ABSTRACT

This dissertation builds upon Scharmer’s account of presencing within the newly emerging fields of contemplative education and complexity education as a basis for developing a pedagogical framework that supports intersubjective inquiry within classroom settings in higher education. The four chapters explore both general and specific ways in which presencing can be adapted within higher education classrooms. Each speaks to those instructors across different disciplines that are exploring ways of communicating and learning shaped by consciousness-based approaches of inquiry for the purposes of bringing forth new knowledge and insights in classroom settings. By re-interpreting and expanding upon Scharmer’s account of presencing as a second-person contemplative pedagogy, this research broadly draws upon an assortment of intersubjective, complexivist and ontological theories as a basis for developing specific contemplative approaches to curriculum and instructional methods in the higher education classroom. As a whole, this dissertation project inquires further into related theoretical questions, issues and possibilities within the emerging fields of contemplative education with the objective of introducing useful distinctions, perspectives and interpretations that will assist scholar-practitioners in thinking through and addressing the complex demands of working with contemplative approaches to classroom inquiry in higher education settings.
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1. Introduction

My passion for the core topics explored within this dissertation—presencing, contemplative approaches to education, conversation as an intersubjective field of inquiry, ontological conceptions of teaching, among others—is rooted in a longstanding engagement with interpersonal and collective transformative methods across a varied range of learning and educational contexts. As an instructor and facilitator, I have taught and learned a great deal from delivering a handful of different courses over the past eight years utilizing generative dialogue processes in post-secondary settings in Sweden (Holma College of Integral Studies), USA (Critical and Creative Thinking Graduate Program, UMASS (Boston) and Canada (UBC, Langara College). Yet, as I reflect back over this period, I am struck by the irony that the heart of this work was not conceived in the classroom.

In Parker Palmer’s (1998) reflections, where he speaks to educators on the importance of paying attention to the inner landscapes of their lives first and foremost as a way of establishing an undivided relationship to their profession, he remarks on the importance of finding a new vitalizing center for one’s life outside or external to the institutional contexts and their incessant demands. Since encountering Palmer’s work and particularly this insight as an undergraduate student, I have made a deliberate and concerted effort to better understand the source of my academic passions as well as optimal ways of situating them in relation to the whole of my life. Consistent with Palmer’s wisdom, this journey has drawn me outside the folds of institutional life to explore transformative experiences in various groups where presencing and other intersubjective practices have shaped our collective processes of inquiry. As a participant in different formal and informally conceived communities of practice—that is collectives with a
shared passion for inquiry into subjects we perceived as essential—each has played a formative role in renewing, clarifying and bringing to light a central felt source of calling around this work for me. In these varied settings, individuals and myself made what we felt at the time were significant discoveries concerning a) the educational significance of the intersubjective dimension of consciousness within complex co-emergent fields of inquiry, b) the importance of sacred inquiry practices as a vehicle for raising collective forms of intelligence c) the educational implications of coming into presence together for the purposes of unfolding new meaning, insights and discoveries into particular subjects and d) contemplative practices of inquiry for accessing the deep interiority of the group’s moment-to-moment experience of sharing meaning.

As a whole, this manuscript-based dissertation focuses and builds on these above discoveries of collective wisdom cultivation, which I believe have a yet untold significance in classroom life.

Throughout this work I expand upon Scharmer’s (2007, 2000) account of the four fields of conversation and of presencing as a basis for developing an intersubjective pedagogical framework that can be applied by instructors working within contemplative and complexity educational processes in higher education settings. My characterization of presencing also further elaborates upon its educational implications as an individual and collective transpersonal process of drawing from presence for the purposes of bringing forth new knowledge and insights in classroom settings. By re-interpreting and expanding upon Scharmer’s account of presencing as a second-person\(^1\) contemplative pedagogy, this research investigates the potentials for

\(^{1}\) In this dissertation, I generally draw upon the distinction of second-person (in contrast to first-person or third-person) as an integral heuristic (Sarath, 2006) for categorizing interpersonal “process-oriented” pedagogies such as dialogue or presencing that involve a shared learning exchange between individuals and groups. Examples of first-person pedagogy might include meditation or journaling, whereas third-person pedagogy involves more object or content driven forms of discussion. Sometimes I represent the second-person perspective with the construct of the shared intersubjective field. And other times, I employ second-person as a referent for the intersubjective position that is represented spatially as held between us, in contrast to inside us (subjective position) or outside us (objective position). To forestall any confusion for readers unfamiliar with my use of second-person in the context of types of
collective learning that is not the aggregate sum of what each student learns but a dynamic shared process of fostering collective wisdom and inquiry. Additionally, this research broadly draws upon an assortment of intersubjective, complexivist and ontological theories as a basis for developing specific contemplative approaches to curriculum and instructional methods in the higher education classroom.

As a whole, this dissertation project seeks to provide viable alternatives to more traditional functionalist pedagogical models within higher education that emphasize the expert transmission and delivery of content knowledge to the exclusion of fostering individual and collective wisdom and inquiry processes. As such, the central overarching objective is to inquire further into what I perceive to be a number of generative theoretical questions, issues and possibilities within the emerging fields of contemplative education and complexity education and to introduce helpful perspectives, distinctions and ideas that will assist scholar-practitioners in thinking through and addressing the complex demands of applying contemplative and complexivist approaches to classroom inquiry in higher education settings.

1.1. Overview of Dissertation Chapters

Within the first chapter, my project is to establish second-person forms of contemplative education by inquiring into the following contributions of four intersubjective theorists, including Martin Buber’s conception of the interhuman (Buber 1965, 1966, 1984; Kramer, 2003), Thich Nhat Hahn’s interbeing (Bai, 1999, 2004; Nhat Hanh, 2000; Nakagawa, 2000; Rothberg, 1998), Christian De Quincey’s three forms of intersubjectivity (2000; 2005; Hargens, classroom pedagogies, it is important to note that I am not drawing from either the literary use of second-person narrative voice and point of view or the linguistic use of the “you” pronoun.

2 Throughout this manuscript I refer to contemplative education as a newly emerging field (Duerr et al., 2003; Roth, 2006) with important implications for teaching and learning in higher education classroom contexts. Within this field, I am particularly interested in establishing intersubjective forms of contemplative pedagogy, fostering teacher and student presence and integrating traditional and contemporary contemplative practices such as meditation, mindfulness, presencing among others for the purposes of bringing about transformative experiences in students ways of being and ways of knowing in the context of classroom inquiry.
and Ken Wilber’s integral dimensions of intersubjectivity (Wilber, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2006; Hargens, 2001) with consideration for how each might contribute to further outlining second-person dimensions of contemplative education (Apffel-Marglin & Bush, 2005; Nelson, 2006; Roth, 2006; Sarath, 2006; Zajonc, 2006). I then locate intersubjectivity within a broader epistemological terrain and introduce the notion of second-person education as a framework within which to establish a provisional set of intersubjective distinctions informed by the four above accounts and to further substantiate the intersubjective field as a central context of learning in classroom life.

For the second chapter, I build on the previous chapter and develop aspects of a second-person approach to contemplative pedagogy in the higher education classroom. To establish a framework for engaging in intersubjective contemplative pedagogy, I draw upon several practices: Scharmer’s practice of presencing (2007, 2005, 2001; Senge et al., 2004), Varela’s three gestures of awareness (2000; Depraz, 2003) and Quaker discernment (Loring, 1999; Palmer, 1976; etc). Each method is examined in relation to its roots in first-person contemplative practice, current thinking on contemplative pedagogy as well as the author’s reflections and experience as a basis for advancing the larger project of establishing second-person varieties of contemplative pedagogy by identifying and sharing examples particular to such process-oriented approaches.

Complexivist education draws upon the discoveries of complexity theory, systems theory, and new scientific thought among others, venturing helpful explanatory frameworks about how transformation unfolds within learning and teaching contexts, particularly the complex processes of collective learning within classrooms. In the third chapter, I explore the implications of a complexity perspective on Scharmer’s account of presencing with an interest in outlining
preliminary considerations for how presencing might contribute to a complex emergent pedagogy for enacting certain key notions within the complexivist education literature such as the “space of emergence” (Osberg & Biesta, 2008), “enlarging the space of the possible” (Davis & Phelps, 2004) and “teacher as the consciousness of the collective” (Davis & Sumara, 2005).

In the fourth chapter, I explore the implications of an ontological turn in higher education (Barnett 2000, 2004a, 2004b; 2005) where one’s condition of being in the classroom takes primacy over one’s fund of knowing. As unsettling forms of uncertainty and supercomplexity play out in our knowledge age, these changes in life conditions are arguably requiring a shift in orientation for educators accustomed to constructing their self-identities around their knowledge competencies. In response to the move towards teaching for wisdom, I reflect on my experiences with implementing contemplative approaches to learning as a basis for integrating the ontological dimension with my students in a graduate course that I teach in Dialogue Processes at the University of Massachusetts (Boston).

As a singular body of work, each chapter in this dissertation represents some combination of presencing theory, intersubjective theory, contemplative education theory and complexivist theory, proceeding with different purposes and audiences particular to each chapter. The intended audiences of this dissertation are primarily the academic community within higher education engaged in scholarship, research and teaching informed by the fields of contemplative education (chapters one, two and four), complexivist education (chapter three), presencing (chapters two, three and four) and ontological perspectives of teaching (chapter four). A small degree of overlap of content between the chapters is to a certain extent unavoidable largely due to the design of a manuscript-based dissertation in which each chapter is written for independent publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal. Overall, I envision the four chapters serving
the function of generating new recommendations, directions and inspiration for future research and practice in these interrelated domains.

1.2 Methodological Considerations

To offer some background on what brought me to theoretical inquiry and how I understand it, I will first reflect briefly on my previous work in fine art photography, since it provided a foundational training in aesthetics and the art of seeing which has informed my philosophical pursuit of and passion for theoretical inquiry. Photography became for me a practice for fostering a contemplative relationship with the world—whether in quiet rapture over the meticulous crawl of a bug, lying on the sand observing the eddies in the tide as it recedes from the beach or noticing a child caught for a moment by her mother’s gaze. As a visual exercise before composing a photograph, I would assess the available light and work through a highly selective process of framing and active composition. However, for the photograph to be more than another picture, I would work with the discipline of surrendering myself to the contemplation of my subject by connecting to a still place within where I could stabilize my attention. Supported by my personal meditation practice, when photographing I practiced witnessing the sensory experiences of aesthetic rapture elicited from attentive observation of my subject with poise and equanimity. I found this practice helped me hear my subject speaking more on its or their terms (rather than mediated through my past associations or preconceptions). As I worked with still photography, I found the medium to be helpful in disciplining my consciousness in the face of such peak experiences of wonder and beauty. When I lacked the discipline of composed attentiveness, I found I often missed the fleeting moment of beauty and so again my practice as a photographer was to prepare my mind through contemplative practice in order to receive and more optimally communicate such fleeting moments through
Reflecting back on this period, I can appreciate how my contemplative orientation with photographic expression has influenced my approach to theory development in my dissertation. Only instead of working with color, form, expression and the world of physicality, I have been exploring across different discourse traditions, following prominent flows of meaning while addressing the challenges of communicating deeper insights and expressing key distinctions well to an assortment of academic audiences through the written text. My fascination with contemplative process has also been directed and shaped by several Buddhist retreats in Asia, Europe, and North America over the past decade, as well as impassioned readings in Buddhist philosophy and psychology and ongoing inquiry with different sanghas over the years. I believe these retreats, readings and experiences in community have helped mature my contemplative orientation, out of which grew the foundation from which I aspire to relate to, behold and inquire more deeply into my subject as a conceptual researcher.

Throughout this dissertation I have worked with conceptual inquiry processes of uncovering, critiquing, generating and integrating perspectives across a range of literatures including intersubjective theory, integral theory, contemplative education, complexity education, ontological approaches, higher education, among others. As it stands, Scharmer’s (2007) account of presencing does not address these bodies of theory or the educational contexts in which they are situated. Given the learning objectives of classroom life in higher education, I am motivated to further recontextualize and build upon Scharmer’s theory to better serve inquiry-based pedagogical and learning needs of educators within post-secondary settings. In academic settings, generally a diversity of learning objectives range from emphasizing content acquisition to inquiry training (Ferrer, et. al, 2005), which involves acquiring new practical, facilitation and
inquiry based skills to be applied in professional and educational settings. Inquiry groups in academic settings are generally composed of persons who define for themselves what the group's learning task will be—whether individual and collective capacity building, personal and collective development or the pursuit of a pressing issue. This research will also involve further investigation into the tensions between Scharmer’s existing theory and my experiences in teaching and facilitating presencing. Building on my master’s thesis and other subsequent publications, I anticipate a small body of work will emerge from this doctoral research, which I plan on developing upon further and later assembling into a book on presencing for post secondary educators.

Given the general absence of prescriptive theory-building methodologies (Schapiro & Bentz, 1998), it is somewhat misleading to describe theoretical inquiry as a methodology in terms of the traditional notions of research method as “found in the procedures and practices of positive science and technologies—including educational science and social science” (Ruhloff, 2001, p.57-72). Bringing some clarity to the issue, Doll (2006) elaborates on method:

> Considering that “method” was an idea run rampant in both northern Europe and Colonial America in the 16th through 18th centuries—not to mention its prominence in the industrialization movement of the centuries following—it should be no surprise to find it in educational textbooks today. In fact, the union between method and textbooks can be traced back to Peter Ramus and the shortcuts he took to display (or chart) all knowledge for students to learn. As useful as this strategy was in the late Renaissance ages—and compared to the abstract intricacies of scholasticism—it has left us with a legacy which assumes that knowledge can, and indeed should, be presented efficiently: in concise, simplified, methodized form (p.690).

Following from the Cartesian tradition, traditional approaches to method risk underplaying the importance of enacting new knowledge that is not mediated by an operative set of procedures, but inspired from insights and revelation that emerge by cultivating a creative relationship and
immersion with one’s work in the present moment.³ It is not that I do not believe theoretical thinking can benefit from being informed by methodological or procedural considerations, rather I am reluctant to support the notion that theoretical research necessarily involves following a predetermined set of methodological guidelines. Given that theoretical thinking is informed by certain patterns and habits of thought, meaning-making processes and action, throughout this dissertation I have drawn on contemplative practices such as mindfulness meditation and presencing as a basis for preparing my mind for creative insights and discovery to emerge in my research. As Doll (2006, p. 9) puts it, “the challenge as educators is to help guide these conversations so that one’s acquired habits focus on the creative not the copied.” Framed in this way, the core process of theoretical inquiry is not guided by methodology, rather I have aspired to mindfully engage with a range of conceptual research processes including intuitive discernment, critical, creative and contemplative thinking, among others. As such, my approach to theoretical inquiry has involved furthering the aims of formulating interpretations and tentative conclusions with the intent of distilling new knowledge, understanding and in certain cases, wisdom. Schapiro and Bentz describe the role of theoretical inquiry in Mindful Inquiry in Social Research:

Theoretical Inquiry attempts to generate new knowledge through analysis, critique, extension and integration of existing theories and empirical research. After identifying limitations of, contradictions within and among theories or between theories and empirical research, the research attempts to eliminate these to arrive at a more consistent, comprehensive and powerful theories (p.141).

As a further explication of my approach to theoretical inquiry, I turn to Van Manen’s (1982) notion of theory:

³ From experiences in the contemplative and meditative traditions, I have also discovered personally that the creative quality of theoretical writing and research is among other conditions, state-dependent. That is, one’s capacity to access, stabilize and communicate from deeper states of consciousness in one’s writing has creative implications in terms of the quality of inquiry and discourse brought to bear on a given subject.
Etymologically, the theoretical is “a place for seeing” and “a place for beholding and presenting,” hence the term theatre. The theoretical as theatre is a place where in the midst of everyday life we find the possibility of contemplating, beholding, and presenting the good; and the possibility of thus having a transforming experience-in the edifying sense of “inspiring,” “making pure,” “enlightening,” and “uplifting spiritually” (p.44).

Aspiring to bring about a new lens for seeing, beholding and relating with key questions and issues in my work, I have attempted to build theory in the edifying sense of what Van Manen is proposing in his definition, exploring beyond the narrow telos of traditional conceptions of research where reductionist, positivist or foundationalist motivations tend to prevail by making educational theory as objective, predictable and manageable as possible.

As a basis for establishing criteria to assist the reader’s understanding of how I have engaged with different theoretical processes as a means for contributing to scholarship within and across the communities of inquiry featured in this work, in each chapter I strive to build upon the aims and objectives of the respective discourse communities by introducing new perspectives to different conversations. To what extent do these perspectives appeal to the questions, issues and matters of importance that resonate and ring true for scholar-practitioners in these fields? As discussed, each article introduces my accounts of presencing in the context of contemplative and complexivist education. As you read through the dissertation, I invite you, the reader, to assess the merits of this work more holistically (Elgin, 1989) on the basis of certain questions addressed, values advocated, innovative ideas generated, as well as interests, commitments and projects to be served. On the whole, my objective is to establish what I perceive to be key processes, distinctions and frameworks involved in theorizing about and applying second-person methods (i.e. presencing, but also in general) of contemplative and complexivist pedagogy that will be useful to scholar-practitioners interested in bringing about processes of collective wisdom and consciousness-based transformative outcomes in their
classrooms. Following from Vokey’s (2001) considerations for wide reflective equilibrium, do the points raised within these conceptual discussions resonate with your experience? Are my assumptions and commitments consistent internally and with the educational contexts they are attempting to serve? Do the ideas introduced hold the potential to further key educational aims and objectives of scholar-practitioners and instructors contributing to the fields of contemplative education, complexity education and transformative pedagogical approaches within higher education? Are my accounts of presencing and intersubjectivity congruent with accepted or emerging wisdom? When engaged within the context of post-secondary classroom practice, do the pedagogical accounts and frameworks I introduce assist the educator and class in bringing about transformative outcomes? I invite readers to consider these and other related questions as they work through the following chapters.
1.4 Works Cited


http://www.solonline.org/repository/download/Theory_U_Intro_Sept_05.pdf?item_id=8892547


2. Establishing Second-Person Forms of Contemplative Education: An Inquiry into Four Conceptions of Intersubjectivity

2.1 Introduction

While contemplative practices have been foundational to wisdom traditions throughout recorded history, it is only recently that these practices are being examined in different context(s) of learning, particularly in secular institutions of higher education. In the past decade, several academic conferences and a growing educational literature have focused on contemplative approaches to teaching, learning and knowing (Brady, 2007; Duerr et al. 2003; Hart, 2004; Miller, 1994; Seidel, 2006; Thurman, 2006). Existing theoretical and qualitative research in contemplative education includes the following areas of focus: integration of contemplative practice in academia (Apffel-Marglin & Bush, 2005; Hall & Archibald, 2008; Nelson, 2006; Zajonc, 2006); studies of mindfulness in higher education settings (Holland, 2006; Langer, 1997); presence (O’Reilly, 1998; Seidel, 2006); contemplative learning in holistic education (Grossenbacher and Parkin, 2006); teacher development (Brown, 1998; Miller, 1994); prospects for a new field of studies (Duerr et al., 2003; Roth, 2006); survey of K-12 programs using contemplative practices (Garrison Report, 2005); meditation as a vehicle for contemplative education (Brady, 2007; Sarath, 2003; Zajonc, 2008); contemplation as creativity (Brady, 2007; Sarath, 2003; Zajonc, 2008).

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5 The following conferences have either exclusively focused on or featured presentations about contemplative education in recent years: Contemplative Pedagogy in Higher Education (Amherst College, May 2003), Contemplative Practices and Education: Making Peace in Ourselves and in the World (Teachers College, 2005), Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education (San Francisco, 2007), Mindful Learners: The Uses of Contemplative Practice in the Classroom (CUNY, 2006), Developmental Issues in Contemplative Education (Garrison Institute, 2008). Additionally, there is a graduate program in Contemplative Education at Naropa University, Contemplative Studies at Brown University and the University of Michigan as well as the Rocky Mountain Contemplative Higher Education Network based out of Colorado for academics interested in contemplative approaches to education. Over the past decade through the Center for Contemplative Mind there have been annual contemplative retreats and over 130 individual fellowships for $10,000 US issued to academics across North American campuses to develop courses that employ contemplative practices. Also, over the past decade there have been annual retreats at Naropa’s Center for the Advancement of Contemplative Education, as well as a special feature journal issue on contemplative education with the Teacher’s College Record (September, 2006).
Sarath, 2006). These and other contributions draw broadly from the perennial world wisdom traditions (i.e., Buddhist, Taoist, Quaker, among others) and recent scientific research (i.e., neuroscience, cognitive science, clinical psychology) in the interests of investigating contemplative practices as a means for enhancing learning and development across a broad array of educational contexts and disciplinary fields.

Naropa University, a leader in contemplative education, defines and outlines their approach:

Contemplative education is learning infused with the experience of awareness, insight and compassion for oneself and others, honed through the practice of sitting meditation and other contemplative disciplines. The rigor of these disciplined practices prepares the mind to process information in new and perhaps unexpected ways. Contemplative practice unlocks the power of deep inward observation, enabling the learner to tap into a wellspring of knowledge about the nature of mind, self and other that has been largely overlooked by traditional, Western-oriented liberal education. This approach to learning captures the spark of East and West working within; it’s the meeting of two of the greatest learning philosophies in the history of higher education. (Naropa University, 2008)

Informed by various contemplative wisdom traditions, contemplative education involves the integration of contemplative practices into the curriculum of traditional higher education settings for the purposes of fostering intuitive, non-conceptual and experiential forms of knowing along paths of learning characterized by wholeness, unity and integration.

As a prominent voice within contemplative education, scholar-practitioner Harold Roth (2006) advocates exploring contemplative exercises from critical first-person and third-person perspectives. In the few articles that address epistemological issues (Roth, 2006; Sarath, 2006),

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6 Traditional contemplative practices include meditation, prayer, chanting, ink brush painting, ritual performance as well as music, dance, storytelling, martial arts, contemplative art, among others.

7 Roth (2006, p. 1805) points out that first-person approaches to contemplative experience involve exploring contemplation from a subjective position within the individual learner, while third-person approaches aspire to examine contemplative experience from an objective position that is presumed to be outside of us.
sufficient attention has not yet been given to contemplative pedagogy\(^8\) from second-person perspectives, with a present gap in the literature concerning intersubjective approaches to pedagogy and learning. Given the absence of a comprehensive study of the philosophy, psychology and phenomenology of intersubjectivity, as scholar-practitioners, there is a need to further outline how to identify, distinguish between and experience key second-person forms of contemplative pedagogy and learning in our classrooms.

For the purposes of this article, second-person approaches to contemplative education involve exploring contemplative experience from an intersubjective position that is represented spatially as *between* us, in contrast to *inside* us (subjective position) or *outside* us (objective position). Additionally, I am situating second-person approaches to contemplative education within an integral pedagogical heuristic (Sarath, 2006) that consists of first-person, second-person and third-person approaches. From this perspective, second-person approaches to teaching categorize interpersonal “process-oriented” pedagogies such as dialogue or presencing, which involve a unique shared intersubjective context for learning between individuals and groups. As the four accounts of intersubjectivity in this article attempt to demonstrate, there are different dimensions to shared experience that call upon distinct features of this relational perspective.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) I define contemplative pedagogy as any first-, second- or third- person contemplative practice that is utilized for educational purposes. Generally contemplative practices invoke heightened states of consciousness or contemplative awareness, which is “a state of being in which one is fully present and attuned to the world, bracketing thinking, judging, and analyzing, while trying to see clearly (Kesson, 2006, p. 1879). While contemplative pedagogy may draw on contemplative practice, not all contemplative practices are suitable within educational contexts. As such, it is advisable that educators explore a particular contemplative practice outside the classroom in order to determine which (if any) elements will be appropriate in serving their teaching objectives and the learning needs of students.

\(^9\) For the purposes of this article, I am focusing primarily on the individual and shared aspects of consciousness in the context of relationality and group discourse. Due to the limitations of space and the specific focus and scope of the article, I have not chosen not to address the myriad personal histories, social, cultural or political voices of students that play an important role in shaping classroom interactions.
Intersubjective theory has surfaced in recent decades from diverse developments in consciousness studies, integral studies, philosophy of mind, transpersonal psychology and feminist critical theory among others. Partly in response to the problematic legacy of Cartesian rationalism that proceeds epistemically by objectifying and depersonalizing one’s self and the world (Ferrer, 2001), a number of intersubjective theorists (Bai, 1999, 2004; De Quincey, 2000, 2005, Heshusius, 1994; Thompson, 2001) have made the effort to establish the validity of certain shared processes of knowing born through and inside relationship. In doing this, these contributions have provided an important epistemological rebalancing and movement towards more integrated visions of knowledge and the processes of knowing.

Within educational contexts, intersubjective theory has been applied for improving teaching designs for a community of learners in terms of focusing on the common elements of attention, understanding and communication (Matusov, 2001). Related to this application is the design of a shared pedagogical object for the learning activity (EngestroKm, 1990), which the educator and students explore during the lesson (Wertsch, 1979). Intersubjectivity has also been applied in the context of special consensus-based learning activities (Matusov, 1996). Framed as a move from egocentric to sociocentric thought (Soltis, 1985), intersubjectivity has served the educational purposes of dialogue instruction (Guilar, 2006) focusing on the interrelationships between teachers, student and content.

In the upcoming sections I consider the following accounts of intersubjectivity10 with an interest11 in their relevance to contemplative education: Martin Buber’s conception of the

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10 I chose to focus on these four intersubjective theorists as their contributions to intersubjectivity theory are rooted in and informed by deeper existential interests in the human condition. Additionally, each proceeds with an underlying sacred orientation to their inquiry and holds a deep-seated commitment to evolving human consciousness with their work. I believe these aspects are particularly relevant to my project insofar as theorizing about the deeper dimensions of intersubjectivity seems to require at the very least, an experiential familiarity with the shared potentials of consciousness—a capacity that is exemplified in the work of each of these theorists.

