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## Participatory Fruits of Spiritual Inquiry

John Heron

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*Abstract* This contribution to the cartography of spiritual inquiry explores its grounding in three interdependent kinds of inquiry – personal, collaborative and cultural – and makes a brief evaluation of the relevance of the perennial philosophy. It then outlines a dipolar theology of the divine as the manifest and the spiritual, the manifest in terms of the phenomenal and the subtle, and the spiritual in terms of its three modes - the situational, the immanent and the transcendent. It considers the validity of spiritual insights, the nature of human mediation between the divine poles, explores the nature of spiritual inquiry as a form of collaborative action research – the divine-human process of co-creative inquiry here in this place where we are. It culminates in describing a broad range of practices of engagement, enlivenment and enlightenment which inquire, respectively, into spirit as situational, immanent and transcendent. It concludes with an overview of the presuppositions of spiritual inquiry.

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The participatory fruits of spiritual inquiry explored in this paper are an enacted set of working principles and practices, grounded in three kinds of inquiry which are interdependent and mutually involved in each other. First, they are co-created in a personal participatory relation with being, a relation which is rooted in the human capacity for feeling the presence of what there is. This radical capacity I explore in depth in *Feeling and Personhood* (Heron, 1992). Ferrer gives a related account of participatory knowing as presential, enactive and transformative (Ferrer, 2002: 122-3). Second, they are generated in a context of a variety of collaborative spiritual inquiries, including an ongoing relationship inquiry (Langton and Heron, 2003), a current long-term co-operative inquiry now (2006) into its twelfth year (Heron and Lahood, forthcoming), and over twenty short-term co-operative inquiries since 1978 - several of which are reported in *Sacred Science* (Heron, 1998). Third, they are influenced by acquaintance with, reflection on, and discussions within, the wider personal, cultural and historical context, including the great legacy of religious beliefs and experiential data from spiritual schools ancient and modern, western and eastern.

These three kinds of inquiry provide a qualified warrant for my text. On the one hand it presents ideas that are clarified and critically refined in personal and interpersonal enactments of what there is, and are thus one modestly valid perspective on, and revelation of, the mystery of being. On the other hand

they are relative to the cultural and historical contexts within which they are framed, and thus are fallible and non-perennial, an invitation to dialogue and further inquiry.

To say that a theological vision is co-created in a personal and an interpersonal participative relation with being, and in the qualifying contexts stated, means neither that it is universally absolute, nor that it is an entirely relativistic construction. It means that it is one relative perspective brought forth *with* what is universal, and calls for other diverse perspectives, grounded in inquiry, to honour the fullness of the mystery.

I will make a few points here about the role of past spiritual traditions in making contemporary spiritual distinctions. They have an important secondary and contributory role, via their massive heritage of spiritual lore. This lore is the indispensable loam which nourishes present growth. However, the primary role is for the contemporary voice of innovative divine becoming, surfacing now through the constraints of what is today outmoded in this great inheritance from the aspirations of our forbears. The idea that there is a perennial (lasting-forever) philosophy which can be extracted from past religions and which lays down the basic structure of spiritual practice far off into the distant future, seems to me as fanciful as the idea of a perennial natural science. To restrict postmodern spirituality by principles derived from premodern spirituality is like constraining the future of chemistry by the precepts of alchemy. Perennial philosophy prescriptions strike me as a rearguard action to defend established centres of spiritual authority from having to deal with radical change. See *Sacred Science* (Heron, 1998: 43-46). Past belief-systems and practices reflect past contexts. Current contexts call both for respect for past traditions and for a radical revisionary overhaul of some of their most fundamental beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

### ***Enacting being***

In the spirit of both respect and revision, I distinguish in what follows between the divine, the manifest and the spiritual; and between three forms of the manifest, and three forms of the spiritual. It is important to note that these conceptual distinctions are at one and the same time the fruits of inquiry, possible guidelines for inquiry and above all are subject to further inquiry - of the three kinds mentioned at the outset.

### ***The divine***

The divine is the presence of the totality of what there is in every respect without let or hindrance: an integral Many-One reality including the manifest and the spiritual in all their modes. Note here that the spiritual is included in, but not identical with, the divine, which is a more comprehensive reality. To regard spirit as identical with the divine leads to acosmic monism: the reduction of the Many to the

One, and of the manifest to the spiritual. It also fosters spiritual practices which flee to god from the works of god, individual inflation rather than relational engagement, and a strong element of misogyny.

### *The manifest*

The manifest comprises the diverse realms and entities of creation, in two known primary forms. First, there is *the phenomenal* realm of human beings in our world, which includes the physical cosmos, the biological, psychological and cultural spheres. The human and physical sciences, comprehensively considered, are fields of inquiry which constitute just one half of inquiry into the manifest. I use 'phenomenal' here with the meaning of 'known through the senses'. Second, there is *the subtle* realm of energies, domains, presences and powers to which extrasensory capacities in humans bear witness. The subtle appears to permeate and sustain the phenomenal realm, and also to reach far beyond it. It has often been called the psychical, as in the field of psychical research.

The subtle realms, in all their majesty and vastness, have been by various constituencies: dismissed as non-existent; or subjectivized - that is, regarded as purely psychological in character; or castigated as distractions on the way to the Absolute; or regarded as projected forms of what is as yet unrealized in the higher Self; or feared as the work of the devil; or simply left out of account. I do not believe that any of these views will really do. They avoid the challenge of systematic inquiry into what is **probably** the greater part of divine creation. This inquiry is the other half of inquiry into the manifest.

There is also an intermediate zone where the phenomenal and the subtle interact. It has two hypothetical aspects: the archnatural - the subtle as the formative matrix of the phenomenal, as the active intermediary between the spiritual and the phenomenal; and the psychoid - the subtle effects of human intentionality in the phenomenal realm (Grof, 1988: 44). Both of these are important hypotheses, and their potential implications for how we live on this planet call for radical inquiry.

### *The spiritual*

The spiritual I envision as an all-pervasive conscious animation informing the manifest, both phenomenal and subtle. It has three known primary aspects, which I call the situational, the immanent and the transcendent.

*The situational* is the living spirit of our present situation, our current process in the world, our immediate engagement with what there is, in its three interrelated aspects, the third being the ground of the other two. We can open to it as: (1) the presence of location, of a particular place and time, of being here now; (2) the spirit of occasion - a birth, a death, a greeting, a meeting, an occupational task,

making love, a ritual of celebration, and a myriad other events; and (3) the reality of relationship, Shekinah, the Between, the spirit that connects, the *distinctness-in-unity* of subject and object, subject and subject, as we participate in our multidimensional world, perceiving and engaging with nature, culture and other realms.

Compare Jorge Ferrer's important notion of transpersonal phenomena not as individual inner experiences, but as events in reality in which our consciousness creatively participates. These include I-Thou relationships, communal spiritual occasions, collective identities such as archetypal morphic fields, sacred places, communion with nature (Ferrer, 2002). An influential precursor here is Martin Buber (1937), who proposed a shift from an individual to a dialogical and relational concept of spirituality, and affirmed the spiritual realm of the Between as establishing authentic community.

For a simple opening to situational spirit in relation to the immediate physical environment, try the following. Stand in front of a kitchen workbench, or a surface of similar height so that you can touch it without having to stoop. Place your hands palms flat upon the surface and look out at the world through the window. Let go of egoic contraction by expanding into the space behind the eyes, and behind the spine. Then let your awareness fall into the great open space behind and below you, as you participate in being-in-a-world through posture, touch, seeing and hearing. With this simple magic you find the wrap-around of inner and outer, of awareness and its contents, all one with multifarious distinctions. For another account of the same process, and for interpersonal versions, see *Seamless perceiving* below.

*The immanent* I construe as the spiritual life-potential embedded within creation, the indwelling source of manifest becoming, the drive of emergent development. We can open to it as: (1) the motivation of cosmic unfolding, including the dynamic ground of our will to live both as an individual and as a universal citizen of cosmopolis; (2) the creative cosmic womb, including the spiritual womb within our embodiment, whence emerge our potentials and creative innovations; and (3) the pregnant void that is the mystery of spirit within the manifest.

Note that 'immanent' has traditionally been used, in ambiguous and confusing ways, to refer to spirit both as 'the situational' and 'the immanent' in my terms. For the spirit as ground, compare Schelling's *deus implicitus*, more recently reappearing as the "Dynamic Ground (libido, psychic energy, numinous power or spirit) of somatic, instinctual, affective and creative-imaginal potentials" (Washburn, 1995); the "Entelechy Self...the Root Self, the ground of one's being, and the seeded coded essence in you which contains both the patterns and the possibilities of your life" (Houston, 1987); of "Eros as spirit-in-action", the indwelling divine drive at the root of human aspiration (Wilber, 1995).

*The transcendent* I regard as cosmic consciousness which is beyond and encompassing creation, and is the origin of its formative archetypes. We can participate in this consciousness in its several aspects as: (1) the sustaining, managerial intelligence of the universe; (2) the Logos, creative divine speech which utters the universe; and (3) as indeterminate ineffability, beyond all name and form. Here we celebrate the great legacy of the mysticism of transcendence which we inherit from diverse traditions over the past three thousand years. For an overview of historical precursors to these aspects of the transcendent see Heron (1998: 89-90).

The three aspects of spirit as portrayed in this section - the situational, the immanent, the transcendent – honour both traditional and contemporary accounts of human experience of the divine. And the assertions made here about them call to be questioned within the practical inquiries described later on in this paper.

### *The validation of spiritual insights*

How do we assess the validity of this or any other insight into what is spiritually ultimate? How do we make qualitative distinctions among different enactions of the nature of the divine? This is a contentious area of discussion because it is not clear to me how anyone can respond to the question without simply turning their own enaction into a set of criteria for evaluating others. A more modest question is about the criteria I use to clarify the personal validity of my spiritual beliefs. Here are the four basic criteria: (1) the beliefs affirm autonomous spirituality - authority resides in the internal monitor; (2) they affirm relational spirituality - the central locus of the spiritual is between persons and between persons and their worlds; (3) they affirm embodied spirituality - the primary energies of our embodiment reveal living spirit; and (4) they affirm transcendent spirituality - everyday awareness is continuous with a vast backdrop of universal consciousness. Beyond this, the basic question is about how I dialogue fruitfully with persons who have criteria of validity different from my own.

### *Symbolizing the divine*

A simple diagram of concentric circles can symbolize the divine (Figure 1). The centre point represents spirit as the infinitude within, an immanent life, which moves everything with indwelling potential. An outermost circle represents spirit as the infinitude beyond, a transcendent consciousness, which emanates, and informs and calls everything with the archetypes of creation. An inner circle around the centre represents the phenomenal, and another circle between this and the outermost circle represents the subtle, both interfused with spirit as situational. All these four together symbolize the divine. The phenomenal circle of human experience is open to situational spirit here and now –

symbolized by the space around the circle - and beyond this can open to the circumference and to the centre, in qualitatively different dipolar practices, as described in the inquiry practices below.

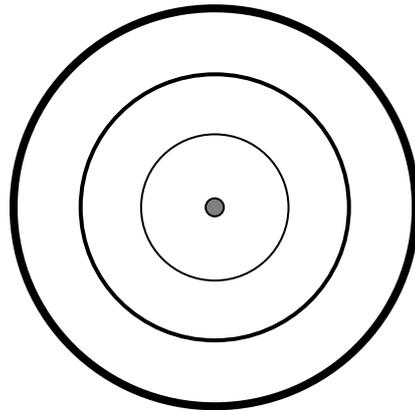


Figure 1: a symbol of the divine

*Human mediation*

From our human point of view, the only place where the divine poles interact and influence us, and whence they are accessible, is in our current situation, our here and now locality in our universe.

