

A Spiritual Ecology: Finding the Heart of Art Education

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In 1628, William Harvey made two observations about the human heart that forever altered our perceptions. While people were well aware that the heart produced an audible noise, Harvey was the first to explain the heart's sound as the *beat* of a *mechanical pump*. Scholars of the day were not particularly pleased—up to that point, humans had listened to the heart's speech as a “whispering, wailing, loving tale of that center of the human body” (van den Berg, 2001, p. xviii), a body in which life itself moved, pulled by the ebb and flow of the tides.

According to phenomenologist Romanyshyn (2001, p. 130), Harvey's discovery also revealed the heart to be “*divided within itself*” with “*one blood* which exists in two different states.” With this mechanical metaphor of the human heart as an audibly beating pump, the Western worldview of the body subtly but assuredly shifted. The divisions of the heart and its mechanization that Harvey revealed became *a way of seeing* functions of the body as ordinary, observable-from-a-distance phenomena. The heart was no longer a place in humankind that loved, imagined, became full or heavy, buoyant and uplifted; it was a chambered machine with a task to do. In a sense, the imaginal¹ realm that was formerly housed in the heart seeped away slowly in collective Western consciousness; replaced with a more mechanical metaphor of the human heart. Everyone's heart spoke a universal and functional

language. It was only the *lack* of function that allowed the heart to voice, through its pathological distinctions (dis-ease, and dys-function), other realities that demanded to be heard.

When I considered how metaphors such as *having heart, taking heart, being lighthearted, downhearted, broken hearted*, etc. invite new images of the body (and for the body) of education, one of the interesting comments that *captured my heart* was written by well known author Thomas Moore. He noted in the forward of art educator/therapist Howard McConeghey's *Art and Soul* that "art education has yet to discover the heart of its work" (2003, p. iii). The small but mighty word *yet* seems indicative of potential, of letting the reader know that while art education may not have found the true nature of its discipline, there is hope that this will occur. The metaphor of finding the heart of any body, or any philosophical matter, immediately suggests that there is something *alive* to look for. It also implies that there is something that can sustain the whole through its important discovery that it *has* a reason for being which far surpasses a mechanical functionality. In this quest for what I call *a spiritual ecology*, or an organizational pattern that leads us back to an imaginal and embodied spirituality in art education, the heart plays an incredible role in what we yet may find.

Definitions

While I am primarily addressing art education in this discussion, many of the seminal ideas came from other disciplines as I will explain here. In a similar manner, the art education emphasis in this writing may cultivate a broader interpretation of what appears to be education's primary concern in Western culture, which is curriculum. When I speak of an art education, I am referring to a program of study which provides both visual and verbal languages as tools, and simultaneously develops the interpersonal skills necessary to address issues of ultimate concern through art making and viewing. Giving life to an idea so that it is visible to others is not negated in this focus on a spiritual ecology of art, but is supported here as being an essential purpose of being human.

While the term *art* can stand alone (for awhile) without an inquisition regarding its increasingly broad contemporary meanings, and the word *education* has a remarkable range of definitions, as Brent Davis (2004) so thoroughly points out in *Inventions of Teaching*, my use of the term

spiritual ecology needs more immediate grounding. The common parlance often suggested by the word *spirituality* implies an ethereal separation from being here-and-now, a lack of embodiment, and a transcendent connection with the numinous. While its use in educational conversation has been guarded and distanced, more recent explorations encourage our consideration that spirituality is part of humankind's daily creative life (Wuthnow, 1998, 2003; Griffin, 1990), is a vital part of an art curriculum (London, 2006; Grady, 2006), and is also recognized as an aspect of art making which invites a transformational experience (Simmons, 2006; Lipsey, 1988).

Spirituality, as I use it in this work, is an orientation to life that is whole, non-divisive, and utterly lacking the mechanistic functionality of Harvey's heart. It is grounded in daily experiences that allow for reflection, metaphoric connections, and transformation to occur, without necessarily leaving the here-and-now. Spirituality in my view is a sacramental orientation to life; the sacred is immanent in all creation and encompasses real, daily phenomena as well as the less-frequent experiences of mystical transcendence. I employ the word *soul* to suggest the questing, active awareness that encloses all experiences inside a sacred world, one that does not privilege thinking over other kinds of understanding, such as sensory perception or intuition.