2.2 Buber’s Conception of the Interhuman

A twentieth century religious existential philosopher, Martin Buber has been a prominent voice in advocating the ideals of sacred consciousness, interpersonal relationship and dialogue in community. Buber’s philosophical contribution involves framing human existence as contingent upon interpersonal modes of consciousness, interaction and being through which one engages with other humans, nature, the inanimate world and the sacred. Best known for his articulation of I-Thou and I-It relationships (1965; 1966; 1984), Buber argues that human life consists of a

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11 My interest and passions for intersubjectivity and contemplative education arise from a number of sources. As a dialogue educator and facilitator, I have taught post-secondary courses over the past eight years utilizing generative dialogue processes in Sweden, USA and Canada. My research, partly informed by these experiences, has been primarily of a theoretical and philosophical nature with an overarching interest in clarifying and inquiring further into the conditions for students to experience integral forms of transformative education mediated by deeper intersubjective dimensions of teaching and learning. As an eclectic Buddhist practitioner and meditator, I am interested in inquiring further into consciousness-related approaches to learning and related themes. This project is in part motivated by an interest in deepening and broadening the evolution of consciousness discourse in the contemplative education literature as well as improving upon my knowledge and expertise in these areas as a scholar-practitioner. In addition, as a personal coach, my interests in self-actualization have developed a strong interest in learning the skillful means and capacities needed to support the conditions for personal transformation in my students and clients. Finally, my interest in cultivating second-person forms of contemplative education is also motivated by my experiences in various communities of practice that applied presencing and other intersubjective practices to our collective process, where we discovered and co-enacted deeper creative possibilities that I believe have a yet untold significance in classroom life.
movement between meeting and mismeeting in these realms, with the I-Thou representing a sacred form of relationship (which is central to interhuman relations) and the I-It a more common secular variety (Buber, 1965). In Buber’s (1984) monological I-It relationship, others are regarded like an “object” in a world that largely consists of people to be interacted with in order to serve our desires and ends. Buber (1984) elevates the personhood, needs and interests of the other as “subject” in the dialogical I-Thou mode of relationship, basing it on a responsiveness to and confirmation of the other, the other’s deeper humanity and the existing present-ness of the situation. Wood (1999) elaborates on the I-Thou relation:

For Buber, I-Thou relations are unique, unpredictable, immediate, and involve the whole of oneself ‘bound up in reciprocity’ with the other. I-It relations are linked to the universal, are predictable, mediated by past experience, and involve only a part of oneself which stands at a distance from the object. I-It relations are third-person relations, so that for ‘It’ one could substitute also ‘He’ or ‘She’ of ‘They.’ (p. 84)

Distinguishing these two very different modes of existence, the I-Thou relation draws upon a shared basis of connection that emerges through our encounters with others. In adopting the I-Thou attitude or stance towards relationship, there is a turning towards and acknowledgement of a more essential existential experience of another.

Throughout Buber’s works, he tends to sharply contrast the I-It relationship and I-Thou relationship. At times this leaves little room for more nuanced and paradoxical modes of being and meeting that are not exclusively apart of either archetype. Sidorkin (2000) elaborates:

It is either I-Thou or I-It, all or nothing. There is nothing else and nothing in between. In his later work, Buber tried to enrich this binary model by introducing the notion of Zwischenmenschliche, or the interhuman. The interhuman consists of elements of every day life that may lead to a genuine dialogue, or, as Buber describes it, “I-Thou” relation. (Sidorkin, 2000, p. 10)

As a shared experience of mutuality that is “generated by the immediate presence that binds together a conscious “self” with a conscious “other.”” (Kramer, 2003, p.78), the interhuman
comes alive when separate individual subjectivities come into an intersubjective experience of genuinely encountering one another, in turn generating a new reality between them. Buber describes that intersubjective reality as the interhuman:

When two individuals “happen” to each other, there is an essential remainder that reaches out beyond the special sphere of each—the “sphere of the between.” In an essential relation the barriers of individual being are breached and “the other becomes present, not merely in the imagination or feeling, but in the depths of one's substance, so that one experiences the mystery of the other being in the mystery of one's own.” (Buber, 1965, p. 170)

Buber’s notion of the interhuman is mediated by shared presence and offers no smooth continuity, thus it has been largely ignored (Friedman, 2001). Yet, in classroom contexts where we aspire to engage with our students from the emergent interhuman, in spite of whether one is in agreement or not on a particular issue, there is always an I-Thou occasion to stand our own ground while also meeting our students more fully on theirs. In other words, by attending to the interhuman in one’s teaching, we are in the position to more powerfully acknowledge Buber’s I-Thou relational ideal by grounding it in the real interactions with the elements that constitute post-secondary classroom life (i.e. diversity of views, ways of being and intelligences). In a classroom where an educator is exploring a second-person form of contemplative pedagogy, learning within the interhuman is contingent on the educator’s quality and capacity for sustaining presence with her students through the ups and downs of classroom life. Additionally, it would depend upon her capacity to confer, share and invite students into fostering I-Thou forms of relating collectively as an underlying process informing the inquiry. Buber’s characterization of what takes place in the interhuman describes a subtle way of being with others from the I-Thou condition of presence, where former barriers or boundaries between self and other soften, offering an existential referent in that it enables the self and the other to become more immediate, tangible and real.
Ironically, while Buber advocated for such encounters, he disliked groups as Sidorkin (1995) elaborates:

Buber is right, most of the groups most of the time probably do suppress an individual relation. But a group might become a nurturing community, a special kind of group that is not hostile to, but inviting of the interhuman. As we can see, Buber states that the interhuman encounter happens within the group only as a secondary meeting, while the work of the group is the main concern. A nurturing community is the group where this hierarchy is reversed. It is a group where the interhuman is the primary concern, and what the group actually does together moves into a subordinated position. (p. 5)

In this passage, Sidorkin (1995) uncovers a key insight concerning the importance of leading classroom interactions from the interhuman as a deeper intersubjective dimension of inquiry. This becomes quite relevant in the context of second-person forms of contemplative education, as contact with and inquiry informed by the deeper ontological domain of the intersubjective that Buber’s interhuman signifies may be subtly eclipsed, inadvertently marginalized or skipped over in the effort to fulfill content objectives in the courses we teach. Reflecting on previous teaching experiences that draw upon collective forms of contemplative pedagogy, I have come to appreciate the importance of aspiring to speak and listen from Buber’s interhuman sphere of the between with students as the primary context for orienting collective contemplative learning processes.

With the interhuman encounter as the primary basis for meeting, it becomes possible for both the educator to recalibrate their teaching stance and the students to in turn recalibrate their learning stance away from self-preoccupation towards a shared I-Thou orientation. Honoring a primary commitment to fostering Buber’s sphere of the between with our students helps bring about a shift in the classroom ethos towards becoming a more nurturing community (Sidorkin, 1995). In this sense, Buber’s work offers a helpful insight into the transformative potential of addressing one another through deeper presence in the intersubjective encounter, which can give
rise to an ontological shift in the context of our inquiry and learning within educational settings. As this section has made a case for, in a number of different ways contemplative second-person approaches to pedagogy will benefit from drawing upon the relational and sacred implications of I-Thou encounters with our students in the interhuman sphere of the between.

2.3 Nhat Hanh’s Interbeing

Drawing from his Vietnamese lineage of Buddhism in the East and life experience in the West, Buddhist monk, scholar, poet, and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings of engaged Buddhism speak to a broad cross section of people from various religious, spiritual, and cultural backgrounds. Known for his work with mindfulness in daily life, Nhat Hanh is a passionate exemplar of uniting Buddhist contemplative practice with social action and inter-religious dialogue.

Within Nhat Hanh’s teachings, his depiction of interbeing (2000) is informed by the central Buddhist theory of pratitya-samutpâda (Nakagawa, 2000), which literally means contingent origination, but is often translated as dependent co-arising. From the perspective of interbeing we radically coexist and are fundamentally interrelated with what is “other” unlike the Cartesian dualistic and mechanistic account of human experience, in which we exist independently in and for ourselves. As a lens to help us experience the ground and fabric of relationality within and beyond the human domain to include all of life, interbeing depicts the self as an active co-participant in a greater shifting matrix of mutual causality and interrelationship. Within the Buddhist tradition, when pratâtya-samutpâda is deeply understood by practitioners, it helps bring liberation from the root of suffering and delusion insofar as the separate self-sense is seen through as an impermanent psychological construction, empty of any abiding or independent constitution (Nakagawa, 2000). Pratâtya-samutpâda also offers a classic
depiction of how we emerge through interdependent relations and how all events are deeply interwoven and mutually conditioned.

Nhat Hanh (2000) builds upon this classic Buddhist insight and goes a step further by emphasizing how the realization of interbeing gives rise to an increased sense of interconnectedness, bringing about a more inclusive and deepened ethic of responsibility for others. As such, his account of interbeing offers an important perspective for engaging with the underlying process-oriented nature of reality. By illustrating how our everyday experience of self and world are deeply interconnected, interdependent and interrelated, interbeing validates the underlying intersubjective dimension of reality that human experience is ultimately contingent upon.

When the notion of interbeing is a focus of contemplation, it brings attention to how the students, the classroom subject of inquiry, the process of inquiry and educator shape and co-constitute one another. As a “pedagogy of communion” (Nakagawa, p. 50), interbeing helps deconstruct our conditioned identification with our separate self-identity as an educator and, in turn reconstruct our primary identification with interconnected experiences of self and the attendant co-constitutive classroom processes. The practice of interbeing foregrounds the dynamic interrelated elements of the learning process with one’s students, which cultivates compassion and an education of heart (Dalai Lama, 1999). Whether through a contemplative reconstruction of our student’s points of view or a willingness to feel our student’s distress concerning a particular injustice and resulting suffering on a particular issue, interbeing disrupts our traditional sense of agency and western self-sufficient ideals of individuality.

Upon closer inspection, interbeing offers the possibilities of what Wilber describes as “agency-in-communion” (Rothberg et al., 1998, p. 216). That is, an agency that is no longer
being motivated by a traditional idealized masculine stance of autonomy that avoids, suppresses or denies communion. From the perspective of interbeing, our individual strength and source of empowerment are fueled by our connection(s) with others within greater fields of interrelatedness, further helping us see through the false Cartesian dualism of personal autonomy versus relationship. Bai (1999) elaborates:

The self dynamically flows into, out of, and with the other, creatively assuming a complex, polymorphous sense of agency. It is not the simple sense of agency wherein the subject (the self) does something to its object (the other). (p. 4)

Through this polymorphous sense of agency, the tensions of individual agency and communion lie in the paradoxical dance of, on the one hand, becoming increasingly attentive to our interrelatedness with others (i.e., our students) without, on the other hand, binding one’s sense of self to them. Such an intersubjective orientation can also help us avoid falling into either extreme of what Wilber (Rothberg et al., 1998, p. 216) frames as pathological agency (which avoids or denies communion) or pathological communion, where we become overly identified with relationality to the extent that we find ourselves submersed in orienting from the needs of others.¹²

How might interbeing advance the project of developing second-person contemplative pedagogy in higher education settings? Interbeing provides an intersubjective context and process that can be of great use in informing the development of second-person methods. By carefully attending to the distinctive intersubjective space(s) we co-inhabit with our students, the educator learns (with practice) to see through the dualistic tendencies of his or her own consciousness—particularly in terms of how this reinforces different forms of separateness and fragmentation in group contexts of classroom learning. By forging a more distributed basis of

¹² While our culture suffers from both pathological tendencies, Wilber’s integrated notion of agency-in-communion offers a helpful distinction to monitor our ontological orientations for being in the world.
connection with our students, the class subject and the processes of contemplative inquiry, seeing
with the eyes of interbeing can help facilitate a shift into a deeper second-person intersubjective
experience. As these elements coalesce, occasions for engaging with multiple contexts of self
and otherness invariably arise. By modeling and encouraging a less rigid identification with our
conventional identities, interbeing also offers a more distributed context of inter-relationality,
which in turn establishes a broader ground and intersubjective context out of which we can lead
the class inquiry. This helps relieve everyone of the individualistic if not narcissistic habit of
blocking the intersubjective view by being in the middle of a conversation or steering classroom
discourse with one’s private agenda. By valuing and amplifying our shared experience of
consciousness, the lens of interbeing brings into focus the more subtle unseen aspects and sinews
of interrelatedness with our students, the subject and process of inquiry.13 This helps us relax the
habituated compulsion to know and deliver an authoritative view to our students.14 In the
context of classroom inquiry, the experience of interbeing can help students and educator regard
the classroom as a place for occasions of interconnectedness and the co-constitution of shared
meaning on deeper levels of shared mind and consciousness that typically characterize
experiences within typical classroom and seminar discussions.

In addition to the applications of Interbeing discussed above, educators may wish to
impart a taste of the experience by introducing a guided visualization informed by Nhat Hanh’s
(1998) writings:

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper.
Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without

13 Given that a) interbeing extends far beyond the context of intersubjectivity and b) the urgent need for a more
comprehensive ethic of responsibility towards others, in certain higher education classroom settings it will be
constructive to broaden the scope of the interbeing lens by expanding beyond the students in the class to include
greater contexts such as all humans and the more than human world.
14 This does not suggest that professors are not also balancing content objectives, teaching aims, purposes and other
considerations that shape the post-secondary classrooms.
trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. “Interbeing” is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix “inter-” with the verb “to be,” we have a new verb, inter-be… If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger’s father and mother are in it too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist. Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here-time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. “To be” is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is. (p. 3)

While such visualization exercises can be helpful in bringing about a shift in our accustomed individual habits of perception and ways of apprehending and relating to the world, there invariably will be occasions when it can be challenging to experience interbeing with students. Nhat Hanh’s depiction of interbeing also provides a basic entry point to identifying the resistances in ourselves to what is “other” in our classrooms, as well as to the elements in our students and ourselves that we may resist and for whatever reasons, cannot or refuse to openly engage with. By identifying and finding a basis to transform the elements in ourselves that prevent us from recognizing our inter-relatedness with our difficult students, we become more prone to experiencing our students and our selfhood as interdependent and thus our processes of inner transformation and our students’ transformation as likewise interdependent.

2.4 De Quincey’s Three Forms of Intersubjectivity

Instead of being lone subjects in our own life's drama, we are ‘intersubjects’ created by the original worldwide web - the web of intersubjectivity woven in the Great Cosmic Drama, in the Great Unfolding of Being. ~ Christian de Quincey
Christian de Quincey is a theorist in the field of consciousness studies and the philosophy of mind. His more recent work focuses on legitimizing second-person forms of knowing and inquiry by arguing for fundamental shifts in our understanding of human experience and consciousness. Like Nhat Hanh and Buber, in Radical Knowing De Quincey presents his thesis of intersubjectivity as the deeper context that human consciousness arises from. Like Buber, he tends to emphasize the interpersonal dimension of relationship given that communication is among his chief concerns. Tracing out the philosophical and spiritual roots of intersubjectivity in his work (2005), he argues overall that it has not been given sufficient attention as a legitimate ground of knowing and path for exploring consciousness.

De Quincey (2000; 2005) distinguishes among three types of intersubjectivity, each offering an important contribution to the project of bringing forth second-person forms of contemplative education. He derives his first meaning of intersubjectivity from the basic Cartesian worldview where “individual subjectivity ontologically precedes intersubjectivity” (2005, p. 183). Communication in intersubjectivity-1 takes place primarily through sharing language and linguistic signals. Comparable to Buber’s I-It relationship, linguistic intersubjectivity is commonly found in academic culture where the prevailing pattern is to develop one’s own unique point of view “independently” of others. This can lead to a pedagogical orientation that privileges agency, where as educators we may find ourselves siding with those students who share a similar view to us. Prone to overlooking the entangled matrix of interbeing and corresponding forms of collective intelligence, from intersubjectivity-1 we teach from our established funds of knowledge as the meeting point or center of convergence in the classroom or online learning environment.
The meaning of intersubjectivity-2 refers to the psychological dimension of intersubjectivity, which, according to De Quincey (2005), is explored in the intellectual and feeling realm of relationship through presence. De Quincey remarks that intersubjectivity-2 focuses more on the interpersonal domain of communication, but not the deeper intersubjective context of an interaction. Here, participants’ subjectivity is still ontologically prior to intersubjective encounters. For the purposes of contemplative pedagogy, intersubjectivity-2 draws upon felt-relational forms of presence, providing an important intermediate depth of intersubjective experience that is comparatively more engaged than intersubjectivity-1. Given that intersubjectivity-2 relies on personal or interpersonal presence, the educator is focused on shifting class participation into presence, but as a means for affecting their learning of the subject, not transforming their sense of self to “understand the deeper co-arising and engagement of intersubjective subjects or intersubjects” (p. 281), which is the hallmark of the third sense or “intersubjectivity-3” (2005). For De Quincey, intersubjectivity-3 involves the radical shift from separate subjects interacting psychologically to a more profound transpersonal form of interacting that is also based upon shared presence.\footnote{Though De Quincey does not elaborate on how to make the shift from psychological to transpersonal modalities of intersubjectivity, my experience is that each form involves a different quality of presence and self-sense of the individuals engaging within these interactions. In other words, from intersubjectivity-2 one is still relating primarily to another as a separate self, whereas in intersubjectivity-3 one is relating to another from an interconnected sense of self that is informed by Bai’s (1999) notion of a more polymorphous sense of agency that arises in part from the field of relationship that one experiences one’s self co-arising with others from.} However, in this mode of intersubjectivity, our interrelatedness with another is experienced as *primary* to our ontological constitution. For De Quincey, this deep form of intersubjectivity contains the seeds of co-creative process and “relies on co-creative nonphysical presence, bringing distinct subjects into being out of a prior matrix of relationships” (2000, p. 2).
To the project of developing intersubjective approaches to contemplative education, De Quincey’s intersubjectivity-2 and -3 offer important contributions. By drawing attention to the significance of felt-relational presence, intersubjectivity-2 offers an important intermediate context that focuses on the personal dimension of learning with others. In focusing on a shared transpersonal basis of learning with intersubjectivity-3, De Quincey identifies a path to generative interactions through the vehicle of a sacred co-creative relationship where our experiences of self and the world are chiefly mediated by engaging in presence with other centers of experience (i.e. subjects). Both forms involve learning to facilitate interactions beyond De Quincey’s first mode of intersubjectivity where educator and students exchange language and inform each other (intersubjectivity-1). While De Quincey locates intersubjectivity-2 interactions as arising from independent subjects, his emphasis on felt-relational presence and incorporating the psychological dimension of learning are essential in creating the conditions for safety, compassionate listening and interpersonally mediated forms of co-creativity. For intersubjectivity-3, the aim is to experience the interhuman sphere of the between as ontologically prior to our individual subjectivities. Expressed in another way, the relational context or interhuman field become’s more prominent in one’s awareness than our individual sense of separateness from both one another and this interhuman sphere of the between. By aspiring to learn together as interdependent subjects, our very identities become involved with the co-creative processes of conversation. It is not that individual meaning is no longer important. Rather, the emphasis of intersubjectivity-3 shifts to co-creating new shared meaning through collective felt presence and what is emerging through the class. My understanding of this intersubjective turn is that it involves listening and speaking from a subtly different self-location that is interwoven with, rather than separate from the interhuman field that
envelops the participants. From this collective shift in attention and raising of collective mindfulness, in intersubjectivity-3 students and professor are more able to collectively experience its thinking processes together, rather than a) simply verbalizing or downloading our thoughts when communicating, which is characteristic of intersubjectivity-1 or b) overly relying on the interpersonal qualities of intersubjective experience as is characteristic of intersubjectivity-2.

De Quincey’s philosophical project lies in legitimizing second-person forms of knowing (i.e. particularly intersubjectivity-3).16 As he points out, “we tend not to notice the second-person perspective because it is right in front of our noses everyday. It is the medium in which we most naturally live” (2005, p. 178). However, it is also a medium that is most taken for granted or that we are most unconscious of, too, hence the importance of his three definitions and emphasis on presence, shared meaning, relationality and collective ontology as keys to deepen and refine our practice of second-person forms of knowing and being. As De Quincey’s three definitions are towards an increased degree or levels of intersubjective depth, they mark a progression from separate individuals interacting towards a more unitive and interwoven movement of shared consciousness. The shifts from intersubjectivity-1 to -3 represent not only new possibilities for co-creative manifestation within contemplative classroom settings, but make specific aspects of intersubjectivity (i.e. communion, co-presence, shared meaning) progressively more prominent than the individual agency, presence and personal meaning of learners who are co-participating in the intersubjective event—a change in pedagogical approach.

16 De Quincey does not address ways in which first and third-person forms of knowing might support his project of validating second-person forms of knowing. Instead, he tends to downplay third-person perspectives (2005), by claiming we need to set up experiments to induce the illusion of the separation between observer and observed “this stepping-back allows us to notice the third-person in action because it is not “normal”” (p. 178). He also downplays the role of first-person perspectives as being dependent on withdrawing from the world as in the case of meditation.
that has yet to be satisfactorily accounted for within the existing contemplative education literature.

2.5 Wilber’s Five Dimensions of Intersubjectivity

Over the past three decades, American philosopher Ken Wilber has developed a transdisciplinary and transcultural integral philosophy that draws from a wide cross-section of perspectives, methodologies and paradigms across a breadth of fields and traditions. Wilber’s recent AQAL framework\(^{17}\) (2006) serves as a model through which theorists and practitioners can gain an integrally-informed perspective to their work within their respective fields of knowledge. Integral theorist Sean Hargens (2001) has identified at least five types of intersubjectivity throughout Wilber’s writings (1996, 1997, 2006). In contrast to De Quincey’s three definitions, which address instances of communication and were developed out of his research in academic philosophy and consciousness studies, Hargens’ account of Wilber’s “types” of intersubjectivity are culled from a comprehensive review of Wilber’s writings and are presented in terms that are internal to Wilber’s integral paradigm. In this regard, Hargens provides a summary of Wilber’s broad research into intersubjectivity by highlighting five distinct forms that intersubjectivity takes within Wilber’s integral model.

The first form is “intersubjectivity-as-spirit” (Hargens 2001, p. 13) with spirit being in this context, the ontologically prior, always present background or non-dual ground of being (Wilber, 2006). This meaning of intersubjectivity adds an important distinction to Nhat Hanh’s account of interbeing and De Quincey’s intersubjectivity-3. Where interbeing refers to the co-arising constituents and elements of intersubjective experience, intersubjectivity-as-spirit identifies the deeper undivided formless source of consciousness that our experience of

\(^{17}\) AQAL is short form for quadrants, levels, lines, states and types—five key features of Wilber’s (2006) integral framework.
interbeing arises in and out of. Intersubjectivity-as-spirit offers an important transpersonal referent to the realm of the absolute within each intersubjective experience, signaling the non-dual space or root context out of which our experience of interbeing arises. This distinction also becomes significant within De Quincey’s intersubjectivity-3 insofar as it draws our attention to a dimension of awareness that is not mediated by second-person forms of knowing and being. While certain educators\(^\text{18}\) may aspire to engage with their students in a manner where second-person forms of knowing are informed by non-dual awareness in the classroom, students unacquainted with non-dual experience will require being introduced to it through some form of pointing out instructions.\(^\text{19}\)

The second form “intersubjectivity-as-context” (Hargens, 2001 p. 13) refers to the structural elements of intersubjectivity, which for Wilber is located within the lower left of his four quadrants.\(^\text{20}\) Hargens (2001, p. 13) identifies the intersubjective matrix of contexts as “physical laws, morphic fields, linguistic, moral, cultural, biological, and aesthetic structures.” Hargens does not elaborate on how other structural elements from other zones\(^\text{21}\) might influence our understanding of intersubjectivity. Such a consideration would involve taking into account the structural influences of Wilber’s account of developmental lines\(^\text{22}\), where personal and

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\(^{18}\) Though such an approach to second-person contemplative education will be unsuitable for many educators in higher education classrooms, it has been my experience that learning to locate the non-dual quality of unconditioned experience firstly in one’s own experience as an educator and secondly (where appropriate) within one’s classroom interactions will invite a beneficial quality of shared learning and communication.

\(^{19}\) I realize that educators also unacquainted with the non-dual experience will also require being introduced to it. It is important to note that according to Buddhist traditions, one does not technically speaking “have” a non-dual experience, for this would be enacting a subtle dualism. Rather, nonduality is viewed as a radical realization that requires ongoing meditative practice to stabilize as a view in one’s everyday consciousness. In spite of non-duality being traditionally conceived as the essential condition of enlightened consciousness, in recent years practitioners have moved towards adapting pointing out instructions to give people a taste of this unconditioned experience through various intersubjective methodologies such as Genpo Roshi’s *Big Mind, Big Heart*, Peter Fenner’s *Radiant Mind*, Andrew Cohen’s *Enlightened Communication* among others.

\(^{20}\) Alternatively, in the language of his 8 primordial perspectives (2006), intersubjectivity-as-context would be in zone four within the lower left quadrant.

\(^{21}\) The eight zones refer to the inside and outside of Wilber’s four quadrants.

\(^{22}\) In educational circles, developmental lines are referred to as *intelligences* made known by Howard Gardner (e.g.,
interpersonal capacities, skills and intelligences influence the possibilities of specific intersubjective engagements between teacher and students or classroom life.

Intersubjectivity-as-context viewed in this light highlights developmental issues that educators would benefit from considering in their work with contemplative education. Further research would need to establish which lines and levels\(^{23}\) of development or capacities have a bearing on contemplative processes of education (i.e. stages of insight or concentration). Attention would also need to address the misconceptions around conflating levels of development with states\(^{24}\) and state-stages\(^{25}\) (Wilber, 2006) and to determine which contemplative practices are developmentally-contingent\(^{26}\) and if so, in what ways. Both Hargens (p. 15) and Wilber (2006) point out that these background structures inform the context of the subject’s consciousness before experience and are therefore not accessible to direct experiential knowing. Given that not all students will be at the same contemplative capacity as their teachers and conversely in certain situations, intersubjectivity-as-context is a helpful consideration in refining our approaches to contemplative pedagogy.

The third type, “intersubjectivity-as-resonance” (2001, p. 14), arises out of mutuality of presence shared between people, reflecting De Quincey’s intersubjectivity-2 and -3. Hargens

\(^{23}\) Levels of consciousness are abstract measures that represent fluid yet qualitatively distinct classes of recurrent patterns within Wilber’s construct of developmental lines. Some examples of levels include egocentric, ethnocentric and worldcentric. (Rentschler, 2006, p.20)

\(^{24}\) States of consciousness are temporary (from a few minutes to several days) and range considerably from ordinary to peak experiences including meditative states (induced by contemplation and meditation) and altered states (induced by psychedelic substances, demanding physical exercise, athletics, etc.).

\(^{25}\) Rentschler (2006, p.30) defines state-stages as “states that unfold in a sequence, usually as the result of training. State-stages generally move from gross experience, to subtle experience, to causal experience, to nondual.”