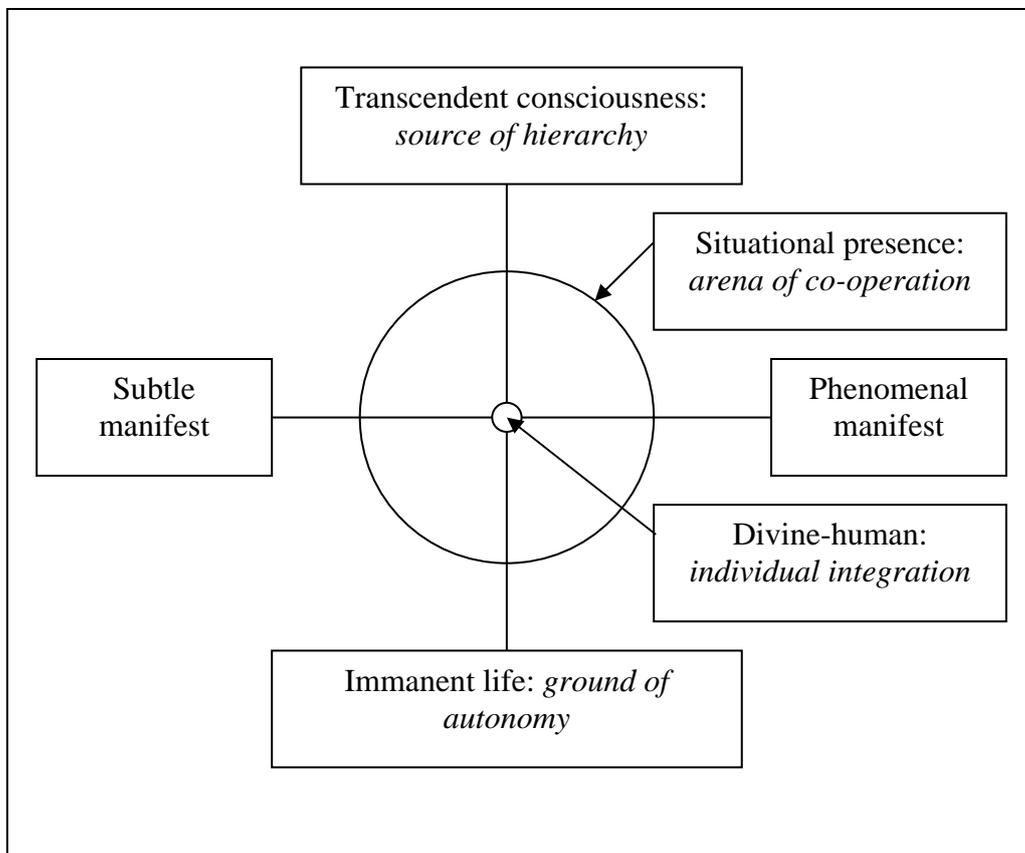


Figure 2: divine-human integration of the spiritual and the manifest

We, in how we are being and doing in our present place, are the integrating mediators of fundamental polar parameters of the divine. Situational spirit is the ever-developing and unfolding human-divine co-creation of this integration. In this matter, we are theurgists, changing the nature of the divine in collaborative transactions with the divine. Or, if you prefer to put it theocentrically, the divine innovates through manifesting as imaginative co-creative humans. See Figure 2.

All the following parameters of the human condition call to be involved and awarably re-evaluated in our mediating role.

1. The human situation is an embodied situation. We are rooted in the several primary energies/drives of our bodily endowment, and in the particular place in which we choose to live upon our planet. These primary energies and our location are grounded in, and basic openings to, the divine.

2. The human situation is also a 'we' situation, inherently intersubjective and social. For each of us it is moulded both in belief and in action by how we use a shared language in dialogue with others, and by how we selectively interpret, in relationship with others, the values, norms, and beliefs of our culture which that language mediates. All this shapes our shaping of the divine.

3. Persons become persons in and through relationship with other persons. Autonomy flourishes in creative kinds of connectedness with other autonomous people. Full and profound participation in embodied divinity is through the collegiality of fully embodied co-inquirers: people discussing options and deciding actions to transform their personhood, their society and their planet. In this practice, each person moves between and integrates three positions: autonomy - being clear what I genuinely need, want and wish for, what my idiosyncratic preferences are, in relation to the matter being discussed; hierarchy - thinking on behalf of the whole group and the wider community within which the action will be embedded; and co-operation - listening to, empathising with, and negotiating agreed decisions with, my peers, decisions that integrate diversity, difference and unity.

4. Our ways of knowing are multiple (Heron, 1992, 1996a). First we have experiential knowing: by meeting/encounter/engagement with people, places, processes and things – that is, by felt participation in the being of what is present - a process which involves the whole of our embodied being, and is the ground of the next three. Second there is presentational knowing: by intuitive grasp of the meaning of the patterns and forms of nonverbal imagery, as in the various arts, in immediate perceiving, in memory and dreams. Third we have our very familiar propositional, conceptual knowing, mediated by language. And fourth there's practical knowing: knowing how to do things, manifest in a whole array of skills and competencies - spiritual, psychic, aesthetic, intellectual, political, interpersonal,

emotional, technical, clinical, etc. All these modalities, interacting in mutual enhancement, are at the service of mediating divine polarities.

### *Enacting forms of inquiry*

Divine inquiry is a much wider notion about human relation with the divine than spiritual inquiry. Since the divine is a body-mind - an integration of the manifest, phenomenal and subtle, and the conscious animation I call the spiritual - divine inquiry for humans includes both manifest inquiry, and spiritual inquiry.

### *Manifest inquiry*

Manifest inquiry includes all the ways of inquiring, both theoretically and technologically, into the nature and potentials of the manifest realms, both phenomenal and subtle, and of the various entities and processes within them. *Phenomenal inquiry* includes both the social and physical sciences. The whole scientific enterprise of the modern age is an expression of divine inquiry in its phenomenal manifest mode. This is exactly how the founding fathers of modern science such as Kepler and Newton saw it; and how the more recent founding father of modern quantitative psychology, Fechner, saw it.

*Subtle inquiry* includes various forms of psychical and parapsychical research. Inquiry into the relation between the subtle sciences and the physical sciences is still largely underdeveloped. The notion of a subtle ethereal medium certainly played a prominent part in the speculations of the founders of modern science (Burt, 1925). Descartes, Boyle, Gilbert, Newton in the 17th century all take seriously the probable role of the ether as a basis of a variety of physical phenomena. But the ether concept finally disappeared from the conventional scientific view in Einstein's special theory of relativity in 1905. It is perhaps an error to suppose that self-sufficient enlightenment can be attained about the manifest realms entirely by physical science, to the virtual exclusion of subtle science and any kind of spiritual inquiry.

### *Spiritual inquiry*

Spiritual inquiry is about opening to and acting with spirit in its three modes of the situational, the immanent and the transcendent. For the past three thousand years it has been largely focused on the transcendent mode. This monopolar quest has been profoundly fruitful and has bequeathed us a luminous legacy. And yet it is today surely an error to suppose that any kind of ultimate spiritual enlightenment can be attained exclusively by inquiry into transcendent spirit, with virtually no manifest inquiry, and no inquiry into spirit as situational and immanent. Current professions of such

end-state enlightenment, based exclusively on limited kinds of dissociated spiritual practice, seem to be for purposes of setting up authoritarian spiritual fiefdoms, whose subjects are led to subscribe to unbalanced monopolar notions of the divine.

*Performative, collaborative action research*

Collaborative action research, in the form of co-operative inquiry, integrates a social science form of manifest inquiry with comprehensive tri-modal spiritual inquiry. I shall continue to call this integrated form 'spiritual inquiry' with the understanding that it involves the spirit that is: (1) the living dynamic ground of our embodiment; (2) the reality of our here and now relating to persons and our world; and (3) the transcendent consciousness embracing our everyday awareness.

This inquiry is performative, a form of action research, by each of us individually and groups of us co-operatively (Heron, 1996; Heron and Lahood, forthcoming). By participating in spirit in the fullness of our embodied situation, we co-create with it our realization of it. As we meet spirit, we shape it as it shapes our shaping of it. The spiritual authority for the validity of such co-shaping rests within each of us as critical subjectivity, and between us as critical intersubjectivity. The autonomous judgments of validity which we make in this way - the continuous acts of subtle discrimination - are co-created with our inner spiritual life and light, in the context of our current state of knowledge and of our resonance with, and our discussions with, each other. They are divine-human judgments, both luminously informative, and also contingent, maculate and relative to their context. They are both revelatory and fallible (Heron, 1998: 50-60).

*The polarity within engagement, enlivenment and enlightenment*

Within the vision here put forward, spiritual inquiry has a basic polarity. On the one hand, it is an inquiry about *opening to spirit* as a context of relationship, creativity for living, and meaning. And on the other hand, it is an inquiry into *acting with spirit* to transform relations with humans and other entities, and with our environments, in the phenomenal and subtle realms. This is the polarity, within the process of inquiry, between receptive opening up, and co-creative action. The inquiry is a consummation of human-divine flourishing, a celebration both of intimate communion, and of transformative going forth. I now consider this receptive-active polarity within each of the three aspects of the spiritual - the situational, the immanent and the transcendent. But first a reminder about how they are defined, and the choice of a name for the inquiry associated with each:

1. *The situational.* The presence that is *between* everyone and everything in our current situation, phenomenal and subtle. The living reality of our participative relation with what and with whom is here and now in this place. Spiritual inquiry in relation to the situational I call *engagement*.

2. *The immanent.* The spiritual life-potential embedded *within* creation, the indwelling source of manifest becoming, the drive of emergent development. Spiritual inquiry in relation to the immanent I call *enlivenment*.

3. *The transcendent.* Cosmic consciousness *beyond* and encompassing creation, and emanating its formative archetypes. Spiritual inquiry in relation to the transcendent I call *enlightenment*. I do not mean by the term ‘enlightenment’ any kind of final end-state of spiritual realization as in the old traditions, but an ongoing process calling for integration with both engagement and enlivenment, all embodied in our social processes.

If we now take into account the receptive-active polarity, we have three components – each dipolar – of spiritual inquiry, making six in all. Engagement includes opening to, and acting with, the presence-between in this situation. Enlivenment includes opening to, and acting with, spiritual life-potential. Enlightenment includes opening to, and acting with, transcendent consciousness. Both the *opening* and the *acting* inquire into human-divine co-creation. In opening to spirit we both immediately meet it, and also co-creatively shape it in terms of some kind of symbolic mediation. In acting, the distinct spirit of each of us, as one of the Many, is co-creatively performative with and within the spirit of the One.

These three forms of paired inquiry are mutually supportive and interactive. Engagement is the mediating middle ground between enlivenment and enlightenment and provides the forum for their complementary kinds of opening and co-creation. Thus engagement is the fullness of a collaborative embodied relation with being. I am here presenting another form of integral transformative inquiry (Leonard and Murphy, 1995). Its goal is collegiality, *sobornost*, individual diversity in free social unity: a consummation of the embodied realization of the Between, grounded in the depths of the immanent, and graced by the embrace of the transcendent.

#### *Parity, balance and centrality*

I do not believe there is any kind of prescribed, sequential path for the cultivation of the various states of engagement, enlivenment and enlightenment. Relationship, life and light have parity of value, as far as I can see. Each person will evolve their own idiosyncratic way of unfolding each and of them and integrating all of them. All I can commend is that over time, and this may mean over long periods of time, each of them is given parity of attention, and all of them are brought into integral balance. At the same time it is clear that engagement - the realm of human mediation and collaboration – is central, since this where we always already are.

In the practices that follow, I outline twelve basic components of spiritual inquiry, which in no way claim to be exhaustive. There are two for each of the six forms given above. As forms of inquiry each reader needs to modify them to make them suit his or her own approach in a meaningful way. They are certainly not prescriptions for other inquirers, just a contribution to the cartography of spiritual inquiry. They are summarized in Figure 3 below. The twelve are not mutually exclusive, but interweave and overlap, and can be combined in various ways.

### ***Enacting engagement with situational spirit***

The point here is that we enact spirit as the reality of the *between*, that is, of the relation between persons, between persons and other entities of all kinds, and between persons and their physical and subtle environment - in the situation where we are now. On any view of divine-human becoming which actively seeks a balanced integration of the Many and the One, the central enactive locus of spirit is situational and collegial. It is in the here and now experiential occasion where some of the Many - humans and other entities - and the One co-enact free diversity in unity. So central spiritual inquiry is relational: *opening to*, and *acting with*, the divine spirit that connects persons and other entities in the immediate locality of the here and now.

### ***Open to the presence-between in this situation***

Here are some receptive inquiries for opening to the reality that connects. The first of these includes the second. 'Only connect' said the novelist E.M.Forster.

*Feeling presence here and now.* This is the root practice of participatory awareness. It is very simple. It means opening to our innate capacity for feeling the presence of places, people and other entities and processes. Through this capacity we directly sense our interconnectedness with whom and with what is in our world, and in other interrelated realms. We feel communion, resonance, attunement, the reality of the go-between spirit in the mutuality of relationship. To share presence is to engage with Shekinah, the local divinity of our process in this time and place. *Shekinah* in Hebrew means 'residence', 'dwelling'. In Jewish tradition it is the name for the divine presence as it makes itself known in the material world, 'overshadowing', 'hovering', 'indwelling'. It is also associated with the feminine aspect of the divine, concerned with interpersonal relationships. In the mystical system of the Kabbalah, *Shekinah* is linked with the tenth Sefirah of Malkhut and the manifestation of the divine kingdom on earth. Here *Shekinah* refers to the spiritual reality that is *between* persons, and *between* persons and their worlds. It is the reality of the relation *between*.

*Seamless perceiving.* Feeling presence includes the simplicity of participatory awareness, opening to the *processes* of perceiving and sensing, aware that there is no gap between seer, seeing and seen;

between hearer, hearing and heard; between toucher, touching and touched; between us, the world we image in any sensory, and extrasensory, mode and the imaging process; between us, our subjective states and sensations, our body, our percepts, and our world. To perceive a world is to feel, to participate in, an ongoing interfusion of subject and object through sensory and extrasensory imagery, an interfusion which is capable of development and extension and which reveals the *distinctness* of subject and object within their *interactive communion*.

The business of feeling presence and seamless perceiving is not something to be constructed and manufactured. It is a matter of uncovering and noticing what is already going on as an innate condition of our being-in-a-world. We open fully and equally to inner and outer experiences, while letting go of any tight conceptual grip upon them, and at the same time abandoning any compulsive emotional grasp of them. Then we enjoy their seamless marriage within the embrace of being.

Feeling presence and seamless perceiving constitute the process of participatory engagement with what and with whom is here and now. This simple and fundamental inquiry can be practised individually any place, any time, in relation with nature and its diverse entities, with human artefacts, with other people, and with subtle realms and subtle entities. It becomes a shared transformative inquiry when it is practised collaboratively by all those in a group. Here are a few examples:

1. We share awarably our mutual presence as the ground of a conversation, or any other social enterprise at work, at college, at home or at play. This inquiry involves everyone in the skill of double-plane functioning: engaging in the social activity while at the same time dropping down into the “ocean of shared feeling...where we become one with one another” (Alexander, 1979: 294).
2. Through mutual presencing in a group, we inquire into the ocean of shared feeling as such. We sit close and comfortable, relax physically and mentally, and simply feel our presence with each other and any other beings involved in our communion. Then we become aware of the presence-between-us, a band of golden silence, the Shekinah of our gathering. Our hands may be linked, or not; our eyes may be closed, or open scanning each other’s eyes.
3. Two of us engage in silent sustained mutual gazing. In this radical one-to-one inquiry, we can become immersed in our dual-unity, the living spacious reality of the sacred Between savouring the distinctness of each within the unity of our dyad. This mode of access to embodied divinity is rich in ambrosia. It is the universal form of *satsang*: peer to peer transmission of divine presence. The skill required is to let go of emotional tension and to be fully present to each other as whole beings, while deepening this mutual presence into living beatitude - the enjoyment of divine favour.

*Act with the presence-between in this situation*

This active spiritual inquiry is for partners, or any face-to-face group, who meet with the shared intention of transforming their interactions with each other and their world, in any of its manifold aspects, to enhance diversity in free unity, interconnected flourishing.

*Participatory decision-making* integrates autonomy, co-operation and hierarchy. In this inquiry, each person moves between and integrates these three positions, and moves between three phases. There is an autonomous phase: each person states clearly their individual, idiosyncratic preference, in relation to the matter being discussed. Next a hierarchical phase: people start to think integrally on behalf of the whole group, and one or more participants state integral proposals that seek to honour diversity-in-unity, and that resonate strongly with the group. Then there is a co-operative phase of negotiating an agreed decision, after debating, selecting and refining the most resonant integral proposal.

Fundamentally, a co-operative attitude of mutual regard and respect underlies all three phases. They are each exercised, and the movement between them is taken, in attunement with the reality of the go-between spirit of the occasion. Situational spirit is a presence which empowers collegiality - the creative interaction of autonomy, hierarchy and co-operation in human decision-making and action. This is a profound practice: exhilarating, liberating, and challenging participants with the intermittent discomforts of ego-burning. For a related approach to peer group decision-making that has a spiritual focus see *PeerSpirit Circling* (Baldwin and Linnea, 2000).

*Life-style transformation.* Participatory decision-making, above, is about the *process* of decision-making. Life-style transformation, in this inquiry practice, brings about the *products* of decision-making, fulfilling in co-operative action inquiry its intended outcomes. It involves transformative deeds covering a wide range of social and environmental outcomes; or some kind of aesthetic, functional or technological product serving such outcomes; or some kind of information gathering or training furthering such outcomes. The collaborative action inquirers are co-creators with divine becoming of planetary transformation, manifest in terms of social justice and human rights, personal and interpersonal development, aesthetic creation and celebration, economic sustainability, ecological balance and cosmic attunement - at home, at work, in the community, and regionally, nationally, internationally and in relation to the wider cosmos. We start here, in this place where we are, with these immediate partners, friends, family, colleagues and associates - and other sentient beings around us. For a related account of human-divine co-creativity see the worldview of creation spirituality at [www.creationspirituality.com](http://www.creationspirituality.com).

God as Creator is incarnate as self-creating universe, including self-creating creatures within that universe, such as, for instance, ourselves as human beings. Creativity itself is what is evolving in the cosmos, and we are at the growing edge...We are in a position to realize ourselves as incarnate divine creativity. (Beatrice Bruteau, 1997).

In co-creation we bring forth two strands - our spiritual essence and our scientific and social capacities - to participate in the creation. When these strands blend, a new human is born; a universal human, a co-creator, a unique and personal expression of the divine. (Hubbard, 1998).

*Life-style transformation* is closely related to *Life-style choices* (see below). For full details of these and other sorts of practice applied within a two-person relationship see Langton and Heron (2003).

### ***Enacting enlivenment with immanent spirit***

Enlivenment inquiries are about opening to, and co-creatively acting with, the depths within, the spiritual as indwelling potential, the divine ground of our human motivation – our will to live both as a distinct individual and as a universal participant. We open to our intrinsic dynamic rooting in spiritual life-impulse, the wellspring of our energies and capacities, in relation with which we co-create our becoming. Enlivenment is responsiveness to the ground of our incarnate being, the embedded entelechy of all our possibilities.

A fundamental aspect of enlivenment is about opening to and expressing the spiritual potential within the primary energies of our bodily life, that is, within the basic life impulses to breathe, move, sleep, rest, eat, drink, perceive, speak, relate, be sexual. These are all gateways to a spiritually grounded, fully embodied, distinctive and inclusive way of living-in-connectedness. That the vital energies of the body can evoke the living spirit in which they are grounded, and whence they issue forth, is demonstrated in distinctive ways in each of the following: the holotropic breathwork of Stan Grof (1988) and the wide range of subtle and spiritual states it delivers; the paratheatrical research of Antero Alli (2003) with its comprehensive phenomenology of physical behaviours for cultivating ‘resonance with vertical sources’; charismatic education and training (Heron, 1999) in the context of a dipolar account of spirit (Heron, 1998); aspects of the integral transformative practice of Leonard and Murphy (1995); the interactive somatic inquiries proposed by Marina Romero and Ramon Albareda (Ferrer, 2003) in their work on a fully embodied and vitalized spiritual life; the work of Michael Washburn (2003) asserting spiritual as well as instinctual energy in the Dynamic Ground of the human being, which can be awakened as an enlivening and guiding force within our bodies; Jorge Ferrer’s (2006) considered affirmation of embodied spirituality.

*Open to spiritual life-potential*

*Wellspring evocation.* Find a quiet time and place, sit relaxed with spine erect, feel and image the inner ground in which your immediate current state of being is rooted; inwardly co-enact with spirit, and have a felt sense of, the wellspring, the underlying source of your everyday mental-emotional-motivational life. Speak out loud, or silently within, such declarations as "I open to you, divine wellspring of my lived experience" or "I open to the divine animation that is the root of my motivation". Use any form of words, any metaphor, that opens you up to feel the spacious, generous mystery of indwelling potential.

*Charismatic opening.* Move on the inclination deep within to open your incarnate being - your whole embodied attitude of soul - through breath, gesture, posture, facial expression to the totality of what there is, to the whole presence of Being, manifest here and now in this situation. Add movements, sounds, and declarations that well up from the *hara*, the life-centre in the belly, to affirm your divine gesture. Allow the primary energies of bodily life to unfurl their divinizing power, the indwelling empowering presence of divine animation. This can be experienced as an all-consuming, all-sustaining, all-creating everywhere active experiential fire. This kind of opening can lead over into sustained expressive action as in *primary theatre* below.

*Act with spiritual life-potential*

*Life-style choices.* Open up to the liberated place within your embodied being where you can be co-creative with immanent spirit, your animating life-potential, in making life-style choices. You open to the inner spiritual and subtle womb, in the belly of your being, where the generative potency of immanent spirit, divine life, dwells. This womb is the locus of your potential, the source and seedbed of options and possibilities. What emerges from it, when you intend to be co-creative with it, are periodic impulses, prompts, innovations, proactions, responses and reminders, about your personal action, development and relationships within the great web of interbeing.

This active participation in indwelling spiritual entelechy, a sacred soil at the root of embodiment, may generate specific life-style impulses about a feel for empowering rhythms and patterns of behaviour in time and space; and about a sense of fitting and appropriate action within the immediate situation - the content and timing of specific actions relating to personal and shared life-style, social change, spiritual practice and unfoldment, artistic creation, learning and inquiry, the process of inner regression and emotional healing. These life-style impulses arising within are maculate, contingent, relative both to the limiting situations within which they occur and to your shaping and selective

framing of them. To be co-creative with this indwelling animation is to shape and frame it as much as it enacts you.

Compare the work of McMahon and Campbell (1991), following on from the work of Gendlin (1981). They develop Gendlin's experiential focusing in terms of a bio-spiritual approach, which emphasizes "an experience of grace in the body". They relate letting go into the body-feeling about an issue, the "felt shift", to a movement of the indwelling life-giving presence and power of God. Compare also the Japanese tradition of the *hara* and the belly. See Karlfried Graf Von Durckheim (1962).

*Primary theatre and lean ritual.* These inquiries are for sharing with a partner or an ongoing spiritual inquiry group. They build on *charismatic opening* above. In *primary theatre* a person explores, reveals and celebrates, in nonverbal and verbal ways, their original relation with creation. It is based on the view that each human being can properly assert:

1. I have my own original relation with being, with what there is.
2. Revelation is now, in my immediate present experience of what there is at this time and place.
3. Spiritual authority is within me.
4. I can use posture, gesture, movement, sound and breath – and all the primary energies of my embodiment - as an original language for exploring and expressing my participation in what there is.
5. I can use verbal metaphors to elaborate that expressive language.
6. My spiritual enlivenment is an ongoing process, starting now as I open myself to, and actively express, my intrinsic connectedness with what there is.
7. I am included within, and am at the crest of, the living process of divine becoming
8. This process is greatly enhanced if I resonate with other persons similarly and simultaneously enlivened.

In a small group each person is open idiosyncratically to respond - in resonance with each other - with movement, speech, and sound (vocal and/or with a variety of musical instruments) to the spontaneous promptings of their immanent, indwelling spiritual energy. Or each person can taken equal time for a solo turn, with the supportive attention of the rest of the group.

A *lean ritual* is free of any explicit theology, and uses the primal meaning of basic words and gestures. Thus the group stand in a circle with arms reaching upward and say 'Above', then kneel to touch the ground and say 'Below', then cross their hands over the heart and say 'Within', finally reach out to take the hands of those on either side and say 'Between'. Innumerable versions of a lean ritual

can be designed. Lean ritual generates a subtle sense of shared sacred space. For more on primary theatre and lean ritual see [www.human-inquiry.com/practices.htm](http://www.human-inquiry.com/practices.htm) and *Helping the Client: A Creative, Practical Guide* (Heron, 2001:112-115).

*Charismatic action inquiry* builds on the principles of primary theatre. It is an inquiry into the cultivation of personal power and presence in interaction with other persons. It is relevant for living generally, and in particular for group facilitators and educators - who need to acquire distress-free authority, and to emanate a quality which liberates inner empowerment in those who seek to learn within its ambience. It is a social skills counterpart to Aikido training. Unlike Aikido, which is a martial art busy with the charismatic toppling of one's opponent, charismatic competence is about being empowered from within the depth's of one's embodiment to be actively present for and with other people in a life-enhancing way.

Charismatic action inquiry works with all the psychophysical modes involved in social interaction: posture, gesture, facial expression, movement, relative position, voice, speech, eye-contact, touch. Charisma is to do with conscious command of all these modes, in dynamic engagement with another person, or with a group of people. It is grounded in a felt sense, experientially from within, of one's total psychophysical presence in space, simultaneously in every direction and in every mode; an integral felt sense that wells up from the *hara*, the life-centre in the belly. This felt sense infuses spatial orientation and relative position, posture, gesture and movement, the tone and timing of voice, the diction, meaning and social intent of speech. It also infuses surrounding social space and is the ground of empathic resonance with other persons who are present. For a full, detailed account of charismatic action inquiry exercises, see Chapter 9, *Living in Two Worlds* (Heron, 2006a: 109-125), and Chapter 12, *The Complete Facilitator's Handbook* (Heron, 1999: 215-248).

### ***Enacting enlightenment with transcendent spirit***

Inquiry here is about co-enacting with spirit opening to, and manifesting in action, the spiritual as transcendent, as overarching divine consciousness, informing the manifest and beyond it. We co-enact the emanation of our local consciousness from this encompassing and universal awareness.

### ***Open to transcendent consciousness***

The two inquiries below co-enact with spirit versions of the great reversal, turning about in the deepest seat of the ordinary mind to open to its continuity with universal awareness.

*The lens of attention.* Human attention is at the core of everyday awareness: we attend to this and we attend to that. It is the very focus of our effective in-the-world consciousness. Yet when we attend to this attentive capacity, when we rest our focus on itself, it becomes a lens which refracts a vast expanse of transpersonal awareness, a soaring outreach of universal intelligence of which our own attention to daily life is the local manifest. Such vigilant awareness of its own intrinsic stillness opens to the cosmic ocean of consciousness. We can participate in this consciousness in its several aspects: as the sustaining, managerial intelligence of the universe; as the Logos, creative divine speech which utters the universe; as indeterminate ineffability, beyond all name and form. Or we open to it as the consort embracing Shekinah, the presence of our process in this place, and then we are aware of its intimate union with the here and now realm of situational spirit.

*Transcendental subjectivity.* Another version of the great reversal is via our experience of 'I', that subjective unity of our consciousness on which all coherence and meaning of inner and outer experience depend. The 'I' transcends any account it gives of itself, since it is the ever-present pre-condition of every account. When we attend to the 'I', open to the 'I', beyond any determinate description of itself, we open to its emanation from, its consubstantiality with, the transcendent I AM, that divine consciousness that embraces whatever there is. This is one-One consubstantiality: since the 'I' can always give an appropriate developing account of itself, it is a distinct one of the Many; since it always absolutely transcends this account, it is contained in the One. This consubstantiality dwells in the spiritual heart. This too closes the circle and takes us back to the spiritual heart in the first of the twelve inquiries, feeling presence here and now.

*Act with transcendent consciousness*

The next two inquiries relate to the spiritual as transcendent Logos, the divine speech which declares the universe.

*Refraction of archetypal powers and presences.* One form of dynamic, active inquiry into such consciousness is to refract the original utterance of creation which it emanates, to echo the cosmos-creating archetypes of the divine word. We invoke, commune with, and actively radiate with, elevated presences (hyper persons) in subtle dimensions, presences who mediate, in a numinous, luminous and sounding way, divine powers - the archetypal formative principles of creation. Within this communion, and through our ritual acts and declarations, we refract the powers within our own phenomenal context, giving them additional local boost or impact. We are here participating actively in the realm of Plato's forms; the powers of Philo; the interpenetrating living intelligences of Plotinus's *nous*; the *mundus imaginalis*, the *alam al-withal* of the Sufis; divine imaginings in the writings of Douglas Fawcett; angel communion in the Christian tradition. For a more detailed account

of some provisional working hypotheses involved in this sort of inquiry, see the section on *Subtle activism* below. For a full account of an ongoing inquiry which combines elements of inquiry drawn from the modalities of engagement, enlivenment and enlightenment see Heron and Lahood (2008).

*Illuminated language.* In this inquiry, through the spoken and the written word we manifest ostensive definition that transcends itself. We use language as a vehicle for pointing to that which both originates it and goes beyond it. We speak and write of that which is boundless beyond space, light beyond differentiated light, uncaused, uncreated, unborn, unconditioned, ineffable, beyond all name and form, free of all determination – and...a creative source of all determinate form and process. We celebrate through the performative word the self-transcending creativity of the original Word. Here is a table summarizing the framework of the twelve inquiry practices described above.

	<b>Immanent life</b>	<b>Situational presence</b>	<b>Transcendent consciousness</b>
Opening	Wellspring evocation	Feeling presence	Lens of attention
	Charismatic opening	Seamless perceiving	Transcendental subjectivity
Acting	Life-style choices	Participatory decision- making	Refracting powers & presences
	Primary theatre & lean ritual	Life-style transformation	Illuminated language
	<b><i>Enlivenment</i></b>	<b><i>Engagement</i></b>	<b><i>Enlightenment</i></b>

Figure 3: the twelve inquiry practices

*Subtle activism and interior communion*

This is my current perspective on what, among other things, may be going on in our long-term inquiry group (Heron and Lahood, forthcoming), when there is an interaction between engagement, enlivenment and enlightenment. It relates to my experiences and the reports of others within our meetings. I set it out in nine uninhibited and very provisional working hypotheses. It is just one belief-system, among several that may co-exist in our group.

1. We are in one vast unified field of spirit in manifestation: spirit embracing consciousness and life, manifestation embracing subtle realms and physical worlds.

2. Each of us is a local eddy of manifest spirit within this greater field, explicitly participating in a given physical locality within it, and tacitly participating in the whole multidimensional field.
3. Each of us is explicitly embodied in a physical body and tacitly embodied in a subtle body. The physical body realizes mortal life and consciousness. The subtle body has the latent capacity for non-mortal life and consciousness.
4. When we awaken to our subtle embodiment and make it explicit within our physical embodiment, our non-mortal life and consciousness infuses and transforms our mortal life and consciousness.
5. We effect this awakening by posture, gesture, movement, rhythm and sound, which both *express* the idiosyncratic promptings of our immanent spiritual life, the animating ground of our double embodiment; and *open up* to immediate theophany - the divine embrace of spirit manifesting here and now in this place.
6. When we effect this awakening together in the same place, combining autonomous individual expression with mutual resonance, we become a potent ring of awakened doubly incarnate beings, and thus open to a space between our physical world and the subtle realms. The space between the worlds is a sacred matrix, the here and now reality of the divine embrace of both realms. We have called it variously Shekinah, and the band of golden silence.
7. When this sacred matrix is opened up by our dynamic toning and gestures, it calls forth participation from presences in subtle realms who interact with us and together with us engage in extraordinary forms of subtle activism. The presences, attuned to archetypal energies, can pour these into our shared and co-energized space, with three principal effects *co-created* with us: (1) a transformation of the psychosomatic field of each of us; (2) a transformative impact upon the psychosomatic field of the human race, through instant morphic resonance between us and the rest of embodied humanity through specific patterns of genetic, psychological, cultural, historic and subtle affinity; and (3) an empowering of each of us in the furtherance of our social activism out there in this world.
8. After the dynamic phase of subtle activism, we have a potent phase of stillness, standing or being seated within the band of golden silence, the Shekinah matrix. In this ecstatic communion, we seem to open to the reality between us, to the divinity that is an ever-present flame of unity here and now where we are. This silent communion is complementary to the subtle activism and makes a very fundamental contribution indeed to the three kinds of effect described above.

9. It is possible that this complementary combination of subtle activism and interior communion, through its threefold effects, sows the seeds for the future unfolding of doubly incarnate cultures, the birth of civilizations which are both autonomously creative in the human realm, cultivate explicit co-creation between independent humans and peer presences in the subtle realms, and are open to the ever-present reality of the between.

### ***Presuppositions of spiritual inquiry***

*Spiritual education.* Spiritual inquiry presupposes that the inquirer: has learned a mother tongue, and has been socialized and educated within a culture; has been spiritually educated, that is, has acquired a working knowledge of conceptual distinctions to do with human spirituality, through some acquaintance with texts, teachers, traditions and schools, ancient and modern; has been spiritually trained, that is, has become proficient in some kind of spiritual practice; knows how to engage in spiritual practice, both alone and with others, as a mode of inquiry. Spiritual education and training may be acquired in some spiritual school, ancient or modern, or may be self-taught from the literature of some school. Spiritual training within a school is at best a precursor to, and is not the same as, spiritual inquiry. Spiritual inquiry is an advanced form of spiritual practice which requires its own preparation and is outside the aegis of any tradition. See *Sacred Science* (Heron, 1998: 46-49). In the final analysis, it seems to me that knowing how to make spiritual distinctions, knowing how to engage in spiritual practice, and knowing how to do spiritual inquiry are all part of the same process.

*Authority within.* Spiritual inquiry presupposes that each inquirer has an internal monitor, a divine ground within, which is an autonomous touchstone for making valid spiritual distinctions. The beginner may project this inner authority outward for a period and invest it in some external spiritual authority to acquire a training in some type of spiritual practice. But spiritual inquiry as such presupposes that such projection is withdrawn, and that all texts, teachers, schools and traditions of belief and practice, become valuable secondary resources for the inquiry process. The primary resource is a creative interpretation, within the limits of one's current state and context, of the promptings of divine becoming - the *deus implicitus*, the divine roots of human aspiration, spirit-in-action - deep within. Spiritual inquiry, with this primary resource, is a radical and fundamental form of spiritual practice. It involves the co-creation of a spiritual path by the discriminating inquirer-in-context and the *deus implicitus* (Heron, 1998, Chapter 3).

*Human-divine enaction.* The spiritual inquiry process presupposes enaction, that is, the integration of ideational construction and direct encounter with the divine. Without ideational distinctions about divine reality and human spirituality, we cannot guide and conduct the inquiry process. Without unmediated touch with divine reality, in some respect or other, our constructions are unwarranted. Spiritual inquiry makes subtle distinctions in order to meet the divine that is. So our enactions involve

mediated-immediacy, the interfused relation of human cognitions and divine presence. We both interpret divine reality and at the same time commune with it. The fruits of spiritual inquiry are human-divine co-creations.

*Fallibility and revelation.* Spiritual inquiry is both fallible and revelatory in varying degrees. It is highly fallible when human mediation distorts divine immediacy. It is highly revelatory when human mediation clarifies its communion with divine immediacy, and when divine immediacy enhances human mediation.

*Relative-universal truth.* Spiritual inquiry presupposes a relative-universal view of truth. In so far as our spiritual cognitions are mediated, their claims to truth are relative to the historical, cultural and immediate social and personal context within which that mediation is generated. In so far as we have adopted procedures to clarify our mediations and ground them in co-creation with divine immediacy, our cognitions can lay a modest claim to have a bearing on what is universal. But what is universal is Many-One, diversity in free unity, so what is universal is not only a unity but also a diversity of enacted attributes.

*Divine becoming.* Spiritual inquiry presupposes a divine reality which is greater than, and subsumes, the inquiry process, and which is the totality of what there is in every respect, including divine becoming. And the inquiry process, as human-divine co-creation, is itself a part of, a participant in, this divine becoming.

*Innovation and diversity.* Spiritual inquiry presupposes that it is intrinsically innovative. It necessarily transcends any account it gives itself of its predetermined limits as to what and how and when it can know divine reality. It can progressively recreate its own enactments about its divine scope. It is free, self-caused, divinely intelligent activity, and is at the leading edge of divine becoming among the Many. Since its account of the divine is a free co-creation of the inquirer in communion with the divine - a communion between one of the Many becoming and the One - the diversity in these accounts is likely to be as significant as the unity and universality.

*Determinate and indeterminate.* Spiritual inquiry presupposes within divine reality the interplay of the determinate and the indeterminate, the conservative and the innovative. Without determinate, constant features of divine reality, there is no intelligible context for the emergence of the spiritually innovative, which will, of course, progressively transform its conservative context. But any account an inquiry gives of these (and any other) polar parameters - that they are, and what they are - is itself an enaction, open to evaluation in terms of its fallible/revelatory status.

*Dialogue.* Hence spiritual inquiry presupposes a requirement of dialogue. It can only manifest in the limited and finite enactions of individuals and groups, and needs the mutual correction and enrichment of diverse overlapping perspectives. Particularly important here is gender dialogue.

*Extended epistemology and the primacy of the practical.* Spiritual inquiry also presupposes a requirement of an extended epistemology - holistic cognition. It needs the totality of ways of knowing to acquaint it with the fullness of divine reality. So it involves knowing-how, knowing-that, knowing-as and knowing-with - practical, conceptual, imaginal and affective ways of knowing (Heron, 1992, 1996). Practical knowledge, knowing how to act in human-divine co-creation, is the creative consummation of these ways of knowing.

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