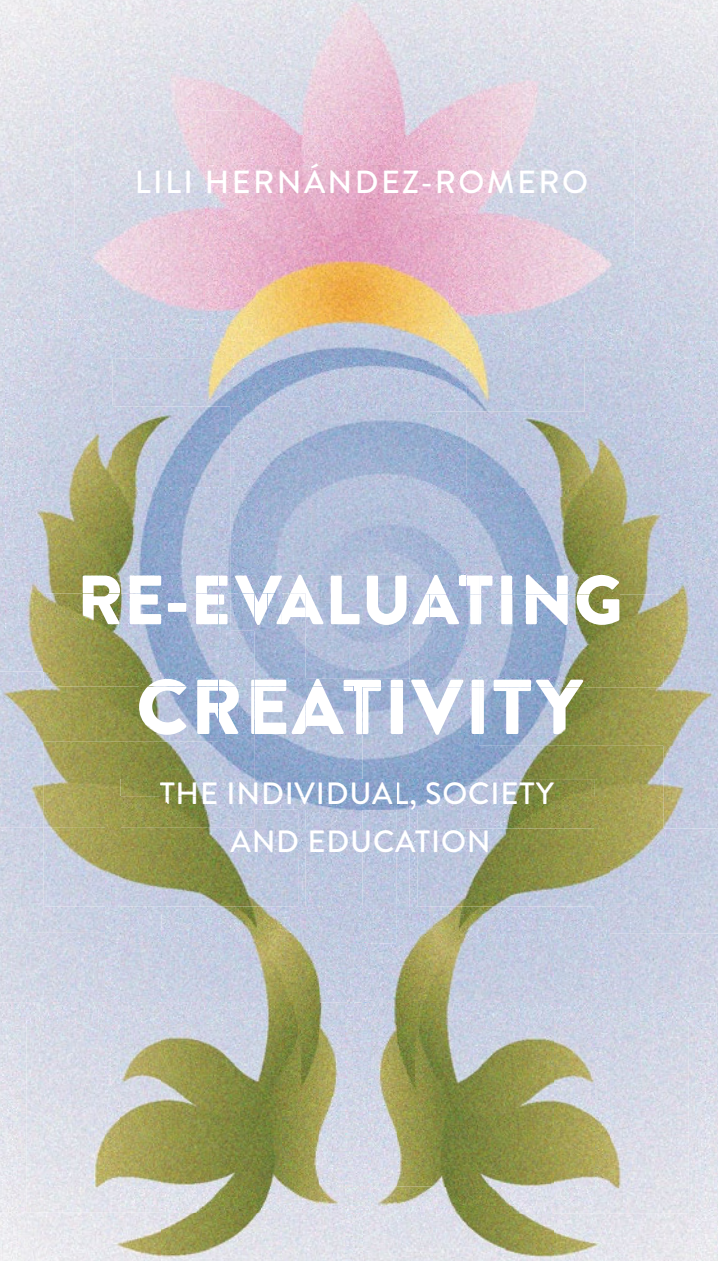
LILI HERNÁNDEZ-ROMERO



RE-EVALUATING CREATIVITY

THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

Re-evaluating Creativity

Lili Hernández-Romero

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The Individual, Society and Education

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To Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi

Acknowledgments

The seeds of this book were sown in a little house located in Mexico in the midst of the woods in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán during a sabbatical. I am immensely grateful for the beauty that surrounded me, which was one of the main contributors to my inspiration to write this book. The fact that I was placed there can only respond to a force beyond materiality, which makes possible things we could never imagine, that is, a spiritual realm that manifests inside and outside. I am indebted to such power that evades words.

In such spiritual plane, this book was not written by me. I was simply the physical instrument that typed it as this was whispered in my ear by a higher conscience. Furthermore, it may be said that I did not type a single word. Even the movements of my hands responded to a superior desire. In that sense, my greatest and most sincere gratitude go to the Creative Power that did the whole job. On that same level, I am grateful to Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi for the knowledge of the subtle system that underpins this work; for guiding me to the right readings and people; and, for always being next to me.

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And finally, a big thanks to you, the readers of this book.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A book about creativity necessarily calls into question the creativity of its author. In my yesteryear, I considered myself neither lacking creativity nor greatly imaginative. I could distinctly identify myself, however, as an intelligent and hard-working person. Creativity was not something in the foreground of my mind. Naturally I was just aware of its existence. And, I never got involved in much artistic endeavor; nor did I try any handcrafts and such. Knitting during adolescence was the limit of my creativity. Generally, I used to believe that I was clumsy with my hands. Not surprisingly, the self-fulfilling prophecy always paid tribute to my belief.

When I started my job as a lecturer at a British university in China, the two well-known aforementioned qualities–intelligence and hard work–took me through the first steps of my job with relative success. After a few years in the job, I applied for a promotion. The feedback coming from the reviewing panel was that my CV lacked a monograph. The result was that I did not qualify for a promotion.

I did intend to work on the monograph, but I never in fact did. Three years later, one of those rare good bosses interested in their employees' careers called me into his office. He was new in the job and was wondering how, after so many years, I had not received a promotion. I updated him on the results of my application for a promotion. He asked me about the progress on the monograph, and sadly, I reported zero advancement. The fact that my boss took so much interest in my career motivated me to start working on the monograph, and I wrote the first draft of a proposal

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for a book. On and off, the idea of the monograph kept coming to my attention. Intermittently, it used to vanish too. Recently, I returned to the thought of writing a monograph. I opened my flash drive only to find out, to my surprise, that I had written six different proposals for six different books. My power to create a book was somehow locked in each of the six proposals, all of them discarded and almost forgotten.

Looking at the six incomplete proposals rang the alarm bell in me. I decided to look into the reasons why I could not follow up on any of them. Through introspection, I discovered that I lacked faith in my creative power. I did not trust I could have the creativity to write an original book. The kind of thoughts that I could identify at that time were: 'All has been said', 'What new information could I possibly add to what has already been written?' 'Other scholars have said what I want to express in a much better way', 'My ideas are not appropriate'. All those thoughts were new to me. It was not something I had consciously reflected upon before. Again, as in the case of the handcrafts, it was not a thought process. It was, however, a pattern of thought materialized at the level of action.

With the help of my meditation and other techniques, I have since then been working on this internal process. As I re-embarked on the project, I decided that there was no better topic for my monograph than that of creativity. Incidentally, at that stage, I had already done some work in this area in anticipation of the publication of some papers and some research grants. My interest in awakening my creativity was already there.

Hence, it is my own journey of blocked and unblocked creativity that I use as backdrop to write this monograph. The analysis has been done in parallel at the inner and outer levels. Both the review of my own process of blocked creativity and the research of academic sources that could illuminate on this have guided me in writing this book. After absorbing my story, one may think that the work is overdue. Once the journey is known, it is possible to assert that this is the only possible time and that, indeed, there has been no delay.

The Idea Behind This Book: Main Concepts and Approaches

Creativity is generally understood as the ability to produce work or knowledge that is original and novel. The definitions of creativity, however, remain controversial according to different perspectives and domains. Craft (2001 cited by Spendlove 2008, 11) divides the concept of creativity

into two parts, comprising 'a big creativity and a little creativity'. The former can be defined as a high intelligence, which pertains only to the gifted and which cannot be taught through education. Einstein and Edison are among those with such innate intelligence (Nickerson 2009, 399). In contrast, little creativity refers to a life-long skill, which includes abilities such as problem solving, adaptability to change, openness towards experience and the capacity to deal with ambiguity. A similar notion of creativity is provided by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999, 28), which divides this quality into two types: 'high creativity and democratic or ordinary creativity'. High creativity is perceived as special skills possessed only by a small number of people (NACCCE 1999). The emphasis in the idea of high creativity is on people's inborn talents by which they are able to make a new invention or develop original work. Quite the opposite, democratic or ordinary creativity is seen as an array of abilities, such as problem-solving skills, that anyone can develop through education. Although such perspectives are useful, they are both centered on the outcome of creativity. What is judged is the extent to which creativity produces certain results but not the quality in itself. In the same order of ideas, Maturana (1991, 77) suggests that creativity is 'a gift from the community. Every time the community thinks that what one does is novel, valuable, which emerges in one's spontaneous living, the community suggests that one is creative' (my translation from Spanish). Such idea is centered in a judgment that comes from outside. All the above-mentioned ways of conceiving creativity are problematic in that these only consider the extent to which this quality manifests outwardly in individuals' lives. Creativity, nonetheless, entails a process within, which we are unable to judge outwardly.

Creativity in this book is considered in a twofold manner–as a living process and as a quality. As a living process, creativity happens not due to human effort, but as a manifestation of our own biology. A living process implies the use of organs and specialized cells that allow for the life of an organism to continue to exist. Examples in the biology of human beings are, among others, respiration, nutrition, reproduction and movement. I consider creativity as a living and survival process because it has contributed to creating and maintaining the conditions that allow for human beings to continue existing in this world. Through scientific, cultural and technological innovations, human beings have been able to use the environment for their own purposes and to sustain life throughout millions of years. The fact that creativity is a living process entails that such

achievements did not arise out of the control exerted by the individuals but from our biology. Although innovations necessitate that talents and skills are put into work, they have followed the natural flow of the creative potential of humanity with its own timings, processes and rules, giving an answer to our needs. The idea of creativity as a living process involves also that this is alive, going through a process of sprouting, maturing, evolving and degenerating, if only to bring forth new life.

Taking it as a quality, creativity concerns the idea of self. I consider the self as all that belongs to the individual, its biological structure as Homo sapiens and its consciousness from where it stands in the world, relating to itself, to others and to the world (Hernández 2012). This involves our baggage as individuals and as social beings, our creativity being a part of such repertoire. According to this concept, consciousness is an essential aspect of the self. Consciousness, however, is by and large constrained by the shadow, which contains all aspects of the self that, while unconsciously experienced as painful or inappropriate, have been repressed or suppressed from consciousness. Scholars in psychology use the concept of the shadow to refer to all such psychic aspects considered wrong and undesirable, which have been relegated or negated (Jung 1958; Zweig and Abrams 1991; Wilber 1994). By transferring into the shadow the undesirable aspects of the self, the subject avoids the pain that arises from coming into contact with the obscure within. The shadow remains at the unconscious level. The individual's identity, thus, remains circumscribed to very limited aspects of the self. In Jung's terms, that restricted area of the self is what is called the ego (Jung 1969). He makes a clear distinction between ego, which is the area that deals with consciousness, and self, which results from the interplay between consciousness and unconsciousness. The overall idea is that the shadow contains elements that are kept away from the conscious mind, bringing forth a partial knowledge of the self. Nonetheless, as suggested by Jung, it is precisely in the shadow where the source of creativity resides.

Creativity is a quality that has been buried below layers of limitations imposed on individuals by the socializing process, becoming an outcast. This quality thus requires resuscitation. As pointed out earlier, some approaches suggest that creativity can be learned through the education system. To align with such views, however, entails the assumption that this quality does not exist in everyone and that it is only accessible to those who procure it through some means. This positions the individual who seeks creativity at the mercy of resources or people from which to learn it, at a disadvantaged place somehow. To learn something also implies a

disparity, a difference in status between those who teach and those who learn. I argue that creativity is a quality that cannot be learnt because to learn implies to acquire and there is no creativity that the individual ought to obtain. Creativity, instead, is a potential to be revived. My suggestion is that rather than being a matter of learning, creativity is a quality to be unblocked, to be found within and to be re-learnt. The idea of re-learning entails that this quality was originally learnt in a spontaneous manner rather than by having been taught to us. This is similar to the way a child learns to speak or to walk. Such capacities are innate and the learning process is spontaneous, rather than artificially acquired. In the same way, creativity is a built-in quality in the newly born child who effortlessly learns how to express this in a spontaneous and playful manner.

The argument proposed here is that creativity exists in all human beings; it is structural to our species and, in some of us, it may have stopped manifesting and materializing in everyday life. To suggest that we are structurally creative is, certainly, a controversial concept because it implies certain determinism, indeed a biological determinism. The present work is to a certain extent structuralist in its approach. Human beings' structure is, however, only conceived as a basic substance that needs to be molded, to be transformed, to be sculpted. The result is a variety of forms, fluid and in constant process of creation and re-creation. Just as two sculptors could not produce the same piece of art, no two persons could ever bring forth the same outcome as a result of finding the creativity within. My idea of creativity requires a quality that everyone has in much the same amount as part of our structure as human beings. Creativity is, nonetheless, to be rediscovered and actualized as this has been lost in the realms of the shadow. Creativity is not about becoming something different to what we are, it is not about becoming creative, but it is about realizing what we already are—creative beings. Individual differences, nonetheless, account for the extent to which this quality might be actualized.

I consider creativity, on the whole, as a threefold process that consists in finding connections, seeing what is not there and actualizing the entirety of the self. Rather than fragmentation, it entails integration, an aspect that clearly evades the ego. In order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of creativity, in this book I make use of three different but interconnected frameworks–the individual, society and education. The approach that underpins my analysis is a philosophy called Sahaja Yoga. According to this method, in all human beings there is an underlying system called the subtle system. This corresponds to our autonomous nervous system,

which is responsible for the functioning of different organs. The subtle system is composed of seven main centers of energy or *chakras* (in Sanskrit language), which are also called psychic centers. In addition, the subtle system comprises three channels of energy (*nadis* in Sanskrit) and an energy called *Kundalini*. The latter rests in a dormant state in the sacrum bone (Nirmala Devi 1997). When this energy is awakened, it ascends through our spinal cord, releasing the blockages of the chakras and bringing forth their qualities into individuals' lives.

The representation of the subtle system is as follows (Fig. 1.1):

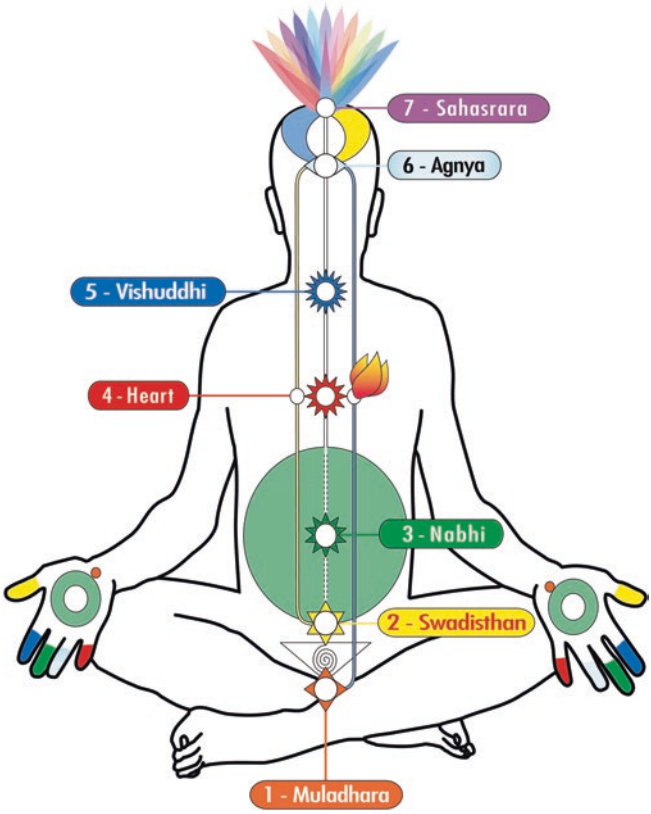

Fig. 1.1 Subtle system according to Sahaja Yoga

According to Sahaja Yoga, the channels of energy that run at the left and right sides of the subtle system, the *Ida* and *Pingala nadis*, cross at the level of our forehead and end on the opposite cerebral hemisphere. These channels give birth to two entities of the mind, ego and superego (ibid). The *Ida nadi*, which runs on the left side of the subtle system corresponds to the left sympathetic. This ends its trajectory on the right cerebral hemisphere and it nourishes the superego, which governs the pineal body. The *Ida nadi* or left channel feeds the superego with a dense energy called *tamas*, which is responsible for our desires and emotions. Memories from the past, traditions and norms are stored in the superego. On the other hand, the *Pingala nadi* carries a stimulating energy called *rajas*, which corresponds to the right sympathetic and runs on the right side of the subtle system, stopping on the left cerebral hemisphere. This is the dwelling place of the ego. The ego deals with the pituitary and it is responsible for the energy of action, our planning capacities and thoughts about the future. *Rajas* is the energy of the ego by which desires are put into action. Finally, the center channel—*Sushumna nadi*—moves in the central part of the subtle system. This corresponds to the parasympathetic nervous system. The energy that characterizes this channel, called *sattwa*, is very subtle and soothing and it is responsible for providing the desire for personal growth. This channel is associated with the experience of the present. The problem with this channel is that, at the level of our abdomen, it encounters a realm of illusion in which the individual's attention gets trapped. Household matters, jobs, money and family worries are the kind of illusory aspects that prevent this energy from ascending naturally towards our brain area. The attention of the individual is ambushed in those deceptive areas, while the energy for personal growth is stagnated and ignored. Subsequently, the brain is fed mainly through the energy from the *Ida* and *Pingala nadis*, which results in that the person tends to dwell in thoughts about the past or about the future, or in both, with barely any experience of the present. Thoughts provided by left and right channels are illusory—the past is gone and the future does not exist. This is, nonetheless, the material that constantly, and throughout life, fills up the minds of the individuals. Later, I will discuss how the social order contributes to feed and sustain our mental affiliation with past and future, as opposed to the experience of the present as part of the energy of central channel.

Each chakra of the subtle system represents a concentration of energy, which have their anatomic basis on the nervous plexuses (ibid). Each of

the seven centers is responsible for certain qualities in human beings. Their energy is interconnected to the three energy channels previously described. The overwhelming predominance of the *rajas* and *tamas* energies and the lack of the soothing *sattwa* energy bring forth different obstructions in the chakras. Sahaja Yoga was founded by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, who suggests a meditation method to unblock the qualities of the centers. Srivastava proposes a spiritual practice to actualize those attributes based on the awakening of the Kundalini. The mystical aspects associated with that, however, are left aside in my use of the subtle system. I use the Eastern model nonetheless as a conceptual framework that provides knowledge of qualities and emotions from where I draw a connection to creativity. This frame is helpful to understand the blockage of creativity in individuals.

The fact that I follow a secular approach in this book does not preclude my use of the concept of spirit. This idea is relevant in that I conceive of creativity as a quality that results from the interrelation and interdependence of four aspects in human beings—the physical, the mental, the emotional and the spiritual. Throughout the book, these four interrelated features are frequently mentioned. It is important, thus, at this point to define the concept of spirit, which lies at the core of the idea of the existence of a spiritual aspect in human beings. Spirit or spiritual is used in this book as a synonym of inner truth. This entails inner principles of good conduct, or *dharma* (in Sanskrit), as suggested by the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The word *dharma* has different meanings. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it means the right behavior, moral law or truth. The word originates from the Sanskrit root word that means to uphold or sustain. Such sustenance does not necessarily come from a superior authority, although it may for some people. The idea of inner truth entails an internal conviction that sustains a positive order, on the whole, an order guided by personal growth. I argue that such sustenance originates within, entailing a sense of inner fidelity, of being true to the inner self.

Two main aspects speak of inner truth in the individuals—authentic joy and awareness. Joy arises from being, in fact from being true to the self. The use of the term joy differs from happiness. Whether in sorrow or in happiness, authentic joy is an anchoring and settling emotion that is experienced when the self enters into contact with its inner truth. Regardless of how things may look on the outside, joy is, from the point of view of spirit, a sustaining emotion. Awareness, on the other hand, entails inner sight of

the wholeness of the self, a means whereby the self can see itself through the mirror provided by the outer world. These two aspects—authentic joy and awareness—lead to inner truth. Although the idea of spirit that I use in this book was formed within my practice of Sahaja Yoga, it does not entirely match the concept held by that. In Sahaja Yoga, the spirit does have the qualities that I mention, but it cannot be understood without a connection to the spirit supreme, regarded as omnipotent divine power. This entails a transcendental view, which, although I endorse it in my personal life, I leave completely aside for the purposes of this monograph.

The concept of spirit as discussed in this book coincides with the idea of inner religion. The term religion has been largely misunderstood. It has been taken to mean the belief in superior powers, customarily ascribed to supernatural beings. What has been missed, though, is the idea that such powers may actually reside within human beings. The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that religion is a 'belief in or acknowledgement of some superhuman power or powers (esp. a god or gods) which is typically manifested in obedience, reverence, and worship; such a belief as part of a system defining a code of living, esp. as a means of achieving spiritual or material improvement'. Although it is indicated that this may refer especially to a god or gods, this is not an inherent aspect of the definition. Thus, it is possible to argue that such superhuman powers may very well inhabit the individual as a godly quality within. This idea has been suggested by some religions. However, it is very rarely the case where individuals can truly believe that. The fact that we may not accept this as true, however, does not entail a flaw of the principle itself but simply that this might be something difficult, or impossible, for the majority of individuals to perceive from the customary states of consciousness available to them, that is awake and asleep. Higher states of consciousness might be required in order to grasp the idea of inner religion as suggested here.

The above-mentioned underpins my working definition of the spiritual aspect in human beings, which I consider as an internal certainty, which sustains the individual need to make contact with the inner realm, in order to satisfy the need for growth. This does not involve the need to belong to a particular system of faith. The inner self becomes the principle of faith that is pursued and worshipped assiduously. Such suggestion is not egocentric but entails the understanding of the relation of self and others, having as a departure point, nonetheless, our nearest point of contact—our inner life. When this innermost interaction is established, it is possible to embark safely on an assemblage with others and with the environment

as a whole. In that sense, spirit means connection within and without. This is where the concept becomes relevant for an analysis of creativity. In the creative process, the spirit manifests as intuition, as the inspiration that arises spontaneously from the connection between inner and outer worlds. The spiritual aspect of human beings allows for creativity to arise out of faith in our creative powers, not only for the sake of the self but also in the service of others. Such faith in our creativity, nonetheless, is not a blind faith. Spirit, as conceived here, requires also a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding of the self. Taking on board this perspective, it is possible to argue that the creative process is the synergy that results from the interaction of four aspects of our being—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual, as part of a journey of inner discovery and knowledge. Additionally, I consider the social as an aspect that underpins and impacts on all four of those.

The creativity suggested in this book is transgressive in nature. It is customarily accepted that the limits established by particular domains are necessary in order to validate conclusions in every discipline. There is a common agreement that to stick to such boundaries implies academic rigor. Nevertheless, when it comes to a book about creativity this becomes problematic. I contest that a scholar cannot speak in the name of creativity when he is tied up by strict limits that block his creativeness. An unyielding perspective as regards academic rigor has resulted in a situation whereby the majority of academics' work does not contribute in any original way to the advancement of societies. To propose something against the grain is such a frightening proposition that, rather than stimulating creativity, drives people into conformity. In order to keep to the boundaries that academic rigor imposes, scholars restrict their imagination, limiting their research mostly to the analysis of other scholars' work but without much innovation on their part. This holds true particularly for the humanities and some of the social sciences.

The framework used here does require a degree of boldness and, thus, the risk of being considered lacking in rigor. The fact that some scholars have taken such risk, however, is nothing new in the history of intellectual production. The depository of knowledge about human beings has been enriched not only by those who have followed strictly the rigid structures of scholarly work, but also by those who have taken the risk of hypothesizing and venturing new propositions based on their observations and experience rather than, or along with, scientific evidence. That is the case of authors such as Maslow, Winnicott, Maturana and Jung. Regardless

of how much their work has been criticized, their theories are used by millions of researchers worldwide. To cite but one example, Anthony Giddens (1991) constantly makes use of Winnicott's ideas to support his own theories. Regardless of how adventurous and rebellious their work might be, authors such as Maslow and Winnicott continue to inform the knowledge about the human condition in very significant ways.

By the use of the subtle system, this book attempts to be creative in its own right. One of the characteristics of creative people discussed by Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 71) is to be both 'traditional and conservative and at the same rebellious and iconoclastic'. This work adheres to traditions and cannons in that it is underpinned by relevant academic sources in the various fields discussed. The analysis is, nonetheless, insubordinate by the mere fact that it incorporates the perspective of an oriental philosophy of life, which, to make things ever more stimulating, has a spiritual foundation. It has been actually thought provoking to attempt to use the subtle system for an analysis of creativity, while leaving behind its spiritual edge.

The approach taken in relation to creativity in this book is based on Maturana's ideas of the two dimensions in human beings (Maturana 1991). On the one hand, their structure given by their physiology and biology and, on the other hand, their relation to others. Applied to creativity, the physiological and biological aspects give the individuals their potential as creative beings. This corresponds with the idea of the subtle system, according to which, each individual is made of concentrations of energy called chakras, which in their original state provide people with myriad qualities. As it will be demonstrated, such qualities are all interconnected to creativity. As mentioned earlier, the predominance of *rajas* and *tamas* energy in the subtle system accounts for a central obstruction of the qualities of the chakras. The relation to others come into play as patterns imposed by parents in agreement with the social order contribute to obstruct the qualities of the chakras and, subsequently, the individual's creative stream. The education system, as a key social institution, significantly contributes to the suppression of creativity.

This book re-evaluates creativity based on three interrelated aspects: the individual, society and education. Firstly, from an individual perspective and in its most incipient form, creativity is connected with the creation by the newly born baby of transitional objects and phenomena that help in the transition from the inner to the outer world (Winnicott 2005). The creativity of the child manifests mainly through playing. Playing and

creativity are indeed two interconnected realms, impossible to distinguish where one ends and the other starts. The child does not play for a reason or to achieve a result, not even to gain pleasure. The child plays due to an innate quality, where his inner and outer lives merge into one. The child does not seek enjoyment. Instead, it is joy that manifests itself, among other means, through playing. The child plays for play's sake. The attention is within and the qualities of all the psychic centers remain, on the whole, intact. This is the case, at the very least, of children with no evident malformations. As the child grows, nonetheless, the chakras are obstructed and their qualities, to a lesser or greater degree, stop expressing in the everyday lives of the individuals. Hence, this is the departure point for my re-evaluation of creativity at the individual level. Such level of analysis, nonetheless, cannot be tackled without consideration of the social realm. By speaking of the blockage of the qualities of the chakras, I am not addressing an individual deficiency but an aspect of being that, while being structural to some degree, is also nurtured by a tenacious system that prevents creativity, transgression and imagination.

Secondly, in terms of society, the analysis takes social psychology as a point of reference, exploring creativity as an outcome of the reflection in which our social interactions have molded particular ways of being in the world (Winnicott 2005; Maslow 1999; Jung 1958). Accordingly, in this work, creativity is deemed as the possibility to create a new model of self and others based on qualities that pertain to all individuals but that have remained hidden, due to social constraints imposed on them. The fact that the newly born baby is able to express in a spontaneous manner entails unity of all aspects of the self. At that stage, there is no fragmentation between body, mind, emotions and spirit; and, no censure of feelings. The verb 'to please' is not part of the equation either. The child is not guided by anticipation of the consequences of his acts, but by the mere instinct of expressing the self. This is what innocent behavior entails. This can be explained through Maturana's ideas of the antagonism between the matristic and the patriarchal. The patriarchal culture started 5,000 years before Christ with the spread of the Indo-European culture throughout Europe (Maturana 1991). The result was the gradual disappearance of the matristic cultures that hitherto prevailed. According to Maturana (1991, 53), the matristic is guided by 'collaboration, mutual respect, acceptance of the other, self-respect, sharing and the legitimacy of sensuality' (my translation from Spanish). What prevailed was the capacity to share based on the complete acceptance of self and others. This, however, was replaced

by a culture where attention was placed in the outer world, in appropriation, competition, outcomes, mind and rationality. It is in the process of socialization that the child loses the connection with the matristic and, subsequently, with the ability to be himself. What takes over is the need to fit within a patriarchal culture that emphasizes results, rationality, appropriation, control and objectivity. Based on their need to belong, the individuals create certain masks and stories and they live according to such artificial means of identity. The attention, which used to be placed inwardly, turns into an outward consideration of myriad aspects that will thereafter shape the relation between self and society. To seek cause and effect in the world around and to be guided by reason and outcomes is subsequently prioritized over the 'chaos' and the free flow of imagination. Playing and creativity are tamed to fit in with the structures of the social system. It is important to mention that the influence of the social realm does not entail complete obliteration of the individual. By acquiring sufficient inner resources, some people are able to fight back in order to regain independence, agency and creative power. In such cases, the individual might be able to find ways to fit within the system without unconditionally succumbing to it.

Thirdly, education is a part of the analysis and it is considered both as a constraining and releasing factor of creativity. The need to promote creativity at school has been widely discussed (Spendlove 2008; Jeffrey 2006; Sternberg and Williams 1996; Morris 2006; Fasko 2000). This quality is, nevertheless, at one and the same time, sabotaged in practice by those involved in the education system. This has to do with the standpoint from which creativity is promoted, which is amply discussed in this book. In this work, creativity is explored as a fundamental quality to be developed at school by allowing a re-learning process of the qualities of the seven psychic centers. This requires the naturalization of an attitude of self-review in all actors involved in education.

One of the main approaches taken in this book is related to the transpersonal, a field of study and research that touches on various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, ecology and psychiatry, each of which study the transpersonal experience in their own particular domains. Walsh and Vaughan (1994, 20), define transpersonal experiences as 'those in which the sense of identity—the self—goes beyond (trans) the individual or the person, reaching into aspects that belong to the whole humanity, life, psychism and the cosmos, earlier experimented as alien' (my translation from Spanish). Some of the aspects covered by this perspective are: altered

states of consciousness, mythology, lucid dreams, yoga, meditation, spirituality and transpersonal emotions, amongst others. The transpersonal, as suggested by the abundant literature on the topic, is not associated with any particular religious belief but with an attitude of openness to a wide range of methods. These are helpful in order to delve into areas of the self that have been otherwise rejected by Western culture as they depart from the strictly tangible. The transpersonal is thus used throughout the book and, in particular in Chaps. 6 and 7 where transpersonal methods are suggested as a means to unleash the creativity of teachers and students at school.

The Contents of This Book

The main objective of this book is to explore the process by which creativity might have been cast away, addressing ways by which this can be regained and actualized in individuals' lives. To propose the unleashing of creativity without acknowledging the power of the social order as a main deterrent would mean to propel such enterprise into failure. In order to boost individuals' ability to create the world, an understanding of their place within their social conditions is required. It is precisely as we aim to resist rules and fixed patterns of the social system that our need to create becomes more evident. For that, individuals' awareness of how they are confined within such configuration is required. If we are aware of the many forms and shapes whereby the patriarchal culture impinges on us, it is possible to fight back and resist being controlled. Unawareness, on the other hand, entails submission. Berger and Luckmann's notions are relevant to support this argument. As they suggest, we 'apprehend the reality of everyday life as an ordered reality' (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 21). In other words, the social world acts as an external and coercive force that orders the individuals into certain forms and arrangements. The extent to which the individuals are able to play into those circumstances varies according to their awareness and to the inner resources at their disposal.

In Chap. 2 of this book, 'The Obstruction of Personal Creativity', I use scholars such as Winnicott (2005), Maslow (1999) and Jung (1958) to address both the structural aspects of human beings and the influence of the social system on patterns of behavior and modes of thought. I start by discussing the influence of parents on the newborn baby and the small child. This provides the framework for an understanding of how such influence translates later, in adulthood, into problems expressing

creativity. I propose the concept of the outsider to the self to address the condition whereby a person gradually learns to disconnect from his or her inner world and is dragged instead into a fixation with the outer world.

The analysis of the outsider to the self is helpful for understanding the progression of human creativity. Creativity has brought immense progress to society in areas such as knowledge, science and technology, which are favored by the patriarchal. What creativity has not been able to achieve, however, is a significant change in terms of the quality of human beings and their social relations. The presence of wars, ethnic conflicts, hatred, abuse, discrimination, attacks on the environment and to the human dignity demonstrates that scientific and technological advancements have not moved in parallel with an improvement of the human quality. In addition, while human beings' needs and ambitions show no sign of ending, the environment seems to be reaching its limits. The circumstances that have allowed for progress in some areas, while the human condition has remained on the whole largely unchanged, is explained based on the concept of the outsider to the self. My suggestion is that in as much as individuals remain outsiders to the self, the effects of human creativity cannot translate into a better world. There is a missing link in the chain of progress whereby the human condition remains constricted by individuals' outsideness.

Based on the concept of the outsider to the self, I discuss how rules and structures of the patriarchal order prevent not only the expression of the inner self but also the awareness of its contents. As part of the process of socialization, individuals are taught to turn a blind eye to the inner realm. We are trained to respect our mind and our rationality. Our emotional side, however, is reduced to a handful of feelings that we are supposed to control. Since creativity belongs to the realm of the sensual and the emotional, this quality becomes largely inconspicuous. This leads to the proposition of the need to conduct a process of self-review in order to unveil the creativity within.

The review of the self suggested in this book aims at the expansion of consciousness, by means of which the outsider to the self might become an insider to the self, subsequently being able to find the appropriate paths to unlock its creativity. Such a concept is a cornerstone in the argument throughout. According to Jung, 'anyone who has insight into his own actions, and has thus found access to the unconscious, involuntarily exercises an influence on his environment' (Jung 1958, 76). Jung's idea corresponds with that of the insider to the self who, by dwelling inside, is

able to act outside and have an impact on the environment. This book deals mainly with personal creativity and some aspects of social creativity are also investigated. The analysis of other forms of creativity, for example, collective creativities are, nonetheless, left aside due to limitations in terms of scope. However, the interrelation between personal creativity and the social realm is fully addressed.

The examination of the self suggested in Chap. 2 paves the way for the discussion in Chaps. 3, 4 and 5 of different routes that shed light onto the state of the centers of energy and their qualities. The condition of the psychic centers is subsequently connected to an analysis of creativity, providing analytical tools that might be helpful in order to pin down obstructions in the centers that, once released, may contribute to individuals' creativeness. This by no means takes the form of a recipe, a prescription or a handbook. The sole idea of such dogmatic methods denies the very principle upon which creativity rests—innocent spontaneity. What is foremost and suggested is to conduct a process of self-review to bring to the surface the necessary awareness of myriad aspects that led to the obstruction of the qualities of the centers of energy, affecting creativity as a whole. The subtle system provides the backbone for the analysis of a number of aspects that act either in favor of creativity or against it. The discussion in Chaps. 3, 4 and 5 is conducted in four phases. Firstly, I elaborate on the qualities of each chakra. I do not cover all the qualities associated with each chakra, but a selection has been made according to the topic that concerns us. Secondly, I explore the conditions that have contributed to the obstruction of these qualities. Thirdly, I re-evaluate creativity based on the manifestation—or blockage—of the qualities of the energy centers. Given that to propose an analysis of creativity based on the qualities of the subtle system is, without a doubt, something unprecedented, manifold questions—in terms of the application of this model—are somewhat expected. Thus, the fourth and last phase of the analysis carried throughout Chaps. 3, 4 and 5 includes a discussion about implications for research. The suggestions are in no way exhaustive, but they are indicative of foreseeable possibilities for expanding the study of the relation between the qualities of the chakras and creativity.

Chapter 3, 'Re-evaluating Creativity: A Basic Map to Individual Qualities' starts by elaborating on the concept of self-knowledge. I propose the idea of the plural form of this term, processes of self-knowledge, as a means to destabilize the idea that to know the self can be seen as an end result. Subsequently, the first three chakras are analyzed. The first

energy center, the Mooladhara, also written as Muladhara, is related to innocence and spontaneity. Such qualities are of great significance in order to allow, in adulthood, the manifestation of the creative impulse. According to Maturana 'innocence is an attitude that entails vision rather than blindness [and] it is lost when the attention is put to the consequences of our actions and when one starts to live in the future or when in relations based on requirements one lives to attend to results' (Maturana 1991, 58–59) (my translation from Spanish). It is in the relation of mutual acceptance between mother and child that the latter finds a sense of legitimacy. Such authenticity, mainly experienced through playing, is an important constituent of all creative endeavors. The second energy center, the Swadishthan, is also part of the analysis in Chap. 3. The main potentials associated with this center are authentic desires and the ability to surrender to those desires. Over-thinking and over-planning, both largely stimulated by the patriarchal culture, affect this chakra, contributing to the blockage of creativity. The analysis of creativity connected to the second center of energy allows for an understanding of how anger takes up a significant amount of energy, acting as a deterrent to creativity. The third center of energy, the Nabhi, is related to states of contentment and balance and is affected by the opposite, greed and ambition. Excessive aspirations and greediness have the potential to kill creativity. If we intend to create the perfect work, the state of the art in science or technology, or if we aim at high levels of success and fame, what we may find instead is an obstruction to our creativity.

A follow-up on the analysis of the subtle system in its connection to creativity is carried out in Chap. 4, 'Re-evaluating Creativity: A Step Further in the Review of the Self'. In this chapter, two chakras are discussed—Anahata and Vishdhi. Love is one of the main qualities of the fourth center of energy, the Anahata, also known as Heart. However, the quality of love is only briefly introduced in the chapter. This is due to the fact that, in this book, love is considered both a quality and a pedagogical tool, thus a more in-depth discussion about this is included in Chap. 6 in relation to education. Chapter 4, on the other hand, discusses in detail self-confidence and responsibility, which are also very significant qualities of the fourth center of energy. I explore the relation between creativity and these two attributes. Self-confidence is required in order to step into the territory of creativity, which is usually paved by uncertainty and risks. Responsibility, on the other hand, concerns mainly a sense of self-duty, which conveys the possibility to account for our desires, our actions and the consequences of all of those. Applied to the creative process,

responsibility means that we are to be accountable for our creativity, for the steps that we take in order to unleash it and for the consequences of our creation. The analysis subsequently moves into the qualities of the fifth chakra, the Vishudhi. This is linked mainly to communication and collectiveness. Linked to these qualities, creativity is discussed as social creativity, as an individual impulse to create that entails social responsibility and ethical concerns. Accordingly, creativity is seen as an expression of self-respect and respect for others. In contrast, competitiveness, envy, aggression and guilt block the collective aspect of the creative impulse.

The last of the chapters that explore the qualities of the subtle system in relation to creativity is Chap. 5, 'Re-evaluating Creativity: A Higher State of Consciousness'. This chapter elaborates on the sixth and the seventh chakras, the Agnya and the Sahasrara, respectively. The Agnya is connected to qualities such as humility and forgiveness. In order to understand such transpersonal qualities, the concepts of ego and superego are explained in more depth. As mentioned earlier, the ego is the motor of our actions and it gives us the projection of our thoughts into the future. Taken to an extreme, however, it gives us ideas of superiority and leads into arrogance and aggressiveness. The superego, on the other hand, is connected to the past, tradition and morals. Its excessiveness, nevertheless, derives in a tendency to undervalue the self. The qualities associated with the sixth center of energy are used to explain how extremes such as vanity and self-deprecation both abate creativity. Humility and forgiveness are suggested, instead, as qualities that can support the creative process. The last and highest of the seven centers of energy, the Sahasrara, is also explained in this chapter. This is connected to a sense of harmony and integration by which it is possible to actualize the attributes of all the centers. The quality of harmony is analyzed in relation to Maslow's notion of self-actualization, vitally linked to the creative self. Harmony entails that antagonisms such as those between inner and outer worlds, or between body, mind, emotions and spirit, start to recede. A balance is struck up, based on the qualities of the Sahasrara, between inner and outer lives.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the role that education has played in dismantling creativity from its roots. The education system has gradually brought individuals into an irreconcilable tension between emotions and reason. With its emphasis on results, measurability, objectivity and rationality, education is indeed one of the routes that takes the child into such incongruity. With the exception of a few isolated organizations and institutions that have brought creativity into the classroom, on the whole, the current

education system, both in the West and in the East, conspires in manifold ways against the creative process of individuals. For example, the fragments of everyday life that represent the seeds of the creative impulse pass inadvertently due to the emphasis on content-based programs that prioritize the visible and the measurable. There seems to be no time to stop and watch. In many countries, the stress is still on memorization. Even in advanced countries where rote learning has receded in favor of critical thinking, time and efforts devoted to creativity are constrained by the inertia of assessments and results. Inspiration—a state whereby both mind and emotions are stimulated to a degree of unusual activity—goes almost unnoticed at schools due to the lack of time available for pupils and teachers to attend to it. The strategies followed to impart education are indeed the antithesis to inspiration because the latter requires time to be discovered and listened to. Inspiration is also intangible. Thus, it is not straightforward to find means to stimulate this through education.

A great number of attempts have been made in order to stimulate creativity in education. Nevertheless, substantial problems remain, most of them coming from the teacher difficulty in dealing with creativity as part of his undertaking. As suggested by Banaji et al.,

> even in countries with a long tradition of school autonomy and innovation like Sweden, there are discussions about whether it is a good idea to give teachers complete freedom in choosing practices and methods, or whether it should be for the national steering documents and curricula to provide a more uniform guidance, therefore being more restrictive. According to one of our Swedish experts, the system is currently under review, including investigations carried out by the inspectorate, which suggested that Swedish teachers were having difficulties handling high levels of freedom, and many were in fact asking for more specific guidance and directives. (Banaji et al. 2010, 30)

The proposal in this monograph is to analyze the education system as a platform where the obstructions to creativity coming from all stakeholders can be overcome not through policy making and reform but through fostering attitudes of self-review and of validation of the emotional and subjective aspects in human beings. My claim is that the difficulties found in the implementation of creativity at school respond to the same dilemma addressed in this book, that is, individuals' outsideness. This condition affects all those involved in the education process, including leaders, teachers,

parents and, undoubtedly, students. Even when education reform is pursued in most countries in the world, very little of this is put into practice, mainly due to the fact that those in charge of creating the reform and those responsible for its implementation are, overall, outsiders to the self. This means that although creativity is advocated in practice, it remains only partially accomplished through the education system. According to Maturana (1991, 231) to learn 'is the result of a history of consistent transformation of two or more systems that recurrently interact, seen in different moments of that history' (my translation from Spanish). This means that such attempts at enhancing students' creativity made by educators, who do not allow themselves to be transformed by and within the same process, shall largely remain futile.

The analysis of the impact of education both as obstructive and releasing factor is discussed in Chaps. 6 and 7. Chapter 6, 'Creativity in Education: A Transpersonal Approach (Part I)', starts by challenging traditional ideas about teaching. This is done using the poem by Maturana, 'The Student's Plea'. Subsequently, the role of education reformers is amply scrutinized. Based on the subtle system, I propose an alternative framework for creativity, which I call the Spectrum of Creativity in Education (SCE). This model is based on the concept of re-learning as opposed to learning. The premise is that, although buried below the heavy weight of a patriarchal culture, the qualities of the seven main chakras of the subtle system can be re-learnt at school. The application of this spectral model entails the understanding of creativity as a multi-layered quality connected to the qualities of all the chakras.

In Chap. 6, the SCE is applied to the analysis of the Mooladhara, the Swadishthan and the Nabhi chakras, whereas Chap. 7, 'Creativity in Education: A Transpersonal Approach (Part II)' deals with the remaining four centers of energy—Anahata, Vishudhi, Agnya and Sahasrara. In both chapters, first, I provide an account of how the qualities of the chakras have been blocked by the education system. This is followed by a suggestion of possible methods that may contribute to unblocking such qualities in the classroom. It is imperative to note that such methods are not by any means comprehensive. They are nonetheless representative of ways by which schools can contribute to unblocking creativity by allowing students to re-learn about their obstructed qualities, according to the subtle system. The suggested methods are yet to be tested on the ground through empirical research carried out at schools. However, at the time of writing this book, I implemented some of these methods in my own

teaching, carrying out the first in-class test of the validity of the ideas proposed. The results of this experimental phase are included in the final chapter of the book.

As indicated earlier, the assumptions made throughout this book are groundbreaking. Consequently, further empirical research is required in order to demonstrate their applicability. A first approach to such testing grounds is carried out in the closing chapter, 'Autoethnography of a Journey of Blocked and Unblocked Creativity'. This encompasses my own experience of blocked and unblocked creativity, which includes many years before the incubation of the idea for this book, expanding through to the period of writing it.