\(^{26}\) This article will not address developmental considerations in educators, students or classroom life as this might pertain to contemplative education or intersubjective approaches. This is due in part to the sheer complexity of the subject but also the lack of established research in understanding how developmental awareness plays out experientially given the invisibility of these background structures and lack of clarity in understanding to what extent and precisely how successful applications of contemplative education are contingent or helpfully guided by such awareness.
elaborates upon *worldspaces* and *worldviews* as contexts out of which the resonance takes place. In terms of worldspaces, Hargens (p. 14) introduces the distinction of *ontological* resonance between subjects and for worldviews and *epistemological* resonance between subjects who share a common stage of psychological development. Both of these terms attempt to locate where intersubjective resonance is taking place within Wilber’s AQAL model. However, these distinctions become problematic in practice. For example, epistemological resonance between two subjects does not necessarily presuppose a common level of psychological development. Hargens’ claim that ontological resonance is contingent upon a shared worldspace is helpful in a broad sense and resembles De Quincey’s ontological definition of intersubjectivity. However, once again, identifying the specific shared worldspace that resonance is taking place within Wilber’s integral system or any developmentalist’s model is a speculative matter, even when subjects are in broad agreement with the interpretive frameworks being applied. What would be helpful for contemplative educators interested in exploring second-person modalities of contemplative learning is a more nuanced heuristic to differentiate between the different forms of resonance. Such a heuristic would not need to be developmentally contingent, but could rather represent the possible stage-processes that groups go through or the characteristic forms of resonance that distinguish different intersubjective contexts such as De Quincey’s -1, -2 and -3 in classroom settings. Resonance is often a marker of mutual understanding. However, Hargen’s (2001) portrayal of Wilber’s intersubjectivity-as-resonance traces each form of resonance back to Wilber’s AQAL model. Again, I am not convinced this captures the significant intersubjective qualities of resonance that would shed further light into the nature of different encounter(s), particularly within classroom settings where learning is the underlying objective.
The fourth type of “intersubjectivity-as-relationship” (p. 14) offers a further explication of types of relationship. Hargens offers two important sub-distinctions of relationship-as-solidarity (p. 14), where the basis of intersubjective interaction lies in the shared values, ethnicity, gender, interests and so on, as well as relationship-as-difference (p. 14), where one relates to another subject and makes the effort to reach across differences in the interest of arriving at a fuller understanding of one another or a given issue. This latter distinction has important ramifications in educational settings, in that the cultivation of this form of intersubjectivity flourishes when collaboration and shared meaning across difference take place, but also perhaps more importantly, enabling both educator and students to recognize one’s self in difference. Relationship-as-difference follows on Nhat Hanh’s account of interbeing, where the point of resistance in whatever we happen to disagree with is connected in some way to the point we are advocating for. While the deeper interwoven pattern that connects these points may not be initially evident to our students or us, this principle highlights the importance of the latent potential of intersubjectivity as a robust container for the transmutation of our understanding of conflicting and contradictory views.

The last category, “intersubjectivity-as-phenomenology”, touches on elements of De Quincey’s intersubjectivity-2 and -3 by focusing on the felt experience of intersubjectivity. Hargens associates the felt-sense with the previous three types of intersubjectivity: spirit, relationship and resonance. The felt-sense of spirit has an important implication in terms of deeper shifts in states of consciousness\(^27\) (Wilber, 2006) that become more pronounced within intersubjective-3 engagements. Given the potential for deeper states in providing an ontological

\(^{27}\) Wilber (2006) outlines five primary states of consciousness in his AQAL framework: gross waking states (everyday); subtle states; causal formless states; witnessing states and non-dual awareness. States of consciousness range considerably from ordinary to supernormal varieties. Similar to meditative states, intersubjectivity-3 engagements, varieties of Buber’s notion of supreme meeting and other sacred intersubjective encounters tend to evoke deeper states of consciousness.
window into our deeper motivations and shared meaning (Wilber, 2006), the temporary emergence of transcendent states of consciousness and their potential to evoke deep feelings of sacred connection with life and the cosmos make the felt-sense of spirit a significant dimension of intersubjectivity that merits further exploration, particularly in the context of contemplative educational pedagogies. The felt-sense within intersubjectivity as relationship offers a widely subscribed to moral compass to navigate what educational philosopher Nel Noddings defines as an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1984), which centralizes love in the particular, reciprocal, and personal forms of classroom relationship.

2.6 Recontextualizing Intersubjectivity within Broader Epistemological Horizons

This article has attempted to convey the importance of second-person forms of contemplative classroom processes, which draw upon the depth of shared relations and quality of intersubjective experience, expanding our scope of contemplative practice to include and build upon key insights of intersubjective theory is a natural next step. With the development of second-person approaches to contemplative pedagogy, as educators our approaches to classroom learning will increasingly ask for more distinct shared mode(s) of participation with our students—including key distinctions that have been outlined and developed throughout this paper.

Rather than proclaim the strengths of intersubjectivity and problematize other ways of knowing, I believe a more fruitful course forward involves first establishing the contributions

28 As a result of the traditional marginalization or omission of intersubjectivity, problematizing first-person subjective or third-person objective onto-epistemological habits may have been an appropriate stance to take in certain debates. My hope is that we can turn the conversation towards a post-Cartesian inquiry that honors both limiting the problematic features and including the respective gifts of each perspective and way of knowing. By sufficiently differentiating and untangling these three epistemological forms in the context of our classroom pedagogies, we can then move towards a stronger integration of each, with further consideration for how first-person and third-person contemplative pedagogies might support the development of second-person approaches. Given that the deeper forms of second-person engagement are partly contingent upon first-person contemplative practice, there is value in proceeding with a more integral orientation here.
of intersubjectivity theory that could be helpful in developing a second-person contemplative educational approach as I have attempted to convey by highlighting features of each intersubjective theorist’s work above. Second, as I address in the next section, I believe it is important to contextualize intersubjectivity as a distinct perspective alongside other primary epistemological perspectives—i.e. subjectivity, objectivity and inter-objectivity. However, in doing this it is crucial to acknowledge that intersubjectivity is more than an epistemological perspective with distinct processes and dimensions of knowing.

As I have pointed out in the above sections, intersubjectivity has an ontological dimension (Buber, 1965; Roy, 2006) with both an interpersonal (Nhat Hanh, 2000; De Quincey, 2000; Wilber, 2000) and transpersonal relational significance (Buber; 1965; De Quincey, 2005). Intersubjectivity is also a conversational field of inquiry (De Quincey, 2005) that is contingent upon second-person contextual structures (Hargens, 2001) and interwoven relational elements of self and other (Nhat Hanh, 2000) that influence any given interhuman encounter. Finally, intersubjectivity also has a phenomenological (Wilber, 2006) dimension that is experienced through co-presence (De Quincey, 2005) and resonance (Hargens, 2001) among other characteristics outlined above, as well as beyond these four accounts.29

Keeping in mind these and other richly textured facets of intersubjectivity as we locate it heuristically as an epistemological perspective, we will then embark on our third step in considering what intersubjectivity more broadly might bring to the project of establishing second-person modes of contemplative education. Along with preparing the theoretical terrain for such work to emerge successfully, ongoing experimentation will be needed to gain a more

29 In introducing the related yet distinct elements, terminology and conceptions of intersubjectivity, this article does not go into depth with either comparing or contrasting each theorist’s perspective of the ontological nature of intersubjective forms of communicating, relating, communion, agency or other modalities relevant to teaching across the four accounts. Largely this is due to the limitations of space and scope of this particular project.
direct understanding of the distinctive qualities, meaning and significance of intersubjectivity as a contemplative form of knowing and learning in classroom settings. Explorations of this nature could help identify a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of second-person contemplative pedagogical approaches, experiences and their relevance for educator and students both inside and outside the classroom.

Returning to the first objective, to help establish intersubjectivity as a key epistemological perspective within contemporary teaching and learning practices, there is value in consulting with a more encompassing epistemological map that differentiates intersubjectivity from its neighboring perspectives. Wilber (2000) provides us with such a map in his account of the four quadrants in figure 2.1 below.
Wilber’s quadrants locate four primary perspective-dimensions of reality that co-arise: subjective (i.e., the interior of an individual), intersubjective (i.e., the interior of a collective), objective (i.e., the exterior of an individual) and inter-objective (i.e., the exterior of a collective). The quadrants essentially represent the broad range of interior and exterior perspectives within individuals and collectives. Each specific quadrant is a referent for one of these four primordial perspectives.

Wilber’s four quadrants are useful to our purposes in several ways. By distinguishing each epistemological perspective in addition to their validity claims and criteria, we are in a better position to untangle methodological issues that invariably arise in our research. For example, if we are tacitly or unknowingly employing “objective” validity criteria to understand a contested intersubjective experience as a way of inquiring into whether it is true, we are proceeding incoherently. Insofar as the intersubjective experience we are investigating is contingent upon mutual understanding, shared resonance and co-presence, understanding the validity of the experience becomes an interpretive exercise, not an empirical one. By conflating the methods and measures of validity across different epistemological perspectives, the language and validity criteria naturally become muddled and academic turf wars ensue—hence Wilber’s map helps locate and defend the partial merits of each first-, second-, third- and third-person plural perspective of knowing and their accompanying methodologies. In this way, Wilber’s quadrants help prevent colonization from other perspectives or privileging one form of knowing to the exclusion or diminishment of another.

Given that contemplative education draws from the perennial world wisdom traditions (i.e. whose knowledge horizons are generally located in the left hand quadrants—particularly upper left) and recent scientific research (i.e. that is generally located in the right hand
quadrants), contemplative education research in academic settings is attempting to occupy an uncomfortable position or movement between the more objective sciences and the more subjective and intersubjective interpretive social sciences. As a case in point, Wilber’s quadrants offer a helpful augmentation of Roth’s (2006) binary contemplative framework that differentiates first and third person methods. In turn, the quadrants offer us a more comprehensive epistemological map to distinguish and validate intersubjectivity as one of four broad perspectives of contemplative knowing. Differentiating intersubjectivity from its neighboring perspectives ensures that educational researchers utilize the appropriate truth claims and methods required to coherently work with intersubjective approaches to contemplative education, as each perspective carries with it inherent methods for experiencing and interpreting the world (Wilber, 2006).

Nevertheless, while Wilber’s quadrants are helpful in broadly differentiating these perspectives, they have the limiting condition of offering a more “structural approach and interpretation of reality” (Roy, 2006) than a process approach. Roy (2006, p. 119) makes a helpful distinction between “epistemological categories of knowing” which help us apprehend reality and the related yet distinct “ontological ways of understanding” that are gleaned through deeper modes of consciousness and being. In this regard, Wilber’s quadrants do not satisfactorily account for the ontological ways of understanding intersubjective reality that this chapter attempts to convey. Additionally, neither do Wilber’s quadrants nor his eight native perspectives (2006) satisfactorily locate the second-person perspective or differentiate singular or

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30 Intersubjective truth claims involve knowledge developed by a group of inquirers about some theme, issue or domain of inquiry. Such knowledge is concerned with the shared, intersubjective processes which groups of people explore when they meet in the context of discussion, dialogue, presencing and other inquiry formats. Epistemological validity in the intersubjective deals more with interpretivistic methods or procedures for conducting inquiry that are grounded in the second-person world-space of shared experience.

31 Roy derives her process-model in part from process-theory, which is informed by intersubjective theory to the extent that a process-model is contingent upon a relational understanding of reality as comprised fundamentally of processes rather than things.
plural forms of second-person knowing. Integral theorist Marc Edwards has advanced a more nuanced account of intersubjectivity in his rendering of the three basic first-, second- and third-person epistemological perspectives:

![Figure 2.2: Edwards' account of first-, second- and third-person perspectives (2005, p. 280)](image)

By framing Edwards’ epistemological map as an appendage to Wilber’s quadrants, in addition to legitimizing the intersubjective dimension of reality, we can now honor the second-

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32 Within Wilber’s eight native perspectives (2006), he identifies the interior and exterior of the intersubjective by noting first-person and third-person accounts of second-person reality. However, he does not distinguish a second-person perspective or differentiate between the singular and plural forms of second-person knowing in his mapping out of the eight native perspectives.

33 For the purposes of my project in legitimizing and further developing second-person forms of contemplative education, I have drawn on Wilber’s (2000, figure 1.1) and Edward’s (2005, figure 1.2) frameworks as a way of establishing how intersubjective/second-person approaches to contemplative education are situated, epistemologically-speaking. This work is consistent with and in several cases informs the contemplative pedagogy heuristics that Roth (2006) and Sarath (2006; 2009) have developed in framing their approaches to contemplative education. As this article explores, specific shared experiences within the intersubjective/second-person domain of classroom life are qualitatively distinct from the modes of knowing and learning that emerge from the private-subjective first-person and public-objective third-person domains, hence the importance of distinguishing them.
person perspective more fully by distinguishing between second-person singular (i.e. one on one dialogue) and plural (i.e. group-based) varieties. In the context of contemplative education, Edwards’ map becomes useful in distinguishing intersubjective reality by locating distinct second-person perspectives that co-arise within it. Given that the field of contemplative education is in its formative stages, legitimizing, clarifying and further differentiating a) second-person perspective(s), b) intersubjective reality and c) the neighboring first-person and third-person primary perspectives raises important foundational clarifications and questions in terms of how we proceed to develop the field of contemplative education. By differentiating and including single and plural varieties of second-person pedagogies alongside their first- or third-person counterparts, we can begin to more clearly demarcate the epistemological terrain underlying these different pedagogical orientations. As an example, without distinguishing second-person forms of contemplative pedagogy from first or third-person forms, deeper forms of intersubjective collective knowing may remain dormant, obscured or completely hidden from our awareness as educators. Acknowledging second-person forms of contemplative pedagogy will help locate and map out the respective depths of intersubjective reality, as well as deeper forms of intersubjective knowing than the conventional varieties that prevail at the physical-material and conceptual-mental levels of existence (i.e., intersubjectivity-1). By mapping out the different regions of intersubjective experience, further interpretive validity criteria can be established to determine to what extent if at all we are enacting distinct senses/experiences of intersubjectivity. Additionally, as second-person forms of contemplative education is a broad distinction, there is room for including the intersubjective insights and distinctions of Buber,

Some readers may find the technical or presentation of Wilber’s and Edward’s frameworks to be incongruous or unsuitable to the above inquiry into the four conceptions of intersubjectivity. However, my intention in utilizing their frameworks is to provide further heuristic and conceptual clarification by locating these four accounts epistemologically, not to suggest that Wilber’s or Edward’s frameworks are in any way necessary to experience the different aspects of intersubjectivity explored above.
Hahn, De Quincey, Wilber and others who have shed helpful light onto different contours and dimensions of intersubjectivity.

2.7 Establishing Critical Second-Person Forms of Contemplative Education

In the September 2006 contemplative education issue of the Teachers College Record, alongside Roth’s (2006) call for developing pedagogies that support student’s investigation of contemplative states of consciousness through first- and third-person approaches, Sarath (2006) briefly comments on second-person approaches of contemplative practices as a “movement from education’s conventional focus on third-person knowledge toward a more inclusive approach that also includes second- and first-person approaches to knowledge” (p. 1817). Sarath locates second-person educational approaches along an integrated continuum of first-person and third-person knowing and inquiry and points out that any subject can be studied through each perspective. Sarath describes his experiences with second-person approaches to contemplative education:

I move into the intersubjective domain with exercises done in small groups that invite students to share and connect deeply with others. Common examples are exercises in which students reflect on, identify, and discuss inner feelings, behavior patterns, frustrations, and sources of fulfillment. Community based learning is another example of intersubjective learning that can both thrive within and provide feedback to strengthen a creativity and consciousness framework (p. 1836).

On the whole, Sarath offers brief third-person descriptions of the content of second-person interactions in the classroom. However, he does not comment further on the process of second-person approaches to education other than it is “more process-oriented” (p. 1817) than first-person or third-person forms. Roth (2006), on the other hand, advocates for critical first-person and third-person approaches to contemplative education.

By critical, we mean that students would be encouraged to engage directly with these techniques without prior commitment to their efficacy. They would then step back and appraise their experiences to gain a deeper appreciation of their meaning and
significance. Students will learn to identify contemplative states of consciousness both as objects and subjects of study. (p. 1788)

Roth does not address second-person approaches to contemplative education in this article\(^\text{34}\) or in any of his published work to date. Given the academic heritage of valuing third-person forms of learning at the expense of other forms, one of Roth’s key points of focus in this chapter is to advocate for critical first-person methods of contemplative education.

Building from where Sarath and Roth left off, I am advocating for developing second-person methods of contemplative education that take into account the above perspectives on intersubjectivity. The interhuman encounter, the interbeing of students and educator, the shared presence of intersubjectivity-2 and -3 and the intersubjectivity-as-spirit and –resonance in the class field among other intersubjective distinctions further explicate the contemplative dimensions of this broader project. To the extent that not all forms of second-person education are oriented towards the depths of learning and co-creativity that the application of the work of the above theorists entails, there is a need for distinguishing critical second-person forms of contemplative education and pedagogy as a means for establishing a new theoretical domain of inquiry within the field. Additionally, such an initiative will also help students and faculty identify a broader spectrum\(^\text{35}\) of contemplative pedagogy than if they had been primarily exploring first- and third-person approaches as advocated by Roth’s (2006) framework.

Consider the following description of an intersubjective experience, which exemplifies a second-person contemplative encounter:

There’s nothing like the joy, freedom, and deep intimacy of intersubjective space… our shared and passionate attention to what wants to come into being didn’t diminish, but rather it enhanced our senses, receptivity, deep intuition, as well as the faculties of

\(^{34}\) I will speculate that this omission is because second-person forms of inquiry are not an important focus of the proposed contemplative studies concentration at Brown University—the subject of Roth’s (2006) article.

\(^{35}\) A broader spectrum would not leave out second-person approaches, but include an array of first-, second- and third-person forms of contemplative study.
thinking together, building on each other's ideas and inspirations, and profoundly appreciating the value of everyone’s perspective. They became notes in a larger harmony that has a message that we can receive only when the chatter of the conditioned mind stops, and we share with one another what is perceived in that precious state. (Por, 2004)

I believe Por’s brief description conveys key aspects of intersubjective space that arise when the conditions for second-person education are present in that it draws attention to a distinct quality of feelings and attention, mode of shared thinking, a state of consciousness and way of being together with others in conversation. How might our current approaches to contemplative education facilitate intersubjective experience(s) for learners along these lines in a manner that serve the course’s pedagogical and content goals?

As an educator, my urgent felt-sense of the call for developing intersubjective methods of contemplative education arises in response to having witnessed and endured countless hours of classroom life shaped by “the most minimal sense of we” possible” (Balder, 2007):

It is a functional “we” designed to serve the interests of private selves. There are, of course, advantages to our modern self-centered “public sphere,” allowing for freedoms that were not possible in the mythic membership societies of the past, but these freedoms come at a cost. The self, in winning and maintaining its independence, is cut off from the whole in fundamental ways, which are frequently difficult to identify. (p. 1)

As a basis for fostering an optimal “we,” critical second-person contemplative educational approaches work with varied processes of collective contemplation and inquiry into the class subject that are shaped by subtle and emergent dimensions of intersubjective experiences. What discoveries await a graduate seminar or cohort group where conversations are oriented from a collective investment in speaking and listening that is attentive to what is emerging from the intersubjective worldview of the class field of learning? By experimenting with second-person approaches to contemplative education that engage students in intersubjective forms of learning, thinking and being together introduced from the distinctions brought forth in this chapter, as
educators we bring long awaited attention to the deeper intersubjective spaces that await us and our students in daily classroom life.

2.8 Closing Remarks

To briefly summarize, Buber offers a helpful compass to orient second-person contemplative interactions with his notion of the primacy of intersubjective learning processes unfolding from the interhuman sphere of the between, which establishes a transpersonal context and process from which to orient classroom inquiry. Nhat Hanh’s description of interbeing conveys rich insight into the ground and fabric of intersubjective relationality, helping foster an inclusive and deepened ethic of responsibility for the intersubjective encounter with “other”, whether our students, a differing opinion, perspective or some element of the cosmos one has neglected to include in our picture of inquiry and communication. De Quincey’s three modes of intersubjectivity, particularly intersubjectivity-2 and -3, build on his epistemology of presence, relationship and collective co-creativity. Signifying different qualities of intersubjective knowing, intersubjectivity -2 and -3 offer helpful markers of the respective ontological depths of reality that second-person experiences of contemplative education uncover. Wilber’s intersubjectivity-as-spirit provides a referent to the deeper source of our human experience, which re-situates second-person modes of engagement within a sacred emergent context. Intersubjectivity-as-resonance in the context of our modes of knowing and being as well as intersubjectivity-as-relationship (i.e. relationship as similarity and difference) and the felt-sense in intersubjectivity-as-phenomenology also offer key distinctions to further explore in our critical contemplative classroom experiments with second-person education.

Alongside critical first-person and third-person contemplative methods, the related yet varied assortment of intersubjective accounts culled from the literature on intersubjective theory
outline key aspects of the territory for developing second-person forms of contemplative learning and knowing together in the classroom. The purpose of this article is not so much to show how these distinctions improve upon existing second-person contemplative pedagogical methods, as there are presently few to draw from, but more to illustrate the need for a subfield of inquiry to establish and inspire the future development of second-person pedagogical approaches to contemplative education.\textsuperscript{36}

In framing these interpersonal methods pedagogically as “inter-subjects” of study from critical second-person perspectives that arise with post-Cartesian first- and third-person perspectives, my intent has been to cast new light on collective contemplative practice by recontextualizing this body of work within a more comprehensive epistemological framework and domain of inquiry within the emerging field of contemplative education. By presenting central elements from these four accounts of intersubjectivity, then introducing Wilber and Edwards’ epistemological maps to reinforce and advocate for the inclusion of these accounts within a broader critical framework of second-person education, my hope is this chapter will provide scholar-practitioners with useful distinctions to further differentiate and build upon second-person approaches to contemplative education.

\textsuperscript{36} In the following chapter, I build upon my case made for second-person pedagogies presented here and begin the project of developing three examples of second-person forms of contemplative pedagogy.
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3. Building Upon Second-Person Contemplative Pedagogy in the Post-Secondary Classroom\textsuperscript{37}

3.1 Contemplative Education

Traditionally, academic learning across disciplines has concentrated on intellectual development, establishing a prevailing pattern of education that strengthens learner’s critical, analytic and deliberative abilities to the neglect of other essential ways of knowing and being.

Scholar-practitioner Harold Roth (2006) elaborates:

Current North American higher education is dominated by what we might call third-person learning. We observe, analyze, record, and discuss a whole variety of subjects at a distance, as something “out there,” as if they were solely objects and our own subjectivity in viewing them does not exist. Certainly there are exceptions to this; in courses in public speaking, studio art, theater, language acquisition, music, and all science class laboratories, including those in environmental studies, students combine third-person approaches with direct firsthand experience of what they are studying. But in the humanities, we tend to value third-person learning at the expense of all other forms. (p.1790)

As a point of contrast, within the world wisdom traditions, contemplative practice has a long history of wisdom building processes that deepen the religious and, more recently, secular\textsuperscript{38} practitioner’s self-observation, awareness, understanding and insight as well as compassion.

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\textsuperscript{37} A version of this chapter has been submitted for publication. Gunnlaugson, O. Building Upon Second-Person Contemplative Pedagogy in the Post-Secondary Classroom.

\textsuperscript{38} While contemplative practices have to a great extent emerged from the world wisdom traditions, increasingly educators are exploring contemplative processes outside the worldviews and religious paradigms that traditionally oversaw these processes. This is giving rise to increasingly diverse secular interpretations, which make these practices more accessible to a broader audience. It is important to acknowledge that introducing contemplative practices without consulting the spiritual traditions in which they have developed ignores valuable perspectives, particularly as the wisdom traditions typically have 2000 + years of dedicated practice and experience informing their view. Buddhist practitioner and professor Daniel Vokey (2008, p.31) elaborates: “Perhaps most importantly, walking the Mahâyâna path properly involves undertaking to observe ethical precepts governing body, speech, and mind. It might also involve some or all of painting thankhas, executing calligraphies, memorizing slogans, visualizing mandalas, repeating mantras; engaging in dialectical debate, composing spontaneous songs of realization, or simply resting in the clear light of unconditioned awareness. To enjoy their full benefit, the different elements of the Mahâyâna path must be understood and practiced within their proper larger context.” The question then becomes, how to support appropriate boundaries between the respective spiritual-religious tradition(s) and our public educational institutions, while also recognizing the importance that spiritual maturation (regardless of one’s source of practice) continues to play an essential role in fostering the well being of individuals and societies?
Across higher education settings in North America within the past decade\(^{39}\), interest has grown in exploring contemplative pedagogy as well as the issues and challenges of working with a contemplative approach to teaching and learning. Arthur Zajonc (2006), advocate for contemplative education, remarks:

> On the basis of evidence from surveys and conferences, a significant community of teachers exists at all levels of higher education, from community colleges to research universities, who are using a wide range of contemplative practices as part of their classroom pedagogy. (p.1742)

While educators have focused on teaching contemplative methods, the preponderance of practices outlined within the emerging contemplative education literature in higher education (Duerr et al., 2003; Gunnlaugson, 2009; Roth, 2006, Zajonc, 2006; etc) reflect a bias\(^{40}\) towards predominantly first-person forms of contemplative pedagogy.\(^{41}\) Second-person instruction offers the benefits of engagement not only within, but also between learners, the educator and field of inquiry, developing interpersonal contemplative capacity and establishing a participatory rather than individual-centered ethos within the classroom community.

In the interests of expanding the epistemological horizons of contemplative education and cultivating the aforementioned benefits of second-person pedagogical approaches, in this chapter I will explore specific aspects of Scharmer’s practice of presencing (2007, 2005, 2001; Senge et

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\(^{39}\) For an overview of the conferences, presentations, journal articles, graduate programs, retreats and fellowships that have focused on contemplative education in the recent decade, please consult Gunnlaugson (2009) for an overview.

\(^{40}\) Within the contemplative education literature, this bias is reflected in the relative absence of second-person methods that advocate collective discernment and foster shared contemplative states of experience from the point of view of “our” shared emergent experience. I draw upon the distinction of second-person (in contrast to first-person or third-person) as an integral heuristic (Sarath, 2006) for categorizing interpersonal “process-oriented” pedagogies such as dialogue or presencing that involve a shared learning exchange between individuals and groups. Sometimes I represent the second-person perspective with the construct of the shared intersubjective field. Other times, I employ second-person as a referent for the intersubjective position that is represented spatially as held between us, in contrast to inside us (subjective position) or outside us (objective position). To forestall any confusion for readers, it is important to note that I am not drawing from either the linguistic use of the term to represent the second-person “you” pronoun or the literary use of second-person narrative voice and point of view.

