GOING WALKABOUT THROUGH THE SUBURBS

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SYNOPSIS

This work explores human consciousness, using a framework of the Structure of Feelings and Experience developed from the work of Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith. It then examines aspects of the consciousness of the Mentally Ill, the Intellectually Disabled, Addicted and Indigenous people, with three aims:

(1) To identify a model of consciousness which reflects the major indicators arising from the structure of feelings and experience, drawn from Williams’ and Smith’s work analysing human culture and society; and those arising from consideration of the four subject groups, representing the plurality of human consciousness.

(2) To explore some of the lessons for mainstream citizens, arising from alternative aspects of consciousness, both positive and negative, which these groups exhibit. Thus suggesting possible alternative perspectives on feeling and experiencing more integrated ways of being, as contrasted to aspects of the modern condition.

(3) To suggest ways the model of consciousness can be used to empower those with mental illness, or intellectual disability, by acknowledging and strengthening their opportunities to take responsibility for their lives. By engaging them more in active roles in the planning and delivery of their health, rehabilitation and community services. And to illustrate some examples of practical applications of person-valuing and spirit-engaging healing and empowering processes, used in groups in Australia and overseas, which point to ways of improving health and rehabilitation policy and practice in Australia.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to William Lloyd and Tom Elenor

The work has resulted from many years of working and living with the groups of people it covers. The ideas expressed may not be shared by some of these individuals, but their contributions have been important and valued, in shaping a sense of the map for further walkabouts. I thank them all and maintain connection, even if separated by the illusion of time and distance.

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Spirit of Place: Blue Mountains North Katoomba Valley Dreaming, Capertee Valley Dreaming

While all these people have been contributors to the content and spirit of this work, only one person has ultimately made the process possible. My partner Margaret Bailitis, without whose forgiving and accepting, caring and providing support in trying circumstances, it would not have reached this stage, with strong hopes of going further walkabout. Thanks darling.
ALL THAT WE ARE

Walt Whitman

Leaves of Grass 1899

All that we are - the solid and liquid we are, we have advanced to,
We have advanced from what was our own cohesion and our own formation
We advance to just as much more, and just as much more.
Time suffices, and the laws suffice, -

Send any or all, - no matter what,
We have places for any and all - good places
We receive them, we have made preparation,
We have not only made preparation for a few developed persons
We have made preparation for undeveloped persons also

We effuse spirituality and immortality
We put a second brain to the brain,
We put second eyes to the eyes and second ears to the ears,
Then the drudge in the kitchen - then the laborer in his stained clothes - then the
Black person, criminals, barbarians - are no more inferior to the rest,
The frivolous and the blunderer are not to be laughed at as before,
The cheat, the crazy enthusiast, the unsuccessful man,
Come under the same laws as any. -

(with thanks to Prof. P. Marudanayagam, English Faculty, Pondicherry University, India)
In establishing our basic attitude toward the world around us, we might simply reflect on the awakening of consciousness in our earliest years. As soon as we awaken to consciousness, the universe comes to us, while we go out to the universe. This intimate presence of the universe to itself in each being is the deep excitement of existence... The word ‘universe’, ‘universa’ in Latin, indicates the turning of the grand diversity of things back towards their unit. I mention this tendency here because the purpose of this book on insects is simply to indicate the intimate presence that exists between ourselves and the insects. The immediate corollary is that we and the insects depend on each other in some profound manner. This was the primordial insight of the Taoists of ancient China: the movement of the Tao is ‘to turn’. After differentiating, all things turn back to that primordial unity where each is fulfilled in the others. To go far is to come near. Sch is the basic law of existence. We are at the moment of turning.

( Joanne Lauck, *The Voice of the Infinite in the Small*)
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Chapter One
INTRODUCTION

1. Foreword

Not long after the ravages of the Second World War (1939–45) historian Arnold Toynbee was thinking about human history. He expressed what I believe is true for all of us:

My view of history is itself a tiny piece of history; ... If my individual view of history is to be made at all illuminating, or indeed intelligible, it must be presented in its origin, growth, and social and personal setting. There are many angles of vision from which human minds peer at the universe. (1)

The ‘angle of vision’ for this work is that of some of ‘the others’, those human beings who are not identified in the mainstream of western society, at least in the way humanity currently organises itself in the new millennium:

1. The Mentally Ill and the Intellectually Disabled, who are part of the publicly unacceptable face of society now, when image and form seem to be all, and content a secondary matter.

2. Indigenous peoples, who are increasingly neglected and exploited, their lands being overtaken by the rapacious search for profits in natural resources. Yet they maintain, in both urban and outback environments, a practical connection with the numinous, which can inform all of humanity.

3. Addicts, those individuals who have given in to the desire to seek oblivion, away from ‘normal life’, through insatiable pursuit of escape behaviours, or ‘fixes’. These allegedly ‘help’ them to achieve relief from the discomfort of living in that ‘normal’ world, but in fact they only receive temporary relief from their dis-ease with life.
Going Walkabout through the Suburbs

Increasingly this way of being is taking over the lives of many ordinary people, so much so that it has become an allegory of much of modern life, in my view. People feel trapped in lives they don’t enjoy, serving the treadmill of earning money to survive, or searching hopelessly for work that no longer exists, in a world they find de-spirited and meaningless.

Although we all share aspects of these universal human perspectives, most people are uncomfortable with facing them. Toynbee knew this. He observed, just after the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, witnessing the ‘outbreak of a third Western technological revolution’:

Technology is, of course, only a Greek name for a bag of tools; and we have to ask ourselves: What are the tools that count in this competition in the use of tools as means to power? ... [A]ll tools are not of the material kind; there are spiritual tools as well, and these are the most potent man has made. (2)

This thesis believes humanity is missing the use of many of its ‘bag of tools’, which exercise spiritual muscles made to actively value our full lives, and to embrace difference among human beings. So much is this process missing from our daily lives that our collective soul is sick and in need of repair. I use the term to ‘go walkabout’ as a way to commune with the greater soul of the universe, in the Australian Aboriginal sense of choosing to reconnect with the transcendent. I believe that this faculty of human awareness is available to all people in several dimensions. And it seems to me that many people would benefit from going walkabout.

The work proposes that humanity in late capitalism can restore its communion of souls and community of ‘lifeworld’ (Lebenswelt) by valuing universal aspects of the higher good: in earth’s spirit of place; in sharing our consciousness of the numinous; and in our practical expression of mercy and compassion for one another, in holding to the common good. I claim that the way humanity chooses to run the world of politics, economics, the market
and our responsibilities for the earth and one another, can be integrated with these values.

Within the four groups of ‘others’ covered in this work—the mentally ill, the addicted, the indigenous and the intellectually disabled—there are many ‘teachers’ for ‘normal’ people, if we bother to listen. They can show alternative and/or exaggerated perspectives to all people, which can inform our understanding of ourselves. The way we feel and experience the same variations between love, fear, anxiety and joy, may be a clue to how better to manage our world, since my underlying belief in this work is that we are all individuals living in a shared society. And if we are to restore some value to human life, respecting each person’s right to exist with dignity and safety, health and happiness, we need to re-learn ways of thinking and feeling, so that this late capitalist world can remember to value our humanness, as the core part of ‘progress’.

Understanding that life is a shared experience, more than a ruthless competition of winners and losers, will enable people to genuinely know each in the other’s terms. This could lead to sharing more of our inner lives, as much as material life concerns.

If the old individualism artificially isolated the ‘bare human being’, there is equal danger in certain trends in the new sociology, which isolate the group, the society or the culture as an absolute point of reference… If man(kind) is essentially a learning, creating and communicating being, the only social organisation adequate to (our) nature is a participating democracy, in which all of us, as unique individuals, learn, communicate and control. Any lesser, restrictive system is simply wasteful of our true resources; in wasting individuals, by shutting them out from effective participation, it is damaging our true common process. (3)

One way to do this is through story. Other ways include dance, art, music, theatre and expressive forms of creative release. Such narrative forms can peacefully gather the rational and irrational, the known and unknown, the truth and the lies, the facts and the mysteries, in ways which can reconstruct information to show up new views of truth. This is a great
part of the gift of the four groups discussed here, when following them on the walkabout trail. They don’t obey the rules and they don’t remember their table manners, but they make a bloody good story.

Sources and original contribution

The work is based on Raymond Williams’ and Bernard Smith’s explorations of culture, society, art and ideas, as well as on my own experience with the four groups studied. It draws new interpretations of the possibilities for establishing a Structure of Feelings and Experience, from the combined perspectives of these two authors, and then extrapolates to incorporate other perspectives. The consciousness of the mentally ill, the intellectually disabled, the addicted and indigenous are all examined, and threads drawn from each, using the work of other authors and my own experience living and working with these people. The aim is to develop a guide to better on-the-ground practices of rehabilitation.

Finally, a model of human consciousness is suggested, developed from my own views, as a framework of indicators for balancing feelings and experience—which I equate with human awareness. This is proposed as the basis for attempting to achieve more engagement by system authorities with the mentally ill and intellectually disabled, in contributing to the design and delivery of the policies and programs that effectively create their lifeworld. The model proposed is not claimed to be comprehensive, just as good a place as any to start. The proposed follow-on Action Research Life Journalling project will ascertain from the two groups themselves what their lived experience has to say specifically.

In critically traversing the modernism project on this walkabout, I am not denying the concept of progress. In my view, progress comes from addressing our inner lives, as much as the outer world of the material, organisational, and representative processes. But, like Marshall Berman, I am for continuing with the project of modernism, with the usual critical views on its overall workings: ‘If everything must go, then let it go: modern people have the power to create a better world than the world they have lost.’ (4)
As Bernard Smith likes to say, ‘in the mix’ of this process of change, one of the echoes I hear returning to join the conversation of life, is the notion of ‘working the culture’ of soul, as an applied aspect of human life. Not religion, not ideology. Shared human spirit, which informs daily decisions about values, priorities and ‘bottom line’ issues, such as the common good before individual self-interest. And the need for more humility and less ego in the workings of humankind. These I hope will emerge as salient features of the new modernism, which replaces today’s already old version with yesterday’s echoes of spirit. Echo-logy in action.

A note on working conditions and references

This work came from more than two years research, with an effective period of ten months production, during a voluntary working visit to South India from March to December 2002. The work emerged between working and learning on self development with the Intellectually Disabled, visits to Bangalore for learning about empowerment and recovery with the Mentally Ill, sustainable environmental and cultural development with Tamil villagers plus cultural tourism and festival celebration nurturing, and weekly efforts to address chronic alcoholism problems in the villages.

It was eventually written in a cramped cubicle in an internet shop in the city of Pondicherry, as my keet hut had no access for computing. There was no access to library facilities, reference material or sources, other than books I brought with me, which were then donated to the mental health centre I worked for (so they might better qualify for accreditation to train mental health workers).

2. The thesis—a map for the walkabout

2.1 The research questions

1. Is it possible to develop a general framework of shared human consciousness among
people in western society, using the work of cultural theorists writing about culture, society, art and ideas?

2. Can there be added perspectives incorporated into this model of consciousness, drawn from the lived feelings and experiences of the mentally ill, the intellectually disabled, the addicted and indigenous people, as representatives of four groups of ‘other’ consciousness?

3. Can a set of criteria based on valuing the common good be used to assess modernism’s readiness to include such a model of consciousness in its decision making processes, in order that the needs of the disadvantaged might be better met?

4. Using this model of consciousness as a guide, can the mentally ill and intellectually disabled be assisted to engage more in designing and managing their own rehabilitation, health and community services, through ‘the system’?

2.2 Why are these issues problems?

The perspective of this work is that domination of health, rehabilitation and community services by economically rationalist ideals and practices, prevents them from effectively serving the needs of citizens. There is a need to re-establish indicators of human needs and aspirations, which reflect people’s feelings and experiences. Ultimately, that seems to me to be the role of services claimed to be answering people’s health and quality of life needs. The particular vulnerabilities of the mentally ill and intellectually disabled are exacerbated by this phenomenon of rationalisation overwhelming a caring service sector. Care as a societal process has become a victim of economic logic. And that it is time to consider alternative ways of measuring efficiency and effectiveness, based on answering people’s needs in the heart, mind and soul.

This is not seen as a romantic, idealistic notion. It is possible to be thoroughly ‘bottom-line’ sensitive, but in the context of valuing those aspects of human life which make us human.
The emergence of economically rationalist ideologies and practices over the past fifty years has created a malaise across the world. While managers pursue savings and downsizing, people have been suffering, from loss of services and loss of heart. My work with the indigenous, alcoholics, intellectually disabled and mentally ill people, has shown me that these ‘other’ marginalised groups have valuable things to teach the system, which is currently failing to meet people’s needs. My view is that taking note of their alternative perspectives can teach managers of health, rehabilitation and community services a lot about how to better serve their clients.

Examples of where such approaches are working are scattered through the work, and alternative ways of approaching a restructuring of these community services are suggested throughout. The limitations of any proposed alternatives are also noted, alongside the critique of the existing system dominated by economically rationalist values.

2.3 Basic assumptions

This work is based on the belief that humanity includes great diversity in consciousness, as well as shared or common attributes of feeling and experience. For the purposes of this argument, feelings and experience are taken to be the representations of consciousness, lived out in people’s daily lives. These aspects of consciousness are taken here as affective indicators of humans’ basic needs, of heart, mind and soul.

So, by establishing a framework of feelings and experience, which reflect common consciousness among people living in western society, it is possible to achieve two objectives. To identify and better understand difference and diversity between people living with intellectual disability and mental illness. And to identify useful parameters for practical application in public policy and programs serving the disadvantaged.

I argue that people with mental illness and intellectual disability have special attributes of consciousness, which are both challenges and opportunities for soul growth. Using the word
soul does not alienate this work from rational analysis and applied discussion of social issues. It is ‘soul’ in the sense that old and new writers, like Carlyle and D.H. Lawrence, David Tacey and John Carroll, see ‘soul’ as the substance of humanity and culture. Something people live within and work with every day, and which is shared between all humans.

The feelings and experience of the intellectually disabled and mentally ill show up attributes, which I believe exist in all humans except that they can be exaggerated and problematic. My point, however, is that if applied policies and programs meant to serve the needs of these people adopt a rationale which sees life in terms of the richness in their otherness and diversity, then their attributes of consciousness are resourceful.

Indigenous people (both urban dwellers and in the outback) have inherited ways of being that link them closer to earth’s rhythms and ‘the dreaming’ consciousness of other levels of awareness, rather than logic and emotion alone. Without romanticising this as some halcyon return to the native, by sharing their territory of consciousness, in urban and more natural situations, I argue that non-indigenous people can access skills for their inner lives, which are still available to all people.

Addicts of all habits can be exaggerated products of modernity, stuck in a dis-eased state, both bred and irritated by conditions of late capitalism. Using habitual fixes to try to avoid sitting with this discomfort of the soul which many share in today’s world.

*Going Walkabout Through The Suburbs* sets out to explore the human condition in western society, and particularly those of some ‘others’ who show difference and diversity of consciousness. On this journey I have ‘adopted’ several aunties and uncles, in the Aboriginal use of the term. That is, elders who provide guidance and observing wisdom, which can inform my own journey. Foremost among these are Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith. But they are accompanied by Aunties Anne Wilson Schaef, Karen Horney and Marie Louise von Franz, and Uncles Jurgen Habermas and his colleague Michael Pusey,
Peter Beilharz, Theodore Zeldin, and New Zealander Michael Jackson, among others.

Uncle Raymond referred to Sigmund Freud’s account of the mind operating in layers of consciousness, on his way to investigating artistic inspiration. Williams quoted Herbert Read reflecting on how artists get their inspiration:

If we picture the regions of the mind as three superimposed strata... we can imagine in certain rare cases a phenomenon comparable to a ‘fault’ in geology, as a result of which in one part of the mind the layers become discontinuous, and exposed to each other at unusual levels... Some such hypothesis is necessary to explain that access, that lyrical intuition, which is known as inspiration and which in all ages has been the rare possession of those few individuals we recognise as artists of genius. (5)

Likewise, in society there are ‘fault lines’ which show up connections between people, knowledge, folklore, mysteries and archetypes. These fault lines are often the people and places where differences gather. It is the view of this work that by entering into a conversation with those places and people, it is possible to learn a great deal about how to reintegrate humanity for the good of all. And to help better serve the needs of people living in marginalised circumstances of lifeworld.

Having identified a structure of feeling and experience that forms a framework for ‘normal’ human consciousness, I then examine those areas shown up by the different experience of the chosen others. This leads to a set of parameters which can hopefully be used to better meet the needs of the mentally ill and intellectually disabled to be more integrated and valued in mainstream society. And to be empowered in expressing their feelings and experience in the process of program planning and delivery, for the health, community and rehabilitation services they experience.
3. Modern lifeworld and the common good

The motivation behind this work is to create pathways towards walkabout, ways people can rediscover their existence as both social and numinous beings, by protecting and exercising ‘the common good’. That is, to me, the set of basic rights and needs of people to live with dignity and treat each other decently, without prejudice, injustice, neglect or being taken advantage of. I believe that this value system has been eroded across late capitalist societies. And that restoration starts among those in greatest need—such as the mentally ill and intellectually disabled. If western society cannot help those most in need, it has little chance of helping those in the mainstream to engage with more integrated ways of being.

No utopian vision of society is held aloft in this work, promising some miraculous salvation for humankind. The version of the lifeworld proposed for operation of normal, healthy human life is simply the kind of social democratic capitalist system that modernity was further built on in the years after World War II. This is one that supports individual enterprise and the process of ‘doing business’, but with an assumption of the maintenance of the public estate and a safety net of basic essential life supports, especially for those in need. This work puts forward an integration of our lifeworld systems, to incorporate more ways of valuing and exercising the feelings and experiences at the core of humanity. And to balance those with equal respect for and protection of natural and socio-cultural environments.

Like Jurgen Habermas, I hold to the value which ‘joins the inner world of our shared subjectivity with the object world “out there”’ (6). It is either romantic nor in denial of realpolitik to argue for greater involvement of the mentally ill and intellectually disabled in organising their lifeworld. As with Uncle Jurgen, I believe that ‘the inner motive we all share is the need to better understand our own lives so that we can live together more productively’ (7).

Community, to me, is the combination of people I share my life with. Partners, children,
extended family, work mates, neighbourhood, and the wide network of acquaintances I don’t know well but who contribute significantly to my lifeworld. Beyond those people lies my wider society. The nation state’s community, where traditions meet, values mix, and priorities for valuing aspects of shared humanity are continuously evolving and being debated.

At the moment, a major debate in western society is taking place about the death of the common good. A basic value system shared across these societies which held it to be each citizen’s right to a basic quality of life, freedom, rights, choices and opportunities. Choice about life circumstances seemed to be one of the hallmarks of ‘progress’ through modernism, until the last three decades of the twentieth century. This choice has been removed from the lifeworld of many citizens, and that this trend should be challenged and reversed in political, legislative and administrative ways.

Too many people’s basic needs are not being met under economic rationalism, the dominant ethos of late capitalism. Things are so bad now that talking about acknowledging difference and diversity, and seeking engagement of the disadvantaged in managing their lifeworld, could be seen by many as an idealistic dream. But like Uncle Jurgen, I argue that it is now time that ‘the limits set by the need for social reproduction and social integration’ (8) were activated on the seesaw of modernism, ‘pushing problems back and forth between state and market’ (9). Now is the time when people in western societies are feeling ‘the pain and the confusions that accrue from the side-effects of “development” (which) will both clear the way and at the same time lead the movement of reflection in a rational direction’ (10).

Acknowledging and servicing those needs identified by the affective indicators of the structure of feelings and experience (SOFE), among the mentally ill and intellectually disabled, may point the way for revaluing them among all people. For if culture is our soul as a people, it will only stay healthy if people ‘work it’, meaning that modern citizens need a balance in acknowledging the numinous, the imaginative, the celebratory and the reverent,
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alongside the rational, reasoned, logical and materialist.

Maintaining that rituals need to be returned to a wider scope, than just listening for the state of the stock market on the morning news, is not a ‘return to the native’. My point is that people can share stories, celebrate beliefs, pass through stages of maturation in rites of passage, and acknowledge the human spirit, all in a late capitalist context. Not as ‘touchy feely alternative lifestyle’ excursions, but as an ordinary everyday shared ritual in an evolving lifeworld. Other developing cultures I have lived with combine modernity and tradition (Balinese, Maori, Tamil, and some Australian Aboriginals): in morning household puja offerings in tourism venues; daily staff gatherings to share reverent multi-faith prayers in large modern hospitals; stopping to value cultural celebrations in business places; and making the spirit of place an honoured context for all who visit.

The vision of this work is that progress is as much about the ‘development’ of our inner lives as it is about material gain and technical invention. My point is that empirical assessment and evaluation of life has assisted material development, but humanity needs more official engagement with its affective and numinous sides. Not in the pursuit of some new version of Tonnies’ ‘Gemeinschaft’ (11), but in a more mature (and in fact indigenous sense) of ‘working the society and culture’, by making social democracy work for all its citizens’ shared needs. Including integrating valuing the spirit and the common good.

That means replacing the current vested interest group domination of representative politics and public administration with a rejuvenated democratic process, to better respond to the needs of the citizenry. Current neo-feudal, almost neo-fascist, theories and obsessions of economists and politicians have come to a dead end. They do not provide for more than a tiny elite minority, and work against the interests of the majority, undermining basic notions and applied values of community and the common good.

Challenging the current trend of applying impression management (12) to the provision of a Wirthian ‘ecological urbanism’ (13), I argue against such versions of democratic social
development. Here people who are lucky enough to score jobs in the new e-economy can also claim a neo-colonial lifestyle, protected in a William Gibson-esque *Neuromancer* style urban enclave life. Safe from the underclasses. This version of progress is nothing more than a game of virtual reality, according to my value system. Neglecting the true needs of both the well off and the poor and replacing them with images from *The Truman Show* (14).

My hopeful view of modernism is that citizens can reclaim ordinary western democracy and make it work for all. I advocate removal of the current parasitic corporate life support tubes catheterised into all areas of public provision. And making those lifestreams flow again to meet the needs of the people through tax dollars going to the public estate, not to privatised, ‘out-sourced’ services. At the same time, the corporate world needs to pay the real price for doing business, acknowledging its debt to the environment and to people who have been exploited all over the globe in the interests of profit.

Rather than being tired Marxist talk, this approach to my mind is applying responsible, respectful rejuvenation of the common good and assertive declaration of the responsibility of representative social democratic processes to serve that higher good. So business goes on, but it pays its way and meets the human and ecological costs that go with profits.

4. Terms and assumptions in a ‘grammar of forms of life’

Consciousness in this work is taken to be the moment by moment awareness of mind that all people share, processing feelings and experience continuously, and different for each individual, while also sharing common perspectives and perceptions.

Humans are taken to be social beings with hearts, minds and souls. ‘Hearts’ meaning our affective experience of emotions, combined with thoughts to generate feelings, which both create and respond to our experiences. It is taken here that all people live their lives through a system of perception and projection, which means people ‘see the movie of their lives’, according to how their own consciousness is ‘screening it’ from moment to moment. The
fact that intention and action can move into accord in democracy, and shift power structures with the influence of people’s combined will power, is a basic assumption beneath the optimism of this work.

Like Uncle Jurgen, I believe that:

our own modern condition is a kind of tug-of-war between the lifeworld and the system... Given the unyielding organizational principle of capitalist mediatised colonization by the economy and the state (money and market, power and bureaucracy, respectively)... the outcome of this “dialectic” between system and lifeworld cannot be predicted. (15)

However, people still have the choice to act on their inner values and beliefs. The common good for me is a precious reason to act. And focusing on the needs of deeply disadvantaged people creates a context of grounded urgency in maintaining the ‘advances’ of social democracy, currently being progressively eroded.

In this work, ‘culture’ is the ‘soul of the people’, and ‘society’ is our combination of ideas, values, traditions, practical management systems and lifestyle choices, which vary from group to group, and nation to nation. Culture and society combine to form the matrix of our lives, and they set the conditions for development of each individual born into human society. How those individuals are treated by their immediate parents and siblings, extended families, community and wider society, creates the quality of life in each society. Right now this work asserts that western society is lacking in the exercise of values and practical life services to acknowledge our shared inner needs.

The ‘lifeworld’ (Lebenswelt) is, as Jurgen Habermas has put it, “the background consensus of everyday life”... “the storehouse of knowledge” that is passed from one generation to the next... [where] social and economic structures interpenetrate with action and consciousness’ (16). Late capitalism has become disconnected from the inherent lifeworld
value system, at the same time as having invaded it. So while it has lost touch with the
deeper human needs of heart, mind and soul, it occupies them with second rate notions, of
power, wealth, competitive self-interest and resulting aggression or powerlessness. This is
due to ‘reification, the increasing penetration of exchange values and power into society,
culture, and the lifeworld’ (17). The mentally ill and intellectually disabled are two groups
who particularly show up this failure to value deeper human needs. And their loss beneath
preoccupation with ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ measured in monetary terms. The feelings
and experiences of these groups illustrate aspects shared by all of us, but more easily
noticed because of their differences.

By creating a framework of the Structure of Feeling and Experience (SOFE) using the
lifetime work of two theorists of western culture and society, Raymond Williams and
Bernard Smith, this work attempts to show where humanity’s needs could be better met.
And specifically the two subject groups, who are positioned for a deeper study following
completion of this work. The belief here, is that more open and assertive conversations
about the attributes of human consciousness we all share are needed to counteract the
mindless pursuit of irrational ‘economic rationalism’, which has overtaken our lifeworld in
the last forty years. My point is that the dismantling of ‘the welfare state’, first by
denigrating the very notion and then privatising its infrastructure, has left humanity in a
wasteland of neglect.

While not arguing that everything about public sector managed services was faultless and
needed no amendment, this work is based on a valuing of the common good via our elected
representatives and public institutions. Administering the public estate in the interests of
all, with guarantees for those in greatest need to be protected by their society, is a
foundation for the view of humanity pursued here.

Further development can then be undertaken, to explore human potential for growth in
integrating broader aspects of humanity in its shared lifeworld. This means taking a view of
‘spirit’ as a notion to be incorporated into mainstream life, and valuing its maintenance as much as people value income, food, shelter and safety. Nothing to do with religion, which is a personal choice for all, but acknowledging the numinous source of that desire to pursue meaning beyond the material conditions of life.

Spirit here is defined as that conscious life force and energy for life, linked with the numinous, which all humans possess. As well as the greater shared human spirit, which crosses all cultural boundaries and keeps humans’ connection with all forms of life, as parts of the universe. Currently western society has been severely de-spirited and needs some rejuvenation of spirit to fight back and heal this wound. As a pragmatic, applied aspect of daily life and societal maintenance. Acknowledging the structure of feelings and experience (SOFE) across all societies. This battlefield of values and practices is embroiled in a conflict ‘not sparked by problems of distribution, but concern(ing) the grammar of forms of life’ (18).

There are limitations to this goal of rejuvenating public involvement in restoring and implementing the common good. One is the predominant influence of self-interest as a sales tool of late capitalism. Cynics argue that the case is lost already, and powerful elites run the world according to a process detached from the citizenry. The only answer I can imagine is that while people can communicate with one another there is a chance to restore values representing the interests of the majority, without preventing on-going functioning of capitalism, just adjusting it to a more responsible version of ‘the customer is always right.’

‘The universal means in which speech is used to create and sustain social relationships… universal skills of communication. We are born with the potential to use them to create a better society’ (19). My purpose is to create the means to give voice to the disadvantaged, help them speak for the betterment of their own lives, and ultimately contribute to the return of valuing the common good across western society.
5. Methodology

The core thesis of this work is that there are common aspects of human feelings and experience, which all people share, making up human consciousness. This is the basis of the question, which I believe can lead to action. My view is that many of these aspects have been ignored by modernity, to its cost. For the mentally ill, the intellectually disabled, indigenous people and addicts, variations in the intensity of these feelings and experiences are like boundary posts for human consciousness. Identifying a framework for human feelings and experience is the first task. The way humans experience life from moment to moment in their minds, processing feelings and experiences in a rich variety of degrees, represents their individuality. Sharing space in the mind are the ego and the spirit—one on a solo journey, the other connected to all human spirit. The job of this thesis is to investigate this territory and come up with a model that can be applied to processes affecting people’s lifeworlds.

Because the subjects of this work are people living in western society, the territory of western culture and society is the natural ground to place this exploration of consciousness. By analysing recurring themes in the work of Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith, it is possible to identify some key aspects of consciousness found by these two cultural researchers. The initial set of affective indicators, of human feelings and experiences, is called here the Structure of Feeling and Experience (SOFE).

The work combines exploration of the last few centuries in Western culture, art and society, with the Antipodean or ‘other’ vision of the world and what it shows about Western perspectives. Uncle Raymond and Bernard provide a rich grounding for thinking about consciousness, which is then given deeper perspective, exploring the four subject groups—the mentally ill, intellectually disabled, addicted and indigenous. Their stories come from two main sources: those written about these groups by many members of the groups and people working with them, ‘uncles and aunties’; and from direct experience living and working with them myself.
The focus is not on collecting a bunch of stories about marginalised people, but on illustrating aspects of feelings and experience in action, which show up general trends. These are both positive and negative, but they are illustrative of lessons for application in current community settings, both among the groups themselves and the wider humanity.

Ultimately the aim is to find a set of parameters for the structure of feelings and experience directly drawn up by the disadvantaged themselves, which can be used to help indicate how to better meet their needs and aspirations. The mentally ill and intellectually disabled living in western society can then be recorded in an Action Research-style project, working with the two groups and their communities, to assess their own feelings and experiences, with this work as a guide. Their input and feedback can be used to better inform the system as to how it can engage them in planning the design and delivery of health, rehabilitation and community services, as well as informing society about their needs for inclusion, respect and equal engagement in life.

Along the walkabout path, late capitalism's processes and the perspectives and practices offered as alternatives will be tested against Uncle Jurgen's four way values: truth, truthfulness, rightness and comprehensibility. Or to put it another way: Do they value the lifeworld, not ideology? Do they work responsibly for the common good? Are they just and equitable, wise and compassionate? And do they make sense for improving humanity's condition?

The aspects drawn from the four subject groups are then compared with the SOFE work by 'uncles' Raymond and Bernard, to create a Mandorla, or Venn diagram-style overlapping sense of what patterns emerge from these perspectives. This is used to make observations about the modern condition and possible ways of helping to restore a more balanced, integrated way of being among western citizens. But especially for mentally ill and intellectually disabled people, there is a need to improve living conditions, which under current circumstances are largely determined outside of their own will.
6. Seeking a perspective on walking about this suburban lifeworld

Breaking out of occupied territory

The view of this work is that human consciousness is a daily workplace, playground and potentially a prison for the mind. If people experience thoughts and feelings that create disease, and they cannot find a way out, this field of awareness and perception becomes a cage, occupied by captive minds. Like Weber’s ‘Iron Cage’ the mind can be overtaken by negative rationalisation (20). Add to that Durkheim’s ‘social facts’ (21), where money and power ‘coordinate action “from outside in”, with obligatory force’ (22), and injustice and marginalisation are made into an occupied lifeworld. It becomes a miserable place. Yet this is where an increasing amount of human life is conducted, in my view of late capitalism.

According to Jurgen Habermas, that ‘lifeworld is the substratum of our conscious worldviews (Weltanschauungen) and of all social action. Roughly speaking, worldviews share the same relation to the lifeworld for Habermas as the Conscious does to the Unconscious for Freud’ (23). In our consciousness lives the ego, that self-determining identity source which worries about its survival above all else. Surrounding the ego is a greater awareness, transcending the level of perception into the more universal world of spirit. Shared human spirit is where people can return to their common humanity, motivated by love and determining universal values of truth, justice, compassion and forgiveness. Not by power, money, competition or status.

But, if one accepts that economic rationalism has successfully appealed to the ego in a majority of citizens by arguing for greater efficiency and effectiveness in how late capitalism works, then those citizens have agreed to its progress on the basis that each can benefit. The apparent success of this logic, in becoming the dominant ideology of the last two decades, is in its appeal to people’s wish to participate in growth and profits. Such a view, now influencing all business, public administration, policy development and legislation, has reached the point where the western lifeworld has been radically changed. Its former core
commitment to the common good is being threatened with extinction. Whether citizens intended it or not. I argue for its restoration, through sharing more feelings and experience as respected parts of daily human interchange.

‘In phenomenological terms the lifeworld comprises that vast stock of taken-for-granted definitions and understandings of the world, that give coherence and direction to our everyday actions and interactions’ (24). What I sum up as ‘the common good’ has been removed from this taken-for-granted status, precisely because it has been taken for granted, and has thereby been gazumped by the economic rationalists. Since Milton Friedman won his battle for world powers’ embrace in the Reagan–Thatcher shadow years of the eighties, what was previously assumed to be natural underpinnings of civilised democratic societies have been largely removed.

‘(The lifeworld) is, as Habermas reminds us, “so unproblematic that we are simply incapable of making ourselves conscious of this or that part of it at will”’ (25). According to my perspective, the evidence is now in that this very unconsciousness of people’s basic needs and how they are met has led to their protective web being removed. The common good has been replaced by self-interest as a defining basis of late capitalist economically rationalist democracies, such as the USA, Britain and Australia. It now needs a strong rearguard action to be restored to its rightful place at the foundation of our culture, society and lifeworld. But, with Marshall Berman, I believe that the same processes of modernism that created many of these problems also hold the hope for reversing them:

Maya Ying Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, dedicated in 1982, shows how the idioms of the modernist movement… may be uniquely qualified to tell the truth about contemporary history… This memorial tells us virtually nothing but the names and dates… [yet] everybody who goes through this space cries. (It) shows how modernism can help a culture look the negative in the face and live with it. If Americans can learn to examine the wounds we have inflicted on others, along
with those we have inflicted on ourselves, maybe we can begin to heal. (26)

For people with mental illness or intellectual disability, their separation from mainstream society have been exacerbated by the demise of the common good. Not only have fewer people got time ‘to think about them’, but they often miss out where previously it was to such marginalised groups that this notion would be applied first. But it may be that a new light is coming from this darkness, where the prevailing conditions of economic rationalism mean that their quality of life, ways of healing and rehabilitation pathways have been narrowed or closed off. Those cases where change is occurring are shining brightly onto all citizens, many of whom feel with their disadvantaged sisters and brothers.

I believe that those beams of light will shine onto the doctors, psychologists, social workers, health and rehabilitation administrators, and researchers, who are largely working to a drug-based, materialist, behaviourist, symptom-suppressing model of human life and healing.

What can be called the neurotransmitter framework of consciousness model has been placed over the lives of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill. So that they are basically treated as machines which need appropriate grease and oil changing and garaging. The state of their hearts, mind and souls is not seen as relevant, beyond nominal impression management in policy paperwork. I have worked with these realities over the past five years, and have seen the rationalist logic expanding over wider and wider territory. But I have also felt, how many of the ‘clients’ and ‘workers’ in this system feel, it has gone awry. Just as Americans knew in their hearts the Vietnam War was a mistake. And Maya Ying Lin gave them a space within which they could cry out their grief about that.

Just as Lin’s memorial was fought over to the last by a conservative, sexist, racist backlash, there are always going to be forces of resistance against the process of opening awareness to growth. It is the aim of this work to follow the yogic maxim of ‘address your resistance’, and to go on exploring and celebrating the feelings and experience of these disadvantaged
groups. By envisaging and illustrating existing practical and celebratory expressions of their connection and integration with all of humanity, the lessons they can teach all of us will shine out.

Using examples of where these people are fully involved in their lifeworld design and recurrent management, it may be possible to influence the management of policy and programs in mainstream health, rehabilitation, housing, welfare, education and other services. To restore a more integrated vision of life opportunities and roles in society for the marginalised. Maintaining hope in the project of change.

Restoring spirit to the public estate

The proposition behind this journey is that human beings are spirit beings, who share a community of spirit that goes beyond individual consciousness. Many indigenous people can still access this way of being. But I claim most westerners have been separated from engagement with this dimension of their inheritance. Now there is a need to find the way back. The mentally ill and intellectually disabled are both examples of that separation, and victims of its widening gap due to economic rationalism. This work also sees them as potential guides to some return trails.

Indigenous people who are still in touch with their culture and belief system have continuing connection with the spirit of place, and access to alternative states of consciousness taught in traditional rites of passage. I claim that acknowledging these levels of awareness may be part of the restoration of more holistic lifeworlds for all of humanity. Not in some ‘return to the native’, but in a contemporary acknowledgement of the nature of human consciousness and shared social spirit, which needs to be ‘worked’ to keep it alive and contributing to humans’ wellness.

Addicts are those people suffering from dis-ease in their daily lives, which they seek to ease by engaging in activities which help them ‘get out of it.’ Releasing themselves from the
normal run of life, and escaping into another state of mind. For many observers of western culture and society, this state has become chronic among most people. Stuck in the dependent cycle of consumption, power broking or being manipulated, escaping from material meaninglessness through substance abuse, codependency and many other habits.

So the case here is that, the positives and negatives which show up in these four groups, offer perspectives on modernity that can point to areas for improvement, healing and restoration. My argument is that the first task is to reclaim the common good. While also redefining basic human needs and aspirations, to incorporate a wider view of the shared lifeworld and worldview (Lebenswelt and Weltanschauungen) (27)

My case is also that suburban life is a paradoxical mix of lifeworld dreams and potential nightmare enclaving. All over the westernised world, suburbs are springing up where people with money and means live behind security-guarded walls, separated from their fellow citizens. While the information technology revolution rockets some to unforeseen wealth, others are falling into poverty at an increasing rate. And the prevailing value system of politics and business seems to assume this is natural and OK, in a neo-Darwinian rationalist logic. The underclasses grow while they become more invisible, in a bizarre sort of ‘virtual unreality.’

While the mentally ill and intellectually disabled are already on the lower end of society’s ‘success scales’, I claim that they actually hold up hope, for many submerged under this suburban virtual reality-scape now unfolding across the world. This is because the way they are seen, treated and understood reflects the state of mainstream humanity. Right now, it’s in a pretty ‘sick’ state. The view in this work is that effort needs to be made to maintain some sense of valuing, not only difference and diversity in consciousness, but standards of moral behaviour. Behaviour which acknowledges and respects those worse off than the rich and powerful, who seem to have become the new gods for many societies, at the expense of everything else. Citizens even comply with their own degradation, by
continuing to agree with the dismantling of what used to underpin their lifeworld.

This work believes humanity will return to principles and practices which value the common good, and apply it through the public estate. First and foremost because it represents universal foundation values of human life. Second because provision for those marginalised by disability, disempowered by health problems, and suffering through adversity, is a bottom line standard in all traditional human value systems. And thirdly, because we need to remain vigilant against ideologies of any kind, which can threaten the lifeworld that is the basis of our shared humanity.

That is not to say this is a ‘given’. The circumstances prevailing in contemporary modernity are dire, in my view. Something many regard as akin to a miracle is required to reverse the lemming-like trend still being pursued by most western political ‘leaders’, and their corporate masters. Yet, as South Africa and Eastern Europe proved towards the end of last century, it is often those who are ‘at the bottom’ who end up succeeding in changing the world. Jean Vanier reflects that the intellectually disabled are the most representative group of ‘the meek’, about whom Jesus spoke, as the inheritors of god’s kingdom. I believe there can be no better point to begin the work on behalf of all humanity. By sticking with advancing the interests of these people, calling for a return to love and valuing the common good, there will be some hope of rejuvenating our shared responsibility for one another.
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
CHAPTER TWO
COMMUNITY, CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COMMON GOOD

1. Reclaiming the spirit of community

This chapter sets the socio-political context for the work overall. It argues for two main outcomes: improvements in the way intellectually disabled and mentally ill people are treated in western society; and through making changes to social provision for those two marginalised groups, a general revaluing of ‘the common good’. Discussing proposals for change in society raises the need for more detailed definition of the terms and current context for community and common good. And to explain my position on what is meant by ‘spirit of community’.

Since Tonnies coined his twin terms nearly a century ago, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (1), for the opposing forms of social organisation he saw being stamped out of ‘community’ by industrialism, there has been a debate between sceptics on both sides of the modernism fence. I call them ‘the twin Gs’.

The Gemeinschaft argument sees life harking back to a glorious past, when all things were well in the shared ‘village-like’ community, before industrialism took people away from their personal relationships and traditions, into a structural association with one another, which is impersonal and isolating (Gesellschaft). This work is based on neither concept. While arguing for a return to more caring, sharing, and communally celebrating forms of community, it is not portraying those as ideal practices residing in an arcadian past, nor a utopian future. Nor is it saying that modernism has resulted in a complete destruction of the possibility of a shared worldview (Weltanschauungen) (2) working for the common good.

Just as Max Weber saw the move from traditional ‘magic’ to modern ‘rational progress’ as a
process of ‘disenchantment’ (3) contemporary writers are viewing the process of modernism since then as having created the need for ‘re-enchantment’ (4). My argument is that understanding more, about the core elements of human consciousness, should present humanity with its criteria for assessing the worth of the processes used to ‘run’ our society.

The structure of feelings and experience is a framework of consciousness, which presents such a set of criteria. It is not claimed to be comprehensive or fully representative, but at least worth introducing into the ‘mix’ (as Uncle Bernard says) of values and processes currently running western society. By taking advice from Uncle Jurgen Habermas, I argue it is possible to collect a set of tools for thinking about these issues, which help build the argument of this thesis. I will introduce those after the definitions of the territory through which this work Goes Walkabout.

Community and the common good

The concepts advocated here are envisaged as being tools of individual and community life, applied in a modern democratic capitalist state. Through personal behaviour and values, group processes, political decision-making, public administration of health and community services. My focus is on empowering individuals through creating decision-making process and therefore power, over matters affecting creation of their lifeworld. The practical expression of these faculties makes a working community, in my view. What is different in this proposition, from the twin-Gs debate, is that I believe active expression of feelings, communal celebrations, shared spirit and rituals, and people’s stories about life, can be valued in mainstream modern environments. This is an argument based on the indigenous notion, best described by the Australian Aboriginal concept of ‘working the culture’, ‘doing the business’ (of life). Nothing fancy or ideal, just daily life.

I am critical of modernism’s influence on social organisation, capitalism’s trends towards de-humanising work and emphasising profit over basic moral values, of ‘share and share alike’, and ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. I believe that people
should have basic rights to work, enough income to support themselves, and sharing in a community life, which values the common good. But I argue it does not need a return to a halcyon past for such values to be realised. They can be expressed in modern conditions and add to society’s overall effectiveness, not detract from it.

Community is therefore the people who mix with one another, living and working through their shared lifeworld. The common good is what all can expect as a basic minimum in quality of life provision, being protected and supported by their community, and the wider society it sits in. Currently this is not the case in many western societies, such as Australia. That is from my direct observation, ‘in the field,’ spending the last ten years working with marginalised groups including the indigenous, the intellectually disabled, alcoholics and the mentally ill.

Community spirit

In the experience of western modernism, it appears many citizens have taken choices, which have changed their whole way of life. As ‘a whole way of life’ is one of the definitions of ‘Culture’ used in this work (5), so it can be argued that western culture has been changed. Not changed by citizens’ conscious choice, just by technological progress, or economic development, or socio-political evolution. They have reconstructed their lifeworld.

The flipside of the choice for modernity has been an effective agreement to increasing detachment of that lifeworld from people’s own control. Management of previously shared, communal life experiences, by institutions, has been an outcome. Separating individuals from active participation in the group, the community and society as a whole. As they become submerged in the fight for work, minimum standards of living, and succeeding or failing in the competition for wealth. Raymond Williams saw this trend emerging in the sixties and seventies. Now, forty years later, it is instructive to reflect on the resulting view he saw, in the creeping separation modernity had brought with it, widening gaps between citizens:
He looked along the street: at the separate people passing, on so many different journeys; at the more distant crowd and traffic, the slow aggregation within which they stood, leaning close to each other and talking, close as always but close now in their separateness: a conscious separateness, within a crowd of strangers. (6)

I believe that large numbers of modern citizens have not only become atomised, isolated and effectively competing for place, space and opportunity in their lifeworld. They have also become effectively devoid of the capacity for decision, within the system they have ‘signed up with’ and ‘over to’. This reconstructed version of democratic capitalism, where vested interest groups, elites, run the lifeworld, is what intellectually disabled and mentally ill people have no choice but to accept, due to their vulnerability. Other citizens seem to have elected to live in this more passive way of life, it appears mainly because it has become so complex and demanding.

My claim is that the effect of the disempowering, resulting from handing over control of the lifeworld to business and bureaucracy, is a deep redefinition of the western concept of community. Community spirit in my terms means the way people decide lot for themselves, in groups of shared interest and overall responsibility for the affairs of all. As well as a practical sense of the common good, which informs individual and group behaviour, to support those in need and ‘look out for your neighbour.’ Sharing and caring.

This model of community is not dependent on harking back to a nostalgic arcadian era. To me, it is available as soon as people decide to ‘act local’. Then, when more people exercise that decision, and combine with a sense of humanity’s overall responsibility to the wider environment, Buckminster Fuller’s ‘think global, act local’, moves into ‘glocalisation.’ Lots of little cells breathing the same shared human spirit of community, expressing its full array of plurality, difference and diversity.

The message from this trend is that democracy takes involvement. Whether defined as ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’, or, as Geoffrey Robertson
points out, in Churchill’s words, ‘democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.’ (7) My view is that if people want to see better processes used on citizens’ behalf, those citizens need to work at their democracy. Or it simply becomes impression management of a formerly representative process. The new virtual reality of political representation.