That being said, what I wish to convey are four essential understandings about spirituality that might assist us in forming an *ecology*,ⁱⁱ and by this I mean *an awareness of the organizational patterns that connect* us to a more metaphorically spiritual heart of art education. Ecology used here is not meant to convey a reductive view of environmentalism. Rather, my use of the term *ecology of spirit* is one that includes all relationships with the natural world, most certainly; as well as (a) insights gleaned from sustainable education; (b) deep ecology's strengths of inter-relational dependencies, eco-feminist philosophy, and embodied knowing; (c) indigenous orientations to learning; and (d) the contributions of re-mythologizing culture with metaphor in art. In the following, these are the arterial rivers that flow, connect, and give me reason to believe there is hope that we will discover the heart of education, and art education in particular.

Finding the heart of a sustainable, educative future

Designer Stuart Walker (2006) notes that although there are those who articulate a difference between *sustainable development*—which often indicates continuing development as well as economic growth—and *sustainability*, which he believes refers to environmental concerns, he suggests that these terms are frequently inter-dependent and mutually sustaining. I am somewhat more cautious than Walker. While I would like to believe that these terms can co-exist, I see daily evidence of a homogenous, explosive, and ever changing consumer-scape whose underlying anthropocentric values often conflict with ethical, moral, and spiritual decisions we make about education. Being fully engaged in a sustainable education should offer lifelong opportunities to be in a relationship where education becomes the means to further awareness and compassion, aesthetic and intuitive perceptions, and mindfulness of a ‘greater-than-autonomous-human’ reality of life.

A closer examination of the kind of pedagogy that contributes to sustainability reveals that many programs have key descriptors in common. Sustainable educational practices generally include a concern for local and global connections (Noddings, 2005); increased collaboration between teachers and learners in fluid, ongoing dialogues regarding curriculum, such as the Foxfire Program or the Common Roots Program (Bowers, 1995); reflective, process-oriented education as in the Passages Program (Kessler, 2000); inter-generational approaches involving community art making (La Porte, 2004; McCollister, 2000); and the study of other ways of thinking that are qualitatively and creatively different from one’s own (Ballangee-Morris, 2000; Cajete, 2004). Those involved in sustainable education recognize that regardless of their method of approaching knowledge and the actions in which they engage, there must be an appreciation that all concepts of sustainability have been, and will continue to be contested, because sustainability is comprised of complex social justice concerns, ecological values, and personal needs (Blewitt, 2006).

A Paradigm Shift in the Purpose of Education

Also noted in sustainable education is the shift in the *purpose* of educating: from a knowledge transmission system, to a system that uses knowledge as one of many tools to transform the learner and the

educational system itself (Sterling, 2001). A transformative system of education is open ended and disrupts the notion of control (Jardine, 2000) that one might have over the outcomes of the educational process. Knowledge is no longer viewed exclusively as a pre-packaged commodity; and knowledge acquisition alone is no longer the definitive goal of an education. Linda Olds's (1992) observation, that if knowledge is approximate, then there may be "alternative ways to conceptualize and approach the nature of what is to be known" (p. 19) invites our involvement in this transformation. It seems more likely in this view of sustainable education that there is "an active participatory epistemology" which enables "all aspects of the world, animate and inanimate, [to] participate with humanity in the ongoing project of knowledge production" (Davis, 2004, p. 160).

Yet, not all educational programs are sustainable, and the reasons ring with some familiar truths for those who have experienced public school education as a teacher or a student. In action teacher/researcher, Steven Levy's (1996) comments, he notes several ways that contemporary education often diminishes sustainability. The fragmentation of subject matter which is parceled out into separate disciplines does not give students a sense of how ideas relate. Second, the reliance on prepared materials, learning kits, and teachers' editions to provide the major content of students' education takes them even further from the real connections that are possible with their worlds, lessening the likelihood of current practices being sustainable. Most importantly, Levy asserts that there is an unrealistic perception that a 'good' education necessitates covering extreme amounts of content. What's missing in this vivid portrayal of impoverishment that he presents? Whose content is usually taught and for what end? Does the pre-packaged product mold the learner, and/or does it mold the teacher's conceptions of what the learner is supposed to 'do,' the nature of teaching, and what must be considered knowledge? These are necessary questions to ask of an education if it is to be sustainable. Levy asserts that every subject should reveal something about who we are, why we are here together, where we belong in the world, and how we can connect with others responsively and responsibly.