\(^{41}\) For the purposes of this chapter, I am applying the term pedagogy in a way that is consistent with its more general usage in higher education circles as embracing the art and science of teaching and facilitating the learning of young adult and adults in post-secondary contexts.
al., 2004), Varela’s three gestures of awareness (2000; Depraz, 2003) and Quaker discernment (Loring, 1999; Palmer, 1976; etc) with the objective of establishing how each might contribute to the project of second-person contemplative approaches to teaching and learning. I will then examine the traditional first-person contemplative practices underlying each approach (i.e. presence, mindfulness and discernment), and identify how the above processes contribute to opening the collective contemplative mind in higher education classrooms—particularly for those educators working in alignment with the intentions, purposes and ideals that characterize contemplative, transformative and integral approaches.

Within Buddhist and Christian traditions, contemplative states of mind generally arise from practitioners working with a teacher and prescribed formal practices such as Vipassana meditation\(^{42}\) or Lectio Divina.\(^{43}\) Contemplative pedagogy is similarly structured by both formal as well as informal contemplative practices\(^{44}\) that offer specific injunctions or methods that bring forth and illuminate new forms of experiential territory for participants. However, without understanding the historical context and methods of particular contemplative practices, as educators we may fail to grasp their deeper implications. Integral scholar-practitioner Ed Sarath (2003) elaborates:

> Contemplative disciplines, unlike activities that might induce contemplative states, are linked to theoretical and philosophical models of consciousness and its development. Thus, while long-distance athletes or environmental engineers may invoke contemplative experiences in their respective activities, there is no corresponding body of knowledge in their fields that explains these states, the mechanics through which they are invoked, the ways they differ cognitively from ordinary experience, and the stages corresponding to their development over time. (p.217)

\(^{42}\) Vipassana is an ancient form of awareness-based meditation that cultivates insight and direct experience of the nature of reality.
\(^{43}\) Lectio Divina is Latin for a spiritual reading, and typically involves a Christian practice of prayer and scriptural reading.
\(^{44}\) Formal practice involves working with the methodology of specific traditional contemplative practices, whereas informal practice involves any improvised activity that evokes deeper contemplative states of mind or presence, but is not necessarily drawn from or informed by the methods of a specific contemplative tradition.
To better understand the nature of contemplative processes in the classroom, there is a need for scholar-practitioners to further unpack and in some instances untangle the relationship between the different forms of contemplative pedagogy and the wisdom traditions and models of consciousness informing them. Consulting with the deeper intentions and views that inform specific contemplative practices will help better determine the benefits and limitations of applying them in classroom contexts.

As a heuristic for distinguishing contemplative processes in educational contexts, Sarath distinguishes between first-, second- and third-person approaches to organize and integrate diverse contemplative approaches. He points out that our pedagogical methods “contain first-, second- and third-person aspects to varying degrees” (2009, p. 2) with certain aspects prevailing depending on the pedagogical approach being utilized. Sarath (in press) briefly reflects on the curriculum he has worked with in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz and Contemplative Studies (BFAJCS) at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance:

A continuum of contemplative practice in CC and CPS courses that ranges from silent sitting meditation to contemplative movement and writing and interactive activities spans first and second person terrain. Readings, discussion, and writings around theoretical topics yield strong connections to third-person learning (p.18).

Apart from Sarath’s framing of second-person contemplative learning, existing pedagogical approaches described within the contemplative educational literature focus primarily on first-person methods of cultivating deepened intrapersonal awareness, presence, mindfulness and

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For those readers who may be unfamiliar with the distinctions of first-person, second-person and third-person in the context of educational approaches, I agree with Roth (2006) in his assessment that the academic world is arguably dominated by third-person forms of education where analysis, investigation and critical discussion of knowledge is presumed to be separate and external from both the one who knows and the object or subject that is being studied. First-person forms of education, as outlined by Sarath (2006), involve learning that is drawn from our individual experience, from some internal content through modes of journaling, introspective reflection, among other approaches. Second-person forms of education are more process oriented within the contexts, generally including collective forms of learning and discovery in group work, community-based learning and so forth. As noted earlier on, it is important to note that Sarath’s application of first-, second- and third-person types of pedagogy do not strictly follow from either the linguistic or literary uses of these terms.
other contemplative qualities. Partly in response to the perceived need for correcting this imbalance, this chapter explores three candidates for a second-person contemplative pedagogy that focuses primarily upon developing *interpersonal* contemplative capacities within individuals.

### 3.2 Broadening the Epistemological Foundations of Contemplative Education: Opening to the Intersubjective Field

Contrary to the stereotypes of contemplative traditions that bring to mind an inward or passive person withdrawn from worldly commitments, second-person forms of contemplative practice are primarily engaged with collective processes and contexts. In my experience, contemplative knowing from a first-person perspective generally involves a subtle *felt* contact with both the subject of one’s contemplation and underlying phenomenological ground of one’s inner experience. Unlike third-person critical and reflective modes of thinking that are oriented towards external content in the attempt to gain objectivity, in contemplative knowing there is generally a figure/ground reversal of the habitual structuring of one’s attention *as one engages in thinking* in order to foster deeper awareness, concentration and insight in the present (Hart, 2004). Rather than habitually directing one’s thinking processes from the momentum of conditioned thought, self-referencing or past associations, the objective of contemplative knowing from the first-person perspective involves attending more carefully to one’s habitual cognition in order to access a more unconditioned awareness, and in turn a more clear, wise and compassionate source of knowing that is always already present. Professor and psychologist Tobin Hart (2004) elaborates:

> Although various practices (of contemplative knowing) may evoke different kinds of awareness, such as creative breakthrough or compassion, they share in common a distinct nonlinear consciousness that invites an inner opening of awareness. This opening within us in turn enables a corresponding opening toward the world before us. Through a fresh lens, our worldview, sense of self,
and relationships may be powerfully transformed. (p.29)

There is a kind of primary subjectivity of the individual learner that informs first-person processes of contemplative knowing, yet there also is a hidden shared intersubjective dimension of learning and knowing that can not be satisfactorily addressed pedagogically by first-person methods. A second-person process such as dialogue might be described as an exchange between situated individuals (two or more) focusing on a specific experiential content developed from intermingling first-person positions. A second-person position from the perspective of a class dialogue is a collection of unique and distinct first-person positions. However, within intersubjective theory, there is the notion of the “intersubjective field” which forms between any two or more persons where there are always at least three points of view: mine, yours and ours together (Orange 1995). In spite of the challenges of conveying the perspective of “ours together” in a satisfying manner, there is a growing consensus on the significance of this second-person perspective as represented by such constructs as the intersubjective field. Support for this view has surfaced within and across the disciplines of consciousness studies (De Quincey, 2000, 2005; Hargens, 2001; Thompson, 2001), contemporary psychotherapy (Orange et al., 1998; Stolorow et al., 1996), leadership development (Isaacs, 1993, 1996, 1999; Jaworski, 1996; Senge et al., 2004), dialogue education (Arnett, 1992; Gunnlaugson, 2006) and collective intelligence (Atlee, 2003; Hamilton, 2004; Por, 1995), among others.

Professor of religious studies Chris Bache (2007) suggests that drawing from the intersubjective field has the potential of offering a markedly distinct quality of experience out of which learning processes unfold:

> Sometimes when I am simply doing my job as a professor, covering the day’s assignment, it is as if the floor suddenly falls away. The atmosphere in the room becomes supercharged, and everyone seems to congeal into a unified state. My mind becomes unusually spacious and clear and my student’s eyes tell me that
they have moved into a particularly receptive state. Our hearts seem to merge, and from this open field of compassion comes a slow stream of thoughts that I, as spokesperson for the group, unfold and work with. In these transient moments of heightened awareness I sometimes have the acute sensation that there is only one mind present in the room. It is as if the walls that usually separated us become gossamer curtains. (p.46)

Though Bache frames this experience as a change in the class atmosphere that has a formative influence on his teaching, he also notes the shared intersubjective qualities, “my student’s eyes tell me they have moved into a particularly receptive state. Our hearts seem to merge…” (p.46). I understand his depiction of there being “one mind present in the room” as suggesting a significant shift in collective experience, though Bache does not elaborate on how his students experience this shift.46

Along the lines of Bache’s explorations, De Quincy has experimented with Bohmian dialogue, “In many of my classes at John F. Kennedy University, I include sessions devoted exclusively to the second-person approach to consciousness studies. Almost without exception, I’m moved and surprised each time at how deeply people can go in shifting from our typical modes of thought to embodied, authentic self-expression, even in periods as short as a couple of hours (De Quincy, p.162-170). Jonathan Reams (2007) has applied Bohmian dialogue as a means for expanding his students’ awareness of other ways of being and knowing through changes of states of consciousness within his classroom. Brock Travis (1993) has facilitated collective non-dual awareness practices in his college courses. Heesoon Bai and Avraham Cohen (2007) have explored the prospects of the classroom as an enlightened energetic and perceptual dao-field of possibilities for cultivating one’s full humanity together. Similarly,

46 In my view, this is an unfortunate omission that needs to be addressed in more detail. Identifying as the sole “spokesperson” for the group can be problematic insofar as the collective state of receptivity Bache witnesses from his students can if perpetuated, lead to strengthening his identification with his role as spokesperson and silencing their voices. The more fundamental challenge at hand that Bache does not explore in his book is how to bring about the conditions to support student’s voices in such shared states of collective receptivity.
Maureen O’Hara’s (2003) research on the *Integral Group* merits consideration: “It turns out that there are certain moments in a group’s life in which an extraordinary level of alignment and attunement occur between individual members and the group consciousness.” Ettling & Gozawa (2000) have explored the implications of co-creating a field of mutuality with groups as a means for fostering collective wisdom, common feelings of being and participant’s shared humanity. Much of this research is appropriately descriptive in nature, characterizing specific yet related aspects of intersubjective experience. As this chapter explores, there is a need to better understand how each second-person contemplative pedagogy draws attention to particular ways of seeing and being that give access to related yet distinct regions within the intersubjective territory of classroom life.47 Building along the lines of these above contributions, which draw upon specific shared aspects of contemplative experience, my interest in this chapter is to further unearth second-person contemplative practices towards this end, laying the foundation for an orientating framework of second-person contemplative pedagogies to be developed in a future work.

In his proposal for a new field of contemplative studies, Roth (2006) advocates integrating critical third-person and first-person approaches to contemplative study, to which I have responded by advocating the development of critical second-person study (Gunnlaugson, 2009). Given Sarath’s (in press) earlier point about each contemplative practice containing “first-, second- and third-person aspects to varying degrees” (p. 2), I have found that second-person approaches to varying degrees draw upon first-person practices. In critically examining

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47 In reviewing this chapter, my dissertation supervisor Daniel Vokey brought up a helpful comparison with mindfulness practice: “I am interpreting you as proposing that there are different contemplative practices that work with the same non-dual awareness, but can be distinguished according to where attention is directed, as there are different mindfulness practices distinguished, not so much by the quality of mindfulness, but by the object of attention.” Future conceptual and empirical research would benefit from further clarifying and where possible, differentiating different regions and their corresponding “objects” within the intersubjective terrain of classroom experience that specific second-person pedagogies may or may not bring forth or attend to.
and integrating second-person approaches to contemplative pedagogy, I believe there is a benefit in exploring the implications of first-person contemplative practices of mindfulness, suspension and presence as they occur directly in the collective class inquiry. A second-person pedagogy then seeks to draw contemplative insights and approaches to learning that emerge from the classroom field of learning constituted by the intersection of multiple subjectivities—that of the educator and learners. Strictly speaking, educator and learners are always engaged in some form of intersubjective participation (whether they are aware of this or not consciously). However, as this chapter will develop later on, the quality and depth of engagement within the intersubjective field is highly influenced by collective norms of listening and speaking which vary considerably between different fields of conversation (Scharmer, 2007, p. 237). In the context of Scharmer’s work, when the educator and students participation in the class subject is engaged from shared presence and collective attention into what is emerging, the inquiry becomes informed by the intersubjective field. Second-person contemplative educational process is thus defined in part by the quality of shared contemplative awareness that permeates the class field and intersubjective classroom events as Brent Davis (2005) has put it, “the classroom community can and should be understood as a learner—not a collection of learners, but a collective learner—with a coherence and evolving identity all its own (p. 87). For this to take place from a contemplative education perspective, the collective learner or intersubjective field becomes the primary context out of which second-person forms of contemplative educational processes emerge.

48 Within the context of Scharmer’s four fields of conversation (figure 2.1), the intersubjective field does not play a role in the collective inquiry process until the later stages of dialogue (field three) and presencing (field four).
49 I use the term class field to signify the intersubjective field in classroom settings.
3.3 Presence

In spite of living in a time of endless distraction and interruption, where pervasive pressures to multitask bring about various forms of attention deficit disorders, from the perspective of the wisdom traditions, the possibility always exists for cultivating relaxed attention, awareness, and intentionality—that is, presence. The experience of presence—the practice, condition or state of abiding in embodied present-moment centered awareness—involves the quality of attention that we make available to each situation and relationship.

Bugental (1987) elaborates on presence as:

a name for the quality of being in a situation or relationship in which one intends at a deep level to participate as fully as she is able. Presence is expressed through mobilization of one’s sensitivity—both inner (to the subjective) and outer (to the situation and the other person(s) in it)—and through bringing into action one’s capacity for response. (pp. 26-27)

Miller (2005) audaciously defines teaching as consisting of a three part taxonomy that includes an educator’s theory, practice and presence, with an educator’s presence being the most critical element. Kessler (2000, pp. 7-9) claims a teacher’s presence develops from cultivating discipline, being present and having an open heart. Reams (2007) explores the quality of teacher presence in terms of facilitating shared understanding, quality of perception and appropriate levels of discourse with students. Solloway delves further into presence as a means for exploring further “what our conditioning shuts to the background” in the classroom (Solloway, p. 30).

Solloway elaborates:

the activity of participating in the motion or movement of what is happening by being present in the “noise” as an initial intention of non-judgment. This means a conscious attempt to as close as possible, lead the imagination to the place before categories exist. After this initial immersion in the “noise,” then the normal activity of categories and signs is resumed. The importance is that the movement through this pre-signifying transitional space-in-between leaves a trace that alters the nature of the upcoming judgment. This alteration opens the upcoming judgment to something other—something other than a closed end in itself. A judgment that is open to its own
As Solloway’s phenomenological account points out, presence offers educators a way to reconnect with classroom life in such a way that other possible meanings and insights can arise where our judgments or conditioning previously prevented us from hearing our students. When teaching from presence, we uncover a liminal space to hear more of what our students are expressing to us. Learning to conduct our teaching from presence first requires cultivating fresh awareness of our discursive thought and interior processes through some form of formal contemplative practice. As presence develops, we begin to shape a distinct way of relating with our consciousness and our students by dwelling more in the “noise” of what we might have otherwise been overlooking or placed in the background of our awareness. Teaching from presence then for Solloway (2000) demands cultivating a wakeful quality of attention that reaches slightly deeper than our confidence in teaching methods and successful education strategies crafted towards specific ends, opening into discoveries and perspectives that may have been previously unanticipated. Building from these insights into teaching from presence, I will now address the significance of engaging presence further within the classroom as a pedagogical vehicle for second-person forms of contemplative inquiry.

### 3.3.1 Applying Presence-Based Classroom Learning through Presencing

Otto Scharmer’s (2007, 2005, 2000; Senge et al., 2004) notion of *presencing* offers a

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50 In other words, presence has the potential to draw upon what has been heretofore made *absent* by virtue of our entering into a heightened relationship with the present, which in turn helps us see through our own projections, hopes and story about what is in order to encounter a richer fullness of what is. Meaning, I discover more of what I have been excluding from my awareness by first becoming more aware of what I am including. However, it is important to note that coming into presence does not guarantee that we necessarily encounter what has been absent from our awareness. Scharmer (2007) describes this issue of absence as the *blindspot of our experience*, and claims that presencing is a method for shifting the inner source of our experience to draw from a deeper quality of attention for creative purposes. Yet, neither Scharmer nor Solloway address the issue of what perspectives have been left out or ignored through the process of coming into presence, indicating a blindspot or limitation in the theory and practice itself.

51 Regarding the subject of presence, all of the above educators I have sourced concur that developing presence requires the support of a formal awareness-based contemplative practice such as Vipassana meditation.
provisional second-person methodology and framework to guide presence-based classroom learning. For our purposes, I will focus on two specific inflections of Scharmer’s (2007) account of presencing, which involve specific ways of teaching from presence. First, I examine presencing as a field structure and meta-process of conversation (Scharmer, 2007, p. 238; 297), and secondly as a way of engaging presence for the purposes of apprehending new knowledge in conversation.

For the first meaning, let us now turn to Scharmer’s (2007) work on conversational fields, where he distinguishes between four basic second-person contexts that arise in groups:

In the above framework, Scharmer depicts how conversations move counter-clockwise from relatively closed and inauthentic fields of conversation in the lower left-hand quadrant (i.e., downloading) through debate, dialogue and finally presencing. For Scharmer, the field of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENACTING EMERGING FUTURES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRESENCING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generative flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collective creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stiffness and grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening from the emerging future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other = highest future Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rule-generating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIALOGUE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inquiry, reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can change my view</td>
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<tr>
<td>listening from within</td>
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<tr>
<td>(empathic listening)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other = you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeing oneself as part of the current whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOWNLOADING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talking nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>polite, cautious</td>
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<tr>
<td>don’t speak your mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening = projecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rule-conforming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEBATE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talking tough: clash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am my point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening from outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other = counterpart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rule-confronting</td>
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Figure 3.1: The four fields of conversation (Scharmer, 2007, p274)
presencing in part builds from the earlier habits of listening and speaking that characterize the three previous fields of conversation. In my experience, awareness of how we enact the three previous fields of conversation and the characteristic structures of attention that define each field is helpful in moving into the field of presencing. For example, reenacting past habits of discussion with one’s students—a key aspect of the field of downloading—generally does not bring forth empathic insights into the perspectives others are speaking from or foster a deepened co-creative process. To establish the capacity for presencing with certain class groups over a semester, it can be beneficial to introduce and explore the dynamics of learning from the previous three fields of conversation. However, with other groups it may only take part of a class or a few classes to move into presencing, depending on a number of different contextual factors unique to each class. Each field of conversation, for Scharmer, contains within it a characteristic intersubjective pattern that is informed by particular forms of engagement in listening and speaking within the group.

This brings us to the second meaning of the term presencing, which involves orienting from presence. In Senge et al. (2004), Scharmer describes presencing as becoming present “to the larger space or field around us, to an expanded sense of self, and ultimately to what is

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52 In the online graduate course on Dialogue Processes that I have taught each spring semester at the University of Massachusetts (Boston) since 2006, I have found it helpful to introduce Scharmer’s four fields of conversation and the methodology of presencing to my students as a foundation for doing presencing together.

53 Contextual factors might include learner’s previous experience with contemplative methodologies, degree of interest from students in engaging collective learning processes, familiarity with the presencing practice, the politics and social relations within the classroom, among others.

54 In my experience teaching and facilitating Scharmer’s model, I have found that participants can roughly self-assess when they are in a particular field and that an outside observer would be able to recognize the particular intersubjective patterns of engagement. The quality of engagement within specific fields, particularly in reflective dialogue and presencing, is strongly related to the specific intention and objectives of the group. For some groups who are seeking mastery of presencing, there is a high intrinsic value of doing presencing with others for presencing sake. For other groups more passionate about debate, they may wish to assemble to debate others for the sake of debating. Additionally, each disciplinary context poses particular challenges that are specific to the area of study. For example, students enrolled in teacher education programs tend to be particularly concerned about inquiry methodologies that will serve their practical needs when teaching in the classroom. Depending on their area of specialization (i.e. Math, English or Social Studies as an example), this will invariably play a role in determining their motivation and quality of engagement.
emerging through us” (p. 91). From this passage, Scharmer builds on the previous meanings of presence by identifying specific contexts for educator and learners to explore the practice of presence in a) the intersubjective field of learning, b) as an expanded or distributed sense of self and c) in a transpersonal process for unfolding new knowledge. Presencing arises from the practice of establishing ourselves in presence and then connecting with specific contexts or sources of our experience while we participate in conversation in order to uncover new forms of tacit-embodied and self-transcending knowledge (Scharmer, 2007, p. 255).

How do the above three contexts for presence take shape in the classroom? Briefly, as we become attentive to the field dynamics of a class conversation, we may find ourselves wondering about the deeper issues, questions or phrases that begin to show up with our students and then voicing these. When we bring our attention to what Scharmer describes as an expanded sense of self, in the context of the classroom this might involve encouraging students to practice moving their awareness from their individual perspectives to attempting to observe from “multiple points of view simultaneously from the surrounding field” (Scharmer 2007, p. 169).

Finally, in becoming present to what is emerging through our conversations, the class becomes more of an “enabling presence” (2007, p. 181). This allows the group to see more of who they/we are, which helps open a clearing to explore deeper issues, questions and subject terrain. In such moments, I have found it helpful to invite students into shifting the place of our perception from our own subjective point of view to discerning what is arising from the class field.

By engaging these classroom contexts from presence as illustrated in each example, we cultivate a distinct form of presence in action. As described in the previous section, there are important benefits for educators to cultivate our individual presence as a means for enhancing
our teaching approach. Presencing draws upon presence, but the intention and purpose are different. With presencing, we cultivate presence as a basis for apprehending, seeing and sensing into emergent (that is, not-yet-known) possibilities and knowledge with our students. Building on presence as an embodied quality of being, Scharmer (2007) reframes presence as a precondition for experiencing a deeper source of who we are, as a form of deeper interrelated pedagogical engagement with our students and as a vehicle for unfolding new knowledge in conversation. Presencing as a field of conversation offers a different learning environment than a conversational field shaped by the processes of downloading, debate and even dialogue, enabling us to focus attention on the shared thought conditions that allow access to deeper forms of tacit embodied knowledge\textsuperscript{55} and self-transcending knowledge\textsuperscript{56} (p. 255). Educator Jackie Seidel (2006) offers a perspective of this process:

Catherine Keller (1986) wrote that we can feel the future forming in ourselves now, for this my present self will be endlessly taken up and reiterated. The future will—if only to the most trivial degree—feel this present. My soul, my body, my world: ongoing, they will have to take me in. So if I learn to feel the subtle movement from past to present, I may begin to discern the transformation of vast relational patterns, personal and social, as they roll through my present. (pp. 246–247)

The practice of presencing then requires shifting from a) learning from and reflecting on the past or pre-existing explicit knowledge, which is well known and underlies all conventional learning methodologies (Scharmer 2007, p. 7), towards b) learning together from the emerging future by collectively sensing into and apprehending not yet embodied or known possibilities. Such a shift in emphasis stands apart from pedagogical objectives that involve educating for the purposes of replicating past knowledge. As a form of collective learning, presencing involves a specific shift in our place of perception from current reality in the present to perceiving from the source of what is emerging in our experience (Scharmer, 2007, p. 163) as a basis for unfolding new

\textsuperscript{55} Scharmer (2007) defines tacit embodied knowledge as based on lived experience within.

\textsuperscript{56} Scharmer (2001) defines self-transcending knowledge as tacit knowledge prior to its embodiment within the self.
knowledge about a specific issue, topic or subject. Lynn Fels (2004) offers a helpful perspective on this process:

If we understand our lived experiences as unfolding possible worlds within which learning emerges, we must then pay attention to how we engage in pedagogical encounters, and how we choose to interact with our students within what becomes a co-evolving curriculum of possibility. A new balancing is required in the pedagogical relationship, one that locates educators and students within the tension of ambiguity and the not-yet known. (p. 78)

Similarly, presencing offers an alternative method to more conventional approaches to teaching, which tend to focus on discussing knowledge through repeating, applying and reflecting upon existing knowledge and models. As a contemplative form of knowing, presencing offers a subtle basis of knowing oneself through a fundamental shift in the locus of our awareness from a localized and separate self to a de-centered and distributed sense of self that is attentive to what is emerging through the field of conversation. Scharmer (2005) elaborates:

People usually enter into an experience of presencing by noticing a change of social space (a de-centering of the spatial experience), of social time (a slowing down of the temporal experience to stillness), and of self (a collapsing the boundaries of the ego). The outcomes of this process include a heightened level of individual energy and commitment; a heightened field quality of collective presence and energy, and profound long-term changes. (p. 13)

From the connected quality of self and knowing that emerges when students are presencing together, shared presence tends to invite a way of listening and being that is attuned initially to one's own interior promptings, but then gradually more and more to the subtle depths of what wants to emerge from the group field of conversation. As we become increasingly receptive to what is arising through our engagements with our students from the group field of conversation and the moment by moment unfolding of the presencing process with our students, contributions in our classrooms tend to elicit more authentic, collaborative and co-creative ways of learning together.
3.4 Mindfulness

Mindfulness practice, both as defined within Eastern traditions and a western social science perspective provides a basis for cultivating enhanced learning experiences. Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Gunaratana (1992) points out that mindfulness training teaches us how to examine our own perceptual process with fine-tuned awareness, so that we see our own responses with calm and serene equanimity. Advocate for mindful learning, Harvard educator Langer (1997) unpacks the cognitive implications of mindfulness in the context of learning:

When we are mindful, we implicitly or explicitly view a situation from several perspectives, see information presented in the situation as novel, attend to the context in which we are perceiving the information, and eventually create new categories through which this information may be understood (p. 111).

Mindfulness then cultivates a flexible and alert state of mind, allowing us to know something more vividly. Educator Susan Walsh (2003) expands further on different aspects of this interior relation:

Through foregrounding breathing, and returning at all times to the ever-changing sensing body, the impermanence of thought too becomes evident. What seems gripping in the moment passes with the breath. A multidimensional space opens around experience, how we encase it in language. We notice how thought works, its habits, its familiar haunts and pathways. We observe, witness. Stay with. (p. 2)

In applying mindfulness to our thinking, we begin noticing our thoughts as we speak and listen to others. With sustained practice, this develops a disposition of non-interfering and non-judgmental witnessing of our thought process. Buddhist practitioner and scholar Heesoon Bai (2001) acknowledges that mindfulness frees us from the “tenacious grip of the abstract, disemboding conceptual mind (intellect)” (p. 97) by recovering our roots in “non-discursive, embodied awareness” (p. 92). By attending closely to what is happening moment to moment without getting caught up in thoughts that obscure this non-discursive awareness, we win some
distance from the obsessive and habitual nature of thinking as Bai points out. By becoming more mindful of our thought process in daily life, we are effectively training ourselves to see and perceive life more directly as it is rather than through a screen of thoughts and concepts (Gunaratana, 1992).