Autoethnography is increasingly used in the humanities and the social sciences. As suggested by Ngunjiri et al. (2010),

> Autoethnographic data provide the researcher a window through which the external world is understood. Although the blurred distinction between the researcher-participant relationship has become the source of criticism challenging the scientific credibility of the methodology […] access to sensitive issues and inner-most thoughts makes this research method a powerful and unique tool for individual and social understanding. (Section Autoethnography as Qualitative, Self-Focused, and Context-Conscious Method, para. one)

Autoethnographic research has been, by and large, neglected in the study of creativity. Its out-of-the-grain, systematic and intentional approach, however, makes it a very suitable method for such a subject of study, providing a framework to highlight aspects that would otherwise tend to remain under-addressed. In Chap. 8, I make use of a personal trajectory of more than a decade in experiencing the qualities of the subtle system in my everyday life to analyze obstacles faced in my process of re-learning creativity. The process of writing this monograph is tied to that.

What is most challenging from the proposal in this book is the idea that in order to actualize the creativity of the individuals, it is important to become an insider to the self. It is foreseen that this will arouse resistance, particularly within the context of a rational model of education inscribed in worldwide societies of outsiders to the self. The insider to the self, however, is seen as a means to make self and others legitimate in their mutual interaction, allowing for the biology of love to resurge and take over patriarchal modes. This is not an easy task. In order to create such

an environment, educators have to be prepared to be the first to embark upon processes of self-knowledge that can be reflected in their reforms. Parents have to be equally part of the process. Their role is of great significance in contributing to sustaining the creative person at home.

The magnitude of the change is enormous to the extent of it becoming frightening and unpromising. The impact, however, may reverberate in many areas, propelling the establishment of more creative and balanced individuals and societies. In the following chapters, the book maps out avenues that individuals may take to discover their own creativity. It is, however, an individual task to walk down those routes to let the creative stream flow.

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CHAPTER 2

The Obstruction of Personal Creativity

The premise explored in this book is that creativity is a quality that can be found in all human beings. When a child is born, creativity is at its full potential. In most children, however, creativity is soon obstructed as part of the socialization process. The present chapter deals with psychosocial aspects that account for the blockage of the creative stream in individuals as they interact with the surrounding social environment. The discussion is constructed around the concept of the outsider to the self. The aim is to introduce the reader to social and psychological factors that explain the condition of the outsider to the self as the cornerstone in the obstruction of individual creativity. It is important to note that, as explained in Chap. 1, the discussion is centered on personal creativity, leaving aside, for reasons of scope, other forms of creativity, such as collective creativities. In this chapter, I examine the origins of the outsider to the self, using Firman and Gila's concept of the primal wounding (2002). In addition, Winnicott's ideas about the dissociated self (2005) and true and false self (1965) are also helpful. And, I elaborate on the major features and implications that the condition of the outsider to the self holds for societies these days.

The Outsider to the Self: Origins

It is not uncommon to hear people blaming others for things that go wrong in their lives. Frequently, people assert that they are fine and they attribute their problems to the unfortunate circumstances of life and to

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people around them. Some individuals feel unhappy about dysfunctional patterns that tend to repeat in their lives, for example, going to extremes, lacking confidence, reacting aggressively towards others. Most people, nonetheless, do not know how to prevent or change their habitual patterns of thought and behavior, regardless of how much they may wish to do so. In addition, many people tend to define themselves in a way that bears little resemblance to their actual behavior. For example, somebody may say: 'I am a very forgiving person', while in truth, his behavior demonstrates resentment towards people who have harmed him. These examples reflect a condition by which the individual lacks awareness of the inner self. I contend that such patterns of unawareness of the self-identity are caused mainly by the fact that the majority of individuals remain connected to the outer world at the expense of the inner world. This is deemed the outsider to the self or the condition of outsideness, and is a concept addressed elsewhere (Hernández 2012). I define this as the condition characterized by the difficulty to connect to deeper feelings of the inner self, tending instead to be bound by outward factors. My claim is that due to the process of socialization and the influence of a patriarchal culture, the newly born baby follows a process by which, gradually, the spontaneous relation to the inner world turns into excessive, almost exclusive, attention to the outer world. The self thus turns into the outsider to the self. Similar to other aspects of identity of which the individuals are unaware, the outsider to the self tends to be ignorant of its own outsideness. Outsideness is, nonetheless, one of the most predominant conditions of our times.

As previously defined, the self is the concurrence of all aspects of being that constitute a world of one's own (ibid). This provides the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual aspects of human beings. Each of these aspects entails consistency and incongruity, strengths and shortcomings. It is through this baggage that the self relates to itself, to others and to the world. Winnicott's theory of transitional objects and relations and his concept of dissociation are helpful to explain the starting point in the relation between inner and outer worlds that accounts for the condition of the outsider to the self (Winnicott 2005). As Winnicott suggests, transitional objects and phenomena, such as the piece of blanket and the teddy bear act as a defense against the anxiety generated in the process of individuation of the child. The child becomes aware of his being distinct and separated from the mother, in contrast to the original feeling of being one with her. Before the separation from the mother takes place, the child dwells predominantly in the inner world. He interacts with the

environment but he does so with inner sensations and feelings at the core of such interactions. Thus, being one with and without. Once the individuation process starts, however, the child switches from the inner to outer world, having this split to accompany him or her throughout life. When such transition does not happen within a safe, empathetic and supportive environment, it results in the condition of dissociation, which entails lack of connection with either the inner or the outer worlds or, in some cases, with both. Due to the fact that this condition is naturalized by the social realm, it tends to go largely unnoticed. We live in a world where dissociation prevails and, up to the point where this does not cause deterioration of social functioning, we tend to turn a blind eye to it.

An outcome of the unsuccessful transition between inner and outer worlds is the divide between true and false self (Winnicott 1965). The true self is characterized by a sense of wholeness, which is based on the complete trust in the reliability of the world around to satisfy its needs. The inner self is thus able to express its deeper feelings. In opposition, the false self represents a defense against an unsupportive and unempathetic environment in an attempt to provide continuity to the basic structures of the inner self that were threatened by such milieu. The appearance of the false self as a response to the primal wounding (Firman and Gila 2002) can be further explained. According to Firman and Gila, the primal wounding 'may occur from intentional or unintentional neglect by those in the environment, as in physical or emotional abandonment; from an inability of significant others to respond empathetically to the person (or to aspects of the person); or from a general unresponsiveness in the surrounding social milieu […] it creates an experience in which we know ourselves not as intrinsically valuable human persons but instead as nonpersons or objects' (Firman and Gila 2002, 27). As suggested by Firman and Gila, primal wounding does not necessarily entail neglect. It may also be inflicted by those deemed as good parents who support, encourage and praise their children. Such support and encouragement, though, may come from the parents' own agenda, seeking the satisfaction of their need to feel good about themselves. Although parents might be unaware of that, the child's achievements often act as a means to realize a potential they did not realize for themselves. In such cases, as much as in those of abandonment and unresponsiveness, the child is objectified, the true self is neglected and love and acceptance is conditioned. A further aspect that affects the child's original sense of wholeness is parental attachment. When the child feels that he is the main concern of his parents and the center of their lives, it is

felt as burdensome. This form of love and care, rather than being nurturing and liberating, is asphyxiating. The child feels indebted to the parents, experiencing a sense of guilt. The child might also misinterpret the need for such excessive care as him or her having some deficiency, resulting in low self-esteem. In all cases, this primal wounding brings forth a sense of inadequacy. Given that in the child's eyes parents are perfect, the child would tend to blame him or herself for having deserved such wounding. In his mind, if those whom he loves the most and who, allegedly, love him or her dearly, have inflicted such a wound on him or her, it cannot be for any other reason but because of his insufficiency. The ensuing feeling is that of not being good enough to be loved for who he is. Subsequently, the primordial sense of trust is dismantled and the false self emerges as a defense against the pain caused by wounding.

In order to avoid the re-opening and re-experiencing of the primal wounding, the self will thereafter take shelter, predominantly in the outer world, becoming an outsider to the self. While remaining alienated from the primal wounding, the outsider to the self will constantly nurture the false self. To the wounded self, it seems safer to remain connected to the outside, farther away from the primal injury that has caused so much pain. During childhood, and succeeding adulthood, the individual will search in the outer world for the sense of contentment that used to be an integral part of his being in the world, a feeling that was lost through the experience of the primal wounding. Rather than seeking the satisfaction of his needs of love and belonging in the inner world, the individual shall predominantly resort to the external world to find the satisfaction of those needs. The individual searches for love and acceptance. Yet, he will in the last instance compromise on what he can obtain. This is because he learns, since childhood, to be contented with what the outer world can provide, which is mainly a form of conditional positive regard. This is the opposite of what Rogers considers as unconditional positive regard (Rogers 1967), which provides the basis for the individual to develop good feelings about himself in every situation in life, regardless of his actions. Conditional positive regard, on the contrary, entails the possibility to be noticed and acknowledged based on behavior that is measured against the competitive standards of the patriarchal culture. Conditional positive regard provides the child with the feeling that he has to justify himself for being, for living. This leads him to become an outsider to the self, seeking such justification in the outer world.

Both the process of individuation from the mother and the primal wounding are part of the child's experience of the reality principle.

Nothing is—and nothing will ever be—experienced as harmonious and consistent as when the child had the feeling of being a whole self. The idea of wholeness of self does not mean perfection but integration, connection with and without. This primordial harmony and unity account for a pleasurable state, not devoid, nonetheless, of its own predicaments. Similar to the condition of dissociation, outsideness works as a defense mechanism against the frustration experienced as part of the reality principle. To go inwards entails vulnerability, to dwell outwards provides a false sense of predictability and control, thus the self chooses to remain on the surface, as an outsider to its true self. The outside world, however, is not always the safest place where one may live.

It is important to clarify that by proposing the concept of the outsider to the self, the intention is not to classify and encapsulate individuals into fixed categories. Very often, it is difficult to ascertain whether a person might be an outsider to the self or not because of the various degrees and tones that are part of this condition. In addition, the ever-changing nature of our identities in tune with the fluid conditions of the social environment explains mutations in relation to where the self might stand in relation to itself at different points in time. The concept of the outsider to the self, nonetheless, remains a useful tool to address aspects related to a certain quality of life, one where the self tends to remain outwardly bounded. It is equally relevant to explain that the condition of the outsider to the self does not preclude resistance. This is what creativity, in fact, entails—the possibility to fight back and to not unconditionally subscribe to the outer world. This prospect, however, comes at a cost, one that individuals are not always ready to pay, choosing very often to remain outsiders to their selves. In their work, scholars from the humanistic approach to psychology and psychoanalysis such as Jung, Laing and Erickson have addressed the tendency of individuals to live in the outer world with little connection, if at all, to the inner self. Something that is missing in this literature, however, is a model that might be helpful to understand the main attributes of this condition and its major implications. This is what I attempt to elaborate in the following sections of this chapter.

The Outsider to the Self: Main Attributes

The main attributes of the outsider to the self are discussed in this chapter. These are: (1) lack of self-knowledge; (2) predominance of thought versus emotion; (3) low frustration threshold; (4) conditionings of ego and

superego; and (5) the outsider to the self's counterpart, the insider to the self. Detailed analysis of these attributes follows.

1. *Lack of self-knowledge*

As part of the outsideness of the self, the inner realm turns into strange and unfathomable territory where the false self does not dare to venture. As mentioned before, the false self aims at avoiding the primal wounding by means of ignoring it. This leads to alienation and lack of what is commonly known as self-knowledge. From a philosophical perspective, Kant suggests that knowledge is not reliable. Although it may arise out of experience, it may as well depart from its original source through the material added by occasional sensuous impressions.

> That all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt […] But, though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience. For, on the contrary, it is quite possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition supplies from itself (sensuous impressions serving merely as the occasion), an addition which we cannot distinguish from the original element given by sense, till long practice has made us attentive to, and skillful in separating it. (Kant 1787, 45–46)

According to Kant, it is only through practice that we may become aware of the difference between the two forms of knowledge. My suggestion is that much before we may attempt to separate those, we require training our attention in order to be aware of the difference between the primary knowledge and that added to it. Similarly, knowledge of the self is covered up by a large amount of impressions that come both from self and society. Only when we train our attention to go inwards does this knowledge become reliable as it is able to discern the attributes of the inner self from those imposed or adopted outwardly. I will further discuss the concept of attention in Chap. 3. For now, it may suffice to say that attention, as discussed in this book, entails the exclusion of thoughts that may detract us from making contact with the inner self. Based on such inward attention, to attempt at knowing aspects of the self is not a mental projection, that is what the self believes of oneself, but it is experiential. That is to say, any knowledge of the self is verifiable—through the understanding of inner qualities and through the materialization of those qualities in the outer world.

From a Marxist perspective, Lefebvre suggests,

> many men […] do not know their own lives very well, or know them inadequately […] In particular, they have an inadequate knowledge of their needs and their own fundamental attitudes; they express them badly, they delude themselves about their needs and aspirations except for the most general and the most basic ones. (Lefebvre 1991, 94)

In order to act against such derisory knowledge of self, Lefebvre suggests the importance of conducting a critique of everyday life. There are, however, divergent positions about the need to know the self. Maturana (1991, 81) argues 'I do not agree with the invitation to know the self, I think we do not need to know the self, one is in the process of being and is constantly changing in a process of becoming, not in a chaotic way but according to how we live' (my translation from Spanish). Maturana points to an undeniable aspect of our identities, which is the fact that they are in a constant process of creation and recreation, impossible to be fixed by any cognitive process. His argument about the impossibility to know the self, however, emerges from a conception of this cognitive process as an end result. To bestow the concept of self-knowledge of such sense of completion does conspire against the idea of our manifold and ever-changing identities. In contrast, I define self-knowledge not as an outcome but as a series of processes through which it is possible to keep track of the changes that take place in our constant process of becoming, that is, a way to keep record of who I (the individual) was, who I constantly become and who I wish to turn into. Accordingly, I propose an alternative idea—processes of self-knowledge as opposed to self-knowledge. Such processes entail acquiring, gradually and incessantly, a sense of mastery over our being in the world. Mastery in this case does not entail thorough proficiency of the workings of the self but the skill at legitimizing the inner self with strengths and shortcomings in its relation to other selves equally legitimate. Mastery involves overcoming emotions and thoughts, not by repression or suppression but by knowing them sufficiently well, so as to not be controlled by them. Processes of self-knowledge, thus, become a constantly acquired and renewed ability in the management of the upheavals that are part of the relation between inner and outer worlds. The idea of processes of self-knowledge destabilizes self-knowledge as meta-narrative that presumes that the self is able to reach, at a point, the knowledge of the totality of its being. To speak of processes of self-knowledge, instead, opens the space

for disruptions, which may explain myriad degrees and different stages in getting to know the self.

There is a tendency in individuals to avoid processes of self-knowledge. Maslow refers to this trend as avoidance of responsibility (Maslow 1999, 77). His idea is based on the close relation between knowledge and action whereby knowledge brings forth a suitable action automatically and by reflex. Maslow argues that the fear of knowledge is indeed a fear of the consequences that such knowledge may bring. When we do not know what is preventing us from a better life, it is easy to lead a mediocre life under the protective bubble of the lack of self-knowledge. In such case, we may blame other people, the adverse circumstances around or our bad luck for the kind of life we live. The lack of processes of self-knowledge justifies, so to speak, not taking responsibility for our life and for the shortage of attempts at introducing change. If we gain, however, a sound knowledge of our ailments, we would have to do something about it in order to avoid feeling guilty of being a coward. To act implies to take full responsibility for the kind of life we may lead thereafter, and this has the potential to become frightening. Maslow (ibid) explains that being a success may be more terrifying than being a failure because the former implies change, growth and complete responsibility for the self. The idea of personal growth involves the risk of significant pain, which is threatening to old and rigid structures of the self. To grow is risky mainly because of two reasons—first, because there would be no one else to blame for our unhappiness and, second, because it entails willpower and courage, which cannot be experienced unless we have a strong commitment to ourselves.

According to Maslow (ibid), a factor that conspires against knowledge of the self is the presence of an antagonism in human beings between their greatness and their weakness. He suggests that human beings tend to deny their potential and their talents as they fear that a sense of inadequacy may arise in the process of actualizing such potential. This often happens at such an unconscious level that very often the individuals are not able to realize it. Adding to that, I argue that to concede to our best side implies at one and the same time the realization of the most obscure within. Good and bad, weaknesses and strengths are all part of our being, that is, of our true self. To enter in contact with all such baggage destabilizes the notion of 'all is well' upon which the rationality of the false self is erected.

An additional deterrent to processes of self-knowledge is the social order. This promotes rationality and objectivity to its last consequences, dismissing the emotional and subjective aspects in human beings. On the

whole, this trend prevents the individuals from fully experiencing their sensuality, their subjectivity and their emotions, leading to indifference towards the inner self. Jung's ideas of the collective unconscious are helpful to ascertain that such trivializing attitude does not pertain only to certain individuals but to humanity as a whole, transmitted across generations in a repetitive and unconscious manner. For Jung (1971), the collective unconscious is the collection of experiences that are common to all members of a particular species and it is the product of ancestral and unchanged experience imbibed in all of them. Part of the unconscious inheritance of human beings is the endeavor to create the best possible world for their progeny. As the child grows, however, elements of vulnerability tend to manifest. Such susceptibility takes different forms, such as extreme emotionality; difficulties facing reality; frustration due to clashes between the true and the false self; emotions such as despair, fear, confusion and sadness; and, other effects customarily considered as weaknesses. The response from significant others is to attempt to cover up such vulnerability through the use of rationality. We can observe this in the way some adults tend to respond to their children when they experience anger, sadness, nostalgia and even extreme joy. It is not uncommon to see parents advising their children to not cry, to not be angry or sad and to not overindulge in excitement or laughter. The child will also be taught to not express his feelings publicly, to not involve emotions in professional settings and, over all, to 'control' his sentiments. In this way, we gradually learn to disconnect from aspects that seem to expose the vulnerable self. As a result, the self acquires a proficiency to repress or at the very least calibrate most of its sensuous experiences. We learn, thus, to be cautious about our expression of emotions. It is important to acknowledge the inherited and unconscious level in which this process takes place. Since there is no deliberate preparation to raise children, parents tend to unconsciously and automatically repeat what they experienced in their childhood when their parents attempted to shun their own vulnerability at all costs.

To understand the concept of processes of self-knowledge, an appropriate analogy would be a bus driver who suddenly enters into a state of madness. This case illustrates how, similar to passengers being overpowered by the insane bus driver, lack of processes of self-knowledge results in a self that is driven by uncontrollable forces. In this example, craziness has overcome the driver. In view of that, passengers may, in all their freedom, take one of two courses of action. The first one is to remain seated, hoping for a positive outcome—the driver may regain sanity, other passengers may

stand up and take control of the vehicle or miraculously an accident may be prevented. A second option is to stand up in an attempt to take control of the vehicle. The former is the case of an everyday life with lack of processes of self-knowledge. At times, one of those positive outcomes may come. At other times, however, an accident might be inevitable, causing damages of varying degrees. What is relevant in this first option is the fact that the outcome is largely beyond the passengers' control. In contrast, the second alternative carries with it the possibility of changing the course of action, entailing agency over the prevailing circumstances.

Continuing with this example, one of the passengers sitting at the rear becomes aware that something is blocking the customary bus ride—the driver has gone crazy. Other passengers in the bus begin to panic and are out of control, some of them are falling down due to the random movements of the vehicle. From his back seat, the passenger in question thinks of the possible consequences of this situation, which in all likelihood might be very serious if not fatal. He makes a judgment of possible actions to take and of the risks associated with each of these. Instinctively, he is plagued by self-doubt. He fears that if he stands up and makes an attempt to take over, he might not be very well equipped to do so and may fall down. And, even if he is able to reach the front of the bus, the driver could react against him in a hostile manner, possibly harming him. The passenger considers also the possibility that while other passengers may see him attempt to take control of the bus, they may ask for his protection. Such a thought is terrifying as he doubts his ability to respond positively to those requests. Instinctively, he fears the worst may happen. He is almost paralyzed by anxiety. If he stays and waits, however, an accident might be inevitable. This thought drives him into action. Despite the contradicting feelings and thoughts, decisiveness takes over and the intrepid passenger endeavors to take charge of the bus and its deranged driver, making use of his resources.

As such, I suggest that processes of self-knowledge entail taking actions, which involve bodily dispositions and attitudes. Under normal circumstances, actions, bodily dispositions and attitudes are taken for granted. These, however, are highly noticeable in circumstances of lack or deficiency of particular skills. In the preceding example, the first action that the brave passenger is required to take is to stand up. Under customary circumstances, to do that would require body movements such as holding tightly to the seat and pushing the body upwards. An attempt at standing up would also entail attitudes such as confidence and know-how.

However, in this particular case, while the passenger attempts such a customary action, the fast turns and chaotic movement of the bus prevents him from standing up in a straightforward manner. A deficiency of skills is evident at that point. Accordingly, attitudes required to perform such action—standing up—would no longer entail confidence and know-how but would require courage and determination. Follow-up actions would involve walking slowly and carefully towards the front of the bus, regaining balance whenever this is lost. At every moment, a constant awareness and a review of the appropriateness of actions, bodily dispositions and attitudes take place. Whenever the passenger's bodily dispositions, actions or attitudes prevent him from reaching the goal, he would need to make adjustments in order to continue moving forward. If, despite all obstacles, the individual is able to persevere in his attempt, he may reach the front of the bus in a timely manner, knock out the foolish driver, assume the driving position and re-direct the vehicle in a proper manner.

In this example, it is possible to appreciate processes of self-knowledge whereby, at different stages, actions are accompanied by particular body dispositions and changing attitudes. All of these are weaved in a constant process of self-reflection that allows the individual to modify and adjust patterns of behavior as required. Processes of self-knowledge entail a similar route—the awareness of the need to act; feelings of doubt and fear; the determination to act, often in opposition to our wishes; the realization of a lack or deficiency in terms of available resources or skills; the adjustment of bodily dispositions and attitudes to compensate for that lack; and, lastly, processes of self-knowledge per se, which are a synergy of all of that. To embark upon processes of self-knowledge involves fighting against feelings of inadequacy by which the task may appear impossible. To do this, it is necessary to defeat the fear of the unknown, which is often paralyzing based on feelings of pain associated with the primal wounding. Processes of self-knowledge involve adopting an attitude of responsibility towards oneself, leaving life not to chance. Such processes lead us to gradually become the masters of our lives. In order to do that, a constant review of the self is required. This is elaborated on later in this chapter.

2. *Predominance of thoughts*

As mentioned, the condition of the outsider to the self is inherited throughout generations. Since a very early age, significant others, who are themselves outsiders to the self, contribute to instilling this condition

in the child. The patriarchal culture that dominates most societies in the world reinforces this trend with an overemphasis on competition, results, objectivity, control, appropriation, materiality and rationality. All of that tends to overshadow the original matristic sense of the child, which involves emotions, subjectivity, cooperation, spontaneity and sensuality (Maturana 1991). In order to fit within the dominant patriarchal model, the child learns to become oblivious to its sensuous self. Similar to a muscle that is not used and degenerates, the child's integral sense of self is weakened to the extent that the matristic becomes almost imperceptible and, in some cases, futile.

Freud divided the mind into three entities—id, ego and superego. According to his theory, the id is the unconscious part of the mind that seeks pleasure. The superego is the one that controls the moral aspects of life, mainly formed based on prohibitions and teachings from parents in the first years of life. Finally, the ego is the entity that, guided by logic and rationality, meditates between the id and the superego, representing the reality principle. According to this perspective, the ego is seen as the managerial part of the whole structure of one's personality. In cases where the ego suffers premature or disruptive development, the self turns into a false self. The ego, nevertheless, continues to be regarded as the anchoring structure of the personality. In opposition to Freud's concept of ego, for Jung (1971) the ego is not the expression of the individual's whole personality but the center of consciousness. Accordingly, while the unconscious remains veiled, the ego cannot be completed. The realization of the ego could only be achieved through a more comprehensive self. This process takes place throughout life and it implies a constant development of consciousness. Jung's incomplete ego corresponds largely with the outsider to the self discussed here, entailing lacking awareness of the inner self and a denial of certain aspects of the personality. Jung addresses this incomplete ego through the idea of the archetype persona, which refers to the masks that the individual chooses to wear in front of others based on the demands of the social world. Hence, I argue that these masks are built upon thoughts that are projected outwardly.

As mentioned in Chap. 1, in this book the re-evaluation of creativity at the individual level is underpinned by the model of the subtle system as suggested by Sahaja Yoga. The concept of ego, according to this Eastern philosophy of life, differs from that proposed by psychoanalysis. According to Nirmala Devi (1997), the founder of Sahaja Yoga, the mind is built up on ego and superego. These two entities are located in the optic chiasm

of the brain, giving us our thinking capacity. Thoughts from the past are stored in the superego and thoughts about the future are formed in the ego. Thus, the ego, according to the knowledge of the subtle system, is an incomplete entity of the mind that governs only some aspects of our personality, more specifically those belonging to the false self that are connected to the energy of action and the future. From this perspective, the ego—and the superego, for that matter—closely corresponds to Jung's archetype persona.

Our thinking capacities are connected to our emotions. Salgado (2009, 53), argues 'the brain is capable of generating electrochemical reactions that we perceive as thoughts, which in turn create hormonal responses that are felt in our conscience as emotions' (my translation from Spanish). A further link between thoughts and emotions can be traced as part of the condition of outsideness. The outsider to the self tends to experience emotions with a mental component added to them. Feelings go through a process of judgment, that is, they are linked to a restricted assortment of thoughts whereby some emotions are deemed good while some others are considered bad; some are judged as desirable, some are conceived as undesirable. Whatever the additional thought process to our emotional side, this, in the last instance, takes away the authenticity of the feelings. Our tendency to mentally judge emotions has led us to categorize emotions into two radical extremes. Emotions such as happiness, confidence, love and gratitude are considered positive emotions. On the contrary, sadness, anger, disappointment and resentment are deemed negative emotions. I contend that such polarized conception of emotions detracts the self from full acceptance of its wholeness. Instead, the suggestion is to classify these as follows: (a) emotions for introspection and (b) emotions for settling. The former entail emotions that have the potential to drive the individual into self-reflection, such as anger, sadness, disappointment and fear. These, rather than being negative, are extremely positive in terms of the resultant processes of self-knowledge that they facilitate. The latter, on the other hand, are emotions in which the individual may rejoice for some time (love, confidence, joy) in order to recharge the necessary energy to continue the process of personal growth. This does not entail that the emotions for settling cannot foster introspection; sometimes they do. As part of our human condition, however, when we experience those, processes of self-reflection tend to subside. The fact that self-reflection may diminish is indeed a positive aspect, representing an economy of psychic energy, which might later be used for introspection as required.

The basic premise for this argument is that thinking acts as a defense mechanism to avoid making contact with the primal wounding. The stronger the urge to avoid such primordial injury, the stronger the need to take refuge in our thoughts. Nonetheless, as pain is evaded by overindulgence in thoughts, more pain comes in the form of dissatisfaction with life, illness and other ailments. Physical, emotional and mental problems emerge as a result of the constant loss of the natural energy that exists within the nervous system and that directs the functioning of cells and organs. This natural energy is lost within the unceasing flow of thoughts of the outsider to the self, bringing forth myriad disorders into the individual's life. The persistent thoughts will further the same cause, keeping the person alienated from the primal wounding that brings problems into his life. The cause lies within, but the outsider to the self cannot make sense of that from the alienated position where it dwells, that is, the outer world. Based on the conditions provided by such abode, the outsider to the self resorts to outward solutions for its ailments. Medicine, therapy, family, money, work and achievements are sought as answers to some of the problems in life. All of these, however, can only treat symptoms. Since the outsider to the self has no access to the roots of the problems, a symptom may temporarily be cured only to re-emerge later, taking a different form or affecting a new aspect of life. As the outsider to the self resides in thoughts of ego and superego and the inner realm lingers unheard and overlooked, the primal wounding remains unhealed. Both ego and superego are necessary for our personalities. The problem with both entities, however, resides in that they easily go out of balance, bringing about a self that either delves heavily in memories from the past or in projections about the future, or, intermittently in both. This brings the individual to an illusory standpoint. Delusion appears because the past no longer exists; all that remains of it is its mental representation, which varies according to perception and selective memory. Similarly, the future has no substance but only that which the mind confers to it, to the extent that on innumerable occasions this turns to be completely different to what was mentally conceived. In other words, one may think about the past or the future, but it is not possible to experience these. Experience lies only in the present.

Attempting to define the present represents a challenge in terms of its conceptual and practical implications. As a concept, it is a mental construct like that of past and future. Nonetheless, while past and future are made of thoughts, the present is built up on the basis of *experiencing*. The present is equal to the experience of deeper feelings that characterizes the true self

in the early years of life. The experience of such true feelings, however, is overwhelmingly diminished due to the influence of the social system. It is commonly suggested that we should live in the present, in the *here and now*, but the possibilities to do that from the perspective of a mind dominated by thoughts is very limited. The present can only be experienced at the junction where the self is able to bracket thoughts from past and future, remaining instead in its own *presence*. Nirmala Devi defines the present as the gap in between thoughts from past and future (Nirmala Devi 1997). When a space is created in between thoughts, regardless of how small this space might be, the experience of the present manifests. Given that the present stands for presence of the true self, a certain degree of vulnerability is involved. Deep inner feelings of the true self may be of joy, pleasure and confidence, but they may equally be of sadness, anger or fear. A plunge into the present, however, entails the possibility to experience them both with no value judgment. This can only be possible when ego and superego, involved in the act of judging, cease to act in the presence of the true self. Due to over-thinking, this experience is, nonetheless, rarely experienced by people on a regular basis.

3. *High frustration threshold*

Thinking is an ability that has been overrated in human beings. It is considered the superior of all human capabilities, at the heart of progress, education and society. The influence of Cartesianism in the West has left a powerful imprint on the overestimation of this ability, rendering it difficult to argue against it. Some scholars, however, have reflected about the futility of thought. Benjamin (1999b) considers thinking as the function of the intellect that keeps individuals at surface level, having no possibility to penetrate behind the experiences that have shaped their everyday life. Benjamin contends that due to this thinking, the individuals' frustrations are meaningless. Thus, preventing a deeper understanding of their dissatisfaction with life. Benjamin refers to frustration in the Heideggerian sense, as an ontological anxiety, which rests in a dormant state, waiting to reveal a fundamental insight about being. The idea of ontological anxiety aligns with that of the existence of the primordial energy of the subtle system called Kundalini, which was explained in Chap. 1. This energy also lies in a dormant state, in our sacrum bone, waiting to be awakened to disclose an insight about the state of our chakras and their qualities. The parallelism is outstanding.

An attribute of the outsider to the self is what I call high frustration threshold. Earlier I defined this concept as the point where the hindrance of a potentially satisfying need starts to be felt (Hernández 2012). At that moment, I referred to the need of self-actualization. Further investigation on the topic has led me to conclude that the frustration threshold goes beyond the satisfaction or not of such need. Frustration arises when the natural capacity to be oneself and to express the self in its wholeness is hampered. This is related, to some degree, to our potential for self-actualization, but only as a by-product. In other words, the cause of our frustration is not the prevention of self-actualization but our inability to be and express ourselves, which in turn results in the impossibility to actualize the self. The need of self-actualization will be elaborated on in Chap. 5. For now, it may be argued that the frustration threshold represents the level where the prevention of our potential to be and express ourselves starts to be felt.

The degree of outsideness is directly proportional to the frustration threshold—the higher the frustration threshold, the larger and more profound the level of outsideness. Similarly, a greater level of outsideness increases the threshold, preventing the individual from recognizing his own frustration. This is what I consider the high frustration threshold, characteristic of the outsider to the self. In this case, signs of frustration arising from the impossibility to express the true self tend to fade, to the point of being almost imperceptible. This takes us further away from the realization in time and space of who I am. A shift in our search for self-identity takes place—from *who am I?* to *what am I?* The difference between the two enquiries is considerable. The former is a search into aspects of the self—hitherto obscured—that is, the unconscious realm of both the realized and the potential within. Based on this query, frustration acts as a means to make sense of the primal wounding. The latter, on the contrary, speaks of conditionings that belong to the outsideness in human beings, such as profession, fame, family roles and material possessions. Frustration in this case remains raw and unprocessed because it cannot reveal any significant aspect of the true self.

The frustration threshold might be identified based on the degree of restlessness of the individual in relation to the quality of his life. For some people, quality of life is connected to the satisfaction of basic needs such as safety, love, belonging and esteem. These people have a high frustration threshold, which means that they cannot make sense of the discontent rendered by their constant attention to ephemeral needs. Such individuals

might be considered as outsiders to the self, seizing on the hope that the satisfaction of their basic needs will bring fulfillment into their lives. In such cases, restlessness is barely experienced, and even if it is, the sense of agitation is disguised in the constant endeavor to find external factors to satisfy needs. For others, however, quality of life is associated with the fulfillment of higher needs, such as aesthetic needs and self-actualization. These people are characterized by a lower frustration threshold, finding the satisfaction of their basic needs insufficient, at times irrelevant, to the fulfillment they seek in life. The individuals with low frustration threshold are restless, constantly questioning their inner and outer worlds. A great sense of dissatisfaction with life is characteristic of those with a low frustration threshold. Dissatisfaction arises out of the realization, to a lesser or greater degree, that the primal wounding has not been cured and thus the need to be true to the self has not been satisfied. This may be considered, indeed, a frustration of *being*.

4. *Conditionings of ego and superego*

The outsider to the self is characterized by its need to hold on tightly to conditionings of ego and superego. According to Salgado (2009), thoughts and emotions represent the basis of our actions and they make us act in certain ways, according to different situations. These ways of acting, however, become conditionings when the thought that originated such responses becomes unconscious, propelling us to act in an automatic manner. Conditionings thus represent habitual patterns of thought and behavior, which remain tied to the past (superego) or that are projected into the future (ego). Salgado refers to them as addictions because they have the power to control our thoughts and behavior. Conditionings from ego and superego contribute to mold our relation to ourselves, to others and to the world. We are conditioned by our personal circumstances of life, profession, material well-being, family, status, beliefs, social position, race, political affiliation, class, religion and others. Conditionings of ego bring forth feelings of self-importance and arrogance. Conditionings of superego result in self-deprecation and depression.

Conditionings represent the foundation of our comfort zone, what Siegel considers as 'the window of tolerance' (quoted in Firman and Gila 2002, 44). The window of tolerance consists of habitualized and familiar aspects that provide a safety net for the individual to function in everyday life. The comfort zone is built up in an attempt to survive within a

non-empathetic environment, preventing us from making contact with the primal wounding. Although the comfort zone is necessary, it nonetheless represents a constriction of our sense of self. It takes us into fixed borders of being that are difficult to leave because of the sense of ease they provide, so relevant to a 'normal' functioning in everyday life. This includes conditionings based on our self-concept; likes and dislikes; what we believe we are capable of doing; a limited range of feelings that we are able to recognize in ourselves; our passing judgment of ourselves and others—I am good, others are bad, or the opposite, they are good and I am not good enough; our reactions to other people's expressions of feelings, among others. It is mainly through identification with such conditionings, rather than through processes of self-knowledge, that we tend to define ourselves. These aspects tend to repeat throughout our lives. They are all mental, or more precisely, they are mental habits that result in habitual patterns of behavior.

Dissatisfaction arises due to our repetitive patterns of thought and behavior, for example: (1) when conditionings clash with each other, for instance, when our feelings contradict our self-concept—feeling angry versus the idea of myself as a person who is always happy and loving; (2) when our ideas about ourselves disagree with those that others hold about us—others may think of us as a person who goes to extremes while we would like them to believe that we are very balanced; (3) when our conditionings collide with those of others, for example, in the case of religious beliefs, political affiliation and the like; (4) when our conditionings clash with the reality principle, as it happens when our plans or wishes are frustrated by critical circumstances such as illness, separation, death, abandonment or other similar events in life; (5) when we are faced with circumstances or behaviors of others that are beyond our window of tolerance—a person who allows himself or herself to be lazy or irresponsible, while we do not tend to give such permission to ourselves; (6) when others think and do contrary to what we would wish them to think or do—our child or spouse choosing a lifestyle we do not wish for them. Possibilities of clashes are not limited to these examples. In all cases, dissatisfaction arises because our mind is forced to enter into contact with something that goes beyond our restricted area of behavior, ideas, beliefs, habits and expectations, coming closer instead to the primal wounding. It could be said that the closer the unfavorable circumstances of life come to our primal wounding, the more dissatisfaction we are likely to experience. The problem is that rather than using such displeasure as an opportunity to get in touch with the wound

and to attempt to heal it, the outsider to the self will blame others or the circumstances around, taking further refuge in its window of tolerance. Dissatisfaction, thus, remains no more than a familiar condition to which the majority of people simply turn a blind eye. Unless and until the self is able to enter in contact with the primal wounding and start a process to heal it, the sense of an underlying discontent cannot disappear.

5. *The insider to the self*

To propose the idea of an outsider to the self entails that there is an insider to the self. The outsider to the self, indeed, contains within its counterpart—the insider to the self. When the outsider to the self is able to make sense of its frustration, either by having a low frustration threshold or by crucial circumstances of life that brings him or her in contact with the primal wounding, the space where the self dwells is put into question. This is the starting point for a significant shift—from the outsider to the self to the insider to the self. The time to make such transfer varies among individuals. It may happen sooner, it may happen later or it may never happen. This depends on the degree of outsideness of the individual and the extent to which thoughts are used to keep deep inner feelings at bay, preventing the experience of a frustration of being. The condition of the insider to the self is not one that is achieved instantly. The self might dwell in between the insider and the outsider to the self for a long time. The outsider to the self is indeed never completely abandoned because this is the one that triggers the need to come closer to the primal wounding in order to make the individual's frustrations meaningful. Thus, the relation between the outsider and the insider to the self is not antagonistic but dialectical—what brings them into contradiction is precisely what gives life to them both.

It is important to note that the condition of the outsider to the self does not necessarily exclude that of the insider to the self. The outsider to the self may, at times, get in touch with the inner realm. The problem is that within its position as the stranger, the self cannot make sense of the contents of the inner world. This responds to the lack of processes of self-knowledge explained earlier. A parallel situation can be drawn from everyday life, that is, people who migrate to other countries and do not assimilate into the culture but remain as outsiders, holding on tightly to their own traditions and views. While there might be moments where they do come in contact with the host culture, their position as strangers would very likely prevent them from grasping the deeper meanings attached to

the alien cultural forms, providing them instead with a feeling of discomfort. In the same way, although the outsider to the self, at times, may get in touch with the inner world, its position as an outsider might prevent it from a feeling of belonging in there. People thus might be both outsider and insider (to the self). The extent to which they belong in each of these abodes is, nonetheless, what reveals their most predominant condition.

It was earlier suggested that the false self makes use of thinking to prevent contact with the true self and with the primal wounding. The insider to the self makes use of thinking too. Its use is different, though, in that aspects reported from the outside world as a thought process go through a route where thought makes contact with emotion. The insider to the self, far from preventing experiences from reaching the primal wounding, directs them to the most sensitive parts of the injury so as to bring forth frustration in the most Heideggerian sense, as an insight into being. Frustration in and with life becomes thus ontological anxiety, revealing aspects of the self that hitherto remained hidden. In this way, and regardless of the pain that this may cause, the inner self is gradually legitimized. The legitimacy of the inner self can be represented through myriad aspects—acceptance of strengths and shortcomings; recognition of inner worth; expression of true feelings; neutralization of the need for conditional positive regard as a means to gain love and acceptance from others; disassembly of the fear that keeps the true self hidden; and allowance of vulnerability. All such self-affirming attitudes are in the last instance, a means to provide the holding environment that was lost—or did not exist—in early childhood. This positive setting is one where the self is legitimized as a whole human being; its existence being neither a means to something nor conditioned or objectified in any sense. This is an environment where the self is simply worth it by the mere act of being (Winnicott 1960). To recover such upholding environment is possible only when the self goes through processes of self-knowledge, by which it is possible to expand the view of the inner self in different stages—who the self was, who the self is becoming and who the self wishes to become. These three phases comprise an understanding of all dimensions of being—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. Processes of self-knowledge provide a route in the direction of the insider to the self, serving as a compass in the process of becoming the true self. I assert that the underlying principle that runs through the insider to the self is an unconditional positive self-regard—the acknowledgement of where I am with complete compassion and understanding of my limitations as well as full recognition of my resources and achievements. No matter the

former or the latter, unconditional positive self-regard entails self-acceptance and self-love. Importantly, the insider to the self is equal neither to the inner self nor to the true self. Instead, it is a condition that allows entering into contact with the inner self as a means to allow the true self to thrive.

Correlation exists also between outsider and insider (to the self); and Jung's terms, extroversion and introversion. According to Jung (1963), extroverts are concentrated on external objects, that is, the outside world, while introverts largely focus their attention on their subjective world, that is, the inner world. In this sense, the outsider to the self is an extrovert, whereas the insider to the self corresponds to an introvert. This is disparate to customary interpretations where these traits are linked to interpersonal behavior; that is, extroverts are associated with the outgoing, talkative and energetic; while introverts are deemed as the reserved and solitary. What characterizes the outsider to the self or extrovert, is its overwhelming direction of interest in and attention to the outer world, while the opposite can be said of the insider to the self or introvert.

In the example of the mad bus driver discussed earlier, the insider to the self is represented by the passenger at the rear who gets in contact with the inner self, becoming aware not only of his fear and his weaknesses but also of his courage and his strengths. By expanding his consciousness, the insider to the self brings forth a possibility of change, which was entirely lost in the dimension of the outsider to the self. The insider to the self involves an attitude where the self is able to stop reacting to the outer world from the position of the false self, having instead the possibility to respond to it by gradually and steadily taking on board the inner self.

Implications of the Outsider to the Self

The outsider to the self has implications connected to two main aspects. First, the obstruction of various qualities. Focus later in this chapter will be on one of these qualities, creativity; and in subsequent chapters other blocked attributes will be discussed. Second, the outsider to the self's impact on the need to conduct a self-review. These terms are further explained in the sections that follow.

1. *Creativity as an outcast*

From an individual perspective, creativity is a quality that emerges out of the expression of the inner self. It belongs to the true self. It is connected

to the sensual, spontaneous, emotional and maternal aspects that characterize the child's original sense of self. Creativity entails trust not only in oneself but in others and in a holding environment. Trust is the basic quality that provides the safety net where the self can express itself, making it possible to create (Winnicott 1960). The false self, on the contrary, entails lack of trust. Its aim is to fit in a non-empathetic environment, which has proven to be untrustworthy. As the primal wounding was inflicted by and within the non-empathetic environment, the self can no longer put its trust in it. The survival strategies developed by the false self in order to dwell within the non-empathetic environment entail two aspects that act against creativity. First, a mental effort occurs. Yet, creativity has nothing to do with effort. On the contrary, it entails effortless flow of the true self. Wherever effort is put to work, the spontaneous connection with the inner self recedes and creativity is blocked. Second, an energy waste exists. The fact that the false self consumes most of its psychic energy in its endeavor to survive within the non-holding environment entails that the necessary energy to create is compromised.

Significant others who are outsiders to the self have a damaging effect on individuals' creativity. The child's creative impulse is affected when a spontaneous expression of creativity is rejected and shamed by others. This represents a primal wounding, whereby an essential aspect of the child is judged and discarded. In such case, the child may learn that it is not appropriate to be creative. He may feel inadequate and, in order to feel safer, thereafter tend to repress his creativity. This provides a false sense of safety, where the primal wounding of having being rejected in his creative expression shall be kept at a distance. Unknowingly, the child embarks in the process of becoming an outsider. The fact that he is alienated from his creativity will therefore remain off the boundaries of his awareness. The outsider to the self feels to a certain degree a sense of fragmentation though not at a conscious level. Fear and low self-esteem emerge as a result. The fear is not only of failure and shame but also of success. Due to the sense of inadequacy left by the primal wounding, the self may not deem itself worthy of success. The outsider to the self who sustains the false self contributes, thus, to keeping creativity as an outcast.

The patriarchal culture contributes further to the obstruction of creativity. While creativity belongs to the realm of emotions and intuition, the growing child is encouraged to fit in and respond almost exclusively to a rational world that discourages the expression of inner feelings. An overemphasis on competition, control, appropriation, results, aggression and

fight acts as a significant deterrent to creativity. A split takes place between desire and action. Lefebvre's concept of alienation supports the idea of a social world strange to and separated from our identities. Lefebvre (1991) suggests that the individual is split between the private man and the man of needs. Conflicting spirits arise as the individual seeks to satisfy the private man while at the same time his own needs bring him or her in relation to others. The conflict between the two creates in the individual the feeling of separation from the self, that is, a sense of living a life imposed by others, one that is dominated by rules and external factors, all of which constricts the expression of creativity. One of the most fundamental problems that hinder individuals' creativity, thus, is the celebration of rationality at the expense of emotions.