2. A scaffold to rebuild the lifeworld

Community spirit, in my direct experience working with the marginalised, is stronger among the weak than the strong. Because those with little to lose have always had to struggle, they appear to have been better fitted to cope with the feelings of disempowerment, which have magnified under late capitalism, and finally created a ‘wear out factor’ among voters. That is, modernism has weakened western democracy, but its hope may lie among its weakest citizens. While elite groups have taken over the representative and decision-making functions, because many citizens have ‘dropped out’ of active political expression, the marginalised represent a ‘bottom-line,’ which cannot be erased by impression management. I argue the ‘spin doctors’ cannot make a virtual paradise out of poverty and disability, so society’s conscience remains alive here. In the space between, where the growing divisions between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ show up.

My view is that among mainstream society members, their spirit of community is still latent, potent and close to the surface. I have seen this in environments of community welfare, cultural celebration, sporting clubs and people coming together in crises. It seems to me that community spirit is one path back to active democracy.

The experience of the marginalised, who are even further detached from influencing their lifeworld conditions, is strangely equated with their fellow citizens, in my view. Because I believe they have often made up for disadvantage, by forming stronger group relationships, and creating their own communities, where self worth can be nurtured. In the absence of democracy realising its other definition, ‘the absence of class distinctions or privileges in a
society’ (8), this aggregation of community spirit is a hopeful sign.

This work argues, that building on such hopeful signs, and revisiting the territory claimed by ‘agents of the people,’ it may be possible to rebuild democratic societal process. Starting with the marginalised is not such a strategic mistake. Many of the bureaucrats working with them have intentions to serve, in my direct experience, even if their management restrictions and ‘policy guidelines’ are along strictly economically rationalist lines. I have been one of those bureaucrats, working for three years with Aboriginal people, and I know assistance can be made available in community-empowering ways. This is my version of true sharing of community spirit—working for the common good with people with whom you develop relationship and mutual understanding.

Contrasted with that, is the economic rationalist value system, which has proven itself to serve the interests of business and profit above all else. The way of business, as Raymond Williams saw it and portrayed it in his work, is to seek its own best interests, and where possible sell its own expansion to others, on the basis of their self interest in the same process (see The Fight for Manod, Williams). This has been successfully completed now over most economically rationalist nations, where both the private and former public spheres have been commercialised. They have become profit centers for private agencies.

Testing the argument for change with Uncle Jurgen’s Four way Test

In order to avoid polemic, which I find an attractive response to the modernist process as it impacts on the vulnerable, I have asked Uncle Jurgen for some advice. Using his early work on the Theory of Communicative Action (9), it is possible to identify four values tests for processes and phenomena which will crop up on this walkabout journey. Habermas ‘tries to reconcile the two processes, of disenchchantment and of rationalisation, into a single theory of modernisation and modernity.’ (10)

His Theory of Communicative Action identified four ways of assessing the value of
processes, which he claimed could help reform the modern condition. They are: Truth, Truthfulness, Rightness and Comprehensibility. I choose to take these four and interpret them as criteria for assessing the current impacts and potential improvements of modern socio-economic processes. For the lifeworld conditions of the mentally ill and intellectually disabled. As my experience has shown me the lifeworld conditions of the marginalised these four concepts ‘pan out’ to mean to me in practice:

**Truth**—Does it reflect and value universal human feelings and experience? That is, is it relevant to and reflective of the lifeworld, not some ideology (such as economic rationalism)?

**Truthfulness**—Does it responsibly act for the common good? That is, are its values right in terms of actually benefiting the people, not just impression management?

**Rightness**—Does it allow justice and equity with wisdom and compassion? That is, does it allow individuals to be their full selves, and society to evolve in a healthy way?

**Comprehensibility**—Does it make sense? That is, does it add to what most people would want, for humanity to keep improving itself and expanding awareness?

Exercising these criteria is designed not only to build my argument. It is the basis of my belief system, and the only point in entering into this exercise. For if it is not possible to add to human knowledge and improve the social process, we might as well all go shopping.

‘Working the culture’ of community

In Australian suburbs and country towns, as with many other western nations, the growth of more ‘economically rationalist efficient’ commercial management processes has meant closure of the local stores, the small businesses where people knew each other, and the demise of small towns overtaken by major regional shopping malls. Aggregation of reta
services into shopping malls has been justified as cheaper, more cost-effective for all, and convenient. But until a new sense of community emerges from the people themselves, this process of rationalisation of our community life support processes seems to me to be still-born in the soul. Like cold-stored, genetically engineered foods. They might look like the real thing, but they taste like wax fruit.

Such moves may ‘make sense’ in efficiency and profitability terms, for the businesses running the overtaking enterprises. But they don’t necessary make long-term sense for community. People do end up going to the shopping mall, and using the automatic teller machines for getting cash, and eating at Macdonalds. But my view is that many may have preferred to stay with older, more personal connections, if they could have been transferred to the newer environments.

The evidence for this comes from community-initiated moves to establish community banks across Australia. In a quiet but powerful consumer movement, the eighties and nineties version of ‘customer service’ has been redefined by a strong aggregation of community spirit. People who wanted to retain personal banking ended up taking their money out of the big banks, which closed branches and even removed automatic teller machines, which weren’t ‘busy enough’. My own community bank, in suburban Sydney, grew from anger and disenchantment. This seems to me to be a sign of return to community spirit, in places which could seem atomised and ‘care less’.

The tests Uncle Jurgen suggested were clearly failed by the multinational banks. That is, whether their ‘services’ valued people’s feelings, worked for the common good, provided wisely an equitable service, and made sense. They didn’t, so they were dumped. This is the process of ‘working the culture,’ that I hold is revivable in the modern context. And which represents an Aboriginal, indigenous-like sense of the community spirit of the people acting in its own interest, which is the common good. As the twelve steppers say, ‘it works if you work it.’ (ie. In AA, Alcoholics Anonymous, twelve step speak, a modern
tribal rejuvenation of spirit).

Where industry has aggregated into central and regional ‘industrial parks’, such as in south western Sydney (Campbelltown) and the inner north west (Baulkham Hills) and north east (Terrey Hills), the decision by communities on the value of this trend is yet to come in. Jobs and workplaces, and surrounding homes ‘are there’. So people are joining the process, and social services are gradually being provided to these new industrial suburbs. But the broader issue, of redefining work and industry, into discrete fields of grouped one-stop-shops, serving major corporatised industrial supply processes is yet to be assessed. Global generic forms of business, such as Information Technology, Packaging and Distribution, Office Automation Services, Computer Aided Design and Manufacturing, and other generic categories, are still to be tested by citizens of the global village.

My point is, that it is no wonder ‘glocalisation’ is a concept growing in popularity. The green movement’s ethos has begun to show, at both local community level and in the ballot box. As more greens replace parliamentarians from the traditional parties, I observe among my own friendship networks and suggest that this is happening as an attempt to value people’s inner environment of soul, and its connection with the larger environment of earth and humanity in general. Linking a caring and sharing value system to an active living process, in small groups and aggregating communities of spirit. This trend follows long-established ‘greeny’ practices directed at conservation and sustainability of ecosystems. They pass Uncle Jurgen’s four-way test, in reflecting the value system that supports people and nature over profit.

3. Inviting the moderns to remember their elders

In my understanding, the root of the trend to reclaim community, is the core human reality, the indigenous ‘us not me’, ‘we not I’ value system at work. I claim it applies as much in conditions of late capitalism as it does in native communities, outback and inner city. Taking responsibility for one’s role in the group, and one’s connections with community, is
possible as much in K-Mart as the Kalahari. The neighbours are serving behind the counter, the kids are working in Macdonalds, and the intellectually disabled and mentally ill brothers and sisters should be there participating too. In fact, in one inner city Sydney Macdonalds store (in George St near the major cinema complex), intellectually disabled young adults are on staff and doing well. Bringing particular joy to their work, and an uplifting sense to those they serve and work alongside. Cynics may claim they work in ‘front of house’ jobs to promote a good image for the company. But the people I know on both sides of this equation see it as benefitting all concerned, specifically because the workers get to have maximum interaction with customers.

The idea of responsible capitalism is showing itself to be directly feasible, as I see it operating. This may be criticised as nominalism, but things have to start somewhere. ‘Giving back’ to the community it profits from, and taking responsibility for assisting those in need to find a place in the economy, answers Uncle Jurgen. My view is that such steps are not idealistic, they are practical and can be applied with a simple will to go beyond profit alone. Involvement of marginalised groups reminds customers of their shared humanity. It lifts the spirit by actively working the culture, that is a whole way of life. It is the stuff of community—who serves our food fills our souls as well.

At the local swimming pool in Canterbury, in Sydney’s south-western suburban belt, where intellectually disabled swimming teams practice and compete, pool staff have gained a deeper sense of compassion for humanity, through interacting with these sportspeople. I observed them joining in growing acceptance of and engagement with their intellectually disabled fellows. Similarly, players, coach and fitness back-up staff for the local inner western Sydney and nationally involved rugby league football team, Wests Tigers, have adopted a Down Syndrome young adult as their motivator and mascot. This has expanded their sense of engagement with wider humanity than professional football, and gives everyone involved with the club a sense of ‘we all share in this thing’.
For the intellectually disabled people engaging in active and purposeful roles in community their lives are not extraordinary all of a sudden. They are included in the everyday affairs of the community. No longer isolated. Exchanging love as the substance of human interaction, not money, or power, or status. Being acknowledged as valuable members of society Refuelling everyone’s lifeworld.

A mentally ill musician plays in a northern Sydney suburban community jazz band, just in the joy making. He gives his particular talent and brand of ‘madness’, and so adds to the colour of everyone’s lives. A simple act of involving and respecting people of different consciousness, opens a way for that consciousness to uplift all concerned in transaction. It is not ‘lip service’, patronising or nominal. Just basic work, play and some of normal human activity. The stuff of life. Like the mentally ill chef who cooks for people each day in the ACT Health building’s Piazza Cafe, in Australia’s national capital, Canberra. Or the mature age mentally ill women who organise catering services in a local Returned Services League Club in Sydney’s northern beaches suburb of Balgowlah.

What is happening in these circumstances is that management has committed to supporting the introduction or reintroduction of people into workplaces, where they would formerly been shunned. The ‘risk’ of their under-performing is no greater than that of workers, once their need for informed support by management and co-workers is agreed. This sort of measure is the reverse of what economic rationalism has brought to our society and I claim it needs to be continued, if western society is to restore and rebuild the heart and soul of the late capitalist lifeworld. These measures pass Uncle Jurgen’s test, of good works for good reason.

Exercising the initiative for compassionate decision-making, even from within management of multinational like Macdonalds, is possible. Now looms the job of returning the power to legislative and bureaucratic managers to the same sort of balanced human consideration far only ‘a toe has been put into the water’, which means individuals and organisatio
choose to swim any time they like.

4. What went wrong in serving the people?

In his ground-breaking 1991 book, *Economic Rationalism In Canberra*, (11) Michael Pusey showed the way Australia’s nation state had changed its mind about ‘governing for the people’, and adopted management by an elitist class, following economic rationalist madness. A country that had led the world in many social reforms during the 20th century, was seen to have lost its way in what I call ‘me, me, me-ism’. But Pusey held out hope, that the elements of youthful nationhood and hopeful rejuvenation of ‘fair go’ spirit among its citizens, would see Australians exercising their democratic rights to restore a more compassionate process of governing for the people.

Since one may still hopefully speak of possibilities in a world order that is never determined, there may yet be a way back to the other fork in the road that leads (along what were always assumed to be the ‘natural’ trend lines of Australia’s development) to social democracy of the kind enjoyed today by non-English-speaking nations—the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and, in the next league, France, Austria, and perhaps Germany—among them nations for which Australia once used to be a distant lighthouse. (12)

Like Uncle Raymond, Pusey is a socialist of deep commitment to the common good. He believes Australia has unique opportunities to restore social democratic processes. Its treatment of the marginalised bears witness to how well that philosophy is being expressed. So far there has been a shift from engagement in their lives (the seventies ‘warm and fuzzy’ image) to management of their circumstances (eighties-bred and nineties sharpened managerialism).

Generally, when social democratic regimes have taken the political reins, their tactics have been to allow bureaucracy a strong rein in determining how needs will be met. As a staff
member of bureaucracy serving the disadvantaged, I observed that under economically rationalist regimes, this approach led to simple administrative impression management of ‘representative community interaction’. Whereby marginalised groups were consulted, even involved on management committees, real decisions and priority setting, and allocation of vital public recurrent funds, came from bureaucrats. Often they were contract workers, employed by agencies used by governments to avoid employing full-time public servants. So they nervously guarded the budget turf and rejected anything outside the box, due mostly to managerialist surveillance. Few chose to side with the community’s wishes outside of policy guidelines, which in effect meant budget restrictions. This fits with evidence, such as the McKinsey Report in the nineties, showing Australian government increasingly off-loaded social responsibility to private providers. They failed Uncle Jurgen’s tests of truthfulness and rightness.

Real involvement of the intellectually disabled and mentally ill in the decisions that will affect their daily quality of life is not so common. It is given lip service in some agencies but is not influential across the public sector in my direct observation. Cynics observe that this is not surprising, given the sort of rationality which condones continued use of medication alone to suppress symptoms of illness, while ignoring the need for addressing patients’ inner needs. While evidence was available twenty years ago, that involving people in their own life management improved their attitudes, health and general hopefulness (I wrote many stories on this subject as a journalist for The Daily Telegraph in Sydney at the time, covering psychology, education, youth welfare and disadvantage), this has not been kept in the corporate memory.

Linear thinking prefers linear solutions to problems, not to engage with affective concepts and interactions between people. The famous story of the British hospital that ran perfectly, but in fact had no patients admitted, emphasised how irrational rational management can be. Many areas of social service management, with which I have worked (in welfare, housing, education and training) have slipped into such mechanistic Taylorist
habits under economic rationalism. My argument is that it is up to the citizenry, including the marginalised themselves, to demand a more responsive system. ‘Loonies in the lanes, and spazos in the streets’ if you like, borrowing the effective process of reclaiming language and redefining ‘nigger and queer’ labels, adopted since the sixties. Using the damning language itself, to reclaim the naming rights. So the patronising inherent prejudice in systems and services is disarmed before it gets going. Treating difference and diversity in human life as something to be managed into neat policy boxes is due for a spring clean.

On this model, the state emerges as the true independent variable, industrialisation being only an intervening variable in countries that are all capitalistic in structure. On that course the ultimate resource for development is culture. And here one speaks of culture not ‘just’ as scientific, technological, or educational knowledge, nor even as tradition, but rather as the social processes of identity formation. (13)

5. Sharing is survival—one in, all in

Raymond Williams was a mentor for many people seeking social justice. His work, as an academic and a creative artist, called for examination of modernity’s problems. He asked questions, as to where modernity might be going, with notions of representative government, justice and equality in this era of mesmeric change. His main character in the early novel Border Country, Will, a brilliant young social planner researching his native Wales, hears from an old friend of his father Harry, how the young man’s dad dealt with change:

I learned something, Will. Something in general we all know about, but I learned it from him. He couldn’t see life as chances. Everything with him was to settle. He took his own feelings and he built things from them. He lived direct, never by any other standard at all. (14)

This determination ‘take one’s own feelings and to settle’, to work things out in one’s own
mind, was a passion with Williams. He saw people’s life conditions directly connected to their decisions about joining in community. My argument is to rebuild this sort of process among the disadvantaged, by creating mechanisms which allow, encourage and inform self empowering processes of lifeworld design.

Services for the mentally ill and intellectually disabled are touchstones here. I believe, if these two groups can be properly assisted to get out and spell out their needs and aspirations, for better supported and integrated lives, then they can test the process. But they need allies, and people prepared to go the long haul. Change may be moving at mesmeric speed across most of society now, but resistance by the people currently running the system is likely to be strong. Unless they agree there is an efficiency and effectiveness outcome inherent in it. Which I observe there is, in health improvements, lack of recidivism, improved rates of rehabilitation, and general uplift in individual and group spirit.

We’re getting the result of our own denying. We’re getting it all except the life… What we talk about, Will, he’s lived. It all depends on a mind to it, a society or anything else… That’s… why Harry’s different. He changes a thing because he wants the new thing, and he settles to it because he wants it right through, not because the rejection is driving. (15)

Having ‘a mind to it’ is citizens’ starting point. The intellectually disabled have expressed to me the desire for more say in how their daily activities are designed and delivered. Certainly the mentally ill people I work and live with, show dissatisfaction with programs that do not help them recover, or rehabilitate skills for living in community and earning again.

Something of what Williams saw in the modern era’s change process is very telling in the predicament society has created for itself today, it seems to me. The generations from the first half of the twentieth century, who fought for what they saw as equal rights, have told me they have been dismayed by the reversal of much that had become taken for granted—i
terms of wages, conditions, welfare provision, and stewardship of the public estate. Watching legislation reversed, public services removed or privatised, and the public estate ‘sold off’ in the name of good financial management, has dismayed even Australian Liberal Party founding, business-supporting people like my parents, before they died. Meanwhile, profits grew in the private sector, shareholders gained increased returns, and jobs began disappearing with the arrival of people-replacing technology or ‘out-sourcing’ of previously permanent jobs in the public sphere. But things have been bad before:

September 1938. What a time to be going away? Not really that the shouting mattered. You had to shout on your own to feel it as a cause. Not only indignation, but a training to indignation. History omits our particular occasions, as it weaves its spell of a date. (16)

And as day to day life seems to accelerate, citizens seem not to be able to remember why valuing certain basic levels of social provision is essential. Western society is still within memory of the ‘gains’ that came from last century’s fights for rights. Now many of those have been lost. But I maintain they can be restored and redefined, in terms that make the parameters of human experience much broader than simply material provision.

Mentally ill and intellectually disabled people go to the heart of the human condition, because of two major aspects of their lives: they are needing healing in the heart, mind and soul department; and they are needing sharing in the community of humankind. People with those needs are silenced in a world run by rationality and monetarism, where inner life is not valued or practised ‘in communion’ with one another.

6. Changing for belonging or dividing?

Changing for the better

Change, pursuit of the new, impatience with tradition, restlessness in the company of old
patterns of life, these are the chapters in the story of modernity. Western societies have been swept up into their alluring winds over the past century. But increasing numbers of the members of those societies have been dumped, like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, when the tornado stopped. People recovering from the shock of landing from modernity’s tornado. Such as redundant workers with many years of ‘good working life ahead of them.’ And people with skills who can’t get jobs, and small businesses overrun by corporations. Such victims of economic rationalism’s ‘friendly fire’ feel shot. They have told me how they then feel somehow emptier, and unable to find bearings to begin again.

But a father is more than a person, he’s in fact a society, the thing you grow up into. For us, perhaps, that is the way to put it. We’ve been moved and grown into a different society. We keep the relationship, but we don’t take over the work. We have, you might say, a personal father, but no social father. What they offer us, where we go, we reject. (17)

The elements of isolation, lack of guidance, absence of mentors, and inability to remember ‘inherited pathways’, are all symptoms of modernity’s loss. While those working to maintain the democratic, common good will empathise and regret, it is now necessary for such supporters to ‘just get on.’ To re-find the natural elements to be applied for healthy human life. Rites of passage, active reference to elders, non-sectarian rituals to teach reverence and a way of reaching beyond the material concerns of life. These are some of the processes I believe can be restored, and are being in contemporary settings. Such strategies are necessary for immediate respiriting, as well as supporting the long journey in using the democratic process to challenge socio-economic destruction for the majority. The marginalised have a key role in helping lead this debate.

Moves among some business and public sector managers to embrace a return to deeper values, such as the SLAM group (Spirited Leaders And Managers), show things are swinging back. And I am arguing for more engagement with the intellectually disabled, as
process for rebuilding empathy and engagement with human needs. Such meeting of minds helps people regain a holistic sense of human purpose, which serves the group experience of life, not just individual self interest. In this way, embracing ‘progress’ can also re-express the necessary structures of feeling and experience, aspects that make us human. This encourages people to realise that life is not just about material survival, individual prosperity and financial success. It incorporates personal spirit growth, social responsibility, celebration, shared communion in reverence for life, and cooperative setting of priorities for the common good.

When ‘normal’ spend time with the intellectually disabled, they see these individuals have none of the outward trappings of successful lives. Yet they have the heartbeat that all share as a common denominator. If it’s beating off rhythm, everyone will know. And the ability these people have to share such moments exposes ‘normal’ people’s loss. Loss of the ability to open their lives to scrutiny by their community, and thus receive support.

Here is strength in weakness. ‘The very thing that makes me weak, makes me strong.’ And the next step is to connect that need for solidarity to active community process. The old maxim that an involved adolescent is a less-suicidal adolescent applies to all of us. People who choose to mix with the intellectually disabled, and work towards their integration into the community, are rich.

Sharing the belonging, the effort towards equitable life, is enriching. To help the intellectually disabled to secure jobs in mainstream circumstances, and to live in communities where they have enough practical and emotional support. So they can live with independence and joy, something that our whole society needs and desires. A return to love. Not as a soppy Hollywood image. As an indigenous style human faculty, as expressed in the Maori and Hawaiian ‘aroha’, ‘aloha’. You share it, you belong. Uncle Jurgen would approve.
Stuck in a future with no future?

Unfortunately, my observation is that the seeds of the current regime were sown out of good intention among the generation of WWII adults, who, like their parents, went on to try to make sure their children ‘had a better life than us.’

People would rather see their own sons separated, going away from them into the rituals of another kind of life, than probe at all deeply into their own lives, where the important changes must come. (18)

Williams saw a malaise among the baby boomer generation, people like me born after the World War II explosion of modernism. For us there was the foot-in-both-camps experience of seeing modernity’s crazy products and feeling it drag us into the future. As this generation is now ruling, it is questionable at the moment, as to how many are bothering to revalue the responsibility of leadership. The obsession our parents had with ‘the future’ seems strangely nostalgic.

Change seemed so necessary straight after WWII. And education such a major tool, to ensure ‘getting away from what we went through’. Yet many previously held ‘traditional’ values were discarded by that very decision, to replace traditional patterns with future-only orientation. Not to be stuck, to move forward. I believe that is one reason the WWI generation missed out on facing many of their internal issues. They had too big a job to do driving progress onwards after ‘the big one’.

Even though inside, some may have regretted the very process they were driving forward so determinedly. And, like my parents, they remembered being much happier when everyone was pulling their weight to fight against adversity throughout the war years. Community for many was a daily, moment-by-moment thing during those times of life and death living. And although no consistency held across all societies, and self-interest still surfaced on a consistent basis during the war, there was a strong sense of community spirit, making sacrifices and helping one another. The very thing that strengthened their own lives, the
were moving their children and themselves, away from. On Jurgen’s scale, this may have seemed a good idea at the time, but it was leading to dangerously compromised territory. Progress is not only measured by material achievement, status on the educational ladder, and how many ‘old fashioned ways’ could be discarded.

The intellectually disabled represent one of the groups still living in daily adversity. They are the least likely to ‘get on’, in material, status and power terms. Their very vulnerability and inability to ‘perform’ in the achievement stakes, means they are bound for second row status in the rush of modernity. I say, thank god, along with Jean Vanier and Henri Nouwen, old time workers in this sector. Because they can help the rest to see the importance of stopping, and thinking and feeling a bit more. About what people might decide is good for them as a species, a society, a community of souls.

And the mentally ill are also examples of what many fear. That the pace of change and the stress will ‘drive them crazy’. Inside many fear they are ‘losing it’, when in fact the best thing they could do is lose it. So that their lives might readjust. Their hearts and souls let their minds slow down and ‘catch up’ by stopping.

The directed self acted, and the other, the unknown, merely disturbed and compromised, in a widening area of misunderstanding and damage. At the very time when he saw beyond the limits of the settlement, he was still a child of the settlement... He could feel it now, every day, in the bodies of others. It came through as pain, and there was then no separation: the pain of others was quite literally his own. (19)

Williams felt the pain of change occurring in his home country of Wales, and across Britain and the western world. Applying a similar view now, forty years later, to what remains the chronic problem in modern societies, it still feels painful—denial of the inner life. The pretence that material life is all that counts.
7. Protecting or denying?

Laws against human nature

In considering the path of legislative, regulatory and administrative ‘progress’, in serving the interests of vulnerable groups, like schoolchildren, intellectually disabled and the mentally ill, it is interesting to consider where modern decision-making processes have ended up. The notion seems logical, that protecting people’s rights means separating them from vulnerability to abuse. But when that same decision means denying the majority access to healthy, normal exchange of sharing, caring and affection, it seems to me to be out of hand.

Because of the rise in pedophilia notifications in western nations, rules have been introduced to prevent teachers and health workers from touching students and patients. They must have someone else present to protect the individual from potential abuse by an authority figure, for any necessary procedural manoeuvres. I argue that fear of a small minority of sick individuals, has therefore been allowed to steer a basic human communication process out of its normal healthy place in society. If the same value system put exchange of love high on the scale, and the need all humans have for physical affection and reassurance, then such knee jerk reactions would be reconsidered. People in professionally responsible positions would be trained and trusted to behave responsibly, not made the objects of suspicion because particular individuals behaved in a sick manner.

Looking at the way intellectually disabled people seek affection, show affection, share feelings and explode with them when necessary, they seem to me to illustrate healthy human process. My question of the current dominant decision-making system is, ‘How have we “advanced” to the point, where humanity no longer trusts itself to be naturally exchanging what is its most needed commodity?’ And if evidence is needed, of what happens when this commodity is in low supply, it is only necessary to look to the mentally ill, and see a group of individuals who have been left to ‘cook in their own juices’.
I argue that, because of materialist empirical thinking, and pharmacological domination of allopathic health systems, there is no mechanism for healing mental illness in the west, based on what are cynically labeled as ‘touchy feely’ techniques. Such as I have worked with in Bangalore, India, at the Athma Shakti Vidyalaya (‘Spirit Self Empowerment School’ therapeutic live-in community for schizophrenics). Why? Because they have been pooh-poohed into extinction. Are the rates of recovery from mental illness improving? No. Are suicides increasing? Yes. Despite evidence that the current drug-based approach is not working, this is ignored in favour of continuing drug therapy and patient monitoring alone. I argue they fail Uncle Jurgen’s four tests, and they are not serving humanity as they are.

Anyone knowing the pressures of course also knew that the effort required, for the real changes, was almost beyond human strength. But there was no gaining of strength, there was only deliberate weakening, while this other pattern persisted. It was really as if, oppressed by an enemy, a people had conceived its own liberation as training its sons for the enemy service. (20)

Williams is exploring the phenomenon of modernism—the changes wrought by ‘progress’, which create pain and separation, from each other and the previous way. He is both acknowledging its inevitability and questioning its worth. The emphasis is on the human experience, the feelings involved, and the way people silently comply. My case is that it is time to change the rules of compliance. Illustrating the efficacy of ways which generate efficient and effective outcomes, but use a value system based on feelings and experience, more than pharmacology and monitoring alone.

8. Mutual celebration and wonder

What will you be reading Will? Books, sir? No, better not. History, sir. History from the Kestrel, where you sit and watch memory move, across the wide valley. That was the sense of it: to watch, to interpret, to try to get clear. Only the wind narrowing your eyes, and so much living in you, deciding what you will see and how
you will see it. Never above, watching. You'll find what you're watching is yourself.

(21)

Raymond Williams is such an appropriate uncle for our journey, because he felt for society. He knew change was inevitable, but that history had threads in it, which were essential to humanity's manoeuvring through the future. 'Watching ourselves' is what people do when they work with the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill. My view is, that by joining their lives, assisting in providing better quality experiences and integration into mainstream lifeworlds, they reciprocate by healing the sense of loss and uncertainty felt across society. About how to chart a course into the future.

Like the canary in the cage down the mines of Williams' native Wales, indicating a gas leak before it became too dangerous, there are indicators working on the side of all humanity. 'Watch memory move, across the wide valley... (and) you'll find what you're watching is yourself.' (22) This is where the tribe of modernism is now at, in my view. Life is crazy, things seem to be running amok. Some feel there are monkeys in charge of the ship. So what to do? Get involved and help steer a course that suits the human heart.

'Working the mystery' and healing

Two aspects stand out here for special mention. They come from exploring feelings and experience, and I believe they are needed in the mainstream conversation of social progress. Mystery and wonder. Not mumbo-jumbo talk. Actual acceptance of the fact that, just like imagination and creativity, and feelings and dreams, fractals and holograms, humans have these aspects to their lives. In the consciousness. They are part of people and culture, and therefore the thing people 'should be working', in the indigenous sense. To place them in context here, Uncle Raymond has some reflections on 'traffic'.

There was an obvious strangeness in the fact of traffic. The approaching headlights
the amber indicator, the high bulk of a lorry: these were the facts with which
consciousness had to deal... he remembered a definition of consciousness, in the report of an experiment: its elements were flashing light, reactions, learned signals, learned patterns... As in the traffic, most people were known in these isolated images, with a quick decision on relevance to oneself, in the rapidly changing series.

Peter wondered how deeply he had been formed by this world. (23)

That story serves to illustrate so much about the modern condition. In the midst of the rush of modernity’s traffic in change, people are uncertain, unfinished, inarticulate. My point is that people need one another to help find the way through this era of post-industrial life.

Part of that journey is to revalue our indigenous heritage of numinous ways of being, and part of it is to learn from the meek. Williams was in a lifelong exploration of change and its impact on consciousness. His own version of ‘the structure of feeling’ was a version which combined ‘culture’ and ‘realpolitik’. He took from literature what British writers had told, about how people felt living during the era of the rise of modernism. He looked at these indicators in the context of what was happening in their politico-economic world under capitalism. It didn’t wow him.

Now that the process has moved so far on from his vantage point, it pays to stop and reflect on what he was trying to show up, and illustrate possible ways to balance out the mad misalignment of values in so-called ‘progress’. His allegory of the traffic merges with Uncle Bernard’s ‘cultural traffic’ allegory, in the echo-logical mixing of cultures in history. I hold that it is possible to respond to these processes with healthy senses of mystery and wonder. Not denying any rational understanding of science and economics and their stories about life. But with an added dimension of humility in the face of what comes up in the universe. The same sort of humility that acknowledges the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill as peers, brothers and sisters, with whom and from whom people can learn, share and grow.

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In Freud's canon, which Uncle Raymond's era found so influential, 'Ego' seemed to me the best word for describing the predominant character of modernism. Its willful, self-centred push for progress has lacked humility and sought out its own ends before all else. Uncle Raymond felt for the boundary fences of modernism, and what they might show beyond. My argument wants to return to that process, and give it greater attention.

Like Jacques Lusseyran 'touching the tomatoes' (24), in his blindness and energy receiving, people can touch the edges of progress and find appropriate levels of mystery and wonder to help reclaim balance. Not out of control with egotistical certainty and rational bluster and boosterism. But a quieter rationalism, based on responsibility for the common good informed by respect for the mysteries of life.

As Uncle Michael says: 'There is a potential for rationality already inherent in the culture to be released and to do its work in further 'domesticating' its once friendly political and administrative structures in the service of its own national population and its social and economic needs' (25).
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
CHAPTER THREE
THE STRUCTURE OF FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCE

A—RAYMOND WILLIAMS

In exploring human consciousness, through the doorway of feelings and experiences as uncovered by Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith, this work aims to take a wide view. By scanning large territory of consciousness, it is possible to reflect on the broad trends within humanity, and then ascertain what overlapping themes arise.

The first part of this journey covers the wide areas explored by these two researchers. Later on, the trends arising will be used to refine a focus on the structure of feelings and experience that can be applied to both mainstream humanity, and the two groups which will form the subject for follow-on work from this—the intellectually disabled, and the mentally ill.

1. Comparative morphology of the soul

Emerging from ‘the age of reason and irrationality’, as we might classify the last twenty years of economic rationalism and virtual reality impression management, it pays to pause and reflect on what has transpired in humanity’s love affair with evolution. Science has come full circle and now gathers in the corner with the alchemists, exploring the ether and transmutation of energy, and even love. In the journey to explore alternative aspects of consciousness, there were distinguished forebears among those seekers of new knowledge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who wandered into territories occupied by the strange, even bizarre on the way to the revolution of evolution.

The influence of the Pacific upon Darwin’s other great friend Thomas Henry Huxley
was not such that it led him directly to evolutionary theory. But it did, by bringing him into direct contact with most primitive forms of marine life, lead him directly towards fundamental discoveries in comparative morphology. (1)

What these explorers of form and phyla discovered was a system for tracing patterns in creation. They showed humility and respect in the face of wonder and diversity. But it was rapidly replaced among their successors with a type of mechanical classification, which spread through all forms of 'knowledge', with the confident assumption that naming something meant it was understood and under man's control. Taxonomic despotism.

Confronted with a chaotic array of nondescript material, Huxley hit upon the notion of classifying according to an archetypal principle, according, that is, to a fundamental structural plan revealed by a study of many individuals, rather than according to superficial resemblances in appearance or mode of life. (2)

In considering the shared attributes of consciousness, I believe that it is also possible to trace an archetypal structural plan, which indicates where many of the deepest links between humans lie. Two researchers of culture and society have plotted the traces of humanity's structure of feeling and experience: 'uncles' Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith. Williams explored Culture and Society; Smith, Art and Ideas. Like Darwin and Huxley, they make a good pair as guides for exploring consciousness.

To begin this exploration, it is advisable to apply one of Bernard Smith's major approaches. In sporting terminology it is called 'keeping your eye off the ball'. Therefore allowing natural instinct to find the target, and lateral vision and thought to influence the intuitive 'game'. In such a way it may be possible to explore aspects of consciousness shared among all humans, showing up through feelings and experience. Combined with the meandering way of walkabout, the 'slow down' approach, this is particularly important in considering the needs and aspirations of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill. In my observation working with them, their feelings are not paramount in the way the system sets
its priorities for them. Failing the tests of right and truthful realisation of their oft-stated departmental visions, goals, objectives and policies.

Furthermore, the study of zoological individuality became an important one for Huxley... He came to the conclusion that biological individuality was a process; that individuality was not to be expressed in static but in dynamic terms. (3)

In the sense that this work explores consciousness, it also is understood as a process through which individuality is expressed in dynamic rather than static terms (4). This is the territory of comparative morphology of the soul, a field that will hopefully lead to indicators for better understanding of the human condition. And thus ways to better serve those whose needs are not clearly understood by ‘the system’, which is meant to serve them, can be found.

2. Framework for life experience

Raymond Williams established a way of thinking about human experience that changed the way people examined history. He believed that culture and society were built on a ‘structure of feeling’ shared in the consciousness of ordinary people. While he was a Marxist focused on applying dialectical materialism as a set of principles with which to understand the world, he actually wandered through the hearts, minds and souls of modern humanity in his work. Always taking the side of the underdog, principally the working class at the mercy of capitalism.

Williams said he used the work for his first book, ‘as a way of finding a position from which I could hope to understand and act in contemporary society’ (5). This work takes that position as a starting point for examining the needs of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill, and how their feelings and experience can be more sensitively acknowledged.
Uncle Raymond had begun his work ‘in the post–1945 crisis of belief and affiliation’ (6). His efforts helped many people around the world find hope and belief in a better way for humanity to behave than the cruelty and pointlessness of war.

The aim here, in following his trail of thinking, will be to find a structure of feeling which suits humanity today. In yogic wisdom, life operates best ‘in balance’, and that balance is shown in practice to be established through the exercise of tension, between forces operating in opposing but complementary directions. Not warring duality, but collaborating energies. I hope to expose some of the dynamic collaborative potentials, in aligning human needs and services, informed by this understanding of consciousness.

A parallel principle applies to individual human lives and our group experience in society. It is the perspective on healing from homoeopathic teaching, that ‘like cures like’. The work uncle Raymond did can possibly assist us in seeing where healing links can be made, between feelings, experience and services to meet their needs. His exploration of culture and society was based at the outset on ‘the truths of his own experience’, as his friend and biographer Fred Inglis put it. ‘He kept up his faith in the moral content of ordinary life. He believed that people learned of necessity, and took to heart the lessons of solidarity and kindliness, peacefulness and an ecological good conscience.’ (7) Williams came up with a basic set of life processes, which I believe everyone shares in, and which can then be used to ‘see how we’re going’. His ‘rider’ message was the need to know that these things would always be changing:

The truth about a society, it would seem, is to be found in the actual relations, always exceptionally complicated, between the system of communication and learning, the system of maintenance and the system of generation and nurture... Our contemporary experience of work, love, thought, art, learning, decision and play is more fragmented than in any other recorded kind of society, yet still, necessarily, we try to make connections, to achieve integrity, and to gain control, and in part we
succeed. (8)

What he argued against was the reduction of society ‘to two spheres of interest, two kinds of thinking, two versions of social relationship: politics (the system of decision) and economics (the system of maintenance)’ (9) For this work, the lives of intellectually disabled and mentally ill people fall into the gap, which persists between these two remaining dominant forms of thinking. While Williams believed humanity needed to get beyond class and power determined versions of how the world operates, society remains stuck in that trap, as I have experienced structures meant to serve humans’ needs. Those in the lower end of society’s power hierarchy are unable to influence policies and programs directly affecting them. So it takes more of the general citizenry to act on their behalf.

What uncle Raymond saw as unnatural and unhealthy, I believe is now directly degrading the lives of marginalised groups, such as the intellectually disabled and mentally ill.

To limit a society to its systems of decision and maintenance is in fact ridiculous ... the true nature of society—a human organisation for common needs—was in fact filtered through the interests in power and property, which were natural to ruling groups ... the alternative society that is proposed must be in wider terms, if it is to generate the full energies necessary for its creation... The integration of work and life, and the inclusion of activities we call cultural in the ordinary social organisation are the basic terms of an alternative form of society. (10)

Here is a version of human organisation which bases social thinking on our ‘general humanity’, rather than on the needs of a ‘received system’ (11). It argues for including the lived experience he used, as a basis for discerning truth. I argue that, for there to be any improvement in the lifeworld of the marginalised we are examining, the values uncle Raymond addressed need to be brought higher onto the agenda. He extracted from English literature patterns of human feeling and thought, which he felt were valuable for
understanding and improving the human condition. His work began to unpack a series of contradictions in modern life, which now dominate our lifeworld.

The approach of this work is that exploring the experience of marginalised groups shows us aspects of all human lives, many of which remain hidden under ‘normal’ behaviour. Social structures. The need for more inclusion of heart and soul, for more con
tact expression of joy, grief and wonder, and for more shared engagement in the connection with the rhythms of the earth, are suggested as just some of the areas need to be brought back into regular human exchange. And I believe this is possible, through provision of public services, if the will of management is there to value such approachs.

Theodore Zeldin has said, the way back to healthy human affairs is through conversation that activity unique to human beings, through which we can ‘explore new territory and become an adventure.’ (12)

In conversation feelings are handed back and forth until an intimacy develops, the other person’s concerns become one’s own. Love ultimately means that a person’s welfare, hopes and fears matter as much as one’s own ... we are entwined in the fabric of the conversation of love. (13)

Perhaps the simplest analogy is that we are given the opportunity now to replace the currency of exchange in money and power with that of love, truth and responsibility for life. Something akin to Uncle Jurgen’s concepts, in his early work on the ‘The Communicative Action’, that humanity needs to move towards achieving four expressions of our true nature: truth, truthfulness, rightness and comprehensibility. While Uncle Jurgen nearly dipped out in the last category himself, in that his language is almost impenetrable, he gave us plenty to chew on – being used here as a test of the validity of modern current processes for dealing with the disadvantaged. But Raymond Williams spoke for ‘everyman,’ yet despite wide acclaim long acknowledgement, the implications...
work have not apparently been seen as an indicator of applied truth, which could to be factored into social planning.

Zeldin’s point about conversation reflects the process of indigenous life rhythms, which are designed to ‘celebrate the wonder of life’ as humans’ major process of living. Putting the practical survival processes into proper perspective, alongside the greater acknowledgement of the two overarching values in human affairs—the common good, and the higher power, of the mysterious universe, god, call it what you like. Put another way, as Chief Seattle told the world, ‘all things are connected’, (Schaef, Native Wisdom) and politics, economics, power and privilege are only one set of parameters with which to construct life.

3. Acknowledging the real lifeworld

Summing up Raymond Williams’ main subjects, in his coverage of the structure of feelings and experience, we can link these with their direct implication for the lifeworlds of the mentally ill and the intellectually disabled. And we can align them against Uncle Jurgen’s four-way test. Williams expressed his interpretations in terms of both principles and life applications, which can be extrapolated to the current feelings and experience of the two main subject groups of this work.

3.1 Knowledge is born of experience, not abstract ideas

Uncle Raymond believed that knowledge of life comes from experience more than abstract ideas. He saw that life driven by conceptual, mechanistic thought and values, put above lived experience and intuition as paths to the truth, is separated from the whole world with which human beings are meant to be integrated. Life becomes (quoting Coleridge) translated... into a dead language, for the purposes of memory, arrangement and general communication. (14)
I believe this 'dead language' concept could be used to describe the abstract, bureaucratic jargon and management processes overseeing the lifeworlds of intellectually disabled and mentally ill people. For the former, there is basically an approach of corraling and treating like sheep, as I have observed in well-meaning but low intensity Australian situations. For the latter the system seems to need more directive, drug-based 'control' processes, as they may be 'a danger to themselves and others'. My point is that arrangements predominate over feelings and experience. Uncle Jurgen's test of rightness and truthfulness to policy rhetoric is not passed in such circumstances.

Uncle Raymond pointed out that dualism in separating 'the mind' from 'feelings' is a mistake in human affairs. He showed it led to a split in values, which he claimed fuelled the destruction of essential human activities, as they became regarded as peripheral. This is exactly what I have seen happening to the mentally ill—in a northern Sydney modern hospital psychiatric unit, and in its community health services parallel operation, once patients are 'allowed out'. To my own son.

While legislation allegedly forced the removal of mentally ill people from institutional life many years ago, no provision was made for appropriate community support services, to allow them to rebuild lives of dignity and independence. I am arguing that what is possible today is a return to responsive politics, where voters can influence such inadequate public provision. By choosing political candidates, who know the need for more person-centred, caring and hopeful development programs for such people.

3.2 Political economy is for general societal health

That political economy should be concerned with the general health of society, was a 'bottom line' belief for Raymond. He felt it is vulnerable to immoral behaviour when laissez faire principles overrule all else: 'In came calculation and out went feeling.' (15) 'That then is an emptiness in the sort of society where the framework of relationships is built on money transactions, and that "there are so many things which cash will not pay."

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The dominance of monetaristic values in managing human environments, particularly for people who are not able to assertively demand their rights, has now become chronic, in my direct practical engagement. Costs, efficiencies, balance sheets and budgets dominate, in health, education, housing, rehabilitation and community services. Consequently, people are subordinate, despite the rhetoric of eighties style business plans and vision statements for departments, which sprout ‘customer service’ and ‘learning organisation’ as priority values. Without blaming any individual managers or even politicians, the system has become swamped in rhetoric but run by ‘sphinctitis’ – the new street jargon for monetarist accounting, which cuts costs at the expense of services, staff and clients.

Uncle Raymond said industrial capitalism created a separation of people from one another, breeding a way of life where ‘Recognition of evil was balanced by fear of becoming involved. Sympathy was transformed, not into action, but into withdrawal. We can all observe the extent to which this structure of feeling has persisted, into both the literature and the social thinking of our own time.’ (17)

So it has become, in my own networks of self-help parents’ groups in Sydney and across Australia, that families and friends of the mentally ill cannot get changes in the way their loved ones are treated in the hospitals. Or better support for them when they come out into community group homes. ‘The model’ of management requires medication, supervision and monitoring. Rehabilitation is a nominal gesture, which means little more than babysitting. And so an abstract idea about efficiency dominates over quality of life.

Coupled with this is the slavish following of mechanistic thought, discrediting the personal feelings and experience of the people involved at all sides of this situation. Uncle Raymond saw modernism ushering in ‘one of the falsest maxims which ever pandered to human selfishness under the name of political wisdom... forgetting that the very name of society
implies that it shall not be a mere race, but that its object is to provide for the common good of all.' (18) (quoting Matthew Arnold).

Detachment of the public sphere from responsibilities for either employees or customers, by outsourcing personnel services and sub-contracting service delivery to private agencies, has seen the system sold out to business. For purposes of profit, not valuing people. This has been shown by research, but needs no further evidence than personal engagement with a system overtaken by financial considerations over all else. Yet, arguments about 'greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness' have been seen by families, patients themselves not to have held up in practice. Costs have generally gone up. So, my point is that people would be forgiven for thinking the whole process has been one of privatising the public estate. Total failure on Uncle Jurgen's four point test – not true, to the spirit of what it's meant to be doing, not truthful, not right and not making sense.

3.3 Human nature comes from the whole way of life of a culture

That human nature is the product of a whole way of life of a culture (19), was one of uncle Raymond's key points. By this value system, decisions about what sorts of services people are provided in community care need to be holistic. Where I have worked they have not been. There are some attempts in parts of Australia, but overall this is not 'management policy.' The concept that life 'is to be experienced in a way, which produces continuing and progressive civilisation,' (20) is alien to today's prevailing conditions.