This brings us to the second application of mindfulness with our emotions. Awareness of our emotional state is central to the capacity of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1997). Mindfulness training provides a way to cultivate emotional balance and decrease the hold of habitual patterns that obscure perception and impair our judgment, developing a distanced or de-centered relationship with our experience, in turn decreasing emotional reactivity. Mindfulness then cultivates an experience of emotions as impermanent entities with which we can work with and not become as entangled in—teaching one to approach experiences with acceptance, open-ended curiosity and self observation without judgment (Bishop et al., 2004). Zukav & Francis (2001), in their discussion of emotions, provide the image of standing on a bridge and noticing the river beneath, accepting where and how it flows, which cultivates an attitude of being-with our emotional state, where, if we happen to fall into the river’s currents, we return our awareness to observing the emotional currents from our previous location on the bridge. Being mindfully attuned to our emotional state in such a fashion, particularly in moments of emotional distress, helps us discover first-hand how our emotions affect and infect our words and actions in the classroom.

Mindfulness of the body requires that we attend to our breath and return to it when experiencing emotional tension. The physical act of breathing is at once material and metaphorical, helping us develop a grounded connection to our immediate experience and

57 I find it unfortunate that awareness of our intellectual state is not viewed as more central to our conventional understanding of IQ intelligence.
situation. It is a practice anchored in our physicality—bringing about a heightened and purposeful awareness of sensations. With a diffuse focus on the breath, we can move towards re-inhabiting our bodies as the mooring and support for mindfulness in the classroom (Klein, 1997).

As I examined presencing in relation to its roots in the first-person contemplative practice of presence, in the next section I will delve further into intersubjective mindfulness by building on a specific first-person practice. I will attempt to convey the importance of intersubjective mindfulness in classroom life with our students, and by extension, the broader campus environment and the individual lives of those within the academic community. Traditionally, interior forms of mindfulness are taught (mindfulness of one’s thoughts, emotions, body and breath), yet when taken up within the intersubjective field, exterior forms of mindfulness can also be cultivated (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) as the outer counterpart to the inward cultivation of moment-to-moment non-judgmental awareness or mindfulness (p. 448). While an intention of first-person mindfulness is to foster clarity and individual presence through mindfulness of body, mind, emotion and spirit, with the practice of intersubjective mindfulness, a core intention of exterior forms of mindfulness is to foster co-creativity within class conversations.

### 3.4.1 Applying the Three Gestures of Becoming Aware in the Class Field

![Figure 3.2: The three phases (Depraz et al., 2000, p. 135)](image)

At this junction, I will now turn to the late Francisco Varela’s (Depraz et al., 2000) three phase structuring of the act of becoming aware, which consists of suspension, redirection and
letting go. Though this cycle incorporates elements of several contemplative practices, it most closely resembles the Buddhist practice of mindfulness. In the following section, I will examine each phase with an interest in adapting its pedagogical contribution for fostering intersubjective mindfulness of the class field. A key difference between second-person forms of mindfulness and a group of students practicing mindfulness is that the former situation takes place with a shared collective intent. In other words, both the process and content of conversation become the objects of mindfulness, whereas having a group of students individually practicing mindfulness may not necessarily involve either a shared second-person content or shared second-person process of mindfulness. As an example, one student could be practicing mindfulness of one’s body, another mindfulness of their emotions and still another mindfulness of thought and be faintly aware of what is unfolding in the group field of conversation.

When practiced by an individual, suspension creates an interior space for the reconsideration of thought, emotions and underlying assumptions and patterns. Suspension of our thoughts, emotions and judgments as they arise helps us see through our tendency to live from past associations and previous knowledge and connect with what is. When practicing suspension in the context of conversation, suspension opens a shared space or clearing within the class field. Adapted as a second-person contemplative practice, suspension involves slowing down our communication so that we can more clearly comprehend the complex nature of a particular issue, subject or everyday situation as Zajonc (2003) elaborates:

We need to learn to live in what looks like, from one standpoint, a kind of confusion or a paradoxical situation ... It’s not that one pole of the paradox becomes true and the other becomes false, but you begin to realize that this tension is part of the dynamic of, say, raising a child or loving someone. Living in such relationships, both poles have to be active. Both have to be fully present. And when they are, then something grows, something happens. When it’s just one pole dominating the other, it’s dead. It doesn’t work. A marriage relationship or a group relationship has to have that complexity. Anything alive has to have that complexity. To bring a quality of
consciousness that is equally capable of holding that complexity is a great challenge, because usually we attend to a maximum of one thing. Or no thing, because we’re too distracted. (p. 25)

When practiced collectively, suspension of judgment involves holding the complexity of our assumptions, biases, histories and habitual ways of engaging with one another in conversation so they can be mindfully attended to, felt and reflected back to the class. In learning to hold these tensions of thinking (as representations of a more comprehensive and complex reality) with others, creative space can be opened intersubjectively in order to address the deeper incoherence of the process of thinking itself (Bohm, 1996), which when left unsuspended, tends to weaken our grasp and diminish our comprehension of this deeper complexity. Suspension, then for creative purposes, helps develop a shared willingness on behalf of the educator and students to be tentative about advocating or defending our existing knowledge and curious about what is emerging. Suspension prevents us from slipping into discursive, disembodied habits of knowing insofar as the practice draws on the physiological and kinesthetic correlates of our thoughts through felt awareness of our thoughts, emotions, breath and other faculties moment to moment. However, perhaps most importantly, suspension helps students and educator develop receptivity to the subtle, felt emergent processes of group sensing that are needed to bring about the class field.

Varela (Depraz et al., 2003) describes the second gesture of “redirection” as moving our attention away from the content we have “suspended” to what is newly arising from within. As a second-person contemplative practice, redirection involves a subtle but discernable change in the location of our habitual mode of paying attention from what has arisen or been shared to listening from the deeper collective interior within the class field. Initially, this can be confusing for students, insofar as distinguishing between the action of reflecting on past knowledge and
redirecting one’s attention to the underlying source context (i.e., class field) out of which knowledge is emerging is generally not clear to the untutored eye and ear.

An approach that I have found helpful is to practice with students by encouraging them to periodically redirect our attention to different levels of our experience as the conversation unfolds. As educators, I recognize that what I am proposing may involve paying attention to our class conversation in ways that are both familiar and likely unfamiliar to us. In my experience, this involves engaging a mode of sensing that is similar to Gendlin’s *felt-sense*58, where we listen on different levels to the larger gestalt of what others are sharing, as well as the deeper source of our individual experience. Zajonc (2003) elaborates:

The idea of redirection is difficult because often we have wrong expectations. To redirect, to step into a space and—as opposed to going with the conventional set of expectations, going with what we know to be the case already, going with a habit and so forth—to stop and truly redirect to what’s right now, right there is enormously difficult. To realize, as something is emerging, that’s what’s important, this shifts everything. And if you’re attentive and can suspend judgment and hold on to that redirected attention, you’re nurturing a part of your own consciousness that is otherwise neglected. Because you’re on the treadmill of expectations and fulfillments. You’re always looking to see the same thing. To suspend and redirect is very important. (p. 25)

As Zajonc points out, redirection follows from the holding gesture of suspension and involves shifting our attention back into the arising present moment—into presence. From presence, you have effectively shifted your attention from outside of yourself to the inside of *yourself* (the first-person contemplative turn), which then expands or opens to include the inside of *us* (the second-person contemplative turn).

According to Varela (Depraz et al., 2003), following redirection is the disposition of *letting go*, which involves loosening our grip on our familiar separate self-sense for the purposes

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58 A felt sense (in Gendlin’s sense of the term) is quite different from "feeling" in the sense of emotions; it is more one's awareness of the ongoing life process. Because a felt sense arises from living interactions with the world, it is more intricate and subtly embodied.
of discovering a less reified or fluid sense of self. As a second-person practice for fostering intersubjective mindfulness of the class field, when we loosen our hold on our separate egoic sense of self it is for the purpose of becoming established in this fluid and connected sense of self with other learners in the class field. *Letting go eventually gives way to a form of letting come.*

Letting come takes place when learners shift their attention from “looking for something” to “letting something come to you,” to “let something be revealed” (Depraz et al., 2003). Depraz et al. elaborate:

> You actively pay attention but at the same time you wait, since what you’re reflecting on is by definition tacit, pre-reflective or pre-conscious. Thus you have to balance your self between a sustained act of attention and not having immediate fulfillment… ” (p. 37)

As a practice of intersubjective mindfulness, letting come fosters receptivity to the subtle textures and nuances of what is emerging within the inquiry in the conversational field. Letting come involves entering into a receptive state of listening for new meaning, knowledge and insights to emerge in one’s awareness. When followed from the practices of suspension, redirection and letting go, letting come helps create the conditions for collective receptivity to what is arising from clearings within the class field.

### 3.5 Discernment

Discernment in academic settings tends to be influenced by the Classical tradition of western philosophy. Olivia (2004) elaborates on discernment as a form of critical thinking

An example of this from the Greek philosophical tradition is in Plato’s *Apology*. Here, Socrates makes his famous observation that “the unexamined life is not worth living” (*Ap. 38a*). According to Socrates, in order to live a moral and ethical life, we should examine not only what we believe, but also why we believe what we believe. In the Socratic method of philosophy, we examine our minds and see if our thoughts, our perceptions, our behaviors, our biases, are rooted in Clear Seeing, come from some form of truth, or instead are simply rooted in habits of mind. According to Socrates, much of what we believe, that is, much of what we take to be our personal beliefs, are actually conditioned by our culture.
And much of what are our personal beliefs are simply habits of mind, habits that are so often repeated that we take them to be true. Coming from the classical tradition, then, examination, questioning, becoming aware, allows us, invites us, to go beyond what we take to be givens. In academia, we call this process of examination and questioning, this practice of discernment, “critical thinking.”

(p. 1)

In the context of critical thinking, discernment involves separating, dividing or distinguishing with the intellect, getting at what is hidden or obscured as a means for a more developed and critical understanding of an existing body of knowledge. It is important to briefly address the limitations of discernment. While it may help us locate certain words, new insights or knowledge, the deeper source of our experience can become remote to us, or our finitude and conditioning can prevent us from living into such discoveries. There can also be false or misleading forms of discernment that surface or lead to confused, deluded or defensive experiences that reinforce ego boundaries and so forth.

Contrasted with critical thinking, within the Quaker tradition practitioners cultivate spiritual discernment through shared ritual and deep listening, which involves opening to dimensions of wisdom that lie beyond one’s presently held ideas, assumptions and current understanding, in turn fostering a “feeling after Truth or the ability to sense the sacred or secular origins of diverse things” (Loring, 1999. p. 73). Loring elaborates:

As we grow in our responsiveness to what we hear, we are increasingly detached from layers of socially-conditioned personality that alienate us from our deepest interior selves. Layers of the outward social scaffolding of our selves—built up during our childhood, adolescence and young adulthood—are stripped away as we come into listening maturity and into our ineffable, true selves. (p. 251)

Loring’s account of Quaker spirituality is that it invites practitioners to clear a path to their true selves through ongoing discernment of the movements of Spirit and the complex psychological motivations and socio-cultural dimensions of their experience.
3.5.1 Applying Discernment as a Second-Person Contemplative Practice

Quaker educator Mary Rose O’Reilly speaks of attending to the wisdom in each contribution in the context of the class as a whole, “To listen thus attentively, to question thus seriously, is not to undermine authority but to increase sensitivity to its authentic voice… I have come to distrust any pedagogy that does not conclude in the communal (O’Reilly, 1993, pp. 60-61). Anne French Dalke in *Teaching to Learn: Learning to Teach* (2002) has also explored a Quaker-informed pedagogy drawn from discernment within the group process, where she views herself as a learner with her students, “companions on a path that has spiritual as well as intellectual dimensions, with all of us moving toward growth and development” (p. 50).

Prominent Quaker writer Parker Palmer (1976) explores the notion of a “meeting for learning” drawing attention to what he describes as *the third thing*:

> This “third thing” mediates the relation between selves. It saves the dialogue from becoming a simple sharing of subjectivities. The common text, a poem for example, has an irreducible reality of its own. And that reality is capable of breaking through the closure and deadlock which can sometimes occur in a simple dialogue. It enables the participants to speak and to listen to something outside of themselves. (p. 2)

While the “third thing” is typically understood as the class subject, Palmer (1976) advocates the importance of the class group:

> Another important feature of the meeting for learning is that it places trust in the group itself. In conventional education the group is only an accident; it just happens to be more convenient for a teacher to deal with individuals in a group rather than separately. But in a meeting for learning the group assumes an importance at least equal to that of any individual in it - just as a meeting for worship is more than a collection of individuals in meditation. In a meeting for learning the roles of teacher and student continually move from one person to another, and it should be impossible at any moment to anticipate who will be teacher next. (p. 3)

In the context of a second-person approach to contemplative education, it becomes impossible to predict if the educator, student or group field becomes the teacher next. To rise to this level of
pedagogical engagement requires discernment—that is, attending intersubjectively through deep listening to what is arising in the class conversation.

Discernment in the class field then occurs a) *intrapersonally* in the dynamic tension between multiple qualities of awareness arising in one’s consciousness, as well as b) *interpersonally* in relation to the intersubjective field formed by the engaged subjectivities of two (or more) persons and c) *transpersonally* through ongoing attention to deeper distributed presence. Because discernment involves a dynamic process of attention that flows through the intrasubjective, intersubjective and transpersonal contexts of our teaching experience, I have found it helpful to work with a discernment cycle, where we periodically shift our attention when listening to each of the aforementioned contexts while teaching.

The first part of the cycle, intrasubjective discernment, was covered in the above section. Intersubjective discernment, the second part, takes place in the identification of qualitatively different and often unpredictable occasions that take place with one’s students, which have potential to shift the intersubjective field to a deeper mode of collective engagement. Transitional moments have the potential to pull the educator and learners into a shared present together—an emergent property of the shared field that evolves out of the educator and learners shared inquiry. Such shifts are essential for doing second-person work. And such transitions often surprise everyone, in that it is generally not predictable though it may be expected or hoped for. In a class informed by second-person contemplative principles, transitional moments can lead to a deepening of class communion, presence, and presencing in the intersubjective field. When this shift happens and has been performed, mutually recognized and integrated, a new intersubjective state comes into being within the field. With practice, it is my experience that this new state helps provide a distinct intersubjective context or field of conversation that the
class has more stable access to.

Through the intersubjective encounter between educator, learners and the class field, there is a collective coming into presence both in silence (feelings, images, body awareness) and in language (words and thoughts), opening the way for new meaning to be received. Such shifts have the potential to alter the field in the direction of presencing or greater collective intelligence, increasing the collective process and quality of attention, with the proof of discernment being its knowledge and life-transforming fruits (increased presence, clarity, acuity of thinking and feeling, etc).

Within the class field, learners bring their unique subjective perspectives, which helps build the relational dimension of the field that forms between them and the educator. Here educator and learners potentially perceive and receive each other in ways that bring increased awareness and deeper meaning to their encounter. Discernment within the intersubjective field plays out on a continuum from ordinary, everyday classroom experience (involving judgment and discrimination) to the heightened presence of extraordinary learning experiences (involving intuition and presencing). When discernment evokes the latter, the field of presencing tends to deepen as the educator and learners are changed in some way through the dialogical encounter. However, presencing can just as easily break down when the opinions of vocal students or educator start to prevail over others and learners are no longer coming from presence or being mindful of what is emerging from the intersubjective field.

So the process of discernment takes place on three levels—mindfulness of what is arising in our perception, of what is arising in the class field, but also what is tacit, felt or hidden from our consciousness awareness and received through deeper intuition or source of our experience.
In terms of the third part of the cycle—transpersonal discernment—I return now to the insights of Parker Palmer (1976):

But what must finally be trusted in a meeting for learning is not a text or the group or the technique of the teacher, but a truth that lies beyond all our devices. I do not have a language adequate to name this truth or tell how it comes to us - except for one symbol, which arises naturally in any consideration of “meeting.” I mean the silence. Conventional education is almost always busy and/or noisy, as it hustles after knowledge with confidence in its own methods and conceptions. But a meeting for learning will know when to cease moving and talking, to cease pursuing truth, and to wait in silence for truth to come into its midst. Some of my most important moments of learning have been in such stillness—as insight coalesced, as knowledge settled in, or as a simple receptiveness opened within me. Above all, the silence symbolizes that so much of what we seek to teach and learn involves mystery to be pondered as well as problems to be solved. (p. 5)

Parker’s articulation of transpersonal discernment through a listening and attending to occasions of silence in the class indicate a reverential disposition towards conversation and learning as sacred process. Questions asked well can invite subtle changes in the class atmosphere. Questions received well hold our attention to what is arising from within us as well as the field of conversation. Questions contemplated well can open up space and slow down time, inviting a deeper space of emergence and sense of participation within a common field of shared experience and inquiry. When learning reaches this point of the amplified quality of silence Palmer writes about, a more profound basis of connection with our students and the process of learning together can emerge.

3.6 Closing Thoughts

As educators, navigating the intersubjective terrain in classroom life is no easy feat, particularly as the conversational field of presencing as well as processes of shared discernment and intersubjective mindfulness among others can be foreign or indistinct to the untutored eye. Nevertheless, contemplative forays into the second-person territory such as those explored in this chapter can help us to discover new patterns for engagement and open up a dynamic collective
context for exploring transformation with our students. Exploring the applications of presencing, as well as mindfulness and discernment in the class field, this chapter builds upon existing contributions within the contemplative education literature by examining the traditional first-person contemplative practices that underlie and support each second-person approach as well as the processes and conditions that broaden and deepen the existing possibilities of second-person contemplative approaches to teaching and learning.
3.7 Works Cited


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4. Presencing the Collective Learner: Preliminary Considerations for a Complex Emergent Pedagogical Process

4.1 Introduction

To the extent that the aims and purposes of higher education remain bound by conventional teaching approaches involving the transmission and acquisition of pre-existing representational knowledge (Osberg & Biesta, 2007; Osberg et al., 2008; Radford, 2007), we postpone exploring more complex emergent modes of teaching with our students for larger creative purposes. In the interest of further describing a complex emergent view and process of knowledge creation that serves the pedagogical needs of educators working with complex emergent processes in higher education classrooms, this article draws from the recent literature of complexivist education for perspectives that bring forth new ways of thinking about and applying presencing (Scharmer, 2007; Gunnlaugson, 2007, 2006) as a conversational process of sensing, seeing into and apprehending complex emergent ways of knowing and inquiry within classrooms.

Within the growing field of complexivist education (Davis & Sumara, 2007, 2006, 1997; Osberg, 2009), there has been an emphasis on discussions that describe principles of complexity and emergence as a basis for rethinking our theories of education and teaching. Nevertheless, these conversations have not identified the specific pedagogical practices that are capable of supporting and engaging in complex emergent processes of conversation with our students for the educational purposes of fostering creativity and a generative culture of learning within classroom collectives (Jorg, 2009). In the complexivist education literature, discussions of key notions such as the “space of emergence” (Osberg & Biesta, 2008), “enlarging the space of the

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59 A version of this chapter has been submitted for publication. Gunnlaugson, O. Presencing the Collective Learner: Preliminary Considerations for a Complex Emergent Pedagogical Process.
possible” (Davis & Phelps, 2004) and “teacher as the consciousness of the collective” (Davis & Sumara, 2005) offer helpful descriptions of what the phenomena of teaching involves from a collective complexivist standpoint. Yet, as this article will develop more in detail, further work is needed to identify pedagogical approaches for pursuing these normative and descriptive aims for the purposes of developing upon our understanding of how to integrate these pedagogies in classroom life.

As a lead into the conversation, I begin by drawing upon Scharmer’s (2007) theory of presencing to inform the development of a pedagogical process and framework for apprehending emergent knowledge within higher education classrooms. Within each upcoming section, I inquire into how presencing sheds new interpretive light onto the above three aims of complexity teaching, exploring further considerations for how presencing can serve as a complex emergent pedagogical process for educators situated in higher education who are working with complexivist education principles in their teaching.

4.2 Presencing a Space of Emergence

The scientific notion of emergence, a key feature of complex systems, is helpful for conveying the creative dynamics involved within educational processes of teaching and knowledge-creation in class conversation. In complexivist education, emergence arises from complex systems that create new properties from “autonomous unities coming together into larger, more powerful unities” (Davis & Sumara, 2007). Osberg & Biesta (2007a) differentiate between types of new properties with their distinction of weak and strong varieties of emergence.

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60 The notion of emergence will be taken up later on in this article where I explore Davis’s conditions for bringing forth emergence in classroom communities of inquiry.

61 For the purposes of this article, in referencing complex systems, unless otherwise stated I am referring to complex adaptive systems that consist of multiple interconnected elements with the capacity for transforming and learning from their experience. As an example, classroom communities of inquiry within higher education have the potential for becoming complex adaptive systems that bring forth emergent knowledge and emergent processes of knowledge-creation.
With the case of weak emergence, emergent properties are to varying extents constituted by what came before, yet contain something new (relative to what came before). For strong emergence, these new properties or processes (Thompson, 2007) are not determined by previous conditions and in the context of what has come before are inconceivable and fundamentally new. The distinctions of strong and weak emergence are helpful in describing how new properties or processes arise in complex systems. Where weak emergence is by definition characterized by conditioned and deterministic causes that give rise to novelty within a closed system, strong emergence is informed by the incoming of new non-determined causes that give rise to something completely new. Another way to think of the fruits of strong emergence is in terms of Goswami’s (2001, p.207-9) notion of fundamental creativity, which involves bringing about something new in a new context. Weak emergence can be compared to his (2001) notion of situational creativity, which involves bringing forth new combinations of old ideas in old contexts.62

Scharmer (2007) depicts conversation as an emergent process characterized by four distinct yet interconnected fields of conversation, which is his term for the dynamic patterns of interaction that are evident in conversation (p. 271-272). Each field of conversation, for Scharmer, contains within it a characteristic intersubjective pattern that is informed by particular forms of engagement in listening and speaking within the group. In the framework below (Figure 4.1), Scharmer charts the natural evolution of distinct conversational fields, moving counter-clockwise from relatively closed and cautious conversation in the lower left-hand

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62 It is important to note that weak forms of emergence should not imply undesirable or inferior forms of creativity. While some readers may detect an implicit value judgment here, I propose that the distinction of weak and strong be framed instead in terms of degrees of complex orders of creativity. Weak emergence is less complex than strong emergence much as situational creativity is less complex than fundamental forms of creativity. For educational purposes, the outcomes or processes of strong forms of emergence are less common, yet I have introduced this distinction as a provisional way to talk about the possibilities of deeper or more complex forms of creative emergence that are possible in conversation.
quadrant (i.e., downloading) through debate, dialogue and finally presencing.

As a field of conversation, presencing involves a movement away from reflecting on the past or pre-existing representational knowledge, which is well known and underlies all conventional learning methodologies (Scharmer 2007, p. 7), towards learning together from the emerging future by collectively sensing into and intuiting not yet embodied or known possibilities. This shift in emphasis stands apart from transmission oriented pedagogical objectives that involve educating for the purposes of replicating past knowledge.

As the fourth field of conversation, presencing is of particular interest here as it is constituted by and generated from a collective process of creative emergence. The lower level social domain including the educator and students gives rise to the higher-level phenomenon of presencing as a field of conversation. When new meaning or knowledge that arises in a presencing conversation is not deducible from the existing knowledge or understanding of the
class (unlike the previous fields of conversation) to return to Osberg & Biesta’s (2007a) previous distinction, we are participating in a process of strong emergence. Strong emergence has the potential to bring forth and open into new structures, ideas, forms of relationship and interaction, in turn becoming part of the history of individuals, educators and the classroom contexts and institutions of which they are a part. Unlike a conversation characterized more by downloading or debate (see figure 4.1 above), the processes of strong emergence in presencing bring about the creation of more developed, complex and unpredictable pedagogical process-structures.

Scharmer (2007) elaborates on presencing:

Time slowed down: space opened up. Several times during my interview projects I have encountered this shift to a deeper space of essential emergence. When it happens, time slows down and seems almost to stop, the atmosphere feels thicker, and my sense of space opens up, as if I were in a clearing or in a larger space… the boundary between me and my dialogue partners is now wide open, and we begin to operate from a common field (pp. 279-280).

From Scharmer’s brief phenomenological description of this field of conversation, he draws a connection between the distinct experience of himself and the group and how this gives rise to an increased lucidity and conscious co-enactment of the process of emergence in presencing.

Scharmer elaborates, “presencing happens when our perception begins to connect to the source of our emerging future” (p.165), indicating that presencing offers the prospects of integrating and uniting the emerging observer with the emerging observed. Emergence in the context of presencing is not a systemically generated process or one devoid of the observer’s participation within the greater field or system of conversation. Rather, the process involves attending to the field of conversation, drawing from an emergent sense of self that is co-enacted with the group

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63 This dynamic is contrasted with the first two fields of conversation where the observer is experienced as primarily separate from the observed, and field three which prepares the ontological ground for this nondual basis of participation.
conversation and co-participating in a transpersonal process\textsuperscript{64} for unfolding new knowledge. This involves sensing into and redirecting our attention to apprehend or intuit new knowledge from the unknown source from which our individual and collective creativity emerge. New knowledge in the context of presencing arises through a process of thinking emergently with others. While new knowledge may arise from conversations that are not drawing from the process of presencing, presencing changes how we pay attention to the unfolding of knowledge in conversation, making both ourselves and the knowledge we discover more prone to being emergent, open and creative rather than determined, closed and predictable (Scharmer, 2007).