The proposal here is to bring inwards the attention of the outsider to the self and embark upon processes of self-knowledge that might reveal the circumstances that contributed to the blockage of creativity. The proposal to search within is, nonetheless, problematic in that there is no easy route to take inward the conditioned mind of the outsider to the self. A process of self-review is thus required. An attempt has been made to delineate a method through which the individuals could re-examine, by themselves, the obstruction of their creativity, without this becoming a large and impossible task. My use of the subtle system responds to such objective, helping as a map for a review of the self.

2. *The Concept of self-review*

As mentioned earlier, scholars from various disciplines have discussed how the individuals are largely unaware of their inner world. Psychoanalysis suggests that psychological illness is a reflection of the fear and resistance to know the self. Much earlier, Socrates expressed in one of his maxims that an unexamined life is not worth living (Plato 1966). Thus, I suggest the need for an examination of the self in order to gain mastery over the contents of the unconscious mind and thus over our lives.

For the purposes of an examination of the self, I propose the concept of self-review. Such a word emphasizes the act of *re-viewing* or seeing again the self, with a view to self-actualization. Self-actualization entails fulfillment of mission and purpose in life. This is what Roger calls the actualizing tendency, which he considers as an underlying force or impulse present in all living beings to develop all capacities, in order to become autonomous and complete (Rogers 1967). The way the actualizing

tendency manifests and seeks satisfaction, however, is largely conditioned by the social world. Such that, to seek 'happiness' becomes a cheap substitute for the actualizing tendency. The social realm instills the idea that the individuals might attain fulfillment through material possessions, social relations and achievements. These are only false substitutes for the satisfaction of the need for self-actualization. The outsider to the self seeks these with the hope of finding a sense of completion.

The idea of a self-review involves an attitude of introspection. According to Salgado (2009, 64), introspection is 'an internal "inspection," that is, to become conscious about our thoughts and emotions' (my translation from Spanish). The need for such scrutiny does not mean that the self is insufficient or inadequate. On the contrary, the review of the self suggested here is based on the premise that the inner self is complete, adequate and sufficient, taking as a departure point the acceptance of the totality of the inner self's qualities. It is acknowledged, nonetheless, that some of those attributes have been blocked by the influence of parents and the social order. Despite that, it is not presumed that the person has to be transformed into somebody else. As suggested by Maturana, 'it is possible to change without wanting to be somebody else' (Maturana and Bloch 1996, 71). This introspective view invites an analysis of qualities that have remained hidden due to the overarching weight of patriarchal values. Thus, the approach challenges one of the main obstacles to self-analysis—the prejudice that by acknowledging the need to analyze the self there is a tacit acceptance of its meagerness. On the contrary, a review of the self is an indicator of the resourcefulness of the self, a form of creativity whereby the individual has the power to create new circumstances for his own life.

By and large, human beings tend to refuse entering a process of self-examination. The fear is that by looking inside, we may enter into a domain that is beyond our control. What is avoided is to come into contact with the flow of deeper feelings, potentially capable of taking us away from our rational side and closer to our primal injury. The window of tolerance or comfort zone is actually useful to avoid the exploration of the inner self. Although this offers no more comfort than that of being familiar, bringing more discomfort than one may wish for, the illusion of being in control predominates. Seeing our shortcomings implies, per se, movement which, compared with the comfort of staying still, is deemed as challenging. The possibility to experience pain is avoided at all costs. Benjamin elaborates on the idea of shock experience, which is useful in order to understand

how the unpredictability of everyday life confronts the self. According to Benjamin (1999a) the shock experience of modern life becomes the non-conscious realm which gets in the way of recognizing the now-ness of everyday life. Shock experience arises from the lack of continuity of modern life, particularly of life in the metropolis. Due to our inability to deal, at a conscious level, with such discontinuity, the shock experience is transformed into larger and hidden forces, which the individual is unable to identify overall.

Based on Winnicott's notion of basic trust, Giddens (1991) suggests,

> every human individual could (in principle) be overwhelmed by anxieties about risks which are implied by the very business of living. That sense of 'invulnerability' which blocks off negative possibilities in favor of a generalized attitude of hope derives from basic trust. The protective cocoon is essentially a sense of 'unreality' rather than a firm conviction of security: it is a bracketing on the level of practice of possible events which could threaten the bodily and psychological integrity of the agent. (Giddens 1991, 40)

Gidden's ideas illuminate on the protective although unrealistic nature of the comfort zone. This false protection contributes to a feeling of 'all is fine' that allows individuals to cope with their lives. At one and the same time, such cocooning contributes to keeping the individual off the boundaries of self-analysis. A process of self-review is compromised. The protective bubble acts as a deterrent to the creative process, which emerges from a feeling of dissatisfaction with the readily made order of things. The comfort zone is an enemy to creativity. It nurtures the feeling of being at home, which, regardless of how alienating this might be, provides a cozy feeling that invites staying still. The power of imagination resides precisely in the ability to question the immutability of home. This idea can be extrapolated to the self. To question conditionings of mind and behavior is a way of stepping out of the comfort zone of the outsider to the self. This opens up new possibilities of actions and interactions and unimagined potential, which rests in the territory of the insider to the self. A process of self-review is required to shed light on such potential. In the following chapters, I make a proposal for a process of self-review, whereby the individuals' potential is examined based on the blockage of qualities that have prevented the individuals' creative stream to come to the surface. As indicated earlier, such an analysis is conducted based on the knowledge of the subtle system according to Sahaja Yoga (Nirmala Devi 1997).

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CHAPTER 3

Re-evaluating Creativity: A Basic Map to Individual Qualities

I have explained in Chap. 2 the process of self-review and its main implications. To conduct self-analysis requires an understanding of the self as one that, although complete, positive and sufficient in its primal stage, has been covered up by layers of constraints imposed by the social order, in other words, by the condition of the outsider to the self, which was explained in Chap. 2. This basic understanding is necessary to dismantle conceptions of inadequacy that tend to detract the individuals from self-examination. To deem the self as complete and adequate entails a positive start for a review of the self, one that is not based on transformation but on the revival of human qualities. Self-examination, as explored in this book, is underpinned by creativity. It is the recovery of the individual's creativeness that inspires this process of self-analysis. In such inner scrutiny, processes of self-knowledge act both as a means and as an outcome, bringing forth the condition of the insider to the self.

The self-review suggested here takes on board the Socratic concern for the examination of our lives. The intricate path for such a review, however, corresponds more with Breton's suggestion that, 'perhaps life needs to be deciphered like a cryptogram' (Breton 1999, 112). This raises the question as to whether it is possible for the individuals to conduct, by themselves, a process of self-analysis. The answer would tend to be negative. Individuals who embark upon a review of self tend to do it, by and large, through the help of a specialist, mainly from psychology, psychotherapy, counseling or coaching; also through supportive groups such as AA or Al-Anon, or with the use of other guided introspective practices. To

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suggest that the individuals are capable of self-analysis without counting on some external help would require the individual's ability to enter in contact with their inner life. This, however, represents a challenge, due to the condition of the outsider to the self. The use in this book of the subtle system is, however, a response to such a perplexing task. As mentioned in the previous chapter according to Sahaja Yoga, (Nirmala Devi 1997), the subtle system consists of millions of vital energy forces, concentrated in seven chakras or centers of energy. Each of these psychic centers is connected to specific qualities. The suggestion is that by looking at those inner abilities, the individual might be able to take the attention inward, facilitating an analytic view to the self.

The human qualities associated with the centers of energy are useful to pin down aspects that have contributed to blocking creativity. This chapter deals with the most basic route to creativity linked to the understanding of the potentials of the first three chakras. In Chaps. 4 and 5, I re-evaluate creativity based on the qualities of the rest of the centers of the subtle system. In each case, the analysis is conducted in four stages. First, I analyze the qualities associated with each psychic center. Second, I explore some factors that contribute to their obstruction in the individuals' lives. It is important to note that there are undoubtedly manifold circumstances that may contribute to obstructing our inner qualities, all of them linked in the last instance to the condition of the outsider to the self. The ones analyzed in this study are only indicative of such a wide range. Third, I re-evaluate creativity based on the attributes of the energy centers. Given that this approach has never been used before for a study of creativity, the connections established between the chakras and the blockage of creativity require being tested through academic and empirical research. Thus, the last step in the analysis includes an outline of implications for future research.

It is important to highlight that although this and subsequent chapters deal with the qualities of the chakras by placing the individual at the center of the analysis, this cannot be disengaged from the social. As mentioned in our introductory chapter, the three chapters of the analysis of qualities of the subtle system focus predominantly on personal creativity as opposed to creative collectives. Social aspects of creativity are, nonetheless, explored in Chap. 5. The impact of the social realm is obvious in how the qualities have been obstructed. True creativity, in turn, cannot be understood without this having an impact on the social system. Thus, the re-evaluation of creativity based on the qualities of the subtle system entails throughout

the complex interrelationship between the individual and its social environment. This interrelatedness has different angles, one of them being that to blame only the patriarchal culture for the obstruction of creativity cannot take the individual much further. As will be discussed in Chap. 4, a sense of self-responsibility for the actualization of our own potential supersedes that of the impact of the social order. It cannot be denied that in a life-long process, the individual will be affected by manifold forms of social control. Immersed in a process of self-analysis, nonetheless, the individual may remain active, creative and tactical in order to avoid being annihilated by the overwhelming weight of social constraints. As a starting point, in this chapter I explore the first three chakras—the Mooladhara, the Swadishthan and the Nabhi.

The Mooladhara Chakra: Innocence and Spontaneity

According to Nirmala Devi (1997), the Mooladhara, known as the root chakra, is located in the pelvic plexus at the base of our spine and below the sacrum bone. The main qualities of the first center of energy are innocence and spontaneity. These qualities are based on the purity of the relation of the child with the mother or mother figure. Maturana's ideas of the matristic (Maturana 1991), which I have explained in Chap. 1, are helpful to explain how the relation between mother and child is propitious to the development of childlike qualities in the human being. It is important to note that we speak of qualities that are childlike rather than childish. The difference between the two is that whereas the latter is associated with lack of maturity, childlike means that which befits a child. This is what Maturana calls the biology of love, which facilitates the child's innocent and spontaneous behavior. It is also important to highlight that although there is literature pointing towards the idea that children are cruel, flawed and malicious just as adults are (Tapia 1971; Chapman 1965), such approaches are not considered in this work. This in no way responds to Christian or other similar moral connotations. Instead, it concurs with the knowledge of Sahaja Yoga, whereby deviations from the primordial innocence of the child are explained based on blockages of the subtle system, some of which precede the child's birth and some that ensue. In this chapter, some of those late obstructions that prevent innocence are explored.

Maturana (1991, 58–59) suggests that 'innocence is an attitude that entails vision rather than blindness' (my translation from Spanish). This

inner wisdom explains how a child knows instinctively how to ask for food, how to show discomfort, how to enjoy, how to play and how to fascinate others. There is no conscious process, no intention behind. Instead, actions instinctively appear, coming from the child's deepest self. An example that is illustrative of innocent behavior is given in Andersen's tale *The Emperor's New Clothes* in which the child, without attention to possible consequences, openly denounces that the emperor is wearing no clothes.

That is to say, innocence and spontaneity are intrinsically connected. Innocence means to put across the self, not according to outward expectations but simply as a spontaneous way of being. Spontaneity arises not from a mental calculation of appropriateness and risks but from a platform where the self is able to manifest in unstructured and unplanned manner. According to Maslow, spontaneity may be explained in terms of 'simplicity and naturalness … the lack of artificiality or straining for effort' (Maslow 1987, 132). Such naturalness represents a sense of congruence between the different aspects of being—body, emotions, mind and spirit. Spontaneity arises as these four aspects do not fight against each other but dwell, instead, harmoniously with one another. The self thus behaves freely and spontaneously in accordance to such harmony of being.

The Blockage of Innocence and Spontaneity

Mistrust

Mistrust is a significant aspect that tends to block the primary innocence of the child. According to Erikson, basic trust entails a sense of reliability that emerges from the most elementary relation established with parents (Erikson 1995). The experience of the consistency, care and trustworthiness of the caregiver provides the child with a sense of hope that in the face of crisis others will be there to provide support and protection. The opposite also holds true. In situations where the child experiences the inconsistency of the caregiver as being emotionally unavailable or unpredictable, the child develops a sense of fear, feeling unsafe and insecure in the world. Consistency and predictability are thus significant factors involved in trust.

Giddens argues that,

> trust always carries the connotation of reliability in the face of contingent outcomes, whether these concern the actions of individuals or the operation of systems. In the case of trust in human agents, the presumption of

> reliability involves the attribution of 'probity' (honor) or love. This is why trust in persons is psychologically consequential for the individual who trusts: a moral hostage to fortune is given. (Giddens 1990, 33)

Giddens' idea of trust is closely related to the concept of innocence. The small child naturally tends to place trust in the goodness of others. As the child grows, however, he or she discovers that good fortune is not always on his side with respect to trusting others. One aspect that affects trust in the early stages of life is the realization that people tend to lie. The child is confronted with lying in various contradictory ways. One of them is the fact that while he or she is instructed to not lie, he or she sees that adults do lie. This is particularly the case of situations where telling the truth may place the adult in a difficult position or bring bad consequences. For example, in a work-related situation the parent who lies about his or her absence at work, telling the boss that he or she is ill. Furthermore, the child is in principle told to not lie while, at one and the same time, he or she is requested to lie. White lies are an example. These are taught to the child in order to conform to rules of politeness and etiquette (Talwar and Lee 2002b). The child learns to use white lies in situations where his words may bring pain or discomfort to others. The case in point is a person asking how he or she looks while having a terrible appearance; or, where the child receives a present that he or she does not like. Although some authors are more accepting because there is no malicious intent, what is relevant is the fact that the child is taught to conceal his feelings and true opinions. This is the message that comes across, which acts against innocence—the need to refrain the self in order to placate or to avoid negative consequences, acting according to calculated patterns of behavior rather than with spontaneity. The child also learns to lie in order to conceal a transgression (Talwar and Lee 2002a). Either to protect others, to maintain social relations or to avoid punishment due to a transgression, the child learns that lying is an unavoidable part of everyday life. This puts into question the honor and probity of others and the child's own integrity. The certainty and consistency that were a part of the experience of basic trust are lost and innocence is compromised. Lying entails low self-esteem, that is, a sense of not being worthy of truly expressing the self. In turn, deceit results in a poorer sense of self-worth because of the guilt that it carries along. Dishonesty thus attacks the original sense of trust in oneself and in others so essential to innocence and spontaneity.

Attacks to the Mother

As mentioned earlier, according to the knowledge of the subtle system, the mother—or mother figure—represents the foundation of the legitimization of the child's sense of being in the world. This legitimization, however, is compromised when the child experiences or witnesses attacks to the mother. For the small child, aggression towards the main caregiver represents an assault to the basic foundation of its being in this world, and this enters in conflict with his or her innocent trust on the probity and reliability of the mother. The aggression could be inflicted upon or self-inflicted. The former is the case of the mother being attacked physically, emotionally or mentally by another person or by an agent such as illness or accident. The latter entails aggression that is caused by the mother herself by not taking enough care of her own needs. To give some examples: being attached to the child at the expense of his or her own well-being; allowing sadness or fear to control his or her own life, thus being unable to act as good enough mother. As suggested by Winnicott 'it should be noted that mothers who have it in them to provide good enough care can be enabled to do better by being cared for themselves in a way that acknowledges the essential nature of their task' (Winnicott 1960, The Role of the Maternal Care section, para. 2). The trust that the child places on the reliability of the mother is such that any attack towards the mother is experienced as an affront to her being reliable and trustful, acting indirectly to attack the child's own innocence.

Another form of attack to the mother is that imposed by the patriarchal culture. As mentioned before, the matristic is subdued by the patriarchal culture that purports an excessive attention to results and rationality over the sensual and emotional aspects of human beings. A denial of the matristic implies an attack to its qualities, which include innocence. Maturana argues that innocence 'is lost when the attention is put to the consequences of our actions and when one starts to live in the future or when in relations based on requirements one lives to attend to results' (Maturana 1991, 58–59). Innocent behavior has no place within a patriarchal framework because the child has to learn gradually to repress its innocence in order to fit within the system.

Attacks to the Spontaneous Self

As mentioned previously, spontaneity implies congruence between body, emotions, mind and spirit. When one of those aspects takes predominance

over the others, spontaneity is compromised. I will explain each of these four levels. Firstly, lack of spontaneity at the body level can be appreciated in those people who experience physical contact as threatening. This is the case of people who find it difficult to come closer to others, to be touched, hugged or caressed, whereby the spontaneous capacity in human beings to enjoy bodily contact is somewhat obstructed. On the whole, this condition responds to the fear that a painful experience from the past may repeat again, a form of embodied primal wounding. Secondly, in regards to the level of emotions, fear acts as an enemy to spontaneity. This is mainly manifested in the fear of vulnerability, which appears as a response to the possibility of being true to the self, exposing weaknesses and limitations. It is in the false self's nature to attempt to obstruct all spontaneous behavior that entails vulnerability, seeking instead a sense of predictability, certainty and control. Thirdly, at the level of the mind, ego and superego projections act against spontaneity. Behaviors learnt within certain traditions and past experiences drive the person into judgments that prevent him or her from acting spontaneously. In this case, the superego (deliberately and in advance) calculates whether a behavior or action might be appropriate according to norms and rules of behavior or according to similar circumstances previously experienced. The ego, on the other hand, acts as a mental deterrent to spontaneity when considerations about the projection of an outward image, perfection, pride or superiority take over the individual's mind. Spontaneity is compromised when attention is overwhelmingly placed on whether behavior may bring negative consequences in the future. Finally, at the spiritual level, the lack of connection to the person's inner truth prevents innocent and spontaneous behavior. As mentioned in Chap. 2, inner truth manifests as joy and awareness. When the person is unaware of and disconnected from his inner life, joy cannot sprout. Innocence can only arise when the child is aware of himself, not through mind but through the experience of deeper feelings in relation to the stimuli that come from the outside world.

Re-evaluating Creativity Based on the Qualities of the Mooladhara Chakra

I want to suggest creativity as a means to regain the spontaneity and the imagination that are lost in the process of becoming an adult. In other words, a quality that allows us to remain childlike in some of the confines of our adult life. As suggested by Montero (2003, 99) to create 'it is necessary to continue to be a child in some part of ourselves. It is convenient not to grow too much' (my translation from Spanish).

The concept of the false self (Winnicott 1965) is helpful to explain the obstruction of spontaneity. Winnicott argues that the false self is the result of the mother's failure to attend to the child's needs, which entails rejection of the child's spontaneous self by not adapting to his or her needs. Rather than continuing to express his or her needs in his or her own unprompted manner, the child is forced to adapt to the needs of those he or she is dependent on. The child learns to tame instincts within, attempting thereafter to control and manufacture a self according to what is socially accepted. This artificial self represents a significant obstacle to spontaneity. In this false self, Winnicott sees both positive and negative aspects. The unhealthy aspect of the false self comes from compliance being forced upon rather than being a matter of self-assertion. A healthy false self, on the contrary, may act as a defense of the true self by adapting to the social realm without negating the self. This may be considered 'false' in that it requires furnishing the self with some accessories to survive in the outer world. It may be healthy, nonetheless, to the extent that this does not entail annihilating the true self, acting only to keep this alive within the constraints of the social system.

I propose a re-evaluation of creativity based on the qualities of the Mooladhara chakra through the use of two main concepts—Winnicott's idea of the holding environment and the concept of self-expression. The holding environment as discussed by Winnicott (1953) is based on the idea of the good-enough mother who starts by adapting fully—or almost fully—to the infant's needs, providing a sense of control in which the baby finds comfort. Gradually, and in small steps, the good enough mother adapts less to the child's needs, contributing gradually to his or her sense of independence. Winnicott considers this sense of individuality as the moment where the child 'attains what might be called "unit status." The infant becomes a person, an individual in his own right' (Winnicott 1960, Infant Development during the Holding Phase section, para. 2). Independence is a significant factor in the creative process. Creativity arises as part of an environment where the child feels free to explore and express in independence—or sufficient independence—from others. On the contrary, the spontaneous flow of creativity stops when the individual has constraint of expression by his need to gain love or acceptance from others. For example, the person who desists on his dream of becoming an artist because his parents expect him to become something else in life. The independence required for creativity suffers also by the need to comply with social impositions arising out of conditionings such as

status, gender, class, nationality and race. Gender conditionings emerge, for instance, when a lady believes that she cannot be creative through knitting or embroidery because of complying with her status as a business woman. Or, the man experiences and understands the imposition of a gender role therefore finding it difficult to be in tune with sensual and feminine facets that could boost his creativity.

The devotion and care of the mother towards the child are preconditions for a holding environment. The care provided by the good enough-mother has various characteristics—it is reliable in terms of the mother's empathy towards the child; it is holding; it satisfies physiological needs; it protects from dangers and risks; it goes through the day and night; and it adapts to changes in the baby due to the process of growth and development (Winnicott 1960, The Role of the Maternal Care section). Winnicott goes on to suggest that there has to be some sort of continuity of the initial holding environment whereby the child, and subsequently the adult, might find such embrace in others, including siblings, family and friends. The individual may also come across, or create for himself, a holding environment later in life—at school, in the workplace or through a psychotherapeutic process. I argue that a supportive setting is a precondition to creativity. As any creation entails the risk of disapproval and rejection, a person is able to create only where there is a holding and protective net that, no matter what, will prevent the self from having a sense of falling down. Creativity requires this sense of trust acquired either by a satisfactory maternal care in early childhood and continued through to adulthood or by the ability of the adult to create such a holding environment later in life.

To create that sort of supportive setting later in life would require, in the first place, awareness of the lack of such environment. This becomes almost impossible when we consider that individuals are largely unaware of the kind of maternal care they received in their early years. Winnicott discusses the idea of the unawareness of satisfactory maternal care,

> It is axiomatic in these matters of maternal care of the holding variety that when things go well the infant has no means of knowing what is being properly provided and what is being prevented. On the other hand it is when things do not go well that the infant becomes aware, not of the failure of maternal care, but of the results, whatever they may be, of that failure; that is to say, the infant becomes aware of reacting to some impingement. As a result of success in maternal care there is built up in the infant a continuity

> of being which is the basis of ego strength; whereas the result of each failure in maternal care is that the continuity of being is interrupted by reactions to the consequences of that failure, with resultant ego-weakening. (Winnicott 1960, Unawareness of Satisfactory Maternal Care section, para. 1)

I agree with Winnicott in his idea of the unawareness of maternal care. I differ, nevertheless, in two main aspects. First, my claim is that whether things went well or not, the adults remain largely unaware of the kind of maternal care they received in their childhood. This is the basic idea that justifies the need for a process of self-review. Winnicott fails to explain the meaning of 'when things go well' and 'when things do not go well'; however, having the feeling of satisfactory maternal care might only indicate the repression of bad memories or experiences as part of a survival mechanism against the primal wounding. The second point of disagreement is that the effect of having had a good-enough-mother might indeed be entirely opposite to what Winnicott suggests. In Chap. 2, it was discussed how ego and superego are considered aspects of the mind reinforced by the patriarchal culture's oppression of the matristic. According to such conception, failure in the maternal care would strengthen ego qualities of mind and rationality, bringing about the loss of innocence. On the contrary, a holding environment would result in the weakening of the ego's tendency to rationalize while strengthening emotions and innocence, contributing indeed to the creativity of the individuals. A holding environment is thus extremely relevant in that it lays the foundation for a sense of independence and trust, which may later translate into sensual and creative qualities.

Self-expression is the second element that I suggest in the relation between innocence and creativity. The relation is twofold. First, as a manifestation of innocence, self-expression entails the impulse to be true to the inner self. Second, self-expression involves a sense of self-worth. I will discuss the latter in more detail when it comes to the qualities of the Swadishthan and the Vishudhi centers of energy. For now, it might be adequate to suggest that self-expression is only possible when the self deems itself valuable by the mere fact of being. In relation to the former, innocent self-expression entails acting that is based not on what others may think but on the innate need to put across the self, based on its self-worth. Self-expression is funneled by spontaneous and innocent behavior. This is apparent in the child who plays and expresses himself for the sake of being. Equally, the creative process arises naturally as part of the need

to manifest the self rather than from diagrams or conventions. The false self goes, to a large extent, against creativity because while psychic energy is invested in creating and sustaining a self that fits within the patriarchal culture, true creation may simply slip off. The healthy aspect of the false self, on the contrary, allows for creativity to flourish while coping with the demands of the social order. Creativity requires a high degree of unanticipated action that is a mind that is free to discover, to explore, to see what is not there and to find unimaginable connections among disparate elements. This mental attitude arises out of spontaneous and innocent behavior. Where such spontaneity is restrained by conventions, by inflexibility and by the lack of a playful spirit, creativity is curtailed.

These previous ideas about the relationship between innocence and creativity have implications for research. In order to empirically test them, it would be necessary to devise some methods to measure the extent to which blockages of innocence and spontaneity have prevented the creativity of the individuals. Research would aim at analyzing issues such as: (a) whether the individual was raised in a holding environment with the prevalence of the biology of love (Maturana 1991); (b) the extent to which this environment was successfully continued through to adulthood; and, (c) the relation of the above-mentioned aspects with the individual's expression of creativity in everyday life. As mentioned earlier, given that, on the whole, individuals are unaware of the kind of environment that surrounded them in the early years, free-association methods could be used to bring forth such unveiled content. Projective tests would also be useful in that these are a way to extract the subconscious ideas from the individual. Results obtained from individuals who considered themselves creative could subsequently be evaluated against those who do not believe themselves creative, seeking to correlate their self-concept with the circumstances that surrounded the kind of maternal care received in early childhood.

Further studies could aim at introducing certain parameters in order to draw from the individuals an evaluation of their creativity. Specifically, whether they feel independent enough to express themselves in their own right or whether, instead, their attention is excessively on the outcomes and expectations from others. And, the extent to which they feel sufficiently supported in order to create. Also, whether they tend to adapt to the impending force of the patriarchal at the expense of personal impulse or whether they are able to go back to the matristic, allowing for their sensual, emotional and creative aspects to be a part of their creation. As

well as the degree to which the individuals are able to create a holding environment for themselves in adulthood, providing a sense of nurturing, protection and care as surrogate mother of the self.

The Swadishthan Chakra: Attention, Authenticity of Desire and Surrendering

The second center of energy, the Swadishthan, is associated with qualities and abilities such as creativity, knowledge, attention, pure desire and surrendering. The chakra is placed in the aortic plexus, having control over the kidneys, liver, pancreas, spleen and lower abdomen. Although creativity and knowledge are two qualities associated to the second center of energy, in this chapter I will leave those aside. The reason for this is that creativity has already been discussed as the main theme of this book in the introductory chapter. It is also discussed in this and in subsequent chapters in connection to each of the centers of energy. Similarly, knowledge has already been analyzed in Chap. 2 as part of the concept of self-knowledge processes. Thus, the qualities and abilities of the second center of energy that will be addressed in the present chapter are—attention, pure desire and surrendering.

Attention is the psychic energy devoted to any particular task or to any stimuli registered by our sense organs. According to the knowledge of the subtle system, attention is a function of our liver. Anatomically speaking, the liver is located in the area that comprises both the Swadishthan and the Nabhi chakras. As part of the functions of the liver, fat cells are transformed into energy cells that feed the brain, making the attention in human beings possible. Two main forms of attention can be discussed in relation to the Swadishthan—focused attention and free-flowing attention. Focused attention is whereby focus can be deliberately directed to a particular objective rather than letting it randomly meander. According to the knowledge of the subtle system, this form of attention entails power of concentration, which is understood not as a mental effort but as the result of intrinsic motivation minus distracting thoughts. This is connected to the quality of authentic desire that will be discussed subsequently as part of the qualities of the Swadishthan. Focused attention is not to be achieved by exercising control over the attention because that would entail an investment of energy that could otherwise be used for other purposes. The knowledge of the subtle system indicates, on the contrary, that it is in fact necessary to train the attention to avoid its customary course (and

thus avoid the controlling thoughts from ego and superego). The fine arts, meditation and the practice of silence are some methods conducive to train the attention.

A mind full of thoughts not only distract us from our aim or from the activity that we perform, but they also take our attention to places that are not conducive to our positive self-esteem. An example would be that of an occasion where we fail in a task and our attention clings on to that. We then supplement this fact with stories about how helpless or useless we are and others' negative perception of us. We may ramble around those stories, devoting an enormous amount of energy in that. Dropping the storyline is a method I suggest to re-focus the attention. I will explain this method in greater detail in Chap. 7. For now, it may suffice to mention that attention might be trained by instructing our mind to let go of any thoughts that are not supportive to our living in the present. In such cases, the suggestion is to alert our mind by commanding it clearly and consciously to—drop the storyline! It is important to note that the suggestion to drop the storyline is not straightforward. The fact that our attention is so strongly tied to myriad thoughts does not have to do only with the individual's wandering attention. The social system contributes to that in powerful ways by bombarding our minds with manifold stimuli, as if noise were essential to our compliance with the system, averting the peace of mind necessary to create, to rebel, to transgress.

The second form of attention is free-flowing attention, which is a form of uninterested attention very relevant to creativity. It is also called uncommitted attention. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997),

> most of us have learnt to save up our attention to cope with the immediate demands of living, and have little of it to be interested in the nature of the universe, our place in the cosmos, or in anything else that will not register as a gain on our ledger of immediate goals. Yet without disinterested interest life is uninteresting. There is no room for wonder, novelty, surprise, for transcending the limits imposed by our fears and prejudices. (126)

Free-flowing attention is connected to the insider to the self. This form of attention is connected to curiosity, which can be translated into innocent attention to the world with a strong connection within. However, in as much as we are outsiders to the self, attention is predominantly focused outward, on outcomes, rationality and appropriation. Free-flowing attention, thus, is compromised. On the contrary, the insider to the self's attention

is not tied by preconceived ideas of what is to be found. Uncommitted attention is not fixed or constrained but wanders freely, thus being capable of capturing the most extraordinary in the most ordinary of life's details.

The second quality of the Swadishthan is pure desire. Desire is the propeller of our actions. To speak of purity in relation to a desire entails that such a wish has not been contaminated by superficiality or by the desire of others, but that it arises instead from the true self. For the purposes of this book, I translate this concept into authentic desire, which arises out of our being true to the self, bringing forth a sense of self-worth. This sense of self-respect emerges from an internal coherence given by being true to form. It is important to notice that not only is authenticity a source of self-worth, but self-worth is in turn a source of authenticity. Where a sense of self-worth prevails, the sheer fact of being validates our being true to the self. Subsequently, disguising or hiding the true self becomes unnecessary.

We have discussed how processes of socialization bring about the outsideness of the individuals. It may be worth questioning, hence, the extent to which, as part of such condition, an individual may be able to be true to the self. Goffman (1963) suggests that authenticity includes both 'a *subjective* [my italics] sense of what the true self is, as well as the individual's *subjective* [my italics] emotional *experience* [my italics] of being true or untrue to that self' (quoted in Vannini and Franzese 2008, Theoretical Perspectives on Authenticity section, para. 4). Goffman brings to the fore two significant aspects—the subjective aspect that authenticity entails and the fact that authenticity manifests at the level of experience. There are no objective parameters to judge authenticity, but only the individual's own subjectivity. The factors from where the individual may draw in order to form such subjective sense of authenticity may be either internal or external, but the sense of authenticity belongs, in the last instance, to the subject. This aspect has been addressed by theorists who have discussed whether authenticity is self-referential or other referential. Vannini and Franzese suggest that 'authenticity, as a product of the symbolic-interactionist tradition, must take self and other into account. Whether others agree on your authentic existence is irrelevant, but it does influence how we relate to others. Authenticity influences not only self-views, but how we negotiate interactions in which self-views are at stake' (Anton 2001, quoted in Vannini and Franzese 2008, Authenticity as Self or Other Referential section, para. 1). This suggests that authenticity might be, to a certain extent, affected by the judgment passed on by others, but the

sense of it is, in the last instance, an inner experience. Unlike sincerity, authenticity cannot be judged from outside.

The preceding ideas are helpful to explain the concept of authentic desire. An authentic desire is the individual's sense that an aspiration is his own and that this has not been tainted by superfluous wishes or by the desires of others. This entails the subjective experience of being true to the self and to its desires, which brings forth a sense of self-worth. Creativity unfolds based on this inner propelling force.

Surrendering is also an aspect associated with the second center of energy. The concept of surrendering is useful to suggest the capacity to let go, to entrust or to give up in favor of something else, which in the case of the second chakra entails a surrendering to our authentic desires. In addition, the Oxford English Dictionary states that to surrender means 'to give in to' (that is a powerful emotion or influence). From this point of view, surrendering entails relinquishing control, giving in to our authentic desires and motivations. It is possible, thus, to establish a link between authentic desire and surrendering, whereby to be true to the self entails the act of giving in to our inner life, handing over our thoughts in favor of our genuine desires.

Blockage of Attention, Pure Desire and Surrendering

This center of energy is affected by over-thinking and over-planning. Excessive thoughts and planning take so much of our psychic energy that attention is compromised. When we think too much, we are affected by superego conditionings and by ego projections. The superego entails a fixation of our attention to the past, whereby unconscious fears that arise from previous experiences have the power to dominate the individual. Due to excessive superego, the person is controlled—and even paralyzed—with fear that comes from thoughts of inadequacy, incompetence and inability. Accordingly, he or she holds onto conditionings, traditions and norms, taking shelter in his or her window of tolerance or comfort zone. The person who is dominated by superego is fixated in the past and, frightened by the possibility of painful experiences repeating again, turns to attending to the desires of others. A customary tendency in this case is to let others take control, accommodating one's desires to those of the other. Thoughts coming from ego, on the contrary, tend to aggrandize the self-image. When ego takes over, the individual is not controlled, but it seeks to control. Ego entails an attempt to control not only results and outcomes but

also other people. Instead of 'going with the flow', the individual tries to be in charge and to produce specific outcomes, responding to superfluous desires such as social status, financial rewards and outward recognition. Both ego and superego entail issues of control—letting others take control or attempting to control others—that act as deterrent to pure desire and surrendering. The individual's authentic desires are blocked as these cannot emerge: either from the delusions of the superego, or from the illusions of the ego.

The qualities of this center of energy are also blocked when we push our actions beyond that which naturally suits our deepest self. Deadlines, timetables, fast lifestyle and non-stop social requirements conspire against pure desire because attention is devoted in extreme towards outward factors. In order to attend to all of that, authentic desires recede and go inadvertent. Such weight brings forth anger, which is one of the main enemies of this chakra. Since the true self is being compromised by unauthentic desires and outward constraints, a sense of irritation takes over. Much of what is commonly experienced as anger towards others is indeed displeasure that comes from being oblivious to the inner self's genuine desires.

Lastly, when our aesthetic needs are not satisfied, the qualities of this center of energy suffer too. Aesthetic needs occupy a high position in Maslow's pyramid of needs and are considered a part of self-actualization. These, however, are sometimes neglected or undervalued based on the predominance of other needs, such as physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, and esteem. The lack of or little attention paid to our aesthetic needs brings a sense of dullness in the person. When the sense of beauty brought forth by the arts is missing, the everyday lacks a spark. The attention thus remains largely tied by day-to-day, matter-of-fact issues without being able to ascend in the scale of needs.

Re-evaluating Creativity Based on the Qualities of the Swadishthan

Creativity entails self-reflection—the possibility to see oneself through our creation as in a mirror, understanding our deepest self based on the image that is being reflected. Attention is an important aspect of the ability of self-reflection. Only when the attention is taken inwards, it is possible to cast back on the self that creates. On the contrary, when attention wanders outwards, self-reflection is compromised. The attention that facilitates self-reflection is one where unnecessary thoughts of ego and superego

are dropped. This form of attention has the potential to connect us with the source of inspiration. Although insight might be present at different points in life, this might be easily missed while the attention roams from thought to thought. The two forms of attention discussed earlier, free-flowing and focused, are relevant to allow for inspiration to land on us. Free-flowing attention widens the scope of things that we perceive from the world. This entails an attitude of openness, whereby the flux of our attention may take us to unimaginable places. As mentioned earlier, the comfort zone prevents true creativity from emerging. Free-flowing attention is a means to leave such window of tolerance and to explore unsuspected realms of the world. Focused attention, on the other hand, allows us to follow our insights and to dedicate as much of our psychic energy to that as might be required. Focused attention casts light onto our creative potential, building up on that as the basis of our creation.

Creativity, from the point of view of the Swadishthan chakra, is a means to our true desires. The creative process cannot reach its full potential out of superfluous desires or based on attempts to satisfy the desires of others. Instead, its highest form arises from the person's authentic desire to express the inner self, giving way to the creative energy stored in the Swadishthan. Such pure desire cannot be equated to that of becoming a great artist, a brilliant scientist, an outstanding academic or a talented designer. Instead, it responds to an inner drive for self-expression by which one is able to surrender oneself to the force of inspiration. That is what true creativity entails, to be moved or taken like the brush of the painter across the canvas or like the marionette that dances and swings on the stage, having relinquished control of any of that.

The authentic desire for creativity seeks neither to aggrandize the vanity and self-centeredness of the ego nor to compensate for the fragility, fears and insecurity of the superego. The search is not for love and acceptance but rather for the realization of the pure desire to express the self. When the individual's need for self-expression is not satisfied and when the creative potential is not realized, this tends to manifest as anger. Anger arises out of an unfulfilled human potential. A useful analogy can be taken from nature. A tree creates its own foliage and leaves and offers them to the environment. When autumn arrives, the tree is prepared to let go of its leaves. Later, in spring, the tree recreates them once again in accordance of its own nature, rather than from a caprice. If, at any point, the branches of the tree were to be permanently tied up, blocking the regeneration of its leaves, the tree would lose its potential to create foliage. The same happens

with human beings when superfluous desires or the desire to please others interfere with the authentic desire to create and expand. In the preceding example, the tree would simply die. In human beings, one of the forms in which this unfulfilled potential expresses is through anger. Such anger is often vented in unconnected circumstances of life, with the individuals neither being able to track down the origins of their wrath nor capable of controlling it. Based on the authentic desire for self-expression, human beings have the potential to surpass the fears and self-doubts of the super-ego and to go beyond the vanity and arrogance of the ego, responding instead to a sense of inner consistency at both personal and social levels.

At a personal level, the idea of authentic desire may be explained through the concept of motivation. The investment theory has shown that motivation plays an important role in the creative process. According to Nickerson (2009), there are mainly two kinds of motivations—intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from the individual: passion, purpose, patience or devotion. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is stimulated by external factors such as rewards or a desire to please others. A high level of intrinsic motivation and relatively low level of extrinsic motivation is the best formula to enhance creativity. In other words, based on their interests, people become more creative and they are more willing to try original ideas. Research has demonstrated that, on the whole, extrinsic motivation is harmful to the creative process and that the enhancement of creativity is possible only when intrinsic motivation is stimulated (Collins and Amabile 2009). The assumption is that extrinsic motivation leads to the loss of interest, resulting, finally, in the decrease of the necessary autonomy to do things creatively (Hennessey and Amabile 1988).

Using the terminology of the qualities of the second center of energy, an authentic desire has the power to propel high-level intrinsic motivation, whereas all superfluous desires decrease motivation to create. To seek answers to our own questions and to respond to our personal curiosity are both authentic desires that have the power to propel creativity. When creativity originates from an authentic desire, the mere act of creation is rewarding, satisfying our need of self-respect. In contrast, desires such as outward recognition, fame, financial rewards and the desire to please others all tend to be ephemeral in the satisfaction of the self's sense of worth.

At a social level, the idea of authentic desire is also relevant to creativity. Maturana (1991, 237–238) suggests the history of Humanity does not follow the course of economics nor the course of resources […]. The history of Humanity follows the course of desires, of the kind of life we

wish to live because our desires are the ones that will determine what is a resource and what is not, what is a need and what is not' (my translation from Spanish). The idea of authentic desire might thus be accountable for all that has been achieved in our societies—the greatest technological advances, the peak scientific discoveries, the most sublime forms of art. The same idea, nonetheless, poses the question as to how we have also created a world characterized by conflict, violence, delinquency, hatred, discrimination and other such maladies. It could be possible to argue that due to the overwhelming prevalence of the condition of the outsider to the self, this is indeed the kind of world that we might have brought into being due to our deficiency to contact with our authentic desires. Even further, we might be able to venture a hypothesis that, most likely, the societies that we have shaped based on our outsideness have unconsciously worked as a means to sabotage our collective creative potential. The latter, when realized, is an expression of the whole range of qualities of the chakras of the subtle system, having an impact not only on advancements in technology, science and art but also on the inner quality of human beings. This, however, has fallen short of being accomplished.

As discussed earlier, in order to follow an authentic desire, surrendering is a fundamental quality. Applied to creativity, this means to yield to our genuine desire to create regardless of outcomes. At a mental level, this may seem incongruent. We have been trained to think of goals and of deliverables in order to achieve what we want. Surrendering, however, entails a sense of trust despite the apparent dismissive attitude towards outcomes. The moment that there is an effort to rationalize what is being created based on the consideration to results, the creative process loses its flow. When we think, our ideas are contaminated by ego and superego projections. On the contrary, creativity emerges when we give up unnecessary thoughts and we surrender to our creative impulse. The stream of creativity is to be felt and experienced rather than understood. Creativity as explored from the qualities of the second center of energy requires a space beyond thought, which at the rational level might not make much sense but that represents the unstructured platform that facilitates the flow of the creative stream. This space provides an unusual form of awareness, that is thoughtless awareness, as opposed to the conscious awareness of ego and superego. I will elaborate further on the state of thoughtless awareness in Chap. 5, where I discuss the qualities of the seventh center of energy, the Sahasrara. At this stage, though, it is important to indicate that this form of awareness means going above and beyond the stream of

thoughts of ego and superego, surrendering instead to the authority of our inner voice. Thoughtless awareness entails giving up our customary thoughts and handing over our creative potential to our inspiration. In other words, to renounce the patriarchal in favor of the matristic, entrusting our creativeness not to the dictates of our mind but to the flow of our emotions and authentic desires.

The preceding discussion brings forth implications for research, particularly in relation to the authenticity of the individual's desires. Research on this could explore whether creative individuals are able to identify their authentic desires and the extent to which they are able to follow such desires with more ease as compared to individuals who do not deem themselves creative. An exploration of various response patterns associated to anger could also be the focus of further studies in order to determine the extent to which anger can be connected to the unfulfilled need of self-expression. Self-report inventory could be used for the measurement of both authentic desires and anger responses associated to lack of self-expression. Research to establish the correlation between attention and creativity would be something to consider too. Tests designed to measure attention could be correlated with individuals' self-reports on creativity and with further measurements of personality traits connected to creativity.

The Nabhi Chakra: Contentment and Balance

The Nabhi chakra, located in the solar plexus, looks after liver, stomach, intestines, spleen and pancreas. This center is linked to nutrition, food, household matters, family and work-related issues. A sense of restlessness lies at the core of this chakra. The agitation arises from a discrepancy between inner and outer worlds, where the deepest self's needs do not find correspondence with what the outer world presents as needs that ought to be satisfied. This sense of restlessness is neither positive nor negative. The response to it, however, may bring either constructive or destructive aspects to everyday life. Creativity is a positive aspect that emerges out of such sense of restlessness. Contrariwise, excess ambition reveals the destructive effects of this sense of agitation. In this chapter, I will discuss both of these facets.

Contentment, the first quality associated with this chakra, is related to a 'source of satisfaction or pleasure; a pleasure, enjoyment, delight' (Oxford English Dictionary). Maslow's pyramid of needs illuminates a general sense of dissatisfaction in human beings, which acts against contentment.