In art education, discovering the heart of the discipline will have a great deal to do with how we take on Levy's above assertions and use

the knowledge of creative processes, histories, and aesthetics as tools for transformation of the learner's world—a focus that includes the individual, but also relationships with family, community, and other-than-human lives. Sustainability will involve a new purpose in being educated in art, one that is both ecological and spiritual, founded on the kind of reflection, silence, and presence that a soulful instructor can bring into the classroom (Miller, 2000). Waldorf schools, as one example, use Rudolf Steiner's spiritual approach as a basis for instruction. Teachers offer art making as an experience that encourages the learners to observe that the same forces which govern nature are also evident in themselves. Historian of alternative educational practices, Ron Miller (1999) also sees ideas from exemplars such as Montessori, Malaguzzi, Alcott, Froebel, Cizek, and Pestalozzi who furthered aspects of schooling that could contribute to a sustainable type of educational practice. In almost all cases, the connections are inter-connective and relational. Knowledge is built in community; and seems less useful as a top-down, hierarchal dispensation.

Mindful deep ecology

Having now disposed of knowledge as neatly packaged contents that can be disseminated to the ends of the earth, perhaps I can convey the second essential idea of this discussion—that of eradicating a common misconception about the mind. It is not simply the gray matter above the brain stem which houses what we call the mind. To understand this more thoroughly, it is useful to explore social scientist Gregory Bateson's view (1972) of mind as an "aggregate of ideas" (p. xxiii), an infinite and fluid association of relationships within a much larger context than we can even begin to grasp. Rather than being localized only in each individual brain, Bateson is saying that there is an operative intelligence as *mind* in a much larger context. This functioning intelligence occurs outside bodies as well as inside them. Even when there is no longer evidence of a physical brain, whole systems of ideas are still present, they iterate over time and through expression, take shape as new art forms, as genres of literature and as cultural evolution and continuity. A study of the larger system of mind, known as deep ecology, (Naess, 1989) suggests that there are no isolated ideas, objects, and events. Interconnectivity of events, for example, could be metaphorically

envisioned as an endlessly turning wheel that allows for patterns of continual change, much like the Buddhist Dharma wheel. Religious scholar Joanna Macy (1991) explains that within this wheel, all life continues to organize and reorganize endlessly in non-hierarchical patterns, without successive causation in which only one event or idea is the originator of a single outcome. The actions of all events, all decisions, and all behaviors arise and are influenced by countless others and vice versa. This concept, in Buddhist teaching, is known as dependent co-arising, one that Macy refers to a “functional equivalent” when she defines deep ecology (p. 64).

It is useful to note that holistic thinking, a sense of ethical treatment, and sometimes equal parity of human and other-than-human concerns also contribute to vital perspectives on deep ecology beyond the inter-relational intelligence I have focused on here. David Barnhill and Roger Gottlieb (2001) assert that the designation deep ecology defines a fundamental shift in humankind’s relationship with the natural world. This new paradigm encompasses a spirituality which accepts that many qualities of the Creator Spirit are seen in the natural world, and in humankind’s reflections. In fact, many of the concerns raised by deep ecologists seem to invite inquiry about underlying spiritual orientations: Are we independent or inter-dependent beings? Do we see these terms as mutually exclusive, or are they complementary? Where do our priorities lie: with human relationships, human-to-other-life form relations, or the biosphere as a whole entity?

The images speak

While the questions surrounding the values of deep ecology indicate ethical and spiritual differences that may not have definitive solutions, they also offer tremendous visual opportunities to express care and concern for the world. Images often express the anguish, pleasure, and deeply cherished relationships in a visual language that is unimpeded by words. Artist Margot McLean (1997) talks about her elusive animal paintings, in which the creatures she depicts remind us that the shadowy world they inhabit is not always selected by the artist:

[T]hese paintings are not messages to ‘warn’ of impending disaster or loss; but rather they are images of the spirit of the animal, with their own autonomous life, their presence and their absence. They come and they go.....I have lost a lot of animals that just wouldn’t stay in the painting (p. 2).