From a complexity perspective, a possible criticism of Scharmer’s model of the four fields of conversation is that it utilizes “re-presentation” constructs, which are limited by pre-existing generalized patterns, to describe conversation as a process. Yet, upon closer inspection, it is important to note that Scharmer’s framework draws from what Thompson and Varela (2001) in their account of emergent processes describe as, “local-to-global determination or “upward causation”, as a result of which novel processes emerge that have their own features, lifetimes and domains of interaction” (p.416). Neither attempting to control or predict the emergent process or outcomes of conversation in advance, in using representational knowledge for emergentist purposes, Scharmer’s model is more an example of what Johnson (2001) describes as the type of theory characteristic of the third phase of complexity theory, which involves the shift from the “analysis of emergence to the creation of emergence” (p.20). As such, one of the primary objectives of teaching with the four fields of conversation is to help learners make the transition from the well established tradition within academic culture of re-enacting past forms of

\textsuperscript{64} By transpersonal, I draw upon Wilber’s (1995, p. 280) definition meaning “personal plus rather than personal minus”, which is another way of saying the deeper spiritual dimension of our experience includes or is inseparable from the personal dimension.
re-presentational knowledge through discussion and debate to bringing about the conditions for the class to participate in and foster the emergence of new knowledge, ideas and perspectives in the conversational field of presencing. This becomes particularly desirable for those educators and learners interested in bringing about collective processes of creativity and discovery.

Within complexivist education, Davis & Sumara (1997) have written briefly about conversation as a complex emergent phenomenon. They draw on Gadamer’s notion of conversation as distinct from discussion and other forms of talk in conveying its importance as an interaction that cannot be predetermined:

The conversation is something more than the coordinated actions of autonomous agents—in a sense, it has us; we do not have it. Put differently, the conversation is not subject to predetermined goals, but unfolds within the reciprocal, codetermined actions of the persons involved” (1997, p. 5).

Fenwick (2003) also relates themes of complexivist education to conversation as a “collective activity in which interaction enfolds the participants and moves beyond them” (p. 35). She goes on to convey how, from a systems view, a conversation is co-influenced by the micro contexts of the participants, their relational space and patterns of interaction. In these descriptions, there is a confirmation of conversation serving as an example of complexity and emergence in the classroom, defined in part by the relational interactions between and among students, educators and larger university, social and cultural systems.

Though these perspectives bring attention to the general significance of conversational interactions in complexivist education, to date there is no mention in the literature of how distinct forms of conversation might serve the purposes of educators working with complexivist principles. From the perspective of Scharmer’s (2007) four fields of conversation, conversation is viewed as an emergent creative system within the classroom containing distinct micro contexts for working with the class as a collective learner (Davis & Sumara, 2005). Each conversational
field is shaped by characteristic field dynamics or patterns of engagement. While each field in part arises out of the conditions enacted within the previous field, the content becomes increasingly indeterminable and new—particularly as one moves into the fourth conversational field of presencing.\textsuperscript{65} Within the complexivist education literature, the focus on conversation has been less as a critical micro context\textsuperscript{66} and more on the general interrelations of classroom learning events within complex systems (Fenwick, 2001) including the educator, students, class subject, class environment, university culture and other dimensions of a larger, emergent process.

As a point of contrast to how conversation has been framed within the complexivist literature, Scharmer (2007, p.273) has taken a systems perspective on conversation one-step further by delineating particular corresponding systems within each field of conversation. His analysis is that field one (downloading) brings about an autistic system; in field two (debate), there is an adaptive system; in field three (dialogue), a self-reflective system and in field four (presencing), a generative system:

\textsuperscript{65} I am not suggesting that emergence does not play a role in the first three fields. Rather, it does not play a primary role as an educational process objective. With the advent of the field of presencing, optimal states of being are activated within various sub-systems of the conversation (i.e. students, educator and the class field of conversation), helping bring about new variables that could not have been necessarily predicted prior to the conversation. As Scharmer (2007) is proposing, presencing brings about an increased quality of participant’s attentional presence and participation in the field of conversation, which brings about conditions for a more creative and emergent order of individual and collective participation.

\textsuperscript{66} It is important to acknowledge that conversation is by no means the only lens through which to study complex emergence in the classroom. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article I have chosen to primarily focus on conversation as a micro context for fostering complex emergence processes and outcomes in classroom life. In doing this, I am not suggesting that the processes and dynamics of conversation are somehow independent of other dimensions of complex emergence such as the classroom environment, individual students, the class subject and other relevant aspects. Given that these latter dimensions do not figure prominently into my analysis here, I leave it up to the reader to further consider the implications of their co-enactment with the processes of conversation.
When individuals in dialogue (field three) begin to realize they have been unconsciously participating in a system, awareness begins to dawn on the participants in terms of how they are participating in collectively enacting this system—not only of conversation, but the larger patterns of systems of culture, discourse, thought, etc (Scharmer, 2007). One might say that, in the field of dialogue, complexity awareness emerges. Here dialogue resembles Fenwick’s and Davis & Sumara’s description of conversation, yet Scharmer’s (2007) depiction of the meta-systemic awareness that develops from field three introduces the possibility of not only seeing one’s participation within the systems one is apart of, but also moving into a new emergent system through a subtle shift in our self-identity, which can bring about an enlarged context for
understanding a deeper sense of who we are. Peschl (2007) elaborates on the existential aspects of this shift that highlights an important aspect of presencing:

Profound change does not only happen in the cognitive domains, but touches a more fundamental level – an existential level that includes the person and his/her attitudes, values, habitus, etc. Whereas it is possible to “play games” on the cognitive/intellectual level (in the sense of trying out or simulating intellectual positions without being touched existentially by them), one can experience that there exists a level, where “intellectual games” are not possible any more. We are then confronted with a level going beyond the domain of cognitive or intellectual questions touching the self in the very center. (p.138)

Learning experiences at the existential level can be helpful as catalysts for bringing about an emergent experience of identity that recasts the boundary lines of our individual consciousness and identity. In turn, this involves re-centering our sense of self as a co-emergent participatory facet of our experience within a greater interactive web or system of interrelations, which in the context of the field of dialogue implies a deeper exploration of shared meaning. Bohm’s (1996) conception of dialogue as a method for exploring the subtle shared meaning that groups hold around a particular issue or subject is one example of how the field of dialogue, in contrast to debate or downloading, provides a context for exploring the deeper interior ontological realms of individuals and collectives. It is not that the latter fields of dialogue and presencing themselves are inherently deeper, more that they bring forth helpful intersubjective conditions where matters of purpose, value and significance (concerning a particular subject) can be explored with greater discernment and depth. This positive de-centering of one’s private sense of self is characteristic of the collective state of presencing as a participatory field of conversation, in which the potential for speaking and listening from a more fundamental existential level becomes possible. Returning to Figure 4.2, the shift from Scharmer’s (2007) field of dialogue to the field of presencing involves enacting a generative system. As Scharmer points out, this tends to give rise

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67 Scharmer’s description of the four fields relies to varying extents on evaluative or normative and empirical (verifiable by observation rather than theory or logic) distinctions.
to the experience of a connected, distributed, emerging sense of one’s self that is thoroughly context-dependent and coupled to a surrounding world. Though complexity theory does not raise specific existential or transpersonal challenges to classroom learning, presencing asks that we attend to, attune with, amplify and sense into these dimensions of our experience (Gunnlaugson, 2007).

4.2.1 Intuitions of the Incalculable

Paradoxically, what we can know is potentially at once conditioned and unconditioned, known and unknown, with each conversation as knowledge-making event potentially offering us a deeper view into the unknown, unconditioned face of our existing knowledge. From the perspective of presencing, this paradoxical process is distilled from being present with, presencing into and looking from the hidden source of our experience (Scharmer, 2007). Knowledge that emerges from the presencing process does not necessarily bring into question our previous fund of knowledge or perspective. So, while presencing may draw our students into a more shared territory of learning, and though the emergent reality that unfolds may be incalculable from previous experiences of conversation, we are able to live into a richer understanding of the possible with our students. Such forms of emergence may not be predictable in a mathematical or scientific sense of the term. Yet, from the perspective of presencing, certain forms of emerging knowledge may be intuited and faintly sensed on the subtle level of our experience as a possibility beforehand by either the educator or students. An example might be in the case of a group inquiring into an educational problem from the level of deliberative discursive thinking, only to later on have aspects of the solution reveal itself through a particular revealing image that arises (and is not shared) from a student when the group falls into an unintended silence. Then later on, upon the group’s discovery of the solution, the student
reflects upon this prior image, suggesting a kind of intuition at work.

In my experience (Gunnlaugson, 2006), intuition and related forms of knowing tend to become amplified in the field of presencing, and in turn foster an openness to experiencing a different sense of self and group identity, which introduces an important enlarging of the framework of the possible as described by Davis and Phelps (2004). For strong emergence of knowledge within a class, there cannot be a regrouping of pre-existing knowledge (Morgan, 1923). According to complexity theory, knowledge that arises from strong emergence cannot be calculated beforehand (i.e., by reason or logic), yet intuition has not been satisfactorily accounted for in the complexivist education literature insofar as it works from a different form of measurement that generally confounds logical inference. Sorokin (1992) elaborates on intuition as follows:

> Each source of knowledge—the senses, reason and intuition—affords a genuine cognition of the manifold reality. Intuition in its ordinary form as a momentary and direct grasp of a certain reality—the grasp distinct from sensory perception or logical reasoning—yields a knowledge of this aspect of reality. (p. 33)

Intuitive expressions of knowing can be challenging to convey and may in some educational contexts be more appropriately represented by metaphors, drawings, images and non-verbal forms of communication. Though such examples may be judged by some readers as less rigorous, in certain instances they can offer a compelling articulation of new knowledge appropriate to a particular classroom context or a student’s personal gestalt of meaning. Scharmer (2001) understands intuition as a form of self-transcending knowledge that requires a different kind of knowledge-creation environment:

> Self-transcending knowledge relates to reality both from within and from outside. The locus of the denoted reality (outside the knower in the case of explicit knowledge and inside in the case of tacit-embodied knowledge) is both outside and within the knower. Or, as Nishida puts it, it is neither outside nor inside the knower (Nishida, 1990). From this point of view, knowledge emerges from a
Unlike more mechanistic conceptions that identify the source of intuition as occurring from within individuals, for Scharmer intuition arises from a certain subtle contact with and articulation from this self-transcendent field or shared space that is both outside and inside the knower. In this sense, glimmers of emergent future knowledge may be partly present in advance and through intuitive forms of self-transcending knowing can be brought into fuller presentation of the present. For this to be so, we need to entertain the paradox of there being traces of an unimaginable future residing in the “not-yet embodied” (Scharmer, 1999) possibilities within the present that emerge out of absence into presence or the unknown into the known through individuals and groups. In describing the source of this intuitive knowledge as arising from the unknown, it is also important to acknowledge how we are constituted by the known images, narratives and discourses that we participate in. Presencing embraces this fundamental paradox by stimulating an unconditioned creative perception that aspires to be mindful of our past conditioning (in whatever form—whether from cultural, psychological, scientific or spiritual sources) and to be receptive to the non-systemic, non-conditioned, non-determined aspects of our experience, which are new. Presencing then involves opening a generative space or field of conversation where our identities, views, intuitions and inventions can be informed by the unknown unconditioned source of our collective experience and the corresponding body of unimaginable knowledge that has not yet emerged or been lived into. In opening this generative space, presencing aspires to bring forth an order of experience that stands in contrast to the cultural studies critique that claims we are to varying degrees determined by the known images, narratives and discourses that shape our daily experience. Of course in practice, it becomes necessary to develop a critical meta-awareness of how these discourses shape our identities and
self and world understanding. This is needed in order to sufficiently disentangle from them in order to more clearly apprehend the not-yet known images, narratives and discourses that have yet to emerge through us. This notion is implicit within David Bohm’s (1980) theory of the implicate order, which posits a deeper hidden dimension of reality that is enfolded within the explicate order or dimensions of physical and psychological reality. According to Bohm, this underlying dimension of reality plays a role in shaping or informing what unfolds into our everyday experience of reality. In the context of strong emergence, presencing then might be thought of as a non-discursive process that attempts to glean insight from this underlying implicate order or field through intuition and other subtle forms of knowing. Such a notion would be viewed as a contradiction from the perspective of strong emergence, inasmuch as it is the unforeseeable outcomes of the processes of systemic emergence that is capable of bringing forth the unimaginable, not the emergent intuitions of our students and educator in a conversation oriented by presencing. Yet, if we place our conceptions of the unimaginable in the hands of unknowable systemic permutations, there is a risk that such a vision of what is unimaginable will no longer captivate our imaginations, insofar as the specific meanings, views and intelligence of the participants do not play a formative role in bringing us into a more profound experience of the unimaginable and incalculable. From the perspective of presencing, the present takes on a greater creative significance—a potential vehicle through which to encounter unknown facets of the strong processes of emergence. Presencing then draws in part upon intuition or a sense-making of a certain understanding of what is or what has yet to be, rather than relying solely on the structurally coupled parts of a complex emergent system to determine the process, measures or parameters of what is incalculable. This becomes an important distinction in the context of classroom life, where educators face the ongoing
challenge of how to adapt complexivist principles to classroom life.

4.2.2 Teaching Presencing

As each person contributes to the class conversation, in Scharmer’s third field of dialogue students and educators are committed to building on previous contributions, drawing other participants into this occasioning through empathic forms of listening and reflective inquiry into shared meaning as a basis for experiencing a more authentic and personal engagement with others. As dialogue moves into the fourth field of presencing (Scharmer, 2007), learners listen for and speak to what is emerging through them and the intersubjective field of conversation. In the presencing process, collective levels of classroom engagement are emphasized, however the agency or voice of the individual learner is not neglected or surrendered insofar as the field of conversation is greatly contingent on shared resonance, shared interest and a shared process of creativity (Scharmer, 2007). While these shared processes alone do not ensure that personal subjectivities are fully acknowledged, they can become barometers that both educator and students may utilize to ensure that underrepresented voices and views are sufficiently drawn upon and the individual is not deemphasized. Similarly, as Davis & Sumara (2006) report, pathways to emergent forms of conversation are often deeply intertwined with course texts and students’ shared rendering of these texts, suggesting the outcomes belong to the class as much to any specific individual or group of individuals. Typically, it is my experience that learners tend to be influenced more by educators than fellow learners within conventional classroom settings due to different factors (i.e. unequal power distribution between educator and students, which can lead to valuing certain knowledge, ways of learning, cultural practices, social relations, etc). As I have applied presencing, this dynamic can be offset through an ongoing commitment to co-enacting a participatory unfolding of views between learners and educator within the class field.
As a way of teaching presencing, initially I have found it helpful to introduce, facilitate and model presencing forms of conversation as distinct from dialogue and related types of conversation with one’s students. However, with practice and guidance over the term, students are encouraged to rely less on the educator as a coordinating agent and more on their own discernment in relation to the group as a basis for a process or field-centered classroom. From the perspective of the educator as facilitator, control of the emergent process is released so that other forms of collective intelligence can arise from the class as collective learner. The locus of authority then is intentionally distributed from the educator to include the students and field of conversation. Preceding the connected quality of self and knowing that emerges when students are presencing together is a way of listening and being that is attuned initially to one’s own interior promptings, but then gradually more and more to the subtle depths of what wants to emerge from the group field of conversation.

The implementation of presencing as a form of conversation-based curriculum involves a dynamic, nonlinear and self-organized process where the course objectives and teaching approaches vary to suit specific context and different students. Whether for the educational purposes of developing creative responses to complex questions concerning field-specific issues researchers and students may be grappling with, addressing future oriented learning matters within a given field of specialization, or fostering student’s potential for engaging in collective creative processes that build on established self and world knowledge, as a complex emergent pedagogical process that is open and generative, presencing provides a process framework to assist the exploration of course-specific content within higher education classrooms where the aforementioned purposes play a role at some level in how the class is taught.

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68 I recommend Scharmer’s (2007) *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges* as a handbook containing excellent practical examples for working with and applying presencing as a conversation process and methodology for groups.
From a complex emergence perspective, the presencing process needs to embrace the “mistakes” and “unexpected events” as important aspects of an emergent curriculum.\(^6^9\) In aspiring to bring about a classroom culture that cultivates creative capacities with our students for specific purposes (as addressed above), it does the process of presencing a disservice to have a pre-defined goal or precise picture of what the class or its learners are to become. In consulting with the principles of complexivist education, our aims, then, are to be shaped as much if not more by the product of the emerging class situation itself.

Moving away from a “spatial” representation of knowledge (Osberg et al., 2008) that is evaluated by its degree of objective correspondence with reality, a more “temporal” epistemology is needed—one that involves “finding more and more complex and creative ways of interacting with our reality” (p. 215). This is not to say that a temporal representation replaces a spatial one, more that our pedagogical commitments as educators shift from prioritizing pre-existing knowledge to valuing emergent knowledge generated in the classroom and cultivating the capacities to bring forth emergent knowledge with one’s students.\(^7^0\) Entering into the space of liminality offers a way to proceed with a temporal epistemological approach in our classrooms, as conveyed by Linds (2004)

The word *limnos*, meaning threshold defines that space between certainty and uncertainty, between what was and what will be. The process contains doubt as well as certainty, and is simultaneously orderly and disorderly, and both rational and intuitive. Liminality offers a space in which to hold things in a tentative way. It provides an

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\(^6^9\) I would also include habits of inattention (Boler, 1999), which involve selectively or unconsciously ignoring certain things in conversation while paying attention to others. This distinction can be helpful in surfacing problematic habits of inattention with students, particularly as presencing and dialogue depend on different forms or patterns of collective attention to our communication.

\(^7^0\) In spite of the disparity of views and lack of consensus concerning the conventional learning objective of acquiring pre-existing knowledge in higher education settings, as I have argued in this chapter, supporting the development of creative capacities for engaging with emerging forms of knowledge may in certain instances be more educationally desirable. Though one can easily cite situations or instances where promoting emergent knowledge or the cultivation of creative capacities is undesirable and problematic, in the context of presencing where the educational aim is to bring about generative forms of conversation with one’s students, adhering to pre-existing knowledge and past-based processes of learning is generally undesirable.
opening where we might move beyond singular truths and examine multiple possibilities. In such encounters we can begin to recognize the limitations of our own perceptions of “what life is like.” Maturana and Varela (1992) call this recognition the social imperative for a human-centered ethic. Whenever we find ourselves “holding tightly to certainty,” thinking we know the “best right way,” we can interrupt this certitude and invite ourselves to step into “another domain where coexistence takes place” (Maturana and Varela, 1992). (p. 6)

Liminality\textsuperscript{71} provides an expanded temporal context for the emergent process of presencing to unfold. Presencing opens us into liminal spaces through conversation, sensitizing us to an awareness of how knowledge creation processes take place in time. Preoccupations with past knowledge tend to foster a closure of our perceptual faculties and risk unwittingly adhering to McLuhan’s adage of seeing the world through a rear view mirror, marching backwards into the future. To connect with what is emerging, we need to find ourselves in time and come to grips with this deep conditioning of orienting through past conceptions and pre-conceptions. Creative horizons then become available through liminal experiences that interrupt the traditional academic adherence to a spatial representation of the world and one’s self. Liminality requires a willingness to abide in not knowing with our students and to priming other faculties of knowing as a way of grappling with the existential implications of not knowing and the encumbered feelings of groundlessness this tends to invoke for learners well accustomed to leading from the known and the past. Attention held well by the educator in the dimly lit regions of liminality primes our own and student’s awareness for an unexpected discovery—that is a presence-led form of seeing that is hungry for participating in the existential challenges that might otherwise discourage us from opening up into what we have not yet imagined.

\textsuperscript{71} For the purposes of this article, I find the visual artist Fernando Ferreira de Araujo’s (2008) definition of the liminal state and liminality to be instructive: “The liminal state is characterized by ambiguity, openess, and indeterminacy. One's sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. Liminality is a period of transition where normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior are relaxed—a situation which can lead to new perspectives” (p.1)
4.3 Deepening the Space of the Possible

Reflecting further on the complexivist project of enlarging the space of the possible, Osberg (2009, p. vi) points out, “If we can already imagine what is possible, achieving such is no longer enlarging the space of the possible, for it already exists in our minds.” Osberg draws on Derrida’s notion of the impossible (i.e., what currently cannot be conceived as possible) as a basis for augmenting what is possible. She also suggests that experimenting with principles of complexity thinking, which does not rely on a linear logic of cause and effect, is better equipped to expand the horizons of the possible through an emergent process, pointing out that, “when emergence takes place, we enter the space of the impossible or incalculable” (p. vii). Invoking a dynamic interaction in the classroom, in contrast to linear thinking, informed by either weak or strong emergence by definition then allows us access Osberg’s notion of the impossible (p. vi).

Building on Osberg’s point, can we entertain a complementary approach that draws upon but is not exclusively determined by complexity processes in augmenting the space of the possible? For this to be so, we need a more educationally relevant yardstick for orienting ourselves towards the unknown with our students. In brief, there needs to be an augmentation of the ideal of the impossible to include not only the measures of structurally coupled systems and emergentist logic but also interior measures of meaning and value drawing on the personhood of students and the class as a collective.

From a presencing standpoint, attending to the emergent meaning of the learner and the class collective is an essential barometer in determining whether or not such impossible forms of emergent knowledge are of value. Teaching from presencing then involves uncovering a basis for augmenting the space of the possible by exploring grounds for a meaningful impossible by partly orienting from the deeper interior worldspaces of the students and the class field of
learning alongside a complexity awareness of emergent systems within the classroom.

4.3.1 Being with *What Is*

In a classroom where conversations are occasioned by presencing, the class field becomes the representative context or signifier where our understanding and shared meaning are renewed and evolving. Complexivist education acknowledges the unconditioned aspect of the present insofar as the present is always a *new* present, to the extent that each moment has an emergent nature. Nevertheless, while this is true in principle, presencing in conversation engages with the present in such a fashion that this newness can be understood ontologically through presence—that is, through a fundamental shared experience of who we are. Orienting from presence helps us become aware of our conditioned modes and filters of seeing and being in the present. With practice, this helps us draw from the unknown and unforeseen side of *what is*, thereby making way for the arrival of new discoveries. Under such conditions, class conversations become a collective lens through which emergent knowledge can be brought into focus.

Paradoxically, presencing offers a different emphasis on being with *what is* as a basis for discovering a deeper creative dimension of *what might be* brought forth. Presencing involves amplifying our experience of the present so it can serve a generative function or become a generative context out of which new discoveries can emerge. Contrary to Davis et al.’s (2003) claim that the emergence does not emphasize *what is*, but *what might be* brought forth (p. 228), in the context of presencing the commitment to being present with *what is* becomes an essential means for bringing forth emergence within the presencing process. *What is*, in the context of presencing, is a referent and invitation to being mindful and encountering our experience of a specific subject of inquiry more fully in the present—including our assumptions, mental models
and ways of understanding. When we experience the deeper dimensions of what is, there is a distinctive quality of awareness and sensing into a particular subject, situation or conversational inquiry. Being with what is then becomes an invitation to engage one’s presence with what is emerging and what wants to emerge—affording ways of seeing and sensing into the very process of emergence itself in the context of conversation or other creative pursuits. Being with what is offers a point of contact with the emergent nature of reality as Tenzin Palmo (2000) elaborates on the nature of self-deception:

There’s tremendous resistance in the mind to being in the present, to just being with what is, rather than with all our fantasies and projections about how we want life to be. Just seeing life as it is, without any of our commentaries is very hard. For example, when I look at an object, I immediately start thinking of others I’ve seen which were similar, of whether I like the shape or don’t like the shape, of whether the workmanship is good or not good, of how I might have wanted one which was somewhat different. This goes on infinitely – elaborating, elaborating, and elaborating until we don’t see the object at all any more. (p. 4)

By orienting in part from what is, we are attending to the deeper source of knowing from within our experience, affording consciousness and our subjectivity a more direct role in augmenting the horizons of possibility. Learning to be with what is as a gateway to sensing into what will be provides a contrasting contemplative path to opening up spaces of the not-yet imaginable. Though the present contains the already imagined and existing possible, for Scharmer (2007) the present offers a window into the emerging future. However, if our individual/shared interior consciousness is not participating in the process, there is a risk that educators are merely orienting their attention to the exploration of the space of the possible without connecting with their deeper sources of wisdom and meaning that otherwise makes such pursuits worthwhile.

4.4 Educator as the Consciousness of the Classroom Collective

Davis and Sumara (2007, 2006, 2005) as well as Davis and Simmt (2006, 2003) offer suggestions to guide curriculum and the conditions for emergence as a basis for orienting and
attending to the class. I will revisit the first three of the five necessary conditions from the context of presencing as initially outlined by Davis and Simmt (2003).

First, the notion of *internal diversity* suggests that educators can benefit from attending to occasions where students’ “various interests, capacities, experiences, milieus and personalities” (Bowsfield, 2004, p.148) as well as historically and culturally underrepresented perspectives can be woven into the conversation—becoming a part of the class’s greater source of collective intelligence. Internal diversity offers a helpful principle for students to explore moving into a fuller expression and integration of who they are individually in relation to the academic subject they are inquiring into. By encouraging students to practice presencing from their socio-cultural location and particular history in terms of social class, gender, age, sexual identity, racial heritage among other representations of diversity, the class conversation is less prone to being directed from the dominant status quo of the particular culture one may be teaching from, as well as our entrenched habits of thought, and self and world view. Secondly, *internal redundancy* is the common ground or shared elements of relationship, language, experiences, values and worldviews that enable the emergence of a group culture. Internal redundancy ensures that diversity is held in a larger shared context that fosters the conditions for learners to feel safe to exchange and develop new knowledge and share from the diverse emergent meanings that arise. Within the field of presencing the educator explores the diversity of views, responses and perspectives with the objective of uncovering shared resonance, which offers a phenomenological barometer for shared meaning and shared ground. When students resonate with one another or a point that has been made by a fellow student, this raises collective attention and interest, which in turn may provoke resistance or disagreement by other students. Thirdly, *decentralized control* involves dispersing control across the class collective through a shared
responsibility for learning-centered participation in the processes of classroom emergence. In the context of presencing, decentralized control is a natural outcome of shifting one’s locus of identity from an individual skin-encapsulated ego to a more spacious presence alongside others unfolding a greater participatory process of emergence.

Drawing attention to the importance of attending to the interplay of these diverse elements, Davis and Sumara recast teaching as the consciousness of the collective—in terms of looking for ways to broaden the canvas of possibilities for learning in collective contexts through the application of complexity principles. To the extent that presencing relies on the individual and collective interior processes of students and the class, the process is more concerned with deepening student’s experience of learning within the collective through the field of conversation. Davis & Sumara’s (2005) description of the class “as a learner—not a collection of learners, but a collective learner—with a coherence and evolving identity all of its own” becomes possible through mastering the complexity principles discussed above.