This is what he calls deficits or deficiency needs (Maslow 1987, 1999). According to Maslow, the following are deficiency needs: physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, and respect and self-esteem. In order to appease those needs, the individual should resort to external resources and other human beings. Maslow (1999) considers that,

> deficiency-need gratification tends to be episodic and climatic. The most frequent schema here begins with an instigating, motivating state which sets off motivated behavior designed to achieve a goal-state, which, mounting gradually and steadily in desire and excitement, finally reaches a peak in a moment of success and consummation. From this peak curve of desire, excitement pleasure falls rapidly to a plateau of quiet tension-release, and lack of motivation. (38–39)

These needs are compartmentalized, each of them requiring a different means of satisfaction. Maslow also discusses what he calls growth needs. Unlike deficiency needs, growth needs tend towards integration as they seek development, perfection and fulfillment of the person's inner possibilities. The need for self-actualization is the prototype of those needs. In contrast to deficiency needs that require satisfaction based on external factors, growth needs are satisfied from within. Maslow suggests that satisfaction of deficiency needs is flickering and evasive. Growth needs are more closely related to long-lasting contentment, which arises out of the search for an acceptance of the self as a whole. The sense of inner contentment emerges as the self strives to integrate all aspects—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. Similar to the concept of processes of self-knowledge explained in Chap. 2, the satisfaction of growth needs might be better defined as a series of processes rather than as an outcome.

Growth needs represent an attempt to bridge the outsider and the insider to the self, an endeavor for which personal will, agency and courage are required. To establish a link between inner and outer worlds is possible only by accepting and getting to know inner aspects that had been earlier rejected and cast away into the shadow. To have an understanding of the wholeness of self allows for the recognition of such completeness in others. That is, self-acceptance prepares us to understand others as they hide behind the fortress of their shadow, just as much as we do. Self-approval of inner strengths and weaknesses, thus, becomes a means to be more content in our interactions with others as we acknowledge that, although in different ways and to a different extent, the shadow is a mechanism that

acts in all human beings. Contentment, thus, is a form of befriending who we are and who others are, that is, a means to relate to things as they are, within and without. Contentment is an attitude of welcoming everything that comes our way, whether it looks good or bad and whether it feels right or wrong.

I have discussed before the ability of attention in relation to the second center, the Swadishthan. Attention can also be analyzed in connection to the qualities of the Nabhi chakra, particularly in relation to our needs. Basic needs, such as the physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem are inherently connected to our instincts. These constantly demand a great amount of outward attention and in human beings there is a proclivity to tie their attention to those needs. The extent to which deficiency needs take hold of our attention affects the condition of the Nabhi chakra and the possibility to attain contentment. When those needs are satisfied or largely satisfied, it is possible to take the attention further into the satisfaction of higher needs. It is also possible, nonetheless, to shift the focus of attention to growth needs even when deficiency needs are not fully satisfied. Long-lasting satisfaction indeed has nothing to do with the extent to which basic needs might be satisfied but with the degree of the attention placed on them. Attention to growth needs might be a useful route to diminish the attention placed on basic needs.

An additional quality of the third energy center is balance. The Oxford English Dictionary defines balance as a 'general harmony between the parts of anything, springing from the observance of just proportion and relation'. Similarly, according to the subtle system, balance entails the satisfying arrangement and proportion between the different aspects of human beings, which provides a sense of harmony within and without. To speak of balance means acceptance of and attention to all facets—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. By and large, the physical and mental aspects of human beings tend to be prioritized. The emotional, on the other hand, is overshadowed by excess rationality, while the spiritual is rejected largely because of this aspect being misunderstood. Taken to mean 'religious', the spiritual has been overridden by an emphasis on the prosaic and the secular. Spirit, however, as explained in the introductory chapter, is understood as an inner truth that sustains a positive order based on the individual's awareness, and pure joy does not necessarily entail the mystic and the transcendental. Balance thus involves an agreeable fulfillment of human needs in relation to all four aspects in human beings. This includes attention to both deficiency and growth needs and a recession of

the antagonism between inner and outer worlds. Balance means an agreement or, at any rate, a dialogue between the outsider and the insider to the self. Finally, it presupposes an adequate proportion of ego and superego, or in other words, evenness between desire and action.

When the myriad aspects of our being are in balance, what comes forth is a sense of quietness. Silence emerges when the struggle for inner consistency stops. The many voices in our minds are conflicting and disquieting. On the one hand, the voice of our ego seeks outward recognition, on the other hand, the myriad voices of our superego strive to gain the compassion of others. Silence is also experienced when roaring deficiency needs are able to be put to rest and we ascend in the pyramid of needs towards growth needs. Silence is a state that is connected to contentment and peace, both of which arise as part of the qualities of the Nabhi chakra.

Blockage of Contentment and Balance

Contentment is blocked by ambition and greed. The restlessness that characterizes this center of energy is the representation of an inner lack. It is the expression of the loss of our original sense of self-worth due to primal wounding. Although parents might be accountable for such primal wounding, the responsibility for healing this injury, later in life, can no longer be placed on those who caused it but on the individual who carries it. The wounding can only be cured from within and it is the duty of each individual to heal it through the fulfillment of our need to grow out of primal wounding—to actualize the self. This is, ultimately, the most thriving of our needs, although one of the most imperceptible.

As mentioned earlier, individuals have an inner tendency to avoid contact with the wounding and thus with the inner realm's most profound need to grow out of the wounding. The social world becomes the ultimate space to remain outsiders to that. Furthermore, the system constantly reinforces our outsideness, proposing alternative formulas based on appropriation, relations and achievements. A sense of insatiability arises as these means of satisfaction are inevitably constricted by external factors. In the case of the appropriation, this is limited by form, quantity and decay. In the case of relationships, the complex interrelation of unhealed primal wounds brings forth conflict and disappointment. Finally, when it comes to achievements, these can never provide the sense of accomplishment truly sought by the inner self, which is to overcome the primal wounding. External gratification, on the whole, whether coming from matter or

from people, cannot compensate for the lack of attention to our inner life. When we seek a sense of self-worth in the outer world, nothing is sufficient. That is why superfluous desires become insatiable. The episodic and climatic curve proposed by Maslow (1999) is helpful to understand the ephemeral nature of the sense of satisfaction achieved in the individuals who strive to appease deficiency needs. The interplay of complex sociological forces that stimulate craving results in the evasiveness of long-lasting satisfaction. While one need is satisfied, subsequent needs arise, bringing about constant dissatisfaction and lack of peace. It may be possible to hypothesize that the larger the distance created between the self and the primal wounding, the larger the ambition for external satisfaction and the more evasive the sense of contentment is.

The difficulty in experiencing a state of contentment can also be explained through Maturana's notion of the matristic versus the patriarchal (1991). The matristic is guided by love, collaboration, sharing, mutual respect and acceptance of self and other. These attitudes are conducive to contentment because, within such framework, to satisfy the needs of both self and others does not call for fighting. In contrast, the patriarchal, based on competition, appropriation, domination and negation of the other, entails struggle, which becomes the antithesis to contentment.

Balance in everyday life is also compromised when the scale of priorities in the individuals' lives bends heavily towards attention to body and mind while emotions and spirit are dismissed. This also holds true for the extreme attention given to deficiency needs over growth needs. I argue that when attention is directed to lower needs, the degree of contentment that the person may experience in life tends to decrease. Satisfaction of deficiency needs is evasive because of the ever-changing nature of the outer world and because those needs are insatiable per se. Attention to those needs is disturbing and finds no rest.

The interplay between ego and superego also plays a role in the blockage of the qualities of the Nabhi chakra, bringing imbalance to our lives. As these two entities take control of the mind in the form of thoughts from past and future, true experience of the present, which represents the balance between the two, evades the individuals. Although a common discourse is that of being in the here and now, there is by and large no understanding of how this might be attained. In addition, balance is jeopardized by stress, which emerges out of the disproportionate demands placed on the individual by the social order. Lack of balance among all aspects in human beings tends to materialize as illness, stress, depression, eating disorders,

insomnia and other such ailments that prevent the individuals from experiencing peace. The idea of peace, nonetheless, remains no more than an ideal and a wishful thought for the majority of the individuals. It is a mythical construct, with very few individuals having truly experienced an authentic peace within.

Re-evaluating Creativity Based on the Qualities of the Nabhi Chakra

The restlessness that characterizes this center of energy manifests as dissatisfaction with the status quo. It entails resistance to admit life as it is presented by the social world and a desire to introduce change in a patriarchal order of things that negates significant aspects of being. Restlessness is, in that sense, a propeller of creativity. From this point of view, creativity might be explained as the energy that arises out of the desire to question the stability of things and to introduce change. Excessive ambition or greed, however, has the power to kill creativity. When the aim of creativity is to bring forth the perfect piece of work, the state of the art in innovation or to achieve the most advanced scientific discovery, the naturalness of the creative impulse recedes in favor of thoughts about how to accomplish such ambitious goals. This also holds true for cases where attention is placed on fame, prestige or external rewards.

A useful allegory that explains the relation of the qualities of the Nabhi chakra with creativity comes from issues of nutrition and food, which are also connected with this center of energy. Nutrition requires a balance between consumption, assimilation and elimination. In order to create, it is necessary to strike up a balance between what we receive from the outer world, what we retain from this and what we may discard. In a similar way, creativity is nurturing, thus, the acceptance of new ideas and concepts and the possibility to assimilate them—digest them—becomes essential. As much as creativity contributes to nourish others, it is also self-nurturing. This destabilizes Maturana's idea (1991) discussed in Chap. 1 whereby creativity is seen as a gift from the community, which judges our work and labels it as creative.

Creativity might be re-evaluated based on the concept of contentment elaborated as part of the qualities of the Nabhi chakra. Contentment, or lack of contentment for that matter, affects creativity in that an enormous amount of energy tends to be devoted to bring gratification to the individuals' lives rather than for creation. The energy that is invested in such

an endeavor may be considered to some extent as 'creative energy' in that it aims, through various means, to create a sense of satisfaction. The means to achieve that, however, evade the individual. This is due to the fact that resources are sought outwardly on matter and on other people, while the true source of satisfaction that lies within is overlooked. Lack of contentment decreases the creative potential of the individual and anxiety comes to the fore. In relation to contentment, creativity calls for silence. It is well known the need that creative people have to seclude themselves from the constant bombardment that comes from the outer world. This is a way to bring quietness without. It is also a means towards silencing the manifold voices within-ego and superego-in order to allow for the voice of inspiration to be heard. Silence, thus, is a means towards the achievement of a sense of serenity required to allow the creative stream to flow.

It is also possible to suggest a re-evaluation of creativity based on the notion of balance. Balance is conducive to creativity in that the latter, in its purest form, may only arise out of a dialogue between all aspects of our being—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. Creativity might be fostered thus through an agreeable arrangement of these aspects as a fourfold process. First, that our body and sensual experiences are the first point of contact with the outward stimuli that nourishes our imagination. Second, our emotions bring inner aspects that provide the range of tastes of our myriad experiences. Third, our mind assimilates the knowledge of the appropriate domain. Lastly, the spirit, as inner truth, blends all of that into a new form, giving way to the voice of inspiration.

The analysis of the qualities of the Nabhi chakra brings forth possibilities for research that might illuminate on relevant aspects. Studies about creativity could benefit from an analysis of the extent to which the obstruction of creativity in the individuals might be connected to an imbalance in the attention given to the four aspects of life—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. This could be revealed though the use of self-report inventory. Projective tests, on the other hand, could be used to measure the degree to which a person's mind is dominated by thoughts from ego or superego, preventing the experience of the quality of the present. Creativity seen through the framework of the Nabhi chakra may also invite studies concerning the predominant needs that creative individuals aim to appease through their creations and whether they are able to identify the thriving need for self-growth.

An interesting research strand could aim at investigating the extent to which the satisfaction of deficiency needs may have an impact on the actualization

of the creative potential of the individuals. Studies could look into the lives of creative individuals, seeking to determine the correlation between the satisfaction of both deficiency needs and growth needs with creativity. This could be achieved through a process of interviews or via self-report inventory. Research could thus explore the extent to which creative individuals consider that the satisfaction of deficiency needs has allowed them to explore higher needs, or whether it has been by means of shifting the focus of their attention that they are able to be more creative, despite lacking satisfaction of more basic needs. Results could subsequently be compared to those reported by individuals who consider that their creative potential is somewhat blocked.

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CHAPTER 4

Re-evaluating Creativity: A Step Further in the Review of the Self

The re-evaluation of creativity based on a process of self-review proposed in this book involves rising further in the scale of the subtle system. In this chapter, I discuss the fourth and fifth of the centers of energy, namely, the Anahata and the Vishudhi. As I did in the preceding chapter, I first discuss the qualities of the chakras; then I analyze some of the conditions that have contributed to obstructing the manifestation of the chakras; and finally I re-evaluate creativity based on the discussed qualities, proposing some implications for research. As in Chap. 3, the present chapter concedes the individual's power to resist being controlled by the social order, precisely by embarking on a constant process of self-analysis that brings forth awareness.

The Anahata Chakra: Confidence and Responsibility

The Anahata chakra, which is the fourth center of energy, is located in the cardiac plexus and it looks after the heart and lungs. Love is one of the main qualities of the Anahata. Nonetheless, in this chapter this quality will not be explained in great detail. The reason for this is that love is also considered an important method for unblocking creativity through education. Thus, in order to avoid repetition, a more in-depth discussion of this quality is kept to Chap. 7. For now, it may suffice to mention that the concept of love used here coincides with that suggested by Maturana. According to Maturana (1991), love arises out of the basic relation of care, trust and mutual legitimacy established

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with the mother or mother figure. He suggests that love consists of 'the actions that constitute the other as legitimate in the interaction with us' (Maturana 1991, 239—my translation from Spanish). This is what Maturana calls the biology of loving, which validates play, sensuality, emotions, sharing and cooperation. In addition to such a sense of legitimization of self and other, love is connected to self-knowledge. According to Nirmala Devi, 'to know the self is to love. If you know the self, you will know love. Love gives you a complete idea about yourself, what am I? What problems I have? Why do I create problems?' (Nirmala Devi 2002). I will now move on to a discussion of two further qualities associated with this center—confidence and responsibility.

The Oxford English Dictionary provides several definitions for the word confidence. The one that best suits the purposes of this book is that of 'feeling sure or certain of a fact or issue; assurance, certitude; assured expectation'. Confidence is significantly linked to the concept of basic trust examined in Chap. 3 in relation to the Mooladhara chakra. As was discussed, this primary trust emerges from the reliability of the mother or mother figure. This is what Winnicott calls the potential space. The potential space refers to 'the capacity of the infant to tolerate the caretaker being away in time as well as in space' (Giddens 1990, 96). The potential space represents the basis of the child's sense of autonomy, which results in the development, later in life, of the quality of self-confidence. Glassman and Hadad (2004) consider confidence as an attitude that allows individuals to have positive views of themselves and their capabilities. The individual differentiates between confidence and arrogance, where the latter is essentially an excessive belief in one's own abilities that interferes with the individual's recognition of the others' worth. This is the idea associated to self-confidence as a quality of the Anahata chakra—a form of faith in oneself that does not entail ego but dharma. Based on the latter, self-confidence might be interpreted as a personal belief in oneself that sustains a positive order within and without.

Confidence as a quality of the Anahata chakra is not only associated to faith in one's abilities but, as mentioned before, it also entails a more basic sense of trust and security. Giddens' concept of ontological security is helpful to understand such meaning. According to Giddens (1990), ontological security refers to,

> the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material

> environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security.… [It] has to do with 'being' or, the terms of phenomenology, 'being-in-the-world'. (92)

Giddens (ibid) goes on to suggest that ontological security is not cognitive but emotional. This precisely refers to the idea of confidence suggested by the knowledge of the subtle system—something to be felt and experienced rather than learnt. This entails a state of trust not only in oneself but in the surrounding circumstances, regardless of how these may unravel. According to Giddens, the reliability, care and nourishment of the caregiver represents the basis of this sense of ontological security. This prepares the child, and later on the adult, to cope with the uncertainty and constant threats of the world.

The knowledge of the subtle system points to a similar direction, connecting confidence to aspects considered by Jung as the mother archetype. This original model entails goddess-like qualities, which provide a greater sense of reliability on the mother figure as this is representative of the power to destroy negative forces that attack her children. Giddens considers that the care and consistency of the caretaker provides an 'emotional inoculation' (ibid, 94) that protects the individuals from the anxieties generated by their being in the world. I do not agree with Giddens in that favorable maternal care has the potential to make the individuals immune to such threats. Regardless of the amount of good care received by the child, the challenges that the outside world presents to individuals continually shake their sense of security. This justifies further the process of self-review suggested in this book as a means to constantly renew and revitalize feelings of trust.

Theorists of the object-relations approach such as Erikson (1995) and Winnicott (1960) suggest that basic trust has a dual aspect—a feeling of trust in others that sprouts from the child´s experience of the mother or mother figure's reliability and a sense of trustworthiness that emerges from the latter's expectation of consistency on the part of the child's behavior. Due to the strong connection between the two, the child's inner trustworthiness mirrors the reliability of the mother. Adequate care from the latter reflects the child's sense of trustworthiness. On the contrary, where such sense of consistency is missing, trustworthiness is compromised.

Thus, parents' attitudes are crucial to children's feelings of trustworthiness and ontological security. A precondition to develop self-confidence is

to love and accept the child unreservedly, which entails a total acceptance of the child's identity. This unconditional positive regard (Rogers 1959, 208) subsequently translates into self-acceptance, providing the basis to develop good feelings about oneself in every situation in life. In terms of confidence, unconditional positive regard builds up what Rogers calls organismic trust, which allows the acceptance of feelings and thoughts as they unravel, without the need to repress or rationalize. This systemic form of trust involves acceptance of all emotions, from joy, love and compassion to embarrassment, anger and sadness.

Adler's individual psychology is helpful to understand how self-confidence is connected to earlier experiences in the individual's life. A basic idea in Adler's individual psychology is the inferiority complex. Adler (1927) suggests that,

> everybody is also perceiving and judging his own way and answer and strives to complete and to accomplish his own totality, always confronted, always asked and driven by the lasting gaping blank between his individual solutions and the full completion of his life. We can understand that in this way there is always living and stimulating a feeling of inferiority. (117)

Adler examines ways in which this feeling of inferiority seeks compensation and strives for superiority. According to Adler, the inferiority complex is common to all children. In some cases, however, this is more fixed and exalted, for example, in children with organic deficiencies, spoiled children and hated children. In those children, the inferiority complex derives from neurotic symptoms, lack of social feelings, fighting, hesitating and escaping. In less extreme cases, the inferiority complex drives children and, later on adults, into striving for compensation, seeking to gain mastery over the inferiority complex by constantly focusing on tangible goals. Wherever goals are realistic, the individual experiences a sense of self-confidence. When goals go beyond the individual's abilities, lack of confidence ensues.

The second quality of the Anahata chakra that is analyzed in this chapter is responsibility. Although this word has several meanings, I will focus only on two. First, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, this is 'the state or fact of being in charge of or of having a duty towards a person or thing; obligation'. The idea that responsibility means being in charge of someone is problematic. I will refer to this in my discussion about the obstruction of the qualities of the Anahata. I would like to point to a different connotation of the word responsibility—first and foremost, a sense

of responsibility for the self, which opens the space for an outward responsibility that acts by itself. Self-responsibility entails a duty to respond to our inner life, being accountable for our thoughts, emotions, decisions and actions as well as for the consequences of all of that.

A second meaning of the word responsibility suggested by the Oxford English Dictionary is 'a moral obligation to behave correctly towards or in respect of a person or thing'. This meaning fits with that associated to the Anahata chakra. Responsibility entails the idea of boundaries of good conduct largely established by the father figure. Considered as an archetype, the father or father figure is the one who provides a sense of limits and good conduct. In that sense, responsibility means acting in accordance to the norms of good conduct adopted inwardly as a reflection of the father principle. Self-responsibility implies the possibility to establish boundaries according to one's own sense of what is right and what is wrong, keeping at one and the same time a duty towards others. Here is where, as a by-product of self-responsibility, we are able to show our duty towards others.

It is not that we are responsible for the other but that, in full exercise of our sense of self-responsibility, we choose to care for others and to have a duty towards them. Therefore, self-responsibility is not selfish. It does entail a duty towards the self, so that taking responsibility for others can be also a part of our sense of self-responsibility. In other words, the act of responding to the self without losing sight of others. This agrees with Maturana's idea that 'we are responsible when we become aware, in our reflection, of the consequences of our actions and whether we want those consequences, and when we act according to that wanting or not wanting' (Maturana 1991, 243—my translation from Spanish). Maturana's suggestion is basically connected to the quality of discretion in human beings. Through discretion, one is capable of determining what responsibilities one is ready to take while accepting the consequences of those choices.

The fact that one might be responsible only for oneself leads to the fact that, in as much as parents are accountable for the satisfaction of their progeny's needs, children are responsible for their perception of the paternal care received. This includes our awareness—or lack of awareness—of the primal wounding. I argue that self-responsibility involves a duty towards healing one's own primal wounding. This means that, regardless of the kind of maternal care that we might have received in early childhood and of the type of primordial injury that might have been inflicted upon us, the adults are responsible for the construction—and reconstruction—of their identities throughout their lives.

As discussed with respect to the Swadishthan chakra, desire is the propelling force of our actions. Self-responsibility entails accountability for our authentic desire for growth and for the materialization—or not—of this desire in our lives. Self-responsibility is thus connected with a sense of inner authority, which means that regardless of how conscious or unconscious the process of identity creation might be in us, we are accountable for whatsoever emerges out of our own development. Despite the fact that external factors do have a powerful influence, we are to be held responsible for our lives. This form of responsibility is a natural response of the self towards its being in the world, thus, it does not, or should not, entail a burden but a sense of inner consistency.

Responsibility implies acceptance of our true self, recognizing the mechanisms that have allowed for the creation and sustenance of our false self in order to survive in the patriarchal society. This brings forth an understanding of how our false self has provided the necessary conditions for us to survive in the social world, taking responsibility at the same time for the actualization of the true self's potential within such overarching conditions. The meaning we give to our experiences thus depends neither on others nor on outward circumstances but on the self who lives through those experiences. Subsequently, responsibility leads to a power to act and change that which requires alteration, opening up the possibility to be creative in and for our lives.

Responsibility as seen from the perspective of the Anahata chakra entails that this executes, manifests and acts by itself without it being a strain on the individual. This is possible only when responsibility is linked to confidence and to ontological security. Where self-identity is not threatened, but on the contrary is maintained by a sense of reliability on inward and outward conditions, responsibility can be executed with no burden on the self. However, it will be analyzed how responsibility is rarely experienced as burden-free, representing instead a heavy weight on the individuals.

The Blockage of Confidence and Responsibility

As mentioned earlier, although I agree with Giddens (1990) in that maternal care provides—within optimal conditions—a reservoir of protection, my argument is that no amount of inoculation is sufficient to protect the child entering into contact with the challenges and upheavals of the outer world. Closely linked to this idea is Nirmala Devi's suggestion that the Anahata is built up by antibodies that are prepared to fight any external

attacks (Nirmala Devi 1997). She goes on to argue that the constant turmoil of the world and the high demands placed on the individual tend to diminish the number of antibodies, bringing forth insecurity and lack of trustworthiness. Fear emerges as the patriarchal culture—with its emphasis on rationalization, competition, calculation and results—threatens the child's sense of ontological security. An element against this is the fact that, in order to fit in, the child is compelled to repress or deny the emotional, sensitive and intuitive aspects of the self, which are all too familiar. The prioritization of rationality and the negation of emotions entail that love, as a foundation of the human condition, is compromised. The individual learns to be alert rather than trustful and to dwell on logic as opposed to love. Intuition, a natural quality in human beings that requires a high degree of trust, that is faith in one's inner sense without material evidence, is substituted by constant calculation of risks and benefits, taking up a considerable amount of the individual's psychic energy.

Parents contribute in manifold ways to the blockage, not only of self-confidence but also of the inner sense of ontological security. Not only the over-critical parent but also the overprotective one contributes to reducing the child's sense of trustworthiness, which results in the child's inability to deal with reality. The interaction with a contemptuous parent creates a feeling of anxiety that emerges as the constant criticism is experienced by the child as inadequacy and failure. Likewise, the parent who overprotects a child brings forth feelings of insufficiency in the infant. In this case, the child experiences the need of such amount of protection as an indicator of an inability to deal with reality.

Over-thinking and over-planning attack the sense of ontological security in human beings, subsequently blocking the quality of confidence. These mental capacities were discussed in relation to the Swadishthan, but they also affect the Anahata in that they bring the individual's attention into the future, a temporality that might be as frightening as it is unreal. Whether in the future fortune might be on the individual's side or not cannot be ascertained. Regardless of the individual's efforts, the fact is that there are no certainties and this affects the person's sense of ontological security.

Similarly, confidence is blocked by aspects that affect the Nabhi chakra. The individual, whose attention is largely devoted to the gratification of deficiency requirements, tends to be afraid of the environment because there is always the possibility that this may fail or disappoint one in the satisfaction of those needs. The fact that deficiency needs are insatiable contributes to a feel-

ing of lack of trust in oneself—regardless of one's efforts as our needs remain unsatisfied. This condition affects the outsider to the self who constantly resorts to the outer world to find a sense of satisfaction. As the outsider to the self strives to satisfy needs, others are prompted to arise, causing a sense of evasiveness that dismantles, or at the very least threatens, self-confidence.

Repression is a defense mechanism that negatively affects self-confidence. According to Maslow 'the adult human being is far more subtle and concealed about his anxieties and fears. If they do not overwhelm him altogether, he is very apt to repress them, to deny even to himself that they exist. Frequently he does not "know" that he is afraid' (Maslow 1999, 75) Denial and repression of fears make these persist rather than recede. At that level of unconsciousness, the individual cannot overcome the ignored fears—thus these continue to weaken his sense of self-reliability.

Responsibility also destabilizes the individual's self-confidence when this overwhelms the individual. This happens when demands from the outer world are such that the individual's ability to respond to these surpasses one's own capabilities. This is the case, for example, of excessive requirements from work or family, which are shaped by competition and social comparison. When the negative feelings that these bring forth are ignored, suppressed or repressed, the individual can neither face them nor take appropriate measures in order to deal with them.

As mentioned earlier, the Oxford English Dictionary suggests that responsibility entails the act of being in charge of a person or a thing. Such an idea is problematic in that it entails a tendency to affirm control over others, bringing forth co-dependent patterns. For example, some people believe themselves responsible for the lives of others, attempting to determine what allegedly might be best for their lives. On the other hand, others seek to find ways to relinquish taking responsibility for their own lives, hoping that others may come to the rescue. Obstructions to the correct functioning of the Anahata chakra are evident in both cases and responsibility becomes a heavy weight at both ends of the co-dependent continuum. Contrary to that, a healthy sense of responsibility involves the idea that one is responsible only for oneself. As mentioned earlier, this does not preclude supporting others in need. However, except in the case of small children where parents or caretakers are entirely responsible for the satisfaction of their needs and for the provision of a safe environment for their growth, to be in charge of others is in no way structural to one's responsibility. Instead, this is something that one may choose along with the consequences that such choice may carry.

Extremes in the execution of outward responsibilities are also problematic. Situations of over-responsibility, either at work or in the family, might be an indication of lack of self-responsibility. The individual's extreme duty towards work or family might serve to help him avoid the responsibility of looking after his deepest self because this can be easily neglected over social duties. This attitude is strongly assisted by the social world, which rewards the over-responsible person, particularly through material recompenses, often at the expense of an integral sense of self-responsibility. The case in point is the person who is extremely focused on his responsibility towards career or business, while taking little care of other aspects of his life such as health, intellectual and creative nourishment, leisure or family. Nonetheless, responsibility is equally problematic when one intends to make others, or the surrounding social system, accountable for whatsoever happens in our lives. To relinquish agency over the circumstances of our lives is an indication of an obstruction in the quality of responsibility of the Anahata.

One final aspect that affects both confidence and responsibility is attachment. This is defined as 'the fact or condition of being attached by sympathy; affection, devotion, fidelity' and 'that whereby a thing is attached; a fastening, tie, or bond' (Oxford English Dictionary). Attachment is anything that keeps us confined within myriad limitations, which leads to fear and lack of self-confidence. Anything to which one affixes oneself carries a sense of apprehension because as much as one may wish for the stability of such links, we are aware, nonetheless, of their volatility. Attachment also affects responsibility when it leads to the omission of the responsibility towards oneself, the environment or the society. Attachment prevents the possibility to let go of what we have, bringing forth anxiety in our attempts to find ways to retain that.

Re-evaluating Creativity Based on the Qualities of the Anahata Chakra

Batchelor suggests that 'it is in solitude that we are constantly confronted with our having-been-born. This awareness may rarely be conceptually formulated, but it is always present as a fundamental mode of the way in which we find ourselves in the world' (Batchelor 1983, 59). I use this concept as a starting point to understand creativity in connection to confidence and responsibility, both being closely linked to the concept of ontological security discussed earlier. Our having-been-born constantly

puts into question our sense of ontological security. Being in solitude facilitates awareness of such destabilization of primal trust. Similarly, the creative process, as a silent space, questions deep structures of the self.

To begin with, creativity is a lonely endeavor where the self finds itself alone with its imagination and its desires. Creativity means to float in the midst of a void, at the heart of darkness, with neither map nor compass, only the self to guide us through. Regardless of how much others may support our creative process, inevitably, the pathway should be roamed alone. To be able to do that, a strong sense of confidence is required. In addition, true creativity requires self-confidence and courage to go against the grain, something that positions the self in a rather solitary place. Nonconformity is an unpleasant zone, which many people do not have the courage to inhabit. To dwell in such space, one needs to be prepared to face solitude.

Fear and anxiety work against creativity in manifold ways. On the whole, the individual may fear that, due to inadequacy, his or her creation will only bring a negative result. The individual may also equally fear a positive outcome because of disbelief in being worthy of good things. Although the two poles often co-exist, many people tend to be aware only of the former, oblivious that the latter could also work against creativity.

I suggest twelve fears that affect creativity. These fears arise either from ego or from superego. My suggestion is that to face up to these fears opens up the space to challenge them. The twelve fears are: (1) fear that the ideas that will be expressed might contribute to nothing new; (2) fear that our thoughts might go too far against the grain; (3) fear of not finding an adequate expression for our ideas; (4) fear that while materializing our ideas, we may confine them to rigid and inadequate forms and structures; (5) fear of creating below our ability and, thus, fear of failure; (6) fear of creating according to our ability and, thus, fear of success and greatness; (7) fear that we may miss the call from our inspiration; (8) fear of rejection and of losing a sense of love and belonging; (9) fear of departing from our window of tolerance or comfort zone to take risks; (10) fear of being true to the self and of the vulnerability that this conveys; (11) fear of facing the uncertainty that runs throughout the creative process; and (12) fear of dealing with ambiguity while not having all the answers.

Overall, individuals tend to use defense mechanisms through which fears are repressed or denied. Some of those defense mechanisms are, for example, procrastination, excessive attention to work or family issues, nostalgia for the past, rationalization, over-activity, over-planning and so forth. In all instances, fears that go unnoticed have the power to drive

individuals into conformity, relinquishing their creative power in favor of a false sense of comfort and stability.

Sternberg and Lubart theorize of attributes that demonstrate the opposite to the above-mentioned—the relation between confidence and creativity. They suggest that the creative person has: (a) tolerance for ambiguity, (b) willingness to surmount obstacles and persevere, (c) willingness to grow, (d) willingness to take risks, and (e) courage of one's convictions and belief in oneself (Sternberg and Lubart 1991 quoted in Fasko 2000, 323). A link might be established between those attributes and creativity based on the concept of self-responsibility. In that sense, the individual is to be accountable for cultivating those attributes. Furthermore, creativity entails our responsibility to reject both a sense of false modesty and an aggrandized self-image, remaining instead truthful to a process of self-discovery. It is through a sense of self-responsibility that the person is capable of taking ownership of the creative process, being accountable for the outcomes of his creativeness.

In the discussion about the Swadishthan chakra it was argued that in order to follow an authentic desire, surrendering is a fundamental quality. Applied to creativity, this means to submit to our desire to create regardless of outcomes. The proposal to leave aside results may seem, at a mental level, incongruent and may create anxiety. Creativity, however, entails a sense of trust in that despite the apparent inconsistency, to not focus on results is the most suitable avenue in order to create. This sense of trust expands beyond self-confidence, entailing a sense of ontological security, which brings forth the capacity to start afresh again all the time.

Creativity as an act of love has a strong connection to responsibility. Self-responsibility means that we are accountable not only for our decisions and actions and for the consequences of those but also for our creative desires. The case in point is our authentic desire for self-expression, the extent to which we surrender, or not, to that and the consequences of that. When we re-learn responsibility we can be accountable for our creative acts, or for the lack of them. The self can take full responsibility for that which is created and also for that which is prevented from sprouting due to the blockage of any of the qualities of the psychic centers.

Attachment was earlier discussed as an enemy to the qualities of the Anahata chakra. The creative process stops or, at any rate, is compromised when we are bounded to: (a) fixed ideas, (b) expectations to obtain particular outcomes, (c) the intention to please others, and (d) the need to tie or secure a place or a position. One may also be bounded to a low self-concept,

which we are unable to release because of the fear of embarking on processes of self-knowledge and growth. Detachment is necessary for creativity because to create is necessary to put into question our beliefs and our knowledge, accepting that our perception might not be necessarily right. This requires openness to see and to experience the world in different ways. A detached attitude starts from acknowledging that there are manifold ways of conceiving reality and that ours may entirely shift from its original position at any point. This involves a readiness to let go of anything to which we hold tightly. As suggested by Maturana, 'to see something, first it is necessary to let it go, and the act of letting go is what constitutes the detachment' (Maturana 1991, 41–42). To create entails the act of letting go of an idea, or even a dream, in order to see it more clearly, being able subsequently to follow it, or any amended version of it, with full awareness.

In relation to future research, confidence and responsibility may be analyzed empirically both in creative and less creative people, establishing a link to parenting styles. The Implicit Association Test (IAS) could be used, for example, to trace the role of both mother and father figures in shaping the individual's self-confidence and sense of responsibility, establishing a correlation with their perceived degree of creativity in their lives. Research could also explore the twelve fears that attack creativity. These could be measured not only through the individual's own account as expressed in questionnaires and interviews but also through personality tests, correlating the individual's responses with the results obtained in the personality tests.

The sense of self-responsibility that entails taking ownership of the creative process could be also investigated. Research on this area could look into the individual's awareness of their desire for self-expression, the correspondent actions—or lack of actions—to allow for that and the consequences of that. IAS would be a suitable method to measure this. Finally, attachments that affect the creative process could be measured by adapting existent methods designed to evaluate attachment styles and attitudes. These could include interviews, projective tests and self-report questionnaires.

The Vishudhi Chakra: Communication and Collectiveness

Communication and collectiveness are the two main qualities of the fifth energy center, the Vishudhi chakra. This center is placed at the level of our cervical plexus, looking after throat, neck, mouth, teeth, face and nose. As

it will be apparent, the qualities of this center are intricately connected, making it difficult at times to draw a line between communication and collectiveness. The two attributes are strongly tied to self-esteem, respect for others and what is called the witnessing state, all of which will be discussed in the sections that follow.

According to the knowledge of the subtle system, communication is the ability to convey feelings or ideas in a way that is both self-asserting and considerate of others, that is a form of diplomacy in our communication. Such diplomacy does not entail maneuvering the process of communication to obtain benefits in one's favor. Instead, it entails discretion to know how to make communication a reflection of both the self-esteem of the speaker and his respect for others. In such a manner, this quality involves a connection to love. It is through our communication with others that love is made concrete and evident in our actions.

As discussed before, love entails the actions that constitute the other as a legitimate other in our mutual interaction (Maturana 1991). It is in the communicative process that such mutual legitimacy is established as we communicate verbally and non-verbally. This applies not only to interpersonal relationships but to all levels of interaction—between human and non-human forms such as plants, animals and the environment and across groups, neighborhoods, cities and countries. A connection between communication and collectiveness can thus be traced.

The word collectiveness comes from the Latin *collectivus*, from *collect*—gathered together—from the verb *colligere* (Oxford English Dictionary). Collectiveness expresses not only togetherness but also a sense of belongingness. It is the quality or state of being part and parcel of a larger entity, be it a family, network, neighborhood, city, country, the world or the entire universe. It entails a fraction that is, at one and the same time, the whole—a deep interrelationship whereby the individuality of the part does not prevent this from being the whole. On the contrary, the part contributes to the whole and the whole gives meaning to the part. The example given by Nirmala Devi as part of her teachings in Sahaja Yoga is that of a drop that becomes the ocean. Although the drop seemingly disappears within the whole, it remains nonetheless a part of it. Both the quality of the part and a degree of fusion are essential to the collective.

Looking at the literature on the subject, collectiveness is customarily taken as the antithesis of individuality. One of the major contributions to the subject is Triandis' ideas about individualism-collectivism, regarded as one of the dimensions of cultural variation. According to Triandis (2001),

collectivist cultures play a predominant role in determining individuals' goals and behaviors to the extent that many of those objectives are subordinated to the collective. Regardless of how high the collective's demands might be, in collectivist cultures the in-group is rather stable and the individuals tend to stay with it. The opposite is the case of individualist cultures, where individuals tend to belong to many in-groups. In this case, when the demands from an in-group are inconvenient, the individual easily drops that. According to such perspective, individual and collective goals seem somewhat antagonistic. On the one hand, in collectivist cultures the strong bond with the collective entails, to a certain extent, forfeiting one's goals in favor of collective demands. On the other hand, in individualist cultures the bond with the collective is rather feeble.

In contrast, I argue that to be collective means being conscious of our needs in relation to the needs of others, a balance between the responsibility to self and to others, between the individual and the collective. Such equilibrium seems, at first sight, out of reach. It may be experienced, however, when processes of self-knowledge act as a compass to give direction to our relationships, providing a sense of both our self-respect and our respect to others. In the example of the ocean, through knowledge of the drop, it is possible to understand the nature of the sea and vice versa. Togetherness embraces knowledge of others, which is only possible through processes of self-knowledge. It also involves respect for others for which self-respect is a precondition. A link to the qualities of the Anahata chakra can be traced. Self-respect means trust in oneself. Subsequently, respect for others emerges out of a strong sense of ontological security, which allows for a person to be part and parcel of the whole without this representing a threat to self-identity.

The qualities of the Vishudhi chakra reflect the interconnection between the part and the whole. This means that while collectiveness entails accord, it also accepts diversity across the parts. Batchelor's ideas (1983) are useful to illustrate this sense of collectiveness. His argument is that all phenomena are interrelated and that nothing has an independent identity. In his view, to believe the opposite is the origin of all misconceptions about us, others and the world.

Madelaine L'Engle, author of a number of successful science-fiction books, reinforces this idea. In her words,

> one of the things that we have learned, having opened the heart of the atom, is that nothing happens in isolation, that everything in the universe is

> interrelated. Physicists have a favorite phrase, 'the butterfly effect'. That means that if a butterfly should fly in here and get hurt, the effect of that accident would be felt in galaxies thousands of light-years away. The universe is that closely interrelated. (quoted in Csikszentmihalyi 1997, 256)

The interconnectedness of the universe remains a profound mystery of which it is important to be aware. Jung's idea of the collective unconscious is also helpful at this point. According to Jung (1971), unlike the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious was never part of the conscious mind and has nothing to do with personal experience per se. Rather, it contains all we have in common as human beings, which has been transmitted throughout generations. The idea of the collective unconscious is difficult to grasp not only in Jung's academic work but in everyday life too. The reason is that; what we have in common with others tends to fade under the uniqueness of personal experience. The preponderance we concede to personal experience colors our lives with a tone of difference. It seems, at times, as if we are unique to the point that no other human being has ever experienced what we have. Personal experience also shapes with indifference our relation to the whole. When it comes to our relation to the environment, nature or the universe, we seemingly care but often not enough to compromise on what we judge is beneficial to us. For example, we do not sacrifice owning a car even when that would benefit the environment.

Our feelings of difference and indifference originate from the dualism with which we relate to all aspects of life—subject/object, body/mind, emotions/reason and inner world/outer world. This explains why the equilibrium between self and other and between individualism and collectivism seems a dreamlike idea. The qualities of the Vishudhi chakra, however, suggest the idea of collective consciousness—an awareness of the part and the whole that gives us, at one and the same time, our sense of individuality and our sense of collectiveness. The awareness of our collective being informs the aspects that make us unique as much as those that we have in common. Within this framework, differences across individuals are not a threat to our sense of identity. These become instead the raw material that makes togetherness worth exploring. The peculiarities of individuals reveal a wide range of angles, reassuring, at one and the same time, the sameness that lies underneath.

Both communication and collectiveness as part of the Vishudhi chakra are linked to an important feature—the witness state. The witness state is

similar to the concept of *akarma* suggested in the sacred Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita. According to the Bhagavad Gita 5.17 (Lin and Yen 2015), *karma* refers to a whole system of action and reaction. It means both action in general and the reaction to action. In opposition, *akarma* means doing without doing or doing for the sake of it. While *karma* invariably brings forth a reaction to the outside world having the ego at the center, *akarma* entails a watchful position with no involvement from the ego. A more down-to-earth translation of this state would be to not take oneself too seriously, dismantling the position of self-importance that brings forth our constant reaction to everything that comes our way. Similar to the notion of *akarma*, the witness state speaks of the act of doing with attention neither to actions nor to the results of those actions. In the witness state, the attention is inwards and actions are only a reflection of the self.

According to the knowledge of the subtle system, the witness state is based on the idea that all events in life are unreal, that is, an illusion, or what in Hinduism is called *maya*, which is a fundamental principle in this tradition. According to *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (Lochtefeld 2002),

> Maya's literal meaning is 'magic' or 'illusion'; the connotation it carries is a magic show or illusion in which objects appear to be present, but are not. In the Hindu Philosophical tradition, maya describes how human beings become confused about the true nature of the world and themselves. (433)

The idea of *maya* is helpful to understand the witness state. If, as a suggestion, we accept that all around is illusion, it is thus possible to see it without reacting, that is, to watch it as if we were only in a play. A related concept is that of *leela*, which entails that as part of the *maya*, the individuals are tested every day as if they were part of a game. The capacity of human beings to perceive the unreality of things and to ascribe a game-like quality to lived experience is not possible with the use of customary conscious states. The comprehension of such an intricate and ambiguous idea also goes beyond the capacity of the outsider to the self who is attached to the phenomenal world and holds on tightly to its substance. This explains how the concept of *maya* is related to the ignorance of the individuals.

Collectiveness and communication involve sharing. Benjamin distinguishes between experience, that which is being lived, immediate and inchoate, *erlebnis*, and, experience as this acquires social meaning through reflection and evaluation, *erfahrung*, or the communicable experience.

For Benjamin, communicable experience is related to the knowledge that becomes shared experience (Benjamin 1999). This idea is in agreement with the concepts of communication and collectiveness discussed in relation to the Vishudhi chakra. A personal experience that is reflected upon and shared becomes a communicable experience. *Erfahrung* is, therefore, experience that is rendered available for the reflection of others—of the collective. Such powerful experience has the potential to enhance knowledge of self and others.

The Obstruction of Communication and Collectiveness

It has been discussed how self-respect and respect for others are essential to communication and collectiveness. Whilst feelings of guilt obstruct self-respect, aggressive behavior prevents respect for others—both acting in the last instance against the inner self. Guilt entails self-punishment in response to a mistake that we avoid facing. It attacks our self-esteem because atonement attempts to substitute for our taking responsibility for our mistakes, which in turn diminishes our sense of self-value. We thus feel contemptible. Aggression, on the other hand, represents a disproportionate reaction to outward failure as perceived from our standards and expectations. Aggressive behavior is used as a means to punish others. It acts, nonetheless, against the self because it tends to bring, even if only subconsciously, feelings of guilt and unworthiness conjured up by our disrespect towards others. Overall, we resort to aggression when we fail to accept that we have no control over others and over the circumstances of life. Attempts at exerting control go against the qualities of the Vishudhi. As it was discussed earlier, the notion of *akarma* entails freedom from action and from the results of action. Control implies the opposite—an attachment to action and to the results of those actions, to the extent that we respond aggressively towards that which does not comply.

Guilt and aggression affect both communication and collectiveness. Their relation is dialectical. On the one hand, from the point of view of guilt, we condemn and despise ourselves, a position where we are at a disadvantage with respect to others thus affecting our ability to communicate with them. Out of guilt, we deny our needs, relegate our feelings and repress our desires, opening the space for others to take advantage. Anger and aggression ensues. Such irritation might not be directly caused by the actions of others but by ourselves for not setting limits based on our self-worth. The space for others to abuse is opened up as we are dominated by

fear and lack of faith in oneself. This, projected outwardly, represents an unconscious invitation to being abused.