Instead of 'the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterise our humanity'—ie. 'cultivation' in Coleridge's words (21), we have qualities of mechanistic management of people's lives. 'A nation can never be a too cultivated, but may easily become an over-civilised, race.' (22) This is what I observe has happened in the mental health and general rehabilitation system. Modern civilisation is run on mechanistic values, and the marginalised groups have lost all semblance of quality of life, which would engage with the needs of their inner lives.

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Raymond’s view saw that separating mind from feelings produced a society of individuals denied acknowledgement of their full lives or effective relationships with one another. We only need to visit any mental hospital, or community health centre, to see the extent of this division showing up in our society. ‘External attachment replaces inward claims to real experience. As Carlyle put it: ‘Intellect, the power man has of knowing and believing, is now nearly synonymous with Logic, or the mere power of arranging and communicating. Its implement is not Meditation, but Argument.’ ’ (23) (quoting Carlyle).

What I believe is needed, to return from what I call this ‘logical madness’ we have ended up in, is to restore the sorts of people-valuing priorities that uncle Raymond believed in. It is now a matter of going back to taws, to find the principles which were briefly taken for granted in public provision, before that led to their demise under a new regime. Compare this with the value system expressed by Matthew Arnold, that ‘Culture is right knowing and right doing; a process and not an absolute.’ (24). It is the position of this work that ‘right knowing and right doing’ requires a basic set of understandings about human needs, which place feelings and experience at the top of the list, along with material survival needs.

3.4 Culture of ‘the inward man’ is ‘the problem of problems’

Uncle Raymond held that the culture of ‘the inward man’ is ‘the problem of problems,’ requiring us to ‘listen to the true and unerring impulses of our better nature’ to find the guiding principles for our common life (25). I claim that valuing the lives of the mentally ill means providing them with experiences which respect their need for full lives. Currently this is not occurring, as I have observed in hospitals and community ‘group homes’ around Sydney. Their days are full of medicated blurr, and occasional rehabilitation group which do little more than waste away the hours. Which is why most ‘clients’ don’t attend regularly, or only do so because it is a mandatory condition of their community treatment orders.
Uncle Raymond stressed that we need to keep culture as an integrated part of all of life, not a separate entity away from the ‘main purposes’ of society (read politics, economics), or a commodity to be bought and sold. As I understand it, this means offering people like the intellectually disabled opportunities to participate in the life of their community, as full members, not ‘special guests’ in some freak show. And for the mentally ill to be able to join in experiences in cultural activities as respected participants.

As uncle Raymond pointed out, the importance of Carlyle’s sense of ‘reverence’ expressing ‘the governing seriousness of a living effort,’ (26) is apposite in this context. Seeing the significance of providing serious engagement for individuals and groups in the common celebration of culture and community. Carlyle stressed, ‘An irreverent knowledge is no knowledge; it may be a development of the logical order or other handicraft faculty inward or outward; but it is no culture of the soul of a man.’ (27) On Jurgen’s four way test these activities have fail all around.

3.5 Society’s value lies in its conditions for ‘wholeness of being’

Raymond argued that ‘the goodness of a society lies in its creation of the conditions for “wholeness of being” ‘ (28) (quoting John Ruskin). Raymond Williams saw the 19th century English social thinkers ‘stressing interrelation and interdependence.’ (29) My view is that it is not impossible to rediscover this aspect of community, and to achieve it within the existing system of public provision. By finding the ways to interrelate the lives of the intellectually disabled with their wider community, both parties would be enriched.

Currently, in the areas where I have worked, there are processes in place which have the intellectually disabled shunted around in buses, herded in and out of sheltered workshops, and organised in groups that have little connection with the wider world. I argue that breaking this cycle of isolation, and finding engagements in permanent activities ‘in community’, will be part of emancipating them, and restoring community.
3.6 Equality among human beings is a given

Williams passionately believed that equality among human beings is a given, part of our natural condition, and therefore should be part of the on-going process of human affairs. Quoting D.H. Lawrence, he emphasised: 'Society means people living together. People must live together... When I stand with another man, who is himself, and when I am truly myself, then I am only aware of a Presence, and of the strange reality of Otherness. There is me, and there is another being... There is no comparing or estimating. There is only this strange recognition of present otherness.' (30)

I believe that, when today's understanding of mental illness reaches the point of seeing that many people carry disturbance through their days, and that all people have needs for sharing and exposing their 'madness', society will have progressed. Currently the symptoms are simply suppressed and the 'clients' housed in places where they will cause the least disturbance, as I observe happening to my own son and his peers. Efforts to bring about community integration have been sporadic, and any failures cripple such attempts 'in the next funding round'. I argue this is not equality in action. So the only answer which seems to remain in a democratic society, is to move electorally to influence provision of more integrating services. And to persevere with those well intentioned programs that have been tried occasionally. And to support the many well-intentioned workers struggling under a despirited system.

3.7 Culture is an energy of the soul

Williams explored the work of R.H. Tawney, and 'his argument that contemporary society will move merely from one economic crisis to another, unless it changes both its values and the system which embodies them. Culture is... an energy of the soul. When it feeds on itself, instead of drawing nourishment from the common life of mankind, it ceases to grow, and, when it ceases to grow it ceases to live.' (31)
Going Walkabout through the Suburbs

The position of mentally ill people in our society is currently divorced from this concept of being part of 'the common life of mankind'. Individuals are 'cases' to be managed, more than citizens with needs reflecting something of 'the energy of soul' that is our whole culture. When this perspective is brought further into the shared light of community wide conversation, I feel there is a chance humanity might begin to repair its social fabric.

Nourishment for all from all, including the lives of people of difference, is a concept that seems to me not beyond possibility. As Uncle Jurgen said, 'I know that all learning depends on the formation of inner motives.' (32) From the people I know working 'in the system', there is plenty of inner motive to work for the good of people. The problem now is that management surveillance punishes people for going outside policy limitations and trying to relate to people's real needs.

To further complicate matters, some of those real needs may be reflecting aspects of shared experience that are actually unconscious, let alone invisible. Uncle Raymond's exploration of T.S. Eliot's work showed how the poet emphasised that 'a large part of life is necessarily unconscious'. (33) Eliot may have been helping people to open themselves to perspectives that would heal many today. Those who remain stuck in an attempt to be 'in control', when life is certainly racing beyond any individual's 'control'.

'A large part of our common beliefs is our common behaviour, and this is the main point of difference between the two meanings of culture. What we sometimes call culture—a religion, a moral code, a system of law, a body of work in the arts—is to be seen as only a part—the conscious part—of that culture which is the whole way of life.' (34) My position is that this common behaviour suggests society would operate better with more sharing of the diversity within our mix. Opportunities for the mentally ill to contribute in neighbourhood activities, creative occasions, and times of reverence and ritual, would be a start. Giving priority to such activities in public programs and policies seems a distant goal at present. So Jurgen's test of rightness seems way above the standards currently being met.

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3.8 Resist individual, fragmenting 'atomism'

When uncle Raymond investigated the trend towards substituting elites for classes, based on the reidentification of class with 'function', as argued by Mannheim, he was ahead of his time in predicting what has happened to our society’s management processes. Working in the public sphere and in business, I have seen the achievement-based, or meritocratic, way of classifying people has largely come to fruition. While Raymond believed it a mistake not to argue against individual, fragmenting 'atomism', and for continuity of considering culture as a whole way of life (3.5), the evidence is that modern society has ended up with exactly that. My argument here, is that the lesson from this trend is to reapply Raymond’s logic and value system in the way alternative community activities and services are proposed, planned and delivered. Piloting examples will assist in illustrating its efficiency, effectiveness and efficacy.

3.9 Understanding depends on extending the expression and exchange of experience

In his examination of the literary criticism of I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis, Raymond Williams showed that art and society did not need to be separated and competitive with one another. He favoured their integration. The lack of community creative expression activities for intellectually disabled and mentally ill is a symptom of the discard with which modern society currently treats them. ‘The essential values, as I see them, are common to the whole process (of the cultural revolution occurring hand-in-hand with the technological revolution): that (people) should grow in capacity and power to direct their own lives—by creating democratic institutions, by bringing new sources of energy to human work, and by extending the expression and exchange of experience on which understanding depends.’ (36)

Art, craft, music, dance, drama and other expressions are more than recreational activities, to ‘keep people busy’. They are fundamental aspects of community, and celebrating
humanity. I argue for their introduction on a serious level for rehabilitation. It is not, as Jean Vanier points out, that they desperately want independence and free expression, at the cost of friendship and community. But having their creative needs met, as well as enjoying company and engagement in society, makes for healing and growth.

3.10 Integration for all members of society wherever possible

Uncle Raymond believed that creative energy should be encouraged and given voice by the organisations society had a duty to create, to allow cultural expression and development. He saw ‘There is not society on the one had and these (creative) individuals on the other.’ (37) Similarly, there is not a society on the one hand and these intellectually disabled, mentally ill or other types of difference.

What can be learnt from his perspective is the importance of integration for all members of society wherever possible, in order to nurture the full culture. ‘We can see how much even highly original individuals had in common, in their actual work, and in what is called their structure of feeling, with other individual workers of the time, and with the society of that time to which they belonged.’ (38) Raymond’s view saw all people included, and that is the priority I believe we need to recapture in public policy making. To remove the current boxes that exclude, and replace them with guarantees of inclusion, where people wish for it and it is feasible within community standards of safety.

‘The contributors are involved in their society, both in profound ways and in their ordinary human needs, and they usually suffer if they are cut off from it, whether as impractical dreamers or as untouchable spirits. ‘ (39) I believe Raymond’s understanding of the needs of creative artists extends to marginalised groups especially. In the current experience of being ‘serviced by the system,’ intellectually disabled people are not experiencing mainstream inclusion. And mentally ill people find themselves isolated in public places, because they are not facilitated into comfortable experiences within their own society. Visiting the shopping mall or picture theatre is an outing, but it is not rehabilitation.
3.11 Standardisation leads to sloth and vacancy

Raymond's resistance to 'mass culture' was for good reason, I believe, in the wake of 'blandification' of so much mass mediated cultural production. He believed it reduced the level of possibility for sharing ideas, creative and feeling among all citizens. 'Isn't the real threat of mass culture ... that it reduces us to an endlessly mixed, undiscriminating, fundamentally bored reaction? The spirit of everything, art and entertainment, can become so standardised that we have no absorbed interest in anything, but simply an indifferent acceptance, bringing together what Coleridge called indulgence of sloth and hatred of vacancy.' (40)

Uncle Raymond was not backward in coming forward to criticise media products. He felt frustrated that standards of cultural expression were becoming shallow. Not against populism, but defending the need for maintaining a wider scope of provision. While not wanting to debate matters of taste in popular culture, the phenomenon of mass mediated life becoming a lowest common denominator process, holds true today. This is a choice for consumers, but more poignantly, I argue it is the vacancy of community behind passive cultural consumption, which magnifies the disconnection from groups like the intellectually disabled.

When Uncle Raymond said about popular culture, 'You are not exactly enjoying it, or paying any particular attention, but it's passing the time. And in so deadly an atmosphere the great tradition simply cannot live,' (41) he was pointing out the kind of passive acceptance that fuels social neglect. While intellectually disabled people have active, socially involved lives with their own community, the prospect of mainstream cultural activities incorporating them as a regular part of the program is distant on current indications. I believe this situation can be remedied, and that the Paralympics in Sydney 2000 showed how much general community support there is for sharing such occasions.
3.12 Commercialising dreams confuses experience

Raymond claimed modern media have decided to compete on the field of people's dreams, by using TV and other media to present advertisements which portray invitations to another world of consciousness, in order to sell products. He was virulent in his criticism of commercialisation of media to one end only. He saw the packaging of audiences to consumer media products, and their associated advertising, as a negative trend.

The relevant perspective for concerns about people like the mentally ill, is that while people are being sold ideal images of the ideal life, those who are 'out of the picture' are more likely to be excluded from acceptance in the 'normal world'. Raymond saw that 'In a sense the product has become irrelevant: the advertiser is working directly on images and dreams. The concentration of such advertisements creates a whole style of life, centred largely in fantasy, which is in effect a common interest of all advertisers, rather than the recommendation of particular products. All ordinary values are temporarily overridden by a kind of bastard art, not clarifying experience but deliberately confusing it.' (42)

No room is left, in this confused and manipulated world, for valuing and engaging with the lives of people who are 'less than', according to the image machine. It would be just as possible to use this form of communication to 'sell' messages about the wonderful attributes of character and courage among the intellectually disabled. As with ads for the Paralympics. That won't sell products, or provide shareholders with profit. But it could lift the standard of understanding and acceptance across society. So I advocate keeping such goals in mind, as campaigns to celebrate disability of any kind, is still worth it.

3.13 Who are the masses and minorities?

Concepts of 'the masses', 'mass media' and 'public opinion' were to Williams signs of more manipulation of ordinary people's awareness. His argument is important here, in underpinning a perspective on where the disadvantaged 'sit' in our society. They are not the masses. Yet they are people, just like the members of the alleged masses. So who are
they really? ‘It is then a matter for argument whether the masses and the minority are inevitable social facts, or whether they are communication models which in part create and reinforce the situation they apparently describe.’ (43) My point is that refusing to accept such implied movements or forces in society as ‘the masses’, is one way to return to active citizenship. And aggregating to support the concerns of minorities is good grist to the mill of the common good. Otherwise people continue to fall foul of presumption and generalisation, ignoring the lifeworld concerns of the disadvantaged because they are minorities. The other side to this story is for these groups to get out and make themselves better seen and better known. That is beginning to happen as more combined support and group campaigns arise.

3.14 Society is a form of communication, sharing experience

Uncle Raymond saw ‘new ways of passing ideas, information and attitudes from person to person’ as one of the modern age’s most powerful improvements and inventions. ‘Society is a form of communication, through which experience is described, shared, modified and preserved.’ (44) His emphasis here is essential to the gaining of both recognition for the mentally ill, and their further healing and growth, through direct involvement in the processes of how society communicates.

‘The relationships in describing, learning, persuading and exchanging experiences are seen as equally fundamental. This emphasis is exceptionally important in the long crisis of twentieth-century society.’ (45) Looking at communications as one of the natural heritages of humans, then the process of explaining the concerns of and promoting understanding of the mentally ill is a high priority for communications. For uncle Raymond, this area became a major focus of his career, and his efforts to demand a more accountable management of communications, on behalf of the interests of the common good, were possibly his greatest work. My argument is that, remembering these channels for ideas, feelings and values are just as open to challenge today as they were in his time, is part of reclaiming democracy.
‘My own view is that we have been wrong in taking communication as secondary. Many people seem to assume as a matter of course that there is, first, reality, and then, second, communication about it. We degrade art and learning by supposing that they are always second-hand activities. That there is life, and then afterwards there are these accounts of it.’ (46) In the case of the mentally ill, it seems to me there is a responsibility to share more information about their lives, as part of society’s acknowledging its own reality.

Just as the union movement grew out of the efforts of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and others, struggling for workers’ rights under the new industrialism, so it seems to me there is still a need to take the needs of people to the people. ‘Our commonest political error is the assumption that power—the capacity to govern other people—is the reality of the whole social process, and so the only context of politics. Our commonest economic error is the assumption that production and trade are our only practical activities, and that they require no other human justification or scrutiny.’ (47) What is relevant in this analysis for minorities such as the mentally ill, is that they and their supporters need to continually remind the political representatives that people’s lives are equally as important as production and trade. When it becomes significant in political terms to ignore such disadvantaged groups, the democratic system must respond. So the only way forward as I see it, lies in engaging in the hard grind of community politics.

3.15 Humanity lies in the struggle to describe, to understand

Raymond spent his whole life describing what he saw as the common people’s predicament, in order to seek improvement in their lifeworld. ‘We need to say what many of us know in experience: that the life of humanity, and business of society, cannot be confined to these ends; that the struggle to learn, to describe, to understand, to educate, is a central and necessary part of our humanity.’ (48)

He felt for the society he saw crumbling in front of his eyes. What he also probably felt was sad at the prospect that citizens, voters, were passively succumbing to the new machine of
modernism, and allowing decisions to be taken that would disadvantage the very people who needed protection most. 'This struggle is not begun, at second hand, after reality has occurred. It is, in itself, a major way in which reality is continually formed and changed. What we call society is not only a network of political and economic arrangements, but also a process of learning and communication.' (49) For the community of mentally ill people and their supporters, this message is to get organised, make yourselves known, argue your case in the corridors of power, and if necessary, go to the streets until you are heard.

This engagement with the communal custom and people being able to empower their own ideas and actions within a culture, is central to Williams' work. What strength the intellectually disabled bring to this notion, is that they can add so much to the communal custom, and in fact lead the way for many people back to community. By making their activities public, inviting participation by the general community, they show the way to engage in real shared communal life. Their natural engagement with people is an influential strength in itself, in my view.

3.16 Culture is central to common life and distinction of spirit

'The difficulty about the idea of culture is that we are continually forced to extend it, until it becomes almost identical with our whole common life.' (50) Here Raymond was able to think more widely about culture than Leavis, but he did not include the contribution and concerns of such marginalised groups as the mentally ill and intellectually disabled.

What can be seen now, is that the concept Leavis had, of seeing literature as the great repository of the consciousness of the race, (51) is in fact akin to the role of people like the intellectually disabled. They hold aspects of human consciousness which are otherwise missed in the media, images of society and exchanges between people in the mainstream. 'In their keeping... is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends, and without which distinction of spirit is thwarted and incoherent. By 'culture' I mean the use of such language. (52) (quoting Leavis) Leavis was being something of an elitist, and uncle
Raymond 'called him on that'. But extending the notion to include the mentally ill, for example, it is possible to see the potential in this perspective informing much more accurate perceptions of the 'distinction of spirit'.

'The ways in which we can draw on other experience are more various than literature alone... history, building, painting, music, philosophy, theology, political and social theory, the physical and natural sciences, anthropology, and indeed the whole body of learning. We go also, if we are wise, to the experience that is otherwise recorded: in institutions, manners, customs, family memories.' (53) Here is where Raymond was a believer in the value of general community, and where his views add weight to the argument for more inclusion of the intellectually disabled in mainstream affairs. So using Uncle Jurgen's four way test Raymond's views failed on the first two counts, since his coverage was not directed in this way, but his intention would have meant a fully representative participation.

3.17 Culture determines human development

Marxism played a huge part in Williams' life and work. He was seen as a leader of the left in his era, and at the same time engaged in a strong critique of Marxist story telling. A crucial point in his examination of Marxist thought regarding cultural aspects of life was to do with 'social existence' and 'consciousness'.

'The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, the social existence determines their consciousness.' (54) (quoting Marx) Raymond argued that Marx had downgraded cultural activity as a central part of human affairs. Given this perspective, it is not surprising that he wanted to see more done to make cultural activity a central part of social planning. The same sort of central placement is now argued for here, for the mentally ill and intellectually disabled.

'I do not see how it can be denied that Marx did in one sense diminish the value of such
(cultural) work... he denied... that it was this kind of work that decided human development.' (55) And Marx wasn’t alone. The capitalist system which succeeded in overcoming his ideologies in most countries which had pursued them, also saw little worth in this type of work. It didn’t represent much more than entertainment value. Now it can be re-seen, as offering the vehicle for expression of the concerns of marginalised groups such as the mentally ill, to tell their story.

3.18 Inherent patterns of feeling are the substance of community

In examining the work of George Orwell, Williams pointed to another facet of human experience, which he felt deserved closer attention as a lesson for further development in human affairs. That was the ‘paradox of the exile’, by which he meant that capacity to ‘find virtue in a kind of improvised living, and in an assertion of independence... the substance of community is lacking.’ (56)

Uncle Raymond’s views on Orwell were split. He felt there was a lot of value in Orwell’s observations of western society and its problems. But he could not agree with leaving that society to criticise it from afar. ‘The exile, because of his own personal position, cannot finally believe in any social guarantee: to him, association is suspect. He fears it because he does not want to be compromised...To belong to a community is to be part of a whole, and, necessarily, to accept, while helping to define its possibilities.’ (57)

For the purposes of this work, such a perspective is informative. The only way forward for politically weak groups like the intellectually disabled and mentally ill, seems to me to be to stay active within their society. Until they gain more support from the people themselves. Isolating further by declaring rejection of the society can only lead to worse problems.

‘His principle failure was inevitable: he observed what was evident, the external factors, and only guessed at what was not evident, the inherent patterns of feeling.’ (58) The difference here for the intellectually disabled, is that I argue they are in fact teachers for general
society. Their ability to open their hearts and feel, is a skill lacking in many members of mainstream society. This is something worthy of sharing and helping those mainstream members to see, why they should support greater integration of the intellectually disabled across the community.

3.19 Culture is an ongoing process of lived experience

'The history of the idea of culture is a record of our reactions in thought and feeling to the changed conditions of our common life... The word, culture, cannot automatically be pressed into service as any kind of social or personal directive... what it indicates is a process, not a conclusion.' (59) Williams began his final chapter of Culture and Society with a call for more engagement with 'lived experience'. In the journey to see more integration for marginalised people, it is worth remembering this.

Our engagement with culture is always needing effort. Democracy, empowerment, social development all take effort. Otherwise citizens end up losing the gains in quality of life that had been previously taken for granted. For the marginalised, who have never even had basic conditions of career prospects, full pay, respectful working conditions or other bottom-line life structures assured, it is essential to maintain solidarity in the process of culture building.

'We have to return to the meanings of experience ... The masses are always the others, whom we don't know, and can't know... Masses are other people. There are in fact no masses: there are only ways of seeing people as masses.' (60) This is illustrative in terms of the implications for reform in rehabilitation services, for instance. Currently the political will appears to be vacant, in responding to calls for more normalising activities for the intellectually disabled. But the process of engaging in lobbying for change, and arguing with the system that it is not responding to people's inner needs, is a continuous, on-going struggle. If it is abandoned, it will only worsen circumstances for these people. If it is continued, their case helps to illustrate universal needs among all citizens. If people chose to see their common humanity.
3.20 Value the common good above all else in human affairs

Raymond Williams’ gift to future generations was to value the common good above all else in human affairs. In *Culture and Society* he outlined a view of human affairs that is still relevant today, whereby sharing our feelings, dreams, ideas and evolving traditions is part of our whole life, as individuals and as a community.

‘A culture is not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work; it is also and essentially a whole way of life… The crucial distinguishing element in English life since the Industrial Revolution is not language, not dress, not leisure… (it) is between alternative ideas of the nature of social relationship.’ (61) Here is where I argue intellectually disabled people can lead the way, to reminding everyone of their basic humanity.

It seems to me, working in community, that many social relationships are currently deeply emptied across society. In the general western community, little remains of what used to form that community. But what does is the special link between people who get to know one another. And therein lies the reason for getting out and amongst it with as many intellectually disabled people as will agree to come. Sharing feelings, news, imaginations, all builds community again. So the gift of the weakest among us, is that they build the strong web that binds community. Like spider web is one of the strongest threads on earth, pound for pound. Gossamer thin apparently, but tough and resilient. What uncle Raymond saw as residing in the working class, I exchange for the marginalised groups of intellectually disabled and mentally ill, when they have enough support to be able to come together and share their concerns.

‘The idea that we properly associate with the working class: an idea which… regards society neither as neutral nor as protective, but as the positive means for all kinds of development. Development and advantage are not individually but commonly interpreted… In the general and controlled advance of all. The human fund is regarded as in all respects common, and freedom of access to it is a right constituted by one’s humanity; yet such
access, in whatever kind, is common or it is nothing. Not the individual, but the whole society, will move.' (62)

Here, I believe, resides the future for reforming opportunities in community, for both the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill. Standing up for their rights to be regarded as fully participating members of society, with certain support needs, but otherwise equal contributions to make to the community. Equal but different. Accepting that humanity is not just a money earning, product making species. We exist to feel, share, exchange and communicate. At the level of the heart and soul equally as much as the intellect.
B—BERNARD SMITH

1. Looking through the shadows to the reality

Bernard Smith is a prolific and passionate contributor to world cultural and democratic investigation. He is still writing furiously at the age of 86 (the second volume of his autobiography), at the time of this writing, and holding up great hope for humanity. Uncle Bernard is very like Uncle Raymond, in that both men hold to the notion that humans have choices, and that responsible living means settling on your choice and having the guts to adhere to truth as you see it. They have it that perspectives may differ, but honesty is non-negotiable. Both men shared Marxist views, and saw the poor as deserving respect and acknowledgement.

Banks are pretty rotten things. Still you can’t expect an institution to have a soul when most people get along well enough without one... Poverty is a hard teacher but it is one of the few things that can teach us the difference between illusion and truth. (Smith writing about pre-WWII life in Australia) (1)

During a lifetime spent exploring art, culture and ideas, Uncle Bernard has spotted patterns and trends, which have helped many people find meaning in the chaos of modern living. He himself was not clear about much of the madness that emerged from humanity during his developing years. His friend Lindsay Gordon taught him that art and practical life were two parts of the same thing, and that separating them would only lead to self-delusion. ‘Truth can only be realised through practical activity,’ said Gordon in a letter to Smith in September 1939, in the peak of war’s unfolding. (2)

This was part of Smith’s early learning about integrating life, art, ideas and self-responsibility. He had great difficulty balancing life’s challenging paradoxes as a young man, and thanks to his efforts to work some of these conundrums out, the benefit of his wisdom
is now shared through his writings: ‘He (Smith) gained no lasting comfort from this image of himself as a sawdust doll pulled by invisible wires of blood and nurture. That was the way of cynicism and self-pity… he began to feel an inner capacity for decision that he had not felt before.’ (3)

The message in Smith’s early life lessons was that the values choices people make, colour all their subsequent experience. Either victims of perceptions of life, or collaborators with the universe in what people choose to see happening ‘to’ themselves. It’s a choice of views. And Uncle Bernard chose early on to see life as an opportunity to collaborate with his ‘fate’, and to take action according to a positive view of the world, as a place where light was always possible to find.

The great curse of the world today (writing about 1939) has been the indifference and hesitancy of people who see only the shadows of things, who are determined that they shall see only the shadows of things, because the reality is too cruel. (4)

Smith’s later work proceeded to shed light on many areas of shadow, and continues to. It is a value system that confronts truth, and then finds beauty hidden behind the ugliness that must be faced. Similarly, I argue that the ‘comparative morphology’ of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill, shows up trends in consciousness that all humans share, with aspects that are ugly. Bernard’s exploration of art and ideas showed a gift for seeing perspective from a wide angle, following history on the big screen, and engaging with culture and diversity in a playful but discerning way.

Such pedigree in thought creates a valuable foundation on which to build a complementary perspective on human consciousness, to that of Raymond Williams. By examining Uncle Bernard’s views, we may find elements that help to give depth to Uncle Raymond’s ideas. So the two uncles combined can help build a framework for the structure of feeling and experience, relevant across western society. That can then be used to provide background to the feelings and experiences of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill.

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2. Valuing consciousness above biology

While Bernard Smith has written prolifically about art, culture and perspective on an international scale, he has remembered to value the basic roots of awareness. In adding a Foreword to Peter Fuller’s The Australian Scapegoat, he noted the Englishman’s shared journeys of ideas, and their shared and different paths.

Fuller’s determination (is) to work out a fully-fledged aesthetic for himself, and one in which the concerns of society, of morality and of art all have their part to play… He respects intellect but is aware of the danger of allowing it to override perception… You may disagree with Fuller but you would have to be a nong not to know where he stood. (5)

Uncle Bernard could have been talking about himself, as he has gone on to illustrate for many that life and art shine backward and forward between each other, with lessons to share in both directions. It seems his message is that the main job for humans, as conscious beings, is to keep their perceptions open to the alternative views that come from the gift of awareness.

Fuller is impressed by the fact (as I am) that we are aware, simply by looking at the way his face and body are rendered by his Hellenistic sculptors, that the ‘Laocoon’ is ‘in pain’. But I cannot agree that this is caused by a biological response on our part. For as biological organisms we possess no access to art. Such access requires a state of consciousness and consciousness is not adequately described as biological, though it can occur within biological systems… The admiration of a work of art, aesthetic valuing, requires the operation of memory. (6)

Here Smith shows his colours, in terms of holding to a sense of humans being creatures of spirit, as much as products of evolutionary process. He saw life unfolding in ways no one could control, and that history was a process of experiences which humanity flowed
through in patterns, not dogmatic facts. Good credentials for creating a framework for thinking about alternative consciousness to the mainstream.

As a cultural critic he has been a leader in the grounding of debate about modernism, post-modernism and how to construct reality. In this work, the aim is to apply analogous and sometimes apparently disconnected perspectives, to the deconstruction of Uncle Bernard’s and Uncle Raymond’s work, and concepts of consciousness among the mentally ill and intellectually disabled. The aim being to find valid references for this set of ideas, to the lives and consciousness of the two subject groups.

So it is appropriate to stop for a moment, to consider the concept of ‘deconstruction’, and see how it fits with Bernard’s and Raymond’s roles here. According to Derrida, opposing two terms helps each receive its meaning, from its difference from the other. This is exactly what is happening when concepts about culture and society, art, ideas and consciousness, are compared and contrasted with the structure of feeling and experience of our subjects.

‘Loosely applied (deconstruction refers to) any rejection of the usual conventions of construction... this trace of difference, and so the other in the selfsame, deconstructs the apparent antithesis between them.’ (7) The aim in this work is to pursue such oppositions where there is potential for opening awareness about shared human traits. Bernard Smith and Raymond Williams both found allegorical and analogous evidence through art, culture and society. It is hoped their efforts can be refreshingly referred, to the need for more expansive thought about improving the lives of marginalised people.

3. Learning that culture and identity are relational

Uncle Bernard’s work covers as much territory as Raymond Williams, and they were ‘soul brothers’ in their engagement with the common good, and their preference for a socialist view of human positive potential. What differed in their overall gamut was that Smith took
up in his academic work grappling with the demons that Williams chose to grapple with in his fictional work—spirit, love, decadence, mystery and ‘the missing’.

Smith’s particular strength is his lateral perspective on human history, and the diaspora of the soul that it presents in the modern era. While many agonised over humanity’s self destructive behaviour during the last century, Bernard managed to find compassion for his fellows. He saw trends that were part of a long march through history. So he became an advocate for joining that throng and becoming lighter with the process.

In examining his canon, to see what it can reflect back on human consciousness, as a possible framework complement to Raymond Williams structure of feeling, it is possible to see an array of views which allow humanity its lee. To shelter fragile, fickle, vacillating personalities from the hard attack of a dialectic artificially seeking some perfect world. This lazy dialectic, what I call ‘the drongo dialectic’, allows for mistakes, for weakness, for habits of repeated faulty decisions and obsessions. It allows for humanity.

And that is what I claim is needed, in looking for parameters with which to frame the consciousness of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill. They are ‘just getting a life’, and what their fellow citizens can offer, is the understanding perspective that recognises that as normal and healthy. Just in different ways to others. The key being to link their inner needs to a set of criteria all can understand and therefore value.

Bernard’s message, relevant to finding such a framework of the structure of feelings and experience, covers the full scope of human experience. From identity and belonging, to chaos, decadence and perspective. All relevant to determining aspects of self, other and the common good. This set of criteria can add to how society can acknowledge, value and better serve the needs of these people through the public estate. The key points can be summarised as follows:
3.1 Social is primary in determining identity and being

A view of Identity and Being that sees Social as Primary, not the Dreamworld, dominates Bernard’s work. He embraced Australian Aboriginal art and life in his career, but decided that humanity was more rooted in its relatedness than its numinous potential. He believed that ‘the relation is all’, and concern with human identity should start with ‘us’ not ‘me’. People live in a society of human beings, more than a numinous engagement with the Dreaming, according to his view. Whether one agrees with it or not, it provides a valuable perspective from which to consider the experiences humans share. Most people are born into family, community and social relations. Some are separated, by circumstance of environment or biological inheritance, from engagement with their group.

For the intellectually disabled, many live in their ‘natural state’, in a world juggled between being with ‘normal’ community members, and being with their peers. This provides both joy and sorrow. Feelings of belonging and separation alternate. But the overall result is a sense that life exists mainly in the group. I believe this is healthy and normal. For the mentally ill, consciousness fluctuates between comfort and discomfort with oneself, and with being in the midst of others. Some of those most divorced from group experience, due to their dis-ease with life, are at risk of disconnecting from the world. And there are some similarities in this experience, with those members of modern society suffering from a disjointed sense of themselves and where to find meaning. It’s a mad, mad world.

3.2 Peripheral vision connects people and ideas

Possibly no greater reference point comes from Bernard’s work, than that he helped the world to see its need for lateral or peripheral vision, as a connecting force in knowledge. By taking the perspective of the Antipodes, and its role in defining and redefining the nature of art, aesthetic, and self-image in western consciousness, Bernard broke out of a bind.

He determined that ‘edge defines centre’, and things haven’t been the same since. If art from the Pacific and the colonies could redefine art and aesthetic in Europe, what does that say
about traffic in consciousness? That people with difference experiences of seeing the world, of imagining the world, of experiencing and feeling life, have valuable parts to play in the full array of ‘reality’? In my view, yes.

Bernard said people had to look sideways and back to see what’s in front of their face. The context and perspective of life had been too much ignored, in a colonialist arrogance. So too today, the rational, empirical scientific worldviews can be arrogant and blind to feelings and experience in the lifeworld. When Uncle Bernard said that looking inwards towards abstraction only magnifies problems, he could have been describing the nature of both mechanistic science and mental illness.

They share the habit of innerness to obsessive lengths. Unless kept in balance. Just as one habit in some rugby playing high schools was to have the tradition of the First XV also being automatically in the school choir, forced engagement with and acceptance of affective experience. So too can our world benefit from embracing the different perspectives offered by the mentally ill. Their ability to link with what many cultures see as valuable shamanic experiences, is one doorway to more meeting of minds.

Assuming pathology before exploring shared awareness is a basic mistake occurring in ‘the system’ at the moment, from my involvement as a worker and the parent of a patient. Whereas, remaining open and conversational about consciousness is a way to create new pathways for engagement. And I believe there are as many areas for reverse healing, hidden within the feelings and experience of the mentally ill, as there are in the rationally schooled psychiatrists and psychologists.

Smith’s work showed that transcultural activities refer outside themselves in a healthy way. This is exactly the analogy for mentally ill people, being more integrated into community life, where they can gradually feel more confident of acceptance and hope. Crossing cultures, building bridges of consciousness. There is a lot to be said for singing in the choir with your rugby boots on.
3.3 Perspective and experience make for difference

By emphasising patterning in human affairs, Bernard showed there was a shared form of organising life, ideas and images, which brings humans of all different cultures into a shared conversation. While this often falls down, due to political, ethnic or religious tensions, there are usually ways through to finding common ground sharing these patterns.

The visual rhetoric is appropriate for imagining a meeting of minds, where the intellectually disabled are seen as possessors of consciousness, which reflects aspects of humanity that have value and depth. Jean Vanier and Henri Nouwen have both described these aspects of intellectual disability, as being a wellspring of shared humanity. In the quiet ability to accept, the patience, the stillness. The gentleness and slowness of people, who have accepted a different path in life. Uncle Bernard showed that power does not flow unilaterally, and he could have been directing that perspective at this comparison of consciousness. The weak are not less than the strong. They are placed differently. In fact, nicely balanced in yogic terms. Because too much energy stuck in one place, means imbalance in another channel for energy flow.

Moving out of the stuck sense of the powerful and the powerless, Uncle Bernard leads into a view where power is best informing the ‘conversation’ about ideas. In so much as ‘knowledge may be that truth may be elsewhere’, there is a lot to be said for the vulnerability and receptivity of the intellectually disabled. Observing the hectic lives my peers live, I feel more people need to slow down and find themselves. Here are some mentors with time on their hands. But book in early, because they’re often out on the town.

3.4 Decadence implies renewal

Putting modernity under the microscope, Smith found its practice and offspring showed trends that continue today. ‘Progress’ in one field of life could convince other parts of the world that disaster had struck. And often it had. Witness and war, pollution, unemployment and financial devastation. When he engaged with the Surrealists who took
up the mantle of critiquing this ‘madness’, Bernard saw in their work and their cries for change, a healthy embrace of decadence. He took an organic perspective, of the decay and degradation of community, morals and justice, which modernity has as a direct and side effect.

Surrealism parodied, and sardonically hung our to dry, the damnable results of progress, and the applications of technology and ideology which modernism put on the magnified world stage. Bernard saw all this as a healthy way to understand the cyclic resurgence, inherent in humanity’s fallible nature. While destruction reigned, the possibility of renewal was being born. This is a bit like Rudolf Steiner’s work on creating miraculous fertiliser from treated animal waste, creating bountiful humus. Decadent expression in culture can dissolve both past and future. And thereby bring reality into the moment, where everything actually happens. This is the territory of the intellectually disabled. Free of too many worldly obsessions, they can often access the moment in a open-hearted way which illustrates something others ‘train’ for years to be able to capture for a few minutes.

3.5 Truth and art are lived practically

One of the wonderful linkings Bernard brought to light, in his exploration of art and cultural process, was the concept that truth is realised through practical activity. He has been a pragmatist as well as an idealist, a combination that can loosen perspective, but in his case has sharpened his sense of ‘what works’. The Aboriginal notion of ‘the business’ of life, ie. culture, is that it is alive and requires working, at and in, to remain worthwhile. Somewhat ironically linked with the German-rooted British Windsor Royal Family’s nickname for itself, ‘the firm’. Bernard saw that practicality determined how culture panned out. Ideas and dreams were fine, but what actually happened ‘in the workings’?

His view is that labour and creation are the context of art and culture. Making work a part of community that is not just slaving away to earn a quid. It is involved in the business of sharing understandings about lifeworld, the numinous, the universe and everything. Here
seems an appropriate time to invite the mentally ill to the table. Are they interested in sharing? Yes. How can they get involved? Currently with great difficulty. But if it is possible to open the doors of legislative, policy-bound rules about where and how the mentally ill can join in society’s workings, perhaps there will be more opportunity for them to share in the workings.

Observing what had happened in ‘the class war’, during the years of modernism’s rise, Bernard saw that it triggers history in the body social, and that this has implications for all humans’ soul development. Just as I believe it is now possible to see the middle classes slipping down with ‘the underclass’, due to radical restructuring of work since the information and communications revolution, the whole notion of class is now being redefined. So consciousness becomes a much more mobile concept, wandering into the field of realpolitik, as the groups forming the marginalised come from much further afield than ever before in history. It is the assertion of this work, that the time has come to embrace wider concepts of human worth, to involve the mentally ill in looking at how we can restructure lifeworlds, to return to valuing everyone’s inner life more.

3.6 Civilisationally, everything recycles

When examining the schools of primitivism, classicism and medievalism, Bernard saw certain patterns predominated. Whatever culture was being processed through art, the movement was one of recycling of generic elements of civilization. The pattern of history showed humanity often mistakenly followed paths of certainty, only to retreat when that way showed itself treacherous and damaging to the whole.

In environmental, socio-economic, and I believe many hold, in organic terms, humanity is now risking the pursuit of linear, rationalist thinking, potentially at its peril. Genetically engineered produce and livestock; notions of growth in development and profits, at the expense of social cohesion and basic standards of life for the majority; and separation of large numbers of capable people from being able to contribute to the processes of
production in western economies; are three trends which alone can drastically alter history.

Yet so far authorities seem to be blindly following the ideologues, who continue to promote these ideas and practices, in the name of the same ‘progress’ that has driven modernism throughout. Many believe humanity has entered another watershed time, similar to the pre-WWII era. ‘Logical solutions’ abound, but most people are feeling very ill at ease. I advocate that other aspects of the modernist project than logic, measurement, and definitions of growth in terms of profit, need to be applied now.

Without sounding like a ‘told you so’, Bernard adopted the position that civilisational thinking sees everything recycling, for some years now. Understanding follows history, arriving late if at all, and so the message usually is, wait til it hurts then think about changing back. We live in a present that is past, and the déjà vu feeling is coming round again. Which is where the inclusion of the marginalised mentally ill now, makes sense, in trying to develop better understanding of what’s going on inside a species, which keeps ignoring its best interests and self destructing.

3.7 Signs of certainty are illusions

The western mythologies of Number and Word have been described by Uncle Bernard as Civilisational Signs. He critiqued the slavish pursuit of mechanistic thinking and rhetoric, as if these two forms of communication and thought would hold all answers for humankind. Certainty is an illusion, in Bernard’s view, and yet it rules today like a holy grail found and placed in its rightful chamber. My argument is that much of science is no longer to blame for promoting this brand of ideology. Many of its explorations in physics and ecology have led it into misty and mysterious territory, requiring humble piloting. But others have raced into the laboratory to switch genes and play with life. Dangerous territory if they could recall the lessons of mythologies from all over the world. Playing with life is something that ought to be left to the gods.
What can be offered by the mentally ill into such a scenario, is a perspective of what certainty can look like, when you’re sick with it. Obsessiveness is not unique to schizophrenics. Leaders and financiers and politicians can fall into the trap, as easily as anyone in a mental hospital. Bernard’s message is that art history tells us images shade into imaginings, and the images represent different orders of seeing. Illusion is a human activity, and modernity has eroded meaning, leaving us with the ‘lost shadow of modernity’. Currently this seems to be lost on the powerful elites running the world. But the value in inviting mentally people to be involved in sharing their perspective, can be hopeful in the face of current mad certainty, about how the world will rush to its future progress, on the back of logic and profit.

3.8 Culture comes first, always changing
Understanding that culture is prior is one of Bernard’s basic rules for balancing assessment of ideas and values. If one accepts that, then involving all members of society in the development of new ways to assist each other and serve the marginalised, is a recognition of the importance of embracing all of culture. I claim that what is occurring to the least in a society is an indicator of what is happening throughout it. Just as the frogs in an ecosystem can be its most telling indicators of potentially deadly pollution, so too the treatment of human beings in society tells of its overall state of health or ill health. It seems to me that the intellectually disabled show that western society is ignoring its soul.

What can be potentially a rich source of quiet energy and shared affection, is typecast in most circles I have worked in, as a management problem in social engineering. One of the deep sources of social capital in all communities is seen by the powerful as a daggy, forgettable group of no hopers. The policy and program rhetoric doesn’t say that. But I claim the reality of their effective lack of presence and recognition in mainstream environments speaks volumes.
But Bernard also reminds us that history is everywhere. It surrounds life, and hollows out arguments for brutal mechanistic treatment of citizens. The answer according to Uncle Bernard? Promoting change and institutionalising restlessness. He sees part of the role of art and culture to challenge the popular notions running the world. To stimulate the social conscience of humankind. And to build a new sense of what to expect of one another in a civilised world.

3.9 Social evolution mixes change and tradition

Watching the path of modernity through the last couple of centuries, Bernard has seen change take some interesting turns. He argues that change and tradition can blend. And the evidence comes from many arenas. Not just art. Music, dance, performance, crafts. Many creative pursuits have proven that old and new make good partners. He also saw that forms of practices are mixed media, and that originality is ‘in the mix’. This is one of his great illustrative expressions, showing there is great scope for applying this wisdom in ‘shaking things up’ in the social sciences. Just as happened in education in the sixties and seventies. Which unfortunately subsequently seems to have been lost, over the following three decades. Returning to didactic certainty and repetition, under obedience to authority, driven by fear of missing economic opportunity.

What I believe can be said, in benefiting from Bernard’s lesson here, is that the marginalised have much to share. Their suffering is both old and new. Their experience is both now and then. Their understanding is basic. That neglect hurts, and being excluded is harmful to all concerned. So the intellectually disabled can be leaders in helping many members of society to return to understanding the exercise of communal love. Not a hippy trip through the seventies. Sharing and caring in your street, shopping mall and high rise flats.

Perhaps then, it will be possible to imagine positive outcomes from Uncle Bernard’s other perspective, that forms combine. Imagining new forms of social development, providing

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inclusion and engagement with the intellectually disabled in mainstream activities, there may be great potential for growth, and healing known, as well as unknown, social wounds.

Smith saw society moving from ‘form dominating content’, to new patterns of human expression. It is to be hoped that such scenarios can include the marginalised, as part of the forefront of social change, towards more loving alternatives than today’s mechanistic materialism. It is then, according to my observation, that then the stored memory in the hearts and minds of the intellectually disabled will be able provide a wellspring of positive feeling, to fuel some of humanity’s renewal.

3.10 Cultural traffic is life’s essence

Thank god culture flows. Bernard explained this long ago, and showed that whatever ‘the centre’ may try to do to control, ignore, or reject ‘the other’, ‘the edges’, they would infiltrate and change their very masters. This is one of the most hopeful lessons from Uncle Bernard’s work, especially for the mentally ill, who are increasing in numbers and decreasing in social acceptability.

The very thing that modernism is creating—joblessness, social dislocation, unhappiness, substance abuse and mental illness—is what its image-makers promote it as removing. Yet the information technology explosion, the virtual reality impression management, and the job removing technology have all resulted in the above social problems.

g by Bernard’s cyclical culture clock, pretty soon this swell of energy will push flow forward, against the trend of the know all stock market jockeys and the certain al spin doctors, who proclaim ‘everything is going great guns in the modern ship of As people feel the ship rise up and begin to float away, breaking its ties, there is be some traffic in the waters ahead.

Illness results from clashing feelings, thoughts, dreams and imaginings, flowing neone’s mind. Similarly for modernism, my view is that the traffic’s getting busy,
flowing around in all the change and profit-boosting progress happening all over. Sooner or later it’s going to come across the course of another ‘ship of state of mind’. And Bernard’s here to tell us, such cultural traffic is life’s essence. He said cultures converge and horizons converge, more than they collide. ‘There is no need to conceptualise the present in terms of the future… we are more fully creatures of the past than the future.’ (8) The image is one of combinations of thought, feeling and imagination, to create new perspectives and understandings.

That is what is I claim needed in looking at the lives, feelings and experiences of the mentally ill. No that they are subjects of pathological investigation of neurotransmitters gone awry. But that their consciousness has something to tell humanity, about them, and about everyone. The notion that involving mentally ill people in designing, planning and implementing their recovery and rehabilitation programs, flies in the face of current scientific expertology. The patient is not supposed to be able to know anything about their condition, when a psychiatrist has trained for years to ‘understand’ such conditions. Yet common sense says that people should be central to their own lifeworld management. Right Uncle Jurgen? And that joining society, as predominantly social beings, is where they would best be placed for healthy recovery, once out of any critical psychotic risk.

Uncle Bernard found that cultural production happens best, and happens most cultural traffic. So I claim managers would be wise to take note, in planning the future policies, programs and services for mentally ill people, that their best chance of healthy recovery is engaged in community, with appropriate support services. This is not happening to an appropriate extent at the moment. My own work in both fields has up to the minute experience to prove it. Some places may be, but the mainstream is not. And they are certainly not being invited into constructing their recovery and rehabilitation programs.
3.11 Knowledge is a negotiated conversation

Knowledge is an invitation to a conversation, not extracts from some god-ordained book that holds all humanity needs to know, according to Bernard’s work. He examined the way art and ideas reflected western conceptualisation of knowledge. He compared that with ‘the others’ in the Antipodes, and decided that exchange of views, opinions and feelings, made up the rich mixture of understandings known as knowledge.

When looking at the perspective of the intellectually disabled, who are by definition seen to be ‘unknowledgeable’, because of their disability, it is interesting to consider Bernard’s view. Conversation, as Theodore Zeldin has told us is a sharing and intermixing of both ideas and feelings. The experience of working with intellectually disabled people has taught me, that they have more than an equal share to offer in this conversational exchange.

Often the feelings will predominate. Other times a quiet observation cuts to the heart of a matter, which others have complicated with their own interpretations and competing ideas. The outcome of engaging in many conversations of this type with intellectually disabled people, is that I believe they have very valuable, entertaining and enriching things to offer to anyone who takes the time to listen. Part of the negotiation of knowledge is to settle on the terms within which it is developed, through this conversation of ideas and feelings. The contention of this work is that intellectually disabled people have much to teach others, in their way of approaching the conversations that lead to knowledge. Simplicity and minimal dressing up of thoughts is something many people pursue through studying Zen Buddhism for years. It is often something innate among the intellectually disabled.

3.12 Life echoes from the edges—it’s ‘echo-logical’

Listening to the echoes of thought was a process Uncle Bernard spent some time reflecting on. His work explored the waves of experience and feeling passing across history, and he came up with the notion that echoes repeated ideas and perspectives through humanity. This is what I call ‘Echo-logical’ thinking. It is a negotiative process, whereby new and old
exchange energies in the distillation of knowledge. What is happening now reflects the past, incorporating what’s gone before, more than repeating it.

Combined with Uncle Bernard’s determination that Culture is not Immanent, the echo-
logical concept implies that humanity is in an on-going conversation with itself, about itself. Narcissism maybe, but more likely the natural result of mindfulness. Bernard says that being aware of ourselves and our inner and shared lives, humans have the capacity to grow and change, as individuals and as societies.

The mentally ill are good examples of how this sort of growth is possible in all people. I have worked in environments, in Australia and India, where, given the right conditions of listening, caring, engaging and imaginative peers and support workers, people with mental illness can ‘work through’ many of their deeper problems. It may take a long time, but the echo-logical healing effect of shared understandings and compassionate views, provide as much healing as drug regimes alone.

Combining appropriate medication, caring conversation and free exchange of feelings and experiences, I believe there is great scope for mentally ill people to recover from deep damage to their psyche. The evidence from Athma Shakti Vidyalaya, in Bangalore, India, where such approaches have been adopted in a live-in therapeutic community since 1979, shows much is yet to be tried in the west along these lines. And just as the ‘answers’ to healing mental illness don’t lie in ‘western medicine’ or ‘eastern thought’, there is no immanent answer in any one cultural setting or tradition. I argue that what is needed is a response to the eclectic nature of human consciousness. An eclectic regime of allowing healing according to the personality and capabilities of the individual concerned.

Bernard saw that ‘Edges and Echoes Think Back and Wander/Wonder Forward’. He is a playful observer of history, culture, ideas and aesthetic. I feel his observations hold great hope for those working with damaged western consciousness. Because he has seen the
results of modernity’s ignoring of the affective side of humanity. And he has still held a compassionate view of its potential to return to a more holistic way of being.

Watching modernity trying to fill the emptiness, arising from its obsession with rational thought, progress and power, Bernard noted there was a process of subordination that occurred among people who could not compete in this game. But he watched them, in the Antipodean experience of the colonised, the other, creating their own meaning. And then saw that meaning feeding back ‘to the centre’, in a way which enriched those who were responsible for sentencing them to relative material poverty.

I believe this is an allegorical story for the mentally ill, in terms of their experience of consciousness in the context of modernity. The very thing that makes them separated from and ‘less than’ mainstream community, is that they don’t handle logical, competitive, compliant thought very well. This puts them ‘on the outer’ with society. Yet my observations, at Pioneer Clubhouse mental health rehabilitation community in Sydney’s Balgowlah, show that this very trait is a strength. When compared with the fear behind ‘normal’ people’s struggle to cope in the rapidly changing world of modernity. Hence my assertion, that involving mentally ill people in sharing their perspectives, and hearing the echo-logical wisdom going around between people, is a valuable way to encourage healing and build self-valuing.

3.13 Place comes from imagination

The exploration of place that forms a central thread in Uncle Bernard’s work, has a potentially important perspective to offer, to those responsible for organising the life circumstances of both the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill. ‘We Make Place, Rather than Place Making Us’ sums up Bernard’s view. The insight that people create the places they experience, which is supported by Simon Schama’s work in Landscape and Memory, emphasises how important it is to allow these two groups to organise the places they inhabit. To decorate them, where possible design them from scratch, and to claim them
Going Walkabout through the Suburbs

as their own.

Indigenous people have religious relationships with place. Creation stories are alive and renewing every day. But westerners seem to have few active equivalents, except their domestic space. Individuals have ‘special places’ they relate to, but generally the experience of valuing place is individual and idiosyncratic. What Bernard found was that an underlying trend of ‘place making’ existed within all of us, but was often denied by rationality, circumstance, taste or habit. Yet I claim understanding that place actually comes from our imagination promises great scope for adding to the value of healing that can be created. Through the way places are ‘developed’ in collaboration with the mentally ill and intellectually disabled.

Added to this perspective is Bernard’s assertion that ‘Culture is about traffic, not place’. He saw the significance of places being determined by how people built them up in their imagination, but that even more, the power of cultural development came from exchange of energy between people and their mixed cultures. Place matters, and especially a local focus. But culture, like identity is transient, as Gao Xinjian showed in his Nobel Prize-winning novel Soul Mountain. Xinjian’s view of the importance of the individual over the concept of identity and culture reinforces Bernard’s point that mixing, exchanging, growing and sharing make up humanity. Not static understandings of people, traditions or places.

Uncle Bernard has taught that humans need to value a sense of community, but also to remember that Imagination is Primary. This can be compared with Lyotard’s view, that ‘Modernity carried regret’. Bernard argues it is all a matter of mixing it and matching it, making it up as we go along. Not getting stuck. So, while landscape may have begun as a dream, ‘reality’ is what is imagined right now, mixing past, present and future. So it is, I argue, that mentally ill and intellectually disabled people can become the determining agents in their lifeworld. By being given greater opportunities to design and manage their circumstances, places and services.
3.14 Nihilistic innerness shadows modernity

Bernard has given modernity a trip to the cleaners. He sees it as sentenced to ‘innerness’, and ‘shadowed by nihilism’. The inner experience and feelings humans undergo, while traveling forward in the machine of modern progress, is one of self obsession and emptiness. The ennui captured in many European films of the post-war era reflects what seems to have spread across modernity. A feeling of ‘is that all there is?’

Australians’ obsession with landscape, while living in the suburbs, is an example of the denial artifice built into modernity, according to Bernard. The modern motto of ‘development at all costs’ has an alter ego of self doubt, like the perpetual stranger in the doorway. D.H. Lawrence felt something of this aspect of Australian bourgeois society, when he visited the Antipodes in the 1920s. In his novel Kangaroo, written while in Australia, Lawrence described the Sydney consciousness as a capacity ‘not to care, at its deepest level not to care.’ Uncle Bernard saw Australian art as ‘sardonic’, not because of the desert it portrayed, but the people in the suburbs it was actually commenting on.

People living in suburban cells, either waxing lyrical about the bush, or fearing it deeply, or both, are like miniature portrayals of the modern condition. Nature, society and fate are all ‘out there’, wild and unpredictable. So it is better to buy a painting of the bush and dream of its connection with one’s soul, than to really embrace the experience of being in land that offers such connection with wildness.

That wildness may also live in the feelings and experience of people, such as the mentally ill. They are actually scary and unknown. Because they are unknown. But my point is that if more of these people are allowed to express their truth, therein lies a healthy route to living their whole lives. Such approaches are both healing for those in disturbed states of art and mind, as well as their ‘normal’ peers in the suburbs. This approach is part of the successful holistic healing occurring at Athma Shakti Vidyalaya therapeutic community in bangalore, where I have worked and learnt from the participants.
3.15 Life goes out towards culture, not in towards mind

Deconstructing the politics of vision, Uncle Bernard showed that ‘seeing’ is used as a metaphor for ‘understanding’. For example, the use of terms such as ‘eye, word, image, blindness and insight,’ show that perspectives, views, dominated western understanding for centuries. Modernism is ‘a point of view’, and it is time to review that perspective with more ‘insight’, according to Bernard.

The message in this set of understandings, considering the feelings and experience of the intellectually disabled, is that they have particular points of view, but no one takes any notice anyway. So when someone is marginalised, their viewpoint matters little, even if it may hold unique visions and possibilities. Uncle Bernard decided the politics of vision needed a shake up. He believes ‘what we do and how we live is more important than how we perceive.’ Shades of Uncle Raymond’s ‘lived experience’ being the core value foundation for life. The true reception of life is through hearts and souls, as well as the ‘mind’s eye.’

Bernard saw that suffering was one type of story sharing cultural echoes, stronger than views or perspectives. It represents a universal human attribute, feelings and experience. Going beyond perspective into lived experience. This is where he argues that humans ‘go out towards culture rather than in towards mind.’ Human lives are shared, feelings an experiences engaging with one another, while views are more illusory and private. I claim the intellectually disabled have interesting views, and even more interesting engagements when they ‘go out towards their culture’. Acknowledging this shared aspect of their humanity is an important step towards providing quality of life, which is the due of all citizens in western democracies, if they are working to their espoused values. Uncle Jurgen’s four way test is currently failing a lot contenders in this field of rehabilitation.

3.16 Context makes life, so celebrate stigmata

All things are Connected through Context and Reciprocity, according to Uncle Bernard. And I believe by acknowledging the context within which people live, and the impact of and need
for reciprocal exchanges in life experience, it is possible to plan for better community services. The ‘give and take’ of life provides for healthy exchange of ideas, skills, feelings and experience. Bernard showed that this exchange process, even between colonised and colonisers, was an inevitable aspect of human societies.

The trend showed itself over centuries unravelling the ‘wisdom of the centre’. Which Bernard interpreted to mean that ‘people’s stigmata should be worn with pride.’ This is a key aspect of the structure of feeling and experience Bernard provides for the mentally ill. While they may feel isolated, even terrified, the society they inhabit would benefit from their taking a more assertive stance with their unique ‘stigmata’. Because the result will be that people benefit from getting a broader perspective on themselves, from what ‘the others’ show them about themselves. As with Sydney’s Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, the streets fill with people celebrating their shared sense of pride in their sexuality, and others begin to reconnect with their own.

Bernard saw the ‘absent centre’ showing up in universal webbed connections between the colonies of the antipodes and Europe. Between the Great Tradition and the innovators. Between the rule-breakers and the indigenous. All sorts of webbings showed up in art and ideas, and Bernard used this observation to conclude that varying contexts make for a rich overall combination of life among all of humanity. He claims it is best to celebrate our stigmata. They’re all we’ve got, so show them off. This stands like an open invitation for the general community, and the ‘experts’ managing their life circumstances, to open more to the value in the uniqueness sitting among the mentally ill. I argue they should be given more opportunity to give voice to and celebrate those aspects of themselves that give colour, depth and individuality to their lives.

3.17 Abstraction misses the particular in the general
Watching modernity’s unfolding, Uncle Bernard saw its use of abstraction as missing the particular in the general. Sweeping movements in art, culture, education, technology, design,
planning and so on, led to everything being taken into a slipstream of ‘progress’. The local, the other, the curious, the small, were lost in a morass of certainty and generality.

Curiosity about ‘the other’ disappeared, in the obsessive pursuit of trends and movements. Certainty about notions of ‘culture as power’, created separation between peoples with compatible lifeworlds. And convergence of ‘world meaning place’, all led modernism to eroding the narrow, eroding context, according to Bernard.

Because they are ‘particular’, the intellectually disabled resist this type of sweeping generalisation. Their needs are not covered universally by modernist, populist experiences. Although many of these things are pleasing and in demand—movies, fast food, clothes etc. In the end, what the intellectually disabled gravitate to more than anything else is community. Company. ‘The other guys’. It’s simple and not expensive. And it wipes away fancy notions about provision of special services, as priorities above appropriate time with peers, and integrating with the wider community.

3.18 Earth and humanity exist through each other

‘Landscape is part of culture’ was a strong message in Bernard’s reflections, on art and its differing traditions across cultures. The overriding perspective he ended up with, was that the earth exists through us, given that our awareness of it is how it comes into being for us. Just as we exist through it, because otherwise we wouldn’t even be here. That leads to certain responsibilities in both stewardship and numinosity. Because this combination is both contextual and symbolic, humanity is challenged with whether it can ‘work the place’ and ‘dream the place’. In Carlyle’s wording, highlighted by uncle Raymond, the concept of the ‘cultivated’ person, is really no different to the Aboriginal sense of ‘singing it up’.

Both concepts reflecting humans’ double connection with earth’s energy and ether, because we ‘sit down here’, and we ‘sing up here’. For mentally ill people, I believe the acceptance of their experience of the ‘other world’, of ideas, nightmares, voices, fears, obsessions and
traumatic visions, is a key part of healing their wounds of heart, mind and soul. Just as in some Aboriginal communities, ‘losing it’ is seen as par for the course, ‘just going wamba’, there needs to be greater acceptance that madness is part of the condition of humanity, and especially modernity.

Then humanity can really start talking. About growing closer to one another. Finding common ground for feelings, understandings of how to deal with voices, fears and obsessions. Healing through commonality. Sharing the pain and letting it dissipate. Isolation is the most powerful form of punishment, just as it is in potentiising pain and darkness. I believe this is part of what earth is telling humans right now. Listen more, practise dadiirri —‘to sit, wait and listen’. Find the voice that includes all voices. The part of each that is part of it all, that is potentially part of the energy of life, providing nurture for those in pain.

3.19 Types and styles find authors, and image is secondary

‘Not a good look’ is a popular late-modernist quip. It speaks volumes. That ‘the look’ is more important than the substance, the image more valued than the content, the outer form is above the inner scope, on humanity’s current scale of values. Uncle Bernard has spent his working life arguing that ‘image of form is only one level of reality.’ It may be valid for creating impressions, but if it is taken as literally the ‘way it is’ in our world, then it leads to the ‘hegemony of the abstract.’ Hence the current slavish following of virtual reality, as a clever new phenomenon, when many feel it is just a technological game to extend the artificial image-making of commercial promotions.

Accepting ‘Form Over Content’ illustrated for Bernard how rationality had come to dominate western thought. He pointed out that earlier on in history, elders had a role in society, to observe from the periphery, and feed back views from the perspective of experience. Now, if the logic works, do it Bernard questioned this as being a lone dominant value, just as he did ‘image above content.’ Bernard saw that types and styles moved
around through human history and societies, creating echo-logical wisdom. And he saw that they would find authors, rather than authors finding them. Meaning that substance exists before image, and it is necessary to clarify where it lies before making discerning assessments of value.

The mentally ill are not impression manageable. They won’t comply with formulae for image creation, and they are likely to misbehave when required to conform. So I feel they hold out great hope against the passivity that currently besets so much of society, in accepting the rise in image-only experiences, as against real time, real life. From Australia’s Wonderland, through the video arcades, to the worlds of fashion and cosmetics, the present modern world has innumerable experiences of images over-powering substance. But for the mentally ill, they are so full of images they don’t want, the thought of giving over to an image-controlled world is only another hallucination to be gone through.

I believe Uncle Bernard’s perspective is a sound foundation for acknowledging the lived experiences of the mentally ill, in involving them in planning for future services. And for making the programs, living conditions and services as personal, real-peopled, and individual as possible. To help healing from the domination of crazy images and deluded senses of how the world goes round. Like in so many other areas of life, they could be setting a trend for ‘back to the future’.

3.20 Plurality overcomes duality

Bernard’s work showed that modernism lives on throwbacks. It continually redefines, recycles and regurgitates life, style, ideas and images. This is a symbolic and a practical phenomenon, which holds both promise for acceptance of difference and diversity, and restless inability to accept stable states. Intellectually disability represents a relatively stable state. The people whose lives rest in a condition of acceptance of hardship and challenge in difference, and battling indifference among their fellow citizens, provide a particular contrast to the ‘rush of the new’. Whether examining promotion and purchase
cycles in consumer capitalism, or concepts of adequate activities for people who are ‘less than’, I argue that the energy of plurality should work in favour of better acknowledgement for people of difference. For they are grist to the mill of progress.

Perhaps it is time to engage in the conversation, about benefits to the whole, by integrating those who are ‘not perfect’ in the mix of society. In my judgement, selecting out difference, and treating people with disabilities as special cases needing separate treatment, is not a healthy process to endorse as a permanent approach. Embracing difference, providing support to accommodate disability, and then seeking active engagement in ‘normal’ environments, would allow healthy energy flow for the plurality that intellectually disabled people provide.

As Uncle Bernard showed in his examination of the culture of colonialism. Progress can harbour many dark aspects, which then fall into decline, followed by a recycling of earlier knowledge and healthy resurgence of humanity. It seems the world is in a particular period of this recycling process right now. Change has occurred in the eastern block and South Africa. The internet has revolutionised communication and personal networking globally.

The earth is blowing its global mind with all this change, and old binary forms of knowledge are being replaced by a healthy plurality. The very substance that can feed into new awareness, of the value in difference and diversity in human consciousness.

3.21 Circling to end the walkabout ‘in the mix’

From these elements in Bernard’s work, I have condensed five main themes, which will be revisited in the conclusion, as the contributors to the final suggested framework of one possible Structure of Feelings and Experience. The concept of overlaying, in Mandorla style, Bernard’s, Raymond’s and the four subject groups’ offerings fits Bernard’s way of seeking answers ‘in the mix.’
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE MENTALLY ILL

1. What is sane?

The aim of this chapter is to skirt around the broad territory of human consciousness, taking in mental illness, to see how it connects with the concepts of the structure of feelings and experience. Comparing the special boundary posts, the unusual ‘geography of mind’, and the regular traffic in ideas, fears, notions and noxious weeds of imagination. Mapping the overlapping territory of these two regions may assist in identifying healing places, formed by the creation of policies and programs, which engage with and value these feelings and experiences.

So the format will be to examine several areas acting as boundary posts of mental illness, and then prepare to set that framework against the structure of feelings and experience, developed from Uncles Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith, later in this work. Two Aunties are important additional ‘elders’ here: psychiatrist Karen Horney, and psychologist Anne Wilson Schaef.

Madness, mental illness, has all sorts of degrees and images, varying in different societies. But for modern western society it is a complex issue, combining widespread depression resulting from stress and burnout, to psychotic schizophrenia from complete mental collapse. So to begin discussing the subject, it may pay to define a common ground most people can relate to. Hollywood starlet Lauren Bacall is quoted as having put all those crazy times most people feel, into perspective with her comment: “You can’t start worrying about what’s going to happen. You get spastic enough worrying about what’s happening now.” (1)

That sense of out-of-control-ness and panic, which besets people when they cannot co
with life, is a normal human reaction to extreme stress. But for people suffering from chronic mental illness, life is a continual cycle of worrying. About what’s happening now, and what happened before, and what might happen soon. It all seems to get mixed up in the minds of those suffering mental illness, and takes over their consciousness completely. That is what will be used here as a ground rule for madness—continual cycles of mental stress and delusion.

While most people can relate to this as a concept, it is difficult to fully empathise with those whose journey is through much darker territory than the norm in daily awareness. Because of the extreme and often unique nature of the feelings and experiences undergone in mental illness, these people have much to teach society. Their journey through consciousness is full of challenges, of fear, paranoia, voices, obsessions and other delusions, which offer analogous perspectives on how the whole society often seems to behave. Some would say our society is stuck in a delusional obsession with economic rationalism, a value system that hurts many citizens, but is supposed to bring us benefits.

Robert Johnson looked at the dark side of human nature in his book *Owning Your Own Shadow*, and he pointed out that it is unhealthy to try to stay only in the positive side of our personalities. ‘To suffer one’s confusion is the first step in healing. Then the pain of contradiction is transformed into the mystery of paradox.’ (2) Mental illness moves onto another level of confusion, than what Johnson described above. Lostness of soul, disconnection from the core self, and inability to relate to one’s community, are indicators of having moved into deeper and darker mental illness. Many healthy, balanced people have travelled through such mental space, at times where they knew they were ‘out there and dangerous’. But they most often pass through this moment and come back to regular functioning, in feelings and experience.

Few people who have been through such territory endeavour to go back in their ‘sane’ moments, and visit the space and place of their nightmares, or those of others. Madness
seems to have been a fluctuating state, in the assessment of broad society. For some it is
one of the ultimate threats for ‘normal’ people. In mainstream community, many people
find it so confronting to be met by other souls, who are completely out of whack with a
shared perspective, that they shy away and try to avoid contact.

Mental hospitals don’t get overrun at visiting times. And as Aunty Anne Wilson Schaef
says, the pioneer of non-judgemental psychology based on broadly accepting people’s ‘life
process’, not pathologising their weirdness:

Many believe that we try to kill in others what we fear in ourselves. And yet, as we
face our fears, we have less need to project them onto others. Going into our fears
and processing through them will lead us to places of clarity we have never
imagined. And, we will not need the other to project upon. (3)

Some cultures have acceptance of madness built into their natural understanding of how
people go though different stages in life, especially indigenous cultures. One Australian
Aboriginal colleague of mine remarked, when I had to rush off to hospital to be with my
schizophrenic son: ‘Oh don’t worry too much about it. He’s probably just gone wamba!
Up home we’d just send him up to aunty and let him work it off’.

Mental illness is rife among indigenous communities, especially in post-colonial situations
like Australia, where dispossession, stolen generations, incarceration and then deaths in
custody have unleashed holocaust conditions onto whole communities. Let alone the
destruction of sacred sites, lands and relationship with the earth, which have been
traditionally part of the normalising influences in their lifeworld.

So it is important to establish that ‘sanity’, ‘rational or sensible behaviour or judgement’
(4), varies from community to community. And the way society decides who is sane and
who is not, has as much to say about the state of health of the society as it does about the
individuals being certified.
For the purpose of this work, 'sane' is taken as 'able to anticipate and assess the effect of one's actions' (5). It remains a mute point as to whether that makes the current economic rationalist school of leaders, of most western socio-political systems, mad or mean.

2. Balancing, not judging the shadow

Robert Johnson emphasises that modern society has lost the ability to integrate those qualities of the human psychic make-up, which are seen as 'unpleasant'. 'It is the task of every human to restore our shadow and redeem our rejected qualities. People are as frightened of their nobility as their darkest side.' (6) Johnson's argument emphasises that if humans ignore the parts of their natures which express the shadow, they are likely to slip into neurotic behaviour.

George Bernard Shaw said, 'The only alternative to torture is art,' by which he meant that either we incorporate our shadow consciously and constructively into our lives, to achieve balance, or we will end up doing it anyway through some neurotic behaviour, likely to be destructive. (7)

It is the argument of this thesis there is a possibility of reaching a balance in human nature, which is often confused with conflict, or dualism. It is that part of human consciousness which links with the universe's energy in tension. Chaos if you like. So light and dark, good and bad, yin and yang are not meant to be in conflict, but in balance. Through exercising both in cooperation. This is what yoga taps into and turns into a strengthening experience, in body, mind and soul.

For many people, there are regular jolts to consciousness, which create disruptions to life, relationships, work, even relaxation. There may not even be a cause. Suddenly a bad mood rises. Its origin is not known. That creates even more frustration, edginess and being prone to irritability.
Aunty Anne Wilson Schaef’s ‘Living In Process’ personal and group life growth work concentrates on letting these moments be. Giving them room, and allowing the person to ‘work through’ the feelings, and see if anything comes to a deeper awareness. Either way, they pass, having generated reaction and negative consequences if suppression has been attempted. Or, if they have been allowed to ‘pass on by’, they could have cleared some unwanted energy from the person’s system.

Aunty Anne says it is a mistake to see this sort of event as a good/bad one. That really is dualism – when judgement enters into the equation. Making a decision to mark the experience with a tick in the red column of the ledger of life. She notes that self-blame, blame by others, and a whole series of negative consequences follow this approach.

And Robert Johnson adds on this point: ‘Every single virtue in the world is made valid by its opposite.’ (8) So if people feel themselves suddenly slipping into ‘a bad hair day’, then the advice from these experts is that it is often best to ‘just sit with it’. The result is a challenge to explore paradox. Something unwanted has come upon the person, and they have to deal with it by letting it have space. That’s paradoxical, and it seems most people like simple logical, apparently ‘rational’ answers.

Paradox is that artesian well of meaning we need so badly in our modern world … (In refusing to embrace paradox) we only confine ourselves to the useless experience of contradiction, (which) brings the crushing burden of meaninglessness… Paradox is creative, it is a powerful embracing of reality … While contradiction is static and unproductive, paradox makes room for grace and mystery. (10)

Taking Johnson’s advice seems a positive step, although it involves risk. The alternative I have observed at first hand, in Sydney mental hospitals and suburban homes, is for patients, and many citizens, to sit in misery and fight the results of their human natures, paradoxical feelings and experiences. Many cultures have rituals and traditions which engage with the dark side. They vary from vision quests, initiation rites, tests of man and
womanhood, opportunities to lead with safe mentoring. And other ways of experiencing fear, darkness and the terror of either being alone, or leading with the full weight of social responsibility for the group.

Culture can only function if we live out the unwanted elements symbolically. All healthy societies have a rich ceremonial life. Less healthy ones rely on unconscious expressions: war, violence, psychosomatic illness, neurotic suffering, and accidents are very low grade ways of living out the shadow. Ceremony and ritual are a far more intelligent means of accomplishing the same thing. (11)

An honest public conversation about the universally shared elements of madness, chaos, darkness and shadow within most human beings, would help to re-contextualise the place of people living with mentally illness in western society. If more people processed such aspects of their full humanity in symbolic cultural rituals. From the sporting field, to all night dancing and mardi gras marches, to sweat lodges and drumming sessions. There would be a healthier balance in individuals’ lives, and in how mental illness is treated by the majority. It is the assertion of this work that judging others’ madness is an invitation to deny the observer’s own inner human nature. It is suggested here that there is a lot to learn, taking a walk on the wild side, with compassion and dadirri (ability to ‘sit, wait and listen’).

3. Who has isolation and loneliness?

Modern life is increasingly marked by isolation. Success, suburbs full of nuclear families, SOHO (solo operator, home office) work, busyness, workaholism... There appear to be any number of ways modern westerners can become isolated from each other. And the corollary of isolation is loneliness. Another criterion of modern life, especially in big cities, full of people. Separation from relationship is a core problem of modernity, caused by massing of population, removal of time to relate with strangers, and pressure to perform.

What’s occurring? It appears humans in western societies are losing the ability to relate to
one another. Emphasising the need for sharing, company, story-telling time, and all the other factors Uncles Raymond and Bernard Smith have described as core aspects of humans’ structure of feeling and experience. This issue is seen by some as an endemic problem of modernity.

Escaping into virtual reality video-computer generated experiences, and finding intimacy through the internet, are two solutions which have blossomed into popularity. Because they are available through well established channels of consumption, and have the individual privacy factor many people need to feel securely in control of their experience of life.

For the diagnosed mentally ill, the above scenario quickly deteriorates into a hell. A place of solo entrapment with all their devils. For millions of people with mental illness, in a world where finding ‘company’ and shoulders to lean on is a rarity, isolation is chronic. Hence the increasing evidence of suicide, drug abuse, complete physical collapse and eventual hospitalisation. Then labelling with ‘psycho’ tags by regular society reinforces the problem, of feeling less than and separate from the norm.

4. What cures loneliness?

Rudolf Steiner understood the human experience as one of reincarnation from many lifetimes before, when souls may have gone through a myriad of different experiences. Whether one agrees with this esoteric view or not, the solution he saw for helping the development of people with mental illness or disability was the same: carers and teachers who are fully present in their own lives, and able to share positive loving energy.

So long as the teacher meets the situation with any kind of bias... so long will he remain incapable of making any real progress with the child. Not until the point has been reached where... a certain calm and composure as an objective picture for which nothing but compassion is felt...is the necessary mood of soul present in the astral body of the teacher. (12)
What Theodore Zeldin (*An Intimate History of Humanity*) and others have called ‘welcoming hospitality’ is the facility to exercise unconditional acceptance and compassion for others. This work asserts that herein lies healing for the mentally ill. However, the introduction of budget limitations, efficiencies and pressures to classify and compete between degrees of need among patients, has removed this capability from western health systems.

Health systems have become so preoccupied during their working hours with meeting the surveillance requirements of the system, otherwise known as ‘management reporting’, that just ‘being with’ people in need has become almost non-existent in health agencies. The loss of community in society has been matched by the loss of community in places, where healing is meant to be available for mentally ill people.

The evidence from community services for the mentally ill, especially where I work in Sydney, is that there is an atmosphere of being ‘babysat’ and ‘watched’, while kept on heavy medication regimes. The drugs may suppress any unwanted anti-social symptoms, but they do nothing to redress the inner psychological problems of patients.

Rather than any real engagement in rehabilitation of body, mind or soul, there is a priority for ‘efficient and effective’ management of mental illness cases, through medication and monitoring alone. Nursing staff and former managers have told me directly, in Sydney mental health facilities, that they would personally prefer to be engaging with patients on a one-to-one basis. Seeking to assist self-understanding among patients. But the domination of only-doctors-know, hierarchical thinking and power control measures, as well as pressure of staffing levels, budget limits, and management priorities, make this not only difficult but it is actively resisted.

It is the assertion of this work that, if mental health nursing and other staff were allowed to be themselves, in their own personal expression of life, their efforts would achieve results in healing the mentally ill. Sharing with patients, rather than conforming to a legalistically limited role, they could make themselves available to listen to the lives of those needing
hospitality for the soul.

Once (the necessary mood of soul in the carer/teacher) has come about, the teacher is there by the side of the (person) in a true relation and will do all else that is needful more or less rightly. For you have no idea how unimportant is all that the teacher says or does not say on the surface, and how important what he himself is, as teacher. (13)

My direct experience—since my son became psychotic with schizophrenia over four years ago (at the age of 18), and since I have been working in the mental health rehabilitation field in northern Sydney, as well as closely liaising with it as a parent—is that mental illness has a twofold effect on everyone it touches. First, ‘normal’ people feel deeply their own edges of madness. And second, they feel the distance between them and the person suffering, as they wish to reach them and share a loving connection, or else run a mile. Closing that gap is not occurring in the current system. The ill remain lonely and isolated.

What this work argues, is that political and health administration leaders in westernised societies need to reflect on the damage being done, by a continuing focus on isolating ways of living and ‘healing’. The inability of health systems to provide healing environments, of care, compassion and individual and group engagement with patients, is an indicator of a chronically sick society, as Theodore Zeldin has pointed out. Here, this work argues, is where the full circle forms, from our indigenous brothers and sisters. As Aunty Anne Wilson Schaef points out: ‘The Hawaiian proverb says—“We” overrides “me”—Tribal peoples know how to be a community. In Western culture, we have tried to make the nuclear family the building block of culture... We are afraid of intimacy.’ (14)

Isolation and loneliness is spread across the suburbs. It is also chronic within the so-called health system. I argue that mental illness remains an unsolved problem, because the means are not being made available, to over-come the lack of sharing, healing relationships among mentally ill people and carers within hospital and community-serviced environments.
5. How are we meant to be?

German-American psychoanalytist Karen Horney decided back in the 1940s that ‘individuals cope with the anxiety produced, by the frustration of psychological needs, by disowning their real feelings and developing elaborate strategies of defense’ (15). Horney said this is the beginning of neurosis, and the trail heading towards mental illness. (16)

The sequence of events for people suffering from such a predicament seems to be that they then can no longer ‘hold it together’. For whatever reason. Not because they are bad, or wrong, or somehow ‘less than’ as a person. They are just challenged with other problems than ‘the norm’. Horney believed that all people have a ‘real self’, which we are evolutionarily designed to fulfill, if we are able to exercise responsibility for ourselves and grow through our difficulties. She thought that: ‘What is psychologically healthy in human beings is qualitatively different from what is unhealthy. That which is sick in each of us operates by different psychological laws and dynamics and develops in very different ways from that which is healthy.’ (17)

It is the contention of this work that Horney’s self-realisation process is our natural inheritance, and that regardless of whatever mental illness we may be exposed to, there is always hope for us to re-engage with this process, from our deep inner self, if conditions are right. It is not guaranteed, nor is it impossible. Understanding the structure of feeling and experience that is ‘normal’ for humans to undergo, we have a set of reference points, as to why individuals may ‘go off course’. If they are denied these, or unable to give them expression, it is likely they will move into an imbalanced state. And likewise, if these conditions can be restored, they may well re-find their balance, with appropriate help.

So the assertion in this work is that, ‘how we are meant to be’ is a basic process of lifetime learning and growth in our self-awareness, towards self-realisation. (18) That is also yoga’s ancient teaching, whereby people seek to balance the energy flowing through them in mind, body, spirit, as an exercise in increasing self-awareness, until self is merged with the
universe in complete balance.

Aunty Karen saw that when humans become out of balance in self awareness they veer towards a distorted view of themselves. She saw this as part of the challenge of ‘growing up’, that all people face the task of learning to balance their inner selves to reveal their true selves. In this way people launch out into life and try to meet their basic needs:

According to Abraham Maslow, people need physiological satisfaction, security, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. These needs are hierarchical: the physiological needs are the most powerful and the needs belonging to a more highly evolved state are progressively weaker. (19)

Horney saw that all people had the potential to realise their coherent self, as the core of their personal identity, while also facing the challenge of having their basic needs met. Maslow developed his theories as complementary to Horney, and the psychologists who followed Maslow’s ‘Third Force’ school (after Freudians and Behaviourists) saw self-actualisation as not only the raison d’etre of individuals, but also of social institutions, ‘whose worth can be measured by their success or failure in fostering the psychological growth of individuals.’ (20)

This concept, of individuals sitting within a context of society and culture, in an interchange with their consciousness, is the perspective that Raymond Williams and Bernard explored. And it is the contention of this work that healthy individual life depends on people being able to access that interchange between self and group throughout their lives, as is the natural condition in indigenous societies undisturbed by ‘civilisation’.

Unfortunately, it can be argued that the ‘self’ that exists in today’s world has a huge challenge finding such ground conditions. Horney believed ‘the self existed within a matrix of concentric fields extending from the intrapsychic, through the interpersonal, to the larger culture in which we are all immersed.’ (21) Today that set of circles is increasingly
impersonal, detached from the individual’s lifeworld, and without interest in or engaging context for the majority of citizens.

For people trying to heal neurosis, Horney’s view was that her work was to be in an on-going oscillation between the outer and the inner regions of the patient’s being. For the purposes of the work being examined here, this image suffices in portraying the challenge for people experiencing madness. They face the task of trying to straddle that territory and the swinging experience, to and fro in their awareness. Thoughts, ideas, images and voices are continually pushing them into a swaying motion, out of balance with self.

6. What can we do when torn in conflict?

One of the defining differences between people suffering from mental illness and those who are not, is the amount of inner conflict occurring in their consciousness. Aunty Karen spent a large part of career trying to help people out of these inner conflicts, as much as possible by finding their own inner guidance and courage, to persevere with the effort required.

‘The neurotic person engulfed in a conflict is not free to choose. He is driven by equally compelling forces in opposite directions, neither of which he wants to follow. Hence a decision in the usual sense is impossible. He is stranded, with no way out. The conflict can only be resolved by working at the neurotic trends involved, and by so changing his relations with others and with himself that he can dispense with the trends altogether. (22)

For people suffering from schizophrenia, choice about entering or avoiding conflict is not there. In fact, neurosis looks comfortable compared to full blown ‘schiz’. This is vividly portrayed in Mark Vonnegut’s book about his experience of being schizophrenic, ‘The Eden Express’:

Most diseases can be separated from one’s self and seen as foreign intruding entities. Schizophrenia is very poorly behaved in this respect. Colds, ulcers, flu, and cancer
are things we get. Schizophrenic is something we are. It affects the things we most identify with as making us what we are. (23)

The conflict between ‘normal’ and ‘sick’ in this condition is continuous, with no way of knowing which is which. Sufferers fluctuate in their ‘understanding’ of what is happening to them, and end up ‘lost’ in the confusion of what is normal and who they are. The issue arising from such evidence, which I am arguing in this thesis, is that people suffering from this condition require caring environments in which to work through healthier inner conflicts. Environments which invite their core feelings and experiences to ‘normalise’, by being recognised, valued and encouraged to ‘come out and play’. Then, when healing has begun, they can be invited to begin taking more responsibility for themselves and their thoughts and feelings. And to open again, to caring for and responding to the needs of others.

I needed help, but still in the back of my mind was the feeling that I was crying wolf, that there was really nothing wrong. It would be terribly difficult for anyone to understand what was wrong, because what was wrong was such a strange, elusive thing, the sort of thing it would be easy, almost logical to discount... time stopped being continuous; it jumped around with lots of blanks. (24)

While mental illness is isolating, exhausting and debilitating, in terms of how it affects the lives of those who suffer from it, there are aspects to the experience, which shine a light into all human consciousness. Mark Vonnegut is lucid in his memory of what it was like for him to ‘be nuts’. And he is able to present the facts in an unromantic, but fascinating way.

There were times I was scared, shaking, convulsing in excruciating pain and bottomless despair. But I was never clumsy. Most people assume it must be very painful for me to remember being crazy. It’s not true. The fact is, my memories of being crazy give me an almost sensual glee. The crazier I was, the more fun remembering it is. I don’t want to go nuts again. I’d do anything to avoid it. Part of the pleasure I derive from my memories
comes from how much I appreciate being sane now, but most of what’s so much fun with my memories is that when I was crazy I found my glass slipper. Everything I did, felt, and said had an awesome grace, symmetry, and perfection to it. My appreciation of that grace, symmetry and perfection hasn’t vanished with the insanity itself. It’s regrets that make painful memories. When I was crazy I did everything just right. (25)

The ‘normality’ of the insanity is what stands out in Mark’s account of his madness. He felt right, and in some perspective seemed OK, but his body and mind weren’t in sync, and he couldn’t get the whole show to operate in a coordinated way. The confusion and entrapment in schizophrenia are alluring aspects of the disease, which come on and off like a faulty electric plug. Sufferers are thrown about in a maelstrom of feelings, thoughts, anxieties and obsessions, which leave them exhausted and drained. Yet totally involved in the whole shebang, as if it’s got a clear purpose: ‘Fear and pain would be everything and then nothing. The highs weren’t all that different from the lows. Neither was grounded. Both had at best a marginal relationship to anyone’s reality.’ (26)

It’s like getting emotionally electrocuted over and over, and going back for more because some parts of it feel so good. Then the whole build up takes over and causes collapse. For addicts there is a similar experience of remembrance being almost a relief, because of the freedom of knowing one is no longer stuck in that mad cycle of experiences.

Conflict may not be just like warfare inside ourselves or between ourselves. It can be when something doesn’t fit where it should. And when life gets like that all the time, being in conflict with our core nature’s desire for peace, creates total exhaustion. But something about this sort of experience is akin to what therapists and others call ‘world work’. Those at the heart of such experiences are ‘carrying the load’ for everyone, grabbing that loose high tension wire of life and hanging on like hell. It’s scary to watch, frightening to think about, and terrifying to have no choice but to have to go through over and over. Yet it is exercising aspects of reality that need to be processed, in order for the chaos factor to work itself
through. Perhaps being ‘normal’ isn’t so different, it just looks more under control.

The assertion of this work, is that to help individuals heal from this sort of combination of imbalanced feelings and experiences, they need to be brought into contact with the ‘normal’ human core expressions of feelings and experience. These are beyond Maslow’s basic survival hierarchy. They got to the aspects Uncles Raymond and Bernard have outlined, covered in the concluding chapter, which reflect shared fundamentals, unfortunately missing in the lives of many modern citizens. I am claiming that, if such fundamental aspects of human life can be restored to healing environments, their patients will recover much faster.

7. How do we get lost and disconnected in the first place?

Karen Horney exposed much about ‘normal modern life’ that was actually sick. She talked about ‘character types’ and explored ‘character pathology’. Because she saw these aspects of humanity as indicators of our ultimate potential as conscious beings. Realisation of human potentiality was her great goal. But she showed up the ‘down side’ of ‘normal’ as she unfolded her story of the human psyche: ‘She makes us question the ‘search for glory’ for many practically a credo of modern life, but for Horney the culture medium of psychic illness. Basic assumptions – about pride, love, the importance of achievement, mastery, the standards we live by, the expectations we have of each other – are all called into question.’ (27)

The pressure on many people, to conform to these expectations of life, may be the main ‘straws that break the camel’s back’, in the burden of mental illness. While not arguing that genetic predisposition, or drug abuse, or behavioural abuse, do not play a large role in creating conditions of mental breakdown. It can be equally argued that the conditions of modernity, the pressure of life in late capitalism, exacerbate pre-existing tendencies to mental collapse.

Feeling hounded by others’ expectations, and one’s own fears and anxieties over performing
badly in whatever 'life test' is being undergone, seems to be able to create the pressure that makes many people snap into madness. Once an occurrence has been experienced, where feelings, thoughts, fears and hopes all crash together under such pressure, susceptibility to more such occasions is created. This begins the 'cracking open' that leaves many people shattered by mental illness.

For Maslow, as for Horney, the real self is not an entity, a homunculus, a thing-in-itself. Its components are 'potentialities, not final actualizations. Therefore they have a life history and must be seen developmentally. They are actualized, shaped or stifled mostly (but not altogether) by extrapsychic determinants (culture, family, environment, learning, etc). The real self is actualized only as a self-in-the-world. (28)

Individuals unlucky enough to miss out on developing their real selves in a congruent, transparent and spontaneous way, end up lacking what Carl Rogers identified as 'openness to oneself' (ibid.). The evidence from researchers like Horney, Maslow and Rogers is that such a beginning most often leads to isolation, loneliness and fear. The current dominant value system of modernity operates in a way, that puts everyone under pressure to perform according to a narrow set of criteria, for which many feel very unsuited.

Competition, comparison, intellectual regurgitation under pressure, speed of operation in all aspects of 'performance', efficiency, tightly focused thinking, low concern for heartfelt matters. Such parameters make for a narrow shoot, through which most modern citizens currently get shot into life. The evidence from Aunty Karen is that, it is no wonder some people just end up flying off into a space away from the others, and find themselves floating alone and feeling like failures.

Karen Horney saw the reason people ended up in a neurotic state, as a result of their life experiences, coming primarily from their relations with other people. Then their problems would gradually move into being unable to relate to themselves. This combination indicates
that our society needs to take more responsibility for how it treats individuals during their
development. Rather than adopting a purely competitive value system, exercising a
'survival of the fittest', 'dog eat dog' approach. It will pay to explore alternative ways of
helping people grow up, so they don’t only see the look-after-number-one approach to life
as their only option.

If we want to see how conflicts develop, we must ... take a panoramic view of the
main directions in which a child can ... cope with the environment... a child can
move toward people, against them, or away from them... In each of these three
attitudes, one of the elements involved in basic anxiety is overemphasized:
helplessness in the first, hostility in the second and isolation in the third. (29)

Being 'spat out' of the high pressure-cooker life, that is now so predominant in modern
societies, leaves people 'out on a limb'. Unfortunately the way back is mostly seen as
needing treatment for being ill. While there may be any number of good reasons, for
admiring those who don't want to fit the machine, which churns out competitors in life.
One of the core questions of this work, is 'Who is sick in our society?' The society that
rejects people, who may be wholehearted and do not want to just compete, and may prefer
to work in teams and collaborate? Or those individuals who fail to comply with
ideologically driven approaches to life that are only one way to live?

While not wanting to 'save the world and change society', this work asserts that, only when
changes have been made to rehabilitation environments for the mentally ill, will they have
better prospects of recovery. When the value system applied in those places reflects the
feelings and experiences that are at the core of humanity (see conclusion chapter), then there
may be something worth aiming at, for those who are asked to pursue recovery. Otherwise,
one could be forgiven for wondering why they could be bothered.
8. Seeing the shaman in 'the other'

Another core theme of this work, is that there are messages in the madness people meet, feel, see and imagine. Humans aren’t meant to be in charge of everything that comes to us, as Uncle Raymond argued in his structure of feeling. Similarly, the things that might pass by us, or pass through our awareness, are not always meant to ‘make sense’. According to some psychologists and sociologists, the trap modern people have fallen into, is that very ‘sensible’ goal of ‘understanding’.

Although many contemporary psychological explanations point to addiction as the basis for our suffering... I believe that the root addiction underneath this fixation on the self involves our desire to understand, the belief that we must make sense of life before we can know how to act in it. (30)

I believe that what might be happening, when ‘normal’ people experience madness, in moments of ‘losing it’ within themselves, in their friends or family, or people in the general community, is that they are being shown something. Not like a laboratory experiment where they remain ‘objective observers’. But a sign, an invitation to engage with another form of being, knowing, expressing or seeing life.

Much of modern society’s legislation, regulation, mob behaviour and individual prejudicial judgement of others, is based on fear. And ‘protecting ourselves’ from fearful possibilities. When something ‘mad’ comes our way, it is really offering a different view of the world, which I argue could be quite refreshing. Outside of physically endangering oneself or others, there is a lot to be said for letting people be, and paying attention.

The bottom line here is that human beings are spiritual, not just rational or emotional. They have a dimension that isn’t meant to always make sense. And madness can be a source of great renewal for individuals and society. Showing signs that conditions need to change, or a shift in the predominant attitudes running the world.
Most of the symptoms described by psychology are experiences that take place because a person feels out of control. The chaos of anxiety, the immobility of depression, and the slipperiness of madness may be seen as panic responses to the realisation that one’s life is out of control. Panic may be a wake-up call not just to a neurotic symptom or repressed memory. Spirituality redefines psychological symptoms as opportunities for growth. (31)

By returning to more active expression of the Structure of Feeling and Experience summarised by Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith, this work argues that humans will allow themselves to ‘go back, go way back’. Not in an idyllic return to the native. A considered rational decision. To re-value those affective qualities of life, which are part of our healthy humanity. What Bradford Keeney calls discovering our natural abilities to feel in the soul. This is related to madness, and it’s where the shamans work: ‘I have no doubt that most of what psychiatry addresses are spiritual crises and natural problems in living. The medicalizing and scientizing of these events in people’s lives too often strips away opportunities for spiritual work.’ (32)

The two practical implications of this view are, that the work undertaken in this study argues for use of the structure of feelings and experience, as a framework for healthy return to a more balanced and comprehensive set of human activities. Not only among those recovering from mental illness, but also in many mainstream environments lacking in integrated understanding of human needs.

Also, while not confusing those cases where genuine madness has beset someone, there are times when all humans enter states, where their potential to engage with another dimension of their humanness opens up. It is argued here, that if more of these occurrences were accepted as part of ‘normal’ life, fewer people would find themselves down the path of madness.

Spiritual experiences occur naturally and effortlessly when one is open as a channel, or, as (American Indian elder) Fools Crow put it, as a ‘hollow bone’ or ‘tube’... When one
becomes a hollow tube and allows spiritual experience to move through, the idea of wrong notes and right notes, or more generally good and evil, is dissipated. (33)

It is argued here that what has been largely lost in modern society, is the ability for people to get in touch with their souls, as a personal and communal experience. The discussion here has nothing to do with religion, or proclaiming ‘new age’ perspectives over empirical logic. It is accepted that humans have a spiritual dimension, as individuals, as well as shared amongst us in the common human spirit. Often referred to in times of adversity, sporting celebrations, and certainly in times of reverence for people having died, or disasters having beset a whole nation. It is that sort of spirit this work refers to, as a resource for healing mental illness.

I argue that churches and new age activities are not tapping a common shared consciousness, of our human spiritual inheritance. Madness presents society, individuals, families and institutions, with one aspect of the different dimensions. Which come up when humans engage with other levels of consciousness. And generally speaking, people are frightened of it.

To paraphrase Jung, many churches seem to exist to make it impossible for anyone to have a spiritual experience. One must follow the voice that comes to one... And only through dialogue and participation in communities of other people and creatures can one’s walk be further tuned to best fit the natural ecology. (34)

Uncle Raymond told us that life carries deliberate mysteries and unknowns, as part of the mix. Uncle Bernard reinforced this message, with reflections on the value in sharing through relational experience as a natural human attribute. I am arguing that part of effective mental health process, in order to facilitate healing, should encompass this. That experiences which touch the souls of ‘patients’ and ‘healers’, at levels that human understanding may not be able to reach, will engage with healthy depths of the structure of feeling and experience. I believe this is nothing new. It is where much of the existing healing of madness actually
occurs, where humans’ souls get their exercise. Only the scientific system does not recognise this dimension.

In the Kung bushmen healing dance, some of the healers enter an experiential realm they regard as ‘death’. Here ‘the fear and pain of that boiling num, the terror of that passage, is faced and overcome as individuals die to themselves. From the death of the individual Kung personality, the rebirth of the Kung healer must come.’ (Katz, p.134) Opening and entering spiritual worlds requires experiencing the death of one’s previously stabilised identity. (35)

Part of this experience is a microcosm for what society goes into, when phases of cultural expression pass through different characteristics. Bernard Smith saw the surrealists as an expression of the decadence of modern society after the wars. In Australia, Mardi Gras in Sydney has been used by gay artists to stamp a surreal statement onto the public consciousness. About where things are at, and how inconsistent human nature can be, in denying difference and diversity.

One core perspective in this work, is that some forms of madness are experiences parallel to the ‘dying’ that occurs in spiritual quests. Only modern medicine has so pathologised these experiences, and the individuals going through them, that it can make no real progress. Because it refuses to engage with their inner process.

The place of balance in this consideration, it seems to me, is understanding that humans need to acknowledge their dual nature. That is, that they are spirit beings, as well as mind and body. And to give expression to their dual nature in the right ways. For example, linked to the structure of feeling and experience parameters, as one balancing framework.

I claim that remaining disconnected from the spirit/soul nexus, humans are denied any real growth. Any deeper sharing and celebration with one another, and certainly any real chance of healing from mental illness. Which is why some cultures see mental illness, as much a disease of the society, as of an individual (see Anne Wilson Schaef, *Native Wisdom*, re
Samoan healing).

A combination of good and evil, equally balanced, is essential – for all souls that exist, like all living creatures, must have a perfect balance between life and death. ... spiritual work takes place between the poles of light and dark... good and evil are always co-present... the point between... any pair of oppositions is the very locus of transformation where one side crosses into the other. (36)

9. Reworking western hearts and minds

It is the belief of this work that experiencing madness is not just a sad and troubling symptom of 'something having gone wrong with people, or their world'. It is also an opportunity and a challenge, for the participants and their communities. If members of western society are to engage in practically improving the quality of life it is producing, I believe leaders in politics and public health need to embrace a better understanding, of the place of madness in society's overall scheme of things.

Madness is both a symptom and a warning, that society is not in balance. And I am arguing that parts of many people's humanity are being neglected, by not 'being worked,' as Aboriginal people describe stewardship and practice of their culture and beliefs. Parts of the consciousness of modern western citizens need 'working'. Just as Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith said, in their reflections on the structure of feelings and experience. At the core of our consciousness, we need to engage with one another in sharing, relating and 'singing up' human life.

Actions such as local governments and community groups, neighbourhoods and extended families, creating more holding more regular social rituals. Bringing the shared human spirit into practical expression. A working notion of spirit in our daily rounds as citizens. Without focusing on any religious dogma, people are invited to connect automatically with an aspect of their humanness. This is basic returning to the structure of feelings and
experience Raymond and Bernard portray: 'Here we learn that soul is not an abstract psychological or religious concept but a way of feeling the rhythm of life itself. When music has a vital beat, we say that it has soul. Life has soul when we feel a beat that makes us want to move and dance.' (37)

The journey towards chaos is not one of terror, if humans realise that nature is meant to express and contain chaos, in the same way it expresses and contains beauty. Madness has characteristics that are frightening and enlightening. If western society choses to see the balance between, and moves to engage with this in more active healing processes, I am arguing that mental health recovery rates will rise dramatically: 'The difference between the real and the unreal is an opposition which hides the greater truth that simultaneously sees both views... when we bring different views in front of us and find a way to see them simultaneously, we are lifted to a higher order of seeing.' (38)

Balanced against one another, I am saying that illness and wellness are potential collaborators. The issue in this examination is to agree on whether wellness means more, than simply behaving safely in society, and not being a danger to oneself or others. The notion that human beings are complex, multi-dimensional beings, with hearts, minds and souls, and a connecting spirit between them, needs to come out onto the table in talks about mental health.

The argument needs to be continuously revisited, that it is time to get beyond a neurotransmitter-based model of consciousness, and therefore a healing model based solely on pharmacological intervention in neural pathways. My belief is that until mental health applies more holistic versions of what constitutes the whole patient, healing rates will be low, and quality of life outcomes will be marginal. Different views on mental illness need airing and discussion now, more than ever. Rates of depression, suicide and mental illness in western societies, are rapidly increasing (*Mental Health in Australia, 2002*). The focus of this study is to find new parameters for addressing possibilities for holistic intervention in
rehabilitation for recovery.

The contention of this work, that the structure of feeling and experience outlined, is one framework for considering affective indicators for informing healing strategies, offers a new approach to rehabilitation. One that values the experiences and feelings of patients, as guides to their recovery, not just indicators of required medication levels. By responding to the feelings and experience, which participants in their own healing share, it is possible to build rehabilitation processes that encourage reconnection with self, with community activities and with relationships of sharing, caring and celebration. I believe this is the beginning of effective healing. But it will take an agreement from health managers, to value the notion of ‘working the culture’, that is at the root of this argument.

10. Rights to be heard, and rites to share

Madness may be ‘out there’ at times and completely into a fantasy zone. But this is not to say that the experience is wasted. Mark Vonnegut’s record of his journey through madness is an exhilarating reminder of the sorts of things that go through all people’s heads at different times. Of ‘daydreams’ or ‘musings’, which people generally pass over and disregard, and certainly keep to themselves. Some researchers and spiritual teachers claim, that human souls are engaging in the varied field of consciousness all the time, moving between different levels of illusion and reality.

As well as being one of the worst things that can happen to a human being, schizophrenia can also be one of the richest learning and humanizing experiences life offers…. Being crazy and being mistaken are not the same. The things in life that are upsetting… are more than likely things well worth being upset about. It is however, possible to be upset without being crippled, and even to act effectively against those things. (39)

Mark Vonnegut gives invaluable insight into the state of feelings and experience, which
people go through when they suffer from schizophrenia. His record of consciousness in The Eden Express is a travelogue through madness. The reason I believe it is important, is that it illustrates thoughts not that different from ‘normal’. Only they are out of context and out of sync with the rest of the world at the time.

Many observers of today’s mad rush to embrace economic rationalist strategies, and the concomitant disastrous results for quality of life among countless citizens, claim these thoughts put into practice are mad as well. I am arguing for more acknowledgement of the diagnosed mad, to be able to indicate large areas of their own programs for healing. If society must be stuck with the madness that currently runs our politico-economic ‘system’, then that system could at least respond by recognising the feelings and experiences of the allegedly clinically mad.

It’s impossible to say whether full insight and understanding would help a schizophrenic or not. We all have vastly greater capacities for experience than for understanding... Schizophrenia multiplies the problem manyfold and disability makes the problem more pressing. Since there is always so much to be understood and dealt with, the notion that understanding will clear up the problem can’t be tested. (40)

What can be claimed is that it is healthy for all human beings to share their feelings and experiences. Therefore it is healthy for the mentally ill to share their feelings and experiences. It is healthy for citizens to become involved in their democratic process, to vote, express their needs and aspirations, so that their elected representatives can reflect those expressions in how they make decisions. So too for citizens with mental illness? Or not? This simplistic expression of the democratic process contains a prospect currently far from realisation in mental health. The powerful elites of doctors, bureaucrats and drug-based models of healing, which currently dominate mental health, keep most patients from having any effective say in their healing.
If I were asked to swear on all that’s holy that I had no extraordinary powers, I
could not do it. As uncomfortable as it made me, I had extraordinary powers. I have
no such powers now. I hope I never have them again... The worst thing about the
powers was how little control I had over them. They coincided with the blanks. The
more rational control I had, the less power I had. So the powers were to me a
powerlessness. (41)

Mark Vonnegut went on from his stint with schizophrenia to become a doctor of medicine.
He valued the drugs that helped him stabilise enough to begin to recover. Then he moved on
to multi-vitamin regimes and a healthy lifestyle process. And he applied himself to his own
healing with a fierce determination.

The example of one person is not enough to warrant changes in government policy and
programs. But I argue there are many, many mentally ill people with brilliance, strength of
logic, strategic understanding, and compassion for the needs of their peers. It does not make
sense to ignore their potential as major designers of their own healing programs. After all,
they are not stupid. Just mentally ill, with occasional bouts of depression, delusions,
obSESSIONs, fears, paranoid concerns and so on. That is not itself a list of attributes, which
could deny someone’s right to participate in managing their own life. Most citizens would
admit to having had similar experiences from time to time.

11. Indicators of the energy of change

There are also some aspects of madness which offer unique perspectives on life, which I
claim should be more acknowledged in how their programs are designed and delivered. These
attributes of feelings and experience are important indicators. They offer perspectives,
which can help the attempt in this work to construct a framework of feelings and
experience. To suggest possible ways to assist the creation of more integrated healing and
rehabilitation programs for the mentally ill. They are relevant for comparison with the
model of consciousness, developed from Uncle Raymond and Bernard’s work on the
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structure of feelings and experience. This will be discussed later in the work, and links made between aspects of the following attributes, and parallel ones from the other three major subject groups—the intellectually disabled, the indigenous and the addicted.

11.1 Chaos can teach us ‘how to be out of control’

Modern members of western society may well relate to the word ‘chaos’, and its accompanying energy in themselves. It has become a household word in western environments, where life has become so busy, demanding and all-encompassing. In homes and offices, people admit they feel ‘put upon’ by the constant chaos. Meaning, they can’t handle so much in life at one time, and it builds up and becomes chaotic.

For mad people, chaos is a curse which comes whenever it pleases, and they have to accommodate it in ways that would make others proud. The process others can share in, arising from this perspective, is the concept of ‘energy out of control’. And that ‘out of controlness’ is exactly where some observers claim modern people need to get to. To save themselves from becoming uptight, anxious, and detached from their true selves.

Just as the butterfly flapping its wings is said to have the potential cause a tidal wave on the other side of the globe, in the Chaos and Gaia Theories, some individual humans’ inner chaos of consciousness may be waiting to be allowed to flow where it can help others, and the common good. The exercise of chaos in one’s life is taken in this work as a valuable ground for learning and knowing. To be respected and engaged with.

11.2 Mess can be freeing from restrictive ways

Being a ‘neataholic’ I’m very sensitive to mess. Its chaos energy disturbs my need to control the environment around me, and to know that things are not ‘dirty’. Some part of me became neurotic about this stuff, so now I live with a psychologist who used to be a professional ‘flooder’—someone who gets with a neurotic and does the thing they hate the most, over and over, until they have learnt to relax around the mess, and to give u
obsessing about it so much. Needless to say I’ve given up worrying about my partner’s mess. Most of the time. It’s actually great to be completely cruddy sometimes, and let myself feel how messiness can be freeing.

Mad mess is another deal. You need to be very present to keep up with it, and it becomes exhausting very quickly. Even mess that means the other person has become ‘absent’ can be demanding. Because the other person may not know what to do, and it puts everything out of kilter. When the individual in question doesn’t keep up their end of the communications bargain called relating, life can get stressful for both parties.

If you try getting with a messy person and let yourself fall apart a bit, it shows how to relax in the company of chaos, and how to see that nothing is so important. A more indigenous perspective on life. And perhaps something that mentally ill people can share with their health system, in order to provide context and balance, in how healing and rehabilitation programs are planned and delivered. Acknowledging ‘the messy’ people with mental illness, and hearing their feelings and experiences, would be a valuable input to mental health program and services planning. Because knowing what to expect, and why frustrations and ‘blow-outs’ lead to messy situations, would allow for dealing with necessary or unavoidable ones.

11.3 A lot of wisdom rises from the shadows

People who have undergone some psychotherapy, may become aware of an uncomfortable feeling, when they realise they are in their ‘dark selves’. That is an aspect of personality expression which represents ‘the worst side’ of a person. Mad people very often don’t have a choice about entering such a psychic space. But they become used to having to deal with their personality mood swings. Which come and go according to the temperature, the ether, the energy flow of life, who knows?

This sort of ‘shadow experience’, of personality and mood flowing in and out of negativity,
is an example of what life teaches most people eventually. For some, only on their
deathbeds. That none of us in control of our full scope of feelings, experiences, and
behaviour, towards ourselves and others.

Sometimes when people get life threatening diseases they suddenly ‘turn’. It shocks their
loved ones and friends to see this person who was ‘nice’ yesterday, become blunt and
demanding today. I argue that there should be more of it, until westerners get to find their
balance. In being able to live according to their true selves, and find cooperation and
compassion for others. The mad can show many how to access their real selves. And this
aspect of their characters deserves more acknowledgement as a natural part of being human,
not a reason to ignore their feelings and experiences.

11.4 ‘Shaman round the mountain’

Mark Vonnegut was sure of it, so is my son William. They claim when you crack up you
get some special gifts of vision. So special you can think they should be broadcast on the
evening news, so the world can set itself straight! Adults know the truth is many people
have such moments of insight, clarity, and also delusion. The argument in this work is that
it is OK to allow them to come, go, float round and give whatever they’ve got to give. What
is not so healthy is to judge people for experiencing feelings like this.

I claim that the mad offer openings into consciousness that can uplift others’ energy of soul.
With a little imagination and patience, I believe it is possible to find special places in one’s
being, the inner knowing, or unconscious contact with the universe. These give generous
quantities of insight, and exposure to nature with its manifold lessons. If people stop long
enough to ‘do-dadirri’: that is, ‘sit, wait and listen’. The unique experiences of mentally ill
people can not only be entertaining and provide light relief after many painful experiences.
They can also give insight to situations for others. This is one of the main reason why this
work claims there is such positive potential in involving people with mental illness in
designing and delivering their health and rehabilitation programs.
Insight, energy, vision, imagination and commitment are all attributes employers cry out for. I claim they are available among the mentally ill, and should be tapped for the good of these people themselves, and those who will come after suffering from mental illness.

11.5 Fantasy

Living with and working with the mad energy of fantasy is exciting, crazy, zany and bizarre. Some people tell of almost ‘fantasy experiences’, meeting a stranger and going on the spur of the moment to a party and entering a completely unknown and unpredicted world. Travellers to other countries sometimes meet someone, get on well and decide to go on a journey together, and have amazing and fresh things open up in their lives.

That is similar energy to what mentally ill people go through every day. Sometimes all day. It is possible to imagine that going such eye-opening, mind-expanding, brand new experiences for breakfast, lunch and tea, would become ‘too much’. And it does for mentally ill people, subject to delusions, extreme reactions to situations and other people.

But small doses are very healthy. I argue that if more people could allow their consciousness to remain in the moment, the immediate experience, and in their deeper knowing, they could exercise awareness on a higher level of fitness for life. The work of many spiritual gurus, therapists, life change workshop presenters and business motivators is based on this exact notion. Stay in the moment and deal with what comes with fresh eyes. It can make life like a fantasy, because preconceived perspectives and prejudices tend to drop away.

12. Designing a lifeworld

What is argued throughout this work, is the possibility that society can find places for mad people where they are accepted. That they are on a journey in life, just like everyone else, and that all people are prone to a degree of madness sometime or other. These seem fair
criteria for integrating people with mental illness into more general social settings.

The issue is that western society is now so rule bound with regulations about 'public safety' and 'public liability', that people with life experience on the edge of normal are now labelled as 'a problem'. Rather than moving the rules to allow for more compassionate acceptance, the west seems more bent on veering towards excluding anyone of difference, apart from anything else because they are too difficult to deal with in a legal responsibility sense.

Disregarding that hopeless red tape angle for a moment, it seems from the examination of humanity's structure of feeling and experience that, most people enjoy engaging with difference and diversity, once it is explained to them. Ignorance is the problem, not difference. My case is that these aspects of consciousness offer a rich resource to the health and rehabilitation system. They deserve engagement and being allowed to prove their worth as participants in design and delivery of their effective lifeworld.
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
CHAPTER FIVE
INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED

1. Offering hospitality for the soul

Welcoming others into a shared sense of worth and acknowledgement seems intuitively to be a natural human attribute, of family, relationship and community. But the evidence is that this is not so. Fear often rules out welcome and engagement with others, especially when their difference is in the area of disability.

This chapter examines aspects of the lives of the intellectually disabled. How they are different from people in mainstream society, but that they offer everyone rich resources in this difference. The evidence presented aims to underline why these people should be more recognised by the health, rehabilitation and community services systems. To be able to participate in the planning, design and delivery of their own and their peers' services.

And in terms of integration within mainstream society, I argue that the intellectually disabled offer special attributes of personality and social character. To emphasise these simply, each sub-section heading has a title and a sub-title, underlining why I believe these people have valuable things to offer the general community. Their special attributes add to society's mix, in a way that enriches humanity's ability to share feelings and experiences. By examining some of the areas of difference in personality and energy expressions, among the intellectually disabled, and comparing them with the structure of feeling and experience Uncles Raymond and Bernard have given us. I argue it is possible to see many aspects of the value in their greater integration across society.

The intention in this work is to focus on how the intellectually disabled can be assisted to become more recognised contributors to society. Through mainstream channels of social service delivery, and greater inclusion in community activities. The view expressed, that our
society has the opportunity to be enriched by these people, is a practical one. Turning up at public events, featuring on the bill, helping organise and present communal occasions. These are the sorts of outcomes I am looking for. Not to pursue an idyllic spectre of all things being bright and beautiful.

Sickness and disability are two things humans fear. I maintain mental sickness and intellectual disability doubly magnify this fear in westernised societies. Because of the high status allocated to matters of the mind and the intellect. Modernism is a product of the mind and the intellect. Its key component, 'progress', is an idea, that change is a good thing, and that the mind is where it begins. Consequently, this value system projects the judgement, that 'if your mind’s not right, you’re automatically “less than”'.

People born with intellectual disability begin life as 'losers', in the competitive western world. A world built on achievements of the intellect, and driven by the fuel of the ego’s ambition. But the argument of this thesis is that there are other aspects to the lives of the intellectually disabled, which make them richly endowed. Not to play down their disadvantage or suffering. To acknowledge their strengths, endurance and unique offerings to others.

In my view, one unique advantage of being unable to perform, in the world of intellectual prowess and competitive achievement, is that it gives one time. This case states that the intellectually disabled combine that time with an attitude of heart, mind and soul that gives them unique gifts to share with others. The biggest being ‘hospitality of soul’. A phenomenon answering one of society’s deepest needs in modernity—the need for shared love.

Linguistically, intellectual derives from the same root as intelligent. The Latin ‘intellegere’, to understand, from ‘inter-, between’, and ‘legere, to choose’. (1) So intelligence means ‘to choose between’. But it is arguable, according to this thesis, as to whether the choices made by intellectual processes alone, are actually intelligent ‘choices between'.
‘Intellectual’ means ‘of the intellect, developed or chiefly guided by the intellect rather than by emotion or experience.’ (2) I argue that the evidence from Uncles Raymond and Bernard, is that humans’ structure of feelings and experience justifies a reintroduction into mainstream values and practices. And that its very lack has created an imbalance, in the way many decisions, priorities, and evaluations of worth are made in our society.

My own experience, working and making personal friends with intellectually disabled people, is that they are very intelligent, highly capable, and deeply caring. Their offerings to others, in terms of sharing, caring, persevering and creating fun and joy, are generous and continual. This is not the territory of ‘less than’. It is difference and diversity in action.

What this case argues, is that intellectually disabled people carry strengths, which should be more seriously recognised and engaged with. That those aspects of mind they express, adding feelings and experience to life’s daily processes, can complement the intellectually dominated parts of life. These ideas, ideals, formulae, concepts, structures and processes may have led us through modernity. But many argue it has been at great cost to the state of our hearts, and the commonweal (‘the general welfare’) (3).

Work on emotional intelligence has emphasised that feelings and experience are engaged in such predominant territory in human life, they deserve more acknowledgement as indicators of people’s effectiveness as members of society. Michael Jackson has highlighted indigenous perspectives, making such aspects of individuality serious parameters of worth (Jackson, At Home In The World) within community. The case here is that it is time western society took similar note, of its intellectually disabled practitioners in the field of hospitality for the soul. As this will benefit not only them and their community services, but society as a whole, through improved integration of difference and diversity.

There is a type of hospitality which comes from the experience of being with intellectually disabled people, to do with the space to share in. Henri Nouwen called it ‘creating an empty space where the guest (ie. ‘the other’) can find his own soul’ (4). This referred to the
‘wounds’ that all humans carry in their psyches, and which intellectually disabled people openly display in their being, ‘which must be self-understood as signs leading to healing’ (5).

While it is possible to rationalise what is lacking or different among the intellectually disabled, I prefer to perceive their strength in this field as one of opening to shared feelings and experiences. Here Theodore Zeldin’s concept of hospitality is inviting:

How great a difference to the conduct of daily life, the ability to alter the focus of one’s perceptions can make. To be hospitable to the nuances of life, it is no use treating the mind as an automatic camera; only by composing one’s picture and playing with light and shadow can one hope to see something interesting. (6)

It is that light and shadow play that shows up in subtle ways when one spends time with the intellectually disabled. Dropping all pretense of intellectualism. People become in these circumstances simply souls in the playground of consciousness, with no advantage one over the other. I have experienced this on many occasions, working with intellectually disabled people when they go swimming, playing basketball, at MacDonalds, and out and about on the street.

Zeldin refers to the Ming Dynasty leader and writer Lu K’un (1536-1628), raising the topic of hospitality in his ‘Song of Good People’, written to be chanted by the illiterate:

What people needed to learn was to put themselves in the place of others, but without illusions, because every individual was different. “Regarding others like the self, while realizing that others are not necessarily like the self, is comprehension.”… Recognise first that “all good people are sick”, that there is something wrong with everyone: it is dangerous to believe one is right and others wrong. The only cure is to “share personal experiences”. (7)

There is an invitation here to engage in one of humanity’s great opportunities. The chance
to re-engage with one another in community. Without ignoring the suffering and need for greater invitation into mainstream environments among the intellectually disabled, I claim they are like catalysts. Their way of being acts like a ‘can opener’ to the hearts and minds of ‘normal’ people, leading them into the experience of sharing our unity in diversity. Just by making friends and spending time together.

This ability offers humanity a rich resource. For I argue that people in western societies have lost much of their ability to relate to one another, and to get beyond their own interest in and preoccupation with surviving and thriving. Which have led to a form of selfishness in isolation. I believe muscles in the social heart have not been exercised, so they have begun to atrophy among many people. It is my belief that the intellectually disabled are open heart specialists. Ready to help, if the means of integrating them more into mainstream activities are enabled.

The age of discovery has barely begun. So far individuals have spent more time trying to understand themselves than discovering others. But now curiosity is expanding as never before. Even those who have never set foot outside the land of their birth are, in their imaginations, perpetual migrants. (8)

2. Sharing the provenance of absence

Offering others the space in which to reconnect with their own hearts may be the main gift that intellectually disabled people bring to society. This work proposes that intellectually disabled people create a new form of provenance, in their effective ‘absence’ from the mainstream world of power, image, status and ‘intelligence’. They are present and ‘absent’ at the same time. So ordinary people, who meet them in the shopping malls or on the neighbourhood street, feel something in themselves reach out and open towards the intellectually disabled. They find a new shared place of origin. I believe it stems from the heart. This is my continued observation in working with intellectually disabled young adults and children, when they meet and mix with ‘normal’ people.
What occurs, by my assessment of personal interchanges around the swimming pool, the basketball court, the video shop and the supermarket, is a sort of abandonment to openness. By both parties. Giving oneself permission to fall into accepting another person’s difference, and their space for engagement. A sort of merging of souls, in a moment when all other priorities fall away, and shared humanity overcomes fear, prejudice or intellectual preoccupation.

That is not to say the intellectually disabled will always be contented and ‘available’, at the moment when others are ‘opened’ towards them. But from what I have seen in action, they often are, and their own sufferings and frustrations often shift aside in the moment of recognition of engagement. All this is what Theodore Zeldin has been ‘on about’ in his work. He refers to Dostoyevsky claiming that ‘it doesn’t matter what people say, only how they laugh.’ (9).

It’s true that you cannot be free or fully human until you laugh, because to laugh means to make your own judgement, to refuse to accept things at their face value, but also not to take yourself too seriously. That means inviting other people to your internal conversations, and discovering that they see you quite differently from the way you see yourself. (10)

This openness is what I have observed is available most of the time with intellectually disabled people. They are not ‘playing a game’ with ideas, thoughts, manners or ‘jockeying’. Not unless they want to ‘try you on’, to tackle the resistance in your own mind to sharing in an open exchange, or just having fun.

So what this work says mainstream citizens are invited to ‘do’, is to enter the space of hospitality opened up for them by the intellectually disabled, and feel whatever comes up. About themselves and the intellectually disabled they meet. I suggest that stopping to do this is suggested is a more fruitful course for dealing with dis-ease with life, than the habituated obsessive escape device many westernised people take on—being ‘too busy to
spare the time'. That is often simply an escape from intimacy, in my observation.

My point here is that this could be a new experience of feeling for many people, giving their consciousness permission to 'go out and play'. For example, by volunteering to join the support group at their local neighbourhood centre, serving intellectually disabled people. I advocate many people would find they could 'come clean' about the thing that most of hope for deep down, a genuine heart connection with another human being.

Such experiences are rare today, in a modern world driven by stress, timetables, and pressure to 'get things done'. I suggest that vast numbers of people have not given themselves permission to 'know' their true humanity, in these times of mad rationality and pragmatic 'real world, common sense'. That is, that they are all connected in a world of human consciousness, regardless of status intellectually, socially, religiously, financially, or whatever.

Every individual is connected to others, loosely or closely, by a unique combination of filaments, which stretch across the frontiers of space and time. Every individual assembles past loyalties, present needs and visions of the future in a web of different contours, with the help of heterogeneous elements borrowed from other individuals; and this constant give-and-take has been the main stimulus of humanity's energy. (11)

The intellectually disabled are a significant group of those 'other individuals', offering the filaments of openness, vulnerability, childlike wonder, and playfulness, which are part of healthy living. D.H. Lawrence thought and felt that humanity needed to hand over to this way of being, in order to fulfill its full potential. He said 'It is impulse we have to live by, not the ideals or the idea. But we have to know ourselves pretty thoroughly before we can break the automatism of ideals and conventions.' (12)
3. Breaking free from compliant ways of being

Helping others to open themselves to greater freedom of expression and sense of self is another surprising contribution arising from interactions with intellectually disabled people. The concept of ‘strength in weakness’ shows up vividly in the context of their experience with education. Because they are seen as incapable of achieving much, in the competitive learning environment that is modern education, they are left to undertake activities aimed at a low level of cognitive development. Working in the environment of intellectual disability schools, it is possible to experience this concept from another perspective. When people are fully engaged with the intellectually disabled, in a respectful and equal sharing, they are given the chance to drop their disguise. All the forced confines of thought, controlled feeling, behaviour and ‘rules’, which many feel have come to stultify western educated lives.

Lawrence observed about western education, that ‘Our whole aim has been to force each individual to a maximum of mental control, and mental consciousness… But for the vast majority, much mental consciousness is simply a catastrophe, a blight. It just stops their living.’ (13) While Lawrence’s particular conclusion about categories of potential for ‘mental consciousness’ veers into a prejudiced corral, his principle of giving priority to the ‘vital and dynamic’ force within each human being, above training the mentality, is laudable. For many people I have observed, it is a task that takes decades, to recover their spontaneity and inner creativity, after they have been ‘educated into oblivion’.

This thesis argues that while intellectual disability brings challenges of limitation that are daunting for most people to consider, the ability to ‘be’ in an unconstrained manner, is a valuable capacity, compared to many people’s limited experience of their own lives ‘from the inside’. Due to being educated into monotonous, obedient compliance, many people have lost their spontaneity. I know this to be true, from my own years in school teaching and tertiary education, where the results often show as a tragic waste of inhibited potential.

What Lawrence was arguing for, according to my reading of his work, was a revaluing of the
inner nature of humans, as creatures of natural energy and connection with nature. His view, that life is best lived through this channel, and not primarily the intellect, supports more engagement with the intellectually disabled, as exemplars of unrestrained being. ‘The supreme lesson of human consciousness is to learn how not to know. That is, how not to interfere. That is, how to live dynamically, from the great Source, and not statically, like machines driven by ideas and principles from the head.’ (14)

The process of involving intellectually disabled people in taking more responsibility, for designing and effectively managing their own lifeworld, need not be complex. With appropriate care and support, they would continue life as it is now, only with greater choice, more self confidence, and a sense of being taken seriously. I argue this simple process will improve their morale, their health, and the quality of community within which they live. Not the Gemeinschaft model. Today’s world with an added component of spirit, heart and ‘working the culture’. When the whole way of life of a group of people is taken seriously and given a place among everyone else.

4. Glocalisation helping people find their way home

Indigenous people I have worked with, in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and India, observe that Westernised people seem to have lost a sense of generational continuity and rites of passage. They have reflected that young people in these cultures have trouble forming an understanding of themselves, and how to progress towards wisdom according to some agreed set of standards. That they often seem lost, by comparison with indigenous youth, who remained with active expression of their culture. And older people seem to have lost a valued role in transferring wisdom and experience.

My view is that two trends are responsible for this. They have arisen from modernism’s embracing of rationality, and denial of the importance of spirit understandings, guided by feelings, in deciding how life should go. Henri Nouwen pointed out in 1979 in The Wounded Healer’ (15), that he observed two types of tyranny had taken over many young people’s
lives. He said the Tyranny of Fathers led to a sense of disobedience if children chose not to follow their fathers. This created guilt and ‘the guilt culture’. Then, when the Tyranny of Peers replaced that of the fathers, it meant that not following one’s peers was to become a non-conformist. This created shame, and led to ‘the shame culture’.

According to Nouwen, both these phenomena of the last hundred years achieved a loss in the aspiration to adulthood, and its replacement by peer conformity among young people, which meant the death of a future-oriented culture. That meant the end of an eschatology—or, in simplistic Christian religious terms, ‘no hope of reaching the promised land’. The more indigenous sense of this perspective is that westernised young people have been robbed of emerging from youth into an informed adulthood. Observed as they made their rite of passage by their elders, able to give feedback from their own experience, not to preach.

The purpose in our lives seems to me to come from two main sources: when we feel ‘seen’, valued and engaged with among our community, with a role to play and contribution to make; and when we feel drawn on a journey towards our higher power, the force in the universe which affects us all, and fulfils us when are ‘in tune’ with its energy. When people are connected with these two sources of purpose, they feel whole and integrated with their world. The phenomenon Nouwen observed happening to many young westerners was a loss of that purpose, and a disconnection from those sources. He saw a tendency to stay home, be with your little group, and therefore end up voting for the status quo. That was the end of the seventies, and soon after, the greed of the eighties answered any concerns with the future by a rush to have everything right now. Ignore the credit card bills. And the immediate sequel was the neo-conservative rush of the nineties, which still impacts on social policy and community lifeworlds. What Robert Theobald called our ‘cultural trance.’

My argument is, that finding new ways of experiencing purpose in community, and the
shared mystery of a spiritual dimension, comes most from sharing in community rituals. Celebrations, local work projects, and ways of caring for each other at the local level, are part of ‘Glocalisation’: the new concept for ‘thinking global, acting local’ (from Buckminster Fuller), with an emphasis on local community as the locus of action, but in shared movements to aggregate people power.

The relevance of this story for intellectually disabled people, is that they are local resources and a local focus for glocalisation. As DJ performer Fat Boy Slim says, ‘right here, right now’, is where the intellectually disabled in our communities are waiting for friends to turn up and get involved in their lives. The result, I am saying, will be a two way benefit in community building and rejuvenation of spirit.

5. Getting still with the compass of compassion

Henri Nouwen suggested that the intellectually disabled teach others, that compassion can be the clue to finding a new authority to direct their thoughts. He added that to find this, people need time and silence. In the film ‘Antonia’s Line’ there is a beautiful moment in the narration when viewers are told: ‘The angels are silence.’ Nouwen points out that: ‘Deep silence leads us to realize that in the first place prayer is acceptance… Prayer creates openness in which God is given to us.’ (17)

I argue that this is almost the exact opposite of what is happening in most of the world today. The information explosion and virtual reality fill up people’s ‘head space’ with ‘noise’. Information takes over from knowledge and wisdom. The knowledge and wisdom, which elders like me believe would often choose to enter silence and contemplate life more. To sit and listen for guidance in our affairs.

I argue that part of the needed contemplation, is to realise that all humans are just ‘bit players’ in whatever is going on in the world, in the universe, and even in our own minds. As one world famous, but anonymous member of the 12 Step movement likes to put it:
‘My life is none of my business’. In other words, he has handed over his life to a sense of living under the direction of a higher power. Whatever critics may think of that, it is the time honoured way for most of humanity, before the age of reason brought us into scepticism about all things metaphysical. I am arguing for a return to valuing these approaches in the public sphere, which manages our lifeworlds.

I am also saying that engaging with the intellectually disabled means facing some of what comes up in this silence. Some of the deep hurt in individuals. It is a silencing moment.

Many people seem to prefer to choose to rush to the nearest shopping mall, to get lost in the muzac and clamour and stupor of consumption. Rather than engage with the experience of feeling their own hurt, through contact with the life of someone else, who has suffered through disability, prejudice and being marginalised.

My point is, that this is the very moment when humans have the choice of the other option. To allow themselves to feel. And that feeling a sense of connection with people of difference can be so liberating. When those people have an intellectual disability, ‘normal’ people are offered the gift of ‘making room for the other’, as Nouwen puts it in The Wounded Healer. This message echoes the same wisdom from Big Bill Neidjie in Story About Feeling, and what Fr Eugene Stockton says about ‘Dadirri’ in Aboriginal teaching—‘to sit, wait and listen’.

Robert Theobald said in We DO Have Future Choices, that humanity is headed towards ‘the compassionate era’, when such values will be essential to our future development as a species. But he also said people needed tools to use repeatedly, to be able to return to the practice of this way of being.

Westerners have become outwardly hardened and cynical, unable to make easy contact with their compassionate feelings, except when directed towards our loved ones. Inwardly though I believe many people are fearful, and often lonely, wondering how to reconnect
with ‘a feeling of belonging’. Here I claim the intellectually disabled teach their associates some valuable life lessons. By helping people to experience that space in themselves where they can celebrate life and death—ie. the full gamut of human existence once more. Humanness becomes the common denominator once people stop distracting themselves and realise their shared ‘bottom line’, their mortality.

Compassion becomes the core and the nature of authority, according to Nouwen, in this context. His view of teaching was that it offered channels through which people discovered themselves. And here people were offered the chance to discover a real, heart-felt, personal connection with people, as they are. I am arguing for more inclusion of the intellectually disabled in mainstream decision-making circles, exactly so that they can contribute those elements ‘to the mix’.

6. Openness and intimacy

Allowing feelings to be welcome guests in modern people’s consciousness takes a major retraining exercise for ‘civilised westerners’. Many have been programmed to shut off feelings, and not to carry a continuous awareness that life is also about death, or that joy often is followed by sorrow. These are more indigenous experiences of the life cycle. They have been disinfected out of most western environments.

My observation is that the intellectually disabled don’t live this way. They feel. If things occur that are unhappy-making, they will express that. If things are joyful, that’s what will be heard all around Henri Nouwen talked about ‘naming the space where joy and sorrow meet’, as a major part of the intellectually disabled’s gift to society. Embracing the truth that painful feelings are often meant for our growth, and are naturally part of life, not something to be avoided.

Many writers have expressed the wisdom that people’s misery is also a gift—see particularly Rainer Maria Rilke’s Letters to Mr Koppas. My case in this work is that, if
people allow sadness its due place in their lives, it can take them into contact with their souls. Just as Rilke said loneliness can be beautiful in helping us achieve self-understanding, and can therefore be a gift, according to Nouwen.

I claim this is not some ‘new age’ truism, but a practical tool for life. Allowing ourselves to be immersed in life’s full array of feelings and experiences is healthy and balanced. The intellectually disabled can be friendly guides, as to how to surrender to this full embracing of feeling. My observation is that they show how it comes through trusting that they can ‘show themselves’, and be open in their expression of what is happening in their lives. It is like the opposite of ‘saving face’, in the English, Japanese and Chinese shared tradition of controlling manners for the sake of social protocol.

As Jean Vanier points out: ‘The journey of each of us is a journey towards the integration of our deep self with our qualities and weakness, our riches and our poverty, our light and our darkness.’ (18) In comparing with the structure of feeling and experience, that Raymond Williams’ and Bernard Smith’s works explore, it is possible to see where intellectual disability opens areas that have been closed to the mainstream of our society for a long time. Being in circumstances where one’s weakness, inadequacy and fear are accepted is an extremely luxurious circumstance in today’s world. But for those lucky enough to live in conditions where intellectual disability is accepted, there is then a trust that allows individuals to relax into a natural balance with their feelings and their state of soul.

People cannot accept their own evil if they do not at the same time feel loved, respected and trusted ... It is a question of accepting others and loving them with all their egoism and aggression ... mutual acceptance ... silent, peaceful and tender acceptance. (19)

Here enters an aspect of living with intellectual disability that opens controversial directions for life pathways. One facet of Jean Vanier’s worldwide home-based intellectual disability supporting movement, ‘L’Arche’, in its Christian philosophy, is to ‘work the faith’. To
make belief a practical part of daily living, in that life depends on God. And whether one is religious or not, most people can tell the difference in any community educational, social welfare or health service, when it is motivated by a spirit-led purpose, or a religious faith, or is simply a mechanical public service.

I claim spirit works, and it is not a dangerous, irrational concept for community work to embrace. Part of its efficacy is its mystery. Here again the Structure of Feeling and Experience shows that we don’t need to know why, and we need to keep engaging with the mystery. Jean Vanier is insistent on this: ‘All members of the community have to be vigilant to remain insecure and so dependent on God, and to lived in their own way the focal point of fidelity, the essential of the spirit ... our faith that Jesus is living in the poor and that we are called to live with them and receive from them.’ (20)

To my mind, the purpose and sources of motivation for living are clear here. It is a challenge for those who have been brought up principally in a secular consciousness. To realise that returning to a practical spirit-based way of living is a possible core component of successfully changing western society—the world’s great secular playground. But I claim that evidence is clear, from the quality of life seen among these people. Individuals with some great challenges to overcome before they even get out of bed each day.

(People with responsibility) have to be shown how to find spiritual nourishment. Many people get burned out because this is what they want. Some part of them is rejecting the need to relax and find a harmonious rhythm of life for themselves... they have not discovered the wisdom of the present moment... These people need (to) .. clarify their own motives and become living with other people, children among other children. (21)

7. Childlike wonder in communion

Beginning from a point of rejection by mainstream society, people with intellectually
disability soon learn that they can ‘shut down’ and feel wrong or ashamed, or they can push through this pain. It is painful to feel rejected. The intellectually disabled have a deep ‘cry for communion’, as Jean Vanier put it (22), which comes from loneliness and inner pain: ‘To be in communion means to be with someone and to discover that we actually belong together... To love someone is not first of all to do things for them, but to reveal to them their beauty and value.’ (23)

I claim this is a practical exercised in better quality community service delivery. Adding heart and soul, as effective management tools: ie. it is ‘good business’, not a ‘sob story’. There is work to be done, and they are doing it—working the culture of loving community. I claim the effective examples of community and communion among intellectually disabled, such as the L’Arche households, are creating a model for all people to rediscover their own community.

As is the Athma Shakti Vidyalaya schizophrenic therapeutic community in Bangalore, India. The Saday Special School for intellectually disabled children and adults in Pondicherry, India. And the Pioneer Clubhouse, community-based, member-organising, mental health rehabilitation center, in Balgowlah, Sydney. All places where I have worked and seen these values put into practice, with effectiveness and efficiency, and above-average rates of recovery and rehabilitation.

Never before has the cry for nuclear disarmament been so loud. But it’s even more important that there be disarmament inside human communities and inside each one of our hearts... disarming ourselves in the world of competition and rivalry ... People are yearning to rediscover community. We have had enough of loneliness, independence and competition. (24)

Criticism from ‘empowerment’ advocates, that such sentiments are patronising and controlling, argue that they are based on one movement’s version of a spiritual priority. In a secular world of equity and equal opportunity, these matters would be left to the individual,
they argue. And those individuals should simply be provided a ‘service’, which enshrines equal access to all that society has on offer.

I argue that anyone who has worked in, or had relatives ‘serviced by’, such agencies, knows that they are completely vulnerable to soullessness and mechanical provision, which lets people feeling empty and sad. The force of economic rationalism, tight budgets, staff c managerialism creating overriding surveillance and pressure everyday, means these people are almost completely de-spirited. I am therefore advocating that community services for the intellectually disabled (and the mentally ill) need to deal in a secular way, with the recognition that human beings are spirits as well as bodies, and hearts as well as minds. That is, they can have access to experiences without anyone being brainwashed or evangelised for particular version of the numinous.

The work of L’Arche is shining a light for many other human services, to show that mat of the soul come first. And it doesn’t matter what ‘brand’ of spiritual faith or lack thereof any individual may or may not have. It is human to be spiritual, and it is there common sense to acknowledge that, this is the way many people live.

Henri Nouwen found that his movement from worldly concerns about justice and rights to a simple life among people with intellectual disability, opened up new fields of learning with people who are poor in spirit. They teach me that being is more important than doing, the heart is more important than the mind, and doing things together is more important than doing things alone.’ (25)

This all echoes very much Uncle Raymond’s and Bernard’s Structure of Feeling Experience categories, for humanity’s yearning to be sharing in culture, stories, celebrating. We want to share; we feel divided; we need to be active in ‘working’ our culture; telling stories creates wonder and acceptance; if we surrender to ‘not knowing’ we can be engaging in the mystery.
So among the intellectually disabled, I am saying that values and practices are found, which can point to practical improvements across society. If people can open to sharing in a re-experience of communion with one another, and re-valuing the simple aspects of human life. ‘Issues don’t save us, people do … My own journey to L’Arche is directly connected with this movement from an issue-oriented life to a person-oriented life… The larger the issues become, the smaller the place where people can return to affirm their love for each other and pray together for God’s mercy.’ (26)

8. Joy, play and abandon

I have observed over my professional life, in education, community work, journalism and business, that the ability to ‘be happy’ is something many people find inaccessible. Either their worries are too overwhelming, or their lives are so full of escape behaviour ‘busyness’, that they don’t allow a moment when such a feeling could enter their consciousness. It seems that battling away at being independent and capable, in the world of power and success, can make you very miserable, especially if you can’t remember how to smile.

At L’Arche our basic philosophy is that of learning to be happy together. We believe that the joy of friendship comes before independence. Joy says, ‘I am happy that you exist’, and thus transforms the broken self-image of the other person. A new form of training which gives primacy to autonomy without this basis of togetherness can be seen as a sort of rejection: ‘I want you to be self-sufficient that I won’t have to live with you’. It can force the other person themselves in a way that does not help them to grow interiorly. (27)

My philosophy is that there is a deep need in most people, to be able to give. Many of us have been embarrassed into not being able to sing or dance in public. We feel inhibited and unable to allow ourselves permission ‘to be’ in an environment which many intellectually disabled people have given themselves permission to
This has come at a price. The ‘normal world’ s choice to cast one aside as a ‘reject’. Whether it occurs directly, or by avoidance, the experience of rejection for the intellectually disabled can make them furious, resentful, hurt, and very often bigger people than those rejecting them. ‘Men and women with mental handicaps are frequently ignored and cast aside because their existence obliges us to face our own limitations, inner darkness and spiritual poverty,’ says Jean Vanier. (28) The ability to climb back up and make life into something worth living is a great achievement among the intellectually disabled. But often they go further than that, and make their shared life experiences in fact more effective, in expressing their full humanness, than most ‘normal’ people.

‘It is a journey which includes experiences of togetherness, peace, celebration and forgiveness, just as it involves the discovery and acceptance of our own weakness and poverty – everything that we try to conceal behind our capabilities and our capacity to ‘get things done’. (29) I am saying that the invitation among intellectually disabled people is to ‘get down and get dirty’ just being. By joining in, hanging out, giving it up and shouting it out. The route to this renewed sense of wonder at being alive, which rejuvenates all those present whose hearts are open, is to increase opportunities for sharing between the intellectually disabled and the wider community.

9. Being in the moment

The intellectually disabled ‘have time’. In the apparent back corners of life, with people avoiding them all around, and awkwardness entering many encounters with ‘normality’, they are actually ‘taking the time to be’. I believe their ability to share this capacity with others is a major motivation for increasing their integration with the general community.

Jean Vanier’s work with L’Arche has concentrated heavily on this faculty: ‘Love is the marriage between time and eternity: it roots us in present experience while opening us to the infinite.’ (30) Here is something I believe people clamour to find, in workshops, therapy sessions, and cries between lovers, family members and friends. ‘Have time for me ‘ they all
yearn. The key to understanding how it is a special attribute of the intellectually disabled is through their suffering. By recognising that this experience brings with it deep suffering, through loss and difference from the norm, people can rise out of preoccupation with their own affairs. Understanding and acceptance of others can then follow. As Jean Vanier puts it: ‘We cannot approach the suffering of other unless we have suffered ourselves.’ (31)

So once we’ve got a shared perspective on passing through each day, a lot of life’s complications slip away. This is the challenge Jean Vanier puts out to people who get involved in L’Arche, and decide to live with intellectually disabled people: ‘The beauty of (humans) is in our fidelity to the wonder of each day … A community which is just an explosion of heroism is not a true community … True community implies a way of life, a way of living and seeing reality; it implies above all fidelity in the daily round.’ (32)

This thesis argues for mainstream engagement with these perspectives, as management considerations, in planning community and health services. Jean Vanier’s challenge is an interesting one to consider putting on the agenda of a public service management meeting: ‘If we are to live in community, we have to be friends of time… (we don’t) fight with time. (We) accept it and cherish it.’ (33)

I believe these perspectives are vital in rebuilding the commonweal. By using the weakness and need of the intellectually disabled as a sign of their strength for the community which cares for them, we are re-valuing the human. The focus on aspects of life that are not about power, status, privilege or wealth, balances the perspective shared.

I’m becoming conscious of the limitations and weaknesses of human energy, and the forces of egoism, fear, aggression and self-assertion which govern human life and make up all the barriers which exist between people…(34)

All members of the community (of L’Arche) have to be vigilant to remain insecure and so dependent on God, and to live in their own way the focal point of fidelity,
the essential of the spirit ... and that we are called to live with them and receive from them. (35)

10. Shared attributes growing from fallow ground

The aim of this last section is to raise some allegorical images, which reflect the energy and value in the offering intellectually disabled people can make to social planning. My intention is to highlight some aspects of consciousness, life energy and community presence, which I believe are valuable grist to the mill of common good. By acknowledging the value that people bring to their community, and celebrating their roles in effective involvement and ceremonial rituals, humans build strong society. The words here are emotive, but they are deliberately chosen to come from left field. I believe that is where new models of social service and rehabilitation need to come from. The old ones have not been working very effectively, if my evidence from individuals, families and groups is anything to go by.

I see the intellectually disabled as 'fallow ground' of humanity. Taking time to refresh the human soul in contemplation, and, for all the limitations of their disability, their acceptance of life is nurturing patience and cooperation. Not all of them, by any means, from my direct experience. But certainly a large number. That fallow ground of humanity needs to be returned to active harvesting. And so I urge the system to embrace intellectually disabled people as a much stronger resource in their own service planning and delivery.

10.1 Kiss

This energy from intellectually disabled people is 'in your face'. It is open, direct, and 'comin'atchya'. I claim such giving, and loving and wanting to show it, is a rejuvenating asset in community care environments. Kissing is not a topic for public service. But it may be a mood that suggests how to heal the feelings of dried up administrators and field managers. As Theodore Zeldin says, 'A mood is much more powerful than an idea'.
(Zeldin, An Intimate History Of Humanity) So I am simply saying, let’s introduce more of this sort of mood into social planning, and get the perpetrators behind it into the seats around the table. The intellectually disabled might be shy, but they know what this is about well and truly.

10.2 Child
This energy from the intellectually disabled invites people to enjoy the gift of realising their childlike side anytime. I claim there is plenty of serious business in life, and being playful can lead to freer thoughts and fresh ideas. So why not occasionally lash out and be childlike, even childish sometimes. My point is that using this sort of perspective, in management meetings for social services planning, could lead to some fresh perspectives and new ideas for community nurturing.

10.3 Feather
I feel the heart energy of intellectually disabled people is like that expression ‘Lighter than a feather’. Compared to the heavy intellectual energy of rational programs and power-based decision-making, such lighter than air energy, can lift people up out of life’s mundaneness. By being lifted up in their spirits, and remembering to look at the clouds, bureaucrats could well find refreshment and new motivation for their work under extreme stress. My point is that, if we ‘lighten up’, there are new perspectives available from the lateral views that this creates.

10.4 Surrender
My belief is that humans’ greatest fear is our greatest asset. By holding onto inner terror about decisions, life issues, money or whatever, people give themselves life crippling stress. The presence of the intellectually disabled in people’s lives says to them, ‘Look, I lost. How ‘m I doing? Great ‘ My position is that the energy of surrender releases unpredictable riches. There are great benefits from people mixing with the intellectually disabled, because
they can feel the sense of freedom in accepting life, no matter what challenges it offers. Letting life 'get you'. Letting the power of the universe show what it wants to show. My point for planners and managers is that this energy is a great resource to help people make decisions and set priorities. It tends 'to cut through the crap'.

11. Leading from behind

This chapter has explored just some of the indicators that illustrate the energy and capabilities of the intellectually disabled. I am arguing that it is worth a serious investment of political will and management effort, to create opportunities for such sharing to occur. Progress in material terms has made western lifestyles the envy of the world. But many observers of this societal model, feel it is lacking in critical aspects of human consciousness, morals and applied values.

What I am arguing is missing at the moment, is the general societal agreement to open up our stuck collective consciousness. To begin again expressing some of the forms of universal human feelings, awareness, purpose and curious inquiry, which intellectually disabled people express.

This can be implemented relatively easily, I am saying. By politicians and bureaucrats, parents and community service managers, supporting their move towards more empowered lives. Allowing them to engage more with mainstream community, and creating decision-making processes that give them more influence over their own lifeworlds. I am arguing that once such moves are allowed, westerners might see something of what Zeldin has envisaged for a rejuvenated social web across our society:

Once people see themselves as influencing one another, they cannot be merely victims: anyone, however modest, then becomes a person capable of making a difference, minute though it might be, to the shape of reality. New attitudes are not promulgated by law, but spread, almost like an infection, from one person to
another. (36)

For the purpose of this walkabout journey, we will return to the potential contributions of the intellectually disabled in the final chapter.
CHAPTER SIX
FINDING OTHERS ON SUBURBAN WALKABOUT
INDIGENOUS AND ADDICTED

1. Two points on the modernity seesaw

Exploring modern consciousness by going walkabout through the suburbs, establishes a perspective on both the light and darker side of late capitalist humanity. The aim in this chapter is to look at two extremities of the structure of feelings and experience. That of indigenous people, and then addicted people, living in late capitalist lifeworlds.

Without claiming full representative status for these two groups, as polarities of modern consciousness, there is value in following such an analogy to a point. My view is, that a perspective comparing extremities in consciousness, from the ‘earthed’ to the ‘spaced out’, helps to illustrate important trends in modern life.

Charting the major attributes of feelings and experience represented by these two groups, can assist the identification of a framework to be used for healing, rehabilitation and recovery for intellectually disabled and mentally ill people. Once their own attributes are compared with the major points from Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith, a deeper perspective on the lifeworld arises.

To inform the potential rejuvenation of key aspects of the lifeworld process, I believe it is possible to apply the skills of mindfulness still applied by indigenous people. Those who are actively in touch with their heritage in consciousness, model new applications today. For westerners needing more integrated patterns of living, I claim these skills are applicable in the rejuvenation of ways of experiencing life, and for planning services for intellectually disabled and mentally ill people.

The counterpoint to that is the illustration of dis-ease with life, shown by the feelings and
experiences of addicted people. I believe modern life has created and promoted all sorts of addictive habits of life across western society. They not only debilitate individuals suffering from substance and other dependencies. They actually eat at the heart of our society, by undermining feelings and experiences, which would otherwise be part of healthy individual lives and community.

So the aim is to examine these two perspectives, with the view to learning what their contrast shows about aspects of modernity, which can inform better processes to serve the lives of the intellectually disabled and mentally ill. Not through seeking an ideal state, but by using ways of focusing and valuing mindful states, to improve on-ground conditions in modern circumstances, where policies and programs are applied.

2. Indigenous awareness—sustaining echo-logy in action

The major elements of feelings and experience I have observed in the indigenous people I have worked with, in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and India, cover aspects of individual consciousness, group consciousness and the numinous. Before entering this subject area, I will state my position on the lifeworld ‘realpolitik’ of ‘the native’, as far as I am concerned. No noble savage exists – either in the desert, on the street, in the jungles or on the airwaves. Recognising that indigenous people live in exactly the same conditions as everyone else in modernity, hopefully removes any implication of harking back to an idyllic state of native consciousness.

But I claim there are patterns of awareness, and ways of dealing with feelings and experience, which indigenous people retain from their inherited perspective on life. These aspects of consciousness offer healthy skills to apply in re-seeing modern life. My belief is that this sort of reapplication indigenous ways of being is relevant today. The major headings under which I group these attributes of consciousness are:

- Valuing the group as much as the individual, and seeing oneself as existing ‘in
community’, not alone;

- Understanding that life is under the control of unseen forces more powerful than the human mind, but which the human mind can access; what I call ‘the higher power’;

- That human beings are spirit beings, in touch with the spirit of place, the dreaming, the earth and stars, and connected with one another in shared spirit of humanity;

- Sharing is a high value approach to life, no matter how much wealth one has or not, as material possessions are of little use unless they contribute to the common good;

- Life is for appreciating from moment to moment, time is not a railway track, and by trusting the higher power, and regularly celebrating the wonder and mystery of life through reverence and ritual, everything is ‘under control’.

These attributes of consciousness may not be highly regarded in current circles of power in western society. But I believe they are on their way back into mainstream conversation, about how the lifeworld of humans needs to be organised and discerningly managed. The focus of this work is to see their importance considered, in how the lifeworld of the intellectually disabled and mentally ill can be improved through increased self-determination.

In a scientific worldview that believes that the only reality is what we can grasp with our senses, the material world takes on a very exaggerated importance. In fact, it becomes all important because it is the only reality. But since the material world does not feed the spirit, we continue to grab for more and more. As we lose the riches of the unseen, we have less and less. (1)

Aunty Anne Wilson Schaef expresses what many Australian Aboriginals, Balinese, South Indian Tamils, and Maoris have said to me. That western life breeds disconnection with spirit, and material obsession removes necessary balance from life. Uncles Raymond
Williams and Bernard Smith also picked up a similar message, in their various explorations of the structure of feeling and experience, expressed in western cultural forms.

My assertion is that natural, instinctive, intuitive and healthy human values and ways of feeling and experiencing life, have been deeply erased by modernism. Whether looking at industrialism, capitalism or our own ‘individualism and self interest,’ buying the materialistic dream has come at a price. Former more numinous habits of mind have been replaced by logic, rationality and reason alone.

Native people living in modern conditions, who have chosen to revalue and apply traditional ways of being with their feelings and experience, have shown me that they discovered the two worlds are not completely incompatible. Earlier western versions of progress said native people were ‘backward’ because they accepted the status quo. According to my indigenous friends, that is a dumb judgement by western thinking. It places the ‘advances’ of ‘civilisation’ ahead of the awareness of living in the moment, in a world still informed by mystery, metaphor, spirits and symbols. Their view is, that westerners are so stuck on the future, they let the present pass by without notice.

Two Balinese restaurants I know run on a spiritually respectful cycle of daily puja ritual celebration, and presentation of food and work as expressions of respect for the gods. The workers are prospering and happy, and the businesses thrive. Customers come to ‘be with this spirit’. They respond to the unseen but deeply felt aspects of shared numinosity, presented in a commercial environment.

Local Aboriginal Land Councils I know in south western New South Wales, operate systems of housing management, training and employment creation, and doing business with mainstream community, in completely western ways. But the value system inform their operation is the traditional Aboriginal way. They have no trouble collecting rent for the houses they operate for the community, and their involvement with the local town crucial for those communities’ survival.
The main activity being pursued by one of these Land Councils is the return to traditional cultural cycles, of large areas of land repurchased from European farmers to be zoned as environmental conservation areas, and cultural heritage restoration sites. Interest is growing in the non-Aboriginal community, as to significance of the restored burial mounds, the carved trees, and the bora bora grounds being given a respectful return to active numinosity.

Uncle Bernard decided that, in his view history doesn’t repeat, it echoes around again through subsequent generations. This is what I call echo-logy, and the stories above illustrate its relevance to today’s world, in modern settings informed by ancient wisdom and mystery. My point is that westernisation of world affairs has swept away so much ‘beingness’, with its pursuit of money and material gain, that what it is to be human has largely been forgotten. I claim we are primarily spiritual beings. Not irrational, mumbo-jumbo merchants out of touch with life in modern times. We can mix both aspects of our humanity.

In a world of complex, fractal symbols and interconnections way beyond most people’s understanding, it does not seem exaggerated to emphasise our numinous character. There are plenty of things about how the modern world operates that are a mystery to most people – electricity, nuclear power, computers and the internet, to name a few. I argue that the introduction of indigenous approaches to understanding life, relating to our environment and the cycles of nature, are practical skills and benefits for modern life. By looking at how they may fit the structure of feelings and experience of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill, it may be possible to improve programs and services. And at the same time illustrate something worthwhile considering for re-evaluating wider society’s values.

3. Sharing human connectedness

For some time scientists and psychologists, social researchers and spiritual workers have been saying that the energy of love is what makes the world go round. Literally, not just from the history of popular songs. Part of the argument in this work is that indigenous
ways of operating, which are able to be transferred to modern conditions, apply 'tough love' as a working process. 'Working the culture' requires elders to remember how the process goes, but once in action it is a natural, logical system.

My claim is that such approaches are appropriate for rejuvenating health and community services for intellectually disabled and mentally ill people. That the current dominant ways of managing human affairs ignore the sides of our existence that are necessary for it to work in balance. At the base of these ideas is the belief that humans have the need to be in daily exercise of their full capacities. Hearts as well as minds, and souls as well as psyches. Indigenous people have ways of factoring this understanding into their daily rhythm of life, the way they relate to each other, and their inner lives. My assertion is that western communities can apply similar ways of being, and create more effective community services as a result. Scientists have started agreeing as well.

When I began this book, I spoke of a 'gap at the centre' in Western civilization due to the breakdown of the old faiths. The clear implication was that this gap needs to be filled. But with what? I repeat, I believe it can only be filled by a renewed sense of the sacred. By this, I do not mean a new set of beliefs, which will inevitably harden into dogma. I mean an experiential sense of trust and caring, a renewed feeling for beauty in whatever form it may be found. (2)

Darryl Reanney died not long after he finished his two books on exploring the numinous with a scientist's consciousness. As a geneticist, he believed passionately in the links between facts and faith, measuring and mystery. It was finally the notion of the music of the spheres that seemed to inspire his view of humanity as part of the hum of the universe.

Most of the atoms in our bodies were made in the heart of a star. We are children of the stars. When we look up at the night sky, when we feel an affinity for the distant lights that burn in the cosmic night, we are not just remembering our origins, we are connecting with our very being... all parts of the cosmos, including ourselves, are
deeply interconnected, flawlessly interwoven, one wholesome unity. (3)

The perspective, which I believe Reanney and other ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ scientists have come to see, is that introducing more numinous ways of seeing makes sense. The best teachers about how to ‘work the culture’ this way are our indigenous brothers and sisters. Those I work with use a combination of traditional awareness and current savvy to work their lives. It is a powerful combination, especially when compared with the divided, dualistic way western thought has limited many modern activities.

‘Attempting to move beyond the received opinions which conventionally condemn human beings to isolation from one another in the name of essential difference.’ (4) So Michael Jackson introduced his book At Home In The World, written while he and his wife lived with the Warlpiri people in Australia’s Northern Territory, and he investigated ways native people experience being ‘at home’.

My argument is that indigenous ways of seeing and being in the world add to those dominant ways of linear logic, reason and rationality that inform materialist versions of reality. Considering how to plan and provide better services for the intellectually disabled and mentally ill, I claim would work much better taking account of wider perspectives.

Ethnographer James Clifford points out that mixing perspectives is a positive way to bring about healthy evolution in culture and society.

As Marshall Sahlins (1985) has argued, these (dichotomous) assumptions keep us from seeing how collective structures, tribal or cultural, reproduce themselves historically by risking themselves in novel conditions. Their wholeness is as much a matter of reinvention and encounter as it is of continuity and survival. (5)

The case in this thesis is that two areas offering ‘novel conditions’ for taking such risks, are the ways people with mental illness and intellectual disability can be brought into taking more responsibility for structuring their lifeworld. The introduction of more indigenous
ways of being may offer a rich rejuvenation of spirit for these people. Such as the tradition of oral story telling. Sharing people’s life experiences on a daily basis, and making that part of the evolving lifeworld mystery tour.

Introducing life journalling and group sharing is proposed for an action research style project to follow this work. My aim there will be to explore exactly how well this works on-ground. For now, the evidence of my own work with both intellectually disabled and mentally ill people, is that sharing stories is healing, rejuvenates spirit, and brings fun and warmth into a community. James Cowan found this rich resource when he spent time in the desert with Australian Aboriginal people.

What the elders taught me was simple...People are, in their most profound aspect, creatures of poetry. They like to make up stories out of the deep metaphors of existence. These metaphors are part of our physical environment and resist all our attempts to make them rational. They are bridges to the irrational, that well of supra-sensibility that we go to at times when we experience thirst. (6)

Cowan’s work points out the important complementarity between ‘poiesis’ and ‘noesis’ in human awareness. Both arising from the Greek, ‘poiesis’ comes from ‘poiein, to make’, as in a harmonious composition. ‘Noesis’ means ‘to perceive’, and in philosophy is seen as ‘direct intellectual apprehension.’ (Longmans Encyclopaedic Dictionary) This difference, making and perceiving, I believe holds a lot of significance for understanding and valuing ‘the dreaming’. It is not passive receiving, it is active creation. Intellect is only one form of exercising the mind.

4. Restoring relationship with place and Dreaming

Where we are has a huge impact on how we are. Non-indigenous people seem to me to have forgotten this in many instances, particularly when planning and delivering health and community services. Many environments are de-spirited and depressing. My argument is
that by re-spiritng places where people gather together, their healing improves and their joy rises. This is not so much a physical thing, as a metaphysical one. What is missing in non-indigenous relation to place is an embodied awareness that ‘the visible world is grounded in the invisible.’ (7)

‘The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped. The contrast and the potential maladjustment of the immediate, the conspicuous and focal phase of things, with those indirect and hidden factors which determine the origin and career of what is present, are indestructible features of any and every experience.’ (quoting John Dewey) (8)

The structure of feeling and experience that people undergo in many western environments feels either owned and controlled by somebody else, or alien and empty of warmth. Thankfully, many public spaces are being made much more people friendly, but not those places where rehabilitation is meant to occur. Still, my main point is that the people energy and spirit is what creates places, just as Uncle Bernard tells us. So the thing to support is the right spirit among people, and then their work and growth will follow effectively.

Many of the burial sites, middens and neglected ceremonial sites being restored by Aboriginal groups in New South Wales, whom I have worked with, look degraded and eroded. But once the tribal group has begun re-singing their relationship with a place, the spirit lift is noticeable. ‘Mytho-poetry is one of the supreme talents of humankind; we must make sure that its flame never dies out.’ (9) My point here is that today’s Aboriginal communities are re-exploring their own dreaming, and I believe so can non-indigenous people. The way to find out if there is a shared spirit among us is ‘to work it’, ‘work the culture’. And in rehabilitation circles this is definitely a healing strategy, because I have seen it working at Pioneer Clubhouse in Sydney, Athma Shakti Vidyalaya in Bangalore, India, and I hear how it works at Te Wananga o Aotearoa in Hamilton New Zealand.
This is not to say that ‘blackfellas have got it all sown up’. There is still conflict of opinion and feeling among native peoples, and disputes over ‘the truth’ of understanding from the Dreaming. But the way to explore solutions is available to anyone prepared to listen.

There are so many conflicting interests in a desert community, so many competing points of view, that contentious issues simply cannot be settled to the satisfaction of everyone. Even appeals to the jukurrpa—the Dreaming, the Law—don’t necessarily reduce the ambiguity. (11)

The very fact that no one actually knows for absolutely certain ‘how the world goes round’ is a great relief. Modern people live with ambiguity as a daily milieu. Plus we have only just ‘come out from under’ centuries of Christianity pronouncing its certainty to holding the only truth, and acting in a colonial way to assert its allegedly god-given rights to bring people under its belief system. Native people aren’t claiming to be the answer to it all. They just have an awareness, which I believe if they choose to share, can help others open to their own inner potential for more balanced, healthy awareness.

‘I was aware that in telling me his jukurrpa, his Dreaming, Pincher had told me who he was. Without such a narrative, a person was bereft of any connection between his life and the life beyond himself.’ (11) If readers feel a sense of familiarity with this notion, it is because I believe westerners have certainly got homework to do, on the applied spirit front. But there are many native people who have to pick up the pieces, of lives destroyed by colonialism, dispossession, stolen generations, or even personal choices to ‘piss off in anger’. I claim no one is free from trouble, or denied help from the universe, in connecting with the universal human fraternity of spirit, and relationship to the land of our Dreaming.

5. Responsible rites of passage

My view is that modern life has lost some essential processes, which used to be integral to human societies, placing the individual in the context of the group, the gods and the good. It
is not nostalgic ‘Gemeinschaft talk’ to raise these perspectives. Responsible modern rehabilitation can embrace such aspects of knowledge in a contemporary context. One is a safe and wisely stewarded rite of passage for young people growing into adulthood. The current rites, in drugs, sex, travel and ideologies, may work well for some. But I claim there are many victims in those processes, and they are not sensible models for the majority. It appears that western society no longer has a consistent use of culturally integrated rites of passage. That is no reason they can’t be rediscovered and reapplied in today’s context.

‘Jung said that to be in a situation where there is no way out, or to be in a conflict where there is no solution, is the classical beginning of the process of individuation. It is meant to be a situation without solution.’ (12) My work with young people and sick people has shown me that modern life doesn’t encourage listening. It fills us up with noise. It takes up all our moments. That’s what native ways of being show us. Realities as important as ideas, ideals and goals. Such as feelings, imaginings, dreams, mysteries and metaphors.

Western concerns with reason and rationality have created some fantastic compromises of logic. Especially in the last few decades. Citizens continually complain of suffering the madness of economic rationalism ruining the quality of community, life, and any shared sense of responsibility for one another. But it seems the elected leaders and business managers are ‘certain’ it makes sense, because we have been told so by the powers that be. Those are the same powers that brought the world the crash of ’87, the excusing concept of ‘killed by friendly fire’, and banks which charge extra fees for ‘cash handling.’

Indigenous people could be forgiven for thinking westerners are actually stuck in someone else’s imaginary world. Yet native peoples are thought by the currently dominant rationalists to have been stuck in superstition and ‘paganism’, in their humble belief in the Dreaming and the higher power of the spirits of the universe. ‘Talking of an imaginary place in the realm of the actual smacks of sorcery and a desire to transcend reality. But, I ask you: is not the security born from the possession of an insurance policy any less an act of
sorcery? (13)

I argue it is not too late for humans to return to practising mindful listening. 'We moderns are killing not only ourselves but all life in our unthinking allegiance to rationality and progress. The rational mind calculates, measures, indeed adores the heady realm of quantifiable relationships... what I am trying to say is, we must give up our belief in the idea that history is centred on 'our' relationship to the world.' (14)

Robert Theobold describes western civilization as being in a 'cultural trance'. Yet indigenous people I know claim that those in that trance generally view indigenous people as 'less than.' Because they practise a system of awareness that opens to the numinous in daily consciousness. My belief is that western people need a reconciliation to overcome the duality of that situation. Not only are there consequences for having treated 'others' as unfairly and insensitively as the west has treated indigenous peoples. I feel there is a balance needing to be restored in how people in western societies experience the other side of their lives than just the rational. Beginning with expressing some of these values among the intellectually disabled and mentally ill will be an opportunity to reflect that truth to 'normal' people. And my experience in centers in Australia and India has shown me this is an achievable goal.

6. Claiming identity in belonging

Marginalised groups I have worked with share a common trait. They might be disadvantaged in the wider world, but among themselves 'they belong'. My view is that the uplift in spirit and sense of self worth arising from this is precious. So what I am hoping to encourage in rehabilitation circles, is a combination of the group belonging, extending into mainstream environments. 'All human beings share the same evolutionary history. We are social animals before we are anything else. A Common phylogenetic heritage exists for us all. And from this is born the possibility of our humanity.' (15) Yet Nobel Prize winner Gao Xinjian advocates in his book Soul Mountain that individuality is the most precious gift
of humanity. Much more important than cultural belonging or identity. Where do we find the yogic balance in these apparent opposites?

To speak of any person as a bounded and distinct entity, possessing a unique essence, is as illusory as speaking of a distinct and autonomous society. It is for this reason that it may be wise to abandon our attempts to identify a person as an entity or essence, and give ontological priority to the experience of being a person. Such a shift would accord full recognition to the fact that every human being has life only in relation to others – something the Warlpiri accomplish in their notion of the Dreaming. (16)

I agree with Michael Jackson, that personhood is a more resilient notion than identity or individuality. Intellectually disabled people have great differences from people without this disability. But it also gives their personhood clear ‘framing’, and marks them for acknowledgement. The fact that sometimes that acknowledgement is in a negative way does not negate their personhood, but it might threaten their identity and erode their sense of individuality. Something about indigenous belonging shows the organic way people can be valued in a community, and allowed to express their differences. It is in the apparent ‘status quo’-accepting indigenous way of staying in the moment, that seems to ‘handle’ this paradox. If people can accept others ‘as they are now,’ it is not necessary for those others to prove themselves. Identity emerges without a struggle, and individuality is illustrated in the group dynamic. My argument is that these attributes of indigenous community can teach something to the rehabilitation process.

‘No human being comes to a knowledge of himself or herself except through others. From the outset of our lives we are in intersubjectivity. Ego and alter ego are mutually entailed. Identity is a byproduct of modes of interrelationships. The particular person, like the particular event, is an illusion. There are, observes Theodor Adorno, only ‘moments of the whole.’... Without the sustaining interplay of self and another, one is as nothing.’ (17)
Jackson’s view may raise the hackles of individualists, but my observation of indigenous communities tells me he is right, and that this understanding is relevant for use in modern rehabilitation processes.

The strength that intellectually disabled people bring to such concepts is their natural tendency to ‘be social’. They form groups and make fun easily, compared with the reserve among their normal peers. While people with mental illness face a real challenge in this area, I believe the lessons from indigenous and intellectually disabled people have some clues to help them out. And for the wider society, my view is that both groups offer engagement with the other who may bring a gift of self-understanding. ‘Knowledge of others is primarily, not secondarily, a matter of sociality... there is always some shadowy part of myself from which I can begin to reach an understanding of experiences which are foregrounded in the world of the other. As Jadran Mimica puts it, “every other is the ‘possibility’ of oneself”.’ (18)

7. Stewarding relationships and places

Where can modern citizens go to find a grounding source for their ‘driven’, over-stressed lives? My perspective is that their natural destination could be our other shared and certain inheritance, Earth. The cycles of Mother Earth, and humans’ ‘dust to dust’ inevitability as mortal beings, means we are naturally linked, whether we know it or not. Indigenous people have employed a rhythmic way of being with their earthedness. It shows in the cycles of stories, rituals, totems and others devices linking earth and human continuity.

But indigenous populations often face a similar challenge to their western counterparts, in that there is an apparent demise of this way among many of their young. As Michael Jackson recounted his moment of listening to elders Pincher Jampijinpa and Zahariah (Zack) Jakamarra, alongside the Lajamanu airstrip in the Tanami desert in the Northern Territory:

‘Young people got no “walya”’, (Zack said). He scooped up a handful of earth.
‘They don’t know this “walya”. They only got that book, that paper...’ I glanced at Pincher. ‘We don’t use maps,’ Zack said. ‘We got the country in our heads... ‘Young people don’t know this one, they don’t hold it any more ... this “walya” business. Young people don’t interest along culture, they don’t look back. They only got paper.’ (19)

To me, there is something sad about such change, just as there is something hopeful. Bernard Smith’s echo-logical understanding of the passage of history, and how the rhythms repeat, shows that chronology misses the point. Change is cyclic and fractal for us all. The message in this story seems to me to be about how people focus their awareness, more than holding onto particular moments as the only right way. After all, in Aboriginal wisdom, all the moments merge if we enter the dreaming. By creating processes linking people to their inherent relationship with the earth, and creating rituals celebrating earth’s natural cycles, I believe rehabilitation will enhance its clients’ lives.

8. Indigenous attributes for healing through the Dreaming

8.1 The Dreaming

Speaking to people from many cultures, I have found no one has resisted wanting to tease out the Aboriginal notion of the Dreaming. It seems magnetic for humans, alluring. I feel it speaks straight to the soul. But in more ‘scientific’ circles, in considering how to assist the healing of people with mental illness, I believe there is good evidence that embracing this perspective can add to the framing of recovery environments. Aboriginal dreaming is a complex set of lifeworld views, covering creation stories, current responsibilities for place, links between different people and their totems, and the ability to transcend normal consciousness and enter a higher state of awareness.

These aspects of mindfulness vary from tribe to tribe, but my experience of modern Aboriginal people is that the dreaming informs their every moment, with the knowledge that
they are linked through the universe to higher powers, spirit beings, and mysteries that give their life deep context. This is in accord with the structure of feeling and experience evidence, collected by Uncles Raymond and Bernard, from western culture and society. It indicates there is an innate desire to commune with the numinous among all people. Sharing, celebrating, rituals and mystery are part of the human condition. So my argument is that it is healthy to help people enter states of more transcendent release of mind. Not religious conversion or dogmatic manipulation. Free association with the natural spirit in each person, linking with the universe, in safe environments where any fear or inner fright can be dealt with caringly.

This task requires effort in western environments. First of all to gain permission, that such activities are not seen as weird. Second, to stop the frenetic scheduling of life and allow time for some contemplation. I am advocating creating therapeutic environments, where it is a priority to let go of all those things that act as distractions from silence and stillness. The space where many people seem unable to face themselves. As if, when they finally stop finding excuses to avoid it, it will be too horrible to survive. Or, as others have told me, their fear has been that they might be empty shells inside, with nothing to experience and no real inner home of the soul.

For the mentally ill, creating contemplative space is valuable and nurturing, as I have seen at Athma Shakti Vidyalaya, schizophrenia therapeutic community in Bangalore, India. Individuals who normally spend a lot of time talking, doing and avoiding intimacy, enter a completely different mindspace under contemplative circumstances. They can then begin 'finding their inner selves', and so follow a path of healing, able to return regularly to this quiet inner space for 'topping up' their equanimity. The indigenous gift to westerners seeking to find ways of reaching this sort of contemplation, is through their attributes of personal life flow and community rhythms. My point is that there are particular lessons, in observing and adapting the inherent ways indigenous people have learnt. Which I know from personal experience they are keen to see westerners explore, respectfully.
To capture something of the quality of these attributes, I have chosen five key words, which act as signposts to the territory of contemplative living, as felt and experienced among indigenous people in practical application of their culture. These are given here as indicators of potential areas, which I advocate should be explored to create more healing techniques among the mentally ill. They are not procedures, tasks or processes. More states of being, and ways of opening to the healing energy of the universe. First is the Dreaming already covered. Then follow:

8.2 Earth

Coming to understand 'dadirri' has been a huge part of my own journey of healing. The concept Fr Eugene Stockton writes about, shared by the Arrente people in the Northern Territory of Australia. For people dadirri means 'sit, wait and listen'. Easy enough instructions to hear. Entering that quiet contemplative zone is another challenge. But the particular aspect of dadirri that Fr Stockton's work exposes, is that it is a two way experience. His understanding of Aboriginal teaching is that the earth is felt to be sitting, waiting and listening to us, as much as we are to it.

Waiting. Listening. There. Humming. I believe Earth has so many energies to offer us, and just lying on the ground tells most people they feel 'at home' on the earth. This is an aspect of Aboriginal relationship to land that is not acknowledged by many non-Aboriginals. It does not mean they have obsession about ownership (although that's certainly important in restoring their natural heritage), but more about spiritual relationship, and thus stewardship. And I advocate the energy of earth is our natural rhythm. Dancing in the dust is an example of getting close to it.

Finding silent places where people can exchange the ‘two way dreamtime’ and ‘do-dadirri’. Those are strategies I am advocating for healing towards recovery in mental health circles. As I have seen happening in Bangalore at Athma Shakti Vidyalaya. Without being romantic, I claim that is the energy of exchange of love ultimately. As it is our origin in the universe,
and the same thing people seek in yogic pranayama, chi gong and all other forms of balanced connection with nature’s gift of life. Indigenous people reflect this energy, carry it in their being, and can share it if seekers come with listening humility.

8.3 Blood

Blood is the energy of animal life. It carries haemoglobin, which bears oxygen, which fuels respiration to combust our food and keep us alive. The same chelated molecular bonds that hold this oxygen in blood also work in chlorophyll to capture energy in photosynthesis in plants. And they appear again in humus and dust, holding the energy of life as it returns to earth in the richest organic fertilisers. Blood is life literally, and in its metaphorical links, through genetic inheritance, and the aspect of kinship between species.

My point is that indigenous people in touch with their cultural heritage and its evolving nature, have strong expressions of blood as a continuing energy running their lives. Tapping this understanding could be useful healing territory, I argue, for people seeking to reground themselves from mental illness. I have heard it works ‘in the family’ in Aboriginal communities, that is by ‘sending him up to aunty’ (the person suffering from mental collapse). And letting natural blood relations do the healing that only unspoken, unconscious connection and unconditional love can achieve. I believe there is an aspect in this understanding waiting to be tapped in western healing environments as well.

8.4 Echo

Increasing evidence from physics and metaphysics shows that humanity is coming to increasingly see the presence of all time in ‘the moment’. The limitation of linear, chronological thinking is gradually being removed, as people begin to imagine themselves living a timeless universe. Just as Eleanor Dark named her famous trilogy written about Australia, *The Timeless Land*.

Now that people are free to imagine that the universe lives in the tiny as much as the
massive, the backwards as much as the forwards, the yin as much as the yang, there is a new perspective available on healing mental illness. One aspect of timelessness as a working concept is that people do not have to be ruled by what happened in the past. ‘Right here, right now’ is a concept now said to cover all time. So healing can happen both to erase the sense of hurt from the past, and to realise that growth and change are available now. This is my argument for beginning new approaches to individual and group healing in mental illness rehabilitation groups.

The understanding that comes, once timelessness is adopted as a practical notion, is that life ‘echoes’ around between past, present and future. This swinging is a cooperative movement, not a wrestling battle, between ‘what happened then’ and ‘what’s happening now’. I observe that indigenous people can carry this echo energy of life, from past and future ‘in the now’. I believe mentally ill people can access it too, if they are able to find an attitude of surrender, waiting and being with their own presence as nothing but vessels of consciousness. This obviously requires creating subtle and nurturing circumstances for healing, as I have seen in action at Athma Shakti Vidyalaya in Bangalore, and have seen work. Doing nothing and waiting for the echo can be very therapeutic, so my point is to try it with people seeking to calm their souls.

8.5 Belong

Already noted in the section above, this is the ability to know that one belongs to the group, the family, the neighbourhood, the community. Humans are social beings first, and people who have become mentally ill may need help to find their way back into the shared space of community. But my view is that indigenous ways of being illustrate how group processes can nurture self love and confidence in people who otherwise feel isolated and rejected by western society. And hermits like me, and Uncle Raymond, need continuous reminding of the value in staying ‘in group’, so we don’t get out of the habit. It is another example of how the culture ‘has to be worked to work’.
Going Walkabout through the Suburbs

If mentally ill people are able to find a purpose, place and people to share this with, they will begin to gather a sense of belonging. From giving, not taking. From joining and sharing, and building not breaking. My own soul has trouble with this, as my addictive side often wants to run. As soon as I remember to surrender, the energy of belonging flows in and fills up that discomfort which used to be scratched with alcohol.

9. Addicted—dis-eased with life

It is my view that the patterns of awareness, and ways of responding to feelings and experience, which addicted people enact, are indicators of some of the deep seated problems of modernity. These problems have not caused addiction, but they certainly exacerbate it and effectively promote it across westernised societies. The major headings under which I group these attributes of consciousness are:

- A continual sense of dis-ease with life, and the strong, even desperate, need to relieve that itch by scratching it, with evasive strategies or habits, to distract one’s consciousness;

- An on-going sense of inner conflict due to the dis-eased state and its relief cycle, because the ‘fixes’ that are used to scratch the itch cause subsequent sense of failure, entrapment and hopelessness;

- The inability to get out of this cycle of dependence, due to having no relevant rites of passage to assist people to enter their responsible adulthood, face their weaknesses and receive support in rising above them;

- Disturbance of heart, mind and soul as a result of the inner conflict, outer hat chasing, and cyclic depression caused by a never-ending sense of ‘is that all the is?’ This comes from a fundamental lack of numinous balance about one’s place the universe;

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10. Society’s frontal lobotomy—integrity removal

A favourite quip among Australian serious drinkers is: ‘I’d rather have a bottle in front of me, than a frontal lobotomy’. Destruction of brain cells is carried among drinkers as a ‘vocational risk’, just as smokers know lung disease is a likely result of their habit. But my concern here is with the loss of individual integrity that is one of the greatest impacts of addiction, whatever form it takes. Because the disturbance of mind, and I say the illness of soul, that results, creates the cycle of repetition, continually returning to the addictive behaviour. To try to ease the pain of dis-ease at oneself that results each time it occurs. My credentials here are strong, after twenty six years as an active alcoholic.

One of the effects of an addictive disease is that it destroys our integrity. We see ourselves doing things at work that compromise our value system, and we say nothing. We are reprimanded for something for which we were not responsible, and we say nothing. We act in ways that are not in keeping with our own personal morality. (20)

On the macro scale many see society stuck in a similar cycle of dependencies, which now envelope the world in a series of compromised arrangements. I believe these are destroying our total environment – natural, social, economic, political and spiritual. Yet the consumer
world continues to look for a fix to ease its dis-ease with behaviour which is killing it. Addiction is big business, literally, under economic rationalism.

I advocate that big business is addiction in action, in the way it is currently constituted and deregulated in the west. With freedom to make profits and expand however it likes, demand that governments comply with its wishes, and total lack of respect for the common good. Business is addicted to growth, shortcuts to profit, and irresponsible behaviour towards the environments it inhabits (personal, social, ecological). It is no wonder the little person with a substance abuse problem, or a codependency problem, or a gambling problem, or an organisational bullying power problem, stays stuck. The whole world is stuck. And in my view, as a long-addicted person in the past, is that humanity appears to be voting with our addicted minds to keep it that way.

'The addiction to doing too much is just like any other addiction, in that it puts us in a position where we are willing to do anything to get our adrenaline “buzz”, to get our “fix”. We see ourselves participating in decisions that are wrong for us, we neglect ourselves, and we neglect our families. We have lost our integrity.’ (21)

The cycle that develops under these circumstances is a loss of integrity, behaviour that abuses others, and subsequent further addicted escape behaviour. Individuals turn to the bottle or the bong for relief, companies turn to the profit and loss columns and boast of their ‘steep rise in rate of growth of profit’. My view is that when profit alone is not enough, it has to be appropriately huge ‘rises in the rate of profit’, then capitalism has reached a deeply addicted state. My reason for arguing this way in a paper focusing on mental illness and intellectual disability rehabilitation, is to highlight the environment in which people who have ‘gone mad’, are attempting to ‘get sane’. The current climate in late capitalism seems to me to be insane, so I believe there are reasons to have compassion for those who ‘lose it’ under these circumstances.

In viewing the lives of marginalised people, such as the intellectually disabled, it is possible
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to see their very distance from this cycle of mad pursuit of profit and growth, or its corollary, poverty from missing out, as an advantage. What I claim is happening now, is a pattern of social dislocation which is breeding mental illness and disturbing many people, who would otherwise be able to go on with balanced lives. ‘For most addicts, the idea of killing ourselves through overwork is something with which we are comfortable. It is the living of our lives at each moment that terrifies us and that we seek to avoid.’ (22) I hope this attempt to assist in healing people suffering in their minds, may be a small step towards beginning the healing, which needs to occur across western societies, riddled with this cancerous pursuit of profit for profit’s sake.

We keep hearing that addictions are spiritual diseases, yet in Western society we keep looking for mechanical causes and cures... Native people are now seeing the connection between Western culture and addictions: that addictions are not only supported by Western culture, but required so that we can tolerate what we have created. (23)

My point is, that the issues Uncle Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith have identified, as the structure of feelings and experience which western people desire in our society, are not being achieved or provided. One result is that people like me, who find life unbearable in the way I eventually admitted it was—compromised and despirited—seek relief in alcohol.

Escaping into getting drunk, for me, was both a pain relief and a rejuvenation of spirit, literally. By taking in the alcoholic spirit I would revive my depressed internal soul spirit—temporarily, and artificially. Alcoholism is worldwide and growing bigger, because, in my view, as people pursue the dollar, their cultures fall away into materialised superficial unsatisfying blandness or titillation, and they become despirited. In the west this process was completed long ago. So most of our nations are immune to acknowledging alcoholism as an endemic social problem.

In developing nations it is rife and spreading like wildfire, as I have directly observed in
dia recently, following the pressure and social destruction that is wreaked by greedy business practices. As people have to find the dollar, many cannot. They seek pain relief and soon get hooked on an escape valve, which is available when the elusive dollar isn’t. So swills around in the alcoholic vortex, within individuals and across society. As a working ember of AA, trying to counteract this force, I know from first hand how endemic the problem is, in both western and developing nations.

I have often said that the addictive system in which we live is an illusory system. It is built on the illusion of control, the illusion of objectivity, and the illusion of perfection. I believe it is also immersed in confusion, dishonesty, and theoretical constructs that are built on abstractions and divorced from nature and reality. (24)

My argument is that late capitalist societies have all agreed to continue with the frontal lobotomy. Those who ‘enjoy’ the fruits of living in westernised capitalist nations are living lie. The lie that the world can go on like this and not eventually implode through lopsided, unjust, destructive ‘growth and development’, let alone the price in individual lives. Whether one is marxist, capitalist, ecologist or spiritualist, this problem requires addressing on behalf of all mankind and the earth. So, in order to find solutions to these sorts of diseased states, what is possible? I believe the twelve step, narrative therapy and spiritual program of recovery is a good model. It provides relief from dishonesty, reconciliation for individuals and those they have hurt, and a chance to join a regular process of replacing habitual destructive ways with group support. ‘Denial allows us to avoid coming to terms with what is really going on inside us and in front of our eyes... The Addictive system does not like this... We cannot be alive in a system based on denial. It leaves us no real avenue to deal with our reality.’ (25)

Telling personal stories, disclosing one’s addiction and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, is like a receiving a healing balm. Doing so in an environment of freedom, confidentiality and acceptance, builds life empowerment, free of dogma, conditions,
judgement or blame. Once on the journey of recovery, an addicted person can offer others their story of experience, strength and hope. All can share the wisdom involved in the process. The addictive consciousness, once on the path to healing, has a lot to offer the world as a teacher. And I claim this process has a lot to offer healing among the mentally ill, and life empowerment among the intellectually disabled.

11. The deceit of addicted minds

The pattern of addictive behaviour is to jump from one evasive behaviour to the next, in order to keep ‘scratching the itch,’ of dis-ease with life which addicts feel. Similarly, we addicts in recovery can see that society has developed endemic ‘itches’, which it scratches in places that used to be for simple social and wholehearted sharing. Now they’ve become gatherings of addicts scratching their individual and collective itches – ie. the pub, the TAB, the shopping mall, the stock market, the beauty parlour, the gym, even the church.

‘No one has just one addiction. Addictions come in clusters. Frequently we use one addiction to support another or to mask another… We can use anything to ‘protect our supply’ and allow us to stay in our addiction. It is not what I do, it is the way I do it, that will get me in the end. (26) There are glaring examples of how the individual’s experience of this phenomenon is mirrored on a global scale by the forces of capitalism. Witness the MAI (the Multilateral Agreement on Investment)—an attempt by the leading western capitalist nations to get the UN to agree to a ‘law’, which makes it illegal for sovereign states to resist the transglobal capital machine from riding over their national interest. If governments legislate to resist business doing business however it chooses, they will be in breach of international law, if the MAI succeeds. What more ‘protection of supply’ could be imagined?

If it is good enough for transglobal capital to legislate, to make it illegal for nations to vote for their own independent decision-making against global greed, then I believe integrity has been stripped from many nations’ governments. It is little wonder individual citizens have
trouble putting down the bottle. Yet, I suggest the other way of seeing this, is to adopt a homoeopathic view. That like cures like, and a tiny suggestion of the ‘illness’ injected into the situation can bring about the cure. Not like an antidote or anti-venin so much, but an energy whisper that starts the vortex of change in the chaos theory, fractal model.

My arguments is, that the more individuals who admit to their personal addictions, and begin to heal by surrendering to reconciliation and recovery, the more likely it is that the political and business leaders will examine their own morality again.

The Addictive System is highly dependent upon what we now call left-brain functions. It is founded on the worship of linear, rational, logical thinking. This kind of thinking supports the illusion of control by simplifying the world to such an extent that it seems possible to have control over it... This deceit frequently requires us to ignore or dismiss our own experience. (27)

From Raymond Williams’ and Bernard Smith’s work, I believe the history of western culture and society has shown that humans want to share in common exploration and celebration of mystery, and stories about our common journeys through the universe. Including admitting our mistakes and learning from them. However, the domination of rational thinking over all other forms of knowledge, has taken humanity into a cul de sac of denial. This is not to say that rational thinking has no place. Just that it has got out of hand, and has become the principle tool of denying natural human needs, feelings and experience. That is, I claim, we are denying the preferred modus operandi of our own consciousness.

When looking to heal the mentally ill, and to work on empowering the intellectually disabled, it is advisable to go beyond these territories into some more open-hearted spaces and strategies. ‘When we lead with our logical, rational minds and try to get our feelings, thoughts, awareness, behaviour, and even spirituality to follow, we almost always get into trouble. When we do this, we almost always find ourselves firmly entrenched in the current mechanistic empirical paradigm.’ (28)
My observation, from twenty six years of personal research and now over six years of work in rehabilitation, is that the energy of addiction is to flee, to escape. Not to take responsibility and admit error. So rationality is a useful tool, because it can serve any master—moral, immoral, lazy, sleazy. Rationality can fit a model to suit the purpose. Conscience can always wait. In Twelve Step programs we talk about people ‘doing geographicals’. You can move house, move jobs, move partners, change countries. But the problem is, you keep taking your problem with you—because it’s not the place, the other person, the house, the job, the suburb or whatever. It’s the dis-ease in you.

‘Belief in the myth of objectivity and holding that as a value has set up a scientific worldview, that tells us the only valid information comes from being “objective”. This view so permeates our society that we have systematised cutting ourselves off, from our feelings and our internal information systems. The most effective means of that cutting off are addictions.’ (29)

The wisdom that comes from understanding healing strategies for addiction, is that once people surrender to their true potential, and allow a higher power to take over their lives, there is an invitation to actually participate in their real lives, moment by moment. This is what David Tacey calls re-enchantment, and has nothing to do with religion or dogma, or ‘cults’. It is the same process inherent in indigenous consciousness. Getting in touch with the universe. As Anne Wilson Schaef says, ‘Spirituality is nothing but participation, being fully present to the moment and participating in it. The moment is, after all, all we have.’ (30)

12. Minds divided by habits

In describing the structure of feeling and experience, Raymond Williams, and in parallel Bernard Smith, identified that humans want to be more together and sharing. Addicts are the extreme example of that desire having been frustrated and denied. They start life enjoying the bonhommie of the pub, cocaine coffee table, restaurant and ‘good times’. Then, when
isolation becomes the natural result of an obsessive addiction closing off individuals from society, their real deepest longing is furthest away from them. And it stays that way, as they pursue the habit to try to ease the pain of the separation—like a donkey with a carrot on a stick.

People stuck in a full blown habit, with alcohol, drugs or gambling for example, cannot be in the company of ‘normal’ people for long. Because their habit demands full attention and feeding. If it must be in the company of others, such as for a gambler needing the TAB, the poker machines or the roulette wheel, the addict will shift about regularly to avoid being seen by too many people. Ultimately the serious addict ends up in the company of other serious addicts, so they don’t have to worry so much. ‘No one’s going to dob’. But generally there has been a long journey before that time, when avoidance, shiftiness and restlessness were a way of life.

My view is divided is a feeling as well as a social phenomenon. People can feel torn between the selves they are showing in different environments. Usually that’s how chronic adulterers feel, from my own work with people in this area. Divided between the part of themselves which genuinely loves a partner, and the desperately addicted ‘love junkie,’ who keeps needing a new conquest to feel better about him/herself. It is a split in the soul that eventually cracks people wide open, and they end up in therapy, suicide or ill health.

Just as with drinkers who give up and tell their old drinking buddies they’ve ‘got on the wagon’, when a philanderer comes clean to (usually) his or her mates about cleaning up his or her act, they are all full of sarcastic put downs and skepticism. Because they themselves may not be able to countenance facing the truth and fronting their loved ones with the behaviour they have been responsible for. These divided behaviours have many parallel with mental illness. And I advocate the healing strategies used in narrative and grow environments, such as the twelve step process, offer great hope for shared strategies among the mentally ill.
13. Money’s too tight to mention

My claim is that the biggest hurdle for individuals, and for society, in getting out of the addictive cycle, is breaking the fear arising from the dis-ease with life. Unlike most people, addicts are unable to bear the normal rhythm of life. But their behaviour can lead to signs of hope for individuals and groups, who may be offered new ways to balance their rhythm.

All the sequences of our life are regulated by upward and downward rhythm; the undulation that we immediately recognize in nature and as the basic form of so many phenomena also holds sway over the soul. (31)

My observation in twelve step work, is that, when the ‘swings and roundabouts’ of life occur to addicts, they panic inside. Tension builds up until they can ‘get release’, by accessing their ‘drug of choice.’ Something that takes away the fear that life is closing in on them, or leaving them alone, or crashing down all over them, or whatever. All people suffer from dis-ease with life at regular intervals. But addicts suffer from it chronically all the time. They have no barrier to separate their souls from the perception that they are being assaulted by life, which is why they need relief as often as possible.

Considering the analogy with consumer society, a large percentage of the world’s population has been bred into habits that make ‘buying’ one of the commonest ‘fixes’ sought around the world. ‘Shop til you drop’ is no joke. Consumption provides daily disguise for many people’s dis-ease with the quality of their lives. Georg Simmel delved into the psychology of this phenomenon in his classic 1900 study The Philosophy of Money which interestingly did not become available in English until 1978. Simmel already saw, at the turn of the last century, that humanity had slipped into a set of habits that ‘objectified’ experiences in life, which used to be more closely integrated into a person’s whole being.

Human enjoyment of an object is a completely undivided act. At such moments we have an experience that does not include an awareness of an object confronting us or an awareness of the self as distinct from its present condition... consciousness is
exclusively concerned with satisfaction and pays no attention to its bearer on one side or its object on the other. (32)

The money economy was like a gift to addicts. Another step away from our internal ‘shit detector’, meant those already hooked on finding release from dis-ease could jump into the process of ‘purchasing’ as part of their habit. And the advent of ‘credit’ made it even more accessible to use denial to feed a habit — just ‘put it on the plastic’. Similarly, internet shopping and especially internet gambling created instant mainlines into the process of ‘feeling that fix’, for those addicted to spending on purchasing or punting.

Money represents a process of ‘relativity’, whereby things are linked to one another through the medium of money as a comparing device, to represent value. In a world where the theory of relativity has begun to release people from a false form of rationality, money is meant to carry some secret relativity that frees it from its effects. ‘Money objectifies the external activities of the subject, which are represented in general by economic transactions, and money has therefore developed as its content the most objective practices, the most logical, purely mathematical norms, the absolute freedom from everything personal.’ (33)

This objectification is, to me, at the heart of what is needing healing in western society today. The priorities for understanding the human condition have replaced heart and soul with mind and body. People seem to have ‘sold the farm to save the super policy’. Ideas and ideals about how best to manage ‘the money economy’ have taken over from how best to manage for the good of humanity. Not only do addictions ‘cost’, they also derive from the process of chasing the almighty dollar.

The philosophical significance of money is that it represents within the practice world the most certain image and the clearest embodiment of the formula of all being according to which things receive their meaning through each other, and have it being determined by their mutual relations... the projection of mere relations particular objects is one of the great accomplishments of the mind... The abili
construct such symbolic objects attains its greatest triumph in money... Thus, money is the adequate expression of the relationship of man to the world. (34)

Once people have bought into the disconnection that objectification achieves, anything is possible. Any activity can be rationalised, so long as it 'makes sense' in the relative value system of a money-rated world. 'To comprehend our separation from our spirituality we need to look at how mechanistic science and technology cannot meet the most basic needs of the creation of which we're a part... We have come to believe that money and material objects are the only true reality as seen and measured 'objectively' through the senses.' (35)

The argument of this work is that, the disconnection from inner selves, and the continual denial of a true connection between people, keep many people in a dis-eased state. And quite a few moving into madness. It is the reason people seek the comfort of addictions, to release them from discomfort. And increasingly that is available by 'paying for it', which keeps the money connection nicely tied in.

To break this cycle we need to reconnect with our hearts. To make human life a process of 'feeling first' and 'thinking about it after.' 'The real issue is to pay attention to the felt experience, so that each person can own the experience as part of their life process, and to do their healing work.' (36)

The work being developed through this thesis aims to offer society some strategies for accepting the price it has been paying for this lopsided way of operating. Providing channels for releasing the confusion and frustration pent up in so many. People who have been operating out of an artificial mindset, detached from their humanity. My belief is that addiction is just a symptom of the need in humans, to reconnect with their inner lives, and the link between those lives and the mysteries of the cosmos. Which is where uncles Raymond and Bernard lead us, to our shared structure of feeling and experience.

It is my view that all these dis-eased states stem from the same place, discomfort with life
because of a basic fear about being alive. Somewhere the addict has been made to feel threatened by their life circumstances, or at risk of danger, or some experience that made fear a dominant emotion. To escape that fear they developed a pleasure-seeking habit, to mask the pain or distract their consciousness temporarily. This state of mind is not far from full blown mental illness. And a regular statement in twelve step programs is: ‘I’m totally mad today ‘ Other members nod in experienced agreement.

When the escape ‘distraction’ becomes necessary to uphold an addict’s ‘normal life,’ they are, in the gambler’s rhetoric, ‘gone for all money’. ‘When we are fearful, we are usually angry at the same time. When we are angry, it is fear that is most often at the root of our anger—fear of ourselves, and/or fear of others. When we operate out of fear, we are almost always angry because we perceive that world as an unsafe place; when we are angry, we help to make the world an unsafe place because our anger generates retaliatory anger in others. When we let go of our fear, our anger dissipates; when we let go of our anger, we have that much less fear. (37)

Addicts who have faced these steps of ‘unpacking their fear and anger’ can then be available as aides for people who are stuck in the fearful/angry place. And it takes an experienced consciousness to be able to empathise with someone stuck in this place of suffering. Not sympathise, empathise—just the ability to listen, and share one’s own story of surrender to a higher power. Such approaches enable recovery, in the mystery that Uncle Raymond and Bernard saw at the core of ‘normal’ human experience. It is that process, which I am advocating should be considered as an integral part of the healing process for people with mental illness.

14. Rights of passage

When Raymond Williams wrote Culture and Society, he was observing the ‘modern’ industrial state at its peak. The Second World War had geared everything up for maximum production and workers were in full tilt, focusing on trying to resist the forces of fascism.
At this time Williams sensed that people wanted other things in their lives than, slavish following of the ‘modern’ dream of a job, a home, secure future and a beer at the pub.

He knew that humanity needed more food for its soul. But something was already afoot then that began to drain away the traditions and habits of community, which had made life both close and rhythmic for most of Williams predecessors and peers. What was coming was a rapid swamping of all the old social infrastructure by the shallow blanket of consumer society. As British punk poet John Cooper Clarke observed in ‘the Thatcher years’, life in Britain was to become a round of brain numbing attempts to cope with an empty soul life and a full TV screen. His song *Ninety Degrees In My Shades* portrayed the English suburban sitting room dweller, stuck in front of ‘the tele’, waiting for someone to fill in the blank where their soul used to be.

Many victims of addiction started their journey in search of some escape from the monotony and emptiness of this media-fed blancmange of a life. Whether it was escaping down a back lane to swig illicit alcohol, or smoke illicit cigarettes and dope, the process was one of looking for something larger in life. Rebelliousness at school, choosing to stay in dead end jobs but pursuing immediate ‘impression-making’ ‘advances’ like hotting up cars and wearing the latest groovy clothes. Teenage sex and ‘escaping’ into early marriage. These were sixties period rites of passage. But later they became superseded by ‘harder’ options, like more serious drugs, and a range of consumer distractions depending on your income level.

My view is that modern western societies lost their traditional rites of passage early on in the process of modernism, and addictive behaviours quickly filled the gaps. Unfortunately, as these were mainly followed by men, they set up a rationalisation to perpetuate the patterns, which then became cemented in place and established a new status quo. ‘Since the White Male System/Addictive System defines itself as reality, everything else is unreal by definition. Since its referent is the external referent, the internal referent is unreal and
nonexistent by definition.’ (38) When the industrial state and the post-industrial world agreed to maintain the myths about logic, rational, ‘objective’ approaches to life, addiction was assured its already well centred place, as the most likely right of passage replacement available in the ‘civilised’ world.

15. Dis-ease—the attributes of addicted consciousness

This section attempts to find some key words that capture the essence of what addictive behaviours may have to share with other fields of healing and rehabilitation. Again, these words are not meant to be scientific labels or precise descriptors. They are indicators of an energy, which may be part of the refocused healing strategies I am advocating. The first is the already much-used term, dis-ease. This reflects the state of not being at ease with oneself, and to be unable to find relief due to an experience than can be compared literally with sickness, or disease. The sense of not being comfortable with ourselves has begun to beset nearly age groups, communities, nations and races, in my observation. To me this is because the human condition has wandered so far away from its state of natural balance. Dis-ease is chronic. The natural follow-on is to ask what can be done? I believe we need to help each other bring things back into balance, just as I am attempting to develop ways for mentally ill to be helped get back into balance. And for intellectually disabled people to be empowered more to try out their skills at finding balance.

This is a matter of energy flow, in my life experience as an addicted individual and member of addicted groups (business/profits, politics and bureaucracy/power, relationships/power). So solving the problem of trying to escape dis-ease in life, may help others to realise the only answer lies in surrendering to their greatest fears, and letting them engulf us. This is part of healing strategies used at Athma Shakti Vidyalaya in Bangalore. Where schizophrenics and bi-polar disordered people can be safely assisted to ‘go into those space’ inside, face their deepest fears and achieve some balance in self-understanding.
15.1 Itch

The feeling that things are uncomfortable, itchy, needing action in reply is a common trait among addicts. When people are frustrated, locked into a situation, made to restrain their natural tendencies, or feeling denied their due, they want to get out of this state. Addicts are known in twelve step circles as ‘the biggest “poor me’s” in the world.’ Because they cannot bear discomfort in their life. The answer? A drink, a joint, a needle, a poker hand, a sex partner, a huge meal, an abusing relative, a packet of fags. These behaviours can be placed in context when one understands the nature of the dis-ease being suffered by the individual. It does not excuse inappropriate behaviour, but it may be a clue to healing it, and helping people with mental illness address some of their inner turmoil as well.

15.2 Scratch

Finding the solution to addictive hunger is half the story of life for addicts. So much energy and strategy goes into ‘maintaining supply’, that this becomes an obsession in itself. Since the whole world is made up of ‘relief stations’—pubs, bars, TABs (Totalisator Agency Board, betting agency), poker machines, sex shops, fast food outlets, shopping malls, and relatives who can be hassled—they have no trouble finding access to feeding their habits. Until the money runs out. Then stealing comes rapidly onto the scene, and criminality is added to the mix. They say in the Twelve Step program, ‘you will only be able to fully participate in your own life when you have dealt with this escape behaviour.’ I believe this is a good model for use with mentally ill people needing assistance in dealing with their inner demons.

15.3 Trick

The energy of lying rests inside every addict. They need to lie regularly, because their desperate need to feed the habit becomes so dominant it soon removes morality and constraint. The driven, desperate addict, lies inveterately to ‘get the fix’. Co-dependents can even invite the lying so they can feel contented in their superiority, and thus escape their
own insecurity and dis-ease about themselves. It’s paradoxical, ‘cunning, baffling and powerful’ (as the AA Big Book puts it). The point in highlighting this energy is to uncover its part in imbalanced living, which is a consistent problem in mental illness. Addiction itself is a mental illness, and healing strategies need to consider wide perspectives on the problem, to find appropriate ways to help heal it.

15.4 Escape

Ultimately every addict yearns for ‘the total trip’. Release into oblivion, probably best imagined in the heroin addict’s collapse into momentary ecstasy, when they’ve finally got their hit in. The energy here is of desperation for release and escape into a state of consciousness that can’t be touched by ‘reality’. It only lasts a moment, like orgasm, like being stuffed with Christmas Lunch, but addicts keep seeking that sort of quality of experience. The natural outcome of such desperate searching, is that each time the quality of the original ‘hit’ is harder to find. Addicts need more and more of their fix, to keep feeding the habit for the same degree of ‘hit effect’. My understanding is that it is little wonder addicts have energy of fear. Their uneasy friendliness in order to get something, and a certain ‘shifty’ distracted attention, is really always focused on finding the fix, not whoever else is present. Such preoccupations are shared with the mentally ill. My view is that the healing strategies that arise from the structure of feelings and experience, address these problems by answering the inner areas of loss that need to be filled.

These attributes and perspectives on feelings and experience will be revisited in the final chapter, looking at how they all provide points on the framework of human consciousness.
**PLEASE NOTE**

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

This chapter does three things: it (i) brings together the threads of the different perspectives, arising from the ‘walkabout’ views of its various subjects and authors; (ii) develops a synthesis of these views into a model of consciousness, which can be used for further analysis; and then (iii) suggests some implications for all people interested in exploring different views of consciousness.

Going Walkabout, through the views of the various aunties and uncles introduced in this work, and the shared feelings and experience of the four subject groups, was intended as a journey towards understanding something about the parameters of human consciousness. The journey found patterns in feelings and experience, which show up shared aspects of the human condition. They are very noticeable among the mentally ill and intellectually disabled, by their exaggerated presence, or absence. But generally, I believe they are common among all people to some degree.

In drawing this journey to its close, I believe the structure of feelings and experience approach provides one model for acknowledging universal human needs and aspirations. And a possible way to use the perspectives arising from the work of two western cultural elders, and four other ‘tribes of difference’, to better understand ways to achieve healthy balance in consciousness.

My view is that the intellectually disabled and mentally ill deserve more engagement by the publicly funded system, which is entrusted by society to meet their quality of life needs. For the rest, I suggest life is open to exploration in new ways every day. On the walkabout that is modernism’s project for deeper growth—beyond the material dimension, into the shared numinosity which makes life really interesting. And in my view responsible. And ‘working the culture’ of life. But first, the research questions should be revisited, to see if
this journey has covered its appointed territory thoroughly enough.

1. Answering the research questions

1.1 Is it possible to develop a general framework of shared human consciousness among people in western society, using the work of cultural theorists writing about culture, society, art and ideas?

The sections below express a complementary set of indicators, which I believe represent a valid general framework for human consciousness, expressed through the feelings and experiences common to the majority of people. While not claiming to be comprehensive, or psychologically or sociologically defining, they are guides to practice. Tools for further working on the human condition. And in the context of this work, these affective indicators show where services can be improved, to better meet the inherent needs of the intellectually disabled and mentally ill.

1.2 Building on that framework, can there be added perspectives incorporated into this model of consciousness, from the lived feelings and experiences of the mentally ill, the intellectually disabled, the addicted and indigenous people, as representatives of four groves of ‘other’ consciousness?

By overlapping the structure of feelings and experience from mainstream cultural art with some representative indicators from the four subject groups, a more comprehensive scope has been made possible. Again, not claiming total coverage, but beginning to expanding the boundaries. Within which society considers the issues, that need into account when responding to the human condition.

1.3 Can a set of criteria based on valuing the common good be used to a readiness to include such a model of consciousness in its decision m order that the needs of the disadvantaged might be better met?
Borrowing from Jurgen Habermas' early work on the Theory of Communicative Action (1), a basic set of criteria has been drawn up, to assess the modernist process as it allegedly serves the needs of the disadvantaged. While in the view of this work, the current state of community, health and rehabilitation services is not satisfactorily answering these criteria, or the above set of indicators of feelings and experience, there are signs of hope.

1.4 Using this model of consciousness as a guide, can the mentally ill and intellectually disabled be assisted to engage more in designing and managing their own rehabilitation, health and community services, through 'the system'?

Combining the fields of consciousness covered throughout the work, a model of shared consciousness attributes has been drawn up. Not to pretend to some definitive status, but to initiate new debate on the matters which need to be reintroduced to modern social provision. No claim is made to have achieved startling new findings about the human condition. But reopening debate about engaging with mystery and wonder, as facets of human life which are positive, is hoped to be a reclaiming of sovereignty for the numinous. That is, rather than being seen as indicators of magic and superstition, they are proposed as tools of applied awareness, broadening humanity's natural scope of awareness.

As stated at the outset, this work does not intend to attack modernism as an evil. It is part of modernism's way to continue a reflection on progress. Even if some of the process seems to take more steps backwards than forwards at times. Modernism defender Marshall Berman posited a view that accords with the intention of this work:

One possible criterion for modernism today, suggested by some contemporary philosophers, is a conscious attempt to arrive at some sort of universal values... (late capitalist modernists) go on struggling to break through to visions of truth and freedom that all modern men and women can embrace. This struggle animates their work, gives it an inner dynamism and a principle of hope. (2)
My claim is that the sorts of values used as criteria here, from Uncle Jurgen, and the sorts of feelings and experiences summarised below, represent valid additions to the consideration of a list of values and perspectives, as Berman suggests would help define modernism today.

2. Reviewing Uncle Raymond’s Structure of Feeling

Examining the themes and issues Raymond Williams described in his work, there are repeated views, which he saw arising from western culture and society, through the literature he explored for evidence of a structure of feeling. I believe these themes give rise to a set perspectives on the human condition, which fits his descriptor of the ‘Structure of Feelings.’ To that descriptor can be added the complementary component of Experience, as this emphasises the ‘lived out’ aspect of the trends in feeling that he observed. Uncle Raymond seemed to discover some general patterns in human needs and aspirations, expressed through the stories which reflect the western, occidental\(^1\) heritage of consciousness (3).

I believe these themes provide a framework for re-examining the fundamental needs of people in modern (including post-modern) times. And that they combine with indigenous\(^2\) (5) and oriental\(^3\) heritage of awareness, to provide a balanced perspective on human life and consciousness (4). These three ways of being—begetting, rising and setting—seem to me to represent the human condition in its full cycle. Which, I claim, is where human destiny means us all to integrate our awareness, embracing the full difference and diversity these points on the life cycle offer. The four subject groups covered in this work can be seen as some subsets of that full array of diversity.

\(^1\) From Latin ‘occidere’, ‘where the sun sets’.

\(^2\) From Latin ‘endo’ ‘within’, and ‘gignere’ ‘to beget’, hence ‘to beget within’

\(^3\) From Latin ‘oriri’ ‘to rise’, ‘oriens’ ‘east, rising’.
The following points are listed, as the major parameters of the structure of feelings and experience, drawn from Raymond Williams’ work on culture and society:

2.1 We want to share

Sharing for the Common Good is the process humans are meant to live in, according to Williams’ research. He recorded many other writers and observers of western life, and he saw common agreement, that these people believed there was an inherited responsibility among humanity to look after one another, by ‘share and share alike’. This is a direct value from indigenous society, and Williams was basically trying to expound its central importance for healthy human living, individual and group.

Among the intellectually disabled, I believe there is clear expression of this value system. These people openly engage in sharing, and when someone pursues occasional greed or self interest at the expense of others, they are quickly reminded of the group preference for sharing. The mentally ill are often unable to share, for reasons that may vary from chronic shyness or paranoia, to obsessive protection of their interest in some thing or experience. This dis-ease with themselves and others is an example of where lack of sharing results in separation between human beings.

The mentally ill show this result of inappropriate balance in feelings and experience, and they can be ‘teachers’ for the rest of us. When we reflect on how much society’s current trends are pushing more and more people towards narrow self interest and self-protective closing off from sharing. A sick trend for our society, and one that we are wise to work to counteract, by returning to valuing more open sharing in day to day social interaction, and community services.

2.2 We feel divided

Williams’ work showed that western society had been fragmented and divided against itself by modern capitalism. Feelings of isolation, loneliness and separation from one another
were seen as chronic in modern life, after the replacement of integrated lifestyles in small communities, with industrialised, and now post-industrial, atomised existence. The modern condition was seen as one of division, within individuals’ consciousness, and between them.

I claim the answer to this is not some halcyon return to earlier forms of managing life, but a mix of contemporary processes, and re-valued understanding of the inner life needs of humans. Uncle Raymond gave voice to this isolating outcome of modernism many years ago, but despite his popularity and authority, no one in the world of ‘realpolitik’ seemed to pay attention.

My observation is intellectually disabled people often live in circumstances that are beneath the standards sought by mainstream western citizens. In terms of material provision and ambition for success in world affairs, these people are way behind. But in terms of sharing, friendship and cooperation for communal life support, they can be, in my opinion from having worked with them, exemplars.

The mentally ill have challenges forming into unified groups, and it is common for them to feel divided. That is one of the defining parameters of mental illness. Yet many of their experiences of rehabilitation and recovery hold out great hope, for showing others ‘the way back’ from divided life, to more shared communities. These sorts of experiences are rare at the moment, but they illustrate what is possible, among those most challenged by both their inner and outer life circumstances. So if these people can find reconnection with each other and their world, I believe that so too can many divided and isolated citizens in the wider world of western materialism.

2.3 We need to be active in ‘working’ our culture

Uncle Raymond saw that cultural exponents had expressed that successful life comes through a ‘working culture’, absorbing people’s interest and motivating their dreaming. I see this, not as a romantic idyll, but an expression of practical human logistics. Humans’ soci...
nature, numinous inner needs, heritage of cultural tradition, and sense of the connections between people, nature and ‘the stars’, are all aspects of humanity that need regular expression.

While he was watching the impact of television and communications media rise into global prominence, through the fifties to the eighties, Uncle Raymond cried out for a return to valuing the local expression of shared cultural celebration. He was not trying to ‘turn the clock back’, but advocating personal gathering and sharing in cultural celebration, more than the passive consumption of media products alone.

I believe there is a serious job to be done by individuals and communities, to reconnect with activities that have largely been forgotten in many passive, pre-packaged, cultural consumption-oriented societies. It is not too late, and it is still very accessible. People can gather and commune with the numinous as much in a shopping mall as in a traditional village. What I see, working and living with mainstream and marginalised groups, is the removal from many people’s lives of the will, the intention to return to community. This means, in the sense of shared celebration of a need for one another. This seems to happen most around sporting activities and events in Australian society. In some multicultural communities it is rejuvenating, due to cultural traditions being celebrated in the public places. And extended to the wider community through ‘main street’ programs and ‘world music’ festivals.

Among the intellectually disabled, community celebration is a common reason for getting together. Sport, culture, belief and celebration are all good motivations to come together. What is less likely to happen on these occasions is the presence of a whole bunch of people from the general community. That is where I advocate the change needs to occur. By integrating general community activities more with the marginalised groups, there is a strong reconnection with universal human valuing of life. I believe separate activities create separate senses of significance, whereas togetherness breeds understanding, compassion and
cooperation for the common good.

2.4 Telling our stories creates wonder and acceptance

Raymond saw that expressing and exchanging life experiences helped people to grow, to be accepting in community, and to maintain a sense of wonder. It is my direct experience that the majority of people, ‘loves an audience’. But outside of personal friendships or occasional family gatherings, for those lucky enough to still have that degree of closeness with family, there are few celebratory occasions for most westernised people.

Recreating environments, ‘moments’ when people can share, either in a prepared or spontaneous way, their ‘important’ feelings and experiences, is in my view one of the most hopeful activities available to people. For the intellectually disabled, gatherings where individuals and groups share in expressing themselves are occasions of high excitement and importance. They understand the significance of celebrating as a group and sharing in performance for the group. I reckon this beats television hands down. It’s about ‘us’, not ‘them’. And the individual nature of giving and sharing performance, combines with the group warmth of receiving.

Mentally ill people are also able to engage in this sort of celebration and sharing. They may be shy at first, even terrified. But such occasions are their greatest opportunities for acknowledgement and confidence building. Being valued by the group, and learning to value themselves more. Most humans are the same, and many are needing similar access to simpler ways of being recognised in a de-personalising world. ‘Narrative therapy’ has been successful in many therapeutic situations, especially in twelve step programs, helping those in recovery to share their feelings and experiences. But before having to deal with pathologies, the process of sharing, crying out, mourning, exploding with joy, that is human society in its traditional form, means healthy living. Making a fool of oneself singing at the office Christmas party, or doing an amateur play in a local hall is, in my view, great for the soul. Uncle Raymond knew it, he just didn’t seem to jump on stage himself too often,
except as guest of honour.

2.5 Surrendering to ‘not knowing’ allows continuing engagement with mystery

According to Uncle Raymond’s life’s work, humans are meant not to know all the answers. His work shows the reason being, so that people keep engaging in the mystery of life. His work indicates, then, that humanity is not meant ‘to work it all out’, one of modernism’s great projects. The experience of the intellectually disabled, as I have observed it, often living simply with a clear sense of wonder and engagement with mystery, seems to me to provide a refreshing reminder of this perspective.

The modern era, of certainty, progress, logical understanding of material processes, and concurrent ignoring of the affective side of life, seems to have left many feeling lost. It appears to come that the best way back to balance is to stay lost. Accepting that life is a mystery, and once having reached that place, finding a way of being in a world of confusion and mesmerising change. The alternatives, certainty and understanding, increasingly feel like misnomers.

Williams wrote commonsense books about a wide range of social issues, as well as many about cultural subjects. His fiction was an exercise in exploring the moral dilemmas in modern trends, about compromised values in the wave of social change, about the forced movement or eradication of people and lifestyles in the path of technical, cultural, communications and economic ‘progress’.

While he could see what was happening, he also seemed to know that a rational, controlling attempt to ‘hold it all in’ would be impossible. So he began to explore the more numinous side of life, and to express it in his major final work, on a fictional treatment of the cultural history and development of Wales. Ultimately it seemed like the grand uncle of dialectical materialism went searching for Merlin. And he seemed to get to a point where he agreed that humans aren’t meant to just ‘get it all under control’. Unfortunately, by the time of his
death, it seemed the world was racing further into its phase of modernist self-delusion with ‘certainty’.

Now, forty years later, it appears clear that the need for mystery and wonder is to remind humanity, that humility keeps people honest. Loss of it seems to lead to grandiosity and abuse of basic morality. Literature is full of stories showing that unhappiness lies down the path of arrogant certainty about truth. The humility of the intellectually disabled, and the struggling work to rebalance among the mentally ill, are to me reminders of what society in general can benefit from.

3. Uncle Bernard—listening to the echoes in the shadows

There is some dark territory, on this journey through modernity. Concentrating on what humanity has produced in its darkest century can be anxiety-creating. Bernard Smith’s main contribution to the consideration of the Structure of Feeling and Experience, was to use art and perspective. To shine a light on his exploration through these dark years of the twentieth century, when warfare became global along with capitalism.

Uncle Bernard developed a way of seeing western culture that incorporated perspectives from ‘the other’ side. Answering the ancient obsession with the antipodes, that those ‘in the centre’ had had, since human exploration first began. His approach to history, knowledge, thought and feeling was relaxed. He seemed to intuit that dialectical analysis was taking itself too seriously. It was somehow missing the point of much of human creativity, especially in its diversity across different cultures. His main themes in seeking messages relevant to all humans, by scanning their creative expressions and debates, were to bring some softer edges to the boxes of thought.

3.1 Life is through relationship

Uncle Bernard taught that Culture, Identity and Being are Relational. He came to see
humans, not as separate souls, but connected. Just as I claim the intellectually disabled show us the value in opening ourselves to heart connections with one another. So did Bernard’s work show that being human is predominantly an experience of relationship. My claim in this work is, that if our identities, our cultural processes and our actual experience of being is predominantly relational, then humanity needs to value that aspect of life more. So far it seems to me that modernity has neglected these aspects.

Workplaces have become increasingly sub-divided into work stations, with expanded management monitoring of workers, and discouragement of people from gathering together, as if this is a threat to productivity. Public places in many towns and cities have been discouraged from becoming meeting places, for fear there might be ‘trouble in numbers’. Public toilets have been closed to avoid vandalism or drug use, as if the need for using the toilets is suddenly no longer there because a few people may have misused the conveniences. Instead of closure, it seems to me, a simple answer would be to have someone paid to be responsible for the upkeep and safe running of such public facilities. Economic rationalism claims this is inefficient and wasteful. I question such values.

Uncle Bernard also saw that humans find truth through practical activities, which are the context for art and culture. Public facilities, public gathering places, communal use of the lifeworld is all part of healthy humanity, in his perspective. This is what the group experience of the intellectually disabled shows me. They move in groups, those groups use public transport, services and places. And they add to the mix of humanity when they are doing this. Everyone wins, because their natural friendliness and openness helps others to share more and experience more of their humanity.

On the contrary, the mentally ill, who are still often locked away, if not in institutions now, in suburban ‘homes’, where their medication keeps them sedated and ‘untroublesome’, represent the saddest side of humanity. And many ‘normal’ people are effectively similarly locked away, through age, social isolation, or simply lack of habit in engaging with their
fellow humans. I believe there are clear lessons here for public planning and service provision. To move towards greater encouragement of human sharing in relationship and gathering in public places. Providing public incentives for people to get together simply to share time with one another. A concept modelled very actively by the intellectually disabled and the indigenous.

3.2 Wisdom comes from seeing our multi-layered true lives

Uncle Bernard’s work on Perspective was to help many people see how life opens up more, if people see out of the corner of their eye, not with their ‘straight line of sight’ prejudices. He claimed embracing ‘the other’ as a point of view opens life to a richer ground, for being and awareness. This work opens the way to seeing the intellectually disabled as holding perspectives on life, which can inform humanity about more expansive aspects of itself than only going by the norm. Uncle Bernard wrote that such Experience makes for Difference and Truth.

The basic lesson Uncle Bernard drew from his travels through art and culture showed that theory and ideology were small fry compared to lived experience. The same lesson Uncle Raymond worked from all his life. It seems to me that, in the context of intellectual disability and mental illness, this is a reinforcing message of common sense. If people have experienced suffering, disability, prejudice, lack of provision of basic life resources, they are gaining experience and understanding, which is a rich source of renewal for society.

Suffering does not always lead to wisdom, but perseverance under marginalised conditions, and emerging with determination to stay positive and hopeful, suggests to me that it has lessons to teach all humanity. The biggest being, to value people of difference, and acknowledge their equal right to full lives, integrated with mainstream society.

Uncle Bernard also saw that, in practice, forms combine and cultures converge, ensuring that plurality prevails over duality. He would not stop in one ideology and fight for its
correctness. His mind wanders over all sorts of ground, and sees the connections between ideas, creative expressions, traditions and cultural processes. Understanding this trend in human history and culture means to me, that there can be a foundation understanding. That ‘combining and converging’ the lives of marginalised people with mainstream society is not a negative move. Their right to engage in a full life is as important as anyone else’s, but they are also potential contributors of great diversity.

3.3 Sharing stories in the cultural traffic, mixing imaginations

Once opportunities to mix are created for intellectually disabled people, I claim they won’t have any problem responding positively. The mentally ill will need assistance, to relearn the skills and confidence to go into community as fully active members. Some will be unable to achieve this, but others will blossom if given the opportunity to join in the traffic of life that Uncle Bernard watched so curiously.

He said that Cultural Traffic is life’s essence, in which knowledge is a negotiating conversation, informed by the peripheral and prophetic, which always shadow the rational. This is almost a personal invitation for the mentally ill to join the staff of humanity’s college of education. Life experience and feelings having come through mental illness makes people fit for sharing many perspectives that are not only deeply moving, but profoundly educative about the human condition.

Bernard saw that types and styles in cultural expression find their appropriate authors in the imaginative mix. In lifeworld story-telling, there are many authors of stories so far kept silent, waiting to share. The means for engaging in opportunities, for the intellectually disabled and mentally ill to share their imaginations with mainstream community, still need to be created. They are not difficult to conceptualise when community is seen as a gathering of all parts of society, with equal invitations to share. This is one aim of the work to follow this project, in creating more integrating processes for community involvement, for people with mental illness or intellectual disability.
3.4 Significance from the edge of consciousness needs to be continually celebrated

Uncle Bernard saw human imagination as a primary component of life, not something to be separated into the ‘creative arts’ department, and kept for recreational purposes. Einstein felt similarly, and the rise of rationality through modernity has been a surprisingly overwhelming process, when this core aspect of humanness is considered.

Bernard believed that peripheral vision connected all people and cultures, ‘from the edges’, where difference resides. This is consistent with valuing people of difference, including the marginalised groups being focused on here. He saw also that the echoes of history showed patterns of feelings and experience, which potentially brought humanity closer together. If people’s decision was to embrace difference, rather than respond to it with prejudice and judgement.

The use of images and imagining to reclaim communal celebratory process, was a major part of Bernard’s reflection on the place of art, culture, creativity and community in human affairs. He saw this as how humanity finds its signification. The way all people place themselves in the world, and find their meaning and purpose. And the further clue, was that this needed to be a repeated experience, not a rare occasion, according to Bernard’s work. Just as indigenous peoples live in a cycle of celebrating the rhythms of nature and their numinous stories used to reflect on it, so Bernard’s work shows moderns need similar cycles of celebration, ritual and reverence to refuel themselves.

I claim the intellectually disabled are expert at this, and the mentally ill can offer unique and sometimes revelatory perspectives to such processes. But the more telling consideration, regarding the place of these two marginalised groups in the experience of humanity, is that they offer unique and rich perspectives, from the edges of human consciousness. They also echo something of universal humanity, in their involvement in suffering, frustration, imagination and deep feelings. I believe these issues do not need to be used as reason for their greater integration in mainstream affairs. But they seem to me to be important
motivations, in the interest of the common good, for valuing the life experiences and feelings of a rich and diverse group of humans.

3.5 Echo-logical wisdom shows all things connect and recycle

Uncle Bernard saw humanity in Civilisational terms. He would not engage in arguments about ideological positions on modernity, he just watched the flows of human society and culture across the seas of time, and came up with perspectives that showed some interesting patterns ‘for civilisations’. His thinking sees everything recycling, and his belief that culture is prior to most other aspects of human experience, sets up an interesting context for considering progress. Without a well supported cultural matrix, the rest of human life is likely to suffer. That is certainly the case for the marginalised, from what I have seen working with them. Their main energies are put into organising themselves into a cultural redefinition of community, as the mainstream has neglected them.

The fate of mainstream societies which over-value mechanistic or imperialistic pursuits, has been shown to be ultimately moving towards decay. This decadence leads to renewing expressions from creative sectors of society, according to Bernard’s journey through history. And he also saw that, through ‘echo-logical’ cycles of history, showing the social context and reciprocity of events, which give rise to similar patterns over long periods. For the purposes of this work, such a perspective gives hope for marginalised groups, to be assisted in showing authorities, that their potential role in renewal is to rejuvenate society at its roots. By being examples of renewing community, coming from behind and expressing the basic values and feelings that motivate all new life.

To me, these trends and society-wide movements of human life show that the intellectually disabled, and when supported, the mentally ill, are in fact in touch with the heartbeat of human being. My relationship with them has shown me they are vulnerable, faulty, ‘scratchy’ and alive. Lives that are grappling with life. Being expressed, felt, and when given the chance, celebrated. Held in humility more than promoted in egotistical pride. So, in one
way to me, they are actually more in it, than their brothers and sisters. Many of whom have
lost connection with their human inheritance, of individual and group relational and ‘echo-
logical’ living (ie. with respect for the past and its lessons for today). As Uncle Bernard said
about the Surrealists between the wars:

Between 1925 and 1930 then, Surrealism, as a coordinated movement was in the
doldrums—the doldrums of peace... (it) waned as the inter-war economy stabilized
itself temporarily. Yet it was precisely because this stabilisation was of such a
temporary nature that Surrealism, as a cultural movement, has a continuous history
in the period between the wars, for the whole period was predominantly one of
crises, economic, political, moral and aesthetic. It was the world economic
depression that began toward the close of 1929 and to which, in Europe, was added
the growing power of Fascist elements, that created the conditions for a resurgence
of the surrealist attitude. (Bernard Smith, ‘Place, Taste and Tradition’, Oxford
University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp.217-8)

I believe many would echo Bernard’s words today. Similar crises of economic, political,
moral and aesthetic nature are felt among individuals suffering under economic rationalism
today. Many observers of world politico-economics hold that nations are effectively
economically crushed by debt, and global corporate manoeuvrings, and would-be-renewing
cultures are being overtaken by global western media products.

The intellectually disabled and the mentally ill are, to me, like little surrealist bursts of
torchlight, shining out on this crazy world of imbalanced values. The perspective that
uncles Bernard and Raymond have thrown, on what is really going on inside most people’s
hearts and souls, shows me that these two groups could provide much needed nurture, in
their very insistence on being different, ‘ugly’, awkward and real. The impression managing
‘spin doctors’ may try to get hold of them to ‘fit them in the picture’, but they’re not likely
to hold still for long enough, to get them into the right frame with the power elites.
Integrating their lives more into mainstream society, could provide balance and a deeper perspective to the imbalanced nature of the mainstream, in my view.

4. What can be learned from some ‘alternative’ minds?

The ‘others’ covered in this work were chosen because I believe they help inform each others’ perspectives, and those of mainstream people. The aim here is to examine some key aspects of their consciousness, which help illustrate the difference and diversity across all of humanity, but especially among these people. They are only some indicators, and are not presented in any claim to comprehensive coverage. Yet I feel they help illustrate areas for greater acceptance of the value in difference. The potential balance in embracing the collaborative energy of life, which I claim pulses beneath apparent dualities.

By borrowing the yoga challenge, ‘to address our resistance’ to embracing new perspectives of awareness, I believe progress can be achieved. In realising how to make better use of the positives and negatives, in individual lives and human societal behaviour. The tactic here then, is to describe the features arising from the earlier walkabout search around consciousness. And then, in the final section, to extrapolate some balancing perspectives, within the suggested model of consciousness.

4.1 Mentally ill

*Chaos freeing up ‘control’*

Chaos is part of the natural mystery and wonder of the universe. Perhaps that is why, when it shows in the behaviour of mentally ill people, other people feel deeply disturbed. The energy, I believe, touches something deep and universal among humans. So if it is possible to ‘sit with’ fear long enough, to let the chaos ride itself out a bit, a natural process will be allowed to work its purpose. Like bushfire, flood, tornado and earthquake. The thesis of this work is that society can benefit from more acceptance of the chaos in mental
illness, and not see it so much as a pathology, and more as a different state. Freud said about the First World War, it was a symptom of the repression of the strongest and deepest feelings of ordinary people. That humanity had ended up living ‘psychologically beyond their means.’ (6)

I advocate including this understanding in the way mental health, rehabilitation and recovery programs are designed and delivered. To allow natural energy to move through people, and as Anne Wilson Schaef (in Living In Process) says, let people go through their process. By refusing to embrace fear as a kneejerk reaction, I believe there is a lot to be learnt in allowing this energy to flow and help the healing. A similar reason I advocate returning to allowing teachers to touch children, and trusting them to be predominantly professional, not live in fear of a rare case of disturbance, and thereby deny generations of kids their needs for physical affection.

**Mess can help remove obsession**

‘Mess’ originated from the Latin ‘missus’, a course at a meal, from ‘mittere’, to send. (7) It signified sharing food, which is what happens across the road from where I write this, in Pondicherry, India, where people’s eating houses are called a ‘mess’, as in the military tradition. I claim we all need to relax more with mess. Me included. It’s out of order, not neat. But it also feeds something in the soul, which has been starved but the ordered efficiency of modernism. Out of messy thinking, some great insights occur. And I believe, if people are allowed to stretch their mess just enough to know how it feels, some positive results can come from such ‘disorganised situations’.

The point, I advocate here, is to allow diversity in consciousness to inform thinking and planning about change and development. As well as understanding that keeping policies and programs neat and ordered may be the exact opposite of what a well informed doctor would order, for effective rehabilitation among the mentally ill, and others. It is a natural part of maintaining perspective, and keeping all sides to human truth open.
Wisdom rising from the shadows

Another aspect of mystery in human life is the shadow or dark side. All people have it, and when someone goes mad, they reflect the worst fears of others who know their own dark side is not far below the surface. The mysterious is healthy, in my view. Once it is accepted as a part of what we call reality. Some spiritual teachings say all of life is just 'maya', an illusion. Mystery goes with being here. Shadow goes with being here with attitude. The point in mental health recovery is to face it, not suppress it.

My view on generating healthier conversation in ‘healing circles’ about the shadow side of all humans, is to allow the energy to flow, under safe circumstances. Then a balancing may come, and light enter where shadow represented part of someone’s soul exercising itself. The American Indian teaching has shadow as where the dreaming occurs, the way some creatures and people (such as Australian Aboriginal people with advanced awareness and initiation) can use a transcendent state to ‘dream someone’, or influence them without their knowing it. I believe there is wisdom in this territory, to be explored with more acceptance and sensible, pragmatic coordination of circumstances in rehabilitation.

Some serious shamanising around

Magic is one thing modernism set out to challenge. Yet many inventions of modernism seem exactly that—aeroplanes, electricity, computers, satellites, the internet. Mental illness can give rise to shaman-like states, where individuals are given incredible powers of prophecy and apparent understanding. This is not planned, and certainly not invited by health authorities. But my view is that, if it’s there and we know it’s a natural process, let it play itself out enough to see if there’s some possible purpose in the phenomenon.

This aspect of mystery also traverses into wonder, where awe and humility are inspired. Not great features of modernism’s project. It wants results, and now, under control of logic and will power. Shaman’s energy is ‘out in left field’. The reason it is significant for me, is that having seen people experiencing this, I believe they are processing healthy mind
stretching. Then, with reflection and perspective later, such experiences can be put into a framework of self-understanding.

*Fantasy invites the unknown*

Creating images and ideas from an unrestricted imagination is one definition of fantasy. It is ironic that a world producing megabytes of virtual reality, would be frightened of the fantasies that mentally ill people might undergo from time to time. Freud’s reflections on the way the nation state ‘forbids wrongdoing and violence, not, however, in order to abolish it, but in order to monopolise it,’ (in war) (8) is telling. Reminiscent of the array of new laws emerging *against* all sorts of human misbehaviours, and the growth in privatised prisons. When many could be forgiven for asking, are not the agreements between politicians and corporations often not as fantastic and dangerous as what an individual might experience.

If acceptance of financial collapses, which have ruined millions of small investors, are supposed to be taken on the chin. Perhaps the prospect of people experiencing fantasies could be seen as a permissible part of the journey of healing, rather than something to be repressed with drugs. The root word for fantasy is the Greek ‘phantos’ (9), meaning visible. My view is that more visibility is a requirement for better operation of an open society. It just may not be comfortable for state control, rather healing for individual regrowth, in safe circumstances.

4.2 Intellectually disabled

*Refreshing from fallow ground*

‘Idle, unsown, dormant or inactive’ (10) are all definitions for fallow, which carry messages that feel right, from my understanding of what many people in modern life need. Time out. Too much time out can be wasteful, as I advocate has been happening in the neglect of intellectually disabled people as contributors to their own development. But the concept of
tapping their fallowness, and sharing this energy with others, is what Jean Vanier has been celebrating in the L’Arche houses for decades. Here the point is to build awareness of the elements in this phenomenon.

If more people can be invited into the sharing of time with intellectually disabled people, there will be an automatic benefit for both parties. People who can’t stop suddenly have no other choice. And they say it’s heavenly, once they learn to stop feeling guilty. As Jean Vanier said, when inviting Henri Nouwen to join a L’Arche community: ‘Why don’t you come and waste some time with us?’ My point is that there are benefits in remembering to learn the lesson of stopping, and then quiet listening. ‘Do-dadirri’ (sit, wait and listen). I claim this as another tool for planning programs and services, especially in offering opportunities for volunteers to meet their needs for stopping, by joining the family of the intellectually disabled.

**The kiss from an open heart**

‘To touch with the lips as a mark of affection or greeting’. (11) In Maori culture it’s touching foreheads at the ‘third eye’ spot, to share the energy of soul and ‘catch up with each other’. In western culture, the kiss is vulnerable to being colonised by romantic imagery, where it certainly has a place, but not exclusively. ‘Affection and greeting’ are exactly what intellectually disabled people have to teach others to remember, as an ordinary exchange of unconditional love. I am advocating bringing more of this sort of exchange into everyday connections between people, starved of affection in the frantic chase for success or survival in modern life.

I maintain that open-heartedness has been turned into a naive weakness, in a world full of competition for beating the next person. But, just as Jean Vanier points out, people are worn out with all being individuals, many people yearn for open hearted connections with one another. And in my mind this is not Gemeinschaft nostalgia. It is responsible rounded humanness.
Childlike wonder restores hope

‘Marked with the innocence and trust associated with children.’ (12) Innocence almost feels like a dirty word in today’s version of ‘modern times’. When corruption is rife across the political and corporate sectors, people become numb to notions of such softness and vulnerability. But it such values and behaviours which I claim need to be advocated and practiced among all people, if humanity is to reclaim its fullness. The intellectually disabled are powerhouses of innocence and trust, ready to top up those who have forgotten how to do it, be it, give it and receive it.

Circumstances can be imagined where these sorts of exchanges can be allowed without control, in simple spending time together. I maintain, that the sharing of ordinary ‘life time’ can renew harrowed business people, administrators, and young people, looking for a way out of the veneer of cynicism they picked up in response to the adults they observed while growing up. My risk-taking in advocating such concepts reflects the strength of what I believe intellectually disabled people have to offer others, and thereby receive themselves. The only commodity to be spent here, is time.

Freed by the incredible lightness of being like a feather

An Australian homoeopath friend of mine is currently ‘proving’ the energy of ‘feather’ as a possible homoeopathic remedy. This may seem weird to those unfamiliar with homoeopathy, but then new awareness makes for interesting feelings and experience. There is, within ‘the light horny outgrowths that form the external covering of a bird’s body’ (13) some real magic. Not the stuff modernism set out to remove. The stuff it has yet to capture. The miracle of flight rests between the fronds of a feather, the energy of uplift and freedom.

My case is that, in the fractal nature of life, in which all things are connected and ‘the whole is in the part, and the part in the whole’, there is a message here. Intellectually disabled people carry a potential. I have seen it happen so many times I am certain it is valid. The way of inviting others’ heart to open and free themselves to rise up out of their stuckness.
It is enlightening to see a harried shopkeeper or bureaucrat meet an intellectually disabled person, and release their pressing worry. Somehow they are allowed to bother to do ‘autonomically’, unconsciously, what they would not do for ‘normal’ folks. This feather energy of soul is a valuable commodity. Not to be exploited, to be shared.

Surrendering to the mystery

The mystery of life’s lottery is what baffles many people during their struggling years, of ‘making it’, and then bemuses them during their redundant (modernism’s latest version of forced retirement) years. ‘Why did I bother so much about that, when I could have...?’ Part of my message in this work, is that a more universally ‘indigenous’ sense of life, would have us all able to accept mystery, and surrender to it as part of life’s gift. Not have it as a fearful threat. The intellectually disabled invite that learning. They don’t even charge to teach it.

4.3 Addicted

Curing modernism’s infectious dis-ease

‘Ease’ is ‘freedom from pain, discomfort or anxiety’. (14) So ‘dis-ease’ is the exact opposite. Like the old standard blues song ‘Easy Street’, life would be so easy if we could just get to live on easy street—a mirage. My claim is that, under the influence of profit making, advertising has sold to the modern citizen the notion that life will be like that, if they just consume enough of the right stuff. In pursuit of good business, the media has performed its task excellently, and now modern citizens are stuck with habits of consumption they find it hard to give up. Addiction is the magnified version of what happens when the dis-ease can’t be fixed. So my claim is that this message is worth sharing with everyone, as they remain vulnerable to getting hooked on whatever habit has been giving them their fix.

Acknowledging this aspect of consciousness is not only important in healing mental illness. I believe it sits at the heart of modernism’s current discomfort with itself. The cure lies in
letting out the feelings and experiences that drive the addictive desire. That comes through honest sharing, telling stories that help heal oneself and others, in our community of souls.

*Finding a way to watch the itch*

Understanding how to watch discomfort, bear pain, and enter into delayed gratification with a feeling of gratitude, may sound crazy. Yet that is what people pursue to great lengths, to try to balance out their heads and their lives. Vipassana meditation training, coming down from Buddha in a long line of teachers, is experiencing a great renewal in the west. The reason is exactly this, just as growing interest in pranayama in yoga. People know they need to learn to watch the itch, not scratch it. I maintain that addicts are here to help teach that fact. Shunning their experience is like scratching itself. It refuses to hear the message, that things need to be, in cricketing parlance, 'let go through to the keeper' of the soul. Allowing acceptance of this facet of all people is part of building a working model for designing programs for the mentally ill and intellectually disabled, who can have it just as strongly as everyone else.

*Healing the scabs by not scratching*

Finding alternative sources of supply does not just come from meditation. Life needs to be worked to fill out some one’s potential. On the model proposed at the end of this work, human consciousness has several key areas needing engagement of the feelings and experience, to reach fully integrated living. This one fills the spot where perspective enters. The perspective many people used to get in their rites of passage, at a reasonably early age. Now moderns need reminding that life is for other purposes than earning, consuming, doing and fretting. Sharing, conversing, imagining and seeing in perspective, are ways of deepening what can make a life. So I am certainly advocating this for the rehabilitation process, but also for many people in their ordinary lives as well. Checking out the missing pieces, and seeking expansion of life through risk taking to learn more, not closure on images of certainty and security.
Seeing through card tricks

The trickster is a major figure in Jungian analysis and archetypal canon. This teaching says that part of each of us is unconsciously trying to trick ourselves into mistakes, crazy blow outs, things we would normally not venture to do. Addicts are the prime examples of giving in and following this bloke. I should know, as I have been there many times myself. My point in this context is, that self delusion is part of the modern condition. It leads to existential angst, questioning ‘how could I do this to myself?’, and too often to further addictive escape attempts to solve the dis-ease resulting.

More open sharing of this part of ourselves would do the world of good, in my book. And I am advocating incorporating such sessions into rehabilitation and recovery work for the mentally ill. Where they can ‘let it rip’ with the full gamut of stories about the trickster’s inner tales of grandeur and self-deception. Something like this happens in twelve step meetings that are working to their full potential, and I believe many ‘normal’ folks would benefit from a healthy dose of such release. Otherwise the trickster has only one audience, and he’s likely to get a convert to another weird idea.

Renewing the escape hatches

It has been said that addiction is modernity’s rite of passage. The corollary to that is how to replace such a destructive habit with something life building. I advocate that what is missing in the past few generations, especially since WWII, is the role of taking responsibility for some publicly acknowledged community action in our society. Relating to the community in a way that defines a role for ourselves. That is the indigenous passage, and my view is that today’s moderns need to find similar functions, in new circumstances. This will fill the void previously taken up by the escape habit. In forming rehabilitation and recovery programs for mentally ill and intellectually disabled people, finding such roles in the relational world is the challenge. To get beyond nominalism into something actual. It feels right for ‘normal’ citizens as well.
4.4 Indigenous

White people getting a dreaming

Indigenous people have many troubles in modern times, and there is no romance about their circumstance among people working in the field of indigenous affairs. But forming relationships with them allows a perspective on what is still possible in human awareness. The Dreaming is a reality beyond modernism, although one could suggest that its ostensible ‘front’ has been to ‘sell the modern dreaming’. My point is that the transcendent Consciousness, exercised by indigenous people remaining in touch with their heritage of spirit, has much to teach the rest of humanity. And a lot to offer healing programs for the mentally ill. By learning to listen to the elders, learn the respect for spirit and place, I believe people who have been mentally disturbed can be encouraged to reopen their inner awareness towards healing. This is not a form of neo-colonial, ‘cultural tourism’, it is serious cross-cultural relational exchange. A matter of discernment and honesty. Uncle Jurgen’s territory. And also recommended for others in pursuit of life expansion.

Getting down and getting earthy

Earthing ourselves is a powerful metaphor for current modernity. Full of the electricity of change and movement, we need a release into mother earth to get some relaxation of spirit. Mentally ill people are full of this ‘electric eels’ feeling. But I claim so are half the executives running our world, and many people buzzing inside their homes with frenetically paced lives. By designing programs to ‘get down’, I believe it will be possible to assist mentally ill people to take hold of some of their unhealthy over-charged energy. Not just by taking Outward Bound courses and bashing cushions. But by developing a listening relationship with the earth, forming reverent relationships with place. And celebrating those in some ritualistic ways, which develop meaning and significance specific for them.

Critics will no doubt see ‘the Jungle Jim of Gemeinschaft,’ donning the loincloth and reaching for the tree vine. I am not suggesting ‘going native’. This is a simple matter of small
domestic rituals, and personal development of gestures towards meaning and connection. In Uncle Jurgen’s words, the intention counts, and the fourway test works as well with truly meant symbols as with the real thing. This is another process to be designed for healing people’s illness, but suggested for anyone seeking a new opening of awareness and refreshment of spirit. I am envisaging it coming to life through public sector agencies as well.

‘That’s my blood down there’

Forgetting genetics, to me today’s latest colony of values-free mechanistic modernism, I am interested in seeing a reconnection with the energy of blood, among people who are healing. Only the transfusions are not ‘in the arm’, but in the spirit. This miraculous energy-carrying substance sustains all humanity, and links us with nature. Through the shared chelated molecular structure, from humus, to photosynthesis, chlorophyll to haemoglobin. In symbolic terms, this is a connection with the iron of life, the electrochemical essence of humanity’s link with the sun, where all earth’s energy originates.

Forming groups that talk about, act out, celebrate, ritualise and share the ‘stuff of life’, puts us ‘in the bloodline’. All symbolic and healing. Rebuilding a numinous link with the ancient, in the meeting room at the shopping mall. This way of meeting with all types of different ethnic groups, indigenous peers, and multi-interest area collections of humanity, is a path to healing for people who lost connection with their fellow humans. Building perspective by remembering our oneness in diversity, through the blood of humanity.

That whispering echo calls

Songlines in the two-way Dreamtime. A concept that covers so much territory that it is only necessary to refer to its link with healing. People who have lost connection with their core self, and their peers, can somehow make connection with the notions of an informed universe working through songlines. An ancient part of humanity must link up here, because I have known several people to ‘get it’ without formal explanation. That there may be
pathways across country which trace the stories of the gods, the ancestors, the creation spirits. And they are accessible today, if the imagination is opened.

For mentally ill people, whose imaginations have been having a field day, this is territory to wait until they are feeling balanced and re-grounded. Then, on the way out into re-enchanted life, I believe it is possible to explore ways of connecting with this part of universal humanness, without being accused of drifting into spiritual gobbledygook. The simple choice of a totem animal or plant or place, is one step. This may not work for some people, but other rituals are possible, to engage with each individual’s way of imagining their link with the higher power, and through its values, to the higher good. I advocate it is part of the echo of humankind, in the spirits going round in the timeless zone.

‘You don’t belong here!’

Belonging in the group is part of the origins of modernity, according to those who saw individualism as a driving force behind the push for progress and removing tradition. But out of that successful change program over the past few centuries came existential angst. The person alone. Without the nurture of others, but free to be themselves. I claim this dualistic way of creating conflict has led to much of the mental illness and inner trauma, still besetting people in developed and developing nations today. And in my own experience, indigenous people can manage to be both individual and belong to a supportive community, where ‘family means ‘my people.’

That is how I am choosing to live these days, and many of my peers and friends. It is what I am proposing to develop into ways of encouraging mentally ill people to grow into a new form of relationship in community. Intellectually disabled people, form my observation, largely have it already among themselves. They somehow have an innate way of forming extended family groups automatically. But some individuals need help with this, just as diversity is across all aspects of the disability community.
Going Walkabout through the Suburbs

5. Combining the ‘Tetrahedral Soul Tensegrities’

5.1 Picturing the process of mind

Models and formulae have been part of modernism’s fascination with ‘understanding’ and ‘capturing’ information, often mistaken for knowledge in my view. So I am sceptical of models. And yet this work suggests one. It quickly shows the image of what the argument is trying to say. And I hope it prevents confusion, because too many things at once may seem to be presented, in the linear format of a typed manuscript.

Borrowing from Buckminster Fuller, one of the great futurists, multi-faceted global thinkers and designers of the last century, I have created a diamond shaped model, to combine the five pointed contributions from Uncles Raymond and Bernard. Bucky made a major discovery last century (one of many), when he developed his ‘Jitterbug Transformation’ (15). By combining two geometric conceptions and realising their combined energy-capturing and strength-bearing potential, he opened up new dimensions in architecture and industrial design.

Thus were born a multitude of modern devices, processes and ways of thinking. I use the analogy of Uncle Bucky’s process, named after the American dance-craze of the time, when partners would jive around together and swing each other to and fro. This visual concept of energy exchange provides an image I like to use, to imagine the energy of consciousness going around in our awareness. Bucky said that ‘how nature builds’ is the way that humans should replicate the wisdom in its designs. He believed that the ‘flow of energy through a system acts to organise that system’. (16) My view is that this is a simple illustrative concept, which can be used to create new parameters for meeting human needs. And of understanding where differences in consciousness sit, on the ‘jiving’ cycle of ‘normal’ movement in human feelings and experience.

Fuller emphasised ‘emphemeralization’, ‘doing the most with the least’. His understanding
of molecular structure, quantum theory and the energy-matter tango, was that ‘nothing in the universe touches anything else... so tension and tensegrity have no limit of clear spanning.’ (17) When he took the cuboctahedron and placed it over the icosahedron, he came up with an octahedron that allowed the creation of the geodesic dome. This harnessing of energy, with Bucky’s aim of discovering the ‘circumferential moment’ (18), has an equivalent, I suggest. In the points of engagement with the Structure of Feelings and Experience, there is a similar energy understanding to be embraced. For the intellectually disabled, the mentally ill, and all of humanity.

Bucky’s philosophy was ‘don’t fight forces, use them’ (19), similar to the principles in eastern martial arts, such as judo and karate. The message here, for understanding human consciousness, is that it is better to ‘go with’ than ‘go against’. So finding points of engagement and cooperation, sharing and exchange, are more natural and healing, than suppressing with drugs or isolating.

Just as Bucky believed ‘there was a regularity function at the deepest levels,’ I believe there is a shared energy of life, and a ‘circumference of consciousness expansion’. In combining the two five-pointed, tetrahedral ‘models’ drawn from the perspectives of Uncles Raymond and Bernard. Put together, with their shared aspects merging, I see these two five pointed summary focus points, joined dot-to-dot, forming a diamond-shaped model. It creates an eight sided, six pointed reflection of human consciousness. And it is just a game, one way of ‘thinking about it.’ But a serious metaphorical way of considering the serious subject at hand. Engaging and contextualising the feelings and experience of two marginalised groups. To create more empowered lifeworlds, but working ‘with them’ to address their inner needs.

So while being metaphorical, this is also a practical exercise. In helping to see the dimensions of opportunity for regenerating human feeling and experience, expression and fulfillment. The ‘swinging crystal model of consciousness’, from the model Bucky used to
GOING WALKABOUT THROUGH THE SUBURBS

ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT CONSCIOUSNESS:

USING AFFECTIVE INDICATORS FROM THE STRUCTURE
OF FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCE AS POINTS IN A MODEL.

1. FROM RAYMOND WILLIAMS

2. FROM BERNARD SMITH

ECHO-LOGICAL RECYCLING
OF WONDER

VISION & VOICES
FROM EDGES & ECHOES

CULTURAL TRAFFIC
MIXING IMAGINATION

WORKING CULTURE

TELLING STORIES

PEOPLE WANT TO SHARE

LIFE IS THRU RELATIONSHIP

WISDOM SEES
MULTI-LAYERS

MYSTERY
‘NOT KNOWING’

3. COMBINING THE ABOVE, PLUS PERSPECTIVES OF “THE OTHERS”
   TO FORM THE STRUCTURE OF FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCE

MODEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

WONDER

PERSPECTIVE

CONVERSING

RELATING & SHARING

IMAGINING — EXPRESSED THRU
COMMUNAL CELEBRATORY SIGNIFICATION

MYSTERY

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conjure up his energy and tension synergies with integrity of form. What he dubbed ‘tensegrity’. I envisage the energy flows and swings which apply here, as two poles of a diamond’s furthest points interchanging, within the integrity of whole consciousness. (See Figure 1, on the previous page.)

The four-pointed belt of the ‘waist’ of the diamond circulating. The two apex points oscillating, constantly shifting the energy with life’s changes. The four energies of noetic awareness move from highs to lows, intense to fallow, dark to light, front to back, side to side and so on. Multi-perspectived and multi-relational. The two peak poetic energies express the transcendent aspects of consciousness. It is just one way of looking at it, but I hope helpful.

5.2 Sharing the energy of awareness

First we can consider the shared four-pointed ‘waist’ of the diamond shape, formed by bringing the bases of the two Raymond and Bernard tetrahedral pyramid shapes together. There are four points, I believe, of agreed focus on human feelings and experience between these uncles. And they are essential for healthy, balanced lives. They are presented here with a balancing set of collaborating yin and yang, light and dark ‘opposing energies’. And with mention of examples of attributes of consciousness from the four subject groups, which are suggested could be seen merging with these points of shared awareness. None of this is claimed to be anything comprehensively representative. It is only a catalyst, a starting point for thought and further conversation.

(1) RELATIONAL—Sharing for the Common Good, in a Working Culture with Practical Activity, Belonging, Cooperating. Responsible for one another.

I believe human beings require regular engagement with one another for healthy living. Those who have been ‘locked away’ from normal integration in society, particularly deserve and need to be re-connected with the mainstream of community. So assessing from the people
themselves, what their feelings and experience are like in this field of life, is a starting point for better meeting their inner and outer needs. Making the creation of Relational circumstances real, and providing time, place, space and respectful acknowledgment of this process, should be a priority for human services agencies, in my view.

Aspects from the four subject groups that fit here may be: Belonging (Indigenous); Sharing Dreaming (Indigenous); ‘Kiss energy’ (Intellectually disabled); finding new Roles and Responsibilities, ie. Passages (for Addicts); and Lack of relationships (Mentally ill).

Some balancing ‘opposites’ in this area, to be given room for healthy ‘processing’ are: Rejection, Anger, Aggression and Hate.

(2) PERSPECTIVE—Where Experience allows Difference and Truth to Combine in Plurality. Leading to Truth, Acceptance and Oneness in Diversity.

I believe establishing processes, which respectfully encourage difference in life perspectives, is another priority area. This could mean creating services that mix people of different disabilities or illnesses, with enough support services to be able to inter-relate and interact safely and effectively within their limitations. Living circumstances that allow different levels of disability, illness and support service need to be met, in order that communities of varied perspective can be valued. I believe this is creating wealth in plural social capital, and potential for stronger, healthier lives.

Aspects from the four subject groups here are: Mess, ‘out of orderness’ (Mentally ill); Fallow (Intellectually disabled); Blood connection with earth and each other (Indigenous); Watching the itch, observing (a lesson from Addicts).

Some balancing energies are Obsession, Prejudice, Separation, Judgement and Blame.

(3) CONVERSATION—Shared in the ‘Cultural Traffic’ of Life, it is how Knowledge is Negotiated. Leading to Exchange of Empathy and Understanding.
Creating circumstances, where interaction and communication are THE reasons for coming together, requires deliberate decision-making. Group decision-making, problem-solving, and working the concept of community into action. These values need to be acknowledged and allowed to emerge into daily practice, in a way determined by the participants, not some outside ‘authority’. Thus valuing the lives and views of the participants, and creating a stronger community among them. Such is life’s cultural traffic and it’s way of sharing and evolving knowledge and wisdom.

The four subject groups provide perspectives here, such as: The Trickster (Addicts); Sharing Stories, joyful and sad (Intellectually disabled); Dis-ease in communicating (Addicts); Echo-logical awareness shared between people and the earth (Indigenous); and No one listening (Mentally ill).

Balancing energies here could be: Isolation, Paranoia, Loneliness, and Ignoring others.

(4) IMAGINATION—The Primary human activity, expressed and exchanged through Communal Celebratory Signification, including Creativity, Inspiration and Intuition.

Combining for group story-telling, music-making, song, dance, celebration of good spirit. This is a universal human need, in my view too often ignored and replaced by passive consumption of media productions. The intellectually disabled and mentally ill can really ‘get down’, and their example of the healing, restorative effects of such gatherings provides evidence for wider society of its need to reclaim a full experience of community. The issue is that time, money and intention have to be devoted to valuing these sorts of activities, and honouring their symbolic and affective role in nurturing communities. Such priorities have to be consciously reset for our society to recognise them again.

Some aspects from the four subject groups showing up here are: Shaman energy (Mentally ill); Earthed feeling (Indigenous); ‘Risk’ Growing more (Addicts); Fantasy tripping
(Mentally ill); Childlike Wonder (Intellectually disabled); and Building one’s own life by valuing what is (Intellectually disabled).

Balancing energies could be: Self-delusion; Psychosis; Nightmares; and Groups creating ‘mirage’ experiences.

5.3 Balancing on life’s swings and roundabouts

The above four aspects of human life, the ‘compass points’ of feelings and experience, or consciousness, are illustrative only. But I believe they point the way for helping the mentally ill and intellectually disabled claim rights to improving their lifeworlds. The way society responds to their need for these engagements with life, and the resulting feelings and experiences, can be a strength for humanity or a weakness. I claim that too often decisions made, allegedly in the interests of ‘efficiency and effectiveness,’ are denying these core aspects of people’s life needs.

The task now is to find ways to reintroduce such experiences into the lives of these two groups. And I suggest for many ‘normal’ people, to explore whether they have the courage to follow the same examples, and give vent to their true inner natures, wanting to come out and be given full expression. This would be a valuable acknowledgement, of how much more can be experienced by everyone—if the marginalised in our society, and those aspects inside ourselves, are served with proper respect and ‘allowed to be’. Safe from ridicule, judgement and artificial ‘protection’ in the name of ‘official due process’.

I claim that finding this ability to ‘swing free’ in our consciousness, can come much more easily if we follow the two other points of the tips of the pyramids, creating a ‘soul tensegrity’ diamond. At the apex and base of the diamond are the two main driving energies, in my opinion. They are identified as the peak points for concentrating the rejuvenation of consciousness in all humans: mystery and wonder. Not Gemeinschaft nostalgic idylls. Working aspects of human awareness, reintroduced as recognised attributes, needing
Going Walkabout through the Suburbs

education and practice to be properly understood and ‘worked’.

These aspects of human consciousness seem to me to show up in all four subject groups in this work. The indigenous have clear engagement with these aspects of daily life, and addicts suffer under the shadow side of both, finding chaos and terror where healthy mystery and wonder can reside. I believe what arises from the walkabout journey through consciousness undertaken in this work, is that these attributes of human feeling and experience need to be officially acknowledged. And factored into programs, to ensure holistic provision of life services. It is not a ‘happy hippy trip’ to raise these notions. It is responsible acknowledgment of human awareness and numinosity.

James Cowan’s work shows noesis and poesis require ‘working’. As Darryl Reanney said, we are children of the stars, literally. So, if we came from the same ‘stuff’ that was there at the first Big Bang, I believe he was right in suggesting that we all need to regularly commune with our source. Allowing mystery and wonder to oscillate through our consciousness, is like keeping the pathways of consciousness clean and healthy. Flushed with the original energy of life. And particularly important in healing and rehabilitation work with the mentally ill and intellectually disabled. Otherwise they become jammed in magnified versions of their balancing opposites, which can create delusion and terror in the ‘worst case scenario’. (See Figure 2, on the next page.)

(5) MYSTERY—Where we keep engaging, allowing echo-logical recycling to renew, giving our lives context and reciprocity.

Stories from traditional culture, and ones emerging from today’s experiences, are some gateways into mystery. So is visiting nature, experiencing its beauty, and seeing that there is so much we don’t understand about life, the universe and everything. I believe Mystery then comes into our minds as a natural part of life. The certainty and determination to be right and understand everything, which modernity has thrust upon us, can be put behind a little, where it belongs in a more respectful place. Exercising humility in the vastness of the
HOW THE STRUCTURE OF FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCE
MIGHT BE REINTEGRATED IN COMMUNITY
AND LIFE'S ENERGY BALANCE RESTORED

ADDITION TO ESCAPE
OBSESSION
HOPELESSNESS

REVERENCE, RITUAL, CELEBRATORY
SIGNIFICATION

DOOMED PRECIOUS
BLAME, JUDGE - MENT

DISCERNMENT,
DECISION,
COMPASSION
FORGIVENESS

IDENTITY
RESPECT
RIGOUR &
RESPONSIBILITY

RELATING,
SHARING

CRAVING
PERSEVERANCE
CONVERSATION
IMAGINATION

MYSTERY

SURRENDER
LETTING GO
RECEIVING,
TRUSTING

FEAR
LOSS
DEATH
UNKNOWNING
GRIEF

TERROR
PANIC
PARANOIA
ANXIETY

METAPHOR
FANTASY
PARABLE
INSPIRATION

TELLING STORIES
LISTENING
ACKNOWLEDGING
EXCHANGING

RENEWAL
DREAMING
RECONNECTION

WITHDRAWAL
CYNICISM
SHUT-DOWN
SELF-OBSSESSION

TRICKSTER
DECEIT
LIES
FALSEHOOD

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universe, not ‘planning to invade Mars’ (for a wonderful spoof, see Mars Attack the movie).

I have observed, practised myself and believe that Hearing about human history, engaging with elders, and sitting still long enough to hear our own feelings and imaginations at work, can restore much of our humanity. This is needed particularly among the intellectually disabled and mentally ill, to provide more fullness to their lives. For recovery and rehabilitation, but mainly for spirit uplift purposes. So could it be applied across society.

The issue will be gaining official approval, that this is serious ‘work’. I believe it is time ‘the system’ began to give some ground on work being a life issue, not only a vocational matter. Cultural work makes for the soul of society, and when it is not done, the society is lacking in its soul. And just as individuals can end up with exaggerated versions of the ‘opposite’ of whichever life energy of consciousness they ignore and fail to exercise regularly, so I believe does society risk ‘archetypal blow outs’ when these matters are ignored.

(6) WONDER—Having a sense of wonder, in a meditation on life, wandering back to go forward. ‘Applied Dreaming’, replacing narcissism

Acknowledging that humanity is still a tiny part of the universe, and that this very sense is part of our healthy operation, I advocate is needed by all humans. By creating more exposure to the wonder of life, in simple and reverent occasions, we can help people rebalance and heal. Rituals designed to acknowledge the numinous and wonderful aspects of life also bring a refuelling to the human soul.

Not any particular ‘brand’ of belief or explanation of the universe. Just simple processes to celebrate our oneness with life, and our part of the natural cycle of birth, life and death. More natural, more indigenous ways of being in our lives. These phenomena may lead to more spiritual occasions, attendance at funerals, births, community occasions and other ways people celebrate things bigger than themselves.

To ignore this aspect of humanness, again I believe is to negate a fundamental part of life.
Daily life, ordinary life. Not life limited to ‘the church’. This leads to my assertion that systemic incorporation of activities that connect with the numinous is part of healthy ‘work’. Especially in the healing professions, but basically I claim in all human fields of activity. The equivalent of an old Australian advertising campaign for milk, which used the catchline, ‘Drink your milk Freddy’, as a message of daily protein, vitamin and mineral intake. So too, I believe does society need to ‘drink its milk’ of numinosity on a daily basis. Or, as Hindu’s here in India might put it, ‘There’s a point to the puja’ (daily offering to the gods).

6. What that means for policy, programs and service delivery

6.1 What does it mean in practice?

Put simply, I believe the above six parameters create a working framework for suggesting areas of development. For exploring aspects of healing and rehabilitation, and re-valuing processes currently missing, from the health and community services provided for the intellectually disabled and mentally ill. The aim of the proposed follow-on project from this work, is to test these areas of lifeworld, in the daily context of involvement in community programs for these groups. It is proposed to develop a process for engaging with the two target groups, and their support workers, in life journalling their experiences and feelings over twelve months. By recruiting ‘buddies’ who can assist in the recording and experiencing of day-to-day sharing, interacting and individual activities, it is possible to create support for this process to occur. The likely recording times would be weekly or fortnightly.

The six parameters above will be factored into a program, designed to test the efficacy of bringing these aspects of life into full engagement. Imagination, Conversation, Perspective and Relational activities will be designed, group produced, and recorded. Wonder and Mystery will be built into the activities and a cyclic pattern of reverence for the mystery
and celebration of the wonder. And the impact of these elements on the lives of participants will be recorded, as part of the evidence of the ‘health’ of the individuals participating. The feelings and experiences of workers, researcher and volunteers will also be recorded during the exercise. To provide tracking evidence, in an action research style project, of the emerging lessons from pursuing this approach. The results will then be fed into policy and program design and community service delivery for the intellectually disabled and mentally ill. Aiming for improvement in quality of life seems a simple target. But so many programs have promised that sort of goal before, so many are skeptical of its ‘outcome potential’. This work promises to add the dimensions previously ignored, because of slavish worship of rationality, before holistic human understanding. And I believe the outcomes will be cost effective, recidivism decreasing, and beneficial to the community as a whole.

6.2 What will make it work?

The point I am making, without pre-empting the later action research style project, is that work-a-day ways of respecting and engaging people’s potential for these activities, makes good pragmatic sense. I believe it has nothing to do with religion, and keeping ‘church and state’ separated in public sector activities. The numinous can be any form of opening to a higher awareness. As Irish comedian Dave Allen used to end his weekly TV show, ‘May your god go with you.’ No specific identification need be made in these rituals with any sectarian point of view. In fact, the spirit of place is probably more likely to relate to ‘generic’ Australian circumstances. It will be up to the participants to plan, design and deliver. But my argument is that the ‘driving energy’ for all this, and the exchange of the six attributes of healthy human consciousness, is sharing them. People want to share, so let’s let them. Uncle Raymond will be smiling, as it is his first point in the structure of feeling.

Equally important are the four circulating aspects of consciousness, which engage people in the full range of human sharing of life skills. ‘Working the culture’, relating with each other, developing a perspective on life and its healthy plurality. Conversing in the cultural traffic,
mixing imaginations, negotiating knowledge. And being encouraged to do what Aboriginal people in the ‘native’ cycle of life do, in the suburbs as much as the outback: ‘When they’re not in celebration (of the wonder of life) they’re preparing for the next—that’s life,’ (paraphrased from Fr Eugene Stockton’s work).

7. What does Uncle Jurgen think?

Going by Uncle Jurgen’s four-way test, I believe introducing these aspects of awareness, into policy and program planning and service delivery, will result in the following answers:

Reflecting the Truth of Human Nature in Healing—Creating activities and experiences relevant to people’s lifeworld brings them into context. Nurturing feelings and experiences which help people rebalance imbalanced lives, will achieve healing, I believe. As well as reflecting the fullness of human nature, and ‘working’.

Truthfully and Responsibly acting for the Common Good—By admitting that previous activities have ignored large slabs of shared human reality, the approaches advocated have greater potential than existing programs to add to the common good. They aim to reflect the fullness of humanity, and heal people holistically, not in segmented symptom suppressing impression-managing ways.

Adding the Right amount of Wisdom and Compassion for Healing—Refusing the existing mechanistic value system and procedures applying ‘in the system’, this model engages with real needs in ways that address the full nature of individuals, and therefore of society. It requires risk-taking, and professional management. The alternative, fear-based shutdown for certainty, has not worked to good result to date.

Making Comprehensive Sense for Society’s Evolution—Engaging with the inner aspects of humanity, as a ‘working’ part of normal individual and societal
functioning is long overdue. Modernism's true supporters will embrace a move into
the territory too often ignored in the project over the past century. It makes sense to
me, and only results can show if it makes sense to humanity.

8. And the limitations?

The down side of all affective, person-centred approaches, requiring trust and sharing of
ideas and skills, is 'the human element'. So much legislation now exists to try to negate this
factor, that I claim policy restrictions and regulations have created as many barriers as
budget squeezes. But, mistakes will happen, and the only defence is to advocate taking the
risk because the overall gain will outweigh any losses.

Current indications are that allopathic medicine loses a lot of customers, due to failure to
heal, unpleasant experiences in the process, and death. Many people benefit from so-called
modern medicine, but I claim the drug-based, symptom suppressing, despirited approaches
to mental illness, and their equivalents in treatment for intellectually disabled, are not
'getting results'. While risks lie in the approaches I am advocating here, there is also an
appeal to reintroduce true professionalism. Where nurses, teachers, social workers, support
workers, families and community members can all be part of 'the mix' that creates healing
and rehabilitation. Not just 'the doctor'.

9. Where to next on walkabout?

Returning to Uncle Raymond, where this story began over two years ago, he ventured a
view on 'the truth about a society', which I hope can be addressed in work to follow this.
He believed a set of guideposts could be picked out, from the actual daily life experiences of
ordinary people. His structure of feeling led to the suggested guidelines above. But his
insight went deeper than there being a set formula to save the world. I risk repeating his
words, to invite imagining whether these parameters cover Raymond's broad sweep of life:
The truth about a society, it would seem, is to be found in the actual relations, always exceptionally complicated, between the system of communication and learning, the system of maintenance and the system of generation and nurture... Our contemporary experience of work, love, thought, art, learning, decision and play is more fragmented than in any other recorded kind of society, yet still necessarily, we try to make connections, to achieve integrity, and to gain control, and in part we succeed. (20)

My hope is that the above work begins to ‘make connections, achieve integrity and to gain control’ (in the sense of greater understanding, not ‘power over’). Model-makers might have a go at overlaying Raymond’s seven points of life experience mentioned there, with the consciousness points on the diamond model. It is all a way of seeing and feeling, towards more informed ways of being, in my view and my hope. Well worth the effort.

While not claiming any academic prowess, I am grateful for the journey to this stage. For two reasons. It has taught me a lot about myself, and the potential in sharing more with others as the substance of life. That giving is getting. ‘You’ve got to give it away to have it’ is the AA maxim. If more people tried exchanging feelings and experiences, I feel the world would be a better place.

And secondly, I see Marshall Berman’s point, about the future of the modernist project. This work has been a ‘way back to the future’ for me, after many years of being critical of modernism, because of its negative, mechanistic side. It can inspire feelings of freedom and new growth as well.

Nietzsche’s... aim was not promote any particular escape route. Rather it was to convince his readers that they didn’t have to let themselves be absorbed by gigantic institutions: to strengthen these readers to the point where they could believe in their own inner strength. If powers of social control grew strong, men and women could grow even stronger. If people found themselves devalued, they had the
capacity to create new values. Thus Nietzsche affirmed and deepened the modernist faith. (21)

The final word on the walkabout journey is about sharing. From all of Uncle Raymond’s and Uncle Bernard’s writings, and my own work with the four groups covered here. I believe sharing is the principal missing factor in modernism’s current ‘mix’. Returning to sharing more between human beings will answer the needs of the two marginalised groups covered. Here it will be an expression of the love, which I see in indigenous terms, needs to be ‘a working part of this culture’, ‘the business of life’. To Uncle Bucky, it was purely logical: ‘Selfishness can no longer be rationalised as inherently valid.’ (22)
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GLOSSARY

Awareness—The phenomenon of human thought, when engaged with the world and when detached from worldly activities and just sensing our existence in the universe.

Belief—A particular set of ideas about how the world operates, and what sort of morals and values it is meant to reflect, when working according to its ultimate plan.

Consciousness—Daily human awareness, as applied in the ordinary business of life.

Common Humanity, Common Good—The shared set of experiences, values, equal rights to life, and understanding of truth and fairness that exists among all human beings; and the process of ensuring that set of notions comes about among all people.

Community—A group of people sharing a region, including place, socio-economic processes and broad values that determine rights and responsibilities among them.

Culture—A whole way of life among human beings, including traditions, beliefs, rites, rights and responsibilities, and signifiers of meaning shared across a particular society.

Democratic—The process of free choice in deciding how people are to be governed and for what ultimate purpose, whether solely administering logistics, or representing moral positions and deciding rights and responsibilities of the citizenry.

Drongo—Australian colloquial expression for ‘a slow coach’, after an unfortunate tail end racehorse of the same name; hence my coining of ‘drongo dialectic’ for the slower, more meandering way of examining things and listening for knowledge.

Echo-logical—The way I see that history enters the timeless zone and echoes through human experience, providing perspective on past, present and future as aspects of the now; as against ‘history repeats itself’.

Ego—That part of human consciousness which represents the personal will and personality quirks of an individual.

Elites—Selected groups of people, organizations or institutions which receive favoured treatment in particular circumstances within society, or inside an organization.

Energy—The shared source of life for everything in the universe, providing ‘fuel’ for life, movement, power and force, in organic and inorganic matter and human affairs.

Experience—The process of engaging with an activity, understanding or set of circumstances in life.

Feeling—The experience of human emotion linked to experience, leading to a sense of positive or negative assessment about a circumstance.

Group—people who share a common experience, as in illness, disability, suffering from prejudice, ethnic background, or belief system.

Identity—The image and associated implications that has about a person’s nature, behaviour and position in society.

Individual—One person in their wholeness.
Knowledge—The human capacity for both holding information and understanding its meaning, for
individuals and society, in the context of time, culture and history.

Love—The quality of unconditional affection for another person, place, thing or idea.

Marginalised—The individuals or groups in human society who are unable to receive normal services or
access to life conditions expected by the majority, due to poverty, disability or illness, or some
other difference creating separation from the mainstream.

Metaphor—When one description of story of a thing or event serves to illustrate another truth relevant to
different circumstances.

Mind—Human thought and conduct of ideas, individually and in a shared ability.

Mystical—Those occurrences which are beyond the normal daily experience of life, through connection with
higher powers in the universe, unable to be explained by rational thought alone, as they are beyond
reasoned understanding.

Noesis—To perceive through metaphor, making stories of life.

Other—The concept of someone or something that is not the subject in question, but a separate person or
thing, identified with difference.

Poesis—To create harmonious compositions, making life a story.

Power—The ability to influence other people, things and events, and to make a difference in the way worldly
activities unfold, in individual and group lives.

Society—The whole population of people within a nation, their mores, traditions, common practices and
understandings about conducting daily life.

Soul—The Higher Self of each person, connected to the Higher Power of the Universe.

Spirit—The shared human awareness of life beyond the material, and of truth, morality and wonder at life.

Suburb—Areas where people live spread around cities, providing individual homes with gardens and
lifestyles built around neighbourhoods and local services.

Walkabout—When people take time to leave their daily round of activities and connect with their
‘dreaming’, that part of their lives which links with the higher power in the universe, as well as with
ancestors, the spirit of nature, creation stories and powers beyond the material.

Western—A perspective among occidental developed nations, which includes capitalist values expressed in
societies where freedom means the right to vote and lifestyle is an experience of transglobal
consumer capitalism.

Will—The part of each person that represents their intention, desire and motivation for life.

Wisdom—The ability to apply discerning judgement to life circumstances, in the light of experience and
knowledge gained in life.
END NOTES

Opening Poem


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