In terms of the distinctions of Scharmer’s (2007) four fields of conversation, the class field of presencing becomes the chief context in which Davis & Sumara’s notion of the collective learner emerges. For the presencing educator committed to bringing forth the collective learner, a degree of mastery in co-creating the conditions for presencing are needed. When classroom teaching is not regarded or taken seriously as a collective learner, we are at some level ascribing to a reductionistic portrait of our classroom that does not adequately account for its creative potential, in turn relegating the dynamic emerging gestalt of the collective to a fanciful impractical possibility.

4.4.1 Teaching from the Gap of the Educational Situation

Teachers can acknowledge the existence of the gap as a space of enunciation that is brought into existence only as a result of the common effort of teachers and
learner, a space that exists only in communication. To go into the gap, to “descend into that alien territory,” entails both a risk and an opportunity. The risk is clear: The space of enunciation is in a very fundamental and practical sense unpredictable. Yet it is at the same time the space in which speaking becomes possible, it is the space, in other word, where people—individual singular beings—can reveal who they are, can come “into presence” (Biesta, 2004, pp. 21-22).

Vanderstraeten & Biesta (2001) locate the *educational situation* in the in-between-space of conversation, orienting from the tension points of difference between possible worlds and actual worlds as well as their unique subjectivity. In their conversation, they arrive at the notion that the in-between-space of educational interaction is that which educates (p.17). By giving primacy to what happens between learners, for Biesta (1999) the process of communication and the intersubjective context take precedence for the educational situation and the experience of coming into presence. Whether our students or the world, according to Osberg & Biesta (2007a) both are continually in a state of coming into presence. This has important implications for our teaching practice, insofar as coming into presence, like presencing in the context of conversation, takes place in an intersubjective context—a world shared by others who are both like and unlike us. What, then, is required to shift our orientation towards coming-into-presence, presencing and other methods that facilitate complex emergence without socializing our students into a prescribed way of being or the replication of a particular socio-cultural learning ideal, regardless of how progressive, emergent or enlightened?

I ask this question from the perspective of presencing, as it requires some structured guidance and practice for orienting one’s attention with others in conversation that is distinct from the accustomed representational *way* of communicating in conventional forms of discussion and debate.\(^\text{72}\) By encouraging different approaches to presencing that facilitate the co-enactment of deeper conversational fields of co-emergence, students are free to explore their own approach,
while simultaneously recognizing that a certain degree of social patterning in the classroom is not necessarily undesirable. Especially as presencing tends to dissolve the roles that would otherwise distinguish the teacher and student, inviting educational situations where the field of conversation becomes the educator, the student becomes the educator with the educator directing her attention towards primarily serving her students and the shared field of inquiry as a catalyst for such occasionings.73

For the purposes of curriculum and instruction, an appropriate modality of training is required, particularly one that is sensitive to Osberg & Biesta’s (2008) critique of the extremes of unguided learning and enculturation. At some level we need to introduce, provide guidance in and represent what is involved with presencing. A complex emergent pedagogical process is thus needed to depart from the logic of either unguided learning, which fails to enact appropriate boundaries and conditions for presencing, and enculturation, which fails to honor the emergent process of shared and individual meanings and subjectivities that play a central role in presencing. Such a pedagogical process must come to terms with the paradox that a collective process of conversation is possible that does not “direct the subjectivity of others” (Osberg & Biesta, 2008), but rather nurtures a collective individualism which facilitates the emergence and transformation of learners in ways that leave open the inquiry of what it means to be a human subject in our time and what it means to educate from a collective complex emergent process of conversation that is committed to fostering the complexity ideals explored throughout this article. To the extent that presencing becomes a creative vehicle for discovering one’s own way of being in the conversations that play out in classroom life, we can in turn open our classrooms

73 The process of presencing in the context of the four fields of conversation has its own demands and requirements to learn. Structured methods can initially help students move into the experience, yet for different reasons not all students will be capable of, open to or necessarily interested in self-authoring their conversational modes of engagement from the field of presencing.
up to new possibilities for a complex emergent understanding of our collective human subjectivity in the class field of presencing.

4.5 Closing Thoughts

As a theoretical inquiry, this article has explored how Scharmer’s account of presencing as a field of conversation might contribute to the project of developing a complex emergent pedagogical process within complexivist educational circles. By engaging with and, in some cases, re-interpreting certain key notions within the complexivist education literature from the perspective of presencing, my aim in this chapter is to promote a pedagogy of complex emergence (versus a pedagogy of transmission). This is for the sake of supporting non-deterministic fields of generative classroom conversation that can serve as midwives for new insights into the role of the class as a collective vehicle for self and knowledge-creation processes in higher education classrooms. In raising a challenge to complexivist educational practice and aims, presencing asks that we explore the depth dimensions of being that co-arise within interwoven classroom systems—orientating in part from what emergence feels like from ontological contexts of being from within the individual and collective as a basis for exploring complexity dynamics. Additionally, an integration and further inquiry into the existential and intuitive dimensions of collective complexivist learning processes are needed. By examining the significance of conversational fields from a complexity perspective throughout this article, my intention has been to identify a pedagogical process through which Davis and Sumara’s notion of the collective learner can be further engaged. By bringing a complexity perspective to conversation and the underlying attentional patterns that inform the pedagogical practice of presencing, this article is offered as a contribution to further articulating specific pedagogical approaches that are equipped to more effectively engage with and bring about transformation
within the complex emergent realities that characterize collective approaches to teaching and learning within higher education classrooms.
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5. Considerations of Contemplative Approaches to Learning for an Ontological Turn in Higher Education Classrooms

5.1 Introduction

Teaching in the university too often involves having students acquire the concepts, theories and knowledge of their particular field of study, giving rise to pedagogical approaches that follow from a “functionalist model of education, a model whose dominant epistemology emphasizes the expert transmission of a non-negotiable curriculum of concepts and facts to relatively-passive students via highly-didactic pedagogic strategies” (Badley, 2000, p. 245).

From within this prevalent model, there is a tendency to conclude that the problematic aspects of university instruction can be traced back to the breakdowns of transfer and acquisition of knowledge across different university programs. However, as this chapter develops, a glaring blindspot of the functionalist epistemology is in the emphasis on content mastery to the diminishment or exclusion of pedagogies that support the development and transformation of students and the cultivation of individual and collective wisdom as *essential processes* of learning." By overlooking these core interior dimensions of our student’s learning, as educators we risk endorsing extrinsic educational approaches and “trends whereby we increasingly instrumentalize, professionalize, vocationalize, corporatize, and ultimately technologize education’’ (Thomson, 2002, p. 124; emphasis in original).

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74 A version of this chapter has been submitted for publication. Gunnlaugson, O. Considerations of Contemplative Approaches to Learning for an Ontological Turn in Higher Education Classrooms.

75 In this chapter I take inspiration from Blatner’s (2005, p. 33) more holistic process-oriented definition of wisdom, “as an activity, something one does, rather than a fixed state, as if it were a possession or social status. It is a broad category of component activities including, for example, seeking wisdom; balancing different kinds of wisdom; discerning the optimal amounts or degrees of various efforts; exercising compassion and interpersonal sensitivity; appreciating; re-evaluating tradition and accepted knowledge; integrating information and skills; developing deeper understanding and integrating also one’s personal ideals; becoming alert to self-deception and the temptations towards foolishness; practicing humility and self-questioning; opening to intuition and imagination; and even weaving in a measure of playfulness.”
As a way of addressing the blindspot of the functionalist paradigm, in the sections that follow I take up Ronald Barnett’s (2005) notion of an ontological turn in curriculum and pedagogy within higher education as a means for signaling the importance of moving towards wisdom cultivation and transformative development in our teaching approaches. Summarizing Barnett’s position, I then make a case for further uncovering and integrating the ontological dimensions\textsuperscript{76} of learning into our curricular and pedagogical approaches. Following this, I introduce contemplative approaches to learning as a means for cultivating wisdom-based qualities of being that I believe are essential to the ontological task of higher education. Finally, as an example of teaching for this ontological turn, I close by reflecting on my experiences with implementing contemplative approaches to learning with my students in an online graduate course that I teach in Dialogue Processes at the University of Massachusetts (Boston).

5.2 Re-Envisioning the Role of Teaching in the Higher Education Classroom

Teaching for knowledge acquisition to the exclusion of wisdom cultivation invariably falls short in preparing students for thriving in an age that is becoming increasingly marked by pervasive change and an “inner sense of a destabilized world. It is a destabilization that arises from a personal sense that we never can come into a stable relationship with the world” (Barnett, 2004a, p. 251). In being confronted with mounting complexity in our professional and personal lives, there is the simultaneous recognition that our choices are becoming to varying degrees tenuous, unlimited and subject to becoming different or more complicated. As the moorings of our institutional, professional and personal identities are called into question under such conditions, with our students we find ourselves confronted with a fundamental inner challenge of

\textsuperscript{76} Throughout this chapter I have intentionally drawn upon a diverse set of interpretations of the ontological as a way of sketching out the different ways of interpreting and filling out Barnett’s ontological turn. For example, at different stages within the chapter, I examine ontology as qualities of being, as a context for wisdom dispositions, as a set of assumptions informing our worldview, as existential ways of being for uncertainty and as the absolute and unconditioned understanding of reality that is central to the world wisdom traditions.
uncovering a viable basis for being and orienting wisely among these emerging life-world conditions where the new world is more quickly replacing the old. Lacking a foundational sense of certainty about what the ‘right thing’ is and how to go about doing it has brought about a shared climate of uncertainty and contingency that touches upon deeper philosophical questions of morality, identity and meaning. Given that our classrooms are not immune or independent from the processes of change or uncertainty that tend to characterize our time, how are we to proceed with teaching and learning for an unknown future (Barnett, 2004b)?

Barnett argues that questions of this nature need to play a stronger role as an organizing principle in shaping our curricular and pedagogical approaches within post-secondary contexts. Responses to such questions generally take the form of teaching generic skills that hold across disparate contexts, yet such technique-oriented responses often fall short of providing a curriculum that is capable of engaging students on deeper levels of their humanity alongside content objectives. I believe we need to ask how we might cultivate pedagogical approaches that are also formatively appropriate to the ontological requirements of our students who are interested in learning for an unknown future.

It is difficult if not impossible to apprehend the particular external forms the unknown will take, as Barnett (2004a) points out, “the changes are characteristically internal. They are primarily to do with how individuals understand themselves, with their sense of identity (or lack of it), with their being in the world.” (p.248). In place of acquiring further knowledge or skills, Barnett (2004a) proposes the importance of being disposed ontologically towards uncertainty in

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77 In bringing to light the significance of the ontological dimension of learning, I am in no way suggesting that the unjust social, cultural and political problems of our world necessarily stem from either individual or collective forms of ontological destabilization. In other words, a more comprehensive analysis and treatment of specific issues is required. Nevertheless, I believe Barnett’s ontological turn identifies a key leverage point for wisdom cultivation and personal and collective transformation in higher education classrooms.
a manner\textsuperscript{78} of, “carefulness, thoughtfulness, humility, criticality, receptiveness, resilience, courage and stillness” (p.259) through what could be construed as an orientation to our learning, one another and our changing world that is helpful in fostering wisdom. Yet, Barnett does not specify or prescribe recommendations about how to go about cultivating such qualities of being—an undertaking that this chapter explores more in depth in the sections that follow and that I believe will be of benefit to educators.

Barnett (2000) describes our age as one of supercomplexity; a time marked by a multiplicity of competing and often incompatible knowledge frameworks that have brought about conditions of conceptual overload, making it increasingly challenging to inhabit multiple perspectives or advance a comprehensive epistemology that can address the diverse epistemological challenges at hand. To the extent that knowledge is, broadly speaking, becoming increasingly vulnerable to change and unable to serve as frames of reference for human actions or long-term life strategies because of its short life expectation (Bauman, 2000), such a world of supercomplexity is bringing about an “age of conceptual and, thereby, emotional insecurity” (p.416).

Wheelahan (2007) criticizes Barnett’s portrayal of supercomplexity as resembling a kind of super-relativism, insofar as Barnett does not offer a basis for evaluating or choosing between

\textsuperscript{78}In characterizing an optimal manner of being with uncertainty, Barnett advocates the cultivation of certain qualities. However he does not prescribe these qualities as the definitive list of virtues—a singular closed ontology as it were. Rather, in my reading of his work, I take his recommendations here in reconsidering the ontological dimension of teaching as a way of pointing out the importance of cultivating certain practical wisdom dispositions for working with uncertainty over knowledge and skill acquisition. Speaking to the prospects of an education that rises to address the myriad challenges of our world of uncertainty, I understand Barnett’s discussion of ontology as being primarily about fostering constructive relationships with our changing world through renewed attention to the quality and intentionality of our ways of being. Barnett does not advance a particular ontological conception, but rather leaves the conversation open for interpretation. For some educators, this will involve entertaining several competing ontological conceptions of one’s self that embody multiple if not contradictory ways of being in our work and lives. For other educators, this will require holding onto and aspiring to embody a particular ontological ideal in one’s teaching. Still for others, there may be interest in integrating or honoring multiple ontologies as a means for discovering the synergistic and creative possibilities of abiding in multiple and conflicting experiences of being as an ideal basis for working with the supercomplexity at play in our classrooms.
knowledge descriptions amidst increasingly unstable self-life-world context(s). Wheelahan raises an important point insofar as not all knowledge contains the same half-life of uncertainty, nor is all knowledge equally fallible or incapable of enduring or serving our needs as in the case of the humanities or world wisdom traditions. And so the challenge might be framed as: how to engage with the super-complex situations we encounter in ways that acknowledge the limitations of attaining certainty of knowledge of the world or ourselves without accommodating a “goofy relativism” (Midgley, 1997) that deems all forms of knowledge as uncertain and changing. Put in another way, how might we work with both the dynamic and relatively stable features of knowledge and our identities in the interests of embodying some helpful combination of both?

Wheelahan’s point notwithstanding, in contrast to previous historical periods of relative stability, given how the epistemological climate in higher education is increasingly pervaded by uncertainty and instability, the nature of the pedagogical challenges we currently face can be construed as one of being as Barnett (2000) elaborates:

If knowledges are proliferating, if any account of the world is contestable from all manner of directions, if our sense of who we are and our relationships to each other and to the world are insecure (as they all are), being overtakes knowledge as the key epistemological concept… Translated into educational terms, pedagogies are required that provide the capacities for coping with supercomplexity; which encourage the formation of human being that maintains a purposive equilibrium in the face of radical uncertainty and contestability (p.419).

To the extent that the educational imperative of teaching within higher education is becoming an ontological task (Barnett, 2000, 2004a, 2004b; 2005; Heidegger, 1962, 1998; Thomson, 2002), which I believe it is, and to the extent that knowledge is supplanted by being as a key emerging term for the university (Barnett, 2003), there is a need to re-examine our curricular and pedagogical orientations by a) fostering a classroom milieu that is supportive of modes of instruction that address the sources of ontological destabilization our students face to varying degrees and b) intentionally cultivating and modeling qualities of being in classroom life that are
needed for thriving in a supercomplex world. In terms of the frameworks that inform our university teaching, I think it is crucial to point out that, in emphasizing ontology, the intention is not to displace epistemological considerations, but rather to learn how to reintegrate our knowing-in-the-world with our being-in-the-world. That is, to attend more carefully to how our ways of knowing are informed by our ways of being in the world and vice versa. My objective here is not to diminish the importance of knowledge in the academy, but rather to depart from functionalist models of teaching that are based on knowledge transfer or acquisition at the cost of ignoring the ontological dimensions of teaching and learning with our students.

5.3 Raising Critical Awareness of the Ontological Contexts We Teach From

Barnett’s call for an ontological turn in teaching is reminiscent of existential philosopher Martin Heidegger’s (1962; 1998) claims about the true purposes of education. Heidegger (1998) points out that the “real education lays hold of the soul itself and transforms it in its entirety by first of all leading us to the place of our essential being and accustoming us to it” (p.167). Interpreting Heidegger’s point about ontological education as requiring an attuned, responsive dwelling with our student’s experiences in places of our/their essential being, to teach for and from a place of wisdom then requires ongoing critical awareness of the ontological conceptions and experiences we are educating for.

As Bai (2001) points out, it is important to develop a reflexive awareness of the representations, images and associated pictures that inform our ontological or lived understanding of reality and ourselves, especially in terms of how these representations influence our way of teaching. These deeper internalized tacit images or vignettes of ourselves, our students and classroom life directly inform our enacted, embodied and lived experiences as educators and tend to function as part of a greater unquestioned unconscious background until
classroom situations arise that renders our pedagogical approach to be problematic in some way.

To clarify the ways in which our background ontological assumptions—that is, our sense of being, existence and reality—shape our teaching practice, consider the following instructional approach. If I teach in a way that privileges engaging with the classroom and my students as separate parts of a larger interactive mechanistic whole (let’s say a position that is influenced by a world view born from Newtonian science), there is a tendency that my results-focused commitment to keeping order in the classroom will lead me to ignoring the subtle fluctuations of mood in my students or the hunches and intuitive promptings that arise during our class inquiry. Partly this is a consequence of my focus on delivering a lecture and in turn moderating the behaviors of my students, making my teaching stance highly invested in “the transfer of information between ontologically separate minds, minds that do not touch” (Bache, 2008). From such a position, my mechanistically-informed ontological assumptions play an influential role in shaping my way of teaching and relating with my students, emphasizing functional learning relationships that are contingent upon deterministic and reductionistic interactions. In other words, I take a highly pragmatic view of my students and management of classroom life. Whatever my students are personally experiencing is not as relevant as the course material I am imparting; I teach to share certain knowledge and expertise that I believe they are generally in need of. To suggest that there are profound emergent meanings or purposes at play in our conversations, aside from perhaps the arbitrary meanings or purposes they happen to assign during a class session would be more of an illustration of projection or conjecture. Summing up, as an educator my core aims are to teach effectively with mastery of course content among other virtues consistent with my ontological views. Bache elaborates further:

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As another example of how ontology can be applied philosophically in our thinking about teaching, Vokey (2001) notes, “World views range in scope and sophistication from simple sets of unarticulated assumptions to comprehensive ontological theories” (p.109, italics added).
The common sense perception that there are separate minds housed within separate bodies is reinforced daily by the simple fact that our students don’t know what we know, that they have to work hard to learn what we have already mastered. However, while this model obviously captures much that goes on in the classroom, it also misses much. (Bache, 2008)

For the sake of contrast, I will now briefly illustrate an instructional approach that emphasizes an ontological approach to classroom life based on a participatory set of assumptions. If I relate to my students from a way of teaching that is influenced by a contemporary Buddhist view, I teach with the assumption that, beneath the level of classroom interaction where our minds are separate and distinct there awaits a more subtle interaction from a shared dimension of being. Where my lone intelligence was formerly the governing agent in the teaching process, I now listen for the interplay of perspectives and diverse accounts of meaning, encouraging students to draw from their experience and to speak from shared resonance with the interest of bridging ontological gaps as we inquire into the class subject. I am less invested in managing or correcting my student’s opinions and take seriously the prospects of learning alongside them as co-participants.

In this classroom landscape, I teach from a process-oriented ontological perspective of classroom life, where as we inquire into particular subject matter I aspire to cultivate the Buddha nature of each student as we inquire through compassionate forms of listening and mindful speech.

In contrasting these instructional approaches, my intention is to illustrate the shortcomings of certain guiding ontological images and assumptions in bringing about the deeper wisdom-based ontological turn Barnett, Heidegger and others are calling for. As illustrated by the former mechanistic teaching approach, certain ontological assumptions or views are poorly equipped for facilitating attuned and responsive receptivity to our student’s experiences, creating a classroom culture where instead of uncovering the pathways to the place of their essential being, we inadvertently pave over them. By cultivating a reflexive awareness of the underlying
ontological assumptions, images and associated pictures that inform our teaching philosophy, we are in a stronger position to begin cultivating and living into the important qualities of being that we are educating for alongside other teaching objectives. In criticizing the first teaching scenario, I am not suggesting that a Buddhist-informed ontological set of assumptions is required to address the ontological requirements of students within higher education. While I think that an educator guided by such Buddhist principles as outlined above would be comparatively more equipped for the ontological tasks at hand than one steeped in a mechanistic set of views informed by Newtonian science, as the next section illustrates, I believe a more eclectic trans-traditional integration of various world wisdom traditions through contemplative approaches to education is comparatively-speaking more effective than a primarily Buddhist (or for that matter, Taoist or Christian) informed ontology, which tends to be constrained by prescriptive tradition-specific wisdom practices and worldviews.

5.3.1 Contemplative Education

Though foundational to the world wisdom traditions, in recent years contemplative practices such as mindfulness meditation have been explored from more secular and scientific perspectives across a wide range of educational settings. A noted development within the recent decade is a growing interest in contemplative approaches to teaching, learning and knowing across disciplinary fields (Brady, 2007; Duerr et al. 2003; Hart, 2004; Miller, 1994; Seidel, 2006; Thurman, 2006; etc) within higher education. This has given rise to a number of conferences.

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80 It is important to acknowledge here that certain discipline-specific objectives (i.e. within technical or scientific subjects such as chemistry or biology where content knowledge is highly valued) may introduce obstacles to teaching in this way, whereas other courses (i.e. education, humanities and social sciences) may be comparatively more open to adaptation in addressing student’s ontological needs.

81 A number of conferences on contemplative education have developed over the past five years including: Contemplative Pedagogy in Higher Education (Amherst College, May 2003), Contemplative Practices and Education: Making Peace in Ourselves and in the World (Teachers College, 2005), Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education (San Francisco, 2007), Mindful Learners: The Uses of Contemplative Practice in the Classroom (CUNY, 2006), Developmental Issues in Contemplative Education (Garrison Institute, 2008).
and graduate program and a new field of studies (Duerr et al., 2003; Roth, 2006). Research in contemplative education has covered the integration of contemplative practices in academic settings (apffel-Marglin & Bush, 2005; Hall & Archibald, 2008; Nelson, 2006; Zajonc, 2006) primarily including studies of mindfulness (Holland, 2006; Langer, 1997) and meditation (Brady, 2007; Sarath, 2003; Zajonc, 2008). Unlike more conventional forms of curriculum, contemplative approaches require attending more closely to the phenomenological aspects of learning, which include the ontological dimensions of being in which our knowledge is held. Contemplative educational practice has the potential, particularly when practiced with the intention of cultivating wisdom, to invoke a shift from the mental-reflective mode of knowing and egoic self-identification that tends to be exercised within higher education classrooms towards more intentional awareness-based modes of knowing and distributed forms of self-identification.

5.3.2 Reconnecting with the Ontological Dimension of Learning through Contemplative Education

Roy (2006) speaks to the deeper quality of being that is cultivated through contemplative practice:

Relative to the experience of “moving mind,” the ontological dimension, by contrast, has the feeling/aspect of stillness. However, this “stillness” is not to be construed dualistically (that would be an epistemological reduction); rather, it is a dynamic stillness—like the axel of a cartwheel rolling down a hill. (p.133)

Contemplative education offers the prospects of ontological renewal without leaving the classroom by reconnecting students and faculty with this dynamic stillness and other interior ontological qualities of being (i.e. calmness, awareness, peace, compassion), both individually and as a collective. Bringing about the conditions for ontological renewal becomes particularly significant in our information age, insofar as the lines between what is real and virtual (i.e.
resembling the real) are becoming increasingly blurred. In my experience, this leaves both educators and students more prone to existential confusion to the extent that we rely on our mental or virtual representations of life as much or more than our direct sensory experiences, which has been the case of previous generations reaching back to the beginning of human civilization.

Unlike the first teaching scenario described above informed by an ontological picture that regards uncertainty and unpredictability as an anomaly to be either disregarded or managed, contemplative educational practice\(^{82}\) stems from an ontology that cultivates wisdom from this fundamental unknowable dimension of who we are and what the world is. Contemplative practice can help us befriend the uncertain, unpredictable and highly complex situations we meet in the world by befriending the uncertain, turbulent and complicated realities we encounter within. Insofar as the world wisdom traditions (i.e. particularly eastern ones) informing contemplative education encourage cultivating a fluid, creative relationship to uncertainty, our minds then become acclimatized to being with the complex interpenetrating flow of relationship that arguably characterizes existence itself. Through non-conceptual contemplative educational practices such as meditation, grounds for cultivating a wisdom-based relationship with reality gradually begin to take form. Apffel-Marglin (2005) elaborates on the ontology of contemplative education:

> There are clearly many pragmatic reasons for incorporating contemplative practices in education. An increasingly stressful and complex environment is certainly a major factor calling for such a response. However, it is also well to recall that the post-quantum, ontological revolution has revealed the boundary between an outer non-human world and an inner human world to have been a conventional one… such a boundary has fostered an implicit—and mostly denied—ethics of domination and violence. With the new horizon in which the entanglement between human and non-human worlds is a reality, responsibility for the worlds we jointly make becomes unavoidable. Such responsibility is a heavy burden, requiring of us all an unprecedented degree of awareness. (p. 21)

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\(^{82}\) As in the definition of contemplative educational practice outlined in footnote #2.
Contemplative approaches to education then offer the prospects of transforming our psychological relationship to uncertainty by helping us see through problematic assumptions such as (a) what is beyond our understanding is of little consequence, (b) what is unknown or cannot be known is not worth our time, or (c) that uncertainty is a fundamentally threatening and overwhelming aspect of reality. Under certain conditions, contemplative practices of education offer a basis for unlearning such false beliefs and moving towards a more friendly and co-creative relationship with reality that accepts and embraces uncertainty or the unknowable as a fundamentally sacred aspect of the deeper mystery of being. Cultivating wisdom and compassion by gently dispelling our selfhood illusions of fixity and separateness through contemplative practice can be helpful in fashioning a trans-traditional identity (Sarath, 2003, p.229) that is less fixed, rigid and more contingent, interwoven and capable of living optimally with the uncertainties that increasingly define our complex emerging world (Vokey, 2008).

It is also important to acknowledge that as a transformative practice, meditation can occasionally give rise to disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1978) for students as they explore the nature of their experience and reality through meditative awareness and attention. Though I have yet to encounter a student situation where meditating became a catalyst for deeper ontological destabilization, it is nevertheless important to offer or refer students to supportive forms of wisdom available through a variety of resources including readings from psychological and philosophical aspects of contemplative traditions, local meditation centers, among others. On the whole though, my experience in implementing contemplative pedagogy in higher educational settings has me inclined to agree with Sarath (2003, p. 232) that “by sharpening students’ mental capacities, ability to focus, awareness of self, freedom from anxiety, well-being, and sensitivity to and concern for others, meditation is a means for broadening the scope of human development
from what is typically addressed in the educational world.”