On the other hand, when we are aggressive we take a superior position from where communion with others is not possible. We respond aggressively to the fact that others and the outside world do not fit our expectations. This, in the last instance, is due to a lack within, a lack of self-respect and self-esteem for which we wish others and the world around to compensate. The fact that others do not take responsibility for our feelings, desires and needs makes us react in a hostile manner because subconsciously we know that such responsibility is only ours. When, even at the unconscious level, we attempt to relegate that, frustration and anger tend to erupt. This diminishes further our self-esteem and the vicious circle goes on repeating endlessly.

Competitiveness and envy are further aspects that tend to block the qualities of the fifth center of energy. A strong emphasis on competition jeopardizes communication because it conspires against *erfahrung* or the shared experience mentioned by Benjamin. If in order to gain something it is necessary to strive and defeat others, knowledge and experience cannot be put in common, or else we would give advantage to our adversary. Competitiveness also acts against collectiveness because it entails separateness, an individualistic sense that loses sight of the whole. Explained in very simple terms, the fingers of our hand have different shapes and sizes and each of them performs a unique function, even when this may often go unnoticed. They are all part and parcel of our hand, thus, regardless of their appearance, none of them is greater than the others. This is the idea of collectiveness. The opposite is the case of competitiveness. In our example, this would mean that one of our fingers would stand as superior to the others because of its size, ability or position on our hand. Competitiveness as applied to individuals means that shallow features and attributes are used to win over others. If, as suggested in the butterfly effect we understand that all is interrelated, competitiveness has no meaning. This does not entail that we do not seek improvement or high standards in what we do but that our efforts towards quality are not underpinned by ideas of winning over others.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines envy as the feeling of 'displeasure and ill-will at the superiority of (another person) in happiness, success, reputation, or the possession of anything desirable; to regard with discontent another's possession of (some superior advantage which one would like to have for oneself)'. A further meaning is 'to wish oneself

on a level with (another) in happiness or in the possession of something desirable; to wish oneself possessed of (something which another has)'. Envy emerges from a feeling of inferiority, a sense of inadequacy that takes our attention to someone else's possessions, happiness or success, bringing forth a sense of discontentment with one's own circumstances. The unhappiness is conjured up by a feeling of inadequacy for which we would like to compensate. This means that envy ultimately reflects low self-esteem. A subsequent obstruction in our communication with others might be inferred. Tainted by low self-esteem, communication cannot but be deficient because what is put in common originates from insufficiency rather than from a feeling of mutual legitimacy on both parts of the communication process. Feelings of deficiency result in poor communication and conflict. These also prevent a sense of collectiveness because from a standpoint of insufficiency the scope of view is rather limiting, encompassing only the concern for the self without enough attention to and consideration of the whole.

As it happens in the case of other centers of energy, the patriarchal culture also contributes to blocking the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra. In this case, over-emphasis on results and competitiveness goes against the principle of *akarma* and fosters aggressive behavior in order to achieve one's goals. Both at home and at school, children are not taught to find satisfaction by doing what they like. They are forced instead to focus on results and outcomes and to compete among each other for the sake of their own achievements. In order to do that, children learn to be more aggressive in pursuing their goals. They are not taught to be part and parcel of the whole. Instead, they learn to seek recognition through competing and winning over others.

Re-evaluating Creativity Through the Qualities of the Vishudhi Chakra

Research on interpersonal and social creativity demonstrates a link between creativity and the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra. Studies have suggested models of creativity that include not only personality and cognitive factors that account for the creative person but also manifold social environmental factors (Amabile 1983). In that sense, social creativity is not a personal asset but the result of manifold aspects acting jointly. Those aspects are, among others, a physical environment that fosters our abilities, the knowledge gained from a particular domain, the natural world that contributes

to our inspiration, and social aspects, such as family or work that play a role in furnishing our motivation and imagination.

The quality of collectiveness discussed in relation to the Vishudhi chakra allows us to relate creativity to what we have in common as human beings, that is, the qualities of the centers of energy stored in our collective unconscious. Although obstructions in the centers of energy vary according to personal circumstances of life, the fact that their qualities tend to be blocked is common to all human beings. When we look at obstacles to creativity in such a way, we enter into the realm where *erlebnis* becomes *erfahrung*—shared experience available for reflection and scrutiny in the advancement of humanity. This is in agreement with Montero (2003) who claims in relation to the creative aspect in human beings,

> that other I oneiric is much more related to the subconscious than we are. The more our other I may descend to those stratus of the self where words do not reach, to those volcanic abysses where the primitive magma of images boils up, the more it will approach the collective fears and desires because deep within us, deep down, we are all the same (my translation from Spanish). (123)

Imagination is nurtured from unsuspected sources that come both from within and without. When the undeniable effect of others and the environment is not recognized, the scope of our creativity is limited. This form of restricted creativity could be said to belong to the realm of *erlebnis*. On the contrary, when knowledge and creativity are shared, *erfahrung*, or the communicable experience, becomes the basis of social creativity. We become collectively conscious as we communicate, through our creative work, the myriad ways through which each of us make meaning of the world. *Erfahrung* takes place as we make use of the experiences of others in order to foster our creativity. Creativity is the result of a domino effect where words, ideas, concepts and lived experience travel across time and space.

Further connections to Jung's concept of the collective unconscious might be traced in relation to the Vishudhi chakra. The creative potential of the individual is in the last instance part of the collective unconscious. It is a dictate to express the self and to transform our environment. Creative work that has had a long-lasting impact throughout generations, as in the case of masterpieces of art or discoveries that have revolutionized social life, suggests that creativity was drawn from the whole, as if the ideas had

always been there and the artist or scientist has served only as a vessel into which inspiration was poured. This kind of creativity might be possible only when limitations of the self have been transcended, finding in the substance of the world the raw material for our own creativeness. When we create, we become collectively conscious because the line that divides the individual and the collective is blurred. Processes of self-knowledge as part of the condition of the insider to the self are necessary in order to grasp that point in common that we have with other human beings, without losing our sense of individuality and uniqueness. Self-review based on inward attention paves the way for such intricate understanding.

The concept of the witness state is also very significant for an understanding of the creative process. This entails the possibility to enjoy creativity for creativity sake, taking distance from outcomes and, following, instead, our emotions and inner states. According to the idea of *maya*, results and attainments are no more than mental constructions or illusions. Attention to results stops the natural and spontaneous flow of the creative process because the mind is too busy with thoughts of ego, which are projected into something that does not exist—the future. When attention is focused on those egotist constructs, the appreciation of the manifold details that make up for the quality of the present is lost and inspiration evades us. To apply the witness state to creativity entails alienation from futuristic ideas about the results of our creation. This requires a watchful attention to our actions from a third-person position rather than as the doer.

Csikszentmihalyi's ideas are closely related to the concept of the witness state. In his view, the witness state in the creative process may be understood as a 'dialectical tension between involvement and detachment' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, 248). He confirms this by referring to an interviewee in one of his studies about creativity—'Strand sees his main skill as just paying attention to the textures and rhythms of life, being receptive to the multifaceted, constantly changing yet ever recurring stream of experiences. The secret of saying something new is to be patient. If one reacts too quickly, it is likely that the reaction will be superficial, a cliché' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, 240). Other participants in his research confirmed this by saying, 'you must always keep distance from yourself. Don't you think? It is the change between being quite close and being quite distant. You must always be in it and always see it from outside' (ibid). In support of such ideas, Lefebvre claims 'to look at things from an alien standpoint externally and from a reasonable distance—is to look at things truly' (Lefebvre 1991, 20). This alien position is precisely what allows us

to shed light on things, illuminating their various angles. The witness state requires flexibility on the part of the creative person, which allows us to have multiple views of things and to take in the multifaceted nature of life.

In order to become the witness, a watchful attitude is required that is open and receptive to the flow of things. It is in this unfastened state where inspiration tends to manifest. In the introductory chapter of this book, creativity was explained as a living process that follows its own rules, processes and timings. In opposition, attempts at having control over things conspire against creativity, entailing a waste of our creative energy. The psychic energy devoted to control is patriarchal in nature, involving rationality, fight, competition and attention to results. Creation, on the other hand, arises from the matristic, which means a subjective, sensuous and spontaneous manifestation of the deepest self. To propose something new or different and to go against the grain involves an attitude of self-respect experienced only by one who believes in himself as an individual in his own right, having no need to justify any of his aspects or dimensions. Self-respect engenders respect for others. Others may disagree with the way we understand the world and with the form through which we may aim at representing such understanding. Nonetheless, to embark upon a creative project necessitates the possibility to witness all of that and to surrender our need to control the responses that come from the outer world, letting the creativity of our deepest self manifest in its own right.

I would like to discuss our response to criticism as an additional indicator of the interrelationship between the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra and creativity. An important need in human beings is love and belonging, which is considered a social need. This need is so pervasive that we tend to seek love and acceptance through means of our behavior and actions. Overall, when one's behavior is pleasing to others, a sense of love and belonging seems to arise. The opposite also holds true. Applied to the creative work, this may often act as a substitute for our demand for love and acceptance from others. Although some individuals deal with criticism in a healthier manner, others may not as easily digest being censured. Criticism is not always welcome because it tends to be associated with rejection. This may respond to the experience in early childhood of conditional positive regard, which was explained earlier in this chapter. Where criticism is unwelcome, it may be possible to trace a link to a feeling where the person takes a critique of what he does for a critique of who he is. Instead of considering criticism as a highlight of a possible flaw as per the criteria of another person, this may be taken to mean a rejection to some

aspects of the self. The result is a feeling of lack of self-legitimacy which translates into 'I am a mistake' instead of 'what I have done may be seen as a mistake'. Such a response to criticism reveals low self-esteem, whereby the self seeks the acceptance from others as a way to compensate for poor or lacking self-acceptance. When we seek approval from such a deficient state, we may fail to acknowledge that criticism, whether positive or negative, is embedded in subjectivity and ideology and that it always responds to particular contexts and interests. To be able to see criticism from such a perspective is only possible based on strong sense of ontological security that contributes to a sense of detachment from what we do and from the outcomes of our doings. Reaction to criticism will be also discussed in the following chapter in relation to the sixth center, the Agnya chakra.

The qualities of the Vishudhi, located at the level of our throat, are all connected in the last instance with the voice of the creative person, a voice that is determinedly his own, idiosyncratic, playful and ordinary. The challenge of making that voice heard arises from the fact that creativity belongs to a realm beyond materiality, where ideas tend to flow freely. Ideas tend to refuse being encapsulated or imprisoned in any form of representation because of the irreversibility that this entails. Often, the quality of the idea seems to vanish as this is transformed into a material form. This is because while an idea flows throughout time and space, its material representation seems to be imprisoned in temporalities and spaces that regularly fail to reflect its texture. To attempt to find the most appropriate form to communicate an idea thus becomes a challenge to the qualities of the fifth center of energy.

Finally, the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra suggest a link to research where creativity might be studied not only as this is affected by environmental factors, but also in order to address more subjective aspects of the creative process such as relationships at work, at home, at school and in other settings. Studies could look into forms whereby creativity might be put to work, for example, to create specific types of relationships at work, to foster a better family environment, to find ways of working with others despite differences and so forth. That is to say, a form of creativity that manifests in the realms of the intrapersonal, the interpersonal and the social. The use of explicit methods such as questionnaires and interviews could prove very useful. Results could, subsequently, be correlated with tests that measure emotional intelligence, tracing the extent to which an emotionally intelligent person is able to apply creativity to his social world.

Further implications for research include an analysis of individuals' responses to criticism, seeking to compare creative individuals with those who do not deem themselves creative. A link could then be established, through the use of Intrinsic Association Test (IAT), to parenting styles and to personal history of either unconditional or conditional positive regard. Further studies could also look into patterns of attachment to results and how these affect individuals' creative potential as manifested in their everyday lives. An investigation of the connection between self-esteem and creativity could also be illuminating, measuring patterns of both low and high self-esteem and their impact on the creative process as a whole. Implicit and explicit methods could be used to measure those aspects.

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CHAPTER 5

Re-evaluating Creativity: A Higher State of Consciousness

In the previous two chapters, I discussed five of the centers of energy using the Eastern model of the subtle system. The knowledge of the subtle system suggests that the first three centers of energy are more tightly connected to the material world than the superior four. The Mooladhara is connected to our genitalia and to our sexual functions. The Swadishthan is linked to knowledge, desires and creativity that are put into action. The Nabhi is associated to household matters, work, money and family issues. The higher the chakra, however, the more connected to intangible aspects—its qualities are of a subtler level. That is the case of the Anahata and the Vishudhi chakras that were discussed in Chap. 4. The challenge to discuss the qualities of the centers becomes more obvious when it comes to the highest centers.

In this chapter, I attempt to re-evaluate creativity based on the two peak centers of the subtle system, the Agnya and the Sahasrara. Given that their qualities cannot be associated with any material form, the discussion may become at times somewhat philosophical. To some degree, the ideas may appear as if disconnected from the overall theme of this book. It is important, nonetheless, to analyze those qualities in depth in order to subsequently argue about their connection to creativity. The discussion of those qualities also paves the way for the analysis, in subsequent chapters, of issues associated to creativity in education. The suggestion in the present chapter of practical links to creativity and of implications for research contributes, nonetheless, to making those ideas more concrete.

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The Agnya Chakra: Forgiveness and Humility

The main quality associated with the sixth center of energy, the Agnya, is forgiveness. This quality is connected to further attributes such as compassion and humility. The Agnya chakra is located in our brain in the optic chasm. It controls pituitary and pineal body, which manifest as ego and superego. The attributes of these two entities of the mind were explained in Chap. 2.

According to the analysis of the subtle system, and as seen in the literature on the topic, forgiveness has two aspects—self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others. The latter is seen as interpersonal forgiveness. Forgiveness between people has been more amply discussed (Bono et al. 2008; Jordan et al. 2015; Collier et al. 2010; Tse and Yip 2009). With respect to self-forgiveness, however, most scholars consider this only as a step to reach interpersonal forgiveness (Woodyatt and Wenzel 2014; Liao and Wei 2015; Pelucchi et al. 2015). Self-forgiveness, however, is analyzed here as a form of forgiveness per se—intrapersonal forgiveness or forgiveness to oneself. In my discussion of forgiveness, I add a third dimension, which is the forgiveness of the circumstances of life.

The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that to forgive is 'to give up resentment against, pardon (an offender)'. To put that into practice, however, is not as simple. According to North, 'how can this be achieved without requiring the wronged party simply to give up on his or her angry and hostile feelings towards the wrongdoer, feelings which are often extremely difficult to overcome and which, in any case, appear to be natural and indeed justifiable reactions to the infliction of harm?' (North 1998, 16). I would like to articulate two arguments in response to North's concerns, one based on the notion of expectations and the second supported by the idea of *maya*, explained with respect to the Vishudhi chakra in Chap. 4.

My first argument is that forgiveness is complex and difficult to put into practice mainly due to our expectations. Anger and resentment are a response towards that which has prevented our expectations to materialize, which is precisely what we experience as harm or injury. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word expectation as 'the action of waiting; the action or state of waiting for or awaiting (something)'. Also as 'the action of mentally looking for someone to come, forecasting something to happen, or anticipating something to be received; anticipation; a preconceived idea or opinion with regard to what will take place'. It may be appreciated, thus, that expectations belong to the realm of the subjective

world of ideas, opinions and anticipations. As such, their validity cannot be questioned. As mental projections into the future, however, what is possible to question is their sense of reality. Expectations are connected to something that does not exist, something that we imagine and wish may happen but that has neither substance nor any sense of assurance. The problem is that, despite their imaginary nature, we tend to attach, often unknowingly, a heavy sense of realism to our expectations. This is why when they do not come true, we experience anger and sadness. If we establish a link to forgiveness, it may be possible to suggest that what lies behind our difficulty to forgive is a feeling of resentment towards that which has prevented our expectations from coming true, curtailing our hopes and making futile our having been waiting for them to happen. Thus, forgiveness might be understood not as the act of giving up our anger but of giving up our expectations. This would involve taking responsibility for those hopes and accepting that whether these may in fact correspond to reality is beyond our control.

I will use a difficult case of forgiveness to illustrate my argument. The case that I wish to propose is that of the mother whose child is murdered. The reason for the use of this seemingly unrelated example is that, if we are able to grasp the suggested ideas of forgiveness as applied to such a challenging instance, it may be then possible, tentatively, to relate them with more ease to other cases. In this example, we are dealing with the life of an innocent creature, which entails a value that is impossible to express in words. We thus acknowledge, respect and understand the strong feelings of love of the mother towards the child and, subsequently, we are capable of empathizing with the enormous pain that she is likely to experience when losing her child.

At a mental level, we know that to ascertain how long we or others may live goes beyond our human nature. To have a say in how the death of others may happen is equally not within our control. If the mother not only grieves her dead child but is also unable to forgive the murderer for taking away that child, we may be dealing with expectations that are neither forgiven nor let go. From the point of view of the argument outlined here, the mother's inability to forgive might be explained in terms of how the child's death truncates her expectations for a life together with him or her, how this dismantles manifold hopes for the life of the infant projected into the future and similar wishes, including those of the child himself, all of which are suddenly curtailed. However, considering that all those wishes had no promise or guarantee attached, in order to facilitate

forgiveness, it may be possible to propose a threefold process of forgiveness of expectations. Firstly, the mother's self-forgiveness would mean forgiving herself for having created such expectations in her mind and for all the feelings that the frustrated expectations bring forth. Secondly, forgiveness to all the circumstances that did not allow those expectations to come true, and thirdly, interpersonal forgiveness to the 'offender' for having contributed in a direct way to curtail all those hopes. The implementation of the latter step may be deemed difficult. The fact, however, that we take full responsibility for our expectations and for the subsequent feelings that the frustration of such wishes bring forth, might soften down the harsh feelings towards the offender as we understand that our anger is a matter of expectations that did not come true. To forgive expectations, thus, might be seen as a first step in the process of forgiveness.

My second argument about forgiveness is based on the concept of *maya*. As discussed in Chap. 4, *maya* means that all events in life are mythical, their rationale being only to help the purpose of our personal growth. Thus, aspects such as relations, wealth, health, illness, abuse and death are considered appearances of reality that exist in our lives to test our ability to go beyond them into a higher awareness of ourselves. *Maya* implies detachment from all that seems real and which binds us. Accordingly, if all is unreal, it follows that crime and harm are equally illusory. Therefore, it may be possible to 'to give up, cease to harbor (resentment, wrath)' (Oxford English Dictionary). This idea might be difficult to grasp in particular in relation to people around, who, in all logic, could be considered real. Based on the idea of *maya*, it may be argued however that, even when the person is physically real, his or her presence or absence is *maya*. This suggests a form of relation by which we may love others but without attachment neither to presence nor to absence. Detachment is suggested not only in relation to people or possessions but from the spectrum of our ideas, expectations and desires. Accordingly, even in the case of the murder of the child, no harm was done as the event happened in the unreal world, to help the mother rise in her awareness. The understanding of this idea may require a higher-level state of consciousness, which in all likelihood might be out of the reach of the majority of human beings. The fact, however, that this idea might be difficult to process does not entail that it is faulty. *Maya*, in the last instance, is based on the principle that personal growth is what gives meaning to all our experiences. *Maya* has to do with the idea of two selves. One of these is the outsider to the self, which is tied to the alleged reality of the phenomenological and

material world. The other is the insider to the self that is beyond materiality and that, through the experiences in life and through processes of self-review, grows in awareness and self-actualization. According to this perspective, in the case of an apparent offense, the inner self may be able to ascertain—'I was not there. Only the self within me who learns and grows was there…. That self, however, cannot be harmed but only raised in its awareness'.

To make use of the concept of *maya*, for the purposes of forgiveness, is intricately connected to a linguistic aspect—the need to eradicate the term wrongdoer, considering the person who caused harm as an agent or instrument instead. Correspondingly, the person at the other end would be the receiver (of the action) rather than the victim. The rationale behind this suggestion is twofold. Firstly, the word wrongdoer is per se an obstacle to forgiveness because it entails a judgment by which the action is considered a mistake, that is something bad. Secondly, the fact that the illusion of the world, or *maya*, tends to find its own means to propitiate human beings' growth, making use of certain agents that perform certain actions and recipients that are at the other end of those actions. *Maya* also entails the prospective of seeing the tragic event as part of the repertoire of conducts of the agent, not done per se against the receiver but simply out of his or her resources and consciousness. According to the idea of *maya*, both agent and receiver only happened to be there at the time of the event, each of them with their own resources. This viewpoint has the potential to release some of the anger caused by events such as the one exemplified in this chapter.

My suggestion to look into forgiveness from the perspective of expectations and *maya* does not entail that feelings are denied. In the process of forgiveness it is crucial to ascertain and validate our emotions and to find ways to express them. The way to express these feelings and whether we make the agent participant of that or not is not a matter of validation of our emotions but of self-responsibility. Self-commitment means that we have the possibility to rise over and above all that happens to us even without the participation of the other person. This responds to two factors. Firstly, as explained in relation to the qualities of the Anahata chakra, we are responsible for our actions, decisions and for the consequences of all of that. Thus, the decision to be attached by feelings of hatred and resentment to whatsoever agent is—in the last instance—ours. And, this choice is independent of whether we might or might not be able to express those feelings to that particular mediator. Secondly, regardless of any event in

our life, our dignity remains intact. We are capable of going over and above betrayal, abuse, lying, offense and death because, according to the concept of *maya*, these are all a myth, which does not entail a compromise on our dignity. The purpose of these mythical experiences is only to make our awareness rise. This means that forgiveness is possible by watching what the agent has done to us as a possibility to go over and above our limitations, facilitating thus the process of our growth.

North claims that 'what is annulled in the act of forgiveness is not the crime itself but the distorting effect that this wrong has upon one's relations with the wrongdoer and perhaps with others' (North 1998, 17–18). This view about forgiveness is very limited, focused only on the impact on outward relations. I go beyond North's suggestion to argue that what is dissolved in the act of forgiveness is the effect that the action has *on ourselves.* I would like to link this to the quality of compassion, which is another quality of the Agnya chakra. The Oxford English Dictionary defines compassion as 'suffering together with another, participation in suffering; fellow-feeling, sympathy' (Oxford English Dictionary). If we can have such sympathy and fellow-feeling towards oneself, it may be possible to understand why self-forgiveness is the first step in the threefold process of forgiveness mentioned earlier. When we feel compassion towards ourselves, we are able to sympathize with our own feelings and, as further suggested by the Oxford English Dictionary, be moved by the desire to relieve it; pity that inclines one to spare or to succour'. To spare our self from suffering means an understanding that we deserve to be free from emotions such as anger, hatred or resentment, which bind us negatively to other people. When we liberate the self from such feelings, our relations may improve. The improvement of such relations, however, is only a byproduct of forgiveness and not its main concern as it seems to be implied in North's concept of forgiveness.

In addition to forgiveness and compassion, though intricately connected, is the quality of humility, also corresponding to the Agnya chakra. The dictionary defines humility as 'the quality of being humble or having a lowly opinion of oneself; meekness, lowliness, humbleness: the opposite of pride or haughtiness' (Oxford English Dictionary). Such definition is problematic in that it provides not only a sense of modesty but also that of a poor or deprived opinion of oneself. The concept of humility as part of the knowledge of the subtle system is understood as the ability to bring into balance our ego through the intervention of the superego. It does not entail self-deprecation or a lowly opinion of the self but a more balanced

and realistic view on the self. The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of the word humble seems more appropriate. It suggests that to be humble equates to 'having a low estimate of one's importance, worthiness, or merits; marked by the absence of self-assertion or self-exaltation'. Overall, the ego entails feelings of self-importance and self-merit, which result in the tendency to adulate the self. Thus, when we are humble, it is not that we assess the self as low but that we bring down its sense of self-importance. This does not mean in any way self-deprecation or lack of confidence. On the contrary, to be humble requires a strong sense of self-confidence, to the extent that self-importance and arrogance become irrelevant for the assertion of the self, which stands in its own dignity. Confidence thus should not be confused with ego. Similarly, humility should not, in any sense, be equated to a low opinion of the self.

The idea of humility is extremely connected to forgiveness. A humble attitude is a *sine qua non* of a forgiving character. When self-value does not develop into arrogance, it is possible to forgive without the fear of losing our worth. In accordance to what has been discussed, humility does not mean one should forgive everything and everyone because of having a lowly opinion of oneself. On the contrary, to humbly forgive others requires care and consideration of the self, whom we wish to liberate from the slavery of pride and resentment and from the negative emotions associated to past events and people. This involves setting boundaries to protect the self from future attacks but without the need to resort to defensiveness. Boundaries are set based on the recognition of self and others as equally legitimate beings in the interaction with each other. Not only does humility bring forth forgiveness, but forgiveness also results in humility because the more one forgives, the more connected one is with the inevitability of life, which goes beyond individual hopes and expectations.

The Blockage of Forgiveness and Humility

I will now elaborate on the blockage of these two qualities based on the idea of ego and superego, which are the major causes of the obstruction of the Agnya chakra. According to the knowledge of the subtle system, the superego represents the energy of desire, which gives us our memory. The superego plays an important role in our lives as it is based on desire that human beings act. In addition, the superego feeds our feminine and emotional aspects. When the thoughts that arise from superego are too

dominant, a strong judge appears and the individual falls into harsh self-critique and self-deprecation. Self-forgiveness is thus compromised.

The ego, on the other hand, plays an important role as it contains the energy of action required to respond to the demands from the world. Ego is a source of self-assertion based on what we do. Taken to an extreme, however, the ego is the main enemy of humility. It promotes a sense of superiority in relation to others. From the perspective of an acute ego, the value of others is put into question. Excess ego brings forth pride and arrogance, which drives us into an attempt to control others and the circumstances around. When we fail in such a vain attempt, we experience anger and resentment towards that which evades our control. Forgiveness to others is constrained by a sense of self-importance and arrogance. Vocabulary that includes words such as wrongdoer, offense and similar terms arises precisely out of ego. These come from the position of the judge, which, in this case, criticizes others and/or their actions, representing an obstruction to humility and forgiveness.

Intricately connected to attitudes of self-critique and the critique to others are customary conceptions about 'error'. Error belongs to the realm of the Agnya chakra in that it requires a mental judgment about the value attached to something. In our patriarchal society, error is strongly censured. By extension, those who make a mistake are commonly considered stupid, lazy, unknowledgeable or incompetent. In such a way, error is somewhat tied to the quality of the person and it is translated into a deficiency of being. Derogative views to those who commit a mistake are, on the whole, experienced since early childhood, either at home or at school or in both. As an antidote to receiving disparaging remarks, the child learns that mistakes should be avoided at all costs. Thereafter, the child shall attempt to demonstrate what is right and how to avoid mistakes. This explains why, in adulthood, individuals tend to embark on a lifelong fight against error, which can cause distress in manifold areas. Not only does the individual strive to be always right, but can also judge others who seemingly are not. This has a significant negative effect on work and professional life and, very importantly, on interpersonal relationships.

On the whole, thoughts are a determinant factor in the blockage of the qualities of the Agnya chakra. Whatsoever we cannot forgive remains in our mind as a thought process. Whether we are conscious about it or not, an important part of our psychic energy goes into those thoughts. That is why we are slaves of that which we do not forgive because recurring thoughts permanently bind us, mentally, to that. In addition, self-

critique and the critique to others, which, as mentioned before, prevent self-forgiveness and interpersonal forgiveness, both arise out of mental judgment. Self-critique emerges out of a judgment of lack of self-worth. The critique to others, on the other hand, involves a thought process where the merit of the other is devalued. This does not mean that we should unconditionally accept everything both from us and from others without an attitude of analysis. The problem with our judgments is the extent to which we subscribe to them as overarching truth, affecting various aspects of our lives, including our creativity. A literary work expresses this in more than appropriate manner. As suggested by Mourad (2010, 169), 'men judgments […] reflect their own limitations: history does not exist, there are only points of view. The only one who knows the truth is that who does not have a point of view because he is nowhere. He is everywhere. He is God' (my translation from Spanish).

Re-evaluating Creativity Through the Qualities of the Agnya Chakra

Following the preceding discussion, the question that arises is—how can we re-evaluate creativity based on the qualities of the Agnya chakra? In what follows, I will attempt to elaborate on that. Forgiveness as applied to the creative process entails both self-forgiveness and forgiveness to others. The former manifests in various forms. First, it represents the ability to accept our limitations and our mistakes. This is intricately connected to humility. It involves, at one and the same time, a strong sense of confidence in that the fact that one may commit a mistake does not make one a mistake. As mentioned before, the connotation attributed to error within our patriarchal culture, involves a lifelong battle to avoid making mistakes. The vast amount of psychic energy that goes into this process tends to result in lack of joy, affecting our motivation to create. In addition, when the individual ought to be so self-conscious about his or her actions, in order to prevent making mistakes, the naturalness and spontaneity required for creativity is highly compromised. Second, self-forgiveness is relevant in relation to the expectations that we may place on our creation. Expectations could be of two types. On the one hand, we may place hopes on our work as a means of self-presentation, that is, to help us construct the self that we want to display to others. On the other hand, we may have expectations in terms of self-expression, being able to use our creation to put across our view of the world. Self-forgiveness is appropriate to forgive

all such expectations, regardless of the extent to which they may or may not come true. Our expectations could be also tied to outcomes, such as obtaining success, outward recognition or certain rewards. Our creative efforts may not always match outcomes. The creative person's responsibility is to forgive both the expectations and the outcomes, bringing forth self-compassion and self-assurance.

Similar to self-forgiveness, forgiveness to others plays a role in creativity too. It is not uncommon to see others putting high expectations on another person's creative work. Those high demands often add strain on the creative person, preventing the enjoyment of the process of creation. From this, it follows that the person who creates also has to forgive the expectations that others put on him. This entails the acknowledgement that those are valid hopes but with no substance of reality, belonging to the subjectivity of the other as projected onto us. Since there is no reality in them, these cannot be binding. It is not uncommon to see that to forgive all such expectations and demands contributes to a sense of relief in the creative person, helping to unleash the creative stream.

Humility is relevant to creativity too. The first connection that I want to draw between creativity and humility is through the idea of knowledge. It is not possible to start a journey into a creative enterprise holding tightly, and arrogantly, to our knowledge of the subject in question. Although creativity requires knowledge of the limits, rules and symbols of a particular domain (Csikszentmihalyi 1997), the creative person has to be prepared to leave the confines of what he knows and venture into the unknown. To abandon personal ideologies paves the way for the creative person to surrender himself to truths that are yet to be revealed.

Furthermore, an attitude of self-value without falling into self-adulation and self-importance entails that the creative person is capable of a sense of humility that allows the recognition of his or her contribution without overbearing pride. To create without falling into arrogance means that one is capable of dealing with criticism in an adequate manner. Some may not like our work and may criticize it. Some others may not appreciate our efforts. In all likelihood, these issues are all part of the creative process. Humility requires the acceptance that we cannot always see all angles of a particular issue. Hence, the views of others contribute to widen the range of our sight. Furthermore, a balance between ego and superego involves the ability to accept the opinions of others without necessarily giving into them, or taking them as an indication of us being wrong or faulty either.

A humble acceptance of criticism considers all divergent perspectives as opportunities to open up our minds and further our imagination.

The qualities of the Agnya chakra entail letting us be guided by a clear sense that we are not owners of the truth, of reason or of justice, but also that there is value in our views and proposals. Although the role of critical thinking in academia, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, seems to indicate that intellectuals are aware of the validity of the multiplicity of views on things, the perspective embraced by scholars time and again reaches into overbearing pride, entailing closeness rather than openness to the different views and perspectives. An example is that of the materialist intellectual who tends to reject the existence of subtle and transpersonal approaches. Thus, forgiveness comes into play as the creative person ought to forgive the wide range of views and assumptions, even of those who may tend to invalidate one's work because of this being out of the grain.

In addition to the above-mentioned, we may also need to forgive creativity along with the manifold lessons that it has to teach us. The creative endeavor is an intricate learning process that challenges our structures of self, probing the boundaries of our comfort zone. Creativity means an interrogation into myriad aspects of the self—flexibility, patience, capacity to adapt to change, courage and the ability to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity, among others. Above all, the creative process suggests the need to constantly revise the self, for which a humble, forgiving and compassionate attitude might be required.

There are further links between creativity and forgiveness. According to the knowledge of the subtle system, forgiveness represents the passage to a superior state of consciousness called thoughtless awareness. I will elaborate further about this state in my discussion about the seventh energy center, the Sahasrara. For now, it may suffice to explain that this state is achieved when both futuristic thoughts from ego and superego subside, giving way to the experience of the present. As we know, we are constantly bombarded by thoughts either from past or future, or from both, which tend to occupy too much of our psychic energy, taking us away from the present. Although the individuals may be unaware of the effect of these thoughts, a constant battle is fought to put our mind at peace and avoid being controlled by the thoughts. Nonetheless, that which we resist tends to persist. Thus, the more we avoid the thoughts, the more predominant these become in our minds. To forgive the thoughts, at the level of the Agnya, is a means towards making the thoughts recede peaceably, subsequently

liberating the mind. Obstructions of the Agnya chakra, which manifests as excessive thinking, compromise the possibility to be in the present, affecting the creative process. As suggested by Montero (2003, 50), 'in moments of grace, one tries to not think, because, indeed, rational thought and ego consciousness destroy creativity, which is a force that should flow as free as water and open its own paths, without the interference neither of our knowledge nor of our will' (my translation from Spanish). Forgiveness acts as a means to achieve those moments of grace where thoughts withdraw, bringing forth the stream of creativity.

Vanity, which arises out of ego, is one of the main enemies of creativity. This implies the desire to be at the center, to conquer the others' glance and to gain their praise. Vanity, in the last instance, is insecurity that resorts to ego as a means for compensation. In such a vain pursuit, it is very easy to lose contact with our inner voice and, subsequently, with our creativity. The patriarchal culture promotes vanity in various ways. Enterprises and institutions of all sorts encourage the vanity of the individuals as a means to increase their own benefits and profits. Through endorsing self-importance, the social realm provokes competition among the individuals based on material success, possessions and achievements. Attention is thus tied outwardly by external and superficial accomplishments that conspire against genuine creativity. This is in no way a condemnation of the individuals drive to improve. What is problematic, nonetheless, is the fact that this force is underpinned by vanity and ego, conspiring against the sense of collectivity. Following the example of the relationship between the drop and the ocean used in Chap. 4 to explain the idea of collectivity, the opposite situation would be that where the drop is not contented with being part and parcel of the sea but 'desires' instead to be the best among all drops, identified from a distance as unique and unmatched. No matter how magnificent our work might be, creativity requires acceptance that we are no more than one among the many drops that contribute to the greatness of the ocean. Ego results in our setting very high objectives, often beyond our capacities. Subsequently, when we are unable to perform to the level of such soaring standards, self-criticism comes into place. This, rather than contributing to improvement, constrains the potential for self-expression and attacks self-esteem. Thus, the person may fall into the other extreme—the superego. At that end of the spectrum and due to self-contempt, the person may set low goals that do not reflect his or her creative potential. Behind both tendencies, ego and superego, it may be possible to identify an inferiority complex, one that either seeks compensation through vanity or overtly resorts to self-deprecation.

While excessive ego in the creative process tends to translate into pride, vanity, arrogance and competition, extreme superego may take the creative person into lethargy, fear, passivity and withdrawal. In both cases, an imbalance affects the manifestation of creativity as a whole.

The knowledge of the qualities of the Agnya chakra has myriad implications for research. One of these would be the investigation of the extent to which lack of forgiveness or difficulty to forgive the self and others affects the creative person. Studies could be conducted both with those people who consider themselves creative and those who do not. Through the use of questionnaires and interviews, it could be possible to interrogate both groups regarding the extent to which they practice both self-forgiveness and interpersonal forgiveness and whether they might be able to trace a connection between this and their ability to create or not. Since these issues are extremely subtle, and people do not often know themselves well enough, the Intrinsic Association Test (IAT) could also be used to gather this data.

An investigation regarding expectations would be also useful, in particular, as regards the creative person. Through the combination of implicit and explicit methods, it could be investigated the extent to which expectations, both their own and those of others, affect the creative person. An experiment could be carried out to test the usefulness of the 'forgiving expectations' practice suggested earlier. The analysis could comprise two experimental groups, one that puts into practice forgiveness of expectations and one that does not. Participants' subjective experience of relief could be drawn from interviews and questionnaires. This data could be later correlated with the extent to which interviewees are subsequently able to create within certain parameters. A similar investigation could be done as regards the ability to deal with thoughts from past and future, looking into the extent to which a simple practice of the concept of forgiving the thoughts could bring a feeling of inner silence, boosting the person's creativity within a particular setting. Personal observation with the use of diaries could be also a useful tool for participants to record their own experiences of the practice of forgiveness of thoughts while working independently on their creations.

The Sahasrara Chakra: Harmony

The Sahasrara is known as the thousand-petal chakra. It is located in the limbic area and it corresponds with the location of a thousand nerves. Each of the six chakras discussed previously has a connection to the Sahasrara.

According to the knowledge of the subtle system, the main quality of the thousand-petal chakra is harmony. The process that conjures up this quality is known as self-realization or self-actualization.

Harmony, associated to the Sahasrara, refers to the confluence of the qualities of all the chakras. Furthermore, the Sahasrara represents the amalgamation of all aspects of human beings—the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. I argue that this center represents also the assimilation between the outsider and the insider to the self, made possible through the state of thoughtless awareness. Thoughtless awareness is defined as a state of awareness minus distracting thoughts of ego and superego. This state is achieved when the attention has passed beyond the level of Agnya and thoughts recede. When consciousness is not diverted by thoughts, it is possible for the outsider to the self to take the attention inwards becoming, even if only for a split of a second, the insider to the self. According to Feldman (2011, 140), consciousness is 'our subjective understanding of both the environment around us and our private internal world, unobservable to outsiders'. Feldman's notion of consciousness expressed in terms of understanding refers to a mental process. This means that, since our apprehension of the environment and of our private world is a mental process, ego and superego, as entities of the mind, play a role in that. Our consciousness is thus affected by fear, self-deprecation and self-criticism as part of the superego as much as it is subjected to pride, arrogance and self-adulation brought forth by the ego. The inner and outer worlds as seen through such lenses are distorted. A lack of harmony between the two is evident. In contrast, thoughtless awareness represents a subjective grasp of inner and outer worlds unattached to thoughts from the past (already gone) or the future (beyond our control). Thoughtless awareness represents, indeed, the present, that is the gap in between thoughts from past and future. This entails that attention moves to the central channel, the *Sushumna*, where contact with the present is possible.

According to Sahaja Yoga, harmony is possible through the rising of the Kundalini, an energy located in the sacrum bone. When this energy ascends, through the practice of meditation, it pierces each of the six energy centers, moving the meditator's attention first inwards and then upwards to the level of the Sahasrara chakra, where the meditator experiences inner silence and harmony. Harmony as part of the Sahasrara chakra does not require achievement or result. Instead, it can only be understood as a process, as a forward movement.

As it has been seen throughout the various chapters, this book takes the knowledge that Sahaja Yoga imparts the subtle system as a framework for the re-evaluation of creativity. As mentioned before, although such philosophy of life is structurally connected to spiritual precepts, those aspects have been kept aside throughout. To remain within a secular position, however, has not been an easy task, particularly when it comes to the analysis of the qualities of the Sahasrara chakra. This center represents the site of self-realization, a concept that has a deep spiritual connotation. This has been used by all religions to refer, with different names, to the idea of second birth. Thus, to avoid the spiritual dimension to it, I have chosen to relate this to the idea of self-actualization, which has already been studied from an academic perspective (Maslow 1999). The two concepts, nonetheless, cannot be separated. Self-realization may be understood as the awakening of a new consciousness within the individual. This consciousness brings forth processes of self-knowledge, revealing the state of the chakras and the extent to which their qualities manifest in the person's life. Self-actualization, on the other hand, may be seen as the actualization of that knowledge, by which the potential that resides on each chakra is made real, put in action, transformed into live experience. Thus, self-actualization entails self-realization as a precondition. That is the idea of self-actualization that I use here.

Maslow considers self-actualization as the higher in the hierarchy of needs. He defines this as the 'ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfillment of mission [or call, fate, destiny, or vocation] as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person's own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend toward unity, harmony or synergy within the person' (Maslow 1999, 31). Although in his book Maslow describes a range of experiences pertaining to self-actualizing people, he does not provide detailed knowledge as to how this actualization of potentials may be induced, nor does he mention what the individual may need to do in order to develop a self-actualizing attitude. Searching for a more concrete way to identify the process of self-actualization in individuals, I argue that self-actualization is a process that runs in parallel to a process of self-review, whereby the outsider to the self gradually becomes an insider to the self. In practical terms, this entails a threefold process. Firstly, a process of thoughtless awareness that might allow for bringing the attention inwards. Secondly, an attitude of self-review by which the person may be able to determine the extent to which his or her life reflects the qualities of each of the seven chakras. Thirdly, a process of self-actualization, whereby

the individual may work in the removal of the blockages of the energy centers, bringing forth gradually the refrained qualities. Self-realization or self-actualization may be explained as the synergetic process of acceptance of the totality of the self, including strengths, weaknesses, virtues and talents, both in actualized form and in potential.

A formal or informal process of self-actualization may be triggered spontaneously as part of the individuals' experiences of life. This is the case, for example, of difficult events in life or crisis of all sorts, which force the attention inwardly in order to better deal with the emergency situation. Self-actualization may also be awoken in a more formal manner through various methods: a) through practices such as meditation, Thai Chi and yoga, b) as part of a process of psychotherapy, c) within the spiritual practice of a religion, and d) through introspection practiced either individually or within a group (for example, AA or Al-Anon). It may be worth mentioning that neither of those practices grants self-actualization. Self-realization is possible only when thoughts arising both from ego and superego subside. Only when the potential within is no further distorted by identifications with ego and superego, is it is possible for the seed of self-actualization to sprout. Thus, thoughtless awareness—consciousness minus thoughts—is a necessary step in the process of self-actualization.

The social realm is a *sine qua non* of self-actualization. It is not possible to actualize the qualities of the chakras in isolation. The state of the centers is constantly tested in our interactions with others. When we enter into contact with others, the blockage of the energy centers is revealed. For example, whether one is innocent becomes obvious when we interact with others in the extent to which we are able to act without anticipation, trusting and acting spontaneously. Another example is related to forgiveness. If we are capable of forgiveness, of letting go of our negative feelings towards the other, this will be demonstrated in the way we relate to those who have harmed us. In this case, our speech will most likely be devoid of concepts such as 'wrong', 'wrongdoer', 'offense' and 'victim'. Whether we remain attached negatively to the agent of our grief or to that which has brought pain to our lives would also be an indication of our capacity to forgive. Our interactions with others and to the collective as a whole are of extreme significance to reveal the state of our chakras.

Blockage of Harmony

I claim that the need of harmony is an important part of the individuals' lives. This need, nonetheless, may go unnoticed and unattended for as long

as they live due to the lack of self-actualisation of all inner qualities of the subtle system. The extent to which the individuals are unaware of the unfulfilled need for self-actualization is directly proportionate to the degree of outsideness. The condition of dissociation to which I refer in Chap. 3 is one of the main enemies to the quality of harmony. As it was discussed, dissociation represents the split in human beings between inner and outer worlds. Dissociation also occurs between body, mind, emotions and spirit, each of them pulling the individual in opposite directions. This condition, nonetheless, might act as triggering factor for the need of self-actualization. As the individual is alienated, he might be propelled to go inwards in order to actualize his or her potentials and achieve a greater sense of integration. According to the knowledge of the subtle system, the force that thrusts this actualization of potentials is the energy Kundalini mentioned before.

The condition of the outsider to the self, on the other hand, represents an obstruction to self-actualization. If the individual remains a stranger to his or her inner self, siding almost unilaterally with the outer world and unable to question it from the perspective of the insider to the self, all he might be able to see will be a distortion coming from ego and superego. Ego will ascertain that there is nothing to actualize and that all is 'perfect' within. Any difficulties faced in and with the outer world would be then attributed to other people or to the circumstances around, avoiding at all costs taking responsibility for that. Superego, on the other hand, will obstruct the possibility of harmony within and without based on the feeling that the self is not worthy of such accord. In both cases, we are dealing with a deformed version of the self from where it follows that self-actualization evades the individuals. Thus, it may be possible to argue, that thoughts from ego and superego are indeed the main source of blockage of the quality of self-actualization.