The gift of working with the image, respectfully, carefully, and then letting it go when it is clear that it “just wouldn’t stay in the painting” calls to mind the approaches of several scholars who have counseled others to let images speak, to dialogue with the imaginal, and to listen to the spirit when it wants to take on form (Cheetham, 2003; McNiff, 1992; Watkins, 1986; Allen, 2005; McConeghey, 2003). The spiritual ecology present in their approaches is one of valuing the relational qualities in human and other-than-human connections that are so essential to art and ongoing soulful responses for healing the dys-function of the world.

The Place of Community

When considering how intelligence is both a process and an outcome of so many kinds of relationships, I am sometimes at a loss to explain Western culture’s proclivity to view both intelligence and art making as isolated, individual pursuits. The frequent, dominant thought is that art making is the result of individual intelligence and artistic autonomy. Suzi Gablik (1991) has spoken often about the necessity of transforming the consciousness of the culture through art that addresses the needs of the community; and Charlene Spretnak clarifies in her discussion of modernity how the contemporary culture of the West is still “astonishingly un-self-conscious” (p. 217) of its own values, ideological alliances, and assumptions.

It seems that an essential aspect of spiritual ecology in art education should further discovery of cultural and personal values through relational knowing, whether that be with images, actions taken in the community, or even in the larger-than-human sphere of activities. These relationships should *connect* individuals, and *circulate* ideas, beliefs, and values. This is the sort of multiple origin, multiple outcome thinking that brings us closer to the heart of art education.

Ecofeminist embodied thinking

In a similar manner to deep ecology, the values inherent in an ecofeminist approach seek to address how one might live in relationship to all life forms. While ecofeminism often includes a critique of the hierarchal patterns of dominion and mastery present in patriarchal societies, it also supports our awareness that the spirit is present in both body and mind, and that they are indivisible.

David Griffin (1990) additionally solidifies this position with his assertion that postmodern re-vision “involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions” (p. x), one which rejects the old order claim that science alone contributes the dominant metaphor that comprises a world view. With the re-integration of the spiritual that is necessary for wholeness in the body, archetypal myths of the feminine offer the opportunity to ground the previous “alienated and mechanistic models” (Gablik, 1990, p. 185) with the strength of stories and imaginings that reconnect us with the heart’s *himmā*, the intentions, desires, and meditations that Corbin (1969) notes as necessary for worldmaking.

An embodied, feminine spirituality in the arts allows for healing to occur by initiating imaginative possibilities of new art forms which can be explored through the body. In fact, acknowledging that the mind and body together are the *being of spirit* is essential in this perspective. The sensing, perceptive body is open and indeterminate in the ways that it connects with all phenomena. Performance artist and figurative painter, Barbara Bickel believes the body is a site of great knowledge—not only the present, but the past and future. Exploring performance spirituality with women, Bickel has co-created works with women of many spiritual orientations that “reveal, create, dialogue, educate and celebrate” (<http://www.members.shaw.ca/radicaltrust/artist.html>) how one can be in communion with others and honor their presence. Artist Meinrad Craighead (<http://www.meinradcraighead.com>) focuses her vision of the sacred on the divine feminine, and uses the content of her paintings to offer a matriarchal reconstruction of the Creator Spirit that encompasses both the physical and the spiritual in powerfully symbolic work. The voices of re-vision and constructive possibility speak clearly and hopefully in these eco-feminine views of spirituality.

Awareness of the way we *are* bodies, and not simply resting or surviving in them, is an important contribution of eco-spiritual feminism

which both of these exemplars show. For pastor Diane Artress (1995), walking a labyrinth becomes an embodied prayer and an acknowledgment of sacred space that is spiritual as well as physical. There, motion of the body becomes the movement of the soul, and the connection to the sacred becomes a place of gratitude and humility. As eco-educator David Jardine (1998) indicates, humility, which stems from the root, *humus*, or earth, is an *educational necessity* that contributes much to our awakening. If educators seek further integration of the physical with the spiritual in art, an orientation that includes accepting the body, and offering both our humility and delight for all that is known and unknown, will develop a pedagogy that leads to the heart.

Indigenous cultures and spirituality

Many of the ideas currently espoused by eco-feminist and deep ecology proponents are not new to indigenous peoples, nor are they novelties to Eastern and Western mystics who have known the Creator Spirit as immanent in all creation, in action, and in art making as one of the processes in which the divine takes form (Gradle, 2004). I employ John Grim's (2001) definition of *indigenous*, as "ethnic groups with obvious cultural, linguistic, and kinship bonds" (p. 37) and *tradition* as the "viable cultural wholes, or lifeways that have been transforming themselves in ongoing encounters" (pp. 37–38). While Grim appropriately points out that it is culturally naive to suppose that all traditional/indigenous people share similar world views and the same environmental concerns, he also notes several general orientations of traditional/indigenous spiritual ecology that are important for this discussion. First, kinship relations, community, the value of ancestral teachings, and responsible actions toward the land, the creatures that inhabit it, and the extended family or group seem essential.

Second, the spatial relationship with place that is noted by Grim and others (Casey, 1996; Basso, 1996; Feld, 1996) presents a cosmology that is an experiential, embodied phenomenon of interaction with all of life. This is not an out-of-body experience, but the kind of here-and-now relationship of being part of a sacred world that I discussed earlier when defining spirituality. In Aboriginal culture, for example, the action of making art allows for the communication with ancestral spirits, thus ensuring the continuation of the world's daily physical existence

(Anderson, 1990). Art not only functions to renew the spiritual world, but to convey a culture that is ever-present in specific places. The visualization of an indivisible sacred/physical world is seen in both Tibetan and Navajo mandalas, the cosmic maps of the spiritual universe, in which the gods come and go replenishing physical and psychic space (Gold, 1994; Witherspoon, 1977). Folkways, traditions, and deeply cherished past practices such as hexes (Boyer, 2004) are representative of a spiritual ecology of healing among long time Pennsylvania German residents. The folk traditions and place stories that Dennis Boyer tells are deeply rooted in the foggy hollows and winding, mountainous turns of Pennsylvania, perhaps pointing to what William Pinar, William Reynolds, Patrick Slattery, and Peter Taubman (1995) would refer to in a discussion of how “place embodies the social and the particular” (p. 291) every bit as much as it embodies the sacred.

However, even in the current environmental crisis, it seems unlikely that Western culture will suddenly develop a land ethic. As naturalist Wes Jackson (1994) remarks, it was neither the goal of American immigrants to operate with a conservation ethic, nor to become native. Care for the earth has been and continues to be an individual value not held in common by all. Sociologist Robert Putnam (2000) notes that the entrenched orientations of individual autonomy in the United States are unlikely to change suddenly and render all people ecologically mindful, engaged citizens. Without greater involvement in communities, which in turn are also embedded in environmental sites, it will be a challenge to develop the strong social capital necessary to generate the kind of mindfulness that will lead to care for the earth and ethical action.

The questions for art educators—and educators—are probably quite obvious. How can a spiritual ecology of art education further the connections with place that are essential for sustainability? What is it we can take from a closer look at indigenous/traditional values and ways of spiritually orienting to the earth that are artful? How might this direction also lead to the heart of art education?

While it may be beyond our capabilities to revise a cultural past that has seen little benefit in a strong ancestral or natural world cosmology, it does seem art education could challenge the stranglehold of fundamentalist thinking apparent in education’s current fascination with outcomes-driven curriculum. The pathways that indigenous education

addresses through ritual, process learning, and the subsequent power to uncloak “the presence of the present itself” (Abram, 1996, p. 223) within daily life are useful in art education. Gregory Cajete (1994), author, educator, and Tewa native of the Santa Clara Pueblo, delineates the eco-spiritual practice in the ritual and ceremonial process of creating indigenous art. This deserves mention here; for it suggests a unique opportunity to marvel at the difference-in-kind (Aoki, 1993) that could extend current thinking about the *locus* and *purpose* of creativity.

A Way of Becoming: Ritual and Ceremony

Cajete (1994) reveals that the preparation of the indigenous artist begins with a conscious effort to simplify, to revitalize, and to obtain clarity of one’s purpose before creating. In other words, it is a time to become mindful of all action—spiritual and physical. Art first becomes manifest as an “intention and an activity” (Dissanayake, 2000, p. 146), with ritual preparations acting as a path to creation. Through ritual, ordinary temporality is suspended as mindful immersion in sacred time occurs (Eliade, 1959). When the indigenous artist is ready to collect materials, Cajete notes that ritual also extends to the gathering and preparations. In some cases, this extends to the artist recalling *why* the ritual of preparation is important and *how it came to be a ritual* in the first place (Gradle, 2004). It seems that frequently the quality, origin, and sometimes even when--and how-- items are obtained contribute to the success of the work.

While the Western definition of creativity is often equated with originality and self expression of the individual, Cajete (1994) notes that the indigenous view on creative action includes: the adherence to prescribed patterns, to conventions of working, and to a particular portrayal of subject matter. It is not only that these actions are realized as necessary in the conveyance of culture, but also essential because “the surrender to the contingencies of the task” is necessary if artist and work are “to become one and if the authentic transformation of both [is] to occur” (p. 156).

The importance of *surrender* was noted by Pinar and Grumet (1976), who recognized it as essential for teaching; and here, it is equally important to explore in a traditional/indigenous view of creativity. When the artist surrenders to the task, thus allowing the transformation of self

and materials to occur, it seems that one could consider that there is a radically differing locus for creativity than the imagination of the individual. Creativity is seen as an inter-relational transformation, a dance of great magnitude between people, processes, and things themselves. It is the connective actions which comprise, and thus alter, the creator-object relationships that transform the world. The concept of *interobjectivity* that Davis (2004) noted as evident in the relational world of objects and people, and the ecological views on *mind as process* espoused first by Bateson (1972), suggest there are strong educative connections to Cajete's (1994) thinking on indigenous, creative process.

Attention and Mindfulness, Embodied Spirit

Focusing on the process of what one is about to do in art is grounded in the awareness that the quality of one's attention does matter, as shown in indigenous thinking. The admonition to students to 'pay attention' is not the kind of attentiveness I am referring to here. In Claudia Eppert's (2004) words, attention has become a commodity: students 'pay attention' as though they must purchase knowledge-as-facts, with the ultimate goal being other tangible rewards of focus: admission to college, passing an exam, or earning points for recess. What is necessary instead, Eppert relays, is something more akin to philosopher and social activist Simone Weil's thoughts on attention. The latter believed this term could best be understood as a turning of one's whole self to God. While the terminology may differ, the cultivation of this kind of attention is essential in the art maker's experience. Focused, purposeful allows for new pathways to open up. As Eppert (2004) contends, this opening realizes for those in education a much different end: "Ultimately the goal of learning is not the acquisition of subject matter but rather a lifelong struggle with the question of how to live in the world...." (p. 47). In her continued discussion on attention, Eppert also notes the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who believed that attentiveness has much to do with receptivity to the Other. Like Weil, he argued that learning entailed something far more transformative than the acquisition of knowledge.

Other Participatory Models

While Cajete's (1994) delineation of the creative process may seem as though it would apply only in indigenous contexts, Gablik's (1991) exploration of a communal, ecologically based approach to creativity—rather than a model of artistic autonomy and separation, or the mastery of skills—points to a similar opinion that it is inter-relational knowledge which is necessary for sustainable art. C. A. Bowers (1995) notes that in traditional cultures, entire *natural systems* are sustained and the knowledge and values of cultures are conserved over generations of living in relationship with a particular place and people. The conception of the term community is thus far reaching; for it includes the community of ancestors and the descendents of the present population. Therefore, experiential knowledge in this view must be continually renewed via trans-generational learning, through story, song, dance, and visual arts as communications of memory, wisdom, ethics, and sustainable relationships.

To consider a participatory mode of art making, in which the meaning in an art form is constructed from interaction and no longer resides solely in the artist or the viewer or even in the piece itself, involves a paradigmatic shift to viewing creativity as *actions* that sustain and renew the spirit through connections. Ritual, process learning, attention, and becoming mindful of the spiritual within physical actions are necessary in *world making*, or the continuation of a culture. If these actions, as Bowers (1995) notes, are now what we will call "creativity in an ecologically-centered culture" (p. 58), the essential questions may well be: how can art educators and artists make the paradigmatic leap from critical reflectors of socio-cultural values and beliefs to the inter-relational, ecological, and a far less individually driven concept of creative action? Can creativity be conceptualized as connective, spiritual, and as a bio-cultural participation which is sustainable via art education?