5.4 Uncovering the Ontological dimension of Classroom Life through *Dialogue Processes*

As an example of teaching for an ontological turn, I will reflect upon my approach and experience with offering an online graduate course *CrCrTh616 Dialogue Processes* in the Graduate Program in *Critical and Creative Thinking*\(^83\) at the University of Massachusetts (Boston). In my course, students come from a wide array of academic disciplines and professions seeking tools and approaches to learning that will empower them as agents of change in education, organizational and social justice settings. There are typically eight to ten participants each term, with the majority from the University of Massachusetts and a few students from universities outside the US who share an interest in critical thinking, creative thinking and reflective practice.

The core objective of *Dialogue Processes* is to cultivate practical know-how and theoretical knowledge of dialogue informed by a range of dialogue scholar-practitioners, with a particular focus on Otto Scharmer’s (2007) account of the four fields of conversation as well as presencing within a variety of contexts of applied learning. I also draw upon Isaacs’ (1999) research from the MIT Dialogue Project, David Bohm’s (1996) conception of dialogue, in addition to my research in dialogue processes (Gunnlaugson 2006, 2009).

While students value their exposure to new theoretical approaches to dialogue methods of communication, the course not only provides a practical toolkit for dialogue facilitation. It also aims to extend beyond facilitative techniques by having students explore their personal and professional experiences in relation to dialogue facilitation as a means of challenging and transforming their ways of being in conversation as facilitators. I have designed the course in a way that puts its epistemological objectives in service of student’s ontological concerns, by

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\(^83\) www.cct.umb.edu/homepage.html
recursively bringing attention to exploring our ways of being when interacting with one another (i.e. speaking, listening, attending) as well as our states of consciousness\textsuperscript{84} in the different contexts of conversation that take place throughout the term. Within the course, for instance, students learn about distinct fields of conversation through initial encounters with the literature and online weekly lectures. Through peer-coaching calls, as well as live group inquiry and coaching exercises, students explore the distinctive ways of being that accompany deeper fields of conversation—listening from stillness, speaking from presence, among others. I have found that bringing a contemplative emphasis within each learning context also contributes to developing student’s capacities for dialogue. This means as an educator, in addition to imparting theoretical knowledge about dialogue to the students, I encourage students to attend to their experiences in conversation more closely in terms of identifying and listening from the special qualities of being that distinguish different fields of conversation.

In terms of the contemplative emphasis that I bring to the course, I generally explore three modalities of contemplative education curriculum with an emphasis on contemplative content, contemplative practice and contemplative process. When introducing \textit{contemplative content}, I introduce students to various writings on meditation, presenting and explicating what the different practices involve, inviting them to draw from an existing practice, follow a recommended practice or devise their own synthesis and integration that draws together different approaches to say meditation. With \textit{contemplative practice}, I focus on specific meditative skills or capabilities that are a by-product of meditative practice (e.g. mindfulness, meta-cognition, suspension, attention). Each week, I introduce exercises that help students recognize these skills in conversation. The final emphasis on \textit{contemplative process} focuses on pedagogical contexts

\textsuperscript{84} States of consciousness range considerably from ordinary to peak experiences induced by contemplative practices such as meditation.
that foster inquiry and different modes of conversation—a core focus of the course—that are informed by contemplative practices such as meditation that student’s undertake independently.

5.4.1 Setting the Stage: Introducing Meditation as a First-Person Contemplative Practice for Opening up Interior Ontological Horizons

In the interests of supporting the conditions for student’s transformation in relation to the dialogue practices that shape their sense of self and their capacities for different forms of conversation, I have introduced several contemplative practices as a means for uncovering the deeper ontological dimension of their learning. For the purposes of this course, I work with contemplative educator Ed Sarath’s (in press) heuristic of first-, second- and third-person approaches[^85] for distinguishing contemplative processes. In the upcoming section I outline the first-person method of meditation, which serves as a foundational practice for the second-person method of presencing. As Sarath points, our pedagogical methods “contain first-, second- and third-person aspects to varying degrees” (in press, p. 2). Insofar as meditation draws primarily on our interior individual experience, it is primarily a first-person practice. And insofar as presencing draws primarily from the shared interior realm of groups, it is primarily a second-person practice.

Early on each term I introduce a basic awareness-based practice of sitting meditation to help students cultivate the capacity for deepened attention and mindfulness in their conversations. The contemplative discipline of sitting meditation involves having students withdraw from their normal day-to-day activities in order to encounter themselves in stillness and renew their connection with a deeper underlying source of intrapersonal attention. Sarath

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[^85]: Concerning the distinctions of first-person, second-person and third-person educational approaches, the academic world is arguably dominated by third-person forms of education (Roth, 2006) where analysis, investigation and critical discussion of knowledge prevail. Within Sarath’s (2006) integral pedagogical heuristic, first-person forms of education involve learning that is drawn primarily from our individual experience through modes of journaling, introspective reflection, among other approaches. Second-person forms of education are more process oriented, generally including collective forms of learning and discovery in group work, community-based learning and so forth.
(2003) elaborates on the benefits of meditation from his experiences of teaching in the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Jazz and Contemplative Studies degree program at the University of Michigan:

Descriptions of contact with this core as instances of extraordinary clarity, insight, and inner calm can only approximate this awareness state; it ultimately can be understood and appreciated only by the experience itself. In fact, the coexistence of levels of wakefulness and profound calm that exceed ordinary experience, which makes these states so difficult to convey to others in words, is perhaps what renders them so transformational. As one invokes these states on a regular basis, they promote the development of these values in everyday life in a way that, as noted above, most other experiences generally cannot match. However, this is not to devalue other activities, or suggest meditation should replace them, whether they are undertaken with contemplative aims or not. Rather, silent meditation can be thought of as a kind of anchor and means for enriching whatever activities one pursues. (p. 219)

Whether students are beginning a basic meditation practice or working with an existing one, I introduce mindfulness exercises to strengthen their awareness of breath, body, emotions and thoughts. I encourage everyone to work up to 20 minutes of daily meditation practice. I keep in touch with online blogs where students journal about their practice in the context of course themes of dialogue processes. I generally start our online synchronous sessions with a brief group meditation and encourage student’s to practice stopping whatever they are doing and to gather their attention in the moment before writing their asynchronous postings and making their peer coaching calls. A number of students have reported that meditation and these meditative aspects of the course have helped them slow down into experiencing how the state of their body, emotions and mental attitude influence their capacity for engaging in dialogue and presencing.

Despite its importance to learning (Duerr et al, 2003), intrapersonal awareness is rarely if ever practiced or cultivated as a learning objective in most higher education settings. It is ironic that in spite of the importance of self-knowledge, colleges and universities tend to give minimal attention to the development of self-awareness or self-understanding or assume this to be a natural by-product of the program. Insofar as meditative practice strengthens student’s
capacities for observing their internal, cognitive-emotional processes, including biases, beliefs, and mental perspectives, through this process self-awareness and self-understanding are developed. Students have reported in their blogs that meditation has helped them work less reactively in conversation and more intimately with the challenges of various competing demands they face in their studies, employment and relationships. Rather than controlling experience (e.g., thoughts, feelings, sensations), meditation helps foster a more primary if not primal experience of well-being, in which students can develop a faith and confidence as it begins to permeate other aspects of their way of living. As students embark upon regular meditation practice early in the term, I have found that they generally become more attentive to the nuances of their experience in relation to course content and when in communication with one another.

5.4.2 Engaging Being: Exploring Presencing as a Second-Person Contemplative Practice of Conversation

There is often a struggle to unlearn old habits as one brings forth new ways of being to the extent that customary preconceptions and patterns generally stand in the way, at least initially. In our online conversations, I encourage students to become more aware of how their accustomed habits of listening and speaking reflect and depart from the characteristic dynamics within each of Scharmer’s four fields of conversation (figure 5.1).
In this heuristic, Scharmer describes how conversations move counter-clockwise through the fields of downloading, debate, dialogue and finally presencing (Gunnlaugson, 2007). For Scharmer, each field builds from the earlier habits of listening and speaking that characterize the previous field of conversation. In teaching the course, I dedicate a week for exploring each of the four fields of conversation. Generally this exploration involves introducing the characteristic habits and practices of attention that distinguish downloading from debate, debate from dialogue and dialogue from presencing, as well as the habits of listening, speaking and patterns of engagement that give rise to these field-specific dynamics. We then explore alternatives for facilitating groups (defined as two or more individuals) from the field of downloading to debate,

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86 In the course I have found it helpful to teach student’s Scharmer’s four fields as a generalizable framework that is by no means complete or comprehensive in it’s rendering of the potential field-dynamics of conversation that are available to groups. This helps keep our conversations open to novel and critical interpretations of his work that require further in-depth inquiry to identify omissions or different perspectives.
debate to dialogue and dialogue to presencing.

When teaching the four fields of conversation, I ask students to respond to course threads by consulting with their awareness-based discoveries made in meditation. As each field is introduced, I have found that this helps prime student’s awareness to the subtle processes that shape conversations and collective processes of knowledge creation that are characteristic of dialogues in field three and particularly presencing conversations in field four. Challenging the popular conviction that conversations typically involve replicating (field one) or critiquing (field two) our existing knowledge, presencing provides a context of conversation where deeper meanings and new experiences of one’s self and the group arise. Where meditation offers a solitary intrapersonal rejuvenation of the ontological dimension of student’s learning through a renewed contact with their deeper being, presencing engages the ontological dimension interpersonally in conversation from the ontological context established in mediation.⁸⁷ Along the lines of how Senge and Wheatley (2001) have explored the significance of meditative and contemplative practice within the context of dialogue processes in learning communities, I have increasing approached presencing as a contemplative practice through which students apply and engage with ontologically.

It is important to note that I initially taught presencing as a transformative dialogue practice, however I have increasingly emphasized the contemplative aspects of the practice as a means for uncovering the collective ontological dimension of student’s experiences. Though I still introduce presencing as a conversational practice of dialogue in the course, over the past two terms I have been exploring presencing as a second-person contemplative practice that deals more specifically with the co-creative potentials of conversation. I have found that emphasizing

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⁸⁷ For this course, I have adapted Scharmer’s account of presencing primarily in the context of conversation, thus emphasizing the interpersonal context. However, Scharmer (2007) has also developed intrapersonal practices of presencing for different creative purposes.
the contemplative dimension of presencing helps students relate to it more as a form of shared meditation—preserving the ontological quality of being that meditation invokes. Also, by framing presencing as a contemplative practice, students tend to be more attentive to the subtle dynamics of listening and speaking that distinguish presencing from dialogue.

Overall, presencing helps students develop a new capacity for speaking from a dynamic stillness that is aligned with a deeper sense of who they are and what is emerging in the conversation, in turn providing glimpses into the absolute quality of manifest experiences.

Jaworski elaborates (Senge et al., 2004):

The core of Buddhist theory is that the human exists in two interdependent orders. One is the manifest domain, the domain of manifest phenomena, both tangible and intangible. The other is the infinite, the absolute, the transcendent, the universal beyond form, beyond thought, beyond any “thing”—typically referred to as *suchness*. And the human exists, literally where these two orders intersect… so the human is said to exist, by our basic nature, in the matrix of intersection between the absolute and manifest. We don’t exist in one or the other but in both, because—and this is a key to the Buddhists’ nondualistic worldview—the manifest does not exist without the absolute, nor the absolute without the manifest. They’re inseparable, interpenetrating… from this point of view, what we’re calling presencing is possible because of this womb, where the absolute and manifest interact. I think a Buddhist would say that presencing can arise to the extent that we develop the capacity, individually and collectively, to extend our conscious awareness in both domains. Normally, we’re habituated to the phenomenal or manifest domain, paying attention only to what’s tangible, even to the point of seeing ourselves as a material being, our body. But we inherently have this much greater capacity, which can be cultivated.

As Jaworski suggests, presencing offers a practice of creativity where our experience in the relative manifest domain can be informed by or drawn from contact with the unconditioned, formless dimension in conversation. Presencing then as a field of conversation offers a participatory path of engagement (speaking and listening) that aspires to listen for and speak from the more subtle ontological dimension of our experience as a basis for realizing more creative discoveries about the particular class subject of inquiry.
5.5 Closing Thoughts

As I have interpreted it, Barnett’s call for an ontological turn in higher education curriculum and pedagogy is an invitation for educators to provide a learning environment or classroom ethos that supports the cultivation of a wisdom-based orientation to our learning, one another and our changing world. Rather than attempt to teach wisdom in the form of beliefs or knowledge, I have worked with experiential contemplative practices as a means for students to uncover essential qualities of being in the context of their learning about dialogue processes. By introducing contemplative pedagogies as a means for encouraging the transformative development and ontological renewal of students, our virtual classroom has become a generative context where I encourage students to investigate, explore and live into those ways of being they believe are most essential to their work in facilitating dialogue processes and their lives in our supercomplex age.

While wisdom cultivation alone will not bring about an end to our inner sense of a destabilized world, I believe that higher education is long overdue for promoting paths of learning that support students in cultivating optimal ways of being with uncertainty and complexity that give rise to new prospects for working with these pervasive existential challenges that beset our time.
5.6 Works Cited


6. Concluding Thoughts

6.1 Reflections on the Dissertation as a Whole

A new paradigm is introduced within a field, not only by arguing against the prevailing paradigm, but also by speaking differently about things and re-describing them in new ways, thereby creating an alternate way of thinking about and being with a particular phenomena. With this approach in mind, I have worked at providing an alternative language and set of frameworks to inspire new pathways of engagement and research into the transformative potentials of intersubjective forms of contemplative learning and development within the higher education classroom. Though re-interpreting and expanding upon Scharmer’s account of presencing and the four fields of conversation has been its core focus, this research project has also drawn upon an assortment of intersubjective, contemplative, complexivist and ontological theories as a basis for contributing to the larger project of developing transformative curriculum and instructional methods in higher education. Given the present scarcity of maps and frameworks to assist instructors with navigating intersubjective processes of contemplative territory in the higher education classroom, this dissertation attempts to contribute to the formation of a new paradigmatic lens for framing and engaging consciousness-based processes of inquiry and communication within the higher education classroom.

In reflecting on the process of writing this dissertation, I have grown to appreciate how each chapter has in a specific way generated new knowledge through a transdisciplinary integration of key perspectives from the fields of contemplative learning, intersubjectivity theory, integral theory and complexity education, among others. In chapter one, I worked at establishing the importance of intersubjective approaches to contemplative pedagogy that offer us distinct ways of thinking about collective classroom interactions. At the 2007 conference,
Uncovering the Heart of Higher Education in San Francisco, where a number of presentations focused on contemplative education⁸⁸, I was struck by the relative absence of second-person frameworks to engage learners with contemplative educational processes in our classrooms. A significant number of presentations dealt explicitly with first- and third-person forms of contemplative pedagogy and curriculum, but none addressed second-person pedagogy, something that stood out to me as a significant omission.

Through the exploration of four accounts of intersubjectivity formulated outside of higher education contexts, I differentiated between distinct senses and experiences of intersubjectivity and elaborated on these distinctions to varying degrees. Important developments within this chapter involve establishing a broader conceptual framework to organize the different meanings and dimensions of contemplative pedagogy, locating specific second-person dimensions of contemplative education, and establishing the notion of critical second-person contemplative education as a type of pedagogy and approach to learning within the field of contemplative education (helpful for further research and applications of contemplative education).

In chapter two, I build on the developments of the first chapter by outlining a framework to inform the implementation of a second-person contemplative inquiry process curriculum that does not compete with existing content curriculum, but follows it like a shadow. This chapter is designed to assist professors and students in developing a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of intersubjective fields in the classroom and to inspire interest in exploring sacred ways of knowing and learning together that can arise through a) presencing as a field of conversation, b) the three gestures of intersubjective mindfulness and c) three forms of discernment in the class field. By drawing upon the underlying first-person dimensions of the

⁸⁸ The Center for Contemplative Mind played a prominent role in the conference. Ten of the 49 workshops were organized by the Center and led by Contemplative Practice Fellows.
second-person concepts and practices across different wisdom traditions, my intent here is to begin establishing pedagogical frameworks that identify and support the emergence of key features of intersubjective experiences. This chapter asks my readers to accept the following premises: (a) that second-person forms of contemplative pedagogy are qualitatively distinct from first- and third-person forms, (b) the intersubjective domain is a shared experiential territory that can be more effectively experienced in our classrooms by introducing second-person practices and frameworks such as those featured in this chapter, (c) that first- and third-person contemplative pedagogical methods, practices and techniques are insufficient to engage with the intersubjective territory of experience with our students in our classrooms (d) that scholar-practitioners implementing integral, contemplative and transformative objectives in their classrooms will benefit from the second-person contemplative educational frameworks introduced here and (e) that second-person practices are often informed to varying extents by first-person correlative practices.

In chapter three, I offer an alternative to teaching approaches which involve the transmission and acquisition of pre-existing representational knowledge in favor of advancing a more complex emergent mode of teaching. I have been drawn to the theory of complexity education for some time now and am intrigued by the particular emphasis within the literature on collective forms of learning and various complexity-based interpretations of collective modalities of emergence in classrooms, which reflect a number of shared aims with the intersubjective approaches I explore in the previous chapters. Building on the previous chapter, I investigate further how presencing (Scharmer, 2007; Gunnlaugson, 2007; 2006) might serve as a conversational process for apprehending complex emerging knowledge. My aim in focusing on key complexity education notions including the “space of emergence” (Osberg & Biesta, 2008),
“enlarging the space of the possible” (Davis & Phelps, 2004) and “teacher as the consciousness of the collective” (Davis & Sumara, 2005), is to examine how presencing might help implement these teaching phenomena from a collective complexivist standpoint. This chapter also challenges complexivist educational practices and aims by asking that we explore the interior depth dimensions of being that co-arise within interwoven classroom systems—orientating in part from what emergence feels like from ontological contexts of being from within the individual and collective as a basis for exploring complexity dynamics. As mentioned briefly, further work is needed in understanding the existential and intuitive dimensions of collective complexivist learning processes—to what extent is intuition a byproduct of internal and/or systemic processes and how might learners reconcile the personal dimension of meaning with an emergentist views of aspiring to bring forth incalculable knowledge for its own sake?

The final chapter builds on a central theme within all the previous chapters as a response to the problematic teaching approaches in university settings that involve some variety of having students acquire the concepts, theories and knowledge of their particular field of study, in other words content mastery, to the exclusion of pedagogies that also support collective wisdom cultivation and developing mastery of inquiry processes. Elaborating on Barnett’s notion of the ontological turn in curriculum and pedagogy, I make a case for integrating the ontological dimension of learning into our curricular and pedagogical approaches and introduce contemplative education as a means for this. I then draw on my experiences implementing contemplative approaches to dialogue with my students in an online graduate course that I teach in Dialogue Processes at the University of Massachusetts (Boston).

Aside from sourcing Barnett’s recommendation of cultivating ontological qualities for a way of being for uncertainty, I do not prescribe or advocate a specific ontological conception that
I hold up as an ideal for my students. Rather, I encourage further experimentation with meditation and presencing as trans-traditional examples of contemplative educational practice that foster ontological qualities of being which can optimally serve the present needs of students and educators as they learn and teach to these new conditions of uncertainty. This chapter also urges a critical reconsideration of our ontological assumptions or pictures of the world in order to reflect on how our ways of being have been conditioned towards worldviews and ways of being that may not be informed by wisdom. In sharing my approach to teaching for an ontological turn, my aim is to illustrate the value of contemplative educational processes in reconditioning our understanding of our selves (identity) and the ontological dimension of our processes of knowing, learning and communicating for the sake of unearthing new depths of existential discoveries that can help show us how to optimally be with uncertainty.

In looking back over the four chapters, the manuscript design of this dissertation has been helpful in providing a flexible structure that accommodates a diverse range of conceptual approaches and objectives that I have been able to work with both independently and as a cohesive whole. Nevertheless, there are places where I have struggled with the challenge of avoiding overlap in content, particularly as the chapters themselves will be viewed independently within their respective journals. Because readers of the published articles will not have been introduced to terms or lines of thought presented in neighboring chapters, some of this material unfortunately needs to be reintroduced.

6.2 Contemplating Questions Towards Future Research Directions

As conveyed throughout this work, the growing academic interest in contemplative approaches to education suggests to my thinking that it will become an important field of study and eventually emerge as a sub field within higher education, similar to the place held by various
discourses of transformative education. For contemplative education to move towards further realizing its potential as a field of study, I believe theorists and practitioners will need to address a number of the following matters, limitations and questions in greater depth and thoroughness.

What benefits and drawbacks exist for shifting university education towards an ontological paradigm for contemplative learning? Though contemplative approaches to teaching and learning have been explored more extensively across disciplines (Roth, 2006), it can be problematic to assume that these approaches are applicable to all fields of study or that all students will necessarily perceive their value and significance. Among other limitations, as contemplative educational practice can be demanding of faculty and students (in terms of the requirements for ongoing practice), I believe it is important that educators recognize that they cannot speak authoritatively about contemplative practice without also working with these practices themselves. Many professors have little to no experience with contemplative practices and offer courses where the content objectives overshadow inquiry and wisdom process objectives. As briefly addressed in chapter two, not all forms of contemplative education translate well into modern pluralistic higher educational settings, and some may be quite inappropriate due to a number of different factors (i.e. lack of requisite contemplative capacities for more intermediate or advanced practices, inappropriateness of certain esoteric or religious practices in educational settings, etc).

To work towards establishing critical second-person contemplative pedagogies, further attention also needs to be given to first- and third-person methods and practices in terms of understanding more fully their respective limitations, synergies and how they can be integrated to serve university instructors across disciplines as well as how each can be re-integrated within
a more integral heuristic of contemplative pedagogical approaches in the higher education classroom.

Though there are ample contemplative practices drawn across the different wisdom traditions, the literature could benefit from further addressing how transplanting these practices within higher education settings will benefit specific course aims, purposes, processes and content objectives. For scholar-practitioners drawn to contemplative education, particularly second-person forms of curriculum and pedagogy, what additional measures are needed to ensure that such approaches can be successfully integrated to meet learning and content objectives?

Questions of power and social location need to be further addressed: can presencing or other second-person contemplative pedagogies unfold when there are fundamental differences of power? Can these differences be suspended or deconstructed in order for the generative process of the field of presencing and other collective contemplative processes to unfold? How might a social justice component invoking critical contemplative education processes serve this aim? In a related sense, how might the role of critical reflection and critical consciousness serve as apart of or complimentary to various contemplative processes of learning? Particularly in terms of further examination of the roles of contemplative seeing in the contexts of social action, social responsibility and probing further into contemplative education as a basis for evolving new dimensions of educational culture, collective social practices and institutional norms.

Further, an expanded view of the nature and processes of contemplative learning as well as the various phases or stages that are involved with different contemplative practices will be helpful to practitioners and students alike. Investigation into what prompts contemplative learning, the kinds of experiences that bring students closer to the textures of intersubjective
forms of contemplative education as distinct from other forms of learning will also be helpful. Making a space for contemplative learning practices such as presencing and collective discernment to compliment functionalist and other approaches to teaching is crucial, whether as a literal break in the classroom processes of learning to engage specific contemplative learning practice or to address the ontological dimensions of contemplative learning—ways of learning from stillness, receptivity to what is arising and the interior conditions of the class field of learning. Related to this undertaking are questions that arise in addressing contemplative education from the perspective of consciousness studies, particularly optimal states of consciousness. In further establishing the distinct dimensions of contemplative knowing; that is, further differentiating the activity of knowing, the content being known and quality of the awareness of the knower(s) with considerations given to the capacities and stages of development needed to engage with different contemplative pedagogy. Work concerning the kind of processes or structures that will help instructors and students “scaffold” their experience in such a way as to foster a preliminary awareness of the territory of contemplative learning across first-, second- and third-person pedagogical approaches will be helpful in order to better understand the challenges involved with implementing such approaches in the higher education classroom.

Further research will benefit the ongoing exploration of specific contemplative practices for listening and talking within the contemplative learning space, as well as the ideal conditions for different contemplative practices. Overall, additional understanding of the components, significance, limitations, conditions and consequences of contemplative learning are needed, giving rise to a more integral conceptualization of the theory. Being able to identify contemplative learning in action, to get behind or underneath the discourse of contemplative
education in order to experience these changes directly for learner’s in the classroom will involve a more careful rendering of the process itself. In raising these questions and issues, my hope is that instructors and scholar-practitioners can begin to establish a shared focus, set of assumptions and principles of contemplative education from which to build upon and more broadly apply within the field of higher education.

6.3 Reflections on Contributions to the Field and Applications

Serving educators and researchers who work with implementing contemplative and complexivist processes of inquiry at regional, national and international levels, this dissertation builds important bridges between the literatures of intersubjective methods of inquiry and contemplative and complexivist methods of teaching by examining the theoretical and practical implications of presencing as a method for facilitating these processes within classroom settings. Following from this interdisciplinary issue, this project is driven by the growing awareness (Sidorkin, 1999; Vella, 2007; etc.) of the benefits of shifting conventional higher education classroom modes of discourse from traditional discussion and debate, with their limiting conditions of serial monologues, groupthink and interpersonal conflict, towards more reflective, synergistic and co-creative modes of inquiry and presencing. My hope is that this work will also serve as a catalyst for supporting faculty members, instructors and students in fostering a renewed understanding of the importance of contemplative practices of education. Particularly for shifting classroom discourse from discussion and debate to more intentional presencing spaces of inquiry for the purposes of cultivating deeper wisdom processes that address the unique challenges of our time on not only individual but perhaps more importantly, collective levels.
6.4 Closing Reflections

As I bring my reflections on researching and writing this dissertation to a close, I look forward to a future where classroom learning processes in academic settings are no longer shaped by “the most minimal sense of we” possible” (Balder, 2007, p.1). My hope is that this dissertation will inspire further interest and research into more optimal forms of engagement with our students and the class field of learning from presencing and related intersubjective processes of inquiry. As this dissertation strives to develop a literacy around intersubjective methods of contemplative education, by getting at the underlying structural aspects of the conditions for presencing and other intersubjective practices that evoke the class field, my hope is that new enthusiasm will be generated among colleagues and scholar-practitioners new to this work and a deepening and further clarifying of the territory to those who are presently engaged in this and related projects. In striving to recover a core dimension of our shared human potential in the classroom, my vision is that this work in intersubjective forms of contemplative inquiry will not emerge as a future trend within higher education so much as an enduring tradition.
6.5 Works Cited