The market economy is also an adversary to self-actualization and one of the fiercest. Societies promote self-interest and drive individuals into the realization of material needs rather than of needs pertaining to the inner self. Through means of consumption, individuals are conditioned to attend to lower needs such as the physiological, the need of safety, love and belonging and the need of self-esteem. As I have mentioned elsewhere (Hernández 2012), allied to basic needs, society promotes pseudo-recipes for self-actualization, which are connected to family, material well-being, romance, success and fame. Above all, parenthood is believed to be the key to the actualization of our potential as human beings. The birth of the child, however, often represents the disappearance of the parents' lives as they largely forget themselves in their endeavor to meet the child's

needs. I agree with that and I concur that parenthood is one of the most prominent ways to keep alive the ego. First, the simple act of giving birth to another human being reinforces the idea of power. Second, and based on the latter, the idea of ownership becomes evident in parent-child relationships where many parents feel that they have the right to decide over the child's life, much beyond the early years of the infant's life. Third, the strong loving feelings towards the child and the fact that they attend to his or her needs makes parents believe in their goodness, contributing to aggrandize their ego. Finally, it is not uncommon to see parents placing expectations on the child based on aspects they themselves could not accomplish in their lives, seeking a feeling of pride and success through the child's achievements. Parenthood can be, in the last instance, a means to please the ego through means disguised in intricate ways.

As a result of the over-emphasis on basic needs, the need for self-actualization is rarely acknowledged in our societies and, even when it is recognized, the means to achieve it continue to be inscribed within the market economy. For example, self-actualization is fostered with an extreme view on material gains through the boom of self-help books and a wide range of seminars and workshops in the field of personal growth promoted throughout the world. Due to high costs, most of these are inaccessible to the vast majority of the world population.

Re-Evaluating Creativity Through the Qualities of the Sahasrara Chakra

Creativity seen through the Sahasrara involves a higher level of awareness, one that is capable of monitoring the self in all dimensions. This awareness is capable of exposing inner mechanisms of ego and superego that bombard the mind and that create deviations from the creative stream. In this state of awareness minus thoughts, instances of self-sabotage that may prevent the flow of creativity are also revealed. On the whole, this awareness represents a state of alertness by which the self is attuned to self and others as much as to the environment. This is only possible when thoughts recede. When thoughtless awareness connects with the stream of the creativity within, authentic creativity arises and it can manifest outwardly. All creativity that has left an imprint in humankind happened at the level of thoughtless awareness. The work of Mozart, Bach, Michelangelo, Beethoven, Nijinsky, Einstein and other great artist and scientists was done from a superior state of consciousness, with no interference from the

mind. Such forms of high creativity are capable of merging the self with a more complex dimension—the whole. Thus, the contribution of those great personalities remains timeless.

Maslow's notion of self-actualizing creativeness is useful to understanding creativity from the point of view of the Sahasrara chakra. According to Maslow (1999), people who achieve this creativity

> can see the fresh, the raw, the concrete, the ideographic, as well as the generic, the abstract, the rubricized, the categorized and the classified. Consequently, they live far more in the real world of nature than in the verbalized world of concepts, abstractions, expectations, beliefs and stereotypes that most people confuse with the real world. (153)

The form of creativity that Maslow conceives of, which coincides with that achieved through the qualities of the thousand-petal chakra, is a form of creativity that manifests in everyday life and that is triggered by the most minute instances of the day-to-day. It is an everyday creativity, an attitude whereby it is possible to find the extraordinary in the ordinary. This form of creativity does not pertain only to the talented and the gifted, but it belongs instead to the ordinary men and women who find themselves connected within, constantly actualizing their potential. Such individuals may not be linked to any area customarily associated with creativity such as the arts, science and so forth, but they may be able to find creativity and to actualize their potentials through their everyday chores and roles, no matter how trivial they might seem. One of the most important teachings in Sahaja Yoga is how to make meditation an every-moment state. The founder of this method, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, suggests that the constant practice of meditation results in the attainment of a meditative mood that the individual experiences not only during the practice of sitting meditation but anywhere and at all times. Such a person may be able to solve everyday problems with a special perception of possibilities where others may only see closed doors. This form of creativity has also an impact on emotions, which can be seen from a creative perspective. For example, to make contact with our vulnerability can become a source of inspiration for a number of creations, including literary works, paintings, music compositions and others. According to the knowledge of the subtle system, this higher form of creativity belongs to a realm beyond thought, which is the state of thoughtless awareness. Where the mind stops, a space is opened to the reality beyond thought where the spark of inspiration comes into

being. When rationality is left out of the equation, the self finds manifold channels for self-expression.

Considering that the seven chakras have a seat on the Sahasrara, creativity at this level might be re-evaluated based on the qualities of each center as realized through the state of thoughtless awareness. That is to say, in thoughtless awareness, the person is able not only to apprehend the blockages of the qualities of each of the chakras but also gain the realization of how those obstructions have contributed to hindering his or her creativity. The sole awareness may bring significant changes to each of the qualities and to creativity as a whole. If the person is capable of furthering the actualization of such qualities through the use of appropriate methods, the impact on creativity might be even greater. Some methods to work on the qualities of the chakras are suggested in Chaps. 6 and 7. Although those methods are mainly proposed for an application to education, their practice, individually and in everyday life, is not to be excluded. On the whole, I will not refer to them in any specific way in the present chapter. The indication is made, nonetheless, that the actualization of creativity through the qualities of the psychic centers might be directly related to the use of appropriate methods that can help to release their potential.

According to the preceding, the re-evaluation of creativity based on the qualities of the Sahasrara may be understood as follows. Firstly, with respect to the Mooladhara, the person who achieves thoughtless awareness may become aware of the extent to which he is capable of acting innocently and spontaneously or whether, instead, he tends to act based on anticipation. Provided that the person may use appropriate methods to actualize potential, he will gradually respond in a more natural and spontaneous manner to his need for self-expression, with no attention to gross gain. Secondly, in connection to the Swadishthan, self-actualizing creativeness relates to a new awareness about the person's authentic desires. As ego recedes to open the space for thoughtless awareness, the person may gradually surrender more to the authority of those desires, relinquishing one's own doing in favor of the creative stream to do the job. Thirdly, the everyday creativity of the Sahasrara in relation to the Nabhi means that the person might be able to realize the degree to which he is able to keep a contented and balanced attitude in life that can support creativity for creativity's sake. The degree of attachment to material rewards, position or fame would be exposed. Aware of inner obstructions that may result in craving for external recompenses, the creative person might be in the position, through the use of relevant methods, to turn that around. If successful,

he or she may gradually turn to seek nurturing in small details and ordinary occurrences, finding beauty in everything. Fourthly, thoughtless awareness in relation to the qualities of the Anahata chakra entails the possibility to become aware of the extent to which the twelve fears explained in Chap. 4, or any other fears for that matter, affect the individual's creativity. To work on those fears involves a recovery of two qualities—confidence on the self and ontological security. As explained in Chap. 4, whilst the former is linked to the individual's abilities, the latter has to do with a form of trust in the reliability of the supportive environment. Relating to such assurances, the person might be able to take full responsibility for his or her creative desires, for the actions that he takes as a result of those, and for the consequences of all of that.

Fifthly, thoughtless awareness in relation to the fifth center, the Vishudhi, means that the person is able to realize the interplay between self-respect and respect for others and any obstructions to those qualities that may affect creativity. Awareness may dawn also on whether the person is capable of witnessing rather than reacting to the constant stimulation received during interaction with others and the environment. The person may also realize the extent to which he is tied by envy, competitiveness and comparison to others. The use of appropriate methods to unblock those qualities may bring an understanding of the extent to which the person feels a part of a bigger entity that fuels creativity, that is, the collective. Sixthly, the self-actualizing creativity of the Sahasrara brings forth awareness, at the level of the Agnya chakra, of the extent to which the person is able to put in practice forgiveness, both self-forgiveness and interpersonal forgiveness, and to apply that to the personal creative process. This entails the recognition of any expectations around his or her creation, subsequently being able to forgive those desires. The application of appropriate methods, at this level, means the possibility of depriving those expectations of their sense of reality, preventing frustration and resentment when these do not come true. Self-criticism might also be brought down. This does not mean that mistakes committed during the creative process are not to be acknowledged, but that these are seen with compassion, removing the heavy weight of the self-judge. Finally, the qualities of the Sahasrara bring forth awareness of a possible gap between heart and mind, which might affect the creativity of the individual. That is to say, whether there is, in the creative person, congruence between his or her desires and the commands from the mind and the extent to which this impacts one's degree of creativity. Whether body, emotions, mind and spirit merge or

diverge in the creative process becomes apparent too through the state of thoughtless awareness of the Sahasrara. Work on this chakra, mainly through meditation, makes it possible for the person to create from the heart while putting, at one and the same time, his or her mind to that. The mind, however, is at that point, deprived of distracting thoughts from ego and superego, bringing forth the possibility to experience the creative process in the present.

The ideas explained here have implications for research. Research aiming at measuring processes of self-actualization may seek to evaluate the individuals' awareness about the state of their chakras. This data could be obtained by requesting individuals immersed in a formal or informal process of self-actualization to keep a diary, registering instances where the qualities of the chakras manifest in concrete experiences in everyday life and those where they experience a blockage of the attributes. Examples are those occasions where the person finds himself acting innocently and spontaneously, as opposed to instances where the attention is on gross gain. Similar records would be kept with respect to the qualities of all the chakras. The data could be subsequently compared with that collected from individuals who are not, in any obvious manner, following a process of self-actualization. The collected information could be subsequently correlated to indicators of creativity as measured both by intrinsic and extrinsic methods.

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CHAPTER 6

Creativity in Education: A Transpersonal Approach (Part I)

The main argument explored in this chapter is largely inspired by a poem written by Maturana. 'The Student's Prayer'[1] (Maturana 1991) connects with my thoughts and viewpoints about what education should pursue in practice. It connects me indeed to an endeavor to which I have dedicated my entire adult life—education. Its words drag me into a profound process of self-reflection. In the poem, the student interrogates the teacher:

> Why do you impose on me
> what you know
> when I want to learn
> the unknown
> and be the source
> of my own breakthrough?
> The world of your truth
> is my tragedy;
> your wisdom,
> my denial;
> your conquest,
> my absence;
> your doing,
> my destruction. (Maturana 1991, 93–96)

I thus ask myself—have I been the kind of teacher to whom the student directs his prayer? The answer is 'yes'. This chapter, as much as Chap. 7, is written with the authentic desire to turn that around, not only in

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myself but in others who might be ready to take such petition seriously. I attempt, in my very own way, to make justice to the student in Maturana's poem—my student, all students—who requests their teacher to live right next to them. The student's petition is:

> Do not instruct me,
> let me live
> living next to me;
> may my riches start
> where you end,
> may your death
> be my birth.

And, it concludes:

> Do not instruct me,
> live next to me;
> you fail
> if I am identical to you. (ibid)

I attempt to respond to the student´s claim by putting the education system, and in particular, education reform, under the microscope. It is worth noticing that the education system is regarded here in a traditional fashion, comprising educational institutions that have an impact on the majority of children in the world. Private efforts that follow more integrative educational schemes, for example the Green School in Bali, deserve recognition in terms of their attempts to turn around the deficiencies of the traditional education system. Those enterprises, however, are not discussed here due to the fact that, based on their steep fees, they remain inaccessible to the vast majority of the children in the world. This chapter thus elaborates on how traditional education, which has an impact on the majority of children in the world, contributes to blocking creativity.

The Fallacy of Education Reform

Chapters 6 and 7 of this book are based on the idea that education is, at one and the same time, an obstructing element and releasing factor for creativity. Abundant literature on the topic of creativity in education points to reforms that are based on the imperative of promoting creativity at school (Spendlove 2008; Jeffrey 2006; Sternberg and Williams 1996;

Morris 2006; Fasko 2000). With the exception of a few countries in the world, nonetheless, education reform has not been very fruitful in the implementation of creativity as part of the curriculum and the pedagogy. Scotland and Finland are two of the countries that have made significant progress in that respect. Improvements are, however, minimal compared to the vast number of students in most parts of the world who are part of traditional education systems where creativity remains only something to be hoped for. Given that the implementation of creativity at school can be costly, in some countries this has only been the privilege of private schools where fees cover for such resources to be put in place. Thus education reform has largely remained on paper.

Erroneous beliefs about policy making have brought us to a situation where methods to develop creativity at school tend to remain as alien to policy makers as it is to teachers and pupils. The problem lies in that policy making directed towards a genuine implementation of creativity in the classroom cannot arise from those who are not creative themselves. Furthermore, to be a creative person in the full sense of the word it is necessary to be an insider to the self so that aspects that could potentially block creativity might be continuously reviewed. Most reformers, nonetheless, belong to the condition of the outsider to self, amply discussed in Chap. 2. Unable to review their own creativity, they are also incapable of actualizing their proposals for education reform.

To design education reform from the point of view of the outsider to the self means to be constrained by parameters of rationality, outcomes, competition and accuracy. Such policy makers, thus, might be better called pseudo-reformers. As suggested by Jean Gebser (quoted in Dethlefsen and Dahlke 2011, 306):

> The necessary change of the world and of humanity will not be operated by efforts to reform the world; reformers, in their fight for a better world as they say, shun the task of improving themselves; they practice the old tactic, human but regrettable, of demanding from others what they themselves do not do out of laziness; but the apparent success that they achieve does not excuse them for having betrayed not only the world but themselves. (my translation from Spanish)

Insofar as reforms to incorporate creativity in the traditional education system come from pseudo-reformers, this is not likely to bear any significant fruits. Effective policy towards creativity in education cannot be suggested

by outsiders to the self who cannot understand the profound meaning of the student's prayer as suggested in Maturana's poem. Such unfathomable appeal can be truly grasped only by those who do not fear entering into contact with their emotions as much as they do with their rationality. As the student in the poem requests:

> Tell me, so that I knit
> upon your history
> show yourself to me so that
> I may stand
> on your shoulders.
> Reveal yourself so that
> based on yourself I may
> be and do something different;
> I will take from you
> the senseless, not the truth
> that kills and halts;
> I will take your ignorance
> to build up my innocence. (Maturana 1991, 93–96)

Alas, one of the traits that characterize the outsider to the self is precisely the predominance of thought over emotion. As mentioned before, the outsider to the self dwells in dualisms such as those between true and false self, human nature and nature, body and mind, the masculine and the feminine, and between emotions and reason. According to the Perennial Psychology (Wilber 1994), this disjointed view of reality may be explained based on the principle of *maya*, by which experience arises out of a dualism between subject and object, between self and non-self. The Perennial Psychology uses the concept of maya to contend that this split is illusory based on apparent divisions. The outsider-to-the-self-reformers or pseudo-reformers proceed mainly from such a dualistic position, overestimating their rationality whilst disregarding their emotions; believing in the supremacy of their mind while looking down upon their body and their spirit. Regardless of how much a syllabus might be designed with the idea of a student-centered education, programs are directed to limited aspects of the self, mainly those structured around the ego.

The Perennial Psychology goes on to explain a further dualism based on ego. Ego entails identification only with a mental representation of the self by which the self is split into psyche (mind) and soma (body). The person identifies himself largely with the former rather than with the latter.

The body is indeed experienced as that where the ego is trapped. A further level of dissociation is that whereby the person is identified with only certain aspects of the ego, commonly refer to as *persona*. At this level, the image of the self is poorer. It excludes those aspects of the psyche that are painful or deemed as undesirable, relegating them into the shadow. Education reform is, by and large, proposed from the standpoint of the persona. This means that a whole range of experiences and domains of the personality are left unheard and unattended within the big education plans that belong to the persona.

There is a large body of research that points to the qualities of the creative person (Feist 1998; Sternberg and Lubart 1999; Qian et al. 2010). If reformers and teachers are oblivious to those qualities in themselves, it is expected that they will be equally blind to the presence of those in the students. Educators and students thus remain far from the idea of the creative person. The discussion that ensues proposes a transpersonal approach to the creative person that is based on awareness.

The Creative Human Being: A Transpersonal Approach

The qualities of the subtle system in their optimal state point to a person that is in agreement with Winnicott's notion of the whole human being, that is, 'not getting killed or annihilated all the time by compliance or by reacting to the world that impinges [but] seeing everything afresh all the time' (Winnicott, 1986, 41). I argue that the creative human being corresponds to that in his or her capacity to see everything afresh all the time. This means that any attempts to conform to the social system cannot suffice to annihilate the creative human being because his or her wholeness embraces the capacity to start all over again. The idea of the creative person does not entail lack of complexity, particularly as he or she is inscribed within the patriarchal culture. It does involve, however, the ability to go beyond the contradictory nature of both self and society and that of the interrelation between the two in order to see what is not there, being prepared to start afresh and create.

The idea here is to analyze the creative human being not only at a personal level but as part of the transpersonal. As mentioned in Chap. 1, the transpersonal is an approach that goes beyond the personal to include states of consciousness and identity that belong to the whole humanity, the cosmos and the psyche. This perspective has been applied in various

disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, ecology and psychiatry. Methods used include yoga, meditation, lucid dreams and mythology (Walsh and Vaughan 1994). Something that characterizes the transpersonal is the fact that it goes beyond customary states of consciousness—awake and sleep—delving instead into higher and diverse realms of awareness. Thus, making use of further states of consciousness for the enhancement of creativity may represent an opportunity to go beyond personal limitations, widening our awareness of our own potentials as much as the means to actualize them.

The transpersonal is not associated with any particular religious belief but with openness to a wide range of possibilities in order to realize latent qualities within us. Applied to education, the transpersonal has the potential to exhibit human facets and aspects hitherto discarded by the rational structure of secular education. Following a transpersonal approach, I define creativity in education as the openness to create and experiment with a variety of transpersonal methods, which, in conjunction with traditional ones, lead to a wider range of possibilities for the realization of the creative potential of the individuals through education. This results in a form of transpersonal creativity based on different states of consciousness and on qualities and emotions such as love, compassion and forgiveness, among many others.

The epistemology that underpins this transpersonal creativity is intuition. Intuition is defined as 'knowledge or knowledge structures that predispose individuals to think and act in particular ways without much conscious reflection. Accordingly, the process of activating these conceptions might be called intuition' (Torff and Sternberg 2001, 3). Intuition is connected with a form of insight that happens without much participation from the mind. It is considered as a fresh take on things that triggers creativity. Insight is a quality that emerges as part of processes of self-knowledge. Although intuition is often linked to contemplation and spiritual perception, the approach taken here in relation to this term remains secular.

There is sufficient literature that discusses the benefits of transpersonal methods for the well-being of the individuals in general and, for students in particular (Carr and Haldane 2003; Tomás et al. 2016; Fleming 2014; du Pont de Bie 1985). This research, however, tends to be obliterated, in practice, by education authorities and teachers. This is because such unconventional techniques challenge customary ways of looking at things, questioning the patriarchal culture that prevails worldwide. A transpersonal

approach calls for practice rather than for theory. This means that, to consider such views, stakeholders involved in education would require putting those principles in practice in their lives, first, to subsequently be able to use them for the enhancement of creativity in their pupils. The difficulty lies in that the transpersonal requires, to a greater or lesser degree, the readiness to discover unknown aspects of our inner life, which undoubtedly put into question structures of self. This is something that not many people are prepared to do. The easiest way out is to condemn such alternative methods as 'unscientific', remaining in the comfort zone of what is deemed as systematic and rational.

The transpersonal approach in the present study is not only theoretical but applied. The framework is taken from Sahaja Yoga's subtle system, which provides a map to unexplored realms of creativity. Based on this, I have outlined a model that constitutes the basis for the actualization of human beings' creative potential in education. I call this the Spectrum of Creativity in Education (SCE). I will subsequently elaborate.

The Spectrum of Creativity in Education (SCE)

The SCE is the representation of a continuum that has the creative human being both in its base and in its pinnacle. This model is based on the principle of self-realization. Self-realization is understood in a twofold manner: first, in the broader sense, as a synonym of Maslow's concept of self-actualization (1999) and second, in a narrower sense, as the realization of the totality of the psyche. Thus the SCE involves, on the one hand, taking notice of the potential contained in each of our chakras and of aspects that might be blocking that; and, on the other hand, putting such potentiality into practice through the use of various methods. The SCE model is characterized by a number of aspects and qualities, which are progressively integrated into one: the creative human being or the realized self. There are seven levels in the spectrum, which correspond to the qualities of the seven chakras explained in previous chapters. Based on those attributes, each stratum contains a principle, which invites teachers to allow students to re-learn those qualities.

The SCE is based on the principle of re-learning, as opposed to learning, which entails that the qualities of the subtle system are already there, be it only a matter of realizing them. Re-learning means to take the qualities out of the shadow and bring them into the light of consciousness, allowing them to be substantiated in and through our actions. The model is

linked to processes of self-knowledge, which are facilitated at one and the same time. The concept of re-learning is helpful to avoid hierarchical ideas about teaching. Traditional views on education inform a system where the one who teaches is positioned in a superior level with respect to one who learns. This means that the teacher adopts the position of 'knowing' as opposed to the 'unknowing' of the student. Re-learning as part of the SCE means recovery and it is a two-way process—both teacher and student re-learn their own qualities in mutual interaction. Within this framework, teachers are seen only as facilitators of both the student's and their own process of recovery of creativity. It is important to acknowledge the relevance of the teaching environment, which either facilitates or inhibits such re-learning process (Luco 1971 cited in Maturana 1991, 120). This is to say, the SCE is not possible in an environment where creativity is not valued or where conditions to enhance creativity are not present.

There is research that suggests signs of blocked creativity (Gurteen 1998; Brodin 2016; Owens 2012). As part of the process of socialization, educators contribute along with parents to obstruct the qualities of the chakras and, subsequently, to the blockage of creativity. In conjunction with parents, nonetheless, the education system has the possibility to unblock student potentials contained in each of the psychic centers, contributing to the release of creativity. The SCE aims at the expansion of awareness about our energy centers through a process of self-review. This does not entail the creation of a new human being but the embracement of who we are based on the understanding of how the social world has affected our subtle system and, the way whereby we, in turn, have affected the world.

One of the problems of the idea of a self-review, however, is the fear that by discovering the unknown aspects of the self and by actualizing our potential, we may no longer fit within the social system. This fear is comprehensible due to the fact that the child learnt to become an outsider to the self precisely with the hope of being accepted by parents and by the society as a whole. To do the opposite is experienced, logically, as a threat. To actualize the individual's potential while re-learning to fit within the patriarchal order of society is, however, an essential aspect of the SCE.

The layers of the SCE are based on the following principles: (1) allow students to re-learn innocence and spontaneity; (2) allow students to re-learn to train their attention, to find their authentic desires and to surrender to those desires in order to unblock their creativity; (3) allow students to re-learn contentment and balance; (4) allow students to re-learn

self-confidence and responsibility; (5) allow students to re-learn communication and collectiveness; (6) allow students to re-learn humility and forgiveness; and (7) allow students to re-learn harmony in order to actualize their creativity. I contend that by allowing students to re-learn all those qualities, teachers are at one and the same time facilitating, in themselves, such process of re-learning.

In this chapter and in Chap. 7 I elaborate on those layers. For each of the stratums I explore how the traditional education system has contributed to block the qualities of the chakras and I propose certain methods that might be helpful to allow students to re-learn them. The suggested methods are in no way exhaustive but an indication of ways in which the qualities might be enhanced in the classroom. I combine techniques already tested at school, or at the very least discussed in the literature, and I put forward additional transpersonal methods. Research is invited to explore these methods, their features, applicability in the classroom and implications. It is not expected to find uniformity in the use of these methods as these might be accommodated to a range of contexts in different learning environments across the world. As for policy that may ensue to implement the suggested methods as part of the SCE that, undoubtedly, would be the task of an insider-to-the-self-reformer, if this would exist.

First Layer of the SCE: Allow Students to Re-Learn Innocence and Spontaneity in Order to Unblock Their Creativity

As mentioned in Chap. 3, innocence and spontaneity are part of unplanned and uncalculated behavior. These qualities correspond to the Mooladhara and they represent the first level of the SCE. Both qualities, linked to naturalness and simplicity, can be appreciated in their purest form in children, particularly in children younger than three years old. Parents and the demands from the social realm contribute, however, to the gradual blockage of those attributes. In education, three factors that reinforce such a trend are—the requirement for students to produce conventional responses to tasks and problems; the use of traditional assessment methods; and the fact that attention is overwhelmingly placed on outcomes. An additional deterrent to innocent and spontaneous behavior is the fact that play has been minimized by the patriarchal culture. Instead of being given the opportunity to play, children are increasingly required to focus

their attention on results, competition, productivity and appropriation as opposed to acting freely without anticipation. Play has been reduced or eliminated even at the elementary level (Bodrova and Leong 2001).

As part of the first layer of the SCE, I suggest play as a method that could be helpful to allow students to re-learn innocence and spontaneity at school. According to Verden-Zöler (2011, 222), play is 'any human activity done in the moment when it is done with the attention placed on it and not on the results, that is, lived without further aim and with no other intention than that of its being done' (my translation from Spanish). Literature on the relevance of play in education abounds (Singer et al. 2006; Gørlitz and Wohlwill 1987; Moyles 1989; Broadhead 2004). What is missing is its recognition by the relevant authorities to the effect that this might be given a key role as part of both the pedagogy and the curricula. As pedagogy, it is the role of teachers to find innovative forms in which play can be used to assist in their teaching. As part of the curriculum, the suggestion is to include 'play' as a key subject from preschool to college. The weight and form that this might take in each of the levels may vary.

In the discussion that follows, I elaborate on methods through which play can be incorporated as part of the curriculum at schools. This is divided into different levels, according to the education system in Mexico, which is the system with which I am most familiar. Methods, nonetheless, can be adjusted to other countries' education systems, according to age range. In Mexico, children ages 3–6 attend Preschool (*Kinder*). Primary school (*Primaria*) comprises grades 1–6 and children 6–12 years old. Junior high school (*Secundaria*) includes grades 7–9 with student ages 12–15. High school or (*Preparatoria*) covers grades 10–12 and students 15–18 years old. Higher education comprises at least four years for a bachelor's degree (*Licenciatura*), two years for a master's degree (*Maestría*) and three years for a doctorate (*Doctorado*).

I argue that in order to allow students to re-learn innocence and spontaneity pretend play can be incorporated as a subject in the curricula during preschool and in the first two grades of elementary school. In this imaginative form of play the real world intersects with a make-believe world through the use of pretend behavior and scenarios and, substitute objects and imagined objects. It is a cooperative form of play, requiring the participation of two or more children who perform certain roles while they manipulate ideas, emotions and objects. The benefits that this brings to children have been widely studied (Lindsey and Colwell 2003, 2013; Sawyer 1997; Russ and Wallace 2013). Imaginative play has proved useful

for children to learn to understand their emotions and to develop skills such as communication, problem solving, empathy and cognitive skills. Such abilities are built up through the integration of disparate elements and divergent thinking. One important benefit is the enhancement of creativity. Pretend play is often referred to as fantasy play or spontaneous fantasy (Sawyer 1997, xi). This means that two of the qualities most developed through this are spontaneity and imagination, both of which are important qualities in the creative process. Playing is indeed a useful method to re-learn that things are not black or white, right or wrong, but that there are countless colors and tones in all aspects of life. The basis of creativity is a disposition towards a wide range of possibilities. This attitude may be fostered at school through a more predominant role of play, allowing students—and teachers—to re-learn the qualities of the Mooladhara chakra, that is, innocence and spontaneity.

Pretend play as a subject in the curricula at preschool and early elementary school would entail having a dedicated space and time whereby children could give free reign to their imagination. As suggested by Landreth 'the presence of toys and materials in the room sends a message to the child that this space and time is different from all others. It indicates that they are given permission to be children and to feel free to be fully themselves' (Landreth 1993 cited in Drewes and Schaefer 2010, 4). It is advisable that teachers should be a part of this activity, creating imaginary situations and suggesting complex make-believe scenarios that could contribute further to the enhancement of this method (Bodrova and Leong 2003). Pretend play as a school subject, however, ought to be free of any assessment or grading system. This is because a significant characteristic that adds value to pretend play is precisely the fact that it is done for fun, keeping intact the essence of play, that is, innocent behavior without attention to results.

In subsequent years of elementary school and throughout junior high school, play could take the form of a guided exploration of nature. According to Sahaja Yoga, the element that corresponds to the Mooladhara chakra is the earth. This Eastern tradition suggests that contact with nature entails a development of the qualities of this chakra, that is, innocence and spontaneity. A guided exploration of nature would include not only field trips to natural spots where children could freely explore the natural world, but also activities where children may work with clay and other earthen materials to produce a range of objects. Sand play is also a useful technique. Research has demonstrated that this brings about significant benefits to children's development (Kestly 2001). As indicated earlier,

these activities cannot be subjected to traditional forms of assessment and grading. Formative assessment methods, instead, could be useful. These could measure, for example, changes in the interrelation of the child with the earth element, which could take the form of impressions written by the child in a diary. Children could be asked to register impressions at the start of the guided exploration phase and/or at the beginning and end of each of the sessions or trips into nature. The child's degree of exploration of and integration with the environment is something that the teacher could keep track of through the various activities. Any changes in such interrelation could be followed up. The level of playfulness is also something to be observed. Children could be asked to express this in terms of the joy they experience when they interact with nature in its different forms.

There is an alarming lack of literature on the topic of play in high school and above. Exceptions are sources that explore issues related to sports and competitions. Therefore, in many higher-education institutions, even recesses in between classes are absent and play is by and large ruled out. While empirical research has been carried out to address the benefits that play brings to young children, there is a significant gap in studies that could illuminate how the lack of play in later phases of the traditional education system affects adolescents and young adults. It is important to explore suitable methods to incorporate play at higher stages both as part of the curricula and the pedagogy. A starting point would be to promote research on the effects that the total suspension of play, with the exception of sports, from high school onwards has in adolescents and young adults.

Some of the major issues that confront adolescents are: developing a sense of self, coping with failure, status allocation in the peer culture and relation to power and authority (Kelly 1979). Most of these problems have to do with processes of socialization and managing relations. A significant aspect is also related to changes in their bodies, which affect their sense of identity. The fact that adolescents are so self-conscious about their self-identity often entails that they lose their spontaneity and they feel awkward regarding their own bodies. Play could be a good resource to help them deal with body and identity issues without much intervention of their minds, letting their bodies speak instead.

Research has demonstrated that school-based play therapy has significant and positive impacts in young children (Drewes and Schaefer 2010). It would be useful to direct resources to investigate forms in which play therapy could be adapted to adolescents and young adults. From a speculative point of view, it may be possible to suggest that body psychotherapy

could be one of the ways to do that. The main premise that underpins body psychotherapy practice is that 'a person's beliefs and feelings manifest in their body and, conversely, that changes in the body can and do facilitate changes in belief and feeling [thus] body psychotherapists are specifically trained […] to work psychotherapeutically through the body' (Totton 2003, 24). Since this form of psychotherapy requires less intervention of the mind and more of the body, this could be a useful tool to help adolescents and young adults reconnect with their innocence and spontaneity. A useful example from real life is that of the adolescent with the big pimple on his or her nose. He or she is teased by his or her peers and, in response to that, the teen, at first, withdraws from social interaction. After working with the body psychotherapist, the adolescent is ready to go out regardless of the pimple. When his or her mother asks about this new disposition, he or she responds: 'It is just a pimple, mum'. Issues related to appearances have the power to put into question the very feeble identity of the adolescent. Body psychotherapy provides the platform on which to work on these issues, bringing a greater sense of self to the youngster. As mentioned earlier, further research is needed to give answers as to how to adapt this to the school setting in higher education.

Dance as a form of body psychotherapy could be also used as a technique to allow high school students to re-learn to accept their corporality and to be more playful around it. Various forms of body psychotherapy could be appropriate, including Tai Chi and other oriental methods. Most of them include training in breathing, which is a useful way to deal with emotions. Body psychotherapy could train students to respond in an embodied way to feelings, sensations and impulses, finding playfulness around these aspects.

On the whole, college students are mainly concerned with career and job opportunities. Their attention is affected by thoughts and worries about the future, which often prevent them from being in the present. A form to recover innocence and spontaneity would be to include in the curricula a unit that could be labeled as 'non-productive acts for productivity'. The idea that underpins this module is that when we are overwhelmed by stress and worries, the most productive way to remain productive is to do something, allegedly, non-productive. This has the potential to free our minds from all concerns, bringing us to the present. In such an unstructured state of mind, intuition or insight may pave the way for creativity. The course aims to provide the necessary space and resources to allow students to re-learn innocence and spontaneity as a means to intuition.

Activities for this course would include, although not exclusively, some of the following activities: aimless walk, free dance and freestyle art design.

The idea is to have a designated area at the higher education institution devoted to this endeavor. In this room, resources such as art materials, clay, sand, yarns, threads and music would be available for any student at any time during a set period, for example, during working hours. Students would then be free to attend during their preferred time. Attendance would be the only requirement. As a way to keep an attendance record, students would need to sign in and out. Neither the use of electronic devices nor chatting with friends would be allowed.

The prohibition of this method is with the intention to allow students to find non-productive ways to be productive beyond those already favored these days by socializing and by an extensive use of technologies, which, incidentally, on occasions are not as productive. The presence of a member of staff would be required at the entrance of the room to make sure no electronic devices are introduced and that room materials are not removed from the space. Depending on the availability of resources, the staff in question could oversee this space while performing other tasks required by the institution. The idea behind this school subject is to allow the flourishing of intuition by focusing the attention on the present in a playful manner. This could be subsequently applied to moments where students have to make decisions, thus exercising their ability to enjoy the present.

The main methodology of this workshop is freedom in three different forms: freedom to be, freedom to create and freedom to do. Freedom to be entails how the student chooses to be in each of the sessions. The student may choose to interact with the available resources and with other students in the room or may choose to be bored. Freedom to create means that the student is free to use the materials available in the room to produce the piece of art or object of his choice. Materials would be recycled and students would not be allowed to take away any of the created items. In this way, the 'non-productive acts for productivity module' subverts the concept of appropriation, which is a significant factor in killing innocence and spontaneity in patriarchal societies. Freedom to do is related to the student choice of an activity: dance, walk, move, stay still or create an object. One final choice would be to do nothing.

In this section, I have elaborated on the first layer of the SCE, proposing play as a means to re-learn innocence and spontaneity. I have attempted to elaborate how play might be a useful method not only in early school

stages but through to higher education. I will now discuss the second layer of the SCE that is connected to the Swadishthan.

Second Layer of the SCE: Allow Students to Re-Learn How to Train Their Attention, Find Their Authentic Desires and Surrender in Order to Unblock Their Creativity

The second layer of the SCE comprises the qualities of the Swadishthan chakra discussed in Chap. 3, mainly, attention, authentic desire and surrendering. These three qualities are affected when the patriarchal takes over the matristic (Maturana 1991). With respect to attention, in the early stages of life, this is placed inwardly. The newly born baby discovers the world around it in a natural and spontaneous manner. The child's attention to the outside world remains intrinsically connected to his or her inner world. For example, when a child finds something unpleasant in the outside world, effortlessly, he or she is capable of bringing the attention inwardly, connecting with the corresponding emotional expression, for example, crying. As part of the process of socialization, however, children are gradually and incessantly taught to focus their attention outwardly. The connection with the inner world is gradually lost and the ability to respond emotionally to outward stimuli is thereafter conditioned by what is deemed appropriate.

Along with parents, teachers play a fundamental role in fostering an instrumental form of attention that is directed predominantly to patriarchal concerns about productivity, results, rationality and appropriation. As a result, contact with inner sources of inspiration becomes scarce. Since insight is fleeting, outward attention conspires against the possibility to seize that. In addition, school works against a free-flowing attention, which is the basis of curiosity. Beyond the very early school years, this is compromised in favor of a dedicated attention to academic matters. Rather than stimulating attention to the process, students are encouraged to focus their attention on results. This prevents enjoyment and flow in most activities performed at school and subsequently creativity is blocked.

The traditional education system conspires also against student authentic desires and, subsequently, against the possibility to surrender to those. In their purest form, children's desires are connected to enjoyment. School, however, aims at academic results through which to justify, in

front of the relevant educational authorities and in the eyes of the parents, the school's budget and the staff salaries. Children's desires thus meet an impasse when they encounter a structure based on rigid timetables, fixed activities and summative assessment methods, all of which are conducive to the school's aims rather than to the child's needs.

On the whole, teaching tends to be framed by a number of prescriptions where children are instructed in what is to be done and how. The teacher is deemed not only as the one who has the knowledge of a particular subject or subjects but also the one who knows what is right for the student. Within such framework there is very little room for authentic desires. Students thus learn to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to those. As a result, they often find themselves at odds between what they want and what they are expected to do or to be. This has implications in manifold aspects of the individuals' lives. For example, the inability at a younger age to choose the desired degree program results in frequent career change later in adulthood. Failed marriages are also very common due to the fact that young adults often fail to listen to their authentic desires with respect to the person they should marry or at what age, often following desires that are not theirs. Lastly, when a person's true desires have been hidden under layers of prohibitions, 'musts', aims and outcomes, it might be expected that this person will not be in contact with his or her true desire to express the inner self. The desire for self-expression was mentioned, in Chap. 3, as the highest of all authentic desires, encompassing all other desires and entailing the potential to create.

I suggest three main methods for the second layer of the SCE in order to help students to re-learn how to train their attention, find their authentic desires and surrender to these. The methods are—locating the attention, the arts and travelling. The first method, to locate the attention, requires a very simple technique based on the meditation suggested by Sahaja Yoga. Attention is very important for the meditator. It is advised that a useful question to ask oneself in regards to locating attention is—where is my attention? This simple question triggers a movement of the attention. The person is then able to observe where his or her attention is—whether in a thought about the future, in a memory from the past or swinging between both. The mere act of consciously noticing where the attention is brings the attention into the present. The meditator can subsequently continue his meditation practice. This technique has also proven very useful with agitated children who get very easily distracted, including those with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Harrison et al. 2003).

Triggered by this question, and as they have to focus the attention on themselves, the children are brought into a calmer state. I advocate that this very simple technique may be very useful at school to allow students to trace their attention. Once students are able to locate their attention, they might be able to re-direct it to their creative endeavors, or any other enterprises for that matter. By training their attention in this very simple way, students can gradually learn to avoid thoughts that take their attention away, allowing them to be more present in whatever activity they do, whether for fun or otherwise.

The second method indicated for the second layer of the SCE comprises the fine arts and the applied arts or crafts. These are proposed in order to allow students to find their authentic desires. The arts are already a part of the curricula in many schools. My suggestion, however, goes beyond the traditional methods used to impart the arts to create a 'free art space' where students can interact with the arts in a more free and spontaneous manner. As a non-purposeful activity, this would preclude the end-of-year plays, choreographies and exhibitions. Such performances and expositions have the purpose of making visible students' achievements in these areas. Thus, wherever possible they should be kept alive at schools. The proposal here, however, is to open further spaces where art can be practiced for its own sake. This should be given a different space in the curricula than that of the art classes. In fact, the knowledge learnt in art classes could be useful for students to apply in the free art space. The same is advised for arts such as dance and drama, keeping an emphasis on expression rather than on results (Mertz and Roach 2002).

Similarly, with respect to the applied arts, the free art space represents the opportunity for students to create crafts for the sake of creating rather than with a purpose or with an object in mind. New forms of art connected to new technologies, such as collage and photomontage, could be also incorporated. The idea behind this method is to allow students to re-learn how to connect with their true desires and how to surrender to those. By freeing them from the burden that results place on them, students are allowed to focus their attention on the process rather than on the outcome. This method would be applicable to all school levels. Some variants would be relevant, nonetheless, in terms of the space, the materials and the amount of guidance needed in each level.

The third method in order to allow students to re-learn the qualities of the Swadishthan is travelling. This is commonly known as field trips. Field trips at school are customarily considered an extension of the formal structure

of the education system and they are promoted as an opportunity for learning. They are used in support of a range of school subjects, covering settings from nature to museums and factories. Field trips, nonetheless, tend to aim at a learning outcome and, in most cases, they are subject to evaluation. The suggestion here is to use field trips in a more unsystematic manner, mainly as a means to train student attention. This would deal with attention in its two forms—focused and free flowing.

In this case, focused attention may be enhanced by travelling to sites where students might be invited to center their attention on specific aspects, for example in the case of natural spots, students might be advised to pay attention to particularities of the flora or fauna or to different scenic views during the trip. The emphasis would not be on learning about any of that but on allowing the students to re-learn how to train their attention. Attention to detail would be fostered. Field trips could be also used to cultivate free-flowing attention. In this case, students' attention would be allowed to freely flow and capture the extraordinary in the most ordinary details of the trip. Based on what they seize, students could use their imagination to build a story, report, drawing or painting or any other form of creative representation. This program, based on the idea of travel, rules out the right-answer-scheme, and thus a wide range of responses would be expected.

In this section, I have elaborated on methods to allow students to re-learn qualities related to the second level of the SCE, that is, to train their attention, to identify authentic desires and to surrender to those. Something relevant is the idea that teachers should not look at these opportunities in terms of students learning in the formal and traditional ways but as a means to enhance creativity, providing thus the necessary freedom. A significant factor is to release students from the pressure that results put on them. I will proceed in the following section to discuss the SCE in relation to the qualities of the Nabhi chakra.

Third Layer of the SCE: Allow Students to Re-Learn Contentment and Balance in Order to Unblock Their Creativity

Contentment and balance, which are the qualities of the Nabhi chakra, represent the third layer of the SCE. In the process of socialization, the original sense of contentment of the newly born child gives way to a

pervasive lack of fulfillment. The primal sense of self-worth is, gradually, placed on external factors such as rewards and achievements. By placing a strong emphasis on those aspects, the traditional education system plays an important role in promoting the greediness of individuals. At school, grades are seen as the pinnacle reward and, based on those, students are judged either as 'good' or 'bad'. The excessive attention to grades erroneously turns them into a measurement for self-worth.

There is not much that can be done to suppress the grading system at school. This, hitherto, is one of the criteria for a number of things—school progression, quality of schooling at higher levels in some countries, postgraduate opportunities and jobs. Some schools have implemented other forms whereby students are recognized, for example, based on sports achievements or on outcomes from various sorts of competitions. All of these, however, entail the recognition of merits based on results. Theoretically, that is meant to be stimulating for students. What is problematic, however, is the fact that the intrinsic value of students remains largely unrewarded. For example, values such as hard work, leadership, responsibility and enthusiasm are not considered within the range of merits that are recognized. Furthermore, students' ability to make friends, to be trusted by others, to have good relationships and other social talents pass inadvertent. Students, thus, learn to place their self-worth in abilities and achievements.

The ability to keep balance is also compromised at school. The increasing demands placed on students go against that. On the whole, there is a lack of balance across school activities, whereby most resources and time are dedicated to academic subjects and not to sports, arts, crafts and other creative activities. Play is by and large overridden and time is used mainly to demonstrate student learning to parents and education authorities. Another source of imbalance is that between inner and outer worlds, where the former is overwhelmingly dismissed over the latter. The inner world has almost no place at school, going largely unheard for the sake of the demands from the outer world. As educators are mostly outsiders to the self, they subsequently teach students, through their example, to become themselves outsiders to the self.

Balance across the different aspects of human beings is also rarely seen at school. The focus is on rationality and mind. Emotions and body are largely rejected—for example, children are encouraged to not cry and to not feel angry or sad. Teachers would, certainly, not know what to do in the eventuality of a student giving free reign to their emotions and thus

the easiest way out is to sweep emotions away altogether. Spiritual aspects are also left out of the domain of school. The supremacy of reason, on the contrary, is incessantly affirmed, using this as the main criteria to judge students, not only in terms of their learning but also as human beings, or so it is conveyed. Courses directed towards developing other forms of intelligence beyond critical thinking, for example emotional intelligence, are nowhere to be seen in the curricula.

The split between subject and object as part of the learning process is a further source of imbalance fostered at school. Students learn that 'objectivity' is the overall aim of education, which justifies the right-answer model. With the exception of a few subjects, such as those in the humanities and the arts, students are taught that the subject has no place at school. Lack of balance between human nature and nature is also fostered. The latter is there for human beings to use, control and exploit in their benefit. A false superiority of human nature over nature is proclaimed.

The above-mentioned speaks of the dominance of the patriarchal culture and the prevalence of the condition of the outsider to the self in the education system. The main aspect that underpins a patriarchal culture where lack of contentment and balance are fostered at school is the fear of looking inwardly and entering into contact with our inner lives. Rewards, grades, myriad activities and packed school timetables are detractors from an inward look. With the support of the traditional education system, the supremacy of the outsider to the self is declared and kept intact.