Metaphors and Mythology

Charlene Spretnak (1997) points out that modernity has relegated mythology to the scrap heap of our souls. Myths are considered narratives—mere stories—that originated in cultures whose world views we cannot share. They are often considered to be constructed falsehoods used to explain natural phenomena or the origins of life. However, myths are not untruths, made-up tales, or human reconstructions of

what is perceived as a pre-literate, causal explanation of the world. While no one can return to the pre-modern conception of the universe as an unbroken whole, replete with the gods who rule in our systems, there are opportunities, noted by Olds (1992) that can revitalize our connections to mythology. Mythology approximates what is true and real with a story. The personas of these stories do not negate our experience, but support our lives by revealing a reality that is translucent through the actions of the story.

Let me offer an example. Edith Hamilton (1942) reminds us that the Greeks didn't believe that the universe was created by the gods. It was the other way around. Before the gods existed, there was Heaven (Uranus) and Earth (Gaia). As a result of their union, the large and invincible Titans were born. Although not much is known about them, we recognize the Titaness, Memory (Mnemosyne), whose role became one of helping mortals preserve the oral history of Heaven and Earth. What is translucent about this story that speaks to us today as truth? What is it that Heaven and Earth want? *To be remembered*. Memory, so the story continues, gave birth to the nine Muses, who were all of one heart, yet each with a differing gift for humankind that gave great joy: music, epic poetry, mime, tragic drama, comedy, astronomy, history, dance, and lyrical poetry. Memory's "aids," one might say, are the gifts of story, song, dance, the recollection of history, the awareness of the planets and stars, and the ability to understand the purpose of both laughter and tears. What we have in this myth, is the remembrance of what we have been given, how it came about, and the *presence of the Universe itself* standing behind the story.

According to James Hillman (1989), archetypes, such as this one about Memory, "are metaphors rather than things" (p. 23). More likely to be described than defined, Hillman suggests that imagistic, metaphoric discourse gives greater access to the presences that stand behind the story. The "deepest patterns of psychic functioning" (p. 23) spill through the image or the metaphor and make their ecology apparent. Image and metaphor are how the archetypes interconnect with the spirit, resonate with memory, or revive and revise themselves with Psyche's energy. This is not a place that literalism inhabits; and this is a challenge for re-visioning today's education. We cannot mistake the "vehicle of truth and worship with the ultimate referent of its meaning" (Olds, 1992, p. 116); in

other words, it is not the story as a story that demands our educative attention, but the story as the progeny of Memory who stands just on the periphery of its telling.

The Invisible made Visible in Metaphor and Image

The role of metaphor in human thought can have visual and verbal components. The heart is not only Harvey's beating, chambered machine, but is also a place of images that some among us have not forgotten. James Hillman (1992/2004) suggests that in scholar Henry Corbin's view, the heart was not a place of feelings, such as the Western world tends to personalize (i.e.; love, hate, fear, anger, bliss). The heart is the entrance into the imagination, where the imaginal world is given to us to see and to use. Peter Abbs (2003) suggests that "the arts provide the distinctive metaphors and the technical means for reflecting the invisible life of human experience" (p. 40). Noting Wittgenstein's hesitation to venture into Psyche's rugged terrain where propositions falter, he comments that the strength of all the arts is that they bring archetypal energy forward by re-visioning culture in ways that complement, rather than contradict, other ways of knowing. In the visual arts, this continues in art educator/therapist Howard McConeghey's (2003) work, in which he insists, "We must care enough to see the face of the invisible essence of the objects and events of our daily experience" (p. 63). In his view, the unique expressions of images require less interpretation and diagnosis from teachers and therapists, and more caring support for bringing the invisible, archetypal energy into the visible world.

Thomas Moore (1998) explains that myths never call for literalism; in fact, they cannot live in a world that literalism inhabits. The images we need thrive in nuance, shadow, and ruminating places where their qualities cannot be known and measured with standardized testing. The task for the educator is one of re-visioning a language of image and of metaphor which speaks of a living mythology of consciousness.

Theodore Roszak (1992) in his description of a study done by anthropologist Joseph Bastien, explains how one pastoral group in the Bolivian Andes employs imagery of the body to describe their relationship with the earth. Living in the steep terrain of Mount Kaata, one group sees themselves as the 'head' in the highlands of the mountains, another further down in the fertile valley as the 'belly' and

the 'heart,' and further down where the corn is planted the people are the 'toenails' of the earth. The connection with each ecosystem and the earth's body are clear in this metaphorical language.

Knowing that many New Mexican Hispanics have ancestry that they can trace back to Spain and that the early settlers had strong connections to the land, when I spoke with a New Mexican Hispanic *santero* a few years ago (Gradle, 2005), I asked him if his contemporaries still felt this connection. Not all do, he explained. But many still refer to the land as *querencia*, a term of endearment that he took to mean a place one belongs to, a place that is always there to come home to. He explained that just as a frightened newborn colt will return to the place in the field where it was born, when there was still blood on the land, the colt will always return to that place for security, if given the opportunity. The sense of belonging to the land is like that for many New Mexican natives and is cultivated through a deep bond to the land, the culture, and the community that has nurtured their identity.

If we consider that metaphor and mythology can do this much to anchor existence, why is it we have such a difficult time de-literalizing language? Why is it we struggle so hard to be exact? Language itself, as noted earlier, is only one gift of Memory—her children, the Muses, enriched this faculty further with the arts. Writer Mary Doll (2000) presses for a stronger relationship with life: one that requires an imaginative spirit and employs “ancient myth, Buddhist meditation, romantic poetry, psychology, modern myth, and modern fiction” as valuable contributors to “the greening of the imagination” (p. 203). Why can't we put imagination, as Matthew Fox (2002) asserts, “to the use of transformation” (p. 8), since it is already known via mythology that creativity and imagination are survival necessities we need in order to remember Heaven and Earth?

Conclusion

The next challenging interface of art education and the spiritual is the process of becoming better acquainted with the metaphoric body of ourselves with a beating, but imaginative heart, one that notes the relational patterns of myth, metaphor, indigenous process learning, and soulful actions in community as creative intelligence. What kinds of

education develop the spiritual mindfulness that is needed to sustain metaphor? How does one become attuned to the subtle nuances of another culture's intentional, communal art? Where does the circulatory system lead, once we are back in the body, searching for the heart?

Understanding the significance of being *rooted* in the imaginal heart of pedagogy and belonging to others suggests a metaphor of being in a relationship that is far more than the sum of its individual parts. Being *placed* in the world feeds us spiritually, nurtures us physically, and connects us functionally. The strength and the future of art education lie in the unique capacity to understand this large and sacred mystery, and attend to it artfully. Ultimately, the kind of questions education asks need to change. Teachers and researchers can not continue to drive instruction that has a narrow outcome (how to keep students in school, how to prepare students for college, for teaching, for the real world, etc.), but must encourage the more deeply ecological and spiritual concerns to surface and propel the discipline forward.

How can inquiry in the arts show the understandings that are possible when we view ourselves as inter-dependent partners on the planet? How can teaching and learning in the arts develop metaphoric wisdom that acts as a pattern of connectivity among living systems? What qualities or characteristics about alternative world views challenge our ideas of how to live? What kind of art ideas would support spiritual and physical renewal of the planet with all forms of life as dependent equals? How can a re-vision of arts education that includes embodied spirituality extend the kind of learning that values difference-in-kind (Aoki, 1993) and blends discipline divides? The heart of art education, and I believe all other sustainable visions of education, is here in the participatory, visionary focus; honed on the spiritual connectivity of humankind with all of life as the most artful composition of all.

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ⁱ I am indebted to Henry Corbin for his use of the term imaginal (and also Cheetham's works that specifically address Corbin's ideas). In Corbin's view, the imaginal realm is an intermediary world that shares qualities of both intellectual and sensory perceptions. The use of the term imaginal is not to be construed as fantasy, but rather a world of Being or way of knowing that is powerful, intentional, and meditative.

ⁱⁱ The word ecology has from its inception implied a relational function. In 1869, German biologist, Ernst Haeckel, combined the Greek words *oikos* (meaning 'household, 'dwelling,' or 'home') and *logos* (the study of) to designate the "study of the household of nature" (Balgooyen, 1973, p.1199) as a way of more clearly defining abiotic and biotic relationships.