions could go on for a long time. My father would intermittently look out from behind the newspaper and offer insightful advice—reinforcing the need for us to look beyond the image that is presented to us in our daily encounters. It has really only struck me now as to the likely effect of our many dialogues—the message always to look beyond what you

> see, or what is presented to you—I was encouraged to always seek out the *locus* of the other, to see the other and to see myself.

Seeking the *locus* of others in the spatial relationship shared between us and attempting to fleetingly apprehend the Other, much of what I have witnessed as an educator shows a temporal relationship of self and other, reinforced through a model of education placing us in transient relationships. Apprehending the *locus* of the other, can we move to decrease the space between us? The spatial relationship between self and other reflects a topological model of our interactions and ideas of self, in that although we are shaped and figurated by words and our system of language, our fundamental and formless 'selves' remain intact. We consider self as *topos*—fluid and verb-based, to awaken from ideas of self as a different *logos*, fixed, noun-based, inert.

Understanding topology of self and other fuels my writing and the reasons we present to the world as we do, or at least, the potential reasons why we might present as we do. Lacan's Mirror Phase is significant in ascertaining where our conception of self originates, gaining ideas to illustrate what this might mean for our daily interactions.

The Mirror

Lacan's thinking suggests an infant's response to its own prematuration is based on observations made in nature and that the capturing of an organism in its own environment, his *locus*, is central to the survival of some species (2002, p. 6). The infant engages in an imaginary capture in an external image, the Mirror, as a process of overcoming helplessness in prematuration, and to engender a sense of

mastery. In Lacanian thinking, imaginary capture in an external image is integral to the formation of the ego, based on the desire for completion and mastery. Illusory 'completeness' leads to conflict through the infant's recognition in a reflection, seen as a whole, contrasted with the lack of coordination and mastery of his own body. Further to Lacan's thinking, transformation by the identification with the image leads to assuming the image presented—he is encouraged to identify with the image as 'I' by those adults around him, and so, begins a search for 'wholeness' and a state of mastery as we are conditioned to apprehend that which is outside of us (2001, pp. 6-8).

Is searching for completeness or wholeness a grasping for something that we might already possess? In our attempts at mastery of a self, do we cling to an idea of a 'thing' to be achieved or obtained? This something is reflected in the thinking of Po,

You can't fathom Mind by straining to discover your liberation.

Perceive that neither becoming nor cessation has reality.

One's duality is merely distinct aspects of the absolute.

Perceive the wholeness. Don't split half of a pair. Why split perfection?

(Po & Uharriet, 2014, p. 70)

Do we pursue the external when we 'have' completeness already? What might we need to understand our wholeness is not something to be pursued but perhaps something to be realised, illustrated by the words of Zen priest, Sōiku Shigematsu (1981, p. 45),

My mind is a void sky.

In voidness, do we turn from what we fear and do not understand? In voidness, do we lessen our desire to capture the image that presents to us? In a return to

Lacanian thinking, a Mirror image gives the child an impression of physical maturity, of wholeness, well before he has reached that stage. Reflected images of wholeness drive the infant to adopt an image of relative independence. According to Lacanian thinking, the result of identification with the image is a life spent pursuing a state of harmony and mastery promised by the Mirror (2002, p. 4).

Danny Nobus addresses the image in the Mirror in his book *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* as the point of departure from the specular 'I' to the relational, social 'I'. The resultant separation is the point where we become mediated through the desire of the Other (1998, p.112).

Jack and Louisa — approximately ten months old and, according to Lacanian thinking, well within the stage of ego figuration. Here, they are ensconced within the arms of nanny and a world of language, the world of the Symbolic and the world of the Other. I wonder if the words are reinforcing a constructed sense of self? Does the physical *locus* reflect an apprehension of the Other in authenticity?

Integral to the Mirror Phase in Lacanian thinking is the formation of the ego via the process of objectification, where, between about six and eighteen months, the infant identifies with his or her own image termed the "Ideal-I" or "Ideal-ego" (1966, p. 4). Lacan suggests that because of this illusion of mastery, the role

of the ego is to maintain a façade of completeness and coherence. Significance in our relationship to images manifests in the concept of 'me' that is 'not-me', an 'imago' (Lacan, 2002, p. 4) of completion or wholeness contrasted to our fragmented uncoordination of early infancy. Because we look outside of ourselves to find coherence, is it also with language that we learn to pursue a self that is not original or authentic—a self that is 'not-me'? We look to the Zen idea of non-being as wholeness and not looking outside of ourselves in the pursuit of wholeness. In a poem by Zen monk Daido Ichi'I, ideas of non-being filling the void arise,

A tune of non-being

Filling the void:

Spring sun

Snow whiteness

Bright clouds

Clear wind

(in Hoffmann, 1986, p. 92)

In our fear of emptiness, do we cling and attach? A return to the thinking of Lacan, contrasted to the motif of the Zen poem, suggests we are constructed by the original Other, usually the mother. Her words imbued upon us provide the fuel for affirmation and validation—our desire to be affirmed and feel the validation once felt as wholeness, as an infant, now resides in words. Exploring ideas of fabrication through the words of the Other, and the potential release from this pursuit of affirmation because of words, allows us to delve deeper into the *locus* of us, and not simply the who.

As educators, we assist in the figuration, layer by layer, of an inauthentic and alienating self. As one of the key issues of education is centrally relational—might we let children be 'where they are'? What ways might this become possible if we perform our role as educators allowing a sense of freedom regarding our students' ecologically relational sense of self? Schools are fundamentally places of socialisation, actively constructing and creating selves, situationally and socially, where students are meant to learn to function effectively within a highly organised society. Yet following Lacan, there is potentially a lack in the idea of a constructed self, and so we must be led to ask questions of the possible effects this lack in self could have for our students and society as a whole.

Introspection as an adult provides us with a potential foundation in which to accept or deflect interactions—to challenge any fixed notion of self. We might be aware of the influences, which have led us to believe 'who we are', and possibly the influences of 'where we are', in the adoption of an identity. We find ourselves clinging to fixed notions of self. A process by which we develop a fixed self is outlined by McAdams who writes of life stories as texts, jointly crafted by the individual and the culture within which the individual's life has meaning. Central to the idea of a life story is the adoption of a self—the story reflects who we believe we are (2001, pp. 100-110). I question why must we adopt any sense of self? Is it the fear of nothingness that drives us to cling to something? Do we unconsciously pursue the validation and affirmation of words first imbued upon us as an infant, which lead us to adopting a self to fit with these words of the Other?

I critically examine the lives of adolescents—that maligned group of young people trying desperately to find their way in life amongst the myriad of distractions, questions and interpretations—and the role in which we play, as

educators. I write because I want to understand and I want others to understand—my wish is that we gain a greater understanding so that we see adolescents as the fragile, exuberant, exhausted, time-poor, disorganised, confused, forward-looking and most of all, incredible humans that they are, and we once all were.

Adolescence sees us undergo a process or many processes of transformation—layer upon layer of the self being constructed and the self constructing self, to find an identity. We continue to cast our eyes outwards in the hope that the answers to who we are, our striving and desire, can be placated. As educators, we witness those who try to 'fit in' with others—sporty students, academic students, musical students—and those who cannot fit in. Various identities are adopted in a more visible way, as our students appear to cling to a more stable sense of self. Clinging or attachment, as we might discover, lays foundations for a false self, wrought by clutching for something that we cannot attain or that does not fit with who we really might be—ideas of clinging to a fixed notion of self disregard the notion of a true self or an authentic self, undefinable through words.

The Other

As we discussed in Chapter One, needs as misunderstood demands are assigned meaning (signified) by the mother (Other), and so, the message becomes essentially from the Other. As needs cannot be articulated in demand, the resulting presentation is desire, which is substituted for demand. Lacan suggests

demand creates a specificity out of the many potential avenues for placating need, by turning it into the singular, proof of love (2002, p. 276).

Our constant striving to fill this void leaves a highly interpretable, constructed sense of self. Our ego is formulated through the original words of the Other—the externality, which helps to construct us. We are forever gazing outwards in our hope to achieve mastery over ourselves. Our *locus* fixed in isolation, removed from openness.

> I sit surrounded by a class of 14-year-old boys as I write notes and observations. As I meditate on their actions and interactions, I remain utterly drawn to the intrigue and the mystery that make up the lives of these adolescents. My role of ethical investigator echoes the sentiments of Paul Ricoeur (1992) in his hermeneutics of suspicion, whereby we are encouraged to demystify the real from the apparent—encouraged to seek beneath what is presented to us. I look to the process of continually searching for explanations as to the *locus* of each of us, in the search for deeper understandings between us all.
>
> As an example, I was recently at a marking meeting at a college where teachers from all over the state had gathered together to mark the students' end-of-year exams. These papers were the culminating pieces for the year and possibly the final pieces of formal education for some. As I entered the marking room, the papers were all arranged in green stacks around the edge of the room. There were hundreds and hundreds of them and this was only for one subject. I was assigned to a team of four where we were responsible for the marking of one section of the exam. I received my stack of green booklets, impressive in their weight. There were 74 papers. Our first task was, as a group, to sit together and 'mark' our first two or three papers, then discuss the appropriate standard for an 'A', 'B' and so on. Of course, we had an assessment rubric to guide us, but our task was to moderate, to make sure we all agreed on what an 'A standard' was.

> As I opened the first paper, the feeling of tension and apprehension leapt from the page. The handwriting of the first paper, scrawled and rushed, indicative of the frenzy of ideas dumped on paper, three hours of regurgitation of facts, theorists and paragraphs. I questioned whether this was representative of the final part of 12 years of education, or representative of what it could be? If I am to be honest, I felt more than a little disheartened by what I saw—a relic of the past, used to judge ability to retain and regurgitate information. In the current climate of great technological advances where smart phones, laptops, iPads and virtual learning environments are commonplace in every classroom from early childhood to senior secondary, I sat looking at what could be described as almost comically old fashioned.

To see our students as others, placing them in the realm of the imaginary, distanced and removed, they remain unknowable and ungraspable. Can we apprehend Otherness, where we situate these adolescents in a more Real dimension, looking beneath the image into the *locus* of them? I find myself thinking about the ways in which words are used to construct and separate us. I contemplate how language objectifies and leaves our students inert, fixed and seeking ways to provide a realisation beyond words of their profound and formless truth.

In *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dōgen and the Lotus Sutra,* Taigen Dan Leighton writes of Zen master Dōgen (2007, p. 3) and how he proposed silent illumination as a means to provide us with greater clarity, achieved through emptiness of no thought, or stillness of mind, in which "emptiness all things are found" (in Cleary, 1991, p. 24).

Can we begin to comprehend that emptiness is not the same as an absence of meaning, or negative? Emptiness or *śūnyatā* in Zen is synonymous with clarity and stands in opposition to ideas of an external assembly by the Other. The emptiness of words are often used in Zen as language to counteract language, and "…many Zen patriarchs used language to defeat language, or as a poison to counteract poison, resulting in a realization beyond thought and scripture" (Dōgen & Heine, 1997, p. 2).

In what ways might we let our students counteract the figuration by the Other, through language, leading to the irradiation of 'true mind'? Unless we have a space for reflection and clarity, we remain burdened by our search, fuelled by the void in each of us—the original lack, amplified in these words by Dōgen,

Monks sit peacefully among the trees,

Ridding themselves of illusion with a calm mind.

Quietly realizing enlightenment,

They experience a joy that is beyond that of heaven.

Laymen seek fame and profit,

Or fine robes, seats, and bedding.

Though the joy in getting them is only fleeting,

They are untiring in their quest.

(Yokoi & Dōgen, 1976, p. 69)

We remain untiring in our quest, in our drive. As educators do we help in the fabrication of individuals and in the burden of constructed selves? As we deem our students to be an 'A student' or a 'B', their identity becomes designated by us, reinforced through a dualistic paradigm. Simplistic and out-dated modes of

schooling and relating to others might result in what Rancière calls the stultification and homogeneity of the individual (1991 p. 7). Perhaps the homogeneity is reflected in the lifeless use of nouns, where our students are shown to themselves as fixed, in *logos.* Through our classification of our students, do we attempt to control our environment?

We cling, we attach, and we suffer.

Let us turn to the individual, looking critically at our interactions with others—we look to gain a deeper understanding of the *locus* of us and not simply the who of us, understood in fixed and immovable language.

Two types of 'other'

Our conception of different forms of 'other' is a key concept in Lacanian thinking. Central is the distinction between the two types of other—the other with a lower case 'o' and Other with a capital 'O', allowing us to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the lives of those around us, and our own. Lacan explains that in our figuration, we are imbued by the words of the Other in that, "...something quite different is at stake in the message, since the subject constitutes himself on the basis of the message, such that he receives from the Other even the message he himself sends" (Lacan, 2002, p. 293).

Might we see our students imbued by the Other's code—figurated upon the foundations of the words of the Other, figurated by the code of a previous Other, who was before figurated by a previous Other, in an endless stream of construction? Returning to the register of the Symbolic, the infant receives words of the parents and the encouragement for recognition in the Mirror, and messages become imbued upon us. We enter into a journey of ourselves, in which we travel and search without end, seen in Rilke's words.

> *There were cliffs and unreal forests. Bridges spanning emptiness and that huge gray blind pool hanging above its distant floor like a stormy sky over a landscape. And between still gentle fields a pale strip of road unwound.*
>
> *They came along this road.*
>
> *(1990, p. 41)*

Our students travel this road as it unwinds before them, often led by the unseen forces of the Other. We continue to provide layers over the kernel of the 'not-me', to "identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it as an object" (Lacan, 2002, p. 84).

Lacanian thinking tells us, in infancy, our ego is founded on a 'lack' or incompleteness, as a manifestation of a desire for recognition or affirmation (1968, p. 193), as we find the image of us does not match with the helplessness of 'me'. The ego serves as a protectorate of our fragmented selves and we become a projection of us onto others, resulting in interactions based on our selves. We become multilayered, initially through the words of the Other, then through education. Central to our figuration from the void, is the lack of wholeness—a space to be filled. When we talk of other people we use a lower case 'o' and this is because the lower case 'o' is an 'other'—a 'not-me' misrecognised as 'me',

which according to Lacanian thinking, outlines its alienating status as an ego or 'me' constructed through the wants and desires of others. Essentially, the lower case 'o' is transference—we imagine what others are like based on ourselves and transfer these thoughts accordingly. Lower case 'o' is based in the arena of the Imaginary—we gain our idea of ego from what we imagine about others, based on ourselves. Our initial fabrication is also based on an image—that which we see in the Mirror.

A capital 'O' in Other refers to ideas of authority and the structure of language based in Lacanian Registers of the Real and the Symbolic (1975, p. 4). Our system of language, in which we are born, is the Symbolic Other, whereas the original Other, the mother, possesses an element of the Real, in that they are an unknowable and omnipotent presence—placing the infant in a position of questioning what the mother/Other wants. The resultant effect of questioning the mother, leads to us become open to our figuration from the outside in. When the parent holds the child before the Mirror, literally or figuratively, the child is exposed to the discourse or input of the Other. As infants, we are exposed to narratives of the parents (the Other) and encouragement for recognition in the Mirror—external images and messages —"what a beautiful boy you are"—are internalised. Let us address one of the key questions of Lacanian thinking, assisting to understand ourselves and others—the formation of the ego as other is in response to the questions of "what does the Other want?" and "How must I position myself in relation to the desire of the Other" (Lacan, 2002, p. 300)? Can we see a parallel between ego formation in the initial stages of the Mirror and what our students experience at school? Students question themselves and who they are, in response to the desires of the teacher as Other.

We talk about others and relate to them, as they do us, based on transference of our own thoughts and desires. We make assumptions of others based on ourselves, initially layered by questioning the desire of the Other (Lacan, 2002, p. 7). Parallels with education are presented by students when they develop and face questions such as, 'What does the teacher want?' and 'How must I position myself with respect to the desire of the teacher?' Students layer a self from the interactions with teachers as Other—their identity further formed and adhered to.

We witness the clinging to identity, and in the nexus between Buddhism and Lacan, the modern Zen master, Amakuki Sessan shows us the effect of clinging to a sense of permanent self, in attachment, becomes a burden and leads to suffering. In our desire to be, we are burdened, and "Because of their sticking attachment they can never throw it away. They are no more than keepers for it. To leave all, to throw away all, is the real way to pick up all and possess all" (1960, p. 79).

In understanding, our faces move upward.

In Lacanian thinking, humans are born prematurely when compared to many species of animals. We are born into a state of helplessness, making us completely dependent upon others, usually our parents, to keep us alive for an extended period of time. In his conception of the Mirror Phase (1936), within the Imaginary Register, Lacan tells us that the infant, helplessly dependent on the support of those around him, gains mastery through identifying with an external image, first observed in the Mirror, then imbued by words from the Other (2002, p. 4).

Integral to the Lacanian Imaginary Register, The Mirror Phase describes the formation of the ego via the process of objectification and Lacanian thinking suggests, because of this illusion of mastery, the role of the ego is to maintain a façade of completeness and coherence. The ego is illusory, as an external, falsifying, negative hallucination, and also an 'imago'—a protective shell for our vulnerable, disconnected selves. Images garnered from the Mirror relate to the concept of 'me' that is 'not-me', a visage of completion or wholeness in direct contrast to our fragmented incoordination of early infancy. A resultant ego is constructed on the foundations of illusion, where the "subject assumes an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, "*imago*"" (Lacan, 2002, p. 4).

Words have the power to be illusory—does input from the Other combined with the image from the Mirror help to construct our falsifying ego? Our layered self seems to divert us from our authentic selves—do we cling to our assembly because we know nothing else? Is our adherence to a self, an adherence to *logos*—fixed or inert? Do we recoil against a formlessness? In Practising Receptance we enact a radical hope reflecting a topology founded in the voidness of *śūnyatā*. In our faithfulness to self and Other we pursue authenticity, moving beyond the figuration of the other, moving beyond the storied self to the profound poetry of the Other.

Our eyes open to the words of the Other.

Searching for an answer to this perplexing issue of clinging to fabrication is paramount to the liberation of us. We appear to be faced with a dualistic paradigm of self or 'not-self'—we continue searching for answers.

A world of the Imaginary introduces us to the world of images or 'things'—we are shown something to be attained or grasped initially through our reflection in the Mirror. We cast our gaze outwards in attempts to reach understanding, looking at people as others, as a simple transference of ourselves, based on our image.

Might we look to others deeply in our attempts to see? Might we look to others as Others, an unknowable presence, never quite understood in terms of needs or Lacanian desire, but an Otherness to be known on a deeper level than image? In our exploration of other as Other, can we see a self, founded in *śūnyatā*, in voidness? As Lacan states, "The mirror would do well to reflect a little more before sending us back our image. For at this point, the subject has not yet seen anything" (2002, p. 130). Ideas of our image are further questioned by Zen Master Seung, who asks, "Who are *you*? If you have an answer tell me. If you cannot answer, you must make I-my-me disappear in your mind" (1982, p. 200).

Do we see the influence of our noun-based self as *logos*? To ask "who are you?" places us in a fixed position. In answering this fundamental question we must define ourselves—how can we? In attempts to grasp ourselves, we resort to dualism in a limiting and prescriptive system of explanation. We must make the 'I-my-me' disappear in our minds. Are we founded on the *śūnyatā* of impermanence? Might the notions of impermanence and the importance of our

apprehension of the other point to "An authentic view of impermanence, [which] according to Dōgen, leads one to identify practice and realization with the holistic moment that encompasses self and other" (Dōgen & Heine, 1997, p. 46).

Do we see the words of Dōgen imploring us to see ourselves as not disconnected from the other? Perhaps a goal of Zen is to see that we have not lost our wholeness. In the Zen tradition, we have an authenticity or true mind, realised from within, whereas Lacanian thinking sees a self, constructed from outside, externally created in language. In our conception of self, we become a separate thing to be grasped and attained. "…as for the *cogito*, it is not only temporal, but it must come from outside: it cannot come from purely internal certitude" (Lacan, 1968, p. 195). In the Lacanian ego, we have an artificial self—an object rather than a subject, from externalities encountered in images and projections of others.

Conceptions of separateness, or perhaps aloneness, drive a search for wholeness again. Searching for unity and completeness sees us look outwards in the hope of attainment and the resultant satisfaction gained in achieving a potential resolution. Ultimately, our goal is the release from our drive, yet, the affirmation we seek is never found.

If we consider self as an eternal and restless search driven by lack, might we also consider the vast implications of possible fabrication of self in education? A focus is drawn sharply on the 'I' as a product of externalities and attributed to an Other, literally a radical departure from any ideas of an innate or authentic sense

of self. With the potential of 'I' as an externality, we illustrate the critical nature of our role as philosophers and educators and the role of schools.

> Yesterday we had a bushwalk for the end of year 'enrichment week' for Year 8. By bushwalking standards, it was fairly tame—a 4 hour walk through mostly flat terrain with some steep uphill sections. As with all walks, the fastest go at the back to ensure no one is left behind and to also ensure those who are slower receive the psychological benefit of leading and helping to set the pace of the group. One teacher is placed at the front, one at the back and one somewhere in the middle. The 25 of us stayed together during the walk and moved well as a group, until right at the end.
>
> As we stopped for lunch, a few of the boys told me that one student, Jim, was at the back with one of the teachers. Reports soon filtered through that Jim had a meltdown, and was refusing to go on. I walked back down the track and saw Jim sitting on the ground, tears running down his face and one of the teachers carrying his bag.
>
> Jim was not considered a successful student, struggling in most subjects to achieve what is deemed 'at standard'. And here he was, sitting on the ground crying—a 14-year-old. As I spoke to Jim, to try to coax him to walk the last 100 metres, I wondered where he saw himself. Did he have the realisation of someone so far from what was considered successful or even competent in the world of school? Was the bushwalk a realisation of non-success in all areas of what school is? Most students will achieve success, and perhaps feel affirmed, in at least one area of school—sport, academia, music, IT, drama or dance. Jim had no such avenues for success.
>
> As he sat in the dirt, tears streaming down his face, I wondered where Jim saw himself. The lack of affirmation in what school offered Jim was so evident—to give and give and receive nothing in return.

Might it have been that Jim's desire for finding in his Mirror a fixed image of himself that he has construed has not been satisfied? Had he not been able to live out what he has imagined for himself? This single incident for him is like an analogy for all his experiences at school. Desire seems always for him impossible to be satisfied, as Lacan insists. And so he weeps.

Desire within the individual might be demonstrated in the biological needs of the infant, to be fed, clothed and cared for in every way, as each of us become bound to, and dependent upon, the need for care and input from other people, initially our parents. Can we begin to understand that we are far from an autonomous or free 'me' able to engage in self-determination (Lacan, 1977) if we appreciate the notion of figuration? In our comprehending, might we also observe the significance of language in our fabrication? Who is this 'I' we see in the Mirror and in our own minds?

In Lacanian thinking, "the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject" (Lacan, 2002, p. 4). 'I' situates the ego as subject, constructed in language, figurated upon the ideal ego of the fixed image, as seen in the Mirror. Following Lacan, the ego is an unconscious function of mastery or protectorate over our infant selves. Jim's weeping might explain that from unconscious impotence to fulfill one's desire comes deep disappointment in being able to apprehend and enact one's ideal self.

We attach and still we suffer.

Understanding ego as other has importance in the idea of referring to others as essentially a projection of our own ego—transference and projection surrounds us, illustrated when we contemplate encountering others. We see things from a biased point of view or unable to see from an other's perspective, observing the world from an egocentric position.

As waves crest, rising in anticipation, can we see the dualistic function of our being? Mastery and alienation, two conflicting processes surrounding our conception of self. How might this affect our students? How might this affect us? How do we apprehend the *locus* of the other? A deceptive function of the ego, as a protectorate of fragmentation, sees us identify with the image and that which is outside of us. The illusory ego, constructed outside of us, leaves us open to external input—a pattern set by initial moments in the Mirror, creating a lack of being by fuelling the anticipation of completeness as 'promised' by the Mirror. We search for completeness. Associating or accepting the ego as 'me' is a misrecognition (Lacan, 2002, p. 8) as we have accepted those projections from others and taken them as our own. To Lacan, a void, lack of wholeness or simply 'lack' becomes the space to be filled, but I question our drive to fill the void. Let us return to the Buddhist concept of *śūnyatā,* and consider what happens when we negate the duality of choice and accept the state of emptiness as natural.

If we understand the emptiness of all things, we may also comprehend our fear of non-being or non-understanding, attaching ideas and concepts to things in attempts to control them or their influence upon us. In our notions of control, we assign a dualistic paradigm to our lives and to ourselves. We give our minds simplistic and perhaps incorrect notions of self, based on the 'either/or' structure learned from infancy. Are we good or bad, smart or not, happy or sad? Our

language reflects our inability to embrace voidness—if not happy or sad, how do we define ourselves? If not good or bad, how do we describe ourselves? Middle? Average? Neither? Our language reflects us. In the Symbolic order, the Other of language into which we are born, we fit into the structure that assists our figuration by providing the paradigm that helps us embrace dualism. In classrooms, we witness a categorisation of our students based on our desire to classify and control, and perhaps this passive witnessing happens because we do not understand wholeness and lack the requisite grasp of such a concept. We seek understanding through categorisation and rationalism borne of flawed values applied to our children and ourselves. Have we forgotten different ways of being? In Lacanian thinking, we engage in a driven, lifelong search for the missing wholeness or unity, found with the original Other, destined never to find it. If we contemplate the thoughts of Zen, might we discover different possibilities in our thoughts that our wholeness can be attainable, sought and found?

Stepping from the commonality of everyday experiences, looking critically at what we do as educators, looking deeply to engage with others at such a vital stage in their development, to really try to 'see' the *locus* of the other, is the place where the other truly finds himself. In the spirit of Ricoeur, we attempt to discern the 'I' of the subject (1992, p. 4). As educators, we become the Other as a source of authority and our students are exposed to the discourse of the Other. What effect does this have on them and on us?

> In an English class, I stand before the students as a clear source of authority and information. I am positioned as Other and the students as others—they attempt to answer the sublimated question of the desire of their teacher. They seek the untold answer to the questions I speak only to myself, and so, in their

> attempts to find the unanswerable, they are further constructed by judgements, through grades, and the discourse of the teacher, the Other. Yet, their striving for success never ceases, in an unending pursuit framed through the dualistic paradigm of Western education.

As ego forms would students ask themselves, "What does the Other want?" and "How must I position myself in relation to the desire of the Other?" As teacher, I meditate on questions and answers posed within the defined and controlled boundaries of dualism in which we live.

Kenshō

Zen might allow us to see beyond the words imbued upon us—beyond ideas and logic and beyond the limitations of words. Is what we seek, to apprehend the other by means not of words? Can we move beyond the storied self to apprehend to poetry of the Other? Might we capture the other as Bashō does?

> *The thoughts within my heart of the beauty of the things that come with each season are like endless songs as numerous as the grains of sand on a beach. Those who express such feelings with compassion are the sages of words. (in Yasuda, 1973, p. 177)*

Can we see the relationship between Lacanian thinking and Zen as it applies to an educational environment? On one hand we might be constructed by words, in the Lacanian tradition, but on the other hand, we might be released from these words, in the tradition of Zen. If so, what is the middle ground? What might allow us to be released? Is the answer in the words of Bashō? We appear to

operate from a perspective of distance, where students are objectified—is this the nature of education? Objectification and construction through a dualistic paradigm, often of 'right or wrong', 'smart or not', leaves our students distant from us. In the thinking of van Manen, "when we truly look another person in the eyes, we may have a realisation of the enigma of the other" (2014, p. 232). Is it not the truth of the enigma that we understand that we can indeed contemplate?

Sekida tells us, "A monk discovered his Original Nature when he saw peach blossoms in full bloom" (1975, p. 101). Unclouded and unfettered by words, are we able to see Others and ourselves? In closing the distance between our students and ourselves we strive to apprehend the Other. In ideas of seeing our true nature we turn to the Zen concept of *Kenshō* that silently illuminates our understandings. Kenneth Kraft, in his study of Zen master Daito Kokushi, tells us enlightenment is "'seeing the nature' which may be rendered in English as 'seeing True-nature' or 'seeing one's own true nature'" (1992, p. 89). In our attempts to see the nature of Others, we attempt to move closer, in Reverence, to see the profound beauty of the Other. Our humanity urges us inwards, while our rationality keeps us distant. We seek ways in which the vertiginous lacuna between us can be crossed. We seek to be seen and we seek the Other.

Words define us as much as they confine us.

Sekida (1975) tells us "Mountains and rivers should not be viewed in the mirror"(p. 176). He warns us not to believe that, "The external world is nothing but the projection of the subjective mirror of your mind…The truth is the opposite of this" (p. 176).

In Zen Buddhist teaching, we attempt to illuminate the unsayable. Imagine someone trying to show us the moon by pointing. If we concentrate on the finger, we cannot accurately understand the moon. So, to comprehend the moon, we might disregard the finger as a distraction from it. In clearly analogous terminology, the finger relates to words—lacking in clarity, whereas the moon is the 'true mind'—illuminated and naturally bright. In following these thoughts of 'true mind' I am drawn to the example of "The First Zen Story" in which "Buddha held up a flower. Only Kāśyapa smiled. What could this mean but that the Buddha was silently drawing attention to the nonverbal nature of reality, of minds, and of communication" (Mortensen, 2009, p. 6)?

Affirmation

If we look to psychoanalytic thinking, beginning with Sigmund Freud, desire is a force to replicate what has been lost as an experience of satisfaction, and expressed as metonymy (Lacan, 2002, p. 166). Specifically, in Lacanian terms, "desire is the metonymy of the want-to-be" (p. 247). If our sense of self develops in relation to the images outside of us, we desire that which is external to us in a metonymy of desire as essentially a desire to be recognised.

Essentially, the desire we unconsciously experience is for love and affirmation, searching for the object of original satisfaction, first encountered as an infant. Do we attach to a self not of us in the hope to fill this longing for love? How do we experience enlightenment and release from our striving? "Enlightenment realizes its true signification in love for all beings…freedom of spirit has its own principle to follow though nothing external is imposed upon it" (Suzuki, 1961, p. 78).

Can we see the dichotomous ways in which we seek truth? Returning to Lacanian thinking, a void caused by the loss of the original object of satisfaction fuels a lifelong search to re-establish validation and satisfaction. We are driven by the endless search for this lost object—our lack fuelling a drive for affirmation, to seek out what was once a part of whom we felt we were. We seek the unity and affirmation of the original Other, the mother, throughout our lives—we pursue the external. Original acts of affirmation occur when an infant cries and the mother understands this cry as a message. The cry is instated as a signifier to be satisfied, through affirmation—the cry is transformed into a message. What issues might arise when people do not feel affirmed?

In education, do we also seek what has been lost? As educators how do we negotiate the projections of our students whom see us as Others? How can we negotiate our own projections? We must be mindful of our projections onto them also and we must be mindful of the illusory nature of desire—our drive that fuels our daily interactions. How can we truly see others and ourselves? As teachers do we need to become adept at recognising the projection of others? Do we need to become attuned to the themes, behaviours or actions that are hidden to demonstrate our understandings of our students? By our careful observations can we understand what causes the drive in each of them? In our hope to understand different ways of being with our students, we may garner a greater insight into our own humanity and that of others.

Implications of the need for validation and affirmation in an educational setting are profound—a need for validation and recognition works in the most remarkable ways, seen most starkly in our pursuit of affirmation, or love, to satisfy the needs of a constructed self.

> Yesterday, I collected my children from school. I sat on the steps outside the class with the other parents waiting for the door to open and witness the surge of colour and excitement from the day, bags comically disproportionate to small bodies. Jack came to me with his head down and crying. He did not want to discuss what had happened until we reached the car, and so I held his hand as we silently walked. As the car door closed, I asked him what the matter was. He burst out crying again—then questioned why some children seemed to get to do "the fun jobs in class and then receive certificates in assembly?" Jack had perceived an occurrence that I would suggest happens in many classrooms all over the world, on any given day. In effect, Jack's sense of self had been radically challenged by the teacher as Other. In essence, what might have upset him is that he had not been validated or affirmed.

I witnessed the reaction—sadness that was perhaps a result of feeling like he had 'not measured up to expectations'. Jack had not felt validated in his pursuit of affirmation of the Other. Although not articulated, there seemed to be an internalising of the feeling that he was not good enough to receive a certificate. To an 8-year-old it is difficult to explain that often the reasons for these decisions rest with the specific paradigm of teacher and their transference of desired attributes. We cannot attempt to guess at what 'drives' the Other, and yet, this element plays such a large part in our daily lives—in the life of social interaction. In an 8-year-old the feeling is simply of failure or of missing out, or perhaps not even articulated as clearly as that—usually the feeling of disappointment rests with the self. Through learning we are not meeting the requirements of the teacher as Other, the blame is turned inwards. Is the saying "I don't like Mrs X or Mr Y" really about the self? What is the result of failure to be recognised, validated or even 'seen' by the teacher as Other?

As educators we must be so vigilant of not only what is said, but what is not said. Words and the absence of words are equally powerful in the maintenance

and assembly of self as it then applies to the narrative of the individual. It is easy to dismiss a single incident as unimportant, and perhaps a single incident might be. As educators, do we remain open to our own desires and drive and the effects these might have in the internalisations of students as others? Through our inattention to our own transference we might impact on the lives of students in ways that are not apparent or obvious to us. This illustrates the need for us to be focused on self-understanding as well as to be focused on the lives, needs and potential drives of others. We must look deeper into the *locus* of the other.

Kōan Tradition

If we look to the tradition of *kōan*, a tool to invoke insight independent of reasoning and words, used in Zen Buddhist training, we might further our understanding or comprehension of seeking the *locus* of ourselves and our students. Reading and thinking, as we conceptualise these ideas in a Western educational paradigm, are not valued as the highest forms of educational method in Zen—students are trained not to depend on words and letters, because in accordance with Zen philosophy, man's original mind is pure or true and with our entrance to the world we lose our original mind.

Parallels occur between Zen and Lacan—is not our entrance into the realm of the Symbolic, an entrance into a world of language and rules of the Other? Within the paradox of *kōan*, with its goal for authenticity beyond words, can we see that we have learned to accept input from outside of ourselves—our authenticity replaced through our assembly? In the idea of a *kōan*, avoiding

rational analysis, do words of others do the same? We have internalised the words of others as rational and objective, when perhaps these words are metaphorical and highly interpretive—what then is the answer to this seeming riddle? We cannot ignore the words of others, as they have such a profound effect upon us, illuminated by Dale Wright and Steven Heine in the challenge of *kōan,* "If you call this a stick you will be clinging; if you do not call this a stick you are ignoring [the obvious]. So, now, tell me, what do you call it" (2000, p. 4)?

We cling to the words given to us by the Other—firstly the original Other, the mother, then teachers as Other. We have learned as infants to look outside of ourselves for the input we require, making us who we believe we are. In our understanding of fabrication by the Other, do we cling to the words and ideas imbued upon us initially by our parents, then teachers? Teachers become powerful secondary Others in the lives of our students.

In looking to the *locus* of us, can we see that words from outside construct us and help to locate us? As we cling to the words of Others we strive to fulfil their meaning, and this attachment causes us to suffer as we endlessly pursue something that is unattainable. Can we look to the words of Others, firstly the mother and then our teachers, as metaphor? Might words be figurative not literal in their application? If we are able to see words in this way, do we free ourselves from the limitations and manufacture words create? If we are able to find authenticity by viewing words of the Other as metaphor, might it become possible to emancipate ourselves from attachment of an identity not ours?

As teachers, our work is a celebration of individuality and yet we are often blinded to it by our mistaken beliefs, or commitment to these beliefs, regarding our role in the efficacy of transmitting information. Surely a goal for us must lie in our ability to allow or illuminate a transcendent knowledge of self for our students, rather than contribute to creating an artificial edifice of them? Is it within our grasp to radically transform both ourselves and our students?

With education having a significant role in the lives of adolescents, is the added influence of teachers as Others a determining factor in the assumed well-being of the individual? Following Lacanian thinking in this way, each student would be driven by the original lack—the drive for affirmation and validation compounded by words of the Other. In illustrating this idea of validation,

> I often think of one young student, Ned, who has now nearly reached Year 12—a boy I have known since primary school. When he first came to the Middle School as a Year 7 he was petrified. I remember meeting with his mother at the end of Year 6, as she was very anxious about the expectations of progressing into a more formal mode of education. She was concerned about the increased expectations, the increased homework and the increased need for independence. When the new year began, I was hopeful he would be OK. I would see Ned in the playground and ask how everything was going, careful to not be too obvious in my concern. Ned had struggled to keep up with expectations in the second part of his primary education and now, faced with the prospect of multiple subject teachers and 'lots of homework', he was beginning to struggle with the expectations and this manifested physically—he often looked sad and burdened. The spark that I was used to seeing, the same spark evident in many early childhood classrooms—of curiosity, of eagerness, of willingness to engage—was soon lost in him. He turned from a very bright and cheerful boy to a withdrawn teenager, who couldn't wait to finish school. The very worst part of the story is that he worked so hard and yet his grades

> never moved beyond a 'D'. Possibly most remarkably, he rarely missed a day of school.
>
> Like Jim, Ned's desire for finding in his Mirror a fixed image of himself that he has construed has not been satisfied. He has not been able to live out what he has imagined for himself. I feel deeply concerned about the potential impact we have as teachers. I wonder about the kind of message we send to our children.

Words of the Other actively construe a self that seem to mould and restrict—how many of us have accepted this assembly unconsciously? How many of us and how many of our students are burdened with a self not of our own making? What might the outcome be of pursuing an affirmation never given? What might the effects be on us, striving for something that we might never attain?

To return to Lacanian thinking, to look for answers to our questions, in the Mirror Phase—where our genesis of the ego shows that we move to an assumption of image—the Mirror promises us an idealised self, one that can never be realised. Lacan tells us the form of our body is an exteriority, a promise of what is to be, in opposition to the turbulent movements that the subject feels standing before the Mirror (2002, p. 94). Is our being founded in apprehension of that which is inauthentic?

The self we realise as 'us', 'me' or 'I' is illusory, originally constructed as a type of defence against our infantile, fragmented helplessness. Our path follows that the 'I' recognised as who I am, is not who we are at all—our identity is conceived as a mirage. With this moment in the Mirror, our alienating ego is adopted, leaving us vulnerable to the input of Others. We are built on illusion, and we remain searching for the validation and affirmation, originally from words of the original Other. The drive for validation and affirmation forms the

central core of who we are—in many ways our life's mission is in answering this question.

Our attachment to the image or 'imago' as seen in the Mirror, leaves us clinging to that which is 'not-us'. We learn to attach ourselves to that which is external to us—then we pursue that which is external to us. In illumination of the way in which we attach ourselves to words and images, "a word is a finger that points at the moon. The goal of Zen students is the moon itself, not the pointing finger. Zen masters, therefore, will never stop cursing words and letters" (Shigematsu, 1981, p. 3),

A phrase

completely to the point:

The eternal

donkey hitching post.

(p. 3)

We become tied to words through our construction by the Other and through our pursuit of the affirmation of these words. The 'who' of us stands before the Other and before others, but it is the *locus* of us that we focus our attention on—how we become is through our attachment and our clinging to words, the pattern of which is set in the Mirror.

In our attachment, we become bound by our dichotomous way of thinking reinforcing a striving for attachment or clinging. For example, if we have been constructed in a way that suggests we are a 'good boy or good girl', the absence of these qualities is negative—if we are not good, then are we bad? Our simplistic and dichotomous mode of thinking drives our interactions either subconsciously or consciously—simplistic categorisation, moulding us through the process of clinging to a self not of our own making. Our other choice, our other way is not to cling.

> When you reach the point of clinging to nothing whatever, you will be acting as the Buddha's act. This will indeed be acting in accordance with the saying: 'Develop a mind which rests on no thing whatever'. (Po &Hsiu, 1959, p. 62)

Śūnyatā

I think of the *locus* of us when we objectify the self in order to be seen. In this view of our *locus*, do we cling to an identity, an 'I', a self not of our own, questioning what we might be, without 'I'? Do we recoil against a void, a nothingness or absence? In Zen Buddhism, *śūnyatā*, or emptiness, negates the duality of choice. The *Lotus Sutra* illuminates *śūnyatā* to ensure that emptiness is not misunderstood as nothingness. These texts maintain that emptiness really means selflessness—that is, individuals possess no independent or fixed nature but are somehow bound to the image of self and cling to things causing illusion and suffering (Yoshiro, 1989, p. 39).

American Psychiatrist Rene J. Muller states, "To live life as *śūnyatā* is to accept the emptiness existing is as natural, and not a condition to be fought or overcome" (1998, p. 68). In *śūnyatā* might we accept non-dualism in our conception of identity? Do we unconsciously turn towards making objects of ourselves and others and cling to them to give us *something,* that is to give us a meaning of something? Does this meaning that we give this something provide security of a known thing as opposed to an unknown thing? I think of Jean Paul Sartre's "bad faith" (1956) in the act of consciously adhering to a 'not-me'. Do we adhere to a 'not-me' without being consciously aware or responsible for the truth of us? Are we blinded by our drives and desires caught in a dualistic interplay between objectivity and fear of nothingness?

In answering, we look to Nāgārjuna's concept of Prajñāpāramitā as central to Zen in the perfected way of seeing the nature of reality, understanding our foundation of emptiness or *śūnyatā*. "The central topic of the text is *emptiness*—the Buddhist technical term for the lack of independent existence, inherent existence, or essence in things" (in Garfield, 2002, p. 24). Prajñāpāramitā personified is the Great Mother, manifesting as Avalokiteśvara or Quan Yin, "The bodhisattva was originally conceived of as a male figure, but in China and Japan frequently came to be depicted in female form and worshiped as a protector of women and children" (Watson, 2002, p. 139). Prajñāpāramitā stands in contrast to the Lacanian mother, as emptiness contrasts against figuration. In comparing both ways of thinking, I resort to dualism in my comprehension and perhaps illustrate our conditioning in seeing the world through a lens of opposition and limitation.

Ideas of emptiness in phenomena, founded on the premise of dependent co-origination, contrast to Western or Newtonian notions of cause and effect. "In

place of a causal notion based on an absolute "final cause" was the notion of "dependent co-origination" (Leaman, 2000, p. 110) and in ideas of co-origination, we are dependent on all other beings, contrasted to contemporary educational notions of cause and effect—nothing is absolute, thus we are all connected. Western ideas of cause and effect isolate us, ignoring our inherent togetherness experienced as a formlessness, embodying the notion of 'I am because you are'.

In our impermanence, we form a complex and infinite interconnectedness, characterised by the impermanence of self. As we allow ourselves to comprehend this impermanence, we apprehend the formlessness of our authenticity becoming aware of self and other founded in *topos,* as fluid and ever changing. Practising Receptance allows us to understand others in their truth and fundamental changing *locus,* and in *śūnyatā,* sees us released from cause and effect or notions of duality. In our understanding of the fluidity and formlessness of the other, we apprehend their Otherness as we move into a shared understanding of our innate humanness founded in emptiness.

In our shared understanding we look to change views of other as founded on cause and effect, as we move from our Radical Isolation into Radical Openness, embracing the Other, in Reverence. We look to continue these thoughts in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Reflections of Us

In this chapter I look to the power of the narrative, to the individual story of 'me' and question deeply our openness to others and to ourselves. I look to the poetry within self and other, beyond the storied self, beyond words in the thinking of Gadamer who tells us, "In our society, which is increasingly ruled by anonymous mechanisms and where the word no longer creates direct communication, the question arises: what power and what possibilities can the art of words, poetry, still have" (1992, p. 73)? I wonder if the poetry within us finds its foundation on the emptiness of *śūnyatā*, expressed in Practising Receptance.

16th December 1964

Dear Keith,

A very brief letter to thank you and all your staff members for the many ways in which you have helped Alison.

She and her friends have always found Taroona a happy school and they have enjoyed their primary education. At the same time the enjoyment has not meant that they have not been working.

As parents, my wife and I are most appreciative of the academic standards you have aimed at and the encouragement and the training you have given the children in cultural matters and sport.

We hope that you and your staff have a very happy Christmas and New Year—and a restful vacation away from school duties and worries, so that you all come back refreshed and full of the same zest to carry on next year!

This letter was written to my grandfather, a long serving Principal of a primary school—though long passed, a man with a lasting impact on my life. What do these words really tell us? Is there poetry within them? They bring my grandfather alive again where I see him in memories, vague, distorted and dimmed with time but the sense of him burns brightly in my mind—this enigmatic Other, ungraspable in physical proximity, but so profoundly present.

I attended the school at which he had been Principal for so many years and the same school at which my mother taught. He remained an active and serving member of the community until the day he died. I vividly remember that day—I was in Year 5 and called to the office, confronted by grave expressions on faces, an unfathomable feeling—a newness and heaviness illustrated by these words of Rilke.

> *Oh always more elusive comprehension, oh fear, oh heavy weight…oh childhood, oh disappearing images, where to? Where to?*
>
> *(1994, p. 22)*

The only news I was told was "your grandfather is not well". I knew something was not right—something beyond what I heard, something else unseen. Dad was coming to collect me—this was a very unusual happening—compounding the 'heavy weight.' A sense of grey emotion hung over every interaction from that moment I walked from class, culminating in the news my beloved grandfather had died. I remember dad crying—a bursting forth of deep sadness, a scene so foreign and surreal to me, so raw and real and devoid of façade. His response showed a dramatic shift in his usual *locus* of being—I wonder if this Radical Openness manifesting so visibly shows what people say when they are 'moved'? Is it a literal movement in topology of self? Feelings of

separateness and of isolation resonate with me today and only now am I able to reflect with some wisdom, in a way that words could not capture my feelings at the time. Zen monk Ryokan begins to reveal my thinking in these words, "Our lives are like the plants floating along the water's edge illumined by the moon" (1977, p. 77).

The moon remains, its presence silently waiting for us to see…

For so many of us, we spend our lives under seemingly moonless nights, without illumination. How do we see ourselves? How can we see others? How might we embody Reverence, moving in authenticity, into the shared space of the Other? I am buoyed by the words of van Manen, in suggesting we are driven by a certain pathos that might help us discern secrets of meanings in the human world (2014, p. 17). I wonder if these secrets are revealed in the poetry of the Other, beyond words?

Separateness

If students ask the question, "How should I act and react with respect to the desires and wishes of the teacher?" they are placed in a position of inauthenticity by concentrating on the external wishes of the teacher as Other. Is desire no more than a deep longing to be seen by the other? In both Lacanian and Buddhist thinking, desire is illusion—so how do we reconcile a driving force that seems to underpin our actions and interactions? What effect does desire have on the *locus* of us? Do we long to step into the sphere of the other and regard them in

Reverence? If we long to see the Other, and not the superficiality of the other, how can we broach the space which keeps us separate?

The moon waits patiently…

> Yesterday I played a game, to see what might happen in the classroom under certain conditions. Specifically I wanted to observe what I considered the power of acknowledgement. I had a new class and some of the boys were unfamiliar to me—the noise gradually built until I thought it appropriate to acknowledge the situation that the volume was a little too high. I directed my message to those boys whom I knew better than others and ignored those I did not know as well. By using names and acknowledging some over others, those I did acknowledge responded far more than those boys who might have felt ignored. I let the situation continue for a few minutes until I used the names of the less familiar boys—they responded immediately. Is it because we long to be validated or *authenticated*?

In a desire to be authenticated, Lacan might suggest, perhaps it is the desire to be acknowledged and seen by the Other. Does the illusory nature of desire, providing the subconscious drive in the lives of us all, long for identification? As educators, do we look for a glimmer of this drive by moving into the sphere of the Other, that we might apprehend authenticity? In seeing true nature or True Mind, answering the desire to be seen, are we longing to escape Radical Isolation? Do we long to be located and authenticated in *topos*, Practising Receptance and embracing the emptiness of *śūnyatā*?

With Lacanian thinking, experiencing lost satisfaction occurs in a moment of realisation that we are a separate entity to our mother—the advent of which occurs from our moment in the Mirror when our uncoordinated self is placed in

stark contrast to the coordinated whole and we become layered through external means. We become aware of our utter separation—something in us is 'lost'. Our lost satisfaction, or awareness of separateness, fuels a psychic desire to replace an original state before the Lacanian 'I', the function of the subject, or the "Ideal-I" (Lacan, 2002, p. 4). Do we long for the re-establishing of connection before the 'Ideal-I' where love, comfort and utter satisfaction were once 'who we were'? In the "pursuit of our deepest urges toward wholeness or integrity" (Bohm, 2002, p. 4) do words prevent our connection? In self as *logos*, are we reduced to a fixed idea of self—inert, figurated and removed from a wholeness experienced as formless authenticity?

Is our desire for the re-establishment of connection, blind to authenticity? Does our pursuit of the external, in a search for wholeness, see us looking away and never inwards? Does our desire for affirmation make us blind to the Other? Our situatedness in objectification, as an 'I', moves us further into Radical Isolation where, in Lacanian thinking, "…the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination, [moves] in a fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible for any single individual" (2002, p. 4).

In apprehending the 'I', Lacanian thinking suggests voidness results from the loss of the original object of satisfaction, forever sought to fill this emptiness. The void, determined as a lack, with desire the constant presence as an outcome of lack, leads to a lifelong search to re-establish validation and satisfaction. In education, as in life, do we seek this that has been lost? Do we long for authentication? As educators, we must also be mindful of our desire to be seen, mindful of the illusory nature of our own drive that fuels our daily interactions. Our confusion and urge to reconnect somehow ironically removes us from ourselves—in Practising Receptance might we become open to the *locus* of the

other, in their fluid and unfixed formlessness? In thinking about students with very different narratives, I consider deeply the effects of validation and recognition on their lives. We must always look deeper in the lives of our students as we move ourselves and our students out of Radical Isolation and into Radical Openness.

> Ed was a student who had become withdrawn over a period of some years. He became an unknowable enigma to us, his teachers. It seemed as if an internalised sense of failure had led him into isolation. Increasingly he was holding his teachers distant, alienating himself from us. This is what happens when Western modes of education focus on individual rather collective achievement—the isolation Ed experienced seemed founded on his Illusory sense of self as apprehended by words of the Other. This is an example of how thoughts of perceived failure in Radical Isolation, based on ideas of cause and effect, disregard notions of connectedness. We do not fail in isolation—as we thrive, so do we all, as we fail, so do we all.

Rancière states, "for comprehension to take place, one has to be given explication, the words of the master must shatter the silence of the taught material" (1991, p. 4). But what of the voice of the student in the words of the master? If the words of the student do not match the explication of the teacher, then what happens? Our students are left isolated, increasingly withdrawn from teacher as Other, unable to comprehend the one-way explication of the master. Instead might we seek a shared space of open communication unbound by the explicative method so prevalent in classrooms? Might we seek to locate our students in *topos,* enabling us to move closer to them, in closing the lacuna between self and other.

Questioning the effect of drive and desire, manifesting in the needs of our students, is it validation and recognition that become central? Each of us long for affirmation—we long to be seen, but how? If we take the example of Larry, we first met outside the bookstore, was his drive for validation and recognition unmet? His need on a deep psychological level perhaps remained unseen. Was he rarely validated or recognised in a positive way leading, I believe, to his disengagement and Radical Isolation? Was his reflection in the Mirror, his ideal self, radically different to his self-conception? How he wanted to be seen and how he felt he was seen, were perhaps two separate ideas. I question how we might release boys like Larry into 'radical hope'. These questions occupy my mind still—I find myself wondering more about the enigma of the other, illuminated by the sadness in these words by Bashō,

Grave move

my weeping voice:

autumn of wind

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 150)

In a highly complex undertaking of being with others in schools, we face the autumn of wind—a self of supposed universal 'truths and facts'. Friedrich Nietzsche cautions us, "…the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface-and-sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious becomes by the same token shallow, thin" (Nietzsche & Hoover, 1994, p. 32).

In consideration of the other, in our empathy with our students, we must caution against attitudes and feelings taken as facts and projected onto us, and against attitudes and feelings of our own in countertransference to our students.

Let us continue to turn towards a pedagogy of Receptance and Reverence as essential to self-understanding and understanding of our students' selves as poetic Others, beyond the storied self.

Different reflection

I have been teaching at my present school for nearly twenty years, with many different age groups—beginning my journey as an early childhood teacher, now teaching some of those same boys, years later, in pre-tertiary classes, as 17- and 18-year-olds. I embrace a certain circularity to this in my mind, watching those boys in the beginning of their educational journey—tying shoes, holding hands and often wiping tears away, assuring some that mums and dads would return at the end of the day. At each stage, taking one step back and now I stand on the opposite side of the street watching proudly.

I feel fortunate to have been a part of their lives—I think the greatest element of being a teacher and educator is having the opportunity to move into the shared space with our students, to step closer and see them as Others. It truly is a privilege to be a small part of it. From the very beginnings of Kindergarten, children negotiate and renegotiate new ways of being, adapting to a foreign and often frightening existence. Do we see ourselves mirrored by the teacher, the Other? Do we long to be seen as who we are, realised, without the need for attachment to a self not of our making. Is there is an authentic 'me' to know?

Our image seen in the Mirror brings an awareness of uncoordination and lack of unity and yet, provides salvation through support of our uncoordination—we seek a 'fix' to our fragmentation as we consider ourselves somehow as not

whole. We find the striking spectacle of an infant in front of a mirror who has not yet mastered walking, or even standing, but who—though held tightly by some prop, human or artificial—slightly leans forwards to take in an instantaneous view of the image in order to fix it in his mind (Lacan, 2002, p. 4).

We look outside of ourselves and we attach to the image.

Anticipation of the coordinated whole, reflected in the Mirror, stands in contrast to the uncoordinated sense of self, as what we see and how we are seen become a divide within us. How might we reconcile these two opposing positions? We appear founded on contradiction and confusion. As educators, we hold children before the Mirror and say to them "this is you" and their 'me' is transformed before us, attaching to the ideal presented by us, as each child becomes open to words of the Other.

> I remember as a 14-year-old being fanatical about soccer. I had played since I was 6 and was now playing in a club roster in a very successful team. The club I was in had two teams in the Under 13 age group—an A team and a B team, the former being the stronger of the two. I was in the B team and was one of the best players of that side. The following year, the teams combined to form a 'super team' in the Under 14 division. I was used to being the centre back in the B team, but found myself relegated to the position of right back in the 'super team'. It was a slight blow to the ego, but I was happy to be in the team. As the year progressed, I became acutely aware of pressure—pressure to perform on a weekly basis and pressure to maintain my spot in that team. It was a feeling I had never felt before. As a player in the Under 13 team, I was supremely confident. I was a great player and I knew it. My confidence was high and thoughts of being replaced or 'dropped' never entered my mind. But here I was, less than six months later, a different person. My identity had changed from stoically unquestioning to questioning my belief in myself—I no longer held

> that supreme confidence. I changed from one of the best, one of the players lauded after each match, to one of the 'grey' men—marginalised by my perceived lack of ability by the rest of the team and devalued. I felt the effects of this acutely as I struggled to keep my chin up. I couldn't wait to leave the game after the final whistle blew, when once I stayed and recounted stories of successes with my team mates.
>
> The final straw for me came in one of the finals. By this stage of the season my confidence was now rock bottom and I started on the dreaded bench. This, for me, was the ultimate blow—the devastating confirmation in my mind that I was 'no good'. Despite the assurances by the coach that I was needed for fresh legs in the second half, I didn't believe him. I looked down at my boots, still clean and polished from the night before, and took them off. I wanted to crawl into a hole and forget this entire experience. I wanted to forget the idea that I had ever had belief in my ability as a soccer player. My entire story about myself had changed—I was no longer the wonderful player I had internalised about myself. I was a failure. I walked away after the game and never played competitively again.

I can recall details of that day, memories and images I think will stay with me forever—feelings of isolation, and a dissonance between a felt self and one perceived by others. I now question the accuracy in these felt recollections. In contemplation, do we begin to understand the difference between how we are and how we are seen? I saw my failure to be accepted by the team as a failure in myself—a rejection from others. I allowed a perceived negativity to influence my decision to walk away from a game I really loved. Did I allow the influence of *logos* to colour my view of events? I find solace in the words of Bashō, "Occasionally an outburst of weeping is *kenshō* itself" (in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 163). In meditating on the thoughts of sadness and insight, I find authenticity and illumination.

I recently shared the above story with a Year 8 class who listened intently as I told it. I feel the relevance was twofold for them—one, in the story relayed I was of their age, and secondly, any personal or authentic story from a teacher usually elicits interest from students. It is in moments of authenticity or personal reality I have found students really respond. Is it because I stepped from Radical Isolation and towards the sphere of the students as Others? Some spoke to me later and relayed their own stories like the one I had told. Others took the narrative as a cautionary tale and shared some thoughts regarding possible alternatives, suggesting acceptance and consideration of different viewpoints.

In this space of vulnerability, of Radical Openness, had I momentarily switched from the Other of the Symbolic to Other of the Real? Had the subtle shift from teacher as authority, as the Symbolic Other, through telling a personal story, changed my orientation to the Other of the Real? In authenticity, does our unknowable and distant Otherness slowly dissolve in an embracing of *śūnyatā*? As we open to the Other are we embracing this emptiness? In moments of genuine dialogue I meditate whether this is the case. Teachers are usually encouraged by the educational paradigm to be the Symbolic Other, and because of transference, it is what the student expects—but when we alter, even momentarily, the structure between student and teacher, our relationships are transformed. Ideas contained within changing student-teacher relationships remind me of a well-known Zen story of two monks travelling the countryside. It is an old parable whose origins are unknown.

> After some time, the monks came to a swollen river with a woman on one side, needing to cross to the other side. The young woman was in need of their assistance as she could not swim. Due to their vows, the monks were unable to touch a woman and this prevented them from physically assisting her to cross.

> So, the three sat and waited for the waters to subside—soon darkness began to descend and the realisation came upon them that they would need to cross or be stranded where they sat until morning. After much thought, the elder of the monks picked the woman up, carried her across the river and sat her down on the other side. The two monks then set off again. After some time had passed, the younger monk spoke angrily: "How could you touch this woman? You have broken your vows to do such a thing." To which his friend replied, "I helped a woman across the river and put her down long ago. You are still carrying her".

Both narratives, of the Zen monks and my own, illustrate a very powerful reality in the lives of adolescents and in the lives of educators. Do our students cling to events and attach to a perceived reality? We become open to external input—the suggestions, words and influence of others, the words perceived as real. Is it our encounter with language as Other, in its ability to figurate, that has the most profound effect on us all? Language as Other provides the Mirror for our students that reflects then constructs who we are. We hold our students before the Mirror of language and they are reflected in it—just as the infant is transformed by their identification with the image, so the adolescent is shaped at a crucial life stage by the language that shapes the image, by educators as Others of the Symbolic.

Just as the Mirror in infancy equips the child with the ideal 'I' that can never be realised, serving as a protectorate with the illusion of mastery, language as the Mirror also covers the self with a unified self-image. The adopted 'me' or "ideal-ego" (Lacan, 2002, p. 6) is both alienating and radically exterior, due to arising without internal awareness, as the child conforms to a 'me' in order to attain mastery through a process of identification and adoption of a foreign and alienating image. In a situatedness as 'me' adopting an image, then words outside of ourselves, we pursue that which is external to us. We provide the

language as Other, the structure into which our students must fit—the Mirror in which our students are reflected and in which their reflections are adopted. We seek the shared authenticity of the Other, and in our attempts, we realise the enigmatic topology of otherness.

Language as the Mirror

If language becomes our Mirror, let us also consider that as we are reflected, are we also made? As we gaze into an actual Mirror we do not simply receive a reflection of us, we receive an interpreted image that we internalise. Based on interpretations, we construct a self in a twofold process—one of interpretation and one of fabrication. Do we face a continuous cycle as we internalise those reflections or messages we receive and make them who we are?

In Lacanian thinking, teachers as an absolute authority situate where "the student seeks recognition as a (human) subject by requiring the other to recognize his (human) desire" (Wilden, 1968, p. 189). Do we place our students in the position of openness to the input of educators as a designation process for their formation of self? Does our language and our actions become the Mirror for them? In transference, we see another avenue for the internalisation of messages—we receive the attitudes and feelings of our students projected onto us, and in turn, we project our own attitudes and feelings in countertransference to our students. Language is the vehicle for our desire for validation and affirmation.

Clouds form before the moon…

In the teacher-student relationships I develop with adolescent boys, it can be often those non-verbal aspects of language providing the most powerful validators of self. A high five, a pat on the back, a game of kick-to-kick, or a shake of the hand in genuine congratulations, leads me to question if these actions are embodiment of self as *topos?* In doing, is truth manifest, revealed to us beyond words? Gestures appear to provide real or authentic validation for some students, perhaps for those who feel the Mirror reflects a lack of validation or authentication. Do these students feel they have affirmation in other ways, and not the traditional academic Mirror? Through our wordless interactions, do we find other ways of locating the topology of others? In a language outside of language, are we composing the poetry of us? Gadamer might agree as he tells us "the poetic word is essentially different from perishing forms of speaking which otherwise support the communicative event. What is special in all these forms of speaking is the self-forgetting within the words themselves" (1991, p. 75).

Just as the infant is transformed by the identification with the image, and assumes the image through encouragement to adopt the image as 'I' by adults, we have an ability to help our students adopt a positive image—their 'I'. Teachers have the ability to provide the Mirror in which our students may construct and internalise a validated sense of self. In the provision of the Mirror, teachers face a moral imperative to reflect a positive and sustainable sense of self to our students.

Through understanding our students, we affirm them and close the space between us—our stance becomes a moral and ethical one, through our provision of the Mirror. Our position as Other allows us to impact the lives of our students positively in providing the Mirror. In our position of teacher as Other we must be critically aware of our ability to intelligently apprehend the *locus* of our students

and remain vigilant to the power of language and its influence to validate and affirm the self. Such vigilance is required so that we are not blinded to ourselves and to Others—or that the face of the other remains an enigma to us, but to see like Bashō,

Though the moon is full

There seems an absence—

Suma in summer

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 55)

Symbolic Register

Lacanian thinking tells us the Symbolic Register refers to the world of words and language through symbols that "envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him 'by bone and flesh' before he comes into the world" (Lacan, 2002, p. 67). Language and the systems of meaning are already present as we are born into them. In many ways, the structure of language precludes individuality—we become subject to a system of commonality from the moment of our birth. In Lacan's ideas, is the subject a slave to traditions of discourse more than a slave of language itself (2002, p. 140)? If we become bound to discourse as a defining element of self, then Practising Receptance becomes paramount in our intervention and our apprehension of the other, as we embody a living verb form in our interactions. We come into viewing other and ourselves as fluid, dynamic and formless—

authenticating their truth through understanding them in *topos*, whilst we are disregarding notions of permanence that are founded in traditional discourse.

In further expansion of ideas that see us born into a universal discourse, central to the Lacanian Symbolic Register the signifier and signifying chain holds significance in the signifier as the mental representation of a concept, or what is signified, represented in the algorithm,

$$\frac{S}{s}$$

The algorithm reads 'signifier over the signified', indicating a separation between the signifier and that, which is signified (Lacan, 2002, p.155).

Our dependence on the relationship between signifier and signified gives our world meaning, as opposed to absolute meaning—the relationship between the sign and that which is named allows us to live in a world imbued by generality or relativity, in that "…we can take things no further along this path than to demonstrate that no signification can be sustained except by reference to another signification…" (Lacan, 2002, p. 142).

A signifier determines the meaning of the signified through a signifying chain and because of this logic, there is no 'truth' distilled by the signifier. A chain of signifiers illustrated in the use of metonymy that shows the chain of signifiers in a relationship between part and whole. For example, using the word 'wheels' to represent a vehicle shows us how themes are linked together—the idea of a signifier is not representative of a word, but closer to a conceptual representation, meaning signifiers are not definitive but personally relative.

Yet, when we look to poetry, can we see some semblance of 'truth' that evades normal language? In the way that poetry speaks to us deeply and reverentially, might we see the same truth within each of us? Just as the superficiality of the signifier and the signified reduces our world to a generality, so the poetic transcends the everyday and amplifies the unique, yet mysteriously reflecting our situatedness in *topos*. As Gadamer tells us, "In poetry, when one is directed away from the word, one is also at the same time directed back to it; it is the word itself which guarantees that about which it speaks" (1992, p. 73).

The Symbolic order and the relevance of signifiers and signified illustrate how communication between individuals might be problematic. Each of us has our own conception or signifiers, even with the most ordinary of items. For example, if I use the word 'car' in a conversation, each person in that conversation would have a unique representation of what a car is to him or her. Some might think, sedan, others sports car, some may think of red, while others think of yellow. If we consider the complexities linked to such an everyday noun, how then can we negotiate the complexities of affirmation and validation? Do we see how language can lead us to fixed and isolating thinking?

To think of language as relative and personal, through a system of signifiers, the question of objective meaning remains unanswered. If we look to how our students are seeking validation and affirmation through language, a language that is highly individualised and personalised, how can we ever be expected to provide the necessary response from our own highly personalised and individualised system of signifiers, as educators? Add to this complex paradigm the idea that we transfer our thinking and interpretations onto others in interactions. We are essentially 'egocentric' in that we subconsciously judge

others to be like us. We remain, in a sense, limited by our conceptual understandings, unable to relate to others in our highly individualised system of signifiers. Is the language of poetry somehow able to rise above limited conceptual understandings, linked to a transcendence of self and other?

We wait for illumination by the moon…

Narrative

Considering limitations of our individual system of understanding, linked to signifiers and signified, our movement from the specular to the social 'I' results in the individual attaching meanings to himself, manufactured by the Other (Lacan, 2002, p. 7). An effect of being created through the desires and wishes of the Other is a narrative—a story we tell ourselves about who we think we are. A narrative created about ourselves impacts on our interactions with others as we are driven by the story we have created for ourselves, based on the input from outside of ourselves. As long as we subscribe to a story of us, created outside of ourselves, we remain isolated in fixed ideas of who we are or should be. In releasing ideas of permanence, in emancipated formlessness, can we grasp the truth of authenticity? I wonder about the poetry within us, founded on the emptiness of *śūnyatā*—I am struck, perhaps by the *keisaku*, in my desire for clarity as I leave behind dualistic thinking.

To explain our need for a story of our self, is it that we turn to thinking that is founded in psychoanalytic traditions where "…adolescents and young adults in modern societies are challenged to formulate meaningful answers to the twin identity questions: Who am I? How do I fit into the adult world" (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich, 2006, p. 4)? Stories we tell ourselves about ourselves might

determine and shape who we are, and narratives we tell ourselves each day make up our life story (McAdams, 1985, 1993, 1996). "The I tells a story of the self, and that story becomes a part of Me" (McAdams et al., 2006, p. 3). Does this mean that it really is who we are? Our 'I' is internalised as me, but we cling to that which is made outside of us.

The 'me' of the Other is internalised and consciously integrated through narrative—we adopt a foreign implementation and build a world of stories around 'me'. A resultant creation of 'me' may lead to attachment and suffering because of a self not of our own—we strive to fulfil and validate our constructed self in pursuing the unobtainable. How do we clear our constructed selves of the words that appear to obstruct our authentic selves? How can we see with clouds obscuring the moon? These words by Bashō help my thinking,

Not a bit of cloud in the empty sky meets my eyes.

It is śūnyatā the void, experienced at the deepest human level.

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 166)

Do we seek the void of poetic non-attachment? Is the void an answer to our lack of understanding for ourselves and of others? In his life story model of identity (1985), McAdams suggests that both the individual and the society or culture creates our identity or life story. Autobiographical narratives, which combine to make up our life story, assist us by giving our lives structure and unity. Just as these stories give us structure and unity, so they also isolate us in their permanence through definition of us, founded in *logos*. Do we construct autobiographical narratives on the foundations of illusion, first acquired in the Mirror, as we develop stories about ourselves, based on the original misrecognition of self? We find stories to 'fit' this illusory sense of 'me' and tie

them together to form a coherence in order to justify the 'me' that has been created by Others. We develop our stories and then we cling and attach to them. In our aloneness, in our alienation from the Other, I find myself immersed in the poetry of Santōka,

watching the moon

go down

me alone

(2003, p. 23)

Alone, we are driven by desire. Our role as educators, as Others, places us in a position of responsibility as much as authority—much of what we say and do is internalised, to different degrees, by those students under our care. We have the potential to be powerful forces in the lives of our students—it is our influence upon our students that impels me to meditate on thoughts of permanence, formlessness and who we really are.

Does a constant internalised message of failure or inadequacy alter our self-perception radically, and with this, our story about our self—our narrative? Where might these internalised messages locate us? In a topology of self, where do we find ourselves? What story would we be telling ourselves, facing failure on a daily basis? Rejection and lack of affirmation from expectations of the teacher as Other leaves the student adrift and increasingly alone, further from the sphere of the Other. A 'me' as reflected in the Mirror of education becomes an ever further alienation from the original unification. As an infant, identification with

the specular image of us, as suggested by Lacan (2002, p. 6), allows the advent of further alienation through the input of others. It is no more apparent in the effects of the input of the Other than in the case of boys like Ned—how isolated these boys must feel.

I consider what might happen if we exchange the lack of affirmation in boys like Ned, for positivity, validation and affirmation? Can we as educators, engineer a positivity that enriches the lives of our students? Could we take our place in the position of authority, as Other, to provide the validation and affirmation as the driving force in each of us? How might this change in attitude affect the *locus* of our students? To follow ideas of affirmation, so much of what is encountered, particularly in secondary education, is built around assessment, in both formal testing and informal interactions, with the student's conception of self tied strongly to his performance. Successful students become affirmed and unsuccessful students feel unaffirmed, and hearing phrases like "I'm dumb" are the most negative experiences for me, reflecting a felt permanence of self that disregards who we really might be. Jarring self-defeating statements and negative non-verbal behaviours are pleas for help, condemnations of the educational process, and they represent a seeking of validation. I take every opportunity to care for our students, realising the power of their need for affirmation—I recoil against stories of our children reduced to scores and deemed worthy or not because of a number. I carry stories of alienation with me long after they are told and long after they are seen.

As young children in the first stages of school, words like 'test' are not part of the daily vocabulary, but as the child grows, words such as this gain momentum and presence until in secondary school, they become part of daily vernacular. In senior secondary education, the 'test' gains prominence as the main idea in the

form of exams. Is the result of assessment an identity ensconced in a score? Is there a symbiotic relationship between score and identity? In some ways the score becomes who the students are and most importantly, who they feel they are. This idea of score and identity is heard in staff discussions, "Ned is a D student. He struggles" or "Tim is brilliant". It is academic excellence that holds a reverence for the Other—might we disregard the absolutes of achievement and instead look more deeply to where our students might be? Our explicative means and assessment further disregard notions of connectedness as we reinforce ideas of Radical Isolation. Our students somehow become greater (or lesser) than the sum of their parts with our value judgements about the individual tied up in a letter, tied to a test. Can we not see the fabrication that we create, clinging to the idea, and imbued? Might we not see the sadness in our students as a direct result of our manufacture of them? Is it because we isolate them from themselves and from others? It is fascinating and saddening in equal measure. How we long for release from our Radical Isolation. How we long to be illuminated!

Teachers in systems provide such a defined line between success and otherwise, and in doing so, assist in the definition of our 'I' and circumscribing *locus* in the topology of our students. More than enrich lives, we have the potential, as Other, to transform lives of those students under our care. What might happen if, in the words of Freire (1974, p. 31), we begin to humanise man? What might happen if we step away from our system of figuration, the societal Other, and instead focus on seeing the truth of each of us, each in our authenticity and each in genuine relationship with Others? Transforming our ways of thinking and being, might we lessen our adherence to an imagined self? Might we, in some way, lessen the clinging to a self not of our own? Might we thus assist in re-forming the *locus* of our students?

In open discussion with a Year 7 class we might diverge from the curriculum to what I would consider authentic dialogue—we enter a space shared between us, of openness. Progression into this space often occurs naturally, through an incidental comment or question leading to a wider participation of thoughts and feelings. I facilitate the movement from isolation into openness, but this requires courage from all who are present— teachers and students alike. We return in the following meditations to the three dimensions of Radical Isolation, Radical Openness and Radical Courage that I introduced in the Prologue.

If we cannot see the moon

> Henry lamented a recent grade he received for a test and soon many of the boys were offering opinions about grades and attitudes—I listened intently as ideas and explanations grew and transformed before me. My thoughts turned to the moon.
>
> Henry: Teachers who take an interest in you make you feel validated and then you are more likely to try harder.
>
> Adam: Teachers who take input from you make you feel better about yourself by making you think they know you better.
>
> Ed: Teachers who don't favour others help you to feel better about yourself. If or when you are ignored, it makes you feel rejected. If this happens, then you wouldn't try or give them the respect that they might want.

I reflected deeply on hearing these views—is it not simply the attainment of grades providing validation from teacher as Other, but the recognition of the student by the teacher in some way, which might also provide validation? Would our striving to authentically locate our students lessen their illusory desire? In acknowledging the human individual presence of the student within the collective of the classroom, teacher as Other assists in mitigating desire and

reinforces a sense of self in the student. As educators, Radical Courage is required by us, in efforts to move from the safety of a defined role as teacher, to something else—a liberation from the expectations that isolate us. We move from Radical Isolation and towards Radical Openness with the other, and Bashō's words echo,

Autumn deepens

My neighbor—

What does he do?

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 94)

In contemplating a deep connection with validation in Radical Openness, we long to realise the enigma that is the Other—we move closer, moving across that vertiginous lacuna and perhaps nearer to ourselves. Gadamer tells us,

> What is at issue here is that when something other or different is understood, then we must also concede something, yield — in certain limits — to the truth of the other. That is the essence, the soul of my hermeneutics: To understand someone else is to see the justice, the truth, of their position. (1992, p. 152)

We move closer to apprehend the Profound Beauty of the Other.

> My thoughts turn again to those students under our care. As part of the Year 9 program, boys must choose an adventure elective that involves spending a term away from the main campus, culminating in a 10- to 14-day expedition. There

are four expeditions to choose from. One of these, the Port Davey Challenge, involves a 5-day sailing trip on a tall ship, where the boys work in teams as part of the 'crew' on the boat. They learn about rigging, ropes, 24-hour watch and often whilst being very seasick. The ship sails from Hobart, around the bottom of Tasmania, into the notorious Westerly winds, the Roaring 40s, and into Port Davey—the heart of the Southwest Wilderness. The tiny settlement of Melaleuca, with its rainwater tank, two huts and airstrip for light aircraft, marks the beginning or the end of the South Coast Bushwalk—its isolation and vulnerable exposure to the elements exquisite, where only satellite phones, emergency locator beacons, or aircraft allow contact with the outside world.

Myself and two other staff arrive by a 6-seater aircraft to meet the boys as they alight from the ship, ready to begin the 7-day walk. These tiny planes are so light that we are seated according to how heavy we are, to distribute weight evenly.

Often, due to the timing of the flights, the staff ready to 'walk out' from Melaleuca to Hobart with the incoming boat 'crew' wait at the small dock. When the boys do arrive there is always a sense of celebration—high fives, handshakes and stories of their time on the sea abound. Boundaries of staff and student, expert and novice, disappear. The significance of the Other is lessened—we begin to emerge from our own Radical Isolation and into openness.

The South Coast Track is one of Australia's, and the world's, premier bushwalks. Mountain ranges, vast button grass plains, thigh deep mud, snow, driving rain, crystal clear water and a sense of utter independence and isolation are all encompassing. The 85 kilometre track runs between Melaleuca and Cockle Creek in Southwest Tasmania crossing two mountain ranges and following the coast—originally cut for shipwreck survivors from the notorious Southwest Coast. The track is exposed to cold and wet southerly winds where rain falls on average every second day in summer and more in other seasons. The Ironbound Mountain Range rises to over 900 metres, where conditions can change extremely rapidly. A sunny day can quickly turn to sleet or snow. Winds can be so strong that you are blown over—I have seen boys tumble off the

wooden duck boarding in high winds into the mountain heather that lines the track at alpine heights. Then there is the other side of the mountain range, where with heavy packs we descend for hours amongst low hanging trees, on hands and knees in the mud traversing slippery tree roots that seem determined to ensnare tired legs.

We unpack all we need each night and re-pack into a backpack at the beginning of every day. We pack tents, food, clothing, cooking stove, sleeping bag carefully into their proper places and tie them off with waterproof liners to prevent any moisture from entering our bags. We focus our thoughts on an essential element for comfort—keeping warm and dry. There are no electronics, no distractions, only ourselves and the beautiful, wild world we find ourselves fully immersed in.

As the week progresses, I find the boundaries between us relax and shift as we learn to live a basic experience where our living and learning pares back to the essentials—eating, sleeping and keeping warm and mostly dry. We sleep open to the elements, observe the scenery and our own thinking day after day. An impermanent lifestyle enhances the feeling of authenticity as we constantly live in the moment. As individuals, we enter a shared space—authentic and real, in stark contrast to the classroom where so much is fixed and constant, where so much is internalised and expected. I begin to realise the enigma of the other. It is here, open to the elements, in nature, that I experience a profound insight into what authenticity might be. In our simple living, I begin to see the *locus* of us. Stories we tell and reflective introspection we share see each of us take steps into openness—in our geographical isolation we move into openness with each other. In our removal from the walls of the classroom, we find some courage to step towards authenticity.

In our daily living with each other, we are becoming truly immersed in an environment of shared understanding. How are we reflected now in the Mirror by this experience? Has our conception of self been altered by how we are living and conducting our relationships, and if so, how? I experience a profound change in what I had thought would be possible for me to be and who I feel I am now allowed to be. Do I feel a loosening of attachment to a self

> not of my own making? My thoughts turn to the boys and their conceptions of self—have they too changed through our interactions? Do the boys feel as I do?

The experience of living so simply in a shared community changed my perceptions of the traditional student-teacher dynamic. Did it also change the conception of the boys and their relationship to others? In changing a sense of self, a redefinition of the 'I', the *locus* of the expedition was providing a topology for the potential redefinition of self—the boys were able to see in the Mirror a different reflection than one provided in the classroom. Some were realising themselves as capable, strong, independent, caring, and supportive. Living this way was opening us up to viewing ourselves through a lens of possibility, potentially redefining and reinterpreting 'me' and our *locus*.

Of your words I am

As we proceed to the end of this chapter and before we embark upon further hermeneutical questioning in the next about how we come to understand the formlessness of self and an Other. I wish to return to examining the Lacanian 'Ideal-I' or ideal self (Lacan, 2002, p. 4), where we are promised completeness and coherence in the Mirror, leading to our figuration through the desires and words of the Other.

In accordance with the thinking of Lacan, the realm of the Symbolic is the realm of our entrance into, and fabrication through, the world of language. Our conscious manufacture, through external input, is through narrative—a story of

us, our 'I', driven by an external 'ideal'. Our ideal, based in the register of the Imaginary, of images, as seen in the Mirror, as our completeness and coherence presented in our reflection, covers our fragmented uncoordination. We seek the external, looking outwards for validation, our striving a result of that which is promised by the Mirror. We look to the Other for answers in our position of apprehending the desire of that Other and through our interpretation and internalisation of their words the desires of the Other become our desires. Our identity is driven by the desire to achieve what is shown to us, through language. Our narrative, or 'I', is driven by this striving for the ideal, or desire—a search for satisfaction, which according to Lacanian thinking will never end.

We cling to our identity, as we attach to the words imbued upon us and are driven by them. In following the Lacanian idea of designation through identification with an illusory self, through the input of the Other, each of us face a different image in the Mirror—our internalised individual narrative, or sense of 'I', is unique. How do we bridge the space between us? How do we see others so that they become more like Others in authentic interactions?

Rene Descartes (1641) in his famous Second Mediation offered *cogito ergo sum* ('I am thinking, therefore I am') (1960/1637) suggesting consciousness is transparent to itself and with this transparency, our selves are also transparent to us. In the suggestion of our self-awareness, our 'I' becomes apparent—but in Lacanian thinking, this transparency is not the case. The process of thinking, *cogito*, is of and with words, and so we cannot escape the language that attaches words to images, surrounds us and is within us.

If we expand on Lacan's idea that we are constructed through the Other, the combination of thinking between Descartes and Lacan produces a symbiosis between 'I am, I exist' and the Other—our 'I' is founded through the words of the Other. Descartes states, "I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind" (1960/1637) Our thinking is a result of input, experiences and interpretations, so can we suggest our 'I' is entirely of our own accord or is a direct result of independent introspection? In looking at the idea of Descartes that the 'I' is true whenever it is conceived in the mind, we could ask which 'I' is he referring to? Certainly there is something that we could consider an 'I', but is this 'I' of us or the Other? The 'I' of us is objectified through the Mirror and the Other. Lacan states, "the point is not to know whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather to know whether, when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of whom I speak" (2002, p. 156). The Mirror and the Other provide an 'I' to which we attach, but this 'I' is not transparent to us—we are driven to affirm our 'I' unconsciously, the separate edifice of us, figurated from the outside in. How can we acknowledge the attachment of an objectified self not of us? In Lacan's thinking, "the apprehension of an object by consciousness does not by the same token reveal to it its properties. The same is true for the I" (1988, p. 6).

So, perhaps our 'I' of narrative and of self is not evident, through apprehension by consciousness, nor the transparent entity proposed by Descartes. Lacan suggests that if our 'I' is presented to us through transparent reflection nothing might indicate that this reality of existence is limited to any definitive self (1988, p. 6). Can we truly suggest our 'I' is available to us through introspection? If we are unconscious agents of our designated 'I' how long must

we wait for the moon to illuminate us? We must not give up hope in our search for answers, embodied in Bashō,

I am resolved

To bleach on the moors;

My body is pierced by the wind.

(in Matsuo and Aitken, 1978, p. 107)

Chapter 4: The moon, our clear mind

In this chapter, I look to clarifying ideas of authenticity in attempts to apprehend the formless uniqueness of the Other. I look to emptiness in *śūnyatā* as selflessness in seeking a deeper understanding, as we look for clarity in challenging notions of a fixed and limited sense of self. Gadamer tells us the notion of the self is problematic but "the hermeneutical task becomes of itself a questioning of things" (1975, p. 281).

Clear mind allows us to apprehend self and other, through Practising Receptance, and we find a critical and fundamental examination of the *locus* of others. In Practising Receptance we guard against critical thoughts of classification and judgement based in the Symbolic Other, in dualistic ways conditioned in Western education. We remain mindful of words and their ability to close us off to authenticity, in the same way Sahn illuminates the way Zen Buddhism simultaneously holds complexity of experience in the simplicity of expression.

> Clear mind is like the full moon in the sky. Sometimes clouds come and cover it, but the moon is always behind them. Clouds go away, then the moon shines brightly. So don't worry about clear mind: it is always there. You must not be attached to the coming or the going. (Sahn, 1976, p. 51*)*

In our attachment to ideas, to things and even to ourselves, the use of language only conveys a simplicity of experience. We become reduced to the

finite of reducible expression through words—our infinite complexity perhaps denied. Our often dualistic modes of thought, in terms of 'right' or 'wrong', 'black' or 'white', 'good' or 'bad' illustrate our attempts to simplify and control our world to perhaps gain a greater understanding of it. Does attempted mastery through deconstruction, in a separation of parts, lead us to believe we are able to gain a better understanding, to gain a closer look at the 'truth' of something by means of rational and deductive inspection? Are we conditioned to see the world in terms of simple opposites? We attempt to make sense of a world through deconstructing its parts and, ironically, it is our fragmenting that the Lacanian ego serves to protect. The irony is held by the ego as a protectorate of a fragmented and uncoordinated body—a literal structural edifice that 'makes us whole', while in the realm of the Symbolic, the world of words, we fragment and deconstruct to make meaning. I wonder if our words paper over the cracks of us?

Is our experience in the Mirror the beginnings of a fixed position in the topology of the self? Our moment in the Mirror is one of definition—we become located in the world of self and other, and in the process of location we become objectified in the dualistic manner exemplified in classrooms everywhere. In our definition by the Other, we move further away from what we are—from a void of any permanent definition of us. Practicing Receptance, we experience a highly mobile and unfixed sense of self and Other, and in our understanding of a fluid self are we are able to transcend the figuration that provides the barrier between self and other?

We use language to deconstruct our world, in the hope to gain a greater understanding of where we are situated within our surroundings, while we are constructed by the same language. There appears a dual and simultaneous process of deconstruction of the world, for our understanding of it, and the

construction of our selves. How might we move into a position of authenticity with the other, in Reverence? Can we gain a greater understanding of others and ourselves? A necessity of words and their basis for use in our structuralist system of language, the Symbolic Other, within our individual system of signifiers and signified, really only creates an image, idea or message the originator can fully comprehend. We are often left guessing at what the other might mean, misinterpreting what is said, as words we receive travel through the perspective of our own internalised narrative—we remain isolated in our understanding of others because of our figuration. Our 'I' is not only an internalised sense of self, but also an internalised way of seeing and hearing the world, based on our 'I'. In our realisation of layering by the Other, through Practising Receptance, might we navigate the space between self and other, and apprehend the *locus* of our students and ourselves?

The moon waits silently, veiled thinly behind the clouds.

The Real

Lacan divides reality into his Register Theory—the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic (1975, p. 94), interlinked and represented by the Borromean Knot (1974). The three registers represent the psyche in a model Lacan devised in the early 1970s, in what Lacanian scholar Romulo Lander calls the "study of the absolute" (2006, p. 17). A fundamental issue presents itself to us in the notion of separation—separation from ourselves in the construction of an illusory ego, and the separation from an authentic existence in the Lacanian Real, through our entrance into language. For Lacan, language sees us constructed, and in

Buddhism, language provides the vehicle for attachment to a configured self. This attachment to figuration leads to the endless search in Lacanian desire, and endless suffering, or *dukkha*, in Buddhism. How might we let go?

Jeff Shore in *Awakening and Insight: Zen Buddhism and Psychotherapy,* speaks of *dukkha* as something profoundly "unbearable". We cannot bear *dukkha* because it constitutes "the entire complex of the self". *Dukkha* comes from our never-ending "desire or craving to have or be something" (Shore, 2002, p. 32). Our desired object and our desiring self are both illusory according to the tenets of Buddhism. What are we to do in the face of suffering because that object of our desire is so utterly unattainable? Shore tells us that Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, student of Kitaro Nishida, "often presented this ineluctable human situation as a fundamental kōan: 'As I am-however I am-will not do. Now what do I do?'" (p. 32).

In our infancy do we come from the void of fragmentation and the Real to be figurated and constructed through the Mirror and the Other? We become encumbered with a self not of our making through a system of language common to us all, but unique to us all. Lacanian thinking tells us we use signifiers to gain access to the signified, or attempt to assign meaning through language. Each signifier finds comprehension only in a network of other signifiers—meaning is relative and performs the dual role of a tool for communication and an obstacle for understanding by others. For example, the word 'father' only makes sense when used against other words such as 'mother' or 'daughter', and so, can we see our system of dualistic apprehension of meaning? Shore says we entrap ourselves in the dualistic matrices we create—"pleasure-pain, good-evil, life-death"—and this is *dukkha*. We find *dukkha* easy to see when "we do have or become what we desire or, when we cannot avoid what we are averse to" (2002,

p. 33). Shore asks us if we ever become truly free, because even if we do have or become what we desire or avoid aversion, "don't we then fret over losing it, or doesn't the object of our desire lose its appeal once we possess it?" (p. 33). In a word, we do not truly come to rest even when the desired end is attained or the aversion avoided. This is the universal truth of *dukkha,* the first Noble Truth of Buddhism (p. 33).

Because concepts are relative, we retreat into a world of 'us', isolated by self-relevance and meaning of our own making. And yet, language as a tool for communication relies on generalisation of concepts—we are born into a shared system of knowledge and understanding. In our interpretation of the words of us and the potential use of the same words in society, we find a gap between what we think and what we hear. We ask ourselves, "What does it mean to be smart? Am I smart enough? What is enough?" We are confounded by the words of society—the Symbolic Other, and our unique interpretations of these same words and concepts. We remain figurated and isolated by words, suffering.

I find myself in Bashō's pilgrimage from isolation and into openness wondering how might we return to who we are, to shed the layering of a constructed self. How do we return to the no-mind of an authentic self?

Come

To the true flower viewing

Of the life of pilgrimage

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 142)

Do we spend our lives in perpetual search for the unity and completeness before words, the true flower viewing, before ideas, before internalisations and interpretations? Do we live our lives in the unending search for the thing that is beyond words that leads us to a feeling of completeness, of wholeness, of unity? Do we seek, ultimately that which is not ours, somehow blinded to an authenticity that dwells within each of us? If we are separated from ourselves and from others, can we question deeply the possibility of an essence of us?

I sometimes see students walk around individually at break times—do they meditate on some newfound assessment of themselves by the Other? Do they try to locate themselves in the eyes of the Other? In the topology of the self, in Practising Receptance, where might they be? Are they Radically Isolated by the figuration of the Other? I deeply question how we might reach out to our students to apprehend their authenticity. The advent of a 'me' made by those around us, leaves us adrift in two ways—we lose the unity we felt we had with the original Other, and the realisation of separation leaves us with a drive to find the lost completeness that was once experienced. We find ourselves empty and searching—we cling to what has been given to us. How do we summon the courage to see ourselves as we really are, or to apprehend the possible truth of a formless self? We begin to understand the enigma of the other—we share a 'sameness' indescribable through words, in thoughts of Sahn, who tells us, "Man's discriminating thoughts build up a great thought-mass in his mind, and this is what he mistakenly regards as his real self" (1976, p. 134). Is it in our understanding of what it is to be selfless that we do not attach, and in Practising Receptance, we might become one with the other, to understand our distance from them is located in words?

In our clinging to the figuration by the Other, does the attainment of high marks or grades fulfil the need for recognition in the eyes of the teacher, as Other, and to some extent fulfil our desire for validation? But, what exists for those students who do not or cannot attain the scholarly level that might fulfil the need for affirmation? I feel there might be other ways in which teachers can validate the individual. Are our students isolated through their desire to be validated, and in doing so, ignore authentic selves, investing only in the 'not-real' versions of themselves? Through our students' desire for affirmation in the eyes of the Other, do they ignore who they are and turn their eyes only to what they should be or become?

> I recently spoke with my 8-year-old daughter, Louisa, to see how the themes of validation and affirmation differ in the environments of school and home. We had a thoughtful conversation about the behaviours of both teachers and students and her attitudes towards both groups. I asked two questions: why she thought school was important, and what she thought the purpose of school was. She responded,
>
> "Sometimes I concentrate harder at school than at home. If you don't concentrate you won't learn–the teachers help you understand new things. It's important to try your hardest–you might be good at some things but not others. You need to know how to do maths properly–you need to know about those skills to get a good job. School is important because it helps you learn and to feel good. That's why I don't like grumpy teachers because they don't understand your feelings and what you are trying to do."

I was intrigued by the aspect of 'feeling good'—was this a realisation of connection with the other? Was it a subconscious apprehension of the other? I posed a further question, "If you had to choose between a kind teacher or a

teacher who was really good at helping you learn new things, which one would you choose?" Louisa responded,

> "The teachers can be kind or they can be angry–they can send children out for nothing, or if they are having a bad day, they 'reflect' their moods onto the children. Making me feel happy is more important than a good teacher. If you weren't happy you might not be able to do your work because you would be sad."

Gadamer tells us "openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather anyone who listens is fundamentally open" (1975, p. 369). Does a teacher 'having a bad day' push us further from openness more deeply into isolation? The Lacanian Mirror suggests authenticity, and perhaps our original happiness, is lost to us as we are reflected through the Mirror of the Other—in our realisation of separateness we are struck by our Radical Isolation and in our isolation we know something has been lost to us. We experience the *méconnaissance* (Lacan, 1966, p. 99)—the misrepresentation of 'me' founded in an image, perhaps vastly different to the Real 'me'. The 'me' of the Real, is the 'me' before words, before striving for validation or affirmation, without the need for words or desire—is the Real found in the silence before words, before the Mirror, before the Other? We might look to the self-less self as authentic and true—before words have begun to figurate us.

We seek validation, a return to our original satisfaction where we were not compared to the image, the ideal 'not-me'—the 'not-me' constructed by words from the Other. The Real has somehow been lost to us, replaced with the constructions of the Other, through the fallibility of words, and through the fallibility of their words.

Authenticity

Words again escape us in attempts to define what we might be—we confuse what is perceived with our inability to define the indefinable. Again I turn to the words of Bashō that might describe our illusory situatedness,

The fallen flower

Has returned to the branch;

No, it was a butterfly.

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 155)

Our mistakenness in what we feel we perceive is compounded by language. As an infant, we experience the blissful unawareness of separateness—a 'complete', affirmed and happy state. Before the Mirror, we experienced the validation and completeness, lost to us in our recognition of separateness from our mother. She becomes our anchor to the world of words, the realm of the Symbolic, as we move from the experience of unification of self and Other to separation through language.

In our separation, we reach out to cling, attach and ultimately, suffer.

The Mirror provides the ultimate awakening to our separation—a separation from our mother and a realisation of dependency. In our comprehension of

separation and helplessness we have unwittingly become the vessel for the wishes and the desires of the Other, as our utterances become interpreted and given meaning by the Other—our external construction begins. Our original state of the wordless Real is lost with the realisation of our individuality, and with this comprehension of aloneness, Radical Isolation. Our stillness becomes forgotten through our preoccupation with the words and desire of the Other, and it is with this irony that we are alone with only the company of words—do we seek the stillness of a wordless union before the Mirror? In moments of Radical Isolation might we understand our original unity founded in the Real has disappeared?

Affirmation and validation become both the goal of our endless search and our burden—we spend our lives seeking this original state, experiencing fleeting moments, but unable to recreate them and unable to describe adequately what they are to us. With the fallibility of language we cannot reproduce or capture our thoughts or experiences. In our original state of completeness in stillness, experienced as the ultimate unification, we can now only experience in Radical Isolation, unable to grasp in language the requisite conditions or adequately reconstruct or recount our feelings to others. I take the following narrative from Sahn, where we find what words can barely say yet richly realise or evoke.

> Su Tung-p'o was one of the greatest poets of the Sung Dynasty. It is said he knew the entire Buddhist canon by heart—some 84,000 volumes. He would visit monasteries and test the knowledge of monks and masters by asking specific questions pertaining to the sutras. At the temple of the ascending dragon there was a famous Zen Master named Chang Tsung. Su Tung-p'o went to him and said, "Please teach me the Buddha-dharma and open my ignorant eyes". The master, whom he had expected to be the very soul of compassion, began to shout at him. "How dare you come here seeking the dead words of men! Why don't you open your ears to the living words of nature?" Totally

absorbed in the question, Su Tung-p'o mounted his horse and rode off. He had lost all sense of direction, and let the horse find the way home. Suddenly, he came upon a waterfall. The sound struck his ears. He understood. So this is what the Master meant! The whole world—and not just this world, but all possible worlds, all the most distant stars, the whole universe—was identical to himself. That evening, Su Tung-p'o wrote,

The roaring waterfall

Is the Buddha's golden mouth

The mountains in the distance

Are his pure luminous body.

How many thousands of poems

Have flowed through me tonight!

And tomorrow I won't be

Able to repeat even one word.

(Sahn, 1976, pp. 130-131)

How do words change us? Why don't we open our ears to the living words of nature? Are we built around an original 'me'? Are we figurated around a kernel, which remains 'me'? Occasionally, the real 'me' is captured—fleeting moments of happiness in validation are the shadow that reminds us of what we once were, and these moments show us the Symbolic cannot capture the Real.

Here is a photo of myself and my son, Jack, taken on the 2nd of April, 2017 at about five o'clock in the morning. What does this photo suggest? Perhaps it depicts a somewhat dour scene of Dickensian parenting, a metaphorical chaining of children to the desk to finish homework? Maybe it depicts an insight into the style of modern parenting, whereby children are placed in front of electronic babysitters, while I am free to scroll through social media? Notice the headphones—we are cut off from one another, aurally and physically. We occupy the same space but we are entirely separate—the colour, or lack thereof, amplifies the scene. Each morning for years, I have arisen at about five o'clock, to read and write, before leaving for work. I love the darkness, the stillness and the silence of the morning. Such a flimsy and two-dimensional description of what appears within me, betrays what is real. There are so many things I feel at this time of the day which are utterly unsayable to others.

Do I experience the Real—completely beyond signification and beyond expression? I watch the day awake, as the trees outside slowly emerge in silhouettes, firstly in nebulous shapes, then with greater definition, then with colour, as trunks turn from black to brown and grey and leaves present their welcoming green. The sky awakens through its change in colour, from grey to blue and sometimes with brilliant streaks of orange or red, perhaps only fleetingly, as the sun rises and brings everything awake. In thoughts that reflect my feelings, Shore says,

> …I do not become another self; on the contrary, I become truly myself. Unencumbered by the entire dream complex, I 'come back' to my original, formless self. No more, no less. (2002, p. 38)

The moon is always there.

Our attempts to deconstruct and to simplify fail to capture what is 'really there' to us. In my own family, my father was the stoic disciplinarian, the man who in his youth, played football on gravel ovals, who sat silently in his chair at night after making dinner and always serving himself last. On the weekends, he worked, always building—with wood or mixing cement, in worn blue bib and brace overalls. The sound of a shovel scraping on the driveway, scooping cement into a wheelbarrow and the smell of putty is Dad. Words were about the only tool Dad could not use well. And so, here I am, using words, constructing things from words—perhaps I am building to gain the validation I never quite felt I achieved as a child? Affirmation—the keystone of the self, driving us all. I wonder what drove him?

In stillness I contemplate the profundity of our lives.

Validation and affirmation, to all of us, is such a unique and highly individualised search. Actions of signifiers and the signified in each of us—the highly unique and interdependent chains of meaning, only make sense to the individual, isolating us. Our system of experiences, language and meaning, leaves us Radically Isolated. How can we move from our isolation and into openness? How might we see the other, and in openness, recognise the interconnectedness yet uniqueness between us all? How can we break from the

conditioned forms that keep us separated from each other? We look to the *locus* of the other to apprehend Otherness and move from our Radical Isolation.

We experience a Radical Isolation, inexpressible and unrelatable to others. The unique drive in each of us isolates each of us through its unique origin and definition—we cannot explain our feelings of desire to be affirmed. In returning to the expedition with Year 9 to the Southwest Wilderness, I attempt to further illuminate validation and affirmation.

> We had developed a community of contentment, the lack of striving for validation was palpable—we transformed into a far more egalitarian 'society' where the dynamic changed between teacher and students—relationships became more 'real'. We laughed, joked, supported and teased each other in a way that is not common at school. In briefings each night we sat around in a circle and recounted the highs and challenges of the day, often in darkness. It is hard to explain the feeling of contentment and solidarity that was so pervading. It felt as though happiness, affirmation or validation had permeated through the group, with each person having a different conception of an individual feeling of affirmation. Even in this shared experience of fulfilment, there existed individual reasons for experiencing happiness, and so, even with this shared experience we were Radically Isolated through our individual experiences and our interpretations of them. I sat on the banks of the flooded Louisa River and silently contemplated what we had been experiencing, as the waters flowed past so did my mind and thoughts of our locus. Joy, unification and community were evident as I looked around me, in the acceptance of rain, the endurance of storm or the embracing of sun, surrounded by faces glowing with determination and achievement. The pervasive sense of togetherness was a spiritual, Zen-like state.

We seemed immersed in a kind of meditative state ready, as Zen Monk, Shunryu Suzuki says, "To see things as they are, to observe things as they are and to let everything go as it goes" (2011, p. 16).

Was my experience a peeling back of layers of the Symbolic? In my contemplation of those wonderful events, I suggest words can only add something unnecessary, confusing and inadequate to what I was experiencing. In my mind, stillness was the only way I could adequately comprehend what I saw and felt. In our shared community, through a silent understanding and shared experience, had we touched, if only briefly, the realm of the Real? Through our lack of words, had a paring back of the superfluous allowed ourselves to become closer, moving into a shared Openness with the other? Had the experience of this shared community with its silent understanding and appreciation of the other, briefly entered the sphere of the authentic? I wondered what words could possibly add to what we were all experiencing, and in our daily reflections at the end of each day it was clear that each and every individual's reflection fell remarkably short of what was clearly all around us.

Our minds the moon, words clouding our illumination.

In a recent discussion with my Year 8 class, we talked about the possibility of neutrality of language and how this could apply to each of us. We found that even a simple communication from the teacher to individual students might be interpreted in many ways. Students who hear simple, positive feedback such as, "Great effort! Next time you could try a different adjective in your first sentence" could construe such feedback as negative or a 'job well done', depending on many different factors, including—who the teacher is, what the subject is, or how confident or not the individual student is.

Just as words fail to describe what we see, so they fail to describe who and where we are. In our figuration, through words, we are topologically located in a fixed position. We become person X or Y, clinging to construction, seeking to affirm a permanent position in space. In thoughts that echo those of Sartre, words and images are separate, just as the Lacanian Registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic are differentiated, and what we see and what we say are two completely different processes. Lacan says, "The only feature common to the sign consciousness and the image consciousness is that each, in its way, aims at an object through another object" (2003, p. 83). Ideas of separation in words and images, captured in the following narrative taking place in the classroom, illustrate again the lacuna between what is experienced and the words attempting to convey those experiences.

> In a contrast to what was experienced in the wilderness, weeks later back at school, one of the first things we do, as teachers, is to check our emails each morning to see if we have received any messages—one in particular is more significant than others. This is the 'supervision' email, which provides notification of whether you have a cover for the day—supervising a lesson for another absent staff member, taking away that free lesson you thought you had. Yesterday, I checked the emails and there it was—my name for a period 6 supervision, the last lesson of the day. The supervision lesson was above the gym, in a Year 11/12 Food and Nutrition class. My 4 lessons had just turned into a 5-lesson day.
>
> As 2.40 approached, the beginning of period 6, I made my way over to the gym and walked up the stairs to the classroom. I opened the door and was met with a reaction I did not expect—as with all quiet rooms, when a door is opened, people tend to look at the person entering. As I opened the door I saw many of the faces in the room turn towards me. There was a cheer from some of the boys, handshakes and smiles from some and disinterest from others.

> "Hey Mr Eaves" went the general chorus, with a few emphatic "Eavesy's" in the mix as well. Covering classes is as much of a lottery for the boys, to see who they will get, as it is for the staff.
>
> I can picture myself walking into the room, met with happy faces. Some boys I had not seen for a while—it was really good to talk with them and see what they had been doing. My interest was not simply with school, in fact it wasn't really about school at all, but these people as individuals. I cannot describe what it was that I felt—to read these words, even as I type them, illustrates only what language cannot do. I am utterly alone in my conception of this wonderful experience—I contemplate that although we do not enjoy receiving supervisions, they are nearly always a positive experience, particularly for those boys we have not seen for a while. These wordless exchanges mean the most.

We have already considered that words are not sufficient to accurately describe what we experience—could authenticity actually be a peeling back of Symbolic layers to reveal the Real? The situatedness of authenticity, or simply being 'real' with our students has the ability to draw out the thing that is beyond words—a commonality between us all. In moving towards openness, "then we shall need a philosophy which is similar to my hermeneutics, a philosophy which teaches us to see the justification for the other's point of view and which thus makes us doubt our own" (Gadamer, 1992, p. 152). We do not simply encounter one-way communication—engagement and authenticity by both parties, student and teacher, reveals the Real. Is the key to authenticity Radical Courage—courage to be seen by others, courage to look beyond the construction of self and to attempt to escape the yoke of validation? In Practising Receptance we must open ourselves to the other and be vulnerable in order for authenticity to be revealed. We try to apprehend and understand the self as constructed by Others—the literal armour that protects our original fragmentation. The Real, a state beyond words of many names, might arise—a shining state of the real 'me' emerging from Radical Isolation.

I cannot adequately relay the experience or the feelings that supervision conjured within me. Framing the experience with words allows me to relay situational and emotional states to others, but utterly lacks in what I really felt and what I experienced. To see the interest and engagement in their faces as no doubt they could see in mine is utterly beyond words. My thoughts are reflected in Shore's words,

> What do you see when looking in the eyes of another? I heard that once Mother Theresa was asked what she saw when she looked in the eyes of the filthy, diseased, and dying cradled in her shoulder. She replied, 'Christ in his distressing disguise.' While we should not gloss over the differences in this Christian 'metaphor,' I take it as an illuminating illustration of who the other truly is: A Buddha. Perhaps a Buddha who has not yet fully awakened to this fact. But a Buddha nonetheless. (2002, p. 43)

Radical Isolation

Gadamer, in viewing the plurality of meaning in words indicates, "a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it—i.e., that it allows something to emerge which henceforth exists" (1975, p. 401).

For Gadamer, an expression is seen as the manifestation of a life experience, which our understanding attempts to re-enact. But with our understanding, coloured by the lens of our lives, how can we accurately convey our

understanding to others? In a sentiment that illustrates the position of Radical Isolation, according to Gadamer, "…it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other…" (1975, p. 403). In a search for orientation of the other, do we seek the *locus*? Is Gadamer hinting at a topology of self? Our individual experiences necessitate isolation from others—our communication often focuses on transference rather than acceptance or receptance of ideas and meanings.

I have written about ideas of language being constructed by signifiers and the signified in a system that is highly subjective and interdependent—our chains of self-dependent meaning leave us isolated from others and they, in turn, become isolated from us, through relative and highly individualised systems of meaning. Might we suggest that our use of language and our construction through language results in Radical Isolation? Do we become somehow marooned on the island of us? In Lacanian thinking, the Other imbues us with language, but is it the desire to connect with us, through language, which provides the 'not-self'—is the 'not-self' embodying the very concept of Radical Isolation? We are constructed through the language of the Other as we internalise and convert our language to a narrative in messages and eventually stories about ourselves corresponding to our desire for affirmation. We are held before the literal Mirror as infants, while characteristics and qualities are placed upon us—"what a smart girl you are" or "what a clever boy you are". We are dressed with words as the image before us is the goal to which we must attain. Subconsciously, we are forever asking ourselves whether we are, in fact, "a smart girl" or "a clever boy", driven by desire from the language that has created this narrative for us and seeking its validation through answering these questions in the affirmative. We rebel against positivist notions of who we are, in openness "of mind and

recognition of the fact that not everything that is, could become the object of science" (Gadamer, 1992, p. 179). We turn to the words of Zen master Sahn in our quest to apprehend the Other.

> If you want enlightenment, then only let your situation, condition, and opinions disappear. This is your true teacher. A teaching based on language alone is no good. If you are thinking, even a good teacher sitting in front of you will not help you. But if you cut off all thinking, then the dog's barking, the wind, the trees, the mountains, the lightning, the sound of the water—all are your teachers. (1976, p. 61)

Do we adopt these messages placed upon us, turning them inwards, yet inherently somehow knowing that we are constituted on a false foundation? Do we search and strive, unsettled and ever longing for the something on which we cannot place our collective fingers? Because of our Radical Isolation from one another and from ourselves, we remain disconnected. Do we seek affirmation and validation as a means for connection with others? Is the authentic connection that was originally lost from our mothers, forever sought, encased in affirmation?

When as an infant, we first realised that we were not one entity with our mothers, we experienced Radical Isolation, in that we first experienced our 'aloneness'. An original connection as a state beyond words, in the mind of the infant has no boundaries between self and Other. Our search for affirmation is sought in the Other—Practising Receptance, we begin to disregard the role of words in apprehending the *locus* of the other, deepening our understanding of them.

Lacan states our ego, or 'I' first realised in our reflection garnered from external sources, leads to a realisation that the child is invested in an external image (2002, p. 4) posing the question: 'who am I?' This investment in the complete and coordinated external image—different from the felt internal or bodily disconnectedness—is an investment in a sense of identity in the external image and marks the beginning of the formation of 'I'. We begin to experience 'I' in a state founded on disconnectedness, open to the external and dependent upon validation as a means to try to recapture what has been lost to us. In our conception of recapturing the lost, perhaps we might meditate on these words by Bashō,

Drinking his morning tea

The priest is peaceful—

Chrysanthemum flowers

(in Matsuo & Aitken, 1978, p. 164)

Do we long to be relieved of our layered sense of self, left to connect with our surroundings? How might we capture the essence of this peace in our lives?

In the explanation of our disconnectedness—our narrative and desire for affirmation are perhaps intertwined or dependent upon one another. Is our desire for affirmation a desire for the escape from our Radical Isolation? As educators, we often take the opportunity to give students under our care a 'boost'. Part of the joy of our work is to help to lift our students—to assist them in building a greater sense of self and to help us locate them, and to see themselves located.

We try to make sure that we 'see' our students through an ability to connect—foundational for developing strong, productive and caring relationships. Traditionally, teacher as Other, has a very narrow definition of what a good student is. A narrow paradigm of success leaves validation open to very few students and excludes the majority. Perhaps a result of the current teacher-student paradigm leads to a potential disconnect with our students. How can they become validated? How will they be seen? Do they remain an enigma that is the other? The student who does not feel validated might withdraw into isolation, unable to be validated—the desire, as desire of the Other, unmet. As our desire for affirmation or validation increases, then so our openness to input of the Other also increases—we seek the affirmation of the Other and we seek the escape from our isolation. Our narrative, our 'I', corresponds with input from the Other—we are constructed by words, founded in the alienation of us. Do we continually and restlessly strive for connection?

As words have the potential to confuse, confound and mislead us, I use algebraic formulae in an attempt to overcome the frailty and ambiguity of language. Again, I emulate Lacan's *matheme* in an attempt to show the relationship between our narrative, the story we tell ourselves, in relation to our desire for affirmation—we see how narrative and desire for affirmation or connection share a close relationship,

$$n \propto a$$

The story we tell ourselves, or narrative (n) is proportional to ($\propto$) our desire for affirmation (a). Changes in the desire for affirmation (a) lead to an increase or decrease in the openness to input from others, effecting a change in narrative (n) as a direct response to external causes. What we hear from others, directly relates to our sense of how affirmed we feel. Practising Receptance, our changes in narrative reflect the *locus* of us—in openness, we become highly fluid in a

topology of self, resisting definition or adherence to any permanent sense of self. We move from Radical Isolation to Radical Openness utilising Radical Courage in our motility as a response to the external, constricting figuration of us.

Our origins illuminate our isolation—our striving is driven by a link between what we desire and the bridge over a seemingly impassable gulf between an authentic and figurated self. If the moment in the Mirror is a disconnection from the register of the Real, then our drive for authenticity, for what is it to be truly 'me' is a desire to be reconnected with the original self before words—some ethereal kernel of 'who I am', instead of chasing an ideal presented to me. Our quest then for authenticity connects to the register of the Real (Lacan, 1968, p. 161), in Lacanian terms, our original state—a state of interconnectedness with ourselves.

Though Lacanian thinking tells us we can't, is there possibly just one moment in the idea of Zen, the firefly, the dragonfly, the chrysanthemum, that we are able to escape our Radical Isolation, a figurated self, an alienation from ourselves and others, able to resist the constructing influence of the Other? Can we ever really remove the figuration of 'not-me' and return to some form of authentic nature? I would say that for me that this is 'radical hope'.

Stillness

If we pursue the thought that an original 'me' is founded in the Real, before the Mirror of the Imaginary and the words of the Symbolic, then we might

contemplate what we are left with. In stillness, might we begin to overcome a dualistic paradigm through attempts to have one state of being over another? If we look to stillness as acting in a state of being, rather than the act of silence, do we move closer to the Buddhist conception of voidness in *śūnyatā*? In stillness do we begin to move closer to understanding the *locus* of ourselves and others through the act of being still in both body and mind?

To illustrate stillness as witness, a teacher's job necessitates managing groups of children or adolescents and requiring them to listen, to him and to others. He asks the students to stop fidgeting, sit still, face the front or stop talking when he requires their attention. This is part of the teacher's craft in managing groups of individuals—the inexperienced teacher raises his voice in an attempt to gain the attention of the class. The experienced teacher stands very still in a prominent position in the classroom, waiting. The inexperienced teacher often leaves at the end of the day, tired from the over use of voice, whereas the experienced teacher rarely has to raise his voice at all. In stillness, the dynamics of the room are pared back to a critical distillation of attention, rarely achieved through a raised voice or exaggerated action. There appears a significant power to the act of stillness—a centering. If we look closely at Practising Receptance, authenticity and fear vacillate in response to one another, with stillness the fulcrum upon which the two poles balance.

In the classroom, gaining attention is easier than gaining attention in an unstructured setting like a sports field. There are no desks acting as an edifice for constricting the individual—outside, students are literally free to move where they wish. The inexperienced teacher uses voice to attempt to gain control and attention, often distracted by those who stand at the periphery talking to their

friends, and not listening. The experienced teacher asks the students to sit down, this simple act causing silence and stillness.

What is the allure of stillness? Is it a *keisaku* from the daily noise and busyness of our lives? In stillness, do we become centered and more equipped to be introspective? In a state of introspection, might we then become more likely to question the *locus* of us and others? Sahn offers ways to understand our attachment and provides us with wisdom to release us from that which binds us,

> You say you looked in the mirror and said, "who's that?" In the middle there was the reflection of your face and also there was your real face. I ask you: the mirror face and your face—which one is the correct face? Are they the same or different? (1982, pp. 166-167)

If we consider Practising Receptance as a Zen-like way of thinking, allowing us to act in Reverence, in a proximal and spatial relationship to the other, we accept the other without judgement. In stillness, we allow misleading thoughts of the other and ourselves to be released—we move closer to the true self of the Real, before the Mirror.

The moon still waits

How can we conceptualise that which is a combination of so many thoughts, experiences and feelings? And, even if we could accurately articulate our own feelings, the experiences of others necessitate a difference in understanding of our conception of the everyday. If we remain isolated in our experiences and in our

construal of even the most common emotions and events, as soon as we attempt to articulate our feelings or understandings to ourselves or others, authenticity is lost. Language captures something but is it mostly a tool for creating something requiring interpretation between individuals, not a representation or direct link to our experiences? Language may only reflect my own experiences, in a way that might only make sense to me. In illuminating the perspective of egocentric comprehension, language is produced by the thoughts and experiences of a person, and relayed to others. Messages are heard and internalised through the filter of experiences and systems of signifiers by another. Language cannot capture what is authentic, nor can it relay what is unique to an individual—the register of the Symbolic dictates a break from the Real (Lacan, 1968, p. 161).

> Rick, a student now in Year 11, plays hockey for Australia—he showed me a newspaper clipping of himself, rightly proud of his achievements. His pride obvious, but it was more than that—he handed me his phone (where he had the article) and it was an action without boast, an action of the desire for validation. Rick seemed transported back in time, as a student in my class in primary school— a young man, now playing sport for Australia, appearing to seek affirmation. Of course I teased him mercilessly about being a bragger, to which the other boys at the table laughed and joined in—but the message from me was clear—I was proud of Rick and extremely happy for him. I always try to make sure, though through the fallibility of words, that the boys understand this is the case. Perhaps he already felt he had validation, and the sharing was a product or manifestation of the validation? I remember the happy and hopeful look on his face—it is strange how these boys seem somehow trapped in time, as perhaps our relationships with others are.

I meditate on the ideas of Radical Openness, as a means to entering into a shared space with the other, to somehow apprehend what is real. Can we ever ascertain what is real?

And so we wait, for the mist to rise, to see the moon.

Yesterday, I received an email—a complete surprise in my holidays, on my way to go surfing. It was from, Gert, one of the boys I used to teach—again, as I reread this sentence, it falls so short, as I have put my relationship with him ("a boy I used to teach") in such simplistic terms that anyone could understand it. The email was from a young man, now at University in Melbourne, whom I watched grow from a very young child to a Year 12 student to now a University student. In our last conversation, he told me he was moving to Melbourne, as do many of the boys from Hobart to pursue greater opportunities. I can picture Gert in my mind as a young lad of about 8 or 9, kicking the football with me on the oval—energetic and excited, the same age as my own son now—next as a teenager, preparing for the Middle School social, nervous and uncertain—then in Year 12 as School Captain, speaking to the school in assembly, confident and grown— now as a University student, younger than but equal to. Snapshots of a life I have been involved with, since his schooling began.

Mr Eaves,

I feel like it has been a long time since we have spoken now I am in Melbourne. I have missed seeing you around school so was just checking up to see how you and the family are.

If you are ever in Melbourne, please contact me and we will go watch a game of football. I have a MCC membership so we can sit in the members and have a beer. Judging by the current ladder you might not want to watch the Kangaroos play so you might want to try next season.

Hope everything is going well.

Words of Rilke again seem to capture what I felt, in response to Gert's release into adulthood.

> *And hours at a time by the big gray pond, kneeling with a little sailboat there; and to forget it because those other sails more interesting than yours are cutting circles, and then to have to think about the small white face that sank away and shone out from the pond: oh childhood, oh disappearing images, where to? where to?*
>
> *(1994, p. 22)*

I cannot begin to convey what I feel when I write this—explaining the background of the email, the words themselves and my thoughts and feelings associated with the experience is impossible. I introspect and meditate on the effects of this profound interaction in Radical Isolation, in stillness—I cannot relay what I feel adequately in any way that might illustrate authenticity in my experience, it seems best to retreat into silence and leave Rilke's echo behind.

In our acceptance, we attempt to conform to words, not of our own and not of our own meaning. A world of words and language forever isolates us from each other, and so, we encounter, through words, a state of Radical Isolation. In a question that ever reverberates how might we move out of words into openness with the other?

> *In silence, the moon still waits.*

Singularity

In our understanding of experience, our internalisations do not translate to others. We are unique in our experiences, which precipitates isolation—we are through language separated from the other. Any notion of clinging to ideas or concepts that convey meaning is illusory—just as our selves are illusory. Language and self, both layered upon misrecognition and misrepresentation, leave us utterly alone. Our uniqueness and the uniqueness of our world, replaced by universal concepts, allow us to move into a shared space. But, universality is not authenticity—do we operate on a superficial level in universality, unable to access authenticity and that which is real?

van Manen draws our attention to understanding how we might appreciate that embracing universality gives us the possibility of what we might find in the singular as being authentic. He cites Georg Wilhelm Hegel's irony, "To create knowledge of our world, things in their singularity are to be annihilated and replaced by universal concepts…Hegel seems to say that words kill the very things they name" (van Manen, 2016, p. 82). The notion of describing what appears exemplifies our position of fleeting apprehension of the other—in asking "what appears?" we disregard ideas of permanence, and instead focus only on what we capture in brief moments. Authenticity disregards any idea of permanence, and only through formlessness and voidness can we understand the Other.

As educators, might we pursue the singularity of the other, to apprehend a unique and profound beauty, in Reverence? In universality, the uniqueness or singularity of the other is diminished, lessened by a function of communication

or perhaps classification of the individual. We meditate on interactions, ideas and experiences, but they are changed into something else when we attempt to categorise or classify these experiences into words. Our students become less than the authentic and unique beings that they are when we move to a linguistic-based universality in our apprehension of them.

Language abstracts and distorts moments of lived experience and we seem forever destined to experience the singularity of things in isolation. Our lives, experienced internally in singularity, are also driven by the input of the Other, driven by our need for validation. We seek moments of the Real, and yet we are burdened by the world of the Symbolic.

In universalising, we reduce what is 'real' to a language of convenience, a world of concepts that places experience and insight into a convenient commonality with communication at the core rather than meaning. We talk of experiences but communication is the shadow—the body of actual meaning is obfuscated in isolation revealed only to the one who casts the shadow. There is a way to awaken our minds to how we use language in our thinking, and even, how language uses us. Sahn reminds us that names and forms are made by thinking. Yet without thinking, there is no attachment, and all substances become one. "The substance of this Zen stick and your own substance are the same. You are this stick; this stick is you" (1976, p. 3).

Chapter 5: Spacing between Us

In this chapter, we delve further into language to explore the dynamic between Radical Isolation, Radical Openness and the Radical Courage required to enter the sphere of an Other. We puzzle over moments, meanings, interactions and simple daily occurrences in meaning making of our world, in interpreting the words of others. Practising Receptance, we find ourselves moving from Radical Isolation to Radical Openness and we vacillate between these domains in the hope of moving into a *locus* of authenticity where we might experience an awareness of our figuration and that of others. We look to our empty formlessness in *śūnyatā* and begin to comprehend our selves in a *topos* of fluidity, where we embody an inherent and fundamental awareness of connectedness. Our new understanding requires us to shift, cognitively, from Newtonian ideas of cause and effect, in isolation, to co-dependent arising that says, "I am, because you are".

We remain vigilant of words and their meaning, always seeking beyond what we hear, mindful of Lacan's thinking, "the use of the Word requires vastly more vigilance in the science of man than it does anywhere else, for it engages in it the very being of its object" (1968, p. viii). A fundamental issue presenting itself is the notion of separation—separation from an authentic self or 'me' through the construction of an illusory ego, separation from others through our unique development of self founded in the Mirror and in our Western ideas of cause and effect, and separation from an authentic existence originally founded in voidness. We drift further and further from what we were—our original authenticity

becomes lost to us as we seek the validation and affirmation of the Other, always looking outside of ourselves in an attempt to quell the desire that drives us.

Language constructs the 'me' originally born into a state of wholeness, of unity and non-separateness. Language is also used as we live our lives in daily deconstruction of events, moments and thoughts but we are limited by linguistic constructs, unique to each of us. In our communication with others, we reach a commonality in our words, a universality—never the intended meaning from either party. We desire to be heard by others, and us by them, but we seem blocked and isolated, held in distance through discourse. We long to emerge into a radical hope of interconnectedness, removed from our desire for validation and affirmation that drives every interaction.

We long to see the clouds move away from the luminous moon.

Our authenticity, a state beyond words and beyond comprehension, of absolute affirmation, is replaced through words. Do we live our lives in the unending search for that which is beyond words and leads us to a feeling of completeness, of wholeness, a return to an authentic 'me'? Is our true and formless self located in the Real? We experienced the blissful unawareness of separateness, meaning we were in many ways 'complete' and affirmed in the time before we are placed before the Mirror. Through our students' desire for affirmation in the eyes of the Other, do they ignore who they are and turn their eyes only to what they should be or become? Words and meanings are a source of transference, a type of one-way traffic, where the source is a drive for affirmation and self-reflexive systems of meaning. As such, we can never quite get at what we are seeking through words—words become the barrier between

ourselves and others, like a glass panel through which we can see, but because of which we can never connect, and so, words necessitate our Radical Isolation.

Language as Radical Isolation

My mind turns to the journey of our students—their odyssey of meaning making and confusion, a journey each of us must undertake, alone in making our way.

> *School time runs on and on with anxiousness and boredom, full of pauses, full of pointless things. Oh solitude, oh slow and heavy hours. And then outside: the streets glisten and ring and in the squares the fountains play and in the gardens all the world grows huge. And one runs through it all in a small suit quite differently than others go, or went --: Oh wonderful, odd moments, oh heavy hours, oh solitude.*
>
> *(Rilke, 1994, p. 21)*

We become isolated by language and isolated in our attempts to understand the other. The necessity of words and the basis for their use within our discourse in individual systems of signifiers and signified really only creates an image, idea or message that the originator alone can fully understand. We might suggest our system of language is shared, but the inherent meanings are unique to each of us—language can never be neutral (Bruner, 1986) and the dissociation between signifier and signified divides what appears to be self-evident through the function of signification (Lacan, 1975, p. 29).

In Lacan, words and language are our common tools for communication, but they are highly individualised within each of us. Words are insufficient to capture any manifestation of the Real, or anything unique to us, only to be experienced individually and so we find ourselves unable to share or adequately communicate our thoughts, ideas or feelings. Our experiences founded in Radical Isolation are similar to what Irving Yalom describes as existential isolation, as an "unbridgeable gulf between oneself and any other being. It refers, too, to an isolation even more fundamental—a separation between the individual and the world" (1980, p. 355).

Once we attempt to share or define, concepts become lost to us, mired in words, diluted in the thoughts and experiences of others. If we cannot directly connect our thoughts with another, our conception of things remains unique to us—ideas and experiences reduced to a shared state of understanding, a commonality or universality with individual interpretations limiting the authentic comprehension. And so it is with us as we become Radically Isolated, marooned by words and our discourse.

In existential isolation, we begin to comprehend the lacuna between self and other. Might we see that our students are alone in every class as they attempt to engage and be engaged? Are they not Radically Isolated, as we teachers also remain Radically Isolated in our experiences and conception of the world? Do we long to cast off the striving that sees us search for affirmation? The advent of language obfuscates what we are—we learn to 'not be' as much as we are subject to composition by the Other. How might we help our students 'be'? And so, how might we apprehend their *locus*?

We cannot escape this separateness because it is language and our individual layering of unique systems of understanding that isolates us. In thoughts of authenticity, Hegelian "*pure insight*" leads us to ideas that the original self of consciousness is superior in its ability to discern reality from appearances. Hegel states, "*pure insight* is the simple inward undifferentiated *essence"* (1807, 2001, p. 74).

Do we see a relationship between the Hegelian *essence,* the Lacanian Real and *śūnyatā*? And in our comprehension, might we begin to understand the ethereal bond between us all, the connection that lies behind discourse? Constructing knowledge of a self and others, how might we apprehend the pure *essence* of Hegel? Is this idea similar to what we might consider authenticity to be, in a situatedness of reality contrasted to appearances? If "*pure insight* knows the pure *self* of consciousness to be absolute, and is a match for the pure consciousness of the absolute essence of all actuality" (Hegel, 1807, 2001, p. 76), might we have another name in *pure insight* for our formless authenticity?

If we look to the question of, 'what appears?', the problem with describing things as they appear is the reliance on our individual system of meaning—a self-reflexive system of language, which by definition, severs us from others. Words truly only belong to each of us—a language within a language impenetrable and foreign to anyone else. We reduce what is 'real' to a language of convenience—a world of universal concepts that places experience and insight into a convenient commonality with communication at the core rather than meaning. If we suggest that the particulars of the moment cannot be expressed without losing the singularity of the instant, then it is language that universalises what it attempts to describe (van Manen, 2016, p. 83).

In expressing the moment, Hegel terms the immediacy of sense experience 'abstract' as it is ungraspable, but it is not only the immediacy that is abstract, but language itself is also abstract, distorting moments of lived experience it attempts to capture (in van Manen, 2016, p. 84). The divide from the singularity of an event increases exponentially the further we move from what is experienced at that moment. Language abstracts and distorts the moments of lived experience it tries to describe to others, forever removed from the singularity of our experiences. Our language does not relate to the language system of others—the singularity of meaning, of the event itself, never relates to another and so we remain isolated. Our language is not entirely graspable by others, and though it attempts to capture and convey meaning it can remain elusive, leaving a feeling of loss. We are so often left bleakly and radically alone.

> *Who has no house now won't be building one. Who is alone will stay that way for long, will waken, read, write lengthy letters and wander, restless, up and down the avenues when leaves are blowing.*
>
> *(Rilke, 1994, p. 27)*

Words within and without

We are born into language, the convention of society—a system independent of us, the Other. Language exists independently of us and our use of language must fit within the existing conventions of the laws of language dictated by society. Our significations must fit within rules already established long before our birth within a pre-established system that isolates us further. Paradoxically, we belong to a shared system but it is because of this shared system that we become

isolated—by the need for adherence to rules and regulations we become channelled into a way of being. Our authenticity is compromised through the need to conform to a system, and so, we move further away from perhaps what we were as we journey from what we were to what we must be, in that, "Man thus speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him a man" (Lacan, 1966, p. 276).

If our system of language is independent and related to a self-contained system of signifiers, the question remains as to the relaying of experiences and knowledge of our world to others. If we are, as I have suggested, behind a metaphorical pane of glass in our communication with others, how can we adequately transfer and receive meaning as intended? We might find that language prevents us from apprehending the other, as the "subject doesn't know what he is saying, and for the best of reasons, because he doesn't know what he is" (Nobus, 1998, p. 84). We appear to be at an impasse, isolated and unable to reach others. Where does our isolation in language and self lead us? "Here it is a wall of language that blocks speech…" (Lacan, 1966, p. 282).

In his article, "*Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances*" Roman Jakobson (1956) argues that language is based on two axes—a metaphorical axis and a metonymic axis. The function of the metaphorical axis is the ability for terms to be substituted for other terms in the production of meaning, whereas the function of the metonymic axis is the ability to order signifiers sequentially. Metaphor uses the transference of one quality to another, for example 'he was a lion in battle', whereas metonymy works through the association between two concepts, for example referring to a car as 'wheels' or professionals as 'suits'. Put more simply, metaphor is concerned with making

meaning, the relation between signifier and signified at its core, while metonymy is concerned only with sequence of the signifier.

In 1957, borrowing from Jakobson's idea, Lacan famously argued that the unconscious has the same structure as language. Lacan suggested desire as a metonymical process—illustrated in a never-ending sequence of signifiers, independent of meaning (as opposed to metaphor), pursuing the endless goal of affirmation. Desire, in its infinite metonymy, independent of making meaning and only concerned with sequence, makes it impossible to identify exactly what it is we strive for. The process of metonymy is only concerned with sequence—one link to another, avoiding a path of understanding, chasing papers blown by the wind in our ceaseless striving for the answer to our desire. In our attempts to unravel this mystery of the human condition, I use the words of Kobayashi Issa,

The road of human life is more rugged than the one that goes across

mountains and rivers.

(in Ueda, 2004, p. 54)

In Lacanian thinking, we move further away from each other in our speech—the use of the signifier and its relationship to the signified is independent of any 'real' meaning. Do we remain adrift, constantly removed from one another? If we cannot connect with 'real' meaning, how can we share meaning? How can we adequately connect with one another? Do we look to the hidden meaning behind what is said? In Ricoeur's (1992) hermeneutics of suspicion (Josselson, 2004, p. 21) we attempt to find meaning disguised beneath a deeper level than what appears. In this way, according to Ricoeur, our narrative regarding ourselves or others is open to interpreting and subject to decoding beyond what is said—we look to the answer of what is blocking speech.

In adopting a hermeneutic of suspicion, are we allowing ourselves the potential of connecting with one another? In the realm of education, can we not see why this would be such an important avenue to explore? Our question here is about ways we interpret the other, based on our own systems of language and experience—how might we shed these internalised experiences and systems of language, in order to understand others? Can we?

Are we able to arrive at a deeper meaning without being reliant on the limitations of words? Words fail us in our ability to link the Real with the Symbolic—can the singularity of meaning ever really be transferred to another? Is there an answer to our isolating system of language that allows us to communicate, but seemingly on a superficial, almost disconnected level? How can we address this issue in a classroom? I feel our responsibility as teachers lies far beyond the transmission of curriculum—we are ultimately responsible for the care and growth of children. How can this development of our young occur without authenticity, without 'real' connection? Without this connection, how can we adequately fulfil our roles as educators, vital for truly understanding the other?

If the connection between us is missing, I think we must question whether it is a conscious lack of connection, or are we unaware that we are disconnected? In reflecting on what I do in the classroom, or what I attempt to do, it is building relationships—but what does that really mean? I attempt to be authentic and to move beyond what is said. I attempt to listen and move beyond myself to try to hear the intended meaning—I attempt to move from a position of Radical Isolation and into a position of Radical Openness, to move beyond myself. In my attempts to hear the other, I open myself to authenticity, in a position of Radical Courage. To open ourselves requires an openness to a fluidity of self, a

self as *topos*, discarding pre-existing ideas or thoughts, in emptiness. I wait. I witness.

As an example, I received the following email yesterday—from a very concerned parent and one whose tone expresses a number of different emotions. To summarise, her son Den was injured playing a game in Physical Education. She felt the school had not provided adequate care in protecting Den, and reading the email, this certainly seems plausible enough—but let us look deeper, as we always must, in order to try to 'see' or 'hear' what is really there.

> Was this an avoidable injury? We think so. Den is a year younger that most of his classmates and considerably smaller than some of them. He has no aptitude for ball sports. He hates them. However, at school, boys like Den are often sent out onto a field to attempt to play a game like AFL with much bigger, more skilled boys. Of course there will be injuries. I am surprised only three boys were hurt that lesson (according to Den). Do we ask boys who play AFL for the school but have no talent or skill in music, to go on stage during a class music lesson and play a violin concerto in front of their peers? Of course we don't. They would have no hope of succeeding. It would be humiliating for them, although they would be unlikely to suffer a physical injury. Why then, don't we use similar thinking when it comes to sport in school? Den's main enjoyment at school comes from his music. He will now not be able to play piano or violin for some weeks. He won't be able to take part in his regular lessons or the senior strings group. He won't be able to audition for the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra as was planned next week. We won't be sending him to camp next week with one functional hand, so some alternative arrangement will need to be made. He won't be able to take part in the 'high ropes' course that was planned for this week. His ability to complete work, since he can't type properly, will also be affected.

Den is much smaller than his classmates are, as he was 'accelerated' due to his academic ability—moved one year beyond his corresponding age group. He certainly fits the stereotype of the bookish student with whom a lack of affinity with the outdoors is obvious. It would be easy for us to stop there and perhaps dismiss this entire incident as an overreaction by an overbearing parent. What if either, or both parents, had similar experiences at school? Were they 'humiliated' on the sporting field when they were at school? Perhaps, despite the 'acceleration' of their son, he is not achieving the academic heights they expect? Perhaps the mother cannot bear to see her son growing and moving away from her, leaving her in a more obvious state of Radical Isolation? Newtonian conceptions of cause and effect see us progress in a linear and outwards motion, but Buddhist thinking suggests otherwise. Our connection is inherent and fundamental—we do not move away from anything, such is our Otherness. Can we see how fear plays such a central role in our thinking and understanding? We grasp desperately at what we do not understand in our attempts to control.

Are experiences, frustrations or fears transferred onto their son? In reading this email, I want to sit down with the parents and get to the 'real' reason this was written. A majority of parents, in my experience, would take a far more conciliatory tone with their words. Accidents do happen—at school and in life. I find it interesting that the tone is immediately accusatory—the words are from a position of offence, perhaps of fear—there is no asking, only telling. There is no attempt to reach across the divide of understanding. "Pure seeing and pure hearing are dogmatic abstractions that artificially reduce phenomena. Perception always includes meaning" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 84).

When we are frightened, fearful or angry might we 'shut down' and retreat into ourselves, lessening the ability for us to reach out or be open? How are we

able to arrive at the singularity of the meaning? Is the apprehension of absolute meaning feasible? Perhaps the best we can do, in consideration of individual historicity, is allow ourselves to arrive at an intended meaning in authentic intentional apprehension. In Radical Openness to the other we disregard fear and we disregard what we might hear in favour of opening ourselves to the voidness of *śūnyatā* in our pursuit of connection. In understanding the other. I look to the poetry within self and other, beyond the storied self.

The clouds begin to move…

The Radical Courage of Openness

With a desire to connect with the other we remain open to the intended meanings, open to the potential of the message. In attempting to consciously place ourselves in Radical Openness we place ourselves in a position of vulnerability—in allowing ourselves to be open, we might leave ourselves defenceless. Are not defences what words can be? When we think back to the moment in the Mirror, words were used to cover for our fragmentation, as much as the image provided by the Mirror. Our ego, the alienating edifice created from outside of us, through image and through words is built on the foundation of lost connection. The realisation that we were not one entity with our mothers is the birth of separateness and in our comprehension of separateness is the birth of Radical Isolation. We are in our isolation "so hidden by layer upon layer of worldly artefacts, each imbued with personal and collective meaning, that we experience only a world of everydayness, of routine activities, of the "they"" (Yalom, 1980, p. 358).

In looking beyond the everyday, is our Radical Isolation overcome by Radical Courage? We are an image projected upon our original selves, a shadow of our authenticity—how can we connect with others when we remain adrift from what we once were? If we are aware that we are a construct of words and images, a product of externality, then we have a starting point. We have a position whereby we can objectively look from outside of ourselves and begin to see transcendently through new eyes, embodying *Prajñāpāramitā* in *śūnyatā*. We gain a 'birds eye view' of our interactions as we develop the ability to stand outside of ourselves.

Are the clouds moving silently from the moon?

Our daily unconscious interactions leave us unable to Practise Receptance, in which we receive and accept the other in Radical Openness. Through a position of spatiality might we see the *locus* of the other, located in space and in relatedness, and move to decrease this proximity between us? In our egocentric situatedness in the register of the Symbolic are we closed to the poetry and authenticity of the other, while at the same time projecting our desires onto them? We close to input of the other in our Radical Isolation—are we able to listen to the words used by others in an attempt to connect with them? We appear to spend so much of our time and our lives chasing the affirmation of self that we turn away from others—in time, we forget how to connect, so consumed are we by our own desires. How might we access the other in an authentic way? Is it so difficult to perceive the authenticity of others because, as Husserl suggests, in apprehending the inner truth or essence of the Other we must know and respect that "essences differ from the objects to which they refer" (1931, p. 371).

In adopting a deeper understanding of the other, we become aware of our need for transference of ego—but for this change, we must be courageous. To part with the hard pursuit of *logos* is to let down our defences—we must be courageous in our striving for authenticity. To be authentic is to be vulnerable and our self-reflexive system of language is like a suit of armour—isolating yet protective. We remain concerned with the projection of desires and needs with this armour. Do we remain fearful of the possibility to be exposed again to a feeling of disunity with the original Other? To be authentic we must be courageous enough to part with structure and construction. We become faced with a choice, to remain protected and isolated, or allow ourselves to be vulnerable. A Radical Courage of Openness is required for Practising Receptance so that we might close the lacuna that exists between us, to apprehend their profound beauty.

I and Thou

I am drawn to the ideas of Buber in my attempts to illuminate the space existing between us. My hope is in our realisation of this divide between self and other, we might aspire to a greater authenticity through our Practising Receptance. With the realisation of authenticity a Radical Courage of Openness may lead to connection with others. In the words of Buber, "As experience, the world belongs to the primary word '*I-It'*. The primary word '*I-Thou'* establishes the world of relation" (1956, p. 45).

Buber suggests we essentially see the world from two viewpoints—the relationship between 'things' and us (*I-It*) and the relationship between others and us (*I-Thou*). I see the similarities between the words of Buber and the Lacanian Real—the formless, unseen that lies beyond the grasp of the Symbolic—the awareness of its nebulous existence is able to be grasped by us all, not by seeking, but by our awareness of the existence of '*I-Thou'*, in "The *Thou* meets me through grace — it is not found by seeking. The *Thou* meets me. But I step into direct relation with it" (Buber, 1956, p. 45).

I see a connection with Buber and Zen—in the consideration of *Thou*, we have an indescribable presence, described by Buber, yet illuminated by poetry. I find such illumination in Bashō,

A flash of lightning;

Through the darkness goes

The scream of a night heron

(in Matsuo and Aitken, 1978, p. 101)

The words describe a scene without the need for definite attachment—whoever reads these words by Bashō, and opens to them, becomes somehow transported from a self-dependent system of language and meaning—we are moved from ourselves and closer to something outside of ourselves. Are we the same? Just as poetry transports us through description of that which often evades words, are we also beyond the everydayness of language, somehow able to be captivated, enraptured?

How might we locate the *Thou* in relation to our current teacher-student paradigm? How can we guide our students towards self-validation, without the need for seeking outside of ourselves for the definition of us? How might we escape from our Radical Isolation wrought by our self-reflexive systems of language? How will our students be seen? As our desire for affirmation or validation increases, so does our desire for input from the Other—as we seek the affirmation by the Other and we seek escape from our isolation. In this strange paradoxical relationship we are drawn near to awareness of the '*I-Thou'*.

Standing outside looking in

> "Why don't we get an award like the smart kids? The teachers don't value our achievements." (Ned, 13 years old)

In developing our students' ability to become critically aware of information and themselves, they become developed in their ability to be more discerning to the ideas and words of others. From a position of being partially removed from the maze of 'me', we stand apart, potentially freed from our desires and motivations—can we develop the ability to look deeper into what it is that makes us who we believe we are? Consideration of the *locus* of self and other, in utility of Radical Courage and Radical Openness, compares to our understanding of our extimate Lacanian figuration maintained and perpetuated through our lives over time, in that we become critically aware of our situatedness. We have a topological understanding of self and other—a map of 'me' in relation to 'you', in which we also rise above the terrain to apprehend the distance between us.

In classrooms we attempt to forge relationships with our students because we care and because we are interested in them. It always strikes me that most students will be open to us being 'real' with them. Is it as simple as taking a deep interest in the other? Could Radical Courage in Radical Openness help to cross the lacuna between student and teacher as Other? Can our own authenticity help to change ideas of permanence—a 'me', which appears to be moulded by schools as Other?

> As a morning routine, I always talk to the boys as I see them in corridors, in the playground or in classrooms. It could be a simple "hi boys" in passing, a joke, or a more direct question—acknowledgement is key to apprehending them. I take an interest and over time, the boys understand this. Over time, these small building blocks of connection close the distance between us—no longer isolated individuals, there becomes something of a community in our openness towards each other. I wonder how many of our students long for acknowledgement by others, even in a simple way, and this validation through acknowledgement somehow gives them life. You can see it in their faces, sometimes very subtle and other times a glowing endorsement of being 'seen'.

In our consideration of how our isolating personal narrative sustains the 'me' that we live in each day, the *matheme*— $n \propto a$—of narrative and desire, discussed in Chapter 1 might become clearer. Can we see yet? Our narrative proportional to desire dictates to us in an ebb and flow that seems to guide our every movement. Our desire for validation decreases as the strength of our personal narrative increases—but we can never extinguish the drive, and so our lives are lived in an attempt to reconcile the imbalance between narrative and desire. In meditating on our construction by the input or words of the Other that continually strives for the pursuit of what is lost, we seek to retrieve the connection we held as an infant and we become better equipped to see how

language and narrative share an interdependent relationship. As Bruner writes, "there are probably only two ways to demystification. One uses the apparatus of explanation, of cause-and-effect, of logical entailment, and in its most refined form, mathematics" (1983, p. 204). To refer to the *matheme*—$n \propto a$—I attempt to demystify the relationship between narrative and desire and its effect on our figuration. More importantly, and perhaps central to our discussion, is the lack of words—might a simple formula, a *matheme*, present simplicity in form and avoid the confusion of words, while conveying meaning? My mind turns to different ways to find others—simpler in form, sparing in words, conveying deeper meanings.

Yūgen

Attempting to capture a deeper meaning of our students, in seeking authenticity through Practising Receptance, might become obscured by our own drive for affirmation—a constant striving to quell the lack within us, as we remain Radically Isolated. We look to change our actions to thinking, reasoning and reflecting.

In considering a greater depth behind what we perceive, we question the *locus* of the other and us. Might an increased awareness of self and others, in an awareness beyond words, situate us in Radical Openness in a position of increased vulnerability? Perhaps our lack of understanding of the other is attributable to our emphasis on the cognitive domain, the Cartesian *cogito*. In education, we focus our attention on learning and not simply being—we prioritise learning in discrete subject areas, over a situatedness of self in the

everyday. In Zen Buddhism, the principle of *Yūgen* expresses the profundity captured within non-being. Kamo no Chōmei describes the vanity and impermanence of life using a series of negatives in his writing to illuminate the essence of *yūgen*—essentially an absence, interpreted by the reader. *Yūgen* is an aesthetic principle, in which we experience "the return to the original ground of nature by entering into nature itself" (Chōmei, 1999, p. 146). *Yūgen*, expressed in descriptive poetry, appears to border on realism but harbours a radically contemplative stance that connects the author to a formless universal truth through the ability to compress many meanings into a single word (in Dōgen & Heine, 1997, p. 24).

Dōgen and Heine further our understanding of *yūgen*, the profound. Suggesting the aim of *yūgen* is to convey a "profound subjectivity through descriptive symbolism", the spontaneous linking of images illuminates a truth in the impermanence of nature—this realisation symbolises the enlightenment experience of a *kōan* whereby we forget the self and realise truth through all phenomena (1997, p. 25).

In meditation on *yūgen*, we find a term for the framing of the profound resulting directly from what we might suggest is true mind—a shedding of all that is superfluous. Might we use the idea of *yūgen* in our interactions with others by shedding the extimate and piercing the meaning of the other? If we reconfigure our understanding of dialogue as teacher and students, we adopt the spirit of interpretive and meditative haiku or *kōan*. Following ideas of interpretation, Nancy Hume's book *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture* tells us,

> If the term *yūgen* is etymologically analysed, it will be found that *yū* means deep, dim, or difficult to see, and that *gen*, originally describing

> the dark, profound, tranquil colour of the universe, refers to the Taoist concept of truth. (1995, p. 182)

In treating the Other as profound and ineffable we echo the words of Zen master Dōgen in studying the self, to forget the self and realise truth through all phenomena. We look another in the eyes and see the enigma that is the other—perhaps we begin to realise the universal truth of formless authenticity. In clear mind, we seek the truth of the other and of ourselves—the language of the heart, or authenticity, obscured by the realm of the Symbolic. "*Yūgen*, then is the beauty not merely of appearance but of the spirit; it is inner beauty manifesting itself outwards" (Hume, 1995, p. 182). My thoughts turn once more to apprehending our students in their formless authenticity, witnessing the profound beauty of that Other.

actus exercitus and *actus signatus*

As we discussed in my Prologue, St. Augustine wrote of the *actus signatus* representing a faulty interpretation of the inner world through words, as opposed to the *actus exercitus*—the language of the heart, of direct or authentic experience. St. Augustine's work helped Gadamer understand the revelation in a difference between translations of the word literally and interpretation of the text subjectively, showing a difference between the literal meaning of a word and its innermost meaning (in Bauer, 2012).

Do we see the Lacanian influence here? Can we observe the influence of the Symbolic and the Real—the Symbolic as *actus signatus* and the Real as *actus exercitus*? The entrance into the Symbolic necessitates a break from the Real so that we can never accurately put into words that which is indefinable. *Yūgen, śūnyatā*, kōan, haiku, the Real, *I* and *Thou* and Practising Receptance are attempts to grasp the ineffable, true mind, the language of the heart, our formless authenticity—the *actus exercitus*, all reflected in our interconnectedness and irradiated by Bashō,

Red-blossom plums—

Unseen love engendered

By the courtly blind

(2004, p. 86)

Our awareness of affirmation through words forever fails to represent our inner truth—our language of the heart, never understood or grasped by mind alone. Following the thoughts of Gadamer, "reaching an understanding in conversation presupposes that both partners are ready for it and are trying to recognise the full value of what is alien and opposed to them" (1975, p. 405).

Yet, how else can we convey our feelings, thoughts and ideas without these being lost in our limiting sphere of language, based on our own unique experiences? Perhaps it is our understanding of the process of disconnection between the *actus exercitus* and the *actus signatus* providing the understanding of us and for us. Our appreciation of the difference between the inner truth and the words attempting to convey this inner truth allows us great insight into the *locus* of the other and ourselves. In our understanding of the separation between word

and true mind, or true thought, we comprehend and apprehend the Other. We move further into Openness with others as we internalise these differences.

In haiku, *yūgen* attempts to illuminate the inner truth through words by guiding us towards something that we might all reveal, unique to each of us. Perhaps in our interactions with others we are compelled to ascertain their inner worlds and to move away from our reliance on the world of words, apprehending their Otherness in Practising Receptance and disregarding our notions of reliance on what we hear.

> My mind turns to a young student, Geoff, only 9-years-old, blessed with an amazing wit, kindness and a rare sense of giving to others. Geoff delights his classmates with his continuous jokes and happy nature. Unfortunately for Geoff, his talent for humour is deemed inappropriate at times in the classroom. His near constant attempts at perhaps eliciting responses from his fellow students, which more often than not are met with raucous success, has found Geoff in trouble over the years. Geoff is often found outside of class, having been sent there for 'going too far', not heeding the advice of the teacher to stop, or perhaps being unable to stop. As a student diagnosed on the autism spectrum, Geoff finds it difficult to read social situations, and so he finds himself unable to adhere to some social and classroom conventions. Often the result of his repeated 'indiscretions' of the Other is a confused and downcast look, alone on a wooden bench, sent outside of his classroom again, on the periphery of his peers—quite alone. I wonder what will happen to Geoff and the many students like him.

Can we move into the realm of the '*I-Thou'* by listening for the authenticity of students like Geoff? What would it take for us to cast aside the conventions of the societal Other and look to students like Geoff and embrace their authenticity?

In coming into Radical Openness with the other, we must have true mind, unclouded in our attempts to comprehend the language of the heart, or inner truth of clear mind. Sahn reminds us, "Clear mind is like the full moon in the sky. Sometimes clouds come and cover it, but the moon shines brightly. So don't worry about clear mind: it is always there. When thinking comes, it is behind clear mind" (1976, p. 52).

Disparity between the socially constructed self and the original 'real' self lies in our inability to transfer the independent systems of language and ideas each of us possesses to the other, perhaps in our fear of the 'non-self'. A concrete sense of self and that of others simplifies our lives—categorised and objectified. Essentially, we might understand 'real' and ineffable concepts and experiences, but we are unable to adequately convey exact representations to others, resulting in our inability to transfer ideas as we individually understand them. Our inability to connect with others in authenticity leaves us in Radical Isolation—can we find a way to bridge the gap forged through our unique apprehension of self, as an internalised narrative to fit with the societal Other? Can we release ourselves from a burden of externally layered desire for affirmation and step into a shared space in which we become open to the other? In bridging a divide between us, we become open to the other and to ourselves.

In Lacanian thinking, we have been developed through words and these words have become a 'not-me', covering an original authenticity—I consider that we remain in a position of Radical Isolation, unable to connect with the other. In our aloneness Radical Courage necessitates a need to 'step out' from ourselves, to try to free ourselves from the systems of language that have constructed us—again our question remains as how do we apprehend the truth of ourselves and of Others?

Ding an sich

Our authenticity reflects the Kantian notion of the '*thing in itself*', as outlined in Emmanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). In ideas reflected in Lacanian thinking our interactions with others are transcendentally ideal in that we experience others as based on ourselves—they are a 'not-real' or authentic selfhood according to us. We cannot truly experience others as they are in themselves and we can only truly experience ourselves as authentic selves. Sentiments of an inner truth are echoed by Kant, in the thing in itself or '*ding an sich'*, "The existence of the thing that appears is thereby not destroyed, as in genuine idealism, but it is only shown that we cannot possibly know it by the senses as it is in itself" (Kant, 1783/1950, p. 37).

We rely on our knowledge of a shared understanding of 'things' as they appear to us, whether it is a chair, a car or a pencil. Things are mere representations of what they 'really are', so we are divided on the precise notion of each of these 'things' but we know that they do exist.

> …and not only are the raindrops mere phenomena, but even their circular form, nay, the space itself through which they fall, is nothing in itself, but both are mere modifications or fundamental dispositions of our sensuous intuition, whilst the transcendental object remains for us utterly unknown. (Kant, 1952, p. 31)

These representations of things, contrasted to the 'real' Kantian transcendental properties, sees us at the intersection of Kant, Lacan, Gadamer, and Zen Buddhism, where we have objects as they appear to us and objects that exist

independently of us. How might we apprehend the reality of others and discern this reality from what we see? Buber states that we,

> …travel over the surface of things and experience them, extracting knowledge about their constitution—but the world is not presented to us by experiences alone. These present him only with a world composed of *It* and *He* and *She* and *It* again. Inner things or outer things, what are they but things and things! (1956, p. 44)

Any attempt to quantify others, removes us from the *Thou* of the other—the distilled presence of the Other, unable to be defined by words. Hegel further shows us a semblance of the '*I-Thou'* world, of entering into Otherness, as

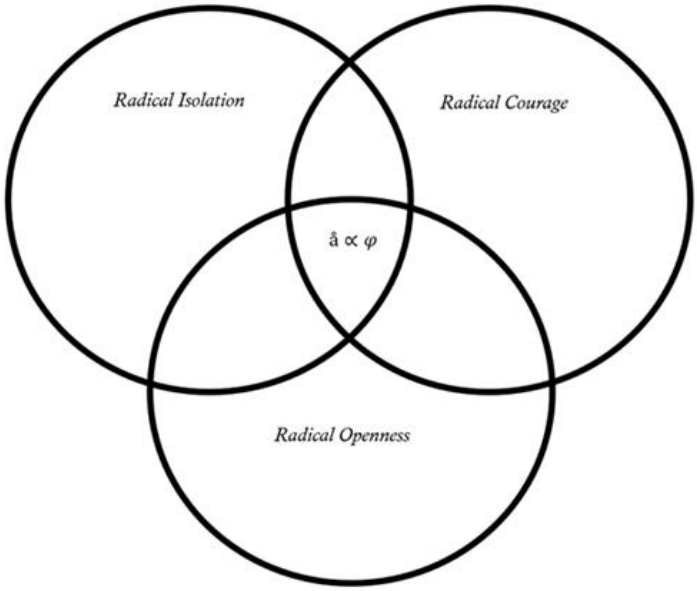
> each tears at the universal being and takes from it his own portion. This dissolution and singularization of the essence is precisely the moment of the doing and the self of all; it is the movement and soul of substance and resultant universal essence. (Hegel, 2001, p. 2)

In our attempts to define others, we reduce them to what they are not—perhaps a further alienation between us built upon the extimate construction of the ego, ignoring our shared formless authenticity again illuminated by Buber, who states "when *Thou* is spoken, there is no thing. *Thou* has no bounds. When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation" (1956, p. 44).

We fall into the world of '*I-It*' and remain removed from the sphere of '*I-Thou*'. The world of things, or the world of '*I-It*' is perhaps flawed but safe—we require Radical Courage to remove ourselves from the safety of 'things' and place ourselves in the authentic, vulnerable position of standing before the other. We seek authenticity, an escape from our Radical Isolation and an entrance into the world of '*I-Thou*' where we might escape our flawed system of language—to

be present with the Other. Placing ourselves in the position of an authentic existence with the other is an escape from our isolation, requiring Radical Courage—the reward is the Real, the language of the heart—a return to a state of beyond words and beyond signification. An entrance into the world of the '*I-Thou*' is an escape from our desire for affirmation or validation through words and an entry into the world where we are open and present with the Other. Critical to our relationship with the other is Practising Receptance, an idea I have briefly outlined, but to which I will now return to in greater depth.

Practising Receptance



Practising Receptance (Eaves, 2018)

Practising Receptance moves beyond simply receiving or accepting, as an action in thinking, as an intention towards openness to the other. We resist definition, allowing ourselves to be open to the *locus* of self and other, to apprehend the poetry of the Other disregarding notions of a simple, storied self.

Practising Receptance echoes one of the central concepts in Mahayana Buddhism of *upāya*, which "refers to the skills a Buddhist practitioner brings to bear to help them along the path that leads to the cessation of suffering" (Brackney, 2013, p. 316). Practising Receptance allows a greater understanding of the other in their profound beauty and uniqueness—we become closer to the liberation of ourselves and others in our comprehension of formlessness. In our openness, we take our stance in relation to the other, moving from our desire to quantify to a relationship of authenticity with them. In our Radical Openness to others and ourselves, we seek the veracity of the other in the *actus exercitus.*

Practising Receptance removes the impetus for validation and affirmation as we enter the sphere of connection once more—the connection lost to us from the original Other. We become able to move from the Radical Isolation we encounter in our use of language and into the light of Radical Openness—the formless authenticity obfuscated through our definition of others and of ourselves.

In stillness, the clouds move from the face of the moon once more.

Practising Receptance does not simply reflect others but also the nature in which we interact with others. I discern the *locus* of the self and other in Practising Receptance as a Zen-like way of thinking, of action in thinking,

allowing us to act in Reverence, in a proximal and spatial relationship to the other. In becoming open to others, can we gain a transcendence of self that irradiates the nature of where we are?

On a recent camp with Year 8, we travelled to Freycinet Peninsula on Tasmania's East Coast. This area contains the glorious Wineglass Bay, the image of which, taken from the lookout, adorns many postcards and tourism images. Our camp was five days' duration involving multi-day walks and rock climbing. On day 3 we walked over the saddle down to Wineglass Bay and to the very end of the beach to our campsite. The beach is pristine, with white sand and crystal water—it is a truly beautiful place. By the time we reached the campsite, it was relatively late in the day—we had walked for most of it. With the new experience of laden walking packs for most of the group, fatigue was apparent and the group was ready for dinner and bed. I set up my bivvy bag on an aptly named space colloquially known as the 'honeymoon suite'—a clearing a little away from the main campsite overlooking the bay, with a beautiful view. After dinner, I retired to this amazing space and lay down, looking up at the cloudless starry sky, drifting off to the sounds of the waves crashing on the sand—a perfect example of how words utterly fail to express what I was experiencing at that time. As I lay awake, in a perfect example of *yūgen,* my profound awareness of nature and comprehension of that moment was utterly beyond words. In the middle of the night I was awoken to the sound of the wind—quite a strong wind, which howled as it blew. I was soon asleep again, is the nature of sleeping out

usually a long sleep, interrupted due to being on the ground or becoming accustomed to a new environment. Before long I was awake again to the sound of the wind—I lay there peering out, up at the stars on this crystal clear night. I love the feeling of being so close to the world, open to the cool air and sounds around me—we seem to spend so much of our lives cut off from that which surrounds us. The boys were sleeping under tarpaulins and I wanted to make sure that the structures were still secure. As I switched on my head torch and readied myself to get up, I looked around and saw the trees were still, yet the sound of the wind persisted. I sat for a minute trying to make sense of what was around me. I turned my head and at that moment I knew at once what I was experiencing—not the wind at all, but the waves crashing along the beach, in a rhythm similar to gusting wind. The shape of the beach means that the waves are refracted—a steep and short drop near the water line, leaving the waves to crash directly onto the sand, and not peeling in sections like on a surf beach. This sound of the waves crashing and reverberating around the bay gave the illusion of a fierce wind. There was no wind at all.

The three registers or elements of thought are represented in Radical Courage, Radical Openness and Radical Isolation—all elements or registers interacting with one another. In Practising Receptance we require all three elements:

Radical Courage is a position in which we are prepared to step forth from ourselves, to connect with others beyond our self-reflexive systems of language. Radical Openness is a state of being in which we receive the other and remain open to different ways of being. Radical Isolation is the space from which we must emerge in order to connect with others. The three dimensions move around a central point of authenticity (å) and its relation to fear (φ), specifically our fear of a 'no-self', which sees us adhere to figuration founded in the Mirror and the words of the Other. In Practising Receptance we gain an understanding of the *locus* of self and other, and in this understanding we become able to move into Reverence with the Other. In Reverence we transcend the lacuna existing between us, witnessing the profound beauty of the Other, in deep respect with that Other.

Practising Receptance is built on the foundational layers of the '*I-Thou*' (1923 in Herberg, 1956), the Register Theory (Lacan, 1974), the inauthenticity of the Mirror, the construction by the Symbolic, and the presence of the Real in *śūnyatā.* In the awareness and then acceptance of an authentic and formless 'no-self', we simultaneously reject a self and accept that emptiness is wholeness. In our realisation and transcendence we become illuminated by the idea that others are the same—we are struck by the knowledge that people are constructed and living a life sustained by an extimate ego (Lacan, 2002, p. 4). We become compelled to move from our position of Radical Isolation and embrace the other as an empty-yet-whole being. We transcend the self-reflexive systems of language through realisation that language is limiting and self-referential, and in our understanding we embrace a radical hope in transcendent understanding of the Other.

As educators we look for that which resides within the other—a search for what lies beneath the façade of words. Seeking beneath the facade, looking to the *locus* of the other, leads us to inquire about the authenticity of ourselves and others where we may move beyond the transference and countertransference of Lacan—a literal shouting match between ourselves, always striving to be heard then validated, driven by our need for affirmation. In our need for validation, we do not listen or hear, so consumed are we by our need—our singular pursuit in life, chasing and striving for the attainment of a goal not of us. If we could just stop, slow down and listen, might we start to see what we are not, then apprehend who we could be? What might happen if we are able to stop and authentically listen to the other? In listening, I mean to be Radically Open. We consider others are constructed by words, constructed by others and therefore, driven by affirmation essentially by others. We might employ authenticity in order to seek beneath what is presented to us. With Radical Courage, might we stand before the other and open ourselves to them, and them to us? In our pursuit of openness with the other, we might find a way to escape our Radical Isolation and transcend our constructed selves so that we may truly see.

In the following chapter, I look to transcending ideas of a permanent self, to find the formless and unique beauty of the Other apprehending the poetry within us. I further explore ideas of suffering wrought by attachment in an attempt to alleviate our misguided thoughts of permanence and identity.

Chapter 6: In Reverence of Us

In this chapter, I look to transcending ideas of a permanent self, to find the formless and unique beauty of the Other—I disregard our ideas of a fixed sense of self to apprehend the poetry with us. I look to the notion of 'no-self' to release us from the suffering wrought by attachment to ideas of a static sense of self.

In remaining open to the potentiality of language creating an inauthentic self, and in continuing to make ourselves vulnerable through Practising Receptance, we enable the conditions to escape the Radical Isolation in which language holds us. We seek the *locus* of self and other, but what of wholeness? How can we, through our ability to be open to the other, alleviate our own Radical Isolation? How might we gain a transcendent knowledge of self and of others, unobscured by language and desire for affirmation? How might we release an attachment to a self not of our own contrivance? From infancy, we are driven by the lost connection, our feeling of somehow being empty and needing a return to wholeness—we strive to see and we strive to be seen.

We release our attachment to let go of suffering.

We have learned to objectify our world—to name and classify what we see, and that classification includes ourselves—we are named and seen by the original Other, then as we move through our lives, we are further named and classified. With objectification of ourselves comes attachment—we cling to a self

perhaps to be seen by others, as we seek to affirm the names that have been given to us. We seek the validation that drives us, for us to become what we have been constructed through words.

We seek to apprehend the profound beauty of the Other in the same way Kant speaks of art in that "it is something that lies beyond all concepts" (in Gadamer, 1975, p. 48). So, what are we then? Do we classify to fit within the world of the Symbolic Other, the system of language into which we are born? I received the following email from a parent of a Year 7 student.

> More importantly what became evident is the difficulty Cam has in forming a systematic approach to understand the subject matter and answer the requirements. So we would like a week extension to reinforce this process to Cam and provide him some confidence in the work he produces. His confidence has been hit in the last two weeks with being called 'thick', 'copy & paste', by other students and even talking about changing schools. "Please keep this in confidence." He will not want this known. Now Cam is a resilient boy and this name-calling is not new to him with the difficulties he has. HOWEVER this is an opportunity for us and his tutor to start placing the building blocks to develop his understanding and confidence. It will be a work in progress. Thanks in anticipation of your understanding. (Email, June 2017)

As I read, a number of themes present themselves—difficulty with work, lack of confidence and a plea for understanding. This raw and somewhat emotive language is a direct appeal to the other. These words represent vulnerability and openness that we do not usually utilise in our daily interactions, unless perhaps it is with a significant Other. There is an exception that invokes this kind of Radical Openness—an appeal to the other with regards to our children.

The words are emotive and strong. Capitals and text in bold are used to strengthen the ideas within the email. I wonder if it is the student in question who has internalised these labels, or it is the fear of the father? I wonder who the message is from and who is it really for? Is the email a Mirror of what happened to the father at school? Is it a desperate attempt by the father to change the apparent self as depicted of his son, into an alternate self (Lacan, 2002, p. 4)?

Subconsciously, are we so consumed by our extimate ego that we are unable to move into the space with others? Our words isolate us—from others and from ourselves. Does our language system reduce us and our interactions to a convenience that obscures what and where we are? In attempts to cross the lacuna between us, language seems to only prevent the connection with others, and lead us to greater isolation. We use language to be heard, but is there another way?

> Picture a room of 20 people, separately contained within glass cubicles, able to see one another, yet not hear anything but the sounds only the individual within each cubicle makes. In essence, we can only hear the language we make, but we can still see everyone else and they us. What is the answer to communication within this labyrinth of confinement, where the only voices we hear are our own? Do we begin to shout louder and louder, hoping that we will be heard by someone? We see the strained faces of others wanting to be heard, but we cannot hear. Do we move about the best we can in order to be seen? We see the movements of others but we cannot understand them and only glean the most basic of communication—a wave, perhaps a face of fear and frustration. Our first reaction is voice, such is our conditioning by the Mirror—always vocalising to be heard, as we return to the mode of the Other. What might happen if we stopped and instead of trying to be heard, listened in stillness? The production of language is of self, first and Other, second, perhaps no more

> than a transference. In stillness we comprehend self and other, perhaps beginning to draw the other closer to us. In stillness are we able to at least partially discard the effects of the Symbolic, to venture more deeply into an authentic or true self? What if all 20 people stood in stillness also—what would we see? What would we understand of the other?

As in our infancy, the Mirror reflects an ideal 'I' (Lacan, 2002, p. 4)—a self that covers our fragmentation, a self that covers what is authentically us. We learn to ignore what we once were and turn our attention to the reflection—the image we pursue, gazing outwards, in the hope that the image might provide security, safety or a feeling of wholeness once more. So, where does that leave us? We remain isolated. We search for the lost connection and we pursue affirmation to attempt to return to our original wholeness. Because of our isolation in language, we can never attain what we desire, and so we remain tethered to an artificial self. If only we could step away from ourselves and remove the coat of artificiality.

So what lies beneath this coat of artificiality? Karl Jaspers uses the term *Existenz,* to represent our fundamental centre, unique to each of us in a wordless comprehension of self. It is the way we comprehend ourselves in authenticity, as the root of each historical self. It is the possibility of the self, rejoining itself for a moment (Jaspers, 1997, p. 11). So, construction or figuration, as the building of layers upon layers of 'not-me', is what we might see as cloaking the authenticity or *Existenz* at its centre. But what of our connection to others? As we continue in our pursuit of authenticity, might we begin to grasp the ineffable enigma of the other in our increasing understanding of the *locus* of us? In understanding an authenticity of self, we might also comprehend the authenticity of Other—our

attempt to apprehend the topology of the other, leads us out of isolation and into a shared space with the other.

How can we negate the isolating effects of language—of the *actus signatus*, and move into the shared space of the '*I-Thou'?* We are so imbued with the world of knowledge and words—the world of things, the world of '*I-It'*, that we have learned to objectify and attach ourselves to a self. In seeking voidness of *śūnyatā,* the ultimate state of connection, we seek a state beyond words and an awareness of the ineffable universal truth embodied in *yūgen*. Perhaps we seek something similar to the original connection of infant and mother—a state of non-realisation of beginning and ending, and an unawareness of self. We existed in a state before the dualistic paradigm of words that construct us. In lessening the objectification of self, might we free ourselves, in part, from the ego created by the Other? In our understanding of the objectification of words and of us, can we move forwards, unencumbered by words that have created us? In the investigation of our objectification through words, we follow the idea of Gadamer in, "bracketing all positing of being" (1997, p. 246) and in bracketing assumptions of the word and ourselves we open ourselves to the possibilities of ourselves and our world through Radical Openness.

With Radical Openness, can we achieve the loss of constructed self, as we move into a state of Reverence? Practising Receptance is being authentically open with others, a state beyond words, a state without the need for knowledge of 'things'—of ourselves, others or anything else. My use of the term Receptance is reflected in the words of Les Todres (2007), who uses the term "unspecified openness" (Todres, 2007, p. 131). He illustrates the idea of losing the self as a fundamental nature of who we really are, as opposed to who we have learned to be. Todres, in echoing the Zen Buddhist paradigm, tells us that human existence has its essence in transcendence, and that we are being most ourselves when we

are lost from ourselves. And so in its fundamental nature, "human identity can thus never be finally objectified; it is essentially nothing" (Todres, 2007, p. 131).

We might look to Practising Receptance as a type of transcendence—transcendence as a means for achieving wholeness through an abandoned sense of self in which we cast off our composition. To become aware, to negate the construction of us, we need openness and courage to move from our situatedness in isolation. As we approach the notion of freedom through transcendence will we subconsciously cling to our cloaks of 'not-me'? Do we prefer the known to the unknown, at the expense of ourselves? Might freedom induce fear in us? In Practising Receptance we are afforded a move from our position of fear, which closes us off from ourselves and from others. Receptance allows us to embrace our empty yet whole selves, looking deeper to each of us in our search for the authenticity within us all.

The answer to our eternal searching for affirmation is encased within a paradox—through the attainment of nothingness are we able to achieve wholeness? Self-objectification is the result of our attempts to return to a state of wholeness, experienced as an infant—we say to ourselves "if I am this" or "if I am that", I will return to the state of happiness hidden within my subconscious driving my every action and interaction. In a pursuit of the concept of nothingness, Steven Rosen tells us that in self-negation we achieve wholeness,

> …it is not simple wholeness that would be achieved in realizing the absolute, but (w)holeness. The negative aspect of the absolute self is precisely what enables it to mediate the negativity of absolute nothingness. (2006, p. 80)

In our realisation of wholeness, in nothingness, we might also see that there is an absence as well as a presence—we face a dual action or process requiring the

realisation of loss of an absolute self in order to achieve a state of wholeness (Rosen, 2006, p. 80). To achieve wholeness, we learn an absence of self is dualistic, as wholeness is comprised of a realisation of 'not-self' or nothingness, and a 'lack of self'. We see these ideas reflected in the *actus signatus* and the *actus exercitus* in our comprehension of understanding a 'not-self' and a 'lack of self'.

Understanding a 'lack of self' is required for us to understand and avoid the utter nihilism of complete negation—we see that we have become objectified in our understanding of 'lack of self', an integral element in achieving the 'not-self'. Wholeness in nothingness is a critical and fundamental awareness of our construction through objectification, illuminated by Yalom, who states that in avoiding nihilism we must engage in the discovery of a life-meaning project that supports a life. After this discovery, we must forget our invention and persuade ourselves we have discovered this life-meaning project, and that it has existence independent of us (1996, p. 6).

Transcending self

We find the infinite through the finite—we gain access to the timeless through fleeting moments, giving us perspective and an ineffable sense of impermanence. To hold your young child, knowing they will one day be grown and gone, makes us hold them for a little longer.

Just as we hold our children, so are we holding on to our selves.

Just as we must let go of our children, so we must let go of our attachment to self.

Instead of pursuing the vacuum of self, might we look to a deep understanding of where we are enabling us to transcend the limitations of a fabricated self? We are made from the outside in, from our initial moments in the Mirror where we are presented with the image outside of ourselves with which to identify. Words are built upon the image—layer upon layer upon an original authenticity—an original formless me. The notion of a layered self highlights the process of objectification—an understanding of living through the words that have come to define us. It is in the loss of a self, which has essentially been imbued upon us, that we are able to be liberated in the understanding that we are fluid and ungraspable—truly 'not-selves'.

In understanding the 'not-self', we appeal to our sense of freedom reflected in our individual historicity, as unique individuals, yet we remain connected to one another through our shared state of authenticity or humanity. With freedom there remains the possibility of fear associated with the freedom to be—and so we find, even subconsciously, that perhaps it is much better to be defined and know who we are, than be exposed to what Kierkegaard saw as the anxiety-inducing notion of freedom.

> Anxiety is the 'dizziness of freedom', which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis, and freedom now looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. (1978, p. xi)

In our conception of wholeness, implicating a transcendence of a 'not-me', freedom from an inauthenticity, and selflessness, we might understand how the

freedom to simply 'be' might cause anxiety. Our worrying thoughts turn to the possibility of a void of selflessness, or utter absence—we are taught to be 'something', to aspire to be 'someone'. We cling tenaciously to something—the self, a lifeboat, from which we peer over the edge.

Schools are the successful machines for the manufacture and perpetuation of selves—in our classification and objectification of students, in many ways we decide for them who they are or who they might be. School provides another layer of the 'not-me'—the 'not-me' constructed through the results of interactions and formal assessments. To look objectively at this process of figuration through the external, it seems incredible that we appear to impact the lives of so many children with such disregard for the core sense of who they are, or who they feel they might be. In the case of a leaning towards a humanistic education, by placing children and their autonomy at the centre of the pedagogical framework, students themselves still have an inadequate understanding of their *locus* and that of others.

A potential lack of self is laden with many unanswered questions, requiring a kind of leap of faith. Many of us are not prepared to leap into the void of 'no-self'—we may fear the unknown more than the dissatisfaction of living inauthentically. To face the fear of the 'no-self', we embrace the Lacanian object-cause of desire (2002, p. 276), the root cause of a 'not-me', the extimate ego and the false foundation upon which we are built. Do we pursue the affirmation of the 'not-me', all the while validating the alienation of us? Might we see how the illumination of this process in an educational environment is crucial to the development of our children? Ronald Purser demonstrates the importance of the 'no-self'. Through embracing the fundamental lack, he says, by becoming groundless in body and mind, we become utterly grounded. From achieving this grounding, we reveal to ourselves that there has never been any lack, because

there has never been any self existing independently of the world (2011, p. 53). And so, we seek the other in *topos*, not *logos*.

In the interaction between Lacan and Zen Buddhism, Raul Moncayo, in his book, *The Signifier Pointing at the Moon: Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism,* illuminates the connection between these two practices,

> Zen teaching recommends a direct plunge into the Real itself through the experience and practice of meditation. For Zen Buddhism, signs, symbols and texts do not mediate self-realisation. (2012, p. 10)

As a result of self-objectification, an adherence to signs and symbols in the grasping to achieve an understanding of self, we strive to affirm the words that have been imbued upon us. We strive to become the One, through attachment to a self not of our making. I am drawn to the words of Issa in contemplating the nature of us,

home at last,
after years
of absence yet, the clouded moon
(in Ueda, 2004, p. 57)

Letting go

> I was fortunate enough to have an hour-long dialogue with a parent of one of the boys in my class yesterday. Dr M, a psychiatrist, was very happy to offer his time in exchange for a poorly made cup of tea. We discussed the effects of relationships with the mother on development of the self—what became clear

> to me was that this original bond, or lack thereof, is the cornerstone of well-integrated, functioning individuals. It is a central function of 'me', to become x or y, to fill the void of self, to make judgements about ourselves, based on these early interactions, and to affirm these judgements. We confront the essence of meaning by attempting to answer the question not of 'who am I?' but because of our experiences, fulfilling the assertion that 'I must be this'. In a sense, the existential dilemma seemed to be not finding out who we are but letting go of what we think we are—we delve deeper into the *locus* of each of us.

As an educator we undertake what Ricoeur calls transcendental reflection, in critically examining what we are receiving and to look beyond what is presented to us, "that is, an examination of the power of knowing" (1986, p. 17). We look to locate our students by looking deeply into the messages presented to us. Josselson further states the importance of Ricoeur's hermeneutics by distinguishing between "hermeneutics of faith which aims to restore meaning to a text and a hermeneutics of suspicion which attempts to decode meanings which are disguised" (2004, p. 1).

In adherence to the principle of searching beneath what is presented to us, we attempt to gain meaning and understanding of others from the words of others. In many ways we pursue an intellectual formulation of something much deeper than words can grasp. We find the *actus signatus* in the intellectual striving for the *actus exercitus*—that formulation of something too vast to comprehend. In our pursuit, we seek the enigma that is the other.

Objectification of others and ourselves attempts to reduce to words that which words can never convey—our independent systems of language that isolate us, and yet we are open to be literally made from the outside in. Our internalisation

of these words then create a disunity between what we seem to be and what we feel we are. We chase the affirmation of the 'not-me'— the 'not-me' of the words of others, while trying to reconcile the dissonance that we feel, unable to be put into words. Eric Fromm tells us, "One has to do away with the many constructs of the mind, which impede true insight" (1960, p. 119). We face a paradox of construction through words, yet isolation through words, in an attempt to define our indefinability. In the exploration of our humanity, we seek the *locus* of us as a reflection of our formless authenticity, not simply the 'who' as reflected in a simple storied self. In this exploration of our humanity in a topology of self, we seek our fleeting locus and ultimately, true insight.

In seeking an understanding of the *locus* of the other, returning to the email I received (p.184), can we see the drive of the father? His words perhaps driven by a diffuse potentiality of influences—did he find difficulty at school? Was he isolated? I vividly remember the father and the mother at parent-teacher night—opposite me were three chairs for the possibility of both parents and their son to all attend an interview together. Some choose to bring their son, some come as a couple and some come as individuals. The parents of Cam chose to sit with the third chair between them—the absence of warmth towards each other was evident to me from their interactions, or lack thereof. I wonder why.

The tone of the email suggests a seriousness that belies expectations of Year 7—the boys are still very young, with most starting at 12 years of age. The involvement of a tutor, someone employed by the family to provide assistance with homework and set more activities in the evenings, illustrates the focus of which Cam's energies are meant to be directed. I cast my mind back to the parent-teacher evening and wonder what other influences have created this email. In the spirit of Ricoeur (1986), it is not usually as things are presented to

us, but in our ability to look deeper that might reveal something to us—we cannot simply accept words as they are presented to us, such is their long and wrought journey from one to the other.

> Years ago, I taught a boy who was deliberately placed in my class due to a 'high maintenance' parent. Specifically, his mother was a very frequent visitor to the school. Nothing seemed good enough for her son, James, and she made sure we all knew about it. At the mention of her name, Kate, in the staff room, eyes would invariably roll and derogatory comments would soon follow. Yes, she was a frequent visitor to the school, but her tone was never aggressive or accusatory. There was something more to what Kate had been judged to be.
>
> One day, at an athletics carnival, Kate and I talked at length about a range of topics—she was usually interested in a chat. Many parents attend these events and it often turns out to be an informal 'parent-teacher interview' with those who attend. The origin of the conversation escapes me, but after a while it turned to our children—she asked how my children were—twins born prematurely and Kate being a ICU (Intensive Care Unit) nurse, had a great deal of experience with similar situations. She immediately softened in this turn of conversation. After a while our dialogue turned to James, but essentially, it was about her. Kate explained that after many failed pregnancies and almost giving up hope of having children, she became pregnant with James. Kate spoke to me of the anxiety she experienced, hoping she would not lose this baby as she had with all the previous ones. It soon became apparent to me that Kate was deeply traumatised by her experiences—my attitude towards her changed immediately. I remember feeling a literal change in the way I apprehended Kate—in my understanding of her *locus*, I was able to step forward into greater openness with her.

Had I experienced a vulnerability and Radical Openness in moving into a space with the Other? In this proximity, the enigma of the other is less obscured,

understood through an '*I-Thou'* relatedness. Others had judged Kate as overbearing, intense and very demanding. Had others seen her in a position of fixed isolation? Isolation through language, thoughts and experiences, closes us to the other and closes us to the topology of the other, denying them any notion of fluidity. We might suggest that the staff did not have the Radical Courage to open themselves to other possibilities that might have been present. In the spirit of both Practising Receptance and hermeneutic demystification (Josselson, 2004), I was able to remain open to the other, and in doing so, Kate was with me. The result of this shared openness was a shared understanding—not judgement or opinion, but listening and receiving of the words, and seeing beyond words, to the message of the other. In listening, we are Radically Open to the other and with Practising Receptance we seek beneath what is presented to us, beyond the words that we hear. In opening ourselves to the other with Radical Courage to a possible intention of the other, rather than an acceptance of language, we move more closely into the sphere of the other, to apprehend Otherness. We gain a greater understanding of the *locus* of the other in our Radical Openness, moving more closely towards Reverence, towards a deep respect of the Other, locating them briefly in a topology of fluidity and indeterminacy.

We oversimplify our interactions in the assumption that these oversimplifications will fit our system of signifiers—always from Buber's '*I-It'* relationship. Our attempts to find sense in the world through classification and control sees us reduce and define 'things' including others. In our relationships and individually, we are heavily reliant on the words that provide relief for our lack of understanding—we operate from the position of the Lacanian *méconnaissance* (1968, p. xv), a misunderstanding of 'me' as imbued externally—the misunderstanding of us.

In the acceptance of a 'no-self', we reject notions of a constructed self, accepting that emptiness is wholeness and in our apprehension of the fluidity of self and others, we transcend thoughts of reduction and classification—we become aware of, and so, impervious to the construction by others. We become compelled to move from our position of Radical Isolation and embrace the other as an empty-yet-whole being. In moving from the unconscious construction of self, to an awareness of our incomplete completeness, are we removed from the yoke of desire? By embracing the voidness of *śūnyatā*, do we become released and emancipated?

Further illustrating the idea of construction by others, at school we have a specialist centre for the support of students deemed to be 'at risk' academically. These students, identified by either a psychologist's report or a standardised literacy or numeracy test are, in many ways, defined by a score and classified accordingly. When these boys are 'identified' they enter a stream of students needing 'support' and so, several times a week they are removed from classes to attend small group support based on scores, advice and the ideas of others.

Is there is a loss of agency in the students and a building of narrative by others? In turn, is the narrative internalised by the boys themselves and does their belief in insufficiency become a part of who they are? We can see that they become constructed by our words, and use these words as their own, the words of the Other. Do these boys see themselves as the ones needing help? Do they feel safer because of the help? In our well-intentioned actions, do we change a position of potential autonomy to dependency? Or, in our actions, do we assist in the building of a more robust narrative?

Ideas of an internalisation of a negative narrative illustrate the concept of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1972), which is linked to constant failure, "Constant failure may perpetuate learned helplessness rather than self-efficacy" (Seligman, 1972; Marshak, Seligman & Prezant, 1999, p. 74). Do the boys fail to reach the ideal of the Other, as presented to them, failing to apprehend the desire of the Other, even when they know what the ideal is?

Can we see that the concept of internalised failure damages our sense of self? In our pursuit of the ideal, we become tied to the idea of being defined by others, and powerless, particularly as a young person. Does our internalised narrative as a response to a perceived failure change our sense of self? In these boys, I see a living embodiment of negative construction by the Other and as a result, these young men cannot wait to leave school. Imagine the courage needed by a 10-year-old, facing this daily reality. Narrative and the desire for affirmation become a clear and driving force for the individual—is how we view ourselves based on the strength of our desire for affirmation? We remain open to the influence of others, seeking the affirmation and validation of us.

Attachment to an insufficient sense of self—I cannot comprehend the suffering wrought by this.

In our conception of the relationship between narrative and desire, we leave no space for the alleviation of a potentially cyclical nature of these two elements. That is, the greater our need for affirmation, the more open we are to a change in narrative. If we have a constant sense of self, then might we suggest our openness to narrative is lessened by our decreased need for affirmation? In either

case, whether our sense of self is seemingly stable or not, there are two issues—one is that the nature of narrative and desire are in constant interaction with the other, much like a seesaw—as one rises, the other falls—and secondly, a sense of self might be the actual issue at hand. Like the seesaw in the analogy of self and narrative, might we seek balance, in horizontal alignment, negating the need for both self and narrative? Can we ask ourselves the question, 'ought we negate the need for self and narrative?' Is this question possible?

What we experience in our Radical Isolation and our illumination through Practising Receptance is a deepening of our ability to look to the poetry within the other and disregard notions of a simple, storied self. Gadamer asks us,

> In our society, which is increasingly ruled by anonymous mechanisms and where the word no longer creates direct communication, the question arises: what power and what possibilities can the art of words, poetry, still have? (1992, p. 73).

In pursuing Gadamer's question, we turn to the inherent meanings within the poetry of us. Can we overcome the subjective, relative, limitations that construct us, and in some ways, free ourselves from the realms of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and return to a state of 'before construction' or authenticity as in the Real or *śūnyatā*? The relativity and subjectivity of individuality might come at a cost of isolation from our fellow humans—as unique beings, with our own system of perception and understanding of language, we celebrate our status as distinct, but the cost might be in our isolation because of our subjectivity. In van Manen's *Phenomenology of Practice*, I find support for the idea of Radical Isolation in his exposition of Hegel's predicament, which states, language universalises what it describes and what is experienced at the moment of the "here and now is

so personal and so particular that it can never be grasped as genuine knowledge" (2014, p. 83).

In following from the idea of language universalising, while at the same time isolating, we pursue the affirmation of a misrecognition of me (Lacan, 2002, p. 294) through language. Our internalised story about who we are is a result of this pursuit and yet we do not seem to consider that others are the same as we are—bound to a subjective life where the only true relevance or knowledge relates directly to us, in isolation. In the pursuit of an affirmed self, built on the words of others, we disconnect ourselves from others. Can we consider the notion of a 'no-self' as wholeness, in an attempt to circumvent the limiting, universalising and isolating effects of language? This view places us in a topology as already whole or already affirmed, in a state of completeness, which we unlearn through the pursuit of the extimate ego. Our current conception of self sees us refer to 'no-self' as emptiness, a negative, and this places us in the position of a drive for the affirmation, or otherwise, of a self that is foreign to who we might be. A reversal of our current mode of thinking might see us negate our inherent negativity founded in absence—a 'no-self' is not a lack, but a wholeness.

'No-self' as wholeness

We practise Receptance for a potential transcendence of desire, and conversely, narrative. We seek to free others and ourselves from limited and fixed ways of thinking, founded in the objectification of us all—in our objectification, we adhere to a self and we cling. As we cling to any notion of a fixed self, we suffer in the desire to affirm what we believe we are or should be. We are so much

more than the cyclical nature of narrative and desire, trapped within a paradigm of seeking affirmation in response to our constructed selves. Practising Receptance we are able to remain open to others and free ourselves, in that, we avoid the aspirational 'ideal self' as our wholeness because our 'no-self' dictates that we are already ideal. To propose narrative is proportional to desire, we introduce Receptance to a more 'complete' equation that in an interesting perspective is both an explanation and an irony.

The formula is an illustration of who we are, or who we might be—a freeing of self as dictated by desire for affirmation, and moving to a position of 'no-self'. The irony is, in my suggestion of a 'no-self'—in an antithesis to construction and prescription, I have used a mathematical formula to assist in the definition of my ideas, in the vein of Lacanian *matheme*—an attempted definition of that which might not be defined,

$$I \therefore f[in(r) - in(n)]$$

The equation reads, 'I am because of the function of, the influence of Receptance minus the influence of narrative'. The formula reflects a changeable *locus* of us, as the influence of our narrative is countered by our ability to practise Receptance. In the representation of a mathematical formula, I find it ironic that such a definitive explanation of our *locus* can be expressed at all, but mathematics represents a kind of purity of meaning. In limiting our interpretation, the emphasis changes from who we are to where we currently are—a change from *logos* to *topos*. My intent is that through the use of this formula we might see more clearly to apprehend the spatiality of self and other.

To relate this invented *matheme* to our students, we might look to school in the construction of a self, through the narrow paradigm of the ideal, holding an academic mirror before us to reflect a model student. The model student is a further layer upon our authenticity that we are asked to attain—a further

construction both aspirational and external, in which we move further way from others and ourselves. We might find that school forces us to adopt a sense of false and separate self.

> Ben, a student many would judge in the current objectifying paradigm as academically challenged, constantly felt the pressure to perform well above what he showed in assessments. He was a quiet and shy lad, seemed very nervous, and under pressure a lot of the time. I often tried to lighten the mood, and try to demonstrate to Ben that life need not be so serious, but to my dismay, I was usually not particularly successful. One day, in a quiet time of reflection, I asked the boys to write a small paragraph on their thoughts about the recent reports that had been sent home. This was Ben's response,
>
> "My parents are quite strict with my school marks, and they're always telling me they work their butts off to send me here, and they expect a lot of me but I don't always deliver. B's and up is the standard to be happy with, and I'm not giving them that, and it affects my home life because I get grounded. So in term 3 and term 4 you can expect a lot more from me."

At once this short piece confirmed what I had thought to be the case—Ben appeared to be affected by his desire to try to apprehend an ideal self as presented by school as Other. In his pursuit of this ideal and adopting a narrative fuelled by the lack of affirmation, Ben felt pressure from his parents to 'perform' and fear the punitive measures in place if expectations were unmet. The failure to access what he thought was expected of him was leading to a narrative of failure—this narrative was apparent to all who interacted with him, in his verbal and non-verbal language—hunched shoulders, dropped head and a striking absence of joy. I wanted to remove Ben from this isolation, to help him understand that there was so much more than test results and reports to be concerned about. It is

difficult, however, when this message is incongruent with that of the self. Ben's story reminded me of Rilke's haunting words,

> *It is a picked tree: through limbs which once bore you fruit, a void shows as though made of the days still to arrive --, days I hardly recognize.*
>
> *(1990, p. 26)*

We can also see a similar negativity in very high achieving students.

> One such student, Ken, who helped me in devising the mathematical formula shown above is now in Year 11, but has been undertaking University level mathematics for several years now. He is a serious and driven student. I sometimes feel concerned that his narrative is also consumed by the narrow paradigm of academic success—as a result he forgoes most other things we might deem as important—friendships, parties, and generally having fun. Whenever I see him, I always try to lighten the mood with Ken, whether it is to poke fun at him or myself—it doesn't really matter, only that he sees that there are other ways of being.

In many ways, Practising Receptance illuminates our potentiality of wholeness or openness, whereas narrative illustrates our position of figuration—layering over an original authenticity by words and by others. The mathematical equation, or *matheme*, attempts to show that we are able to discard notions of a 'not-self' and open ourselves in a way that transcends the world of 'things' and classification and words. It is a further deliberate irony in the way that a formula is used to illustrate the undefinable nature of us, perhaps helping to show that we cling to words and a construction of us because it is safe. In many ways, we remain attached to the world of '*I-It'* because perhaps this simplistic categorisation and objectification of things gives us a feeling of control or safety.

When we are non-defined, we are free to choose and perhaps happy to simply 'be'. We might feel anxiety in freedom because we feel we are faced with a choice in which we might succeed or fail—but we cannot approach the self with this limiting and dualistic paradigm—in true or authentic existence, we simply are. In sentiments illustrated by Suzuki, he says, "What appears from emptiness is true existence…" (2011, p. 10),

> … we realise that everything we see is a part of emptiness, we can have no attachment to any existence; we realise that everything is just a tentative form and colour. (p.103)

Disconnected from the emptiness of things is perhaps being disconnected from others. Can we suggest that this type of thinking or mind is a result of inhabiting the realm of the Lacanian Symbolic and the Imaginary registers—the world of words, communication with others and visions of an 'ideal self'? Instead, do we look to the Zen conception of 'big mind' in a way for us to examine a comparison with the Lacanian Real (1974, p. 7)? Suzuki says, "Before we were born we had no feeling; we were one with the universe. This is called 'mind only' or 'essence of mind' or 'big mind'" (2011, p. 128). However, we become separated from this unification and,

> as water falling from the waterfall is separated by the wind and rocks, then we have feeling. You attach to the feeling you have without just how this kind of feeling is created. When you do not realise that you are one with the river, or one with the universe, you have fear. (p. 83)

We are taught to have a disconnected mind and not 'big mind'—we close off our connections with the world and to others, and instead concentrate on the manufactured edifice of self. Our fear dictates to us and we cling to words in the hope that they may return us to a sense of wholeness—our desire for affirmation

central to our fruitless and painful search for this state of 'big mind'. In the same way that 'big mind' reflects the idea of '*I-Thou'* and Practising Receptance, we seek connection and authenticity—we strive to be open to others and ourselves. So much seems to prevent us from our ability to ascertain this state of being—we strive to reach across the lacuna, to embrace the Other, but we don't know how. We fear openness, we fear our authenticity and we fear challenging the assumptions and constructions of us. Compounding our problem is the issue that we are unaware of our construction, and so, again following Suzuki, "You cannot say, 'this is my self, my small mind, or my limited mind, and that is big mind'. That is limiting yourself, restricting your true mind, objectifying your mind" (2011, p. 128).

Can we see the relationship between Lacan and Zen, and more specifically the Symbolic and the Real? The narrative that we define as self is limiting to us—in the tradition of Zen, can we look instead to Practising Receptance or 'big mind'? "If you reflect on yourself, that self is not your true self any more. You cannot project yourself as some objective thing to think about" (Suzuki, 2011, p. 128).

In this way, in our knowledge of objectification of mind, we might avoid seeking the projection of a 'self', and instead listen to myriad ways in which self and others have been made—to shut out the noise of construction, to critically reflect on the *locus* of self and other. Once we begin to search for a self, we become limited by the very words that have created us—we leave the '*I-Thou*' state of being and enter the '*I-It*', attempting to name, classify and capture—attempts to contain a sense of self is limiting and objectifying. Lacan suggests that communication implies reference to *llanguage*—the language of the unconscious, specific to each of us, "I write with two l's to designate what each

of us deals with, our so called mother tongue (*lalangue dite maternelle*), which isn't called that by accident" (1975, p. 138).

We watch the moon as it shines brightly upon us.

In our attempts to classify ourselves we fall into dualistic modes of thought where we must be or must not be, in accordance with the original words of the Other. In Practising Receptance we open ourselves fully, without regard to a sense of self, moving from isolation, into openness, with courage. We might literally give ourselves up, or give up the preconceived ideas we have of ourselves, and this is no small feat, considering the environment of school we are constructed within. We generally fall into the category of 'clever' or 'not clever', and so to return to our authenticity, and to enter into Receptance, we must cast aside notions of self and, with this, our dualistic ideas that fuel this sense of self, "to give up ourselves means to give up our dualistic ideas" (Suzuki, 2011, p. 28).

Śūnyatā Transcending Fear

Construction through language necessitates separation from our fellow humans—we are Radically Isolated by them and from them. As we approach perhaps a poetic understanding of the other, we might start to bridge the divide that exists between us, to see their inner authenticity, to gain access to true mind. Gadamer persists in asking us, "But is the poetic word thereby truly a reporting? Or can one demonstrate that even today one can still build a lasting image out of words, which is not passé but present and forever" (1992, p. 74)?

We are part of a subjective reality, interpreted from an egocentric position where we each have a system of individualised signifiers relating to transcendent objects, including others, which only have absolute relevance for the individual. How do we access the other? How do we move into the space of the Other? How do we apprehend that which "Rilke once wrote concerning his relation to God: 'There is an indescribable discretion between us'" (in Gadamer, 1992, p. 74).

In the traditions of Zen Buddhism, we seek the clarity required from this seeming paradox—a paradox of construction through words, yet isolation through words—in an attempt to define our indefinability. In the exploration of our humanity, we seek the *locus* of self and other. We seek the transcendence that, through the openness to ourselves and to others, shines a light on the nature of us all. Suzuki tells us,

> You are living in this world as one individual, but before you take the form of a human being, you are already there, always there. We are always here. Do you understand? You think before you were born you were not here. But how is it possible for you to appear in this world, when there is no you? If you understand this ultimate fact, there is no fear. (2011, p. 46)

This is precisely a point of alignment between Lacanian thinking and Zen thinking. And here, we encounter the problem of fear—fear of what is unknown, fear of communication, with others and ourselves, fear of being misunderstood, and the original fear of separation with the original Other—the mother. In Practising Receptance we require Radical Openness and Radical Courage. In Radical Openness we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, and in Radical Courage we aspire to overcome this fear of vulnerability. Only then are we able to move

from our Radical Isolation—the commonality between the elements of Receptance is fear. In fully grasping the notion of fear, in looking at Practising Receptance, we might critically and fundamentally re-evaluate the processes involved in the formation of an 'I'.

Let us suggest now that in the centre of Practising Receptance there is an axiomatic relationship between authenticity and fear. Indeed, for the model to make sense, fear is a fundamental part of our *locus*:

$$\varphi \propto å$$

The equation suggests that through the proportional relationship between fear (φ) and authenticity (å), our sense of self waxes and wanes, and so does our relationships with others. In fear, we lack the courage to become Radically Open to the other—we withdraw into a self. We withdraw into the shell of figuration—an inauthentic but safe fabrication of us. What influences fear? What makes us fearful?

In my story of Ben, I often tried to lighten the mood, to try to demonstrate that life need not be so serious, but Ben was fearful—fearful of not living up to expectations, potential failure and fearful of the message this could make. In my story of Kate, she was so fearful of loss—she hung on so tightly to her son, that all anyone else could see was an overbearing parent. In the email from Cam's father, he was so fearful for his son—was it his own fear? What was he fearful of? In the email from Den's parents, so aggressive and accusatory, all I read was fear in their voices. And what about Larry, who we met outside the bookstore in Chapter 1? Was he afraid of not living up to expectations, perhaps of the teachers and perhaps of his peers? In the end, did his fear drive him away? If we just take the time to look, we become closer to seeing into the eyes of the enigmatic other.

If the influence of fear is too great, we become unable draw on courage and openness to transcend self—we become caught in Radical Isolation, vulnerable to the words of others.

Reverence

Practising Receptance allows us to see the other by closing the space between us. Profound beauty discloses itself, authenticity revealed, often in fleeting and striking moments, under a cloudless sky.

> In reflecting on my teaching journey, from the first days of Kindergarten to the final exams of Year 12, there is a striking commonality between the hundreds of boys I have taught, some over several year levels. In moments, light is captured in their eyes as very young boys—the spark of becoming, eager for life. Twenty bright young faces looking towards me, sitting on the mat, listening to a story—clear and bright eyes, full of hope and promise, an embodiment of potentiality. These are moments realised in profound beauty and those who love teaching, as I do, will recognise such moments. Those who are new to teaching will be struck by these moments when they occur—we must always remain open to the other, to revere them. In the end, words fail to breach the lacuna between authentic experience and the *actus signatus*—instead we become aware of our connection to a formless universal truth.

In Reverence words are unnecessary—they detract from the connection allowing us to see the profound beauty of the Other and of ourselves. As educators, we seek the light of the Other—by moving into a shared space providing the illumination of profound beauty. In Reverence we gain a brief

vision of the man these boys will become or the child they were—a flickering of momentary, eternal truth. In these moments of authenticity, of captive reality, we are driven, not by our own lack but by the desire to bridge the lacuna once more—to enter into the shared space with the Other. We are forever trying to see that light of the Other, which to me, is the enduring essence of education. In Practising Receptance we attempt to negate fear that keeps us in isolation, moving towards the sphere of the Other, in Reverence.

In the spirit of Zen thinking, we are able to achieve this state of authenticity, of openness and of empty-yet-wholeness, in Reverence—as this state of being already resides within all of us. We have seen the mother as the source of wholeness, as is well-founded in psychoanalytic thinking, but perhaps, in accordance with the thoughts of Todres (2007), it is not the unity with the mother at the centre of our identity, but the undivided nature of our nothingness that we lost in the manufacture of us. Do we yearn to catch these glimpses of our undivided nature? Is that what we witness in the profound beauty of the Other?

Words are stones, cast into a pond, defining our self-reflexive system of language—ripples are the interpreted or potential meanings, spreading outwards to others. Meaning is never definite or absolute, only our own. The pond remains nothingness and wholeness already present interrupted by our words—we might look into the pond and see ourselves. Stones obscure the clarity that is already present. We have learned to not be—are we are born whole and learn otherwise?

In our Reverence of the Other we experience a loss of attachment to a constructed ego, a loss of the drive for affirmation. In Practising Receptance for

understanding our fundamental critical awareness of the process of 'selflessness', we gain a transcendent awareness of ourselves and of others. We understand that there is no fixed identity and no fixed narrative—we become liberated through the advent of empty-yet-whole selves, in the knowledge that our lives are fluid and not fixed. "Because each existence is in constant change, there is no abiding self. In fact, the self-nature of each existence is nothing but change itself, the self-nature of all existence" (Suzuki, 1970, p. 91).

To bridge the lacuna, to enter into Reverence with the other we see into the eyes of the Other. We witness the *locus* of the Other, we see beyond the enigma of the other and we negate the need for objectification and clinging to a self—we recognise the empty-yet-whole nature and formless truth of us. In overcoming fear preventing us from the sphere of the other, we become illuminated as we close the space between us—only now can we see the profound beauty of that Other.

Chapter 7: The Profound Beauty of us

In this final chapter, we look to the empty self as wholeness in an exploration of the Zen concept of *Mu-shin*, recognising our empty-yet-whole nature and formless truth, negating our need for objectification and attachment to a self. In understanding fear as a central element in preventing us from realising authenticity, we incandesce as we yearn to see the pure light within the Other and in our intentionality towards illumination we move closer to apprehending Others, perhaps understanding there is no real space between us, only that which is imposed through discourse.

In embracing Zen Buddhist traditions, we become aware of the reductionist ideals that drive education—measurement, categorisation, objectification and ultimately isolation from others. In Practising Receptance we look to the other in genuine Reverence, compelling us to see them as they are, in authenticity. Seeing others through simplistic means maintains the distance between us, so I meditate on whether it is the thought of apprehending what is real, that induces fear in us. Do we see the control and fear that drives our discourse? Leighton tells us Zen is based on soteriological aims, removed from the current worldview of Newtonian objectifications, the same worldview that clouds our attitudes (2007, p. 3) and keeps us separate. In asking what drives our quest for salvation, could there be a

better reason than the affirmation of authenticity and utter emancipation of our children? To embrace a liberation so complete for our students becomes horizoned through ideas contained within Zen—I look to a philosophy of completeness and coherence, perhaps to be ushered in by the turning of the educational tide.

Because of our profound and utter separateness experienced in education, I feel a moral imperative to illuminate ways in which we may act differently. By adopting teachings of Buddhism, educators might embody the spirit of "He Who Observes the Sounds of the World (Avalokiteśvara)" (Kumārajīva, 1976, p. 1), of the *Lotus Sutra*, to reach out to our students and to embrace their Otherness. As we apprehend our students, we understand our situatedness as Other, within the realm of the Symbolic. Lacan tells us, "The status of knowledge implies as such that there already is knowledge, that it is in the Other, and that it is to be acquired (*a prendre*). That is why it is related to learning (*fait d'apprendre*)" (1975, p. 96).

Reflection

How can we abandon our constructed selves, considering we are even aware of our construction? The idea of clinging to a self is highlighted by R.D Laing in *The Divided Self* through his conception of 'ontological security', in that we adhere to a central sense of identity (1960, p. 39). Laing raises the question of whether we utilise the idea of security in order to support us, as the alternative might be a nihilistic void of 'no-self', which most of us may not be prepared to confront.

Responding to the notion of 'no-self' might be a protestation of the fact that, I like being person X or Y. We find ourselves associated with events or skills in which we are able to classify and neatly ascribe meaning to others and ourselves. But, surely the notion of a solid and robust self, by definition, limits us, in our unlimited definition? If we are person X or person Y, then might this naturally preclude us from also being person Z? Can we really choose? Clinging to a constructed identity is the pursuit of affirmation of a self that is not ours, and perhaps an adherence to safety.

In our conception of the '*I-It'* we move into a world of 'things'—the 'self' becomes a disconnected 'thing'. Adherence to the sense of self, results in Radical Isolation—we cling to our 'me' and defend our boundaries of self. The who of us is built on the foundations of misrepresentation, never questioning the how of us. In clinging to our misrepresentation, we might embrace nihilistic thought and negativity, but this belies our fortitude—to be closed to a transcendent self does not reflect the inherent beauty of us. In the ideas of Camus, might we seek the undermining of us, to radically depart from our construction? To mine out what lies beneath? Camus says, "Beginning to think is beginning to be undermined" (1991, p. 2).

To be aware of our construction, to seek our own undermining, is to place ourselves in the sphere of Radical Courage. Here we move from our situatedness in isolation and we become immersed in the world of the '*I-Thou'*. We turn our attention outwards and inwards simultaneously—by embracing our inherent nothingness, in stillness, we acknowledge our wholeness, and for our children, their unlearning is significant because of the objectification of self. In these words of Rilke, our journey is illuminated,

Even to walk the road there seemed monstrous to him, an enactment, a test!

(1990, p. 122)

Adherence to the 'one way' of doing in schools provides a narrative that layers upon our authenticity—the path to success is narrow within the walls of the classroom. We are taught the one way to achieve a result in mathematics, based on a singular algorithm. We are taught the one way to write a report or to craft an essay, based on a singular template.

> He will be asked to write compositions and perform improvisations under the same conditions: he must use the words and turns of phrase in the book to construct his sentences; he must show, in the book, the facts on which his reasoning is based. In short, the master must be able to verify in the book, the materiality of everything the student says. (Rancière, 1991, p. 20)

Rancière describes this as the explicative order and distinguishes it from the possibilities of emancipatory education. Such a limiting and traditional view of explicit acceptability must also affect our sense of self. Specific and unwavering parameters for success, limits opportunities for affirmation by the Other. Desire is operational in both the student and the teacher—through the students, the desire to be affirmed is in the adherence to the 'one way', and through the teacher, the desire to be affirmed is in the students' adhering to the methods set out for them to follow. We remain Radically Isolated.

Still we cling and we attach. So we also suffer.

Language and desire

Bruner illustrates the significance of language in the classroom by directing us to the understanding that language, "can never be neutral, that it imposes a point of view not only about the world to which it refers but towards the use of mind in respect of this world" (1986, p. 121). Language is always subjective, always dependent on the self from which words emanate and so language leaves us alone, Radically Isolated. We return to the central tenet of Zen in the possibility of using language to counteract language—we must never take what we hear without an understanding of meaning and that which lies behind meaning—so often, fear and desire.

Let us imagine the picture created by these words,

water's edge

autumn sky, breathless wind.

Plop! Reflection.

(Eaves, 2017)

Meaning is never definite or absolute, only our own. The pebble inferred soon disappears—absolute meaning is irrelevant. Can we see the influence of Bashō? We only see the ripples that remain after the initial impact—reflecting outwards as we perhaps also reflect ourselves. The water is stillness, nothingness or wholeness already present, interrupted by our words—we look into the pond and see ourselves. Pebbles cast into the pond obscure and alter the reflection—their entrance into the pond sets off a chain reaction of outwards movement. The stone can only obscure the clarity that is already present. Are we unlearned?

As an adult, we have a lifetime of stories told about ourselves, based on a figurated self, manufactured outside of us and imbued upon us. We categorise and classify others and ourselves—a lifetime of pebbles thrown into the pond as we attempt to form a semi-cohesive meaning bound by a commonality. Stories of 'me' are built on the foundation of the 'not-me', in the child or adolescent these stories are in the process of being collated. As educators, we witness young people entering the world of '*I-It'*, clinging to labels. Jackie Seidel and David Jardine in their wonderful book, *Ecological Pedagogy, Buddhist Pedagogy, Hermeneutic Pedagogy* tell us, "No word, no name, arrives alone. Not only do words have motion and movement in them. Every word summons up and responds to the world in which it calls" (2014, p. 18).

In our understanding of this world of words, our foundations for the ongoing story of 'me' are illusory, which in turn, allows for the misinformation of our self-story. In linking together vignettes of our lives, in order to gain a stronghold on the idea of self, another example presents as we cling to something that is 'not-me', the storied self. The *cogito* remains unaware of what it is—the vessel for unconscious desire driving our every interaction.

The *locus* of us

I wonder if a dual system in preventing affirmation exists in education, first through the singular template of success and second, affirmation through educators' (for the students) and students' (for the educators) language, leaving us isolated. Alan Watts supports a view of alienating discourse in his explanation of language.

> …because language is dualistic or relational, any affirmation or denial whatsoever can have meaning only in relation to its own opposite. Every statement, every definition, sets up a boundary or limit; it classifies something, and thus it can always be shown that what is inside the boundary must coexist with what is outside. (1961, p. 115)

Watts refers to the concept of clinging to identity as resisting our authenticity, through the process of desire. I see in his thoughts, a linking with Lacan's (1966) and Buddhism in a conception of desire, inherent in the ego, leading to attachment of a self that deceives an original foundation. In our attempts to placate desire, each of us embark on a search to fill this void—in education do we see the void filled by successive constructions of an individual personality, by teachers (Others) and by peers (others), seeking the words that will affirm us, but never hearing the words we seek? In our search for wholeness, we seem prepared to accept input from outside ourselves, internalising these successive approximations of us, until they become us.

Answers to our many questions are inherent within our conception of the Lacanian 'I'—the 'I' of desire, or the 'I' of the unconscious. Our understanding of the Lacanian 'I' is manifest long before the 'I' of Descartes—the 'I' of conscious cognition, positioned in a world of rational thought. Lacan's 'I', the 'I' of the ego, is the unseen force in us all, beyond the rational grasp of the Cartesian 'I'. In our understanding of this idea, of the Lacanian 'I' and the Cartesian 'I', we face different questions along the same continuum of self-understanding. In our conception of the Cartesian 'I', we might ask, 'who am I'? In answering, we reflect our often mistaken knowledge of individual historicity, whereas the Lacanian 'I' posits a different possibility—'how am I, or where am I'? These two radically different questions contain the difference between *topos* and *logos.*

Questioning this fundamental and perplexing issue of *topos* and *logos* relies on a convergence of deep philosophical thought and introspection in an attempt to gain greater clarity.

Sometimes we are struck by the profundity of our lives in moments of *kenshō*, in moments of *yūgen*, becoming able to step from our automated ideas of figuration and judgement based on fixed ideas of self. We apprehend our connectedness in true mind, in understanding problematic grasping or attachment to ideas of self and the world around us, largely attained through rationalism and processes of separation from our true or authentic selves. In the words of Nyogen Senzaki, "Zen aims, through meditation, to realize what Buddha himself realized, the emancipation of one's mind" (Senzaki & Reps, 1998, p. 112).

The Empty Self

Contemplating Practising Receptance, we consider that inherent to our understanding is the concept of an impermanent self—in accordance with Buddhist philosophy, notions of a fixed or constructed self objectify us and lead to clinging to a self not of us. In our critical and fundamental awareness of the relationship between fear and authenticity, do we see why we cling to a self not of us? Our ability to disregard notions of a permanent 'me' is fundamental to entering into Reverence—all constructs fall away as we look into the eyes of the other in their authenticity. Are we able to see, as Bashō does?

Falling from

A grass blade, and flying away:

A firefly

(2004, p. 76)

Practising Receptance allows us to transform our relationships with others as a function of an authentic self, unobscured by a constructed ego. As we become aware, we overcome our figurated selves through the fundamental and radical reassessment of where we are. We disregard notions of permanence only allowing ourselves to meet in the moment, in fleeting and profound beauty, just as Bashō's firefly falls from the grass blade. In our understanding of *topos*, we become unable to define the other, and only regard them in deep Reverence, disregarding the misleading everydayness of language.

Our entrance into language, the realm of the Symbolic, signals a transition between the authentic 'me' and a constructed 'me'—the transition between the mirrored pond and the broken surface through the pebble cast. Do we drift further from what we were—looking outside of ourselves for affirmation and validation, attempting to find the missing element driving us? We become open to the words of others, so determined are we to live up to the original words imbued upon us. We find our alienating ego driving us, as the 'not-self' that we have become. The original reflection in which we see ourselves becomes obscured and changed as more pebbles fall into the water.

We can no longer see ourselves—an image once clear, now obfuscated
by a myriad of ripples and splashes of stones.

If only we could see ourselves place the stones on the ground and wait for the ripples to disappear—we might find ourselves revealed once more. We have spent a lifetime throwing pebbles—in the simple action of casting our stones aside we face the fundamental challenge in the radical reconceptualising of others and ourselves. More than a reconceptualising of the *topos* of us, we look to a deeper understanding of how we think. In apprehending the other in Reverence, we must move from our method of objectification in thought. "To think is to categorize, to sort experience into classes and intellectual pigeonholes. It is thus that, from the standpoint of thought, the all-important question is ever, "Is it this, or is it that"" (Watts, 1963, p. 49)? In these words of Watts, we can see the illustration of the world of the '*I-It'*, the world of categorisation that removes us from the space of the Other, the world of the '*I-Thou'*.

In our desire to objectify, to move to the world of things, to the world of categorisation and labelling, we obscure what is authentic. Our words, the pebbles cast into the pond, disturb what is clear and we confuse what presents to us—words can limit us. Words confine us to the world of the '*I-It'* and cloud the perspective of ourselves by burdening us with a fixed view of self. In the act of self-objectification, we prevent the illumination of us—so concerned are we by the world of classification, the world of clinging to self that we cannot move into Radical Openness, into Reverence with the Other. We long to gaze into the pond and see ourselves and others reflected in the mirrored surface, without the confusion of pebbles thrown into the water. We embody a radical hope shared in these words of Bashō,

Mid the plain—

Attached to nothing,

The singing skylark

(2004, p. 58)

Attachment

In Zen Buddhism, much of human suffering is through faulty ways of interpreting the world around us, often based in our idea of attachment. In following the idea of attachment and suffering, Gelek Rimpoche states, "all Buddhists assert that all phenomena are empty and selfless" (Rimpoche, Berzin, Landaw & Klein, 1987, p. 53). Furthering the idea of rejection to attachment of words, Zen "represents a special transmission outside the teachings that does not rely on words and letters" (Wright & Heine, 2004, p. 3).

Have we separated ourselves from our true insight or true mind by our discourse? If we are born into a system of language and rules into which we must fit, perhaps our inauthenticity reflects this. Within our construction, we become preoccupied with doing—to ensure our actions match our construction—to make sure we are a 'good boy' or a 'clever girl' or any infinite number of other patterns into which we must fit. Is it because of our intent to 'be' that we ignore the authenticity of ourselves and *locus* of others?

K.J Saunders, in *The Heart of Buddhism: Being an Anthology of Buddhist Verse,* writes of ideas of clinging and suffering, in asking a fundamental question, "What is the cause of all the sorrow and pain of things? Does it lie outside man's control? No; the root of all evil lies in *Tanha*, the will to be and to have" (1915, p. 10). The will to be, or the idea of a manufactured self, is central to the inherent message of Buddhism in, "All products are impermanent. All contaminated

things are miserable. All phenomena are empty and selfless" (Rimpoche et al., 1987, p. 53).

In our desire to be affirmed we cling to construction, and this false sense of who we are can never lead to true happiness—we strive to be affirmed through words not of our own, for a self not of our making. As soon as we attempt to categorise or label ourselves in any fixed way, we lose what our true self might be—the space between self and other widens as we clutch at what we feel we should be, instead of perhaps realising where we are.

I propose that problematic ideas of how we view our selves and others, based in ideas of a fixed *locus*, develop in schools, as our layering upon the original extimate ego increases, and we believe the words imbued upon us outside of ourselves. We learn that we are 'this type of student' or 'that type of student'—we become attached to the idea that this is 'who I am'.

> As an example, Rod, a Year 8 student in my Philosophy class who has been a difficult student in many other classes—inattentive, unmotivated and indifferent—has literally come alive. He is usually first to arrive and last to leave—he sits by himself, as to avoid distractions—his work is usually submitted first, and of a standard that belies his reputation. He is engaged in class and enthusiastic in discussions. In short, he is a wonderful student. The question must be asked as to 'why?' Is it because Rod enjoys the subject? Is the reason for his success because Rod has had a chance to cast off notions of a self that is not of his making—perhaps it is a glimpse of our ability to show impermanence of constructed students-as-self. As educators we experience the profound joy in seeing the Other—to release them, even in small ways, from notions of a fixed self. In releasing others, do we also release ourselves?

Our misdirected ways of thinking obscure our authenticity, our true insight, and the vehicle for our misdirection is not only the ego imbued upon us through words of others, but society's pursuit of rationalism. In a previous example of the Cartesian 'I' (p. 217)—the 'I' of the *cogito* or the rational mind, we find the societal focus, that of reason, compared to the Lacanian 'I', the 'I' of pre-conscious awareness, of ego and desire, fuelling our striving for affirmation and wholeness. Let us take a step back further, first from the Cartesian 'I' of rationality, then to the Lacanian 'I' of the ego, to finally, the 'I' of the empty-yet-whole self—the 'I' of true insight, or true mind replaced and obscured by words and thoughts not of us.

Again, no more is the pursuit of the rational 'I' more evident than in the classroom, where most, if not every basis and conclusion is centred around our ability to reason and deduce, in largely linear form, from a position A to a position B, usually an outwards movement or movement away from a point of originality. Practising Receptance allows us to see how these central ideals of attachment, egolessness and suffering align with our acknowledgement of the external processes that fuel our internal narrative. Adopting an authentic or impermanent self requires Radical Courage to lose our idea of a permanent construction. In the state of 'not-self', we move into Radical Openness with our acknowledgement of authenticity—we lose ideas of a fixed self, moving into the sphere with others, sharing a state of unification through lack of construction. We acknowledge our empty-yet-whole selves in *prajñā*, "commonly described as knowledge of the true nature of things, as being "empty" or lacking absolute, independent existence" (Dōgen, 1991, p. 23).

Practising Receptance allows our individual ability to transcend the symbiosis of a layered self of narrative and desire, of the interplay between authenticity and fear. As a fundamental process of our illumination, realisation that through the elements of Radical Openness, Radical Isolation and Radical Courage, we are able to become aware, then move beyond our construction. Once we move beyond our Radical Isolation, we become able to move into the sphere of the Other with Reverence—in our act of courage, we are rewarded with seeing the other as they are, not as they have been made to be, if only fleetingly. In liberating ourselves, we are able to liberate our students—we move out of attachment, out from a constructed sense of self and into openness—into the world of the empty-yet-whole self.

Mu-shin

The concept of *Mu-shin*, favoured by Zen Buddhism, refers to the state of no-mindedness, as it "literally means 'not to be grasped by the mind, 'that is to say' incomprehensible" (Shinkei, 2008, p. 93). The term literally means "no-mind" or "no-thought". It is very difficult to find an English word describing *Mu-shin*, but the idea of being "free from mind-attachment" comes close as it describes "that state of consciousness in which there is no hankering, conscious or unconscious, after an ego-substance, or a soul-entity, or a mind as forming the structural unit of our mental life" (Suzuki, 1960, p. 114).

In his seminal text *Three Pillars of Zen,* Phillip Kapleau describes *Mu*, as

> …utterly impervious to logic and reason, and in addition is easy to voice, it has proven itself an exceptionally wieldy scalpel for

> extirpating from the deepest unconscious the malignant growth of "I" and "not-I" which poisons the mind's inherent purity and impairs its fundamental wholeness. (1965, p. 65)

Mu refers to emptiness, nonexistence, non-being, or pure awareness prior to knowledge. *Mu* means emptiness, in the same way emptiness refers to our authenticity in Practising Receptance. An illustration of ideas of emptiness, and the difficulty Western thinking has with such concepts, is presented in the Mumonkan. The Mumonkan is a classic Zen kōan, literally translated as 'gateless gate' or 'gateless barrier' (*mu,* nothing, no; *mon,* gate; *kan,* barrier)" (in Grimstone, 1977, p. 27). This kōan *Mu*, or Jōshū's dog, is essential for comprehension in Zen thinking. The single word *Mu* is the front gate to Zen. Therefore, it is called the Mumonkan of Zen.

> A monk asked Jōshū, "Has a dog the Buddha Nature?"
>
> Jōshū answered, "Mu".
>
> (in Grimstone, 1977, p. 28)

Mu-shin cannot be grasped through the intellect and the mind that embraces *Mu-shin* is a mind free of attachment to ideas and to ego. A person who embraces *Mu-shin* has stepped forth from Radical Isolation, imbued by the ego, and into Radical Openness. Openness in facing the prospect of a 'no-self' requires Radical Courage and is rewarded by illumination of the *locus* of the other. Suzuki says, "When you realize *mushin* without anything intervening [that is, intuitively], the substance itself is revealed to you. It is like the sun revealing itself in the sky…then you have your seat of enlightenment" (1960, p. 118).

Mu's meaning as 'lack' as well as emptiness or non-being draws my mind to Lacanian thinking where our drive for affirmation is the drive for wholeness. A separate 'me' constructed through the desires and wishes of the Other provides the drive to try to find what was lost to us—we are driven by the lack, which is a desire to find the lost happiness or completeness that was once experienced. We find ourselves empty and searching.

Perhaps this is exactly what we should be—empty? We fear emptiness and its negative connotations—better the glass is half full than half empty, we scorn and deride those as being 'empty headed', we ask children from a very young age not to leave too much empty space on their pages when illustrating—emptiness is conditioned as an entirely negative concept. We are engaged in a never-ending search for what was lost to us, when, what we believe was lost, is perhaps present within us—is our emptiness our wholeness? Our empty-yet-whole selves negate the need for affirmation or validation, and so, in this realisation we become released from the drive fuelling our interactions and thinking based in a fixed or enduring self. We might move from the idea of a fixed self, with its nature founded in construction of the other, to the idea of *Mu-shin*—a 'no-self'. In the thoughts that follow from this idea of 'no-self', let me illustrate with two examples,

> The loss of a fixed self and the embracing of an empty-yet-whole self became evident to me on my latest expedition to the Southwest of Tasmania as I helped guide a group of Year 9 boys through a physically and mentally challenging 7-day bushwalk. At one stage, we individually walked a stretch of 4 kilometre beach, at 5 minute intervals, to remain equally spaced out along the beach, with no interaction between us—the aim was solitude and reflection. As I walked along the beautiful and wild Prion beach, I balanced my walking poles between my neck and my pack and took a small notepad and pencil I had stored for this

task, from a sealed plastic bag in the top of my pack. As I touch the paper now, I am transported back to the sand—the sounds of the crashing waves, the cool wind and the shining sun, distant figures of previous walkers, boot marks in the pristine sand, the raw beauty. I meditated on the idea of challenging notions of a fixed self—here in this wild and beautiful place, I was not teacher or mentor—I had moved into a feeling of selfless, empty-yet-wholeness that embraced the idea of the *'I-Thou'* and the profundity of *yūgen*. I realised that our sense of self is maintained through effort—we cling to notions of who we think we should be or who we think we are. When these notions of a fixed self are challenged by circumstance or by others we find ourselves negating the internal conflict that arises from the challenged assumptions of who we believe we are.

Following these ideas of challenging the notion of a fixed self,

On Thursday afternoons, we have surfing as a school sport. Three staff members take a group of boys down to the local surf beach for an hour and a half, to enjoy the sea and catch waves, with the underlying ideal that we have a great time. And we do. In the same way that I experienced a profound loss of self on Prion beach, in the Southwest of Tasmania that day, as we sit in a group in the waves, the same thing happens. There is an absolute shedding of self—the sense of empty-yet-whole self transcends any notion of who I feel I am or should be. As we talk in the water, I think the boys feel the same way, even though they may not yet be able to articulate or understand it fully. If this is so, there is no greater gift an educator can give—not only the acknowledgement of authenticity, but the promotion of this way of being. We seem to learn how not to be and to ignore our true mind. Sitting on our surfboards in the sun, sometimes talking, sometimes sitting in silence, sometimes cheering each other when we catch waves—is this not Reverence? The connection feels palpable—we see beyond the enigma of the other, even for a short time.

In returning to the words of Shinkei, in illuminating our understanding of our fundamental connection, and the illusory notion of separation, "the subject/object or mind/world dichotomy renders both illusory; it is only by cognizing their interdependency, and thus their emptiness as autonomous entities, that each attains to the Real" (2008, p. 331).

Lacan apprehends Zen in the assertion that desire is illusory, and that we might become liberated in *Mu-shin*. He states, "the use of negation, which is common in Zen, for example, through recourse to the sign *Mu* can only point us in the right direction" (2014, p. 222-223). And so, Lacan suggests we follow *Mu* in our path to liberation from our illusory desire. He suggests that in our illumination of desire and that of non-dualism, "If there be an object of desire, its nothing but thine own self" (p. 222-223). If the object of illusory desire is in fact ourselves then might we truly embrace our empty-yet-whole selves as an expression of our authenticity? With the three domains in Practising Receptance engaged, the individual stands in a position of embracing the 'no-self', through negating fear and embracing emancipation in Radical Openness.

Many pebbles are cast into the pond obscuring the true self by the refracting and interacting ripples.

A central element to the prevention of Reverence and ultimately, our incandescence is the limiting factor of fear. Often, when faced with the choice, we choose to stay with what we know, rather than pursue the unknown. Our fear of the unknown, of the uncertain, might be what prevents us from wholeness through emptiness—*Mu* signifies what might be central to who we are, prevented through our attachment to a self. Our illumination and emancipation then becomes our aim—perhaps the goal of the progressive, modern educator in assisting our students in the realisation of utter liberation, through the movement

beyond Radical Isolation and towards Reverence with the Other. Is our lack something to aspire to, to attain or realise, rather than avoid?

Practising Receptance, then Reverence of the Other is our acknowledgement of *Mu*—as a fundamental and imperative basis of who we are, or who we are not. In our ability to literally rise above our construction, and acknowledge the figuration of others, we remain open to the wholeness that is our empty-self. Through emptiness, we become freed from our layering—we acknowledge that we are already complete, and come to the understanding that in our completeness, others are also in this state of completeness or wholeness. Can we see the suffering wrought on others by the pursuit of selves not of their making, and in our empathy, appreciate the great burden carried by seemingly weightless words? In Practising Receptance we must be open and vulnerable—words obscure us but they also protect us—words prevent others from apprehending our *locus*, just as we are prevented from apprehending their *locus*. As educators, we face a crucial and fundamental reassessment of self, to be aware of our own vulnerability before assisting our students—only then can we adopt the *upāya* of Practising Receptance to attempt to see beneath the cloak of words and the obfuscation of self.

Only when we become able to look into the pond without the casting of stones can we ask others to do the same. As adults, we have a lifetime of manufacture and obfuscation with which to engage and transcend—our students have had only a brief time, and so, we are in a most wonderful position to help our students see themselves for who they might be, rather than be told who they should be. Can we also see the pivotal role that language in education has in the further construction of self through a very narrow definition of success? "Because the conditioning power of language prevents awareness of reality, the goal of

both humanistic psychology and Zen Buddhism is a liberation from…" (Fromm, 1960, p. 98)… "the illusion of being in touch with the world, but only being in touch with words" (p. 127).

In Practising Receptance—in Radical Openness, Radical Courage and moving from Radical Isolation are we are able to move from the words of the other, of *logos*, into the world of authenticity, of true mind, of *Mu*, of '*I-Thou',* in *topos*? As a utopian ideal, what a gift for our students—to release them from the yoke of desire for affirmation and to remove them from attachment to a self not of them. Are we able to take our students to the pond and allow them to gaze in, their reflections unobscured by stones and ripples? Can we help our children to comprehend that emptiness is wholeness—that they are without need of words to define or construct them?

Utopian thoughts

In our search for the release of self, as constructed by the other, we might echo the sentiments of Freire (1973) and view our students as subjects and not objects, where we look to the poetry of the other and not as simple, storied selves. We look to emancipate our students from the weight of attachment to a self not of their own, and look to ways in which we may help them transcend limited ways of seeing themselves and others. As educators, we look to the other as profound, fleeting and impermanent, beyond the otherness in which they are situated. We look to our students as Others, as we utilise Radical Courage to enter into their sphere and apprehend them as formless and authentic beings. We rally against fear—the fear of 'no-self' or the fear of emptiness-yet-wholeness. We question

those who grasp positivism in the hope that the constructed self gives safe harbour. For those who continue to cast pebbles into the pond and remain obscured by words, and fixed ideas, I follow Nietzsche who rallied against such fixed ideas, and states to those who cling to facts, "I should say: no, it is precisely facts that do not exist, only interpretations..." (Nietzsche, 1874, p. 458).

And so, what of these words and what of our selves? Words are perhaps only pebbles in a pond—deliberately cast or carelessly dropped. Either way, the outwards ripples continue as meaning stretches outwards, colliding with the ripples of other pebbles. As we stand above the water, gazing downwards, the movement below us reflects Rilke's words,

Whoever grasps too much will overlook the infinite. (1990, p. 108)

Are our true selves present beneath the broken surface of the mirrored pond, in stillness? The nothingness and wholeness perhaps already there, is only interrupted by our words—can we all gaze into the pond, our mirrored reflections finally unobscured by casting the stones aside. These words as stones, placed aside, allow us to see the authenticity of ourselves and that of Others reflected in the Mirror of the pond—the moon illuminating us in our profound awareness of *yūgen* as we enter into the voidness of *śūnyatā*—released and affirmed in radical hope.

Epilogue

In coming to the end of this thesis, I look to summarise and to question, in the same way I aspire the boys might after a series of lessons with me and I remain open to self-reflection and self-questioning on a deeply phenomenological and meditative level seeking what is Real. More than seeking what is Real, I hope for others to search for that which is beyond us, that which seems ungraspable, but is ever present. Perhaps most of all I hope that we might discard notions of a superficial, figurated self and look deeper within the other to their profound authenticity. In doing so, we move beyond words, to a wordless poetry that apprehends Otherness in a way both universal and unique to us all. Let us look again to the thinking that has led us to arrive at this position of 'me', and in doing so, look to remove the artificial duality that sees us separated.

In Lacanian thinking, humans are born prematurely, compared to many species of animals. We are born into a state of helplessness making us dependent upon other people, usually our parents, to literally keep us alive for an extended period of time. Lacan describes the process "whereby the child develops its identity (its ego) via an identification with the twin image reflected by the mirror" (in Nobus, 2000, p. 63). The infant, being entirely dependent on the support of those around him, gains a sense of autonomy through identifying with an image outside of himself, first observed in the Mirror. In the ideas of Lacan, we find the ego results from tension owing to a lack of unity and coordination in

ourselves, "We sense that we are *not* beings like the other unified beings we see around us" (Fink, 2004, p. 100). In sensing we are not like others, this is when we face outwards, away from ourselves, ignoring our authenticity and ignoring our emptiness, and looking something beyond us.

Identifying with a 'not-me' as seen in the Mirror results in a foundation for the *méconnaissance* or the misrepresentation of me. Lacan saw this function of the *méconnaissance* as a protectorate of the fragmented ego—an 'Ideal-I' (1966, p. 4), providing an illusion of completeness and coherence. Objectification, between the ages of about six to eighteen months, is completed in our adherence to the external, ideal me. And so begins the layering of us—firstly through images and then through words. In this illusion of mastery, the ego or '*moi*' (Lacan, 1992,1959-1960, p. 56) becomes an external, falsifying, negative hallucination, and also a protective 'imago'—a protective shell for our vulnerable, disconnected selves. In our protection, we become isolated, withdrawn from the other, adhering further to the protective 'not-me'. Words from our pre-infancy form the basis of us, in the Lacanian ego, the unconscious 'I', or the 'I' of desire. From the 'I' of desire, we move to the 'I' of consciousness, or the 'I' of Descartes, leading to what Bonnie Litowitz (2014) outlines as the process of an ongoing self-narration. The basis for self-narration is a conscious awareness of the self and it is for this reason the ideas of Litowitz perhaps align more with the Cartesian 'I' in a basis for a specific form of human consciousness, resulting in the storied 'I', built upon a *méconnaissance* of 'not-me'.

As I look at the faces in these self-portraits, I see happiness, sadness and moments in life reaching out to me, beyond the two-dimensional representations. Lives leap from the page as I apprehend the multi-faceted humanness that presents itself. In fleeting moments, we capture the infant, the child and the

immanent adult—in appearance and in immediacy, historicity and potentiality is revealed, like the striking *keisaku*. I see beyond the figuration and beyond the protected selves. I hear the voices and I see the smiles, I see the endeavour and the toil in faces of youth imploring me, "As I am-however I am-will not do. Now what do I do?" (in Shore, 2002, p. 32) and as they ask, "Is this correct? Am I correct?" My answer can only be, "Yes, you are, exactly as you are".

I subscribe to the Zen concept of seeing one's nature (*chien-hsing* in Chinese; *kensh* in Japanese) or seeing True-nature (Kraft, 1992, p. 89) as I contemplate the authenticity in truth of the other, founded in the emptiness of *śūnyatā*. My exploration of voidness or emptiness should not be misunderstood as nothingness, rather selflessness (Yoshiro, 1989, p. 39)—that is, I find myself oriented towards a philosophy that suggests individuals possess no independent or fixed nature. This idea of selflessness or voidness opposes Western educational traditions founded in Newtonian and Cartesian conceptions of Rationalism and Empiricism that look to notions of cause and effect, quantifying phenomena to be objectified and measured. I find it astounding that we still adhere to these principles of ranking and scoring. Is our desire for control so great that we enslave our children in a discourse of number and graph to make our world simpler to justify?

We move from the 'I' of Descartes, where "The *cogito* in itself only allows me to affirm my own existence" (1960, p. 22) in which the 'I' of thought is different to the realisation of the 'I' of desire—the 'I' of Lacanian thinking. Descartes states, "I preferred to use my own existence as the foundation of my argument, since my existence depends on no series of causes and is so well known to me that nothing else could be more well-known" (1637-2000, p. 152). Is our existence "so well known" to us? I think Lacan would suggest otherwise—by the

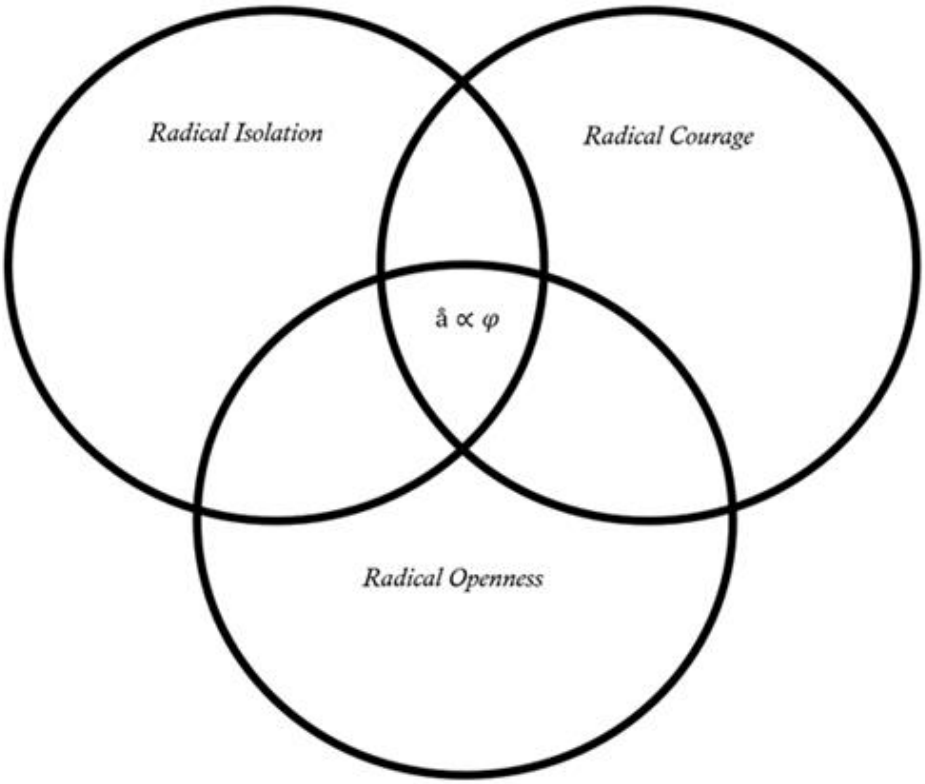
time we have the faculty for self-reflection, in which the Cartesian *cogito* is inferred—the 'I' of desire is already who we believe we are. A core issue of the 'I' of desire is that we are not only driven by unconscious construction but we cling to our construction, perhaps fearful of the alternate 'no-self', which might only be achieved through radical and fundamental self-reflection. In acknowledgement of the Lacanian 'I' of the ego and the Cartesian 'I' of rationalism, both approaches become tied by the concept of attachment or clinging to that which is external to us. In comprehending the implications of a 'not-me', open to the input of others, can we grasp the significance of our current educational paradigm? Our focus becomes the 'I' of the Other—literally an identity figurated through the words of the Other, resulting in any idea of a transcendent sense of self becoming obfuscated through our pursuit of validation. Validation pursued is of the Other, first realised in the question as an infant, "what does the Other want?" We strive for something created outside of us, in the desire that we will fit this creation. Desire sees us cling to construction, brought by our identification in the Mirror, and a life spent pursuing a state of harmony and mastery as promised by the Mirror.

We objectify and create the ideal self, manufacturing and maintaining desire from the Mirror of education. We hold the ideal before our students, the narrow paradigm of success, based in scientific discourse, based further in our unique systems of language, driving daily actions and interactions, and students are left to ask themselves, "what does the teacher want?" In the space between teacher and student, the space of apprehension of that which is desired, let us look to the ways in which we might find ourselves isolated from the other, and how we might overcome this Radical Isolation with the Radical Courage of Openness. We look to Practising Receptance as a means by which we locate the other in a topographical situatedness of self and other. In *topos*, we focus on the *locus* of self

and other allowing an understanding of the non-fixed nature of us, to comprehend our fluid formlessness. Practising Receptance is action in thinking—an intentionality without prescription, allowing us to apprehend the *locus* of self and other. In our understanding of a 'non-self', we transform our thinking to one of *topos* in our apprehension of the other in a spatial relationship.

Practising Receptance as an understanding of our fundamental process of selflessness, we gain a transcendent awareness of others and ourselves. In our understanding, we appreciate that there is no fixed identity, and no fixed narrative of us—our liberation is attained through the advent of empty-yet-whole selves in *śūnyatā*. In critical and fundamental self-reflection, a shift occurs from our position of Radical Isolation—a position where our knowledge of self is obscured by language and desire. Moving from isolation, we embrace openness—to ourselves and to others. We require Radical Courage to move from our situatedness in isolation in safety, as perhaps it is easier to suffer and cling to a self that is not authentic, than to face a potential void of 'non-self'. In our aim of transcending a constructed self, to move into the *'I-Thou'* and to see beyond the enigma of the other, we require Radical Courage—we require a transcendence of fear.

Practising Receptance moves us from a position of Radical Isolation, to self-understanding and self-reflection—illuminated, we move into a situatedness of self-overcoming. Practising Receptance allows us to move from our unconscious acceptance to intellectualising the *locus* of ourselves and others, allowing us to comprehend what we might be—removing us from our figuration. We become enlightened to the topology of self and others, and thorough radical and fundamental awareness of self, we become transformed.



Practice of Receptance (Eaves, 2018)

To reflect again on the relationship between the three domains comprising the Practice of Receptance, fear (φ) is a central element that affects our ability to apprehend our authentic selves and the authentic selves of Others. We fear the vulnerability of Radical Openness needed to step forth from Radical Isolation, where adherence to a figurated self places us. In our movement towards the authenticity of ourselves and of others, we require Radical Courage, to leave a figurated self, to disregard notions of a 'me' and embrace an empty-yet-whole self in *śūnyatā*. In our embracing, we see others as Others—impermanent and profound, beyond the figurating words constructing us and placing us in the sphere of *logos* and otherness. We strive for the understanding of authenticity and Otherness, in a sphere of *topos*, reflecting the impermanence of us. In our

comprehension, we achieve a greater understanding of self and gain greater insights into the worlds of others—we understand our commonality of isolation through figuration and self-reflexive systems of language. We apprehend the profundity of the Other through the apprehension of *topos* and in that apprehension, we witness the profound beauty of the Other.

In Radical Courage, fear is proportional to our authenticity, as represented in the *matheme*,

$$I \because f\{in(\text{å}) - in(\varphi)\}$$

Any notion of the 'I' is because of the function of the influence of authenticity and its relationship to the influence of fear. Our clinging to construction, based on fear of the 'no-self', affects Practising Receptance in that we require Radical Courage and Radical Openness to move into authenticity and beyond our position of Radical Isolation. We face the fear of a 'no-self', to allow ourselves liberation, to let go of our construction. Is our drive and search for wholeness, our pursuit of affirmation and validation, driven by fear?

Practising Receptance moves us from our Radical Isolation and into the realm of Radical Openness, shedding our construction, releasing ourselves from the burden of the pursuit of affirmation through words, not of our own, for a self, not of our making. We strive for the raw authenticity of our inherent humanness and disregard the objectification of self and other. We move from what makes "the whole external world itself, seem so foreign, so other" (Watts, 1961, p. 76) to strive instead for the voidness of *śūnyatā* and the apprehension of profundity in *yūgen.* We turn from the Cartesian dichotomy of subject-object, and instead apprehend the inner connectedness between us, and in our utter sameness, we

embody co-dependent connectedness through our knowledge, "I am because you are".

In our release from the subject-object dichotomy, might we look to Zen and to Lacan who suggests liberation lies in our apprehension of *Mu* through negation and realisation that the illusory nature of desire is within us, as ourselves (2014, p. 222-223)? In our understanding of the illusion of desire, our journey begins to take us from the understanding of *dukkha* as something profoundly unbearable, to something that is comprehensible. Our "craving to have or be something" (Shore, 2002, p. 32) is lessened as we look to our profound authenticity founded in *śūnyatā* as the commonality between us all.

It is an optimism in our shared understanding that a negation of self is a positive—an apprehension of Otherness beyond conscious effort or reasoning, avoiding a nihilism of a selfless self. In our new understanding of selflessness, can we perhaps look to a self of poetry, a self of haiku, a self of art grasped in the immediacy of authentic existence? Gadamer tells us,

> Traditionally the purpose of 'art', which also includes all conscious transformation of nature for human use, was to supplement and fill the gaps left open by nature. And 'the fine arts', as long as they are seen in this framework, are a perfecting of reality, not appearances that mask, veil, or transfigure it. (1975, p 75)

We return to Masaoka in our shedding of the Symbolic in attaining a deeper, more profound apprehension of the Other. In the same way haiku apprehends through *shasei*, we might apprehend our students through *shasei*, so that they become art as a perfecting of reality, in impermanence, far removed from the

figuration of us, in language. We find, as the portraits show, the progression from construction to emancipation—not just the boys, but also our thoughts, moving from layering to emptiness, from the fixed determinacy of colour to formless truth emanating from each of us in our simplest form.

We look to Dōgen in apprehending the impermanent, the immediate and the authentic and meditate on whether these words mirror our students as they also mirror us.

Dewdrops on a blade of grass,

Having so little time

Before the sun rises;

Let not the autumn wind

Blow so quickly on the field

(Dōgen & Heine, 1997, p. 40)

In the end, these are all ideas—perhaps nothing more than my words. In my journey for understanding, I take heart in the enduring passion of the educator who sees in each of our students a living art form, a formless truth and above all, profound beauty.

References

Bauer, R. (2012). Hermeneutics, St. Augustine and Innermost Awareness. *Transmission: Journal of the Awareness Field.* Vol 4.

Beichman, J. (2002). *Masaoka Shiki: His Life and Works.* Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company.

Biesta, G. (2007). *Who Is There? Finding the Other in Self*. Illinois: Philosophy of Education Society.

Blondelot, X. & Sauret, M-J. (2015). Japanese and Lacanian Ways of Thinking: An Invitation to Dialogue. *Japan Review*, 28, 173–189.

Bohm, D. (2002). *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. New York: Routledge. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Brackney, W. H. (Ed.). (2013). *Human Rights and the World's Major Religions*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. Retrieved from Questia.com

Bruner, J. (1983). *In Search of Mind: Essays in Autobiography*. New York: Harper & Row. Retrieved from Questia.com

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. London: Harvard University Press.

Bruner J. (1991). *Self-making and world making*. Journal of Aesthetic Education, 25(1), 67–78.

Buber, M. (1956). *The Writings of Martin Buber.* W. Herberg (Ed.). New York: Meridian Books. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Camus, A. (1954). *The Stranger.* (S. Gilbert, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Camus, A. (1991). *The Myth of Sisyphus: And other Essays*. New York: Random House.

D'Amato, M., Tillemans, T. J. & Garfield, J. L. (Eds.). (2009). *Pointing at the Moon: Buddhism, Logic, Analytic Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Descartes, R. (1960) [1637]. *Descartes' Discourse on Method, and Other Writings.* (A. Wollaston, Trans.). Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Descartes, R. (2000). *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence.* R. Ariew (Ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Di Pippo, A. F. The Concept of Poiesis in Heidegger's An Introduction to Metaphysics. In *Thinking Fundamentals*, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 9: Vienna 2000.

Dōgen, E. (2007). *Shōbōgenzō: The Treasure House of the Eye of True Teaching*. (H. Nearman, Trans). California: Shasta Abbey Press.

Dōgen. E. (1991). *Shōbōgenzō, Zen Essays* (T. Cleary, Trans.). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Dōgen, & Heine, S. (1997). *The Zen Poetry of Dōgen: Verses from the Mountain of Eternal Peace*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Eaves, N. (2018). *Rising Waves, Breathless Wind. Lacan, Zen and Adolescence: Illuminating Śūnyatā in the Dualism of Education.* Perth: Curtin University unpublished thesis.

Freire, P. (1968*). Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.

Freire, P. (1974). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum.

Fink, B (1996). *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. New York: Princeton University Press.

Fink, B. (2007). *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*. New York: Norton.

Fink, B. (2004). *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Écrits Closely*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Fromm, E., Suzuki, D.T. & De Martino, R. (1960). *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Harper and Row.

Gadamer, H.G. (1975). *Truth and Method*. (J. Weinsheimer & D. Marshall, Trans.). London: Bloomsbury.

Gadamer, H.G. (1976). *Philosophical Hermeneutics.* (D. Linge, Trans.). London: University of California Press.

Gadamer, H.G. (1992). *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics.* D. Misgeld & G. Nicholson (Eds.). (L. Schmidt & M. Reuss, Trans.). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Retrieved from Questia.com

Garfield, J. L. (2002). *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Gould, J. A. & Dewey, R. E. (1970). *Freedom: Its History, Nature, and Varieties*. London: MacMillan. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Grimstone, A. V. (Ed.). (1977). *Two Zen Classics: Mumonkan and Hekiganroku.* (K. Sekida, Trans.). New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Hegel, G. (2001). *Spirit: Chapter Six of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit.* D. E. Shannon (Ed.). (Hegel Translation Group, Trans.). Indianapolis: Hackett. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Hoffmann, Y. (1986). *Japanese Death Poems*. Boston: Tuttle. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Holmes, S. W. & Horioka, C. (1973). *Zen Art for Meditation*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Hopkins, J. (Ed.). (1987). *The Buddhism of Tibet.* (J. Hopkins, Trans.). Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Hume, N. G. (Ed.). (1995). *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology.* (W. R. Boyce Gibson, Trans.). New York: Macmillan.

Inston, K. (2006) Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Post-Marxist Critique of Alienation: A Re-reading through Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Zizek. *Philosophy Today*, 50 (3), 349-367.

Jakobson, R. & Morris, H. (1956). *Fundamentals of Language.* The Hague: Mouton & Co, Printers.

Jaspers, K. (1997). *Reason and Existenz: Five Lectures.* (W. Earle, Trans.). Milwaukee: Marquette University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Josselson, R. (2004). The hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of suspicion. *Narrative Inquiry*, 14(1), 2004, 1-28.

Kant, I. (1965) [1781]. *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.* (N. K. Smith, Trans.). New York: St. Martin's Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Kant, I. (1950) [1783]. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Kant, I. (1952). *The Critique of Pure Reason, The Critique of Practical Reason, and Other Ethical Treatises*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved from Questia.com

Kapleau, P. (1965). *The Three Pillars of Zen*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Kasulis, T. P. (1981). *Zen Action/Zen Person*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Kierkegaard, S. (1844). *The Concept of Anxiety*. New York: Princeton University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (1978). *Kierkegaard's Writings.* (Vol. 19) H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong (Eds.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Kierkegaard, S. (2000). *The Essential Kierkegaard.* H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong (Eds.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Kraft, K. (1992). *Eloquent Zen: Daito and Early Japanese Zen*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kumārajīva. (1976). *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma.* (L. Hurvitz, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Lacan, J. (1957). The Psychoanalysis. *(*May 14-26, 1957*), Psychoanalysis and the Sciences of Man, 3,* 47-81.

Lacan, J. (1953). Some Reflections on the Ego. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 34(1), 11-17 reproduced in Furman and Levy (Eds.). *Influential Papers from the 1950s*, Karnac, 2003, 295-296.

Lacan, J. (1966). *Écrits: A selection*. (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Norton.

Lacan, J. (1968). *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis.* (A. Wilden, Trans.). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lacan, J. (1974). Jacques Lacan's Seminar XXII, Preliminary to the Seminar of Real, Symbolic and Imaginary. 19 November 1974. Retrieved from:http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/RSI-Complete-With-Diagrams.pdf

Lacan, J. (1975). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge (Encore) Book XX.* (B. Fink, Trans.*).* J-A Miller (Ed.).

Lacan, J. (1975-6). Jacques Lacan's Seminar XXIII. J-A Miller (Ed.). Ornicar. 6-11, 1976-7. Retrieved from, http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/THE-SEMINAR-OF-JACQUES-LACAN-XXIII.pdf

Lacan, J. (1977). *Écrits: A selection.* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). London: Tavistock.

Lacan, J. (1992). *The ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The seminar of Jacques Lacan*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.dbgw.lis.curtin.edu.au

Lacan, J. (1988). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book II The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955.* (S. Tomaselli, Trans.). J-A Miller (Ed.).

Lacan, J. (2002). *Ecrits. A selection.* (B. Fink, Trans). London: W.W Norton and Company.

Lacan, J. (2014). *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book X. (*A. R. Price, Trans.*).* J-A Miller (Ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lander, R. (2006). *Subjective Experience and the Logic of the Other*. New York: Other Press.

Lang, R. D. (1960). *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. London: Penguin.

Leighton, T. D. (2007). *Visions of Awakening Space and Time: Dōgen and the Lotus Sutra*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Libbrecht, K. (1998). The Original Sin of Psychoanalysis: On the Desire of the Analyst. In D. Nobus (Ed.). *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, (pp. 75-100). London: Rebus Press.

Litowitz, B.E. (2014). *Coming to terms with intersubjectivity: Keeping language in mind*. Plenary address, American Psychoanalytic Association, January 17, 2014. Submitted for publication February 27, 2014.

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The Psychology of Life Stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100-122.

McAdams, D. P. (2004). The redemptive self: Narrative identity in America today. In J. L. D.R. Beike, *The Self and Memory* (pp. 95-115). New York: Psychology Press.

McAdams, D. P., Josselson, R. & Lieblich, A. (2006). *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*. Washington: American Psychological Society.

Marshak, L. E., Seligman, M. & Prezant, F. (1999). *Disability and the Family Life Cycle*. New York: Basic Books. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Matsuo, B. & Aitken, R. (1978). *A Zen Wave: Bashō's Haiku and Zen*. New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Matsuo, B. (2004). *Bashō's Haiku: Selected poems of Matuso Bashō*. (D. L. Barnhill, Trans). New York: State University of New York Press.

Merton, T. (1968). *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. New York: New Directions. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Moncayo, R. (2012). *The signifier pointing at the moon: Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism*. London: Karnac.

Muller, R. J. (1998). *Beyond Marginality: Constructing a Self in the Twilight of Western Culture*. Westport, CT: Praeger. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Nietzsche, F. (1874/1965). *Schopenhauer as Educator*. (J. W. Hillesheim & M. R. Simpson, Trans.). Chicago: Gateway Editions, Henry Regnery Company.

Nietzsche, F. W., & Hoover, A. J. (1994). *Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and Thought.* Westport, CT: Praeger. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Nobus, D. (1998). *Key concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis*. New York: Other.

Nobus, D. (2000). *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Plato. (1961). *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters.* E. Hamilton & H. Cairns (Eds.). New York: Pantheon Books. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Po, H. & Hsiu, P. (1959). *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po on the Transmission of Mind.* (J. Blofeld, Trans.). New York: Grove Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Po, H. & Uharriet, T. E. (2014). *Zen Haiku. Haiku derived from the Zen teachings of Huang Po on Mind Transmission.* California: Peace Publishers.

Purser, R.E. (2011). A Buddhist–Lacanian Perspective on Lack. *The Humanistic Psychologist,* 39(4), 289-304. Published online: 25 Oct 2011.

Rancière, J. (1991). *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. New York: Standford University Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1986). *Fallible Man: Philosophy of the Will.* (C. A. Kelbley, Rev. Trans.). New York: Fordham University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Rilke, R. (1986) [1903]. *Letters to a Young Poet*. New York: Random House USA Inc.

Rilke, R. M. (1994). *Selected Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke: The Book of Fresh Beginnings*. (D. Young, Trans.). Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Rilke, R. M. (1990). *The Unknown Rilke: Selected Poems.* (Expanded ed.). (F. Wright, Trans.). Oberlin, OH: Oberlin College Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Rilke, R. M. (2001). *The Book of Hours: Prayers to a Lowly God.* (A. S. Kidder, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Rimpoche, L., Berzin, A., Landaw, J. & Klein, A. (1987). The Key to the Middle Way: A Treatise on the Realisation of Emptiness. In J. Hopkins (Ed.). (J. Hopkins, Trans.). *The Buddhism of Tibet*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Rosen, S. (2006). *Topologies of the Flesh: A Multidimensional Exploration of the Lifeworld*. Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Rousseau, J. J. (1957). *Emile.* (B. Foxley, Trans.). New York: Dutton. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Rousseau, J. J. (1992) [1782]. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing.

Ryokan. (1977). *One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryokan.* (J. Stevens, Trans.). New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Santōka, T. (2003). *For All My Walking: Free-Verse Haiku of Taneda Santōka with Excerpts from His Diaries.* (Modern Asian Literature Series) (B. Watson, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Sartre, J. (1976) [1945]. *The Age of Reason*. London: Penguin Books.

Sartre, J. (1957). *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*. New York: Noonday Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Sato, K. (1977). *The Zen Life.* (R. Victoria, Trans.). New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com

Saunders, K. J. (Ed.). (1915). *The Heart of Buddhism: Being an Anthology of Buddhist Verse*. London; New York: H. Milford Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Seidel, J. & Jardine, D. (2014). *Ecological Pedagogy, Buddhist Pedagogy, Hermeneutic pedagogy. Experiments in a Curriculum for Miracles*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Sekida, K. (1975). *Zen Training: Methods and Philosophy.* A. V. Grimstone (Ed.). New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1972). Learned Helplessness. *Annual Review of Medicine*, 23, 407-412. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.me.23.020172.002203

Senzaki, N. & Reps, P. (1998). The Gateless Gate. In P. Reps & N. Senzaki (Authors). *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings.* (pp. 109-162). Boston: Tuttle. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Sessan, A. (1960). Hakuin's "Song of Meditation". In T. Leggett (Author) & T. Leggett (Trans.). *A First Zen Reader.* (pp. 65-81). Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Seung, S. (1976). *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn*. New York: Grove Press

Seung, S. (1982). *Only Don't Know: Selected teaching letters of Zen master Seung Sahn*. Boulder: Shambala.

Shigematsu, S. (1981). *Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters.* (S. Shigematsu, Trans.). New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Shinkei. (2008). *Murmured Conversations: A Treatise on Poetry and Buddhism*. (E. Ramirez-Christensen, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Shore, J. (2002). A Buddhist Model of the Human Self. Working through the Jung-Hsimatsu discussion. In P. Young-Eisendrath & S. Muramoto (Eds.). (2002). *Awakening and Insight: Zen Buddhism and Psychotherapy*. (p. 32). New York: Brunner-Routledge. Retrieved from Questia.

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to Phenomenology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spira, R. (2016). *The Transparency of Things: Contemplating the nature of experience.* Oakland: Sahaja Publications.

Suzuki, D.T. (Trans.). (1932). *The Lankavatara Sutra*. London: Routledge & Kegen Paul.

Suzuki, D. T. (1957). *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*. New York: Harper & Brothers. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Suzuki, D. T. (1960). *Manual of Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Suzuki, D. T. (1961). *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Verbatim transcripts of lectures by Shogaku Shunryu Suzuki, Roshi, 1962-1971*Suzuki Roshi Transcripts* Tuesday, October 01, 1968 Lotus Sutra Lecture, #3 Zen Mountain Center http://suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/archives/index.cgi/681000BU.html?seemore=y

Suzuki, S. (1970). *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*: *Informal talks on Zen meditation and practice*. Shambhala Publications: Colorado.

Taneda, S. M. (1980). *Mountain Tasting: Zen Haiku.* (J. A. Stevens, Trans.). New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Todres, L. (2007). *Embodied enquiry*. Retrieved from http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/curtin/detail.action?docID=736260 Created from curtin on 2017-06-01 17:39:32.

Ueda, M. (2004). *Dew on the Grass: The Life and Poetry of Kobayashi Issa.* (Brill's Japanese Studies Library). Boston: Brill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*. California: Left Coast Press.

Watson, B. (Trans.). (2002). *The Essential Lotus: Selections from the Lotus Sutra*. New York: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Watts, A. W. (1961). *Psychotherapy, East and West*. New York: New American Library. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Watts, A. W. (1963). *The Two Hands of God: The Myths of Polarity*. New York: George Braziller. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Wright, D. S. & Heine, S. (Eds.). (2000). *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Wright, D. S., & Heine, S. (Eds.). (2004). *The Zen Canon: Understanding the Classic Texts*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Yalom, I. D. (1980). *Existential Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Yalom, I. D. (1999). *Momma and the Meaning of Life: Tales of Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Yasuda, K. (1973). *The Japanese Haiku, Its Essential Nature, History, and Possibilities in English, with Selected Examples*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Yokoi, Y. & Dōgen. (1976). *Zen Master Dōgen: An Introduction with Selected Writings*. New York: Weatherhill. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Yoshirō, T. (1989). *The Ideas of the Lotus Sutra*. In G. J. Tanabe Jr., W. J. Tanabe, & International Conference on the Lotus Sutra and Japanese Culture (Authors). The Lotus Sutra in Japanese Culture. (pp. 37-52). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Retrieved from Questia.com.

Every reasonable effort has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.