Three methods are claimed to allow students to re-learn contentment and balance. These are: silence, Tai Chi and meditation. It is a quasi-impossible task to attempt to re-learn contentment and balance when there is so much noise inside and outside that grabs our attention. The inner noise takes the form of thoughts of past and future, while the outer noise presents manifold stimuli that surrounds us and constantly bombards our senses. Very rarely are we in silence. According to Esaki, 'silence is the space and time to listen, where to listen is to learn, to allow one's consciousness to transform, or to absorb. Sound, silence's younger brother, is the production on top of space and time, or the attempts to teach, to change another's consciousness, or to emit' Esaki 2007). Esaki's working definition of silence is very useful for the purposes of this chapter. Going back to The Student's Prayer, it is possible to argue that the student is requesting silence, that is, silence as a possibility to listen, to learn, to absorb and to experience a change in consciousness. All such qualities are necessary for creativity. It follows then that what the

student implores is to be allowed the conditions to create. It might be worth questioning, how many spaces are designated at schools to allow for silence? The answer might be, none. Furthermore, to what extent are we allowing students to listen, to learn, to absorb, when constant noise can prevail in the classroom? The answer to this question might be, very little.

The suggestion for the second layer of the SCE is to introduce silence as a methodology to allow students to re-learn contentment and balance in order to unblock their creativity. Studies have already investigated the effects that silence has on learning. A study conducted at two Mid-Atlantic universities demonstrated that self-imposed silence had a significant effect on the awareness of the students' listening effectiveness and on the value attributed to developing listening skills (Johnson et al. 2003). An original reflection about the pedagogical value of silence is found in the work of Zembylas and Michaelides (2004). They discuss how silence has a positive effect on emotional communication, which takes place, by and large, without talk. Their work invites self-criticality in the way of thinking about silence in the classroom setting. Silence, they suggest, allows for self-reflection on teaching and learning, and it is a useful disciplinary method too when teachers request the attention of students in the class. Silence is also explored as 'a response'. Zembylas and Michaelides (ibid) contend that there are situations where silence is indeed the best response, opening the space to listen to ourselves and to others. The research mentioned here is only a sample of the literature on the topic of silence in education. In praxis, however, silence is not common at schools. This has to do with a customary fear of facing the vacuum that silence conveys, which brings us into contact with the inner self. As has been amply discussed, this is something that most people would tend to avoid.

The suggestion to use silence as pedagogy entails purposely introducing spaces of silence in the classroom to allow for self-reflection. A deliberate effort should be made to permit such pauses while content is delivered to students. The introduction of silent gaps could be applied to all subjects in the curricula. This method requires the teacher to be comfortable with silence him or herself, demonstrating through his or her example the benefit that silence brings forth. As suggested by Maturana (1991, 113) 'the secret of the word is in its silence' (my translation from Spanish). The introduction of spaces of silence at school, thus, becomes a means to listen and reflect on what is learnt, giving students and teachers the possibility to absorb more profusely the content that is learnt.

Spaces of silence at school might be useful not only as part of the pedagogy but also in the curricula. It is suggested that there should be spaces for silence built into the timetable. These differ from the recesses where children are allowed to do things, play, talk with their peers or use electronic devices, which entail constant noise through different means. Spaces of silence consist, instead, of indoor or outdoor opportunities where both teachers and students may remain in complete silence. It is not necessary that silence should be practiced for long periods, which could potentially grow into disorder, for example, in the case of very young children. What is relevant about spaces of silence is their repeated presence in academic life so that students and teachers may become familiar with them.

Finally, a form of silence in education could be introduced through music. This musical silence may be facilitated not only in school subjects such as musical appreciation or music classes but also in the form of musical moments introduced, for example, when students are tired or when their attention is wandering in all subjects in the curricula. The suggestion is to introduce silence through a pause in between tracks or between different pieces of music that might be played. The gap could be deliberately enlarged to allow, not only for self-reflection but also for both teacher and student to get in touch with emotions and thoughts brought up by the music. This musical silence would also allow participants to absorb the various meanings associated with each piece, facilitating the assimilation of the vibrations that music carries with it. Classical music might be the ideal. This is because of its highly aesthetic and extraordinary source of inspiration of its creators (Legrá Sánchez and Fernández Pereira 2009). As in the case of spaces of silence, the musical gaps do not need to be lengthy. In both cases, the duration could be adapted to student age, starting from very short periods in preschool and primary school and increasing gradually in high school, college and graduate studies.

It is likely that the proposal of spaces of silence may evoke antagonistic reactions both in students and teachers. This is due to the fact that silence is overwhelmingly alien in our culture. Negative responses to it, however, are only an indicator of how powerful silence might be if granted a proper place in our lives. Given the overwhelming resistance to silence in our culture, this technique might require time before it might be embraced by teachers and students. It would be relevant to invite participants to record the emotions and thoughts that they experience in these spaces by asking themselves a question—what happens to me when I am in silence? No judgment would be passed to any particular answer, all responses

would be perfectly valid. Despite the initial resistance that these might trigger, constant practice may allow for this to gradually grow into a sense of friendliness with whatever happens within, which translates into inner contentment and satisfaction. Spaces of silence at school aims at allowing both teacher and student to listen, to learn, to absorb and to bring forth a different state of consciousness—from crowded, loud and avoidant to a serene awareness of self. The methodology is intended as a form of training in how to quiet our minds in order to listen to the voice of our inspiration and to our authentic desires, allowing them to guide our creativity.

The second method proposed as part of the SCE is Tai Chi. This is one of the most well-known martial arts, which consists of slow pace movements. Tai Chi is considered as meditation in movement. This Eastern technique can be used from preschool to college. Studies have already investigated the impact of Tai Chi in college and secondary school students (Chen and Sherman 2002), its impact on helping underachievers (Griffin 1988) and its contribution towards an integrated, interdisciplinary college education (Clark and Wawrytko 1990). These studies have in common the premise that Tai Chi has the potential to benefit students in regaining balance and self-esteem, in focusing their attention, dealing with their emotions and coping with stress. An important benefit of Tai Chi, as opposed to other body techniques, is the fact that it conjures up qualities such as patience. Tai Chi offers the possibility to slow down in order to first, notice the world within; second, notice the world without; and finally, create—based on the synergy between the two.

A third method conducive to re-learning contentment and balance is meditation. This technique will be explained in detail in the following chapter to re-learn the qualities of the seventh center of energy, the Sahasrara. For now, it may suffice to argue that one of the basic benefits of meditation is balance between thoughts from past and future, between ego and superego, and between body and mind, all of which are united in and through the present. As we witness our thoughts and we let them go and, as we embrace our emotions and accept them as ours, meditation brings forth a peaceful and contented attitude towards whatever comes our way, at every moment. Such an accepting attitude allows for creativity to flourish because ideas are not censured in any way but peacefully watched and welcomed as they unravel. Being at peace with our desires and with our insights allows for that to be actualized in the creative work.

In this chapter I have discussed the first three layers of the SCE connected to the qualities of the Mooladhara, the Swadishthan and the Nabhi

chakras. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the four subsequent strata, which are based on the attributes of the Anahata, the Vishudhi, the Agnya and the Sahasrara.

Note

1. The Student's Prayer (1991, 93–96) by Humberto Maturana. Trans. by Lili Hernández-Romero.

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CHAPTER 7

Creativity in Education: A Transpersonal Approach (Part II)

As it has been discussed throughout this book, the patriarchal culture is responsible for reinforcing polarities between body and mind; emotions and rationality; subject and object; inner and outer worlds; and insider and outsider (to the self). This is the culture that prevails at present and that has spread beyond the limits of the West, permeating the entire world. The dualism fostered by the patriarchal culture is evident in the education system. In Maturana's words,

> In childhood, we guide them [children] into collaboration, mutual respect, acceptance of the other, self-respect, sharing and in the legitimacy of sensuality. In the passage to adulthood, we guide them into appropriation, fight, denial of the other, competitiveness, domination and repression of the sensual in favor of reason. That is, we guide our children during childhood in the biology of love while in their youth we guide them to the biology of aggression. (Maturana 1991, 53—my translation from Spanish)

By embracing the patriarchal, the education system provides a form of life training—in fighting. As part of school life, children learn to fight in various ways—to gain the attention of the teacher, as classes are generally large; to attain positive regard from their parents through their merits; to gain the respect from teachers based on achievements; and, to obtain respect from their peers, as perils such as bullying always threaten them. Bullying is indeed one of the more dysfunctional forms of the biology of aggression that characterizes education. Through means of this, children

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ventilate manifold—and sometimes subtle—forms of aggression that they learn and experience at home.

Inversely, in the model suggested by the Spectrum of Creativity in Education (SCE), the more we escalate up the ladder of the psychic centers, the more the qualities become intricately connected to Maturana's biology of love. The top four chakras—Anahata, Vishudhi, Agnya and Sahasrara—represent the basis of the four superior stratums of the SCE. The qualities of these centers of energy—love, compassion, communication, collectiveness and forgiveness—are transpersonal in nature. This entails that the methods that allow for their qualities to re-emerge often step out of the comfort zone of the predictable and the objective sought by reason and mind. Thus, this requires openness to further levels of consciousness, such as thoughtless awareness, discussed in Chap. 5.

A difficult task is to try to elaborate about transpersonal qualities and of possible methods to unleash such attributes as part of the traditional education system. In order to be true to my commitment to The Student's Plea introduced in Chap. 6, this chapter represents an attempt to do that. A range of methods are signposted. Similarly to Chap. 6, these methods invite further research to investigate how they can be used in the classroom and possible implications that they might bring. As was the case of the techniques discussed in Chap. 6, the methods introduced here are not comprehensive in any sort of way. The discussion starts with the fourth layer of the SCE, which corresponds with the qualities of the Anahata chakra.

Fourth Layer of the SCE: Allow Students to Re-Learn Self-Confidence and Responsibility in Order to Unblock Their Creativity

The traditional education system contributes in manifold ways to blocking the qualities of the Anahata chakra, mainly through self-confidence and responsibility. Conditional regard based on grades and achievements is one of the main deterrents to the development of healthy self-confidence at school. As children escalate the ladder of the educational system, the sense of being valued for who the child is starts fading, giving way to pervasive patterns of recognition based on behavior. This is structural to an education system focused on outcomes. Competitiveness is encouraged in various forms and in different areas as a way to motivate student

learning. Although competitiveness might be positive in some ways, the overall message sent to students is that in order to win, some others have to lose. This is a direct attack to the self-confidence not only of those who 'lose' but also of those who 'win' because competitiveness entails that even if the child wins today, he or she may lose tomorrow. This drives children into developing a sense of alertness or a shell against losing. This armor contributes to the gradual diminishment of self-confidence because it prevents not only the negative from going out but also the positive from coming in. The loss of ontological trust lies at the core of this protective shield. In addition, to win stirs up envy and jealousy from peers. Although some children are able to deal with that better than others, on the whole, to attract such negative attention from coequals tends to be a source of anxiety. At the level of the fourth layer of the SCE, the method suggested to re-learn self-confidence is love. As mentioned in Chap. 4, love is also a quality of the Anahata chakra. While working on this as a method, love as a quality is also facilitated.

Although the scholarly literature in education has opened up in the last decades to affective learning, exploring the role that emotions play in the learning process, very little has been said in particular about love. Freire's pedagogy of love is one of the earliest attempts at incorporating feelings, emotions, sensations, body and other aspects of the whole human being into the education process (Freire 1970, 2005). Freire was criticized, however, for lack of rigor due to the emotional language he used in order to express his ideas. Incorporating love as part of teaching, thus, entails manifold risks. That is what made Freire suggest that teaching required courage and commitment (ibid).

More recently, only some forms of love—for example, love for learning, love for the child and teaching with love—have been studied. An exception is an edited collection by Liston and Garrison, which represents a serious attempt at discussing love as part of learning (Liston and Garrison 2004). The scarce literature on the subject may be explained based on the challenges that dealing with such a topic conveys in the academic milieu.

Some studies discuss the role that love plays in education under the umbrella of 'caring teaching'. This term, however, implies protection and guidance, which bounces back to the superior position of the one who cares as opposed to the one who is protected or guided. Although love might be endorsed in education with the best of intentions, it may also become a means to establish the supremacy of the teacher's ego, as such efforts are deemed praiseworthy. This can potentially be used as a means

of exerting control in a subtle way (O'Quinn and Garrison 2004). To speak of love as a teaching method requires instead openness to establishing equity between teacher and student. My concept of love as a method to re-learn self-confidence is based on Maturana, who suggests that love consists of 'the actions that constitute the other as a legitimate other in his or her interaction with us' (Maturana 1991, 239—my translation from Spanish).

School represents the land where the basis of love might be either sowed or reaped. It is at school where, beyond their immediate family, the child establishes contact with the other. The child's experiences at home and at school determine the type of interactions that this will build. These might be either based on love when the other person is created as a legitimate other, or the opposite. Lack of love—or a deficiency in our share of this—manifests in various ways—bullying, illness, neurosis, conflict, hatred, indifference, abuse, power, inequity and disrespect for self, others and the world. More often than not, we tend to believe that we love and that we are loved in sufficient degree. The presence of individual and social ailments, nonetheless, speaks of the opposite.

One of the reasons why we fall short in our supply of love is because we have not understood what love means. Love has been mistaken for a synonym of romance, beauty and happiness. It has also been constrained by allowing this to be felt by and expressed only to those whom we are close to, as in the case of our children, parents or friends. Love is also experienced as a moral principle, which tends to remain alien from our everyday experience. Examples are love for the environment, the planet or for life.

On the contrary, I find Maturana's concept of love very down to earth, as this is explained in terms of actions, that is, the actions that constitute the other as a legitimate other in his or her interaction with us (ibid). On the whole, we have failed to experience love in terms of actions and to make it observable and measurable. This raises a question—what are the actions that constitute the other as a legitimate other in his or her interaction with us? The answer to that is not as obvious in Maturana's work.

To elaborate on the actions that define love cannot be done in any exhaustive or prescriptive way because the nature of love—alive and fluid—refuses encapsulations. Some actions can, nonetheless, be sketched out, for example, to listen to the other; to understand him or her; to accept the other as a whole human being, with built in weaknesses and strengths; to accept differences in him or her with respect to oneself; to give him or her the freedom to be, regardless of the extent to which one

may agree or disagree; to not put one's expectations on the other; to express the self while allowing the other to express him or herself; and, to have one's entire attention on the other while we interact with him or her, that is, to be fully present. I refer to these as acts of love.

Maturana suggests that love cannot be learnt. His idea is that this can be allowed or denied but it cannot be learnt because it belongs to our biology as human beings. I agree with Maturana in that love is part of our biology. The newly born baby is, naturally and biologically, love. He relates to the other based on love, creating the other as a legitimate other in the interaction with him or her, in the most natural and spontaneous manner. Nonetheless, in the same way that an organ or muscle in our body suffers a disturbance, love has become pathological. As the child grows, love starts a process of malfunctioning. This is mainly due to the influence of two aspects: firstly, parents who are outsiders to the self, thus, not truly connected with the emotion of love; and secondly, the patriarchal culture that surrounds both parents and the child, which leads to the rationalization of love. I concur that love cannot be learnt because it is indeed already built in our biology. It can, nonetheless, be re-learned. As it happens with the physiotherapy required to bring back to proper functioning an abnormal organ or muscle, some training might also be needed to let love thrive again.

Love is a significant element in building up our confidence to create. In order to be creative, one has to love oneself first, so that we can have the confidence to follow our genuine desire to be and express ourselves. Love gives confidence to the creative human being to see everything afresh all the time. A feeling of ontological security is required to attempt without the risk of falling down, whereby one might be capable to start all over again as many times as needed while feeling protected by a loving environment.

Based on this idea, I argue that love should be a part of both the pedagogy and the curriculum at school. As pedagogy, love might be re-learned through the teacher's acts of love in and outside the classroom, which may help as an example to the student. In principle, this would allow students to experience love in and through their own actions, as a down-to-earth, day-to-day quality that has to be re-learned and actualized. Without a doubt, the process of re-learning love is a lifelong endeavor, workable, nonetheless, at school.

Based on Maturana's concept, a form of pedagogy based on love would be one where the actions of both teachers and students might constitute

each other as legitimate others in mutual coexistence and interrelation. I argue that the elements of such pedagogy of love are the following. Firstly, teacher's self-love. Love for oneself can be defined as the actions that constitute oneself as a legitimate being in and through our own existence. This is a form of unconditional positive regard whereby we befriend the strong and the weak, the obscure and the enlightened, all as part of the inner self. Self-love is a precondition in order to love others in the exact same way. Secondly, and as a result of the preceding, complete acceptance and endorsement of emotions in oneself and in others. This includes emotions for introspection as well as emotions for growth, previously discussed in Chap. 2.

A third aspect in the pedagogy of love is the re-evaluation of the concept of 'obligation' as part of teaching. To oblige or demand entails a denial of the legitimacy of the other because it precludes the other's taking responsibility for his or her desires and actions along with the consequences of both of these (Maturana 1991). To talk about a pedagogy of love, thus, means that the teacher has to avoid as much as possible prescribing and demanding a particular set of responses or behaviors. Teaching, and by extension all behaviors in the school setting, should be centered on love rather than on authority. This does not preclude the establishment of certain rules in the classroom to facilitate learning, for example, punctuality or discipline. The suggestion to avoid obligation is connected instead with an expectation of certain responses to content or anticipated ways of doing things, allowing instead for a wide variety of rejoinders in the classroom.

A fourth element is a commitment to joy in every aspect of teaching. Joy comes mainly from appreciation. In general, to experience appreciation it is necessary: (a) to recognize who we are and what we have; and (b) to welcome an attitude of lightening up things, removing the heaviness that duties and adverse circumstances entail, remaining in the joy of our inner truth. Appreciation is demonstrated when in the midst of things going apparently 'wrong', we can express gratitude towards self and others and towards our being in this world. In this context joy does not only mean happiness but the quality of being in the present and as such it does not preclude emotions for introspection such as anger or sadness. For the teacher, joy involves recognizing strengths and shortcomings and drawing on that to lighten up the learning process. A useful source in terms of bringing joy into the classroom is the work by Opitz and Ford (2014).

The pedagogy of love proposed here entails teacher's attitude of self-reflection. This means, a continuous evaluation of actions based on the

concept of acts of love outlined earlier. Self-reflection should be carried out with honesty, compassion and love for the self on a regular basis. In this way, the teacher is able to see where he or she is in this long life process of re-learning how to love. Reflection about oneself has to be carried out without falling into the three futile strategies described by Chödrön (2002, 63–64), that is, without attacking or condemning ourselves for our flaws; without indulging in our old habits; and, without ignoring the limiting patterns in our behavior. Instead, accepting where we are as a starting place.

Thus, the pedagogy of love brings us back to the notion of self-review that has been discussed throughout this book and which entails, in the last instance, the process of becoming an insider to the self. This entails a commitment to the inner self and to a process of self-review. In this way, love can be seen as a part of our biology, which at some point became pathological but that can nonetheless regain its functionality again by casting an eye on ourselves.

In the above-mentioned, I have discussed love as pedagogy. As part of the curriculum, on the other hand, love involves a revision of this in terms of its structure, making it more flexible. This is what some scholars have called a humanistic approach to teaching which comes from heart rather than from mind (Zucca-Scott 2010). Heart (which is also a name given to the Anahata chakra) is understood here "in its ancient sense, the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self" (Palmer quoted in Zucca-Scott 2010, section Views on Learning and Teaching, third paragraph). I consider this as a 'live-next-to-the student' approach, which represents an answer to the student plea. For this, the curriculum should be less packed with content so that there might be more free time for teachers and students to spontaneously and affectionately interact with each other.

One of the methods through which love can be made a part of the curriculum is storytelling. Scholars have analyzed the role of storytelling in education (Bullough 2010; Fox Eades 2006; Abrahamson 1998). This method entails that both teachers and students are seen beyond their fixed roles, being considered instead as people. Storytelling opens up the possibility to get to know the human aspect of teachers and students: what they love and fear, their passions, their doubts, their dreams and, their potential. My suggestion is that storytelling, as part of the curriculum, can take the form of a workshop framed by a space of love and acceptance. The golden rule of a storytelling seminar is to keep all that is shared, always

and under all circumstances, within the walls of that space. If this recommendation is taken seriously, storytelling may have a very positive effect on confidence. As teachers and students are allowed to be and express themselves, a sense of ontological security is ultimately rebuilt, each of them constituted as legitimate in their mutual interactions.

The second quality of the Anahata chakra—responsibility—is also affected by the traditional education system. Responsibility is encouraged at school not as a quality that manifests and acts by itself, as it was discussed in Chap. 3, but as a tremendous weight on teachers and students. The reason for this is that the main or only measurement of the individual's responsibility is based on results, success and achievements. Both teachers and students are outwardly accounted for their acts: the teacher through performance reviews, the students through their grades. Responsibility is mistaken as a means to measure the stature of the self.

By and large there are two ways of responding to such kind of outward responsibility—under responsibility and over responsibility. The middle point is by and large difficult to achieve because a link to self-responsibility is missing. As mentioned in Chap. 4, self-responsibility entails a duty to respond to the self by taking ownership of our desires, thoughts, emotions and actions along with their consequences. Self-responsibility involves acceptance of our desires while taking ownership of the actions that arise out of those desires and of their effects. Seen through this lens, self-responsibility is a way to respond to the outer world with consideration to the inner self. In this sense, self-responsibility entails love, both for the self and for others. It also entails social responsibility as we are aware that our acts have consequences in our relation to others and the world. To place the responsibility within and to not detract it from outside factors takes off the heavy weight that responding to the outer world entails. This is because the inner world is within one's reach while the outer world consists of manifold factors that evade us. It is the latter the one that we experience as challenging in terms of responsibility. Self-responsibility instead is a safe ground because it allows for a process of re-learning. When the consequences of our acts are not what we expect, we can always go back to re-learn. Self-responsibility is, nonetheless, overlooked in the education system. As part of an objective and rational world, we are not encouraged to look anywhere beyond the materiality of our acts. Hence, our desires, the actions that we take based on them and their consequences, become heavy in that they are only a means to respond to outward demands.

Self-reflection is suggested as a method to allow students to re-learn responsibly. Self-reflection is the capacity to turn consciousness towards itself in order to establish a conversation with ourselves about our moods, emotions, actions and experiences. The proposal is to have a space in the timetable dedicated to self-reflection where both students and teachers might be reminded about their biology of love and their sense of duty towards self and others. This could also take the form of a workshop. In this, children and teacher could sit and reflect privately about their experiences and emotions of the day. Participants would be encouraged to write their experiences bringing two elements into their reflection: a fact or action and the emotion (s) that this elicited. Participants would be encouraged to write about both emotions for introspection and emotions for settling. This exercise is a way to give an unconditional positive regard to the self by befriending our strengths and weaknesses. It is also an attempt to take responsibility for our acts and their consequences, allowing teachers and students to become aware of how certain acts bring forth particular emotions in us and in others, taking full ownership for that. The loving acts discussed earlier might be a useful guide for self-reflection, providing teachers and students the opportunity to ponder on the extent to which their actions may be considered as indeed loving acts or not. The last part in the practice of self-reflection would be to practice appreciation. Participants would write about their qualities, the good things in them and around them, accepting all of this as the 'baggage' that takes them through their lives in that particular moment.

The suggested self-reflection workshop might require some initial guidance from the teacher, for example, to provide participants with a vocabulary of emotions to widen their emotional literacy. This and other required suggestions could be provided by the teacher in the first seminar session. Thereafter, both teachers and students would be equally considered as learners. It would be appropriate to schedule this space at the end of the school day or at the end of a section, allowing for the actions and emotions of each day to help as raw material for self-reflection.

I have discussed the fourth layer of the SCE and I have proposed love and storytelling as methods to re-learn confidence. Self-reflection was signposted as a method to re-learn responsibility. I will subsequently elaborate on the fifth stratum of the SCE, connected to the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra.

Fifth Layer of the SCE: Allow Students to Re-Learn Communication and Collectiveness in Order to Unblock Their Creativity

In Chap. 5, communication and collectiveness were explored as the main qualities of the Vishudhi chakra. Both attributes are acutely connected to creativity by the desire to create and to share. As discussed in Chap. 5, this requires bringing the other into view and acknowledging that our creation represents a collective endeavor of many actors, both known and unknown. On the whole, the education system works against such sense of interrelatedness. This is due to the role that competitiveness plays at school, which rather than fostering collectiveness creates boundaries among students mainly based on academic merits. Students who achieve high grades are highly rewarded. As argued earlier in this chapter, this system of awards based on grades is a trigger of low self-esteem in the majority of students, not only in those who fail to achieve the recognition but also in the achievers because of the constant envy from their peers. In whatever position the student might be, the attention is in comparing and contrasting one's abilities with those of others. The message conveyed is of antagonism, whereby in order to win others have to lose.

The education system also conspires against the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra through the concept of instruction, which underpins its mission. To instruct means 'to provide knowledge or information, to teach' (Oxford English Dictionary). The term has further meanings, such as 'to furnish with authoritative directions as to action; to direct, to command' (ibid). The latter connotations have brought myriad implications to the traditional education system. In the poem 'The Student's Plea', instruction is seen as the assertion of ignorance and as the destruction of creativity. The equation is simple, if instruction is needed on the basis that the student is ignorant. The student asks the teacher not to instruct him or her but to live next to him or her. This petition is of profound meaning. It is also one that it is not likely to be put in practice at schools.

Although in the last decades institutions have made an effort towards a student-centered education, endeavors at commanding or directing students are still prevalent. By exercising control over students, teachers attack one of the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra, which is the respect for the other. It is important to acknowledge that attempts to relinquish control might be costly. Traditionally, control has been equated to discipline,

and is amply justified in the learning process. Thus, a high level of confidence on the part of the teacher might be required to reverse that. By imposing their knowledge, views and even their guidance on the students, teachers perpetuate the supremacy of their authority. In figurative terms, this means living above the student. What the student asks, however, is for his or her teacher to live next to him, as equals. In order to do that, a connection to the true self might be required so that the teacher might be able to share, to experience and to learn together with his or her pupil. This entails a high degree of vulnerability, which the traditional teacher-student boundary does not allow for.

The fifth layer of the SCE requires a degree of personal vulnerability and awareness. The suggestion is to allow students to re-learn communication and collectivity through two methods that involve exposure—solitude and reverse storytelling. Scholars have discussed aloneness and the different forms that this takes. It has been suggested that solitude is a form of voluntary aloneness that brings forth personal development and creativity (Galanaki 2005). However, misconceptions about loneliness prevail and these are transmitted across generations. Presence seems to be the main way to satisfy the need of love and belonging, while absence is experienced as threatening and as lack of love. Loneliness is taken to mean a sort of deficiency with people tending to avoid it at all costs. Concepts such as that of 'leftover women or men' are deeply rooted in the individuals' minds as a form of censorship to being alone. Ideas about 'finding your other half' carry the meaning that the person is incomplete thus requiring somebody else to bring the missing part, the other half. A sense of incompleteness takes hold deep within the self. Very rarely, if at all, would a parent make the child aware of his or her wholeness, which stands in independence of whether he or she is alone or with others. In most cases, the parent is unaware of his or her own sense of completeness.

I argue that solitude provides the necessary space to re-learn how to respect self and other. In terms of self-respect, being alone provides the opportunity to get in touch with our true self and its whole baggage of strengths and weaknesses, light and darkness. From a space of complete acceptance of self as a legitimate and whole being, the person can listen to his or her authentic desires and surrender to them in order to allow his or her creativity to flow. Solitude is also a useful method in order to re-learn respect for others. Human beings tend to take things for granted. Relationships, togetherness and the presence of others in our lives often tend to go backstage to the point that, at times, it is only through absence

of contact that we come to deeply appreciate people that are part of our lives. The practice of solitude helps as a reminder to continuously get in touch with the value of social relationships and togetherness. Self-reflection is facilitated within the space of solitude as the child is invited to reflect on the meaning of what the presence of others entails in his or her life. Galanaki suggests useful techniques through which solitude may be implemented in the classroom (Galanaki 2005). An important aspect of this method of the SCE is its attempt at destabilizing solitude as this has been socially constructed, allowing for a sense of vulnerability in favor of creativity.

The second method proposed to re-learn communication and collectivity is what I call reverse storytelling. As referred to before, scholars have elaborated on the power of parables and stories as a means to learning (Bullough 2010; Fox Eades 2006; Abrahamson 1998). The method proposed in relation to the Vishudhi, however, is concerned with a different set of stories, that is, the stories that we create in our minds. My assumption is that much of the difficulty that we have to communicate with others and many of the conflicts in interpersonal relationships arise out of the stories that we create in our minds. Our interaction with others necessarily elicits certain emotions on us. Our emotions are legitimate in every respect. However, due to the intervention of our minds our feelings tend to be followed by judgments, of one's self and the other. The presence of superego entails a tendency to put oneself down, invalidating and negating the feelings through strong and punitive self-judgment and guilt, for example, when we feel angry, which tend to be socially censored. On the other hand, ego brings forth the negation of the other. In this case, the sense of self-importance is exacerbated and blame tends to be placed on the other or on external circumstances. Both self-judgment and the judgment of the others are constructed based on the stories that we build in our minds, in other words, based on thoughts. Our superego gives way to a wide range of stories about the self, for example, to consider that a conflict happened because we were not good enough to judge that there was something wrong with having a particular emotion, the idea of not being good at relationships with others, or, that we were not good enough in general. On the ego side, parables may include, for example, those where we judge that the other is not good enough; the other is attacking us so we should respond in defensive manner; and, the other is the cause of all our troubles. What ego and superego thoughts have in common is the tendency to label self and other through and in a story.

When we create stories in our minds two main aspects come into play: conditionings and expectations. On the one hand, our myriad parables are based on conditionings of our upbringing, family, education, country, race, nationality, class and gender. We judge people and events according to the extent to which they fit or not within those patterns. Our perception of self and others is actually shaped by those conditionings. These act against the wholesomeness of relationships, bringing forth separateness rather than collectiveness. It is the judgment and the subsequent aim at exerting control based on our conditionings that hurts others and damage our relationships. On the other hand, expectations are stories for the future that we construct in our minds—ours, the other's and that of both together. Expectations shape our perception of self and others. When they do not materialize, they elicit myriad responses, often including sadness and anger.

Using a Buddhist perspective, Chödrön (2002) suggests the self-reminder 'drop the storyline' as a method to achieve equanimity. She claims that this simple instruction is useful to drop stories that appear in our mind and that take away the possibility to be in the present. I use such a concept to propose a technique that I call reverse storytelling, whereby the reminder to drop the storyline helps to undo all stories created in our minds with respect to self and other. The idea is that at any time we may catch ourselves judging self or others, we should remind ourselves to 'drop the storyline'. Reverse story telling is an invitation to remain in the emotion and in contact with our body and inner self, rather than with the stories created in our minds.

Reverse storytelling has a positive effect in terms of collectivity and communication in that by dropping the story line we challenge the heavy influence of our conditionings and our expectations. We can thus re-learn to become the witness, a quality that, as analyzed in Chap. 4, is also associated with the Vishudhi chakra. The witness state entails allowing relationships to unravel rather than placing content on them from the stories in our minds. This means, to let our relationships unfold, watching them from a distance while being at one and the same time one with them. That is precisely what collectivity involves.

The suggested method as applied to education involves a reminder to 'drop the storyline' in particular situations, for example, when conflict arises among students or when an emotion prevents a student being involved in the activities of the class. In all such cases, a gentle reminder to 'drop the storyline' might be appropriate. By doing that, we are not asking

students to not feel what they feel, as it tends to happen when teachers try to solve an interpersonal conflict and they request students to not feel angry or sad. Reverse storytelling validates the emotion and invites us to remain with that. What ought to be dropped is only the story created around it. It is important that this method might be practiced by the teacher, subsequently being able to share the experience with his or her pupils. This represents a way to live next to the student. Reverse storytelling can also be practiced in the designated space for self-reflection at the end of the school day. Students and teachers could be invited to reflect on the stories they built up in their minds during the school day, how these affected their perceptions of others and their social interactions, and how the technique of dropping the storyline might have helped them with respect to those. A level of awareness is required to be able to catch ourselves as we build up stories in our minds. In turn, more awareness about ourselves, results from such a practice.

The fifth layer of the SCE suggests that to allow students to re-learn communication and collectivity through solitude and storytelling can contribute to unblock their creativity. On the one hand, in solitude, students can make contact with their true desire for self-expression. By surrendering to this desire, the voice of inspiration may guide them. On the other hand, to drop the story line represents an economy in the psychic energy that goes into all the stories that we create in our minds facilitating, instead, contact with our intuition. The sixth stratum of the SCE will be subsequently introduced.

Sixth Layer of the SCE: Allow Students to Re-learn Humility and Forgiveness in Order to Unblock Their Creativity

It has been repeatedly mentioned how the patriarchal culture with its emphasis on rationality and objectivity has contributed to the blockage of the qualities of the chakras of the subtle system. One of the chakras most badly affected is the Agnya chakra. This is due to the fact that this centre is placed in the limbic area of our brain, in close connection to our thought processes. Strong emphasis on thinking, as opposed to feeling, has contributed to debilitate the qualities of this center, mainly, forgiveness and humility. In addition, as discussed in Chap. 5, thinking is an important deterrent to the creative process. In the educational setting, rationality has

been endorsed as a paramount method to achieve the grand objective of educating children of all ages. The qualities of the Agnya chakra are not fostered in any obvious way in the traditional education system.

A step forward in current pedagogical trends, however, is their increasing focus on emotional intelligence in the classroom. The role that emotion takes in education is now amply recognized (Elias et al. 1997; Opitz and Ford 2014; Palomera et al. 2008). These studies suggest a reversal of previous rational tendencies whereby emotions were ruled out of the education process. It is argued that emotions play a significant role in learning and that, subsequently, they should be a part of this. This represents a significant leap in education. Proposals for affective learning are, nonetheless, problematic due to a number of reasons. Firstly and foremost, the fact that affective learning is seen as an instrument to improve learning outcomes. This is a disguised form of reproduction of a patriarchal model focused on outcomes rather than on process. Secondly, is the fact that the teacher is considered as the key protagonist who is expected to act as emotional moderator for the process. It is suggested that the educator is expected to know the students' capabilities in every aspect—physical, emotional, mental and social. This brings us back to a hierarchy where the teacher is placed at a higher position than the student and regarded as the one who 'knows'. Thirdly, it is believed that through different forms of training, the teacher is capable of 'appropriately' channeling the student emotions. However, the emphasis remains on the control of emotions, bringing us back to the starting point, that is, a rationalistic view on emotions. Fourthly, a dualistic view prevails whereby emotions are split into positive and negative. It is argued that positive emotions have the potential to enhance learning and social relations as opposed to the detrimental effects that negative emotions have. The idea of positive and negative emotions has already been contested in Chap. 2. Fifthly, the expectation and requirement that the teacher would be able to generate a 'positive' environment. This, however, is based on a limited experiential concept of what a positive affective environment entails (Palomera et al., 443). Lastly, the paramount limitation of this model is the fact that most teachers are indeed emotionally illiterate as they are, in their vast majority, outsiders to the self. To know the students' emotions in order to act as moderators of affective learning might go beyond the capabilities of the majority of teachers. Affective education, thus, although innovative in its rubric, is in the last instance a new version of the education system's old mistakes as part of a patriarchal culture.

Furthermore, it is still unclear how the teacher may move away from a traditionally rational and objective model of education into becoming an affective teacher. In some countries, teachers have been asked to transform their practice based on the principles of affective learning. The teacher, however, is not given enough resources other than a few training sessions where the new trend in education is explained. In many cases, teachers experience this as a burden and a requirement for which they deem themselves ill equipped. Affective learning also entails a degree of vulnerability which, as has been discussed, tends to be avoided in general and in particular by those who subscribe to concepts of authority as part of their identity.

The proposal for the sixth level of the SCE is to remain within the rhetoric of affective education while, at one and the same time, taking a step further by adopting a transpersonal approach. This would allow students to re-learn the qualities of the Agnya chakra—humility and forgiveness. The methods suggested in order to re-learn those attributes are: error as right and training on managing expectations.

Error as right is envisaged as a method to subvert the concept of mistake that has prevailed in the education system since times immemorial. The literature on the topic deals with error only within specific disciplines such as medicine or nursing, or in academic subjects such as math or statistics. Such claims are irrelevant to the present discussion. A gap can be clearly identified in terms of the meanings that the term carries for the individuals and for societies as a whole.

In our societies, error is a reminder of our vulnerability and it tends to be seen as something that should be avoided by all means. According to patriarchal models based on outcomes, mistakes are seen with contempt. Due to the strong rejection associated with these, the child learns to correlate his or her mistakes with a state of being 'I am a mistake' rather than a behavior 'I made a mistake'. At school, teachers tend to appreciate the students who give the right answer, who get high grades and who perform according to the teacher's expectations. Those students contribute to make educators look good, acting as a form of reward to their efforts. On the contrary, students who often commit mistakes are seen as problematic, lazy or with lower level of IQ. The child, thus, learns to experience error as inner dysfunction or personality problem.

There is no straight forward methodology that might be able to change such ancestral views about error. The suggestion, at the very least, is to introduce forms whereby error might be seen from various

angles. The following are six of those ways: Firstly, raising awareness among educators of the need to acknowledge a wide variety of answers in the classroom whilst ruling out the predominant model of the one right answer. Secondly, making teachers aware of the necessity to constantly review their practice to avoid the reinforcement—even if in subtle manner—of old patterns based on right and wrong, good and bad. Thirdly, using methods whereby teachers can make students aware that error pertains to the domain of action rather than of that of being. Statements such as 'the fact that you made a mistake does not make you a mistake' could be a good starting point. Also, being careful to not disapprove or approve students based on their performance, and preventing and disproving any form of bullying or disrespect coming from peers when students commit a mistake in the class. A fourth way would be to undermine the heaviness with which error is experienced in the classroom. For this, it is necessary that the tutor may learn how to laugh at his or her own mistakes, lightening up the occasions where mistakes are made and insisting on how unnecessary it is to embark upon a battle against them. Fifthly, spreading the idea that error is liquid rather than solid, this means, that it entails a series of bodily dispositions, attitudes and actions which can always be changed into something different. Finally, and on occasions where seemingly error cannot be reverted, it is important that teachers and students may be able to realize that what makes us human is the possibility to learn from our mistakes, which in the last instance entails that there is no error that cannot be turned around, through learning.

It is important to signpost that these approaches to error can only be demonstrated in the class when the teacher is ready to experience them all. The teacher's openness to accept his or her own mistakes in front of the class is thus a precondition. An attempt to consider the manifold angles, through which error might be seen, is a means to undermine the concept of perfection which affects human beings in many areas of their lives and that affects education in myriad ways. To strive for plenitude instead of perfection would require a completely different set of bodily dispositions, attitudes and actions whereby error could have its rightful place as a possibility for growth. Error thus might be understood as *right* in the context of our personal development. Error as right is a technique to be practiced every day at school in the various activities and interactions among students and between teacher and student. It can also be practiced as part of the self-reflection space at the end of the school day. To introspect about

our errors and to deconstruct them by applying the abovementioned method is a practice that can be facilitated at school.

The idea of error as right has connotations also in terms of allowing pupils to develop the quality of forgiveness. By seeing error as right, forgiveness may become more accessible. Often it is our own errors what we do not forgive thus we project that outside, placing blame on others. Error as right helps to re-evaluate what we deem as our faults and those of others. Through this methodology, school can provide an adequate framework for students and educators to re-learn forgiveness in practice, something much needed at an interpersonal level as much as at the scale of societies worldwide.

The implications that error as right has in terms of creativity are manifold. Firstly, the possibility to allow creativity to flow by reducing concerns about making mistakes. The psychic energy that, to no avail, aims at perfection might be better put at work in a creative endeavor. Free from the necessity to be always right and to avoid mistakes, the individual may be free to explore, to be playful, to enjoy and to allow inspiration to land on him or herself. Secondly, this method entails that when mistakes have been committed, the creative person might be the first one to recognize those and restart afresh without feeling disheartened. Finally, to accept our errors is a means to learn and grow, not only in terms of outward knowledge, techniques and abilities but in terms of processes of self-knowledge. Thus, the inner self becomes a life-long creative project, realizable through a continuous process of self-review and self-renewal of qualities. Error as right becomes also a route to forgive others who may not agree with our ideas, may not appreciate our work or may not place value in our desire for self-expression.

The second method proposed to re-learn the qualities of the Agnya chakra is training on managing expectations. As mentioned earlier, children are overloaded with expectations both from parents and teachers to perform according to particular standards. Research demonstrates how expectations play a role in education creating stress, allowing for comparisons among students and families and, other significant factors that affect children at school (Kreig 2013; Chen 2001; Eisenmann 2007). In Chap. 2 I indicated how some parents expect from their children the realization of what they were unable to accomplish in their lives. Often times they also hope that their offspring would make them proud in the eyes of others, a way to validate their parenting through the child's achievements. Teachers also seek validation of their work through student accomplishments.

Their evaluation of teaching is often linked to the results obtained by their pupils. Expectations thus take on a variety of forms.

Expectations entail a high chance for disappointment. Time and again others do not respond in the way that we would expect them or they do not perform according to our standards. Expectations thus have an impact in our social relations. We feel disappointed and, at times, resentful as others do not comply with our ideals. We become angry at ourselves for placing expectations on others who are unable to deliver. Here is where the two main forms of forgiveness analyzed in Chap. 5, that is, self-forgiveness and interpersonal forgiveness, take on relevance.

In Chap. 5, I argued that one of the main difficulties to let go of our negative feelings towards those whom we believe that have harmed us is the fact that we place forgiveness in the wrong place. It is, indeed, not the other person that we ought to forgive but the expectations that we placed on him or her. As a means to put in practice the quality of forgiveness of the Agnya chakra, I put forward in Chap. 5 an exercise of forgiving expectations. I argue that school represents a propitious setting to put in practice as a means to forgiveness. This entails a request to students and teachers to regard their expectations as aspects that have no substance on themselves, belonging instead to their inner self. This fosters the forgiveness of the expectations that do not materialize, taking ownership for the feelings that this conjures up.

A constructive way to resolve interpersonal conflict at school would be to raise awareness about the expectations behind certain interactions and to invite students to take ownership of that. Conflict in interpersonal relationships can be revisited, at school, in terms of the expectations placed on others and on ourselves which, by failing to materialize, bring forth disappointment, anger and resentment. By practicing the forgiveness of expectations, negative feelings towards the other dissolve in the light of the inner nature of our expectations. An important aspect in this process is to not attempt to deny or repress our emotions. As it has been repeatedly mentioned throughout this book, emotions are to be always validated as a legitimate component of our being. Resentment, anger and disappointment are to be embraced and respected as part of our process of re-learning forgiveness.

This practice of forgiveness of expectations is useful not only in interpersonal relations but also in terms of expectations placed on our tasks and the results of these. Whether we achieve what we expected or not, we could always come back to forgive the expectations that we placed on

ourselves, deconstructing disappointment as this is seen through the lens of our inner world, rather than as something necessarily arising out of our doing. This is also applicable to the creative process which not always results the way we expect. Forgiving our expectations is a way to allow for a new and fresh start in our creative endeavor. New expectations might come to the fore but these might be equally forgiven as they belong to the realm of our inner life. We can also forgive the expectations that others place on us or on the fruits of our creativity. Those can be revisited in terms of these being the expectations of others, which belong to their inner world, very often irrelevant for our creative process.

Finally, I would like to propose a revision of the role of the teacher in order to allow for the re-learning of the quality of humility at school. This means seeing the teacher not in a privileged or superior position with respect to the students' creativity. As creative human beings, both teacher and student are placed exactly at the same level. Creative propositions from any of the participants in the education process are equally valid. The potential of creativity lies, precisely, in dissimilar ways of seeing, hearing, tasting and experimenting with reality. As in earlier cases, the qualities associated with the sixth level of the SCE can be re-learn only when both teacher and student can live up to them, experiencing them at school as they live next to each other. I will move on now to analyze the seventh and final layer of the SCE which attends to the qualities of the pinnacle chakra, the Sahasrara.

Seventh Layer of the SCE: Allow Students to Re-learn Harmony in Order to Actualize Their Creativity

The main principle contained in the seventh stratum of the SCE is harmony. Harmony, as a quality of the Sahasrara chakra, conveys a sense of unity within and a unity between self and other. At this level, indeed, there is no other. The other ceases to exist as a separate and distinct entity, merging into the collective consciousness. Due to the strong dualism that affects us, this concept might be deemed as utopia. It is somewhat easy to conceive of harmony as idyllic because we have rarely experienced it. To experience harmony one may require openness to further states of consciousness, such as thoughtless awareness, which was explained in Chap. 5. This awareness, however, remains inaccessible to many people due to a

resistance to delve into the unknown territory of the transpersonal. Self-actualization, which was analyzed as part of the Sahasrara, is the process that fosters harmony through the actualization of our potential as human beings.

I suggest meditation as a method to allow students to re-learn harmony Research has demonstrated the benefits that meditation brings to various aspects of life for example, to deal with issues of attention, emotions, stress and various health problems (Aftanas and Golosheykin 2005; Harrison et al. 2003; Morgan 1999). The literature suggests that meditation has already been tested at school as a learning tool, bringing forth positive results in terms of academic performance and overall learning experience (Dolan 2007; Berard et al. 2009; Hall 1999; Miller 1994). As it happened with other techniques suggested as part of the SCE, the proposal is to introduce meditation both in the curriculum and as pedagogy.

According to Chödrön (2002) meditation is the practice whereby we are able to befriend all aspects of our being while being capable at the same time to come closer to the suffering of others. In practice, it entails openness to see ourselves exactly as we are in that precise moment. Regardless of the kind of thoughts and feelings that may arise when we are in meditation, we do not repress them, nor do we indulge in them. We simply accept them as they unravel. Such a compliant attitude allows us to let go of that, leading to harmony and integration of all aspects of being.

My working definition of meditation is based on my own practice of such discipline for over thirteen years. I define meditation as a method that provides the resources for the actualization of the potential of the whole human being (Winnicott 1986). This is achieved mainly through a twofold process. Firstly, by achieving thoughtless awareness which is a concept that was discussed in Chap. 5. In the state of thoughtless awareness, the meditator is able to silence the mind and remove thoughts from past (superego) and future (ego), turning instead to the present. Secondly, it is through the process of self-knowledge. These processes take place as the meditator is able, in thoughtless awareness, to direct the attention to his or her chakras and their qualities. Attention thus is able to shed light on any obstructions in the centers of energy. Obstacles in the chakras are felt on the meditator's central nervous system in the form of tingling, pressure or pain mainly in hands, head or feet.

To use meditation as pedagogy means that, through the continuous practice of meditation, the qualities of the chakras can be actualized and can make them partake in the teaching. This is possible through a fourfold

process. Firstly, the meditator trains his or her attention in order to remove unnecessary thoughts. Secondly, once the unceasing thoughts recede, the meditator is able to take the attention to the Sahasrara chakra attaining, regardless of whether for long or short intervals, the state of thoughtless awareness. Thirdly, he or she becomes aware—in his or her hands, head or feet—of the blockages of the chakras. Finally, the state of thoughtless awareness facilitates that a supply of energy from the Kundalini located in the sacrum bone is directed to the blocked chakras and, subsequently, the obstructions start to loosen up, allowing for a re-learning process of our qualities.

Teaching in connection to the qualities of the psychic centers analyzed in Chaps. 3, 4 and 5, would entail the following: (a) Mooladhara chakra—teaching innocently. This means playful and spontaneous teaching, with attention not on results but on the present, on being. This form of teaching is based on the idea of living right next to the student, both teachers and students seen as people, rather than in their fixed roles; (b) Swadishthan chakra—teaching based on authentic desires. This involves relinquishing fixed plans and ideas about how teaching should be in order to obtain certain results, following instead the authentic desire to enjoy teaching and to let students enjoy learning; (c) Nabhi chakra—teaching peacefully. To teach peacefully involves teacher's feeling of quietude. Such peace comes from silence. Not only silence of mind achieved in meditation but silence in the classroom too, allowing for time and space where words are not invited; (d) Anahata chakra—teaching with love. Love as the overall pedagogy in the classroom means that at every moment and through his or her actions, the educator constitutes the student as a legitimate other in mutual coexistence; (e) Vishudhi chakra—teaching with respect for self and other. This applies to both tutor and student as they are allowed the freedom to express themselves. This entails acceptance of divergent thinking, differences in perception and, myriad ways of doing things as part of the sense of collectiveness in the classroom; (f) Agnya chakra—humble teaching. This form of teaching entails unequivocal acceptance of the equality between teacher and student. This is to be demonstrated by the teacher's humility to admit his or her mistakes, shortcomings and apprehensions, allowing students the same; (g) Sahasrara chakra—harmonious teaching. This is connected to the actualization of the qualities of the chakras in all aspects of the teacher's professional role as much as in his or her life, so that a harmony can be established between inner and outer world. In general terms, meditation might be used as a pedagogical tool

when content becomes arid or difficult for students to grasp or when the attention of these becomes dispersed. Noteworthy is the fact that meditation is a lived-pedagogy, a methodology of teaching that cannot be used unless it is practiced.

The suggestion to introduce meditation within the curriculum at school involves timetabling a period when students and teachers can practice meditation, ideally at the start of the school day and at the end. These earlier and later meditations are beneficial in different ways. The former provides the necessary disposition and energy for the school day; the latter may facilitate an adequate state of mind for the end of the day process of self-reflection. Meditation could also be structured in the form of a school subject. This may comprise knowledge about the subtle system and the qualities of the chakras along with practice.

It is frequently advised that sitting meditation should be practiced cross-legged on the floor or even in a lotus position. Given that contact with the earth element contributes to enhance the state of meditation, outdoors meditation, particularly, in nature is very positive. Wherever that is possible, the experience of meditation might be very constructive. Techniques such as Sahaja Yoga meditation can also be practiced sitting on a chair and indoors, obtaining equally good results.

The use of meditation at school has already seen much progress. There are schools where meditation is not simply a module in the curriculum but an essential part of the school's mission. That is the case for example of the International Sahaja Public School located in Dharamsala, India. This boarding school is available only to children who have been brought up within an environment of meditators, in this case, Sahaja Yoga practitioners. The children are schooled based on the principles of Sahaja Yoga meditation. The overall aim is to educate children while developing a vibratory awareness that allows them to embark upon processes of self-knowledge, learning how to correct any obstructions of their chakras or any imbalances. Two similar schools are the Cabella School located in Northern Italy and the International Sahaj School at Canajoharie in Canada. These uphold the same philosophy of teaching and the same method than the school in India. The three schools count with the approval of the education authorities in their respective countries, as well as counting with international recognition.

Meditation was suggested as a method to allow students to re-learn the qualities of the Nabhi and the Sahasrara chakras. It is a method, nonetheless, that can be used at school in various ways to support the process of

re-learning the qualities of all the other centers of energy of the subtle system. On the whole, the practice of meditation is proposed as a means to foster creativity at school. As has been discussed in earlier chapters, the creative human being, in the full meaning of the term, is an insider to the self. The greatest works of art and the highest inventions of humanity have been carried through by insiders to the self. They were so much in contact with their inner world that they were moved by an inspiration and an inner energy of unknown origin. They were able to listen to the voices of inspiration and wisdom, which come from the harmony between the self and its creative potential. Not all inventions and works of art were brought forth by insiders to the self but certainly those which are of immortal nature, transcending generations.

As mentioned earlier, the SCE brings forth the creative human being, allowing both teachers and students to actualize their creative potential. However, to adopt this model requires a huge leap forward in terms of awareness. It is something that may not happen in the nearest future unless education reformers were prepared to keep an attitude of self-review. If they were amenable to that, a question to reflect about would be whether they are imposing fixed and constraining views on policy based on their own limitations, and particularly, based on the limited states of consciousness that they have themselves achieved. Furthermore, education reformers would need to ponder the extent to which they are prepared to put this in practice. This may involve contemplating what creativity entails: to find new connections, to see what is not there and to actualize the entirety of the self. These three aspects of creativity require the readiness to go beyond conditionings of mind and rationality in order to explore the state of the chakras and actualize their potential.

The SCE is such a vanguard concept that it may stir up all sorts of concerns about not being able to fit within our society while following such a transgressive model. To re-learn to fit based on a higher form of awareness is, nonetheless, an essential aspect of the spectrum. This cannot be an individual effort—although it may start as such—but it should be embraced as part of the transformation of societies as a whole, as a unifying trend that can bring us together in our aim to actualize our hidden potentials. This is what I call social-actualization, which I define as the synergy of the actualization of the individuals' potentials as part of society. In other words, actualizing the potential of the world based on the aggregate of the individuals' actualization.

In the next and final chapter of this book, I use my personal story of blocked and unblocked creativity to demonstrate, in practice, the route that took me from a state of obstructed creativity to one where I could unleash my creativeness in order to write this monograph. The narrative represents a dialogue with my inner self through a continuous process of self-review, which facilitated a step-by-step actualization of my creative potential.

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CHAPTER 8

Autoethnography: A Journey of Blocked and Unblocked Creativity

I was born to make my family proud. My birth took place in Villahermosa, the city capital of Tabasco State, in the southeast of Mexico. When I was a baby, my round cheeks, big green eyes and long eyelashes would attract the attention of many people. Although these attributes might be typical in many countries, they are not as common in Mexico, thus, they attracted a great deal of attention. I was also a chubby girl with cute little rolls in my legs. My parents and relatives seemed endlessly pleased. Added to this, as reported by the adults around me, was the fact that I was a very happy girl. In my father's memories, I never used to trouble anyone and, as far as he remembers, I was so well behaved that I did not even cry. His appreciation might, in all likelihood, be distorted. What it reveals, nonetheless, is the aura of idealization that surrounded my early years of life.

My schooling years up to preparatory school took place in Morelia, a city in the state of Michoacán, where my family moved when I was one year old. My parents recall that, since the age of two, I was utterly eager to go to school. I myself remember that it was a great disappointment for me to see my siblings leave for school every day without me. As a consequence, my parents had to request special permission from the kindergarten authorities to allow me to enroll before I was of the required age. Parents, teachers and relatives were all impressed to see me so eager to go to school at such an early age.

The fact that I was admitted to kindergarten made me very happy. I am not sure how much I was aware at the time that this would indeed be the start of a life of responsibility and commitment. I remember that playing

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was a part of my life, both at home and at school. A great deal of my energy, nonetheless, was devoted to my studies, to do my homework and to my endeavor to be a good girl. My efforts to please others were already obvious back then. At the age of six, when I started primary school, one of my favorite things was to pretend that I was a teacher. My father had given me a present—a little Coca-Cola blackboard. This, along with white chalk, an eraser and my little dolls who acted as my students, was all I needed to be happy. My role as a teacher occupied most of my time at home. Although there was playing involved, it was overshadowed by responsibility. For many years, and until I finished primary school, that was the main method I used to prepare for my examinations. I used to write on the board the concepts or equations that I needed to learn, and I was learning by explaining them to my doll pupils. It seems as if, from the very early stages in my life, playing was blended with a high dose of responsibility.

My older sister and I were only two years apart in age. We also had an elder brother. We were good friends, but when it came to playing our styles were very different. My sister used to complain of my mellow approach to playing. I used to like, for example, impersonating a very romantic singer, Angélica María, who was very famous in Mexico at that time. I also liked to play the cashier in a shop and a bus driver. My sister used to be more interested in the arts. She liked drawing and painting. She was also more adventurous. We had a bicycle at home and she and my elder brother used to ride it and explore our surroundings. I never did. The older my siblings and I grew, the larger the differences among us appeared. While for me life was a very solemn matter, my siblings did not take it too seriously. My brother lacked discipline in his studies. He was constantly scolded at school and at home for his overwhelming naughtiness. My sister tended more towards the middle of the behavior of the three. Although she was responsible at school, she never aimed at being the best student. She would allow herself to achieve less than 100 percent in certain things. Her marks were not brilliant, but she did not have any problems progressing through school.

On the contrary, I used to attempt perfection. Since primary school and all through my graduate studies, I was habitually the best student in all of my classes. Obtaining a mark of nine out of ten would make me feel deeply unhappy. In high school, due to my academic performance, I would help my classmates with subjects such as logic, math and physics. My house used to be full of peers whom I would help prepare for the examinations on those subjects. Throughout all my studies, I received many awards for

being an outstanding student. When I completed my bachelor's degree, I won the Best Students of Mexico Award, which was presented by the president of the country. I also used to participate in many competitions in academic subjects, as well as poetry and public speaking. In most of them, I would obtain the first prize. All of those achievements occurred concurrently with my learning foreign languages such as English, French and Italian. As it might be apparent, time to play, or rather, to be playful, did not abound in my life. The fine arts, for example, were nowhere as significant in my life as academic endeavors were. I used to take folk dance classes, but apart from that there was no time left for other artistic activities. The time and energy I used to dedicate to competitions meant a compromise on creativity and thus this was minimal.

On the one hand, taking life so seriously brought me ample benefits. It made me have high aspirations, which underpinned the realization of many dreams. One of them was to study for my Master's and PhD abroad. Another important aspiration was to have the opportunity to travel around the world and live in various countries. This book gives testimony to my multicultural experience. The first chapters were written in Mexico over a research leave period in 2014. Subsequent parts were written in China, where I have been teaching as a lecturer at a British university since 2006. Prior to this, I lived in England and Malaysia.

On the other hand, my endeavor for perfection, first at school and later on at work, meant compromising on spontaneity and innocence, which as explained in Chap. 3 in connection to the Mooladhara chakra, are significant qualities of creativity. To be 'number one' requires an attitude of extreme anticipation, which is the opposite to the childlike qualities of the Mooladhara. It necessitates a mind that is constantly considering countless possible scenarios and that fully prepares itself to tackle them all, even before they unravel. My false self proved very useful to successfully surviving in a patriarchal world of competition, results, rationality and objectivity. It meant a strong compromise in terms of the expression of my true self. On the whole, throughout my studies, there was no time to explore the world around, to be curious about things and to find connections among disparate aspects. Most of what I did followed the rigid logic of perfection, for which it was better to stick to established patterns and fixed forms as a means to 'guarantee' certain outcomes.

It was not until 2003 when I started practicing meditation that I came into contact with the innocence and spontaneity hidden in me. Before that, even in my interpersonal relations, I would tend to act anticipating

certain responses from others. Two aspects were prominent as part of my identity—a mind full of thoughts and an attention focused on outcomes, both of which were discussed in Chap. 3 as enemies to creativity. To live through the manifold responsibilities that I had undertaken implied a great mental effort, the opposite to the naturalness and simplicity characteristic of spontaneous behavior. That prompted the idea for this book. In order to obtain the publisher's approval, I needed to write the proposal and the first chapter, which was a very demanding job. I was trying to calculate all possible risks in the expression of my aims and ideas, and I endeavored to write in a way that would minimize the perils of these not being accepted by the editorial board.

Once I submitted the proposal, however, the inner battle became less strenuous. I knew at that point that the cards were already laid on the table. There was no longer much more I could do about it. I knew it would take up to three or four months to hear back from the publishing house. That represented a great relief because I could ignore the editors and concentrate on my book. As soon as I did that, I felt more connected with my inner world and I started writing the second chapter. This more serene state allowed me to clearly identify more my desire for self-expression. It also helped me to start listening to my inner voice—still soft at that time but vivid nevertheless. Finally, I was feeling more at ease to express my ideas, and I waited for the answer from the publisher for a few months while enjoying my writing. The response finally arrived—the proposal had been accepted. My first book started to become a reality.

Although many years of mediation practice gradually have brought back innocence and spontaneity to my life, challenges to keep up with such qualities remain and these have been part of the process of writing this book. As I mentioned before, while waiting for the response from the publisher, I wrote Chap. 2 in a state of relative innocence and spontaneity. This chapter confronted me less with issues about my innocence because the discussion is around key terms such as processes of self-knowledge, the outsider to the self and the idea of self-review, and I could deal with that in a relatively straightforward manner. Nonetheless, as soon as I started writing Chap. 3, which is the first chapter linked to the subtle system, I was invaded by a sense of uneasiness. The process of spontaneous creativity that accompanied me during my writing of Chap. 2, suddenly stopped. It was as if I was regressing to my early patterns. Myriad 'anti-spontaneity' questions bombarded my mind: how was the publisher going to judge my work as this was tied to an Eastern tradition such as Sahaja Yoga?

Could I possibly discuss my ideas about the subtle system in connection to creativity while keeping a secular and scientific approach? Was it possible to discuss the chakras and their blockages without sacrificing academic rigor? How would colleagues and some of my most rational friends judge my work? The perils were high. I found myself at odds between expressing my voice and following a more rigid and standard perspective. I was experiencing all over again the same pattern of thought that had paralyzed me with anxiety for years, preventing me from expressing my inner self through my writing.

As I forced myself to continue writing Chap. 3 in connection with the qualities of the chakras, the experience became less enjoyable. My mind was controlled by ego, that is, it was focused on results and consequences, which were as frightening as they were unreal. My superego was also playing a role in the form of norms and traditions that, allegedly, dictated what I should say or do according to strict academic conventions. The weight of such thoughts was pushing down on my self-esteem and this was becoming very low. I was aware of the absurdity of the situation. I was writing about innocence and spontaneity in relation to creativity while not being innocent and spontaneous myself. Despite my being aware of this, I was unable to stop the thoughts that were preventing the spontaneous child within me to manifest. Spontaneity, as a built-in quality, entails effort-free actions. My task, however, was experienced as effortful. It was taking too much of my psychic energy to calculate the appropriateness of my writing, trying to avoid all risks. This, added to the work, was too heavy an effort.

As discussed in Chap. 3, spontaneous creativity happens when there is no split between the various aspects of the self: body, mind, emotions and spirit. In my writing, nonetheless, there was a high degree of antagonism among those. Both the emotional and spiritual were suggesting that I should follow my instinct and be true to myself. My mind, on the other hand, was seriously advising to refrain from that and to write only what would be, allegedly, deemed appropriate within my academic field. My body was suffering from such a split. I was exhausted from the strenuousness of juggling all those considerations. I was finding it difficult to enjoy my writing. Spontaneity provides the space to act, instinctively losing—if only momentarily—ego and superego consciousness. This was certainly not my case as my mind was dominated by both ego and superego projections. In order to reverse that, I had to consciously expand my awareness and cast an eye on those thoughts. Only then could I let go of such ruminations. I made a conscious effort to listen to my inner voice. It took

some time until this was able to clearly resonate, but finally it happened and I heard it.

Subsequent steps in the process of writing this monograph were not any less challenging. That was the case of my work on the qualities of the second center of energy, the Swadishthan. As I was analyzing this psychic center, thoughts arising from ego and superego bombarded my mind, affecting my work along with my self-esteem. There was a cause-effect relationship between both entities of the mind. Feelings of inadequacy coming from the superego would turn into an endeavor to prove my argument at a rational level, projecting this into the future. The more I was aiming at the latter, nevertheless, the lower my self-esteem was. During this interplay, my inner voice was covered up by myriad efforts to shape the argument of the book in a manner that this would reflect sufficient and adequate knowledge on my part. My thoughts strongly indicated that to project the image of a rational scholar would be pleasing to all—the publisher, my colleagues, my family, my friends and all potential readers. The attention was outside and the task was feeling mechanic and dry. I would sit in front of the computer with a frown, gathering the ideas of other scholars as a means to validate mine. My general feeling was of irritation.

One day, I spoke to my friend Montse on the phone. Talking about the book, I mentioned that the particular chapter I was writing was proving very difficult. I explained that I had endeavored to be creative by using the knowledge of an Eastern philosophy of life and that such attempt was coming at a high cost. 'It is not an easy task', I said. We spoke about many other things and when the conversation came to a close, my friend ended by saying: 'I hope the chapter gets unblocked'. I had not mentioned the concept of writer's block or anything similar to that in my conversation with Montse. It was, however, only when I heard such a word that I realized that the chapter was indeed blocked. Not only was the chapter blocked but so too was my creativity. I was trying to write about creativity from a closed wardrobe in which I had locked myself. From such a small and constrained space, I was trying to choose 'an appropriate' outfit that would respond to, what I thought were, other people's expectations about the book and about myself. The glower was a reflection of my clumsy attempts at writing from the confines of such restrictive and artificial space. The only way to unblock the chapter was to liberate myself from the superfluous desires that were invading me. 'I hope the chapter gets unblocked' were the magic words that unlocked my inner voice.

At that moment, I asked myself a question—'where is my attention?' I noticed that this was in the outer world, that is, in the desire to please others, in possible results and achievements and in my seeking love and acceptance from others through my work. As I realized this, I changed the focus of the attention and I directed it towards my inner self. Only at that point was I able to recognize the authentic desire behind the idea of writing this book. This creation was not meant to please others but to satisfy my inner self. From the point of view of my mind, my desire to use the knowledge of the subtle system connected to my meditation practice could have been antithetic to the norms of objective academic writing. From the stance of my inner self, however, to follow such an approach was the only way to be true to my inner self. I stopped rationalizing and, despite the apparent lack of logic, I surrendered to my authentic desire to be creative in my scholarly approach to creativity, proposing an analysis based on the qualities of the subtle system. It was only then when I could start elaborating on the qualities of the Swadishthan chakra with ease.

To write about the subsequent center of energy, the Nabhi, was a test for me. The sense of restlessness of this chakra, explained in Chap. 3, has accompanied me my whole life. I have always been a seeker, understood as he or she who, dissatisfied with the quality of his or her life, looks for ways and methods through which to challenge the order of things, not only in the outer world but also, and more importantly, in the inner world. This book emerged as a result of such restlessness. My entire life, my true self had been imprisoned within a range of abilities that represented my window of tolerance or comfort zone (this concept was also explained in Chap. 3). Self-expression, however, was not one of those known attributes. Although in some ways I was an outsider to the self that sought objectivity and took refuge in rationality, in some others I was an insider to the self in constant contact with my inner world. In the latter capacity, I had been constantly seeking an opportunity to challenge the conditionings of my constraining comfort zone. Efforts in such directions were at times very subtle, mainly through the practice of my meditation.

This book represented the possibility to challenge the stagnation of my creativity, transforming this into an academic work that could shed light on processes of blocked and unblocked creativity. To do that, I had to put into question deeply rooted structures of self. While a strong mind and a very resilient body had, until then, taken me through life with relative success, what I needed was the leeway to allow my emotions and my spirit to take the helm. A balance between all aspects of the self, discussed

as part of the qualities of the Nabhi chakra, was needed in order to follow my inspiration and continue my job as a writer. Not surprisingly, this equilibrium was not easy to achieve. To follow my mind was something very familiar to me. To listen to my emotions and my spirit was, on the contrary, unknown territory. It took an effort to make contact with my sense of wholeness in order to bring on board the four aspects of my being: my body and its senses, my mind and its knowledge, my emotions and their multiplicity of states and my spirit or inner truth. As a means to that, I held on to the practice of my meditation very tightly. With the help of this, I was introspecting about the obstructions of my Nabhi, which were preventing a balance within. At times, the task to strike up a balance seemed impossible. I was, nonetheless, finding a sense of peace in each of my meditations, which was taking me through most of my working days.

Additional factors related to the Nabhi chakra contributed to compromising my sense of balance and contentment. As mentioned in Chap. 3, attention to household and money issues are significant to the qualities of this center of energy. At the time of writing about Nabhi, a synchronicity among different forms of creativity in my life took place. My work on this psychic center coincided with my decision to buy land in Mexico to build the house for my retirement. I was as assiduously focused on that task as I was on writing the book, to the extent that to concentrate on the latter was often a struggle. My attention wandered around houses, lands, payments, finances and the creation of a future life for me. It was very difficult to be fully connected to my writing. I would sit for hours in front of the computer without fresh thoughts—not a single idea. Inspiration evaded me. An imbalance was evident in my life. It was my mind taking over. Thoughts coming from my ego and superego would drag my attention. I wanted to control as much as possible the various risks involved in purchasing land and building a house. I was worried about a very mundane issue, one that is nonetheless very significant in a person's life: the creation of a home.

I define home in a very simple way: as freedom. Having no boundaries or constraints from the outer world, the sovereignty of my home makes this a safe space where I am able to express, in open manner, my true self. At the time of writing about the Nabhi, the parallelism between my personal life and the book could not have been more astounding. Writing a book is a form of home too, a shelter where one may feel free to express the self within. While I attempted to build this refuge by blending words into ideas, another home, one made of stones and bricks, was competing

for my attention. Realizing such correspondence helped me to bring both homes together. If only I could balance my attention, I could certainly work on both of them in parallel. I thus made a conscious effort to take the attention inward and to use the emotions regarding my physical home—fear, excitement, anticipation, worry—as the platform from where to comment on how, when our worries about mundane issues take over, our creativity is compromised. I decided then to acknowledge and welcome the emotions connected to the creation of my two homes by putting in practice some of the principles explained in relation to contentment and balance. To make my peace with that led me to feel more at peace with myself. At last, inspiration paid me a visit.

My personal story is illustrative of how the qualities and states associated with the Anahata chakra also played a role in creativity. At the time of writing about this psychic center, I had been practicing meditation for more than 12 years. I had also been an active researcher in different capacities, first as a PhD student and later as an assistant professor. During all those years, I was in search of my inner voice. For a long time, however, this was covered up by layers of fears elicited by my efforts to make my work fit with rigid academic parameters. One such attempt was to prevent, as much as possible, the infiltration of my meditation practice into my intellectual work. Although in every area of research I could see the connection to some of the principles used in my meditation, I tended to dismiss that because I was afraid of stepping in a contested territory: the transpersonal.

That notwithstanding, I wrote a couple of papers related to meditation that were published. All seemed to be going according to plan, except for the fact that to write a monograph kept standing out as a missing step in my career. As explained in Chap. 1, to have found six archived proposals for six different books made me realize that I had been paralyzed with fear for a long time. I am aware now that my creativity had been affected by the 12 fears proposed in Chap. 4. I had been writing essays on various topics, avoiding those that were connected to my meditation practice, which were indeed the most meaningful to me. The main apprehension was to go against the grain, letting my voice—a very iconoclastic one—be heard. It was far easier to remain within my window of tolerance, writing about other topics that did not expose my inner self as much. None of the proposals had, until then, progressed simply because it would have been very difficult to sustain a fabricated voice throughout the length of a book. This was particularly true as I always had the idea that to write a book, and

above all one's first book, was a very significant event in a person's life. Somewhere deep within I knew that my first book could not be on a topic about which I did not care strongly enough.

For a long time, those fears sabotaged my capacity for self-expression. Ultimately, they were putting a stop to my creativity. Even as I write this paragraph, some of those anxieties keep rushing back, as I think: 'I am stepping into alternative methods and domains', 'I am using autoethnography for a study of creativity and, this has never been done before', 'I am rendering my personal experience available for scrutiny', 'I am using the subtle system for a study of creativity and this is unprecedented', 'I am going far "out of the grain" and this might be judged as lack of rigor'. Despite outwardly knowing the theory, challenges to put that in practice remain. The difference now lies in the awareness that I have gained in relation to all those trepidations, which helps me in preventing them, or so I hope, from sabotaging my creativity any further.

Probably out of the same fears, when writing Chap. 4, I missed, at first, elaborating on the autobiographical part of the Anahata chakra. While discussing every center of energy, I had been linking the analysis to my own experience, elaborating, in parallel, on my personal account for this auto-ethnography. When writing about the Anahata chakra, however, I missed doing that altogether and I moved swiftly into the discussion of the Vishudhi chakra. This is, in practice, how fear and anxiety act in order to sabotage creativity. Unless one is alert, it is possible to miss the chance to express oneself, holding tightly instead to a false sense of security.

In my case, perfectionism worked as an anchor for this false sense of security. While, as mentioned earlier, my diligence opened up myriad possibilities in my life, it has also constrained me. This was indeed one of the attachments that kept me from writing the book—it was an imperative that the book should be perfect. I was also attached to my ideas about academic rigor. Attachment was discussed in Chap. 4 as one of the main enemies to the quality of confidence of the Anahata. Upon the realization of various attachments that were blocking my Anahata chakra, I worked, through introspection, on making conscious all of them and I attempted to reverse my perfectionist traits. As I did that, my work started to move ahead. I ventured into writing and I was surprised to find a whole body of perfectly valid research in transpersonal psychology, which gave an answer to the ideas I wanted to express in my book. I also searched for publications concerning creativity and I was thrilled to see some scholars taking steps to relate creativity to Eastern frameworks, which were far from

mainstream approaches. My eyes were wide open as I saw that this body of research was published in renowned peer-reviewed academic journals. I gained awareness, at that moment, of the strong attachments that have affected me for so many years and that have prevented me from looking beyond my conditionings. I thus opened up to the discovery of new perspectives, preparing to challenge my own.

My experience is helpful to illustrate issues related to self-responsibility and creativity, which were also analyzed in relation to the Anahata chakra. A false sense of responsibility was conspiring against self-expression. I had taken the term to mean a duty to respond to the demands from my workplace, to the expectations of others, to conventions and canons. I had obliterated the responsibility towards myself, which entailed letting my voice be heard and my inner self be expressed. I was avoiding self-responsibility by succumbing to other forms of outward responsibility. By keeping the attention on external responsibilities, my duty towards my inner self was relegated and my creativeness could not flow.

Although awareness about my fears brought a sense of liberation, it is important to note, nonetheless, that work on the Anahata chakra has been one of the most challenging in my writing. The 12 fears, my various attachments and issues of imbalanced responsibility have, thereafter, continued to test the process throughout. I have been required to constantly cast an eye on my false self and push the way out for my true self to come to the foreground. Fears and lack of confidence are, undoubtedly, some of the most powerful deterrents to creativity. I have required continuous practice of meditation to facilitate a state where I am able to rise above that.

I will use now the experience of the Spanish novelist Rosa Montero to explain how the lack of confidence in one's self acts in most surreptitious ways to avert the flow of creativity and I will, afterwards, link that to the qualities of the Vishudhi chakra. As my creativity was still locked within, preventing me from starting my first monograph, I read Rosa Montero's *La Loca de la Casa*. In this autobiographical book, Montero narrates a day where she had the entire day ahead of her to dedicate completely to writing. That day, she sat down in front of the computer and started off by checking emails. She continued checking them for hours and, without realizing, the day was over before she could write a single word. Montero uses this experience to reflect on how fear sabotages creativity. Procrastination, in her case, acted as a defense against the anxiety that the creative process conjures up. From another

perspective, the story is also relevant in relation to the Vishudhi chakra and it was actually an eye-opener for me. As I read Montero's words, I had an 'aha moment' and I was able to relate to her experience in a clear-cut manner. On manifold occasions, I had found myself exactly in the same situation. Myriad days, I have had the intention of working on the monograph. Very often, I also would see entire days disappear into thin air, much in the same way that Montero's day vanished in the midst of email checking. In the best of cases, I would work on some other research projects, but time would tend to evaporate before I could commence working on the book.

Based on concepts discussed in Chap. 4, it could be argued that on such occasions time was experienced as 'shock', leaving me at the level of *erlebnis*—an experience that was raw and inarticulate. I was not exactly aware of the kind of mechanism that was preventing me from working on the book until Montero's knowledge reached in me the level of *erfahrung*, that is, of a communicable experience that takes on social meaning through reflection and evaluation. As the Spanish writer rendered her experience available for others to reflect upon, her story made me feel that I was not alone in this. It was not exactly a personal difficulty but something that happened to other people involved in creative work. It was probably a pattern hidden in humanity's collective unconscious—procrastination as a means to deal with lack of confidence and inner fears. My blockage was collective in the sense that it originated from the stratum of human beings' fears. Such awareness dismantled the power that the anxieties had over me. They were destabilized by sitting with them at the same table, looking at them as a witness and detaching from them. My experience made me realize that when a fear enters the realm of *erfahrung*, rather than this being an obstructive factor, it acquires the power, through awareness and reflection, to propel us to create. It is not the fear that boosts our creativity but our awareness about it. It might not be surprising that shortly after I gained awareness about my fears, while sitting on a train to Shanghai, this book's first ideas ignited.

The interconnectedness between the part and the whole discussed in relation to the Vishudhi chakra tends to take unsuspected forms. As I was writing about this psychic center, I was affected by a very bad cold with sore throat and coughing. I was ill for about four weeks and due to my poor health I could not get to finish that part of the book. My ability to communicate was blocked. Both communication and creativity have self-expression in common, that is, the possibility to be true to the self as we

put in common our ideas, opinions and our ways of understanding the world. My lungs and throat were a reflection of the obstruction in my capacity to express my true self. I went through a slow process of recovery. The day that my throat cleared up was the same day I was able to finish my work about the chakra of communication and collectiveness. The implausible parallelism between my work and my life unraveled before my eyes, again, in an unsurpassable manner. It was an interconnection as mysterious as that of the part with the whole. This was similar to *Rayuela*, a novel by Julio Cortázar, in which the character is trying to produce the novel that Cortázar wants to write, which demonstrates how both Cortázar and his character are part and parcel of the same creation. The ideas expressed outwardly not only originate from the inner self but they are also sketched from the outer world into the canvas of the author's inner self. A sense of wholesomeness is thus evident in the process of creativity analyzed from the point of view of the Vishudhi.

Similarly, when I started writing about the Agnya chakra, life presented me with the utmost opportunity to write about forgiveness not from theory and mind but from experience and heart. My work on this chakra 'coincided' with the breakup of a short but meaningful romantic relationship. I was surprised at an apparent link between both situations—on the one hand, my analysis of forgiveness from a theoretical perspective, on the other hand, the need to put this into practice in the breakup of this relationship. I did research about this concept and the ideas of some scholars were very helpful: to consider the 'wrongdoer' as a human being who acted only according to the circumstances of his or her life or the possibility to grasp the event that has caused harm as an opportunity to grow and surpass limitations. All those ideas were useful and to some extent, I had previously reflected on that myself. What was really a breakthrough for me, however, was an idea given by my body psychotherapist, Antonio. He suggested I should write a letter to my ex-partner. When he mentioned this, I had already written one letter to this person when the relation came to an end. What was new about Antonio's proposition, however, was to include a discussion about my expectations, taking full responsibility for those, accepting them as mine, thus recognizing that the feelings of frustration for the fact that these did not come true were also mine.

I followed Antonio's advice. To add that to the letter was truly liberating. I spoke of my hopes, taking full responsibility for them. Those were my expectations and they belonged only to my inner world. How could I ever hold anyone else responsible for my having created those hopes

within myself? While writing the letter, I noticed that, as a human being, I was over and above all expectations whether alive or frustrated. I was also over and above any harm that others could do to me because, despite all of that, I remained myself. That was part of my dignity and no one and no circumstance in life could take that away.

In the letter, I spoke of two significant aspects—the goodness of my ex-partner and my own. Based on his integrity, I could not conceive that whatever he had done could have been in order to harm me. Recognizing the goodness in him was also a means to ascertain my own. The fact that I had believed in this person had not been a mistake. I had been involved with a good person and that, in turn, spoke well of me. Furthermore, based on my own integrity, I did not deserve to be tied to anyone by negative emotions such as anger and resentment. I expressed in a most sincere manner my decision to entirely relieve myself from those feelings. Finally, I thanked this person, in the letter, for all the goodness that he had brought into my life, affirming that whatever good he conveyed was all that I would take with me. Antonio had clarified that it was not necessary to send the letter. I felt, however, that it was important for me to do so. As I sent it, I felt that writing the letter had been a big step in unblocking the quality of forgiveness within me. I felt liberated not only from this particular event but from other similar ones.

A significant aspect in this process was self-forgiveness. This was an important phase in order to let go of a sense of failure in relation to my frustrated expectations. There was, however, no conscious effort in doing so. Simply by acknowledging that all expectations were mine and by accepting them in front of the person involved in this painful process, a feeling of both self-assurance and self-compassion emerged. These feelings meant a self-declaration that, in so far as the expectations that I had placed on this relationship were mine, there was nothing wrong with that. The expectations were only a part of my inner self. I could not help but forgive myself for that. The act of recognizing my hopes helped me to watch them from a distance and to release them. Whether we make the agent of our pain a part of that process is irrelevant, what matters is the detached attitude we take towards our expectations, accepting them and letting them go.

Every now and then, after I had sent the letter, feelings of sadness kept rushing back. There was, however, no sense of failure or judgment attached to that. I was only missing the presence of someone with whom I had created expectations for my life. The liberation of expectations

made me feel great compassion towards myself. I did not need to fight the sadness or any other feelings arising out of this breakup. It was noteworthy that, after I wrote the letter, I felt no anger towards the agent of my grief. As I was so accommodating and forgiving of my emotions, these would tend to leave and I would find a sense of inner peace.

I have discussed this anecdote as a means to illustrate the connection between expectations and forgiveness. As discussed in Chap. 5, the creative process is affected by our wishes and by those that others tend to place on us. The act of forgiving expectations is a means to free our mind, allowing ourselves to create without the heavy weight that these hopes represent. In my case, this exercise helped me to achieve silence both in heart and in my mind. As I was able to let go of my harsh feelings towards my ex-partner, I was also able to express that in my writing in a very honest manner.

The experience of blocked creativity that I have been narrating in this chapter has been an indication of the presence of myriad thoughts of both ego and superego that had attacked my Agnya chakra. For many years, due to the over influx of superego, my goals in terms of my research were somewhat low as compared to my potential. My mind used to tell me that I was not good enough to write a book, that there was nothing new that I could contribute and that my ideas were not of great value. Due to the influx of superego I would imagine the worst-case scenarios in terms of outcomes. For many years, that stopped me from writing a monograph. Once I decided to embark on such a task, however, things in my mind changed. My ego came on the stage. As always, this was craving for external recognition, and it started building up manifold prospects around the publication of the book. Foolishly, my ego started telling me that I should write the perfect book, which, as it used to happen with my excellent grades at school, would place me, once again, in 'the first position'. My ego was also feeding me with ideas about how my work would please others and allow me, subsequently, to obtain their love and approval through that. It took some effort, at first, to break through such superego and ego identifications in order to connect with my inner self and continue my writing. I was required to constantly put in practice the exercise of forgiveness of expectations explained in Chap. 5. I had to constantly remind myself that those expectations were part of my subjectivity, absolutely valid, but expectations nonetheless, with no promise attached. As I forgave my expectations, thoughts would recede and my mind would become quieter.

It would be foolish to believe that, at that point, I had won the war against my inner enemies—my ego and my superego. Those were only small victories, but they were very significant for me. Despite my minute triumphs, my ego and superego always used to fight back. I was, nonetheless, acquainted with both the diminishing thoughts and my ideas about self-importance. Thus, whenever either of those appeared I would forgive the thoughts and I would let them go. As I write this autoethnographic account and the writing is coming to an end, I am still able to identify when thoughts from ego or superego come back to attack. In full awareness I forgive those thoughts, I let them go and I continue writing. It is not necessarily an easy task, but awareness—and indeed thoughtless awareness—plays a major role in the extent to which I can triumph over my enemies. An example is connected to the act of receiving criticism. I had discussed our response to censure in Chap. 5, linking that to the Agnya chakra.

In an attempt to overcome past difficulties dealing with unfavorable opinions from others, I handed over parts of my writing to some friends and colleagues. Indeed, I passed one chapter to David, one of my colleagues at work, requesting his comments. The experience was extremely helpful. It shed light on how people from a different perspective and background would see my work. Contrary to what I expected, to gain feedback from a different angle was really empowering. Following some of David's suggestions, I amended certain parts and incorporated some ideas that were very helpful. While doing that, however, I became more confident about my own views. Regardless of how transpersonal these could seem, they were my ideas and it was the writer in me voicing them. While being open to accepting deviating propositions, I was also determined to fully respect my own.

My personal story is also illustrative of the link between creativity and the Sahasrara chakra, the pinnacle of the centers of energy of the subtle system. At the time of writing about that I had been practicing meditation for more than 13 years. In all those years, I had learned how to bring forth the state of thoughtless awareness in my daily meditation. I had also been able, most of the time, to carry that state throughout the day as a meditative mood. Although to a lesser extent than before, my ego and my superego still have, even to this day, the power to destabilize this state of consciousness. From time to time, those entities of the mind still bombard me with thoughts from past and future. Writing this monograph, indeed, has been a struggle between two forms of consciousness—one

that remains tied by thoughts from ego and superego and one that is able to go beyond that, reaching into thoughtless awareness, that is, the experience of the present. My meditation practice has been a key factor in keeping aware and alert about that.

My writing about the Sahasrara chakra was not that different to that of the other centers of energy. At that time, everyday hassles were taking place in my life and they used to drag my attention. At times, I felt alienated from all my inner qualities, as if these evaded me. I gained consciousness about it while talking on the phone to my cousin Nidia. In desperation, I said 'I am unable to start the analysis of the Sahasrara, somehow I cannot start writing about that'. Subsequently, I added 'maybe I cannot because to write about it one needs to be in thoughtless awareness and at the moment I am not'. Once again as it happened with each of the other chakras, the mere fact of being conscious about this immediately propelled a change. One of the thousand petals of the Sahasrara opened up as I focused my attention on that chakra. I could then subsequently start writing about this center of energy. The rest of the petals have continued to reopen throughout the writing process.

I have narrated my experience of being, to a large extent, an outsider-to-the-self-perfectionist. I have also elaborated on how, based on a process of self-review and from the position of an insider to the self, I was able to gradually relieve the obstructions in my chakras that challenged my creativity. It is clear that at every step, awareness was the key tool that helped me overcome such constraints. Given that an important part of my personal creativity is, at present, connected to my work as a lecturer at a British university in China, my personal story would not be complete without making reference to a further process of self-review brought into that part of my life. I am referring to my first attempt to apply the Spectrum of Creativity in Education (SCE) to my teaching.

My proposal of the SCE was discussed in Chaps. 6 and 7. While elaborating on that, I was teaching a module called Cultures of Everyday Life, which consisted of a lecture to more than 170 students, in a large tiered lecture theatre and three small seminars, each of them of around 18 to 20 students. Given the challenges that the first setting implies, I decided to use the model in two of my small seminar classes. When I made such a decision, the academic term was already rolling. That meant a limitation in terms of the time allowed to plan for such an enterprise and I decided to test only some aspects of this model through my teaching.

I prepared an 'everyday teaching guidance' that included six principles of the Spectrum that I ought to cover in my classes. The first, to allow for play and freedom to create in the classroom. This was achieved by implementing myriad playful dynamics, including activities such as the practice of Tai Chi, throwing a ball to indicate who should answer a question and different role-play exercises. The second, to act as an instrument to help students locate their attention. Every time I perceived that a student's attention was wandering, I would gently ask the question 'where is your attention?' Seemingly, at such impromptu, students would bring the attention back into the class. The third, to allow for spaces of silence. These, rather than being planned in advance, were suggested wherever I thought it pertinent, for example, when students were too excited and it was difficult to bring their attention back into the class. The fourth, to not prescribe or demand particular responses or behaviors from my students. This was something I tried to keep in mind at all times in connection with all principles of the SCE. For example, when I suggested the practice of Tai Chi, I asked students to join me only if they wanted to do so. Some students remained seated while some joined in. The same principle was applied to the games, where I kept in mind that I should not expect any particular reaction from students but allow them the freedom to be.

The fifth principle of the teaching guidance was to use love as an overall pedagogy. To tangibly put into practice such a guideline represented a big challenge. Hence, I devised a questionnaire that contained all aspects discussed in the SCE regarding the use of love as pedagogy. This was conceived in a threefold manner—as a self-reminder, as a means of self-reflection and as a self-evaluation method of my teaching. The questions were an enquiry into whether each particular day: 1) I have listened to all my students; 2) I have given students the freedom to be themselves, regardless of the extent to which I may have agreed or disagreed; 3) I have allowed for spaces of self-reflection; 4) I have accepted my students as whole human beings, with weaknesses and strengths all built in; 5) I have admitted individual differences in the classroom; 6) I have not put expectations on my students; 7) I have expressed myself while allowing students to express themselves; 8) I had my entire attention on the other person in each one of my interactions in the class, that is, I was fully present; 9) I was committed to joy, that is, I practiced appreciation and I lightened up the classroom environment; 10) I lived next to the students, seeing each of them as a person rather than as a student. Answers included: a) always, b) sometimes, c) average, d) not very often, e) never. The scale was from

one to five, where one accounted for 'always' and five for 'never'. I used to answer the questionnaire immediately after the end of each of my classes. Every week, I was bringing to my seminar classes the everyday teaching guidance. Before the start of each class, I would look at the principles and questions. At the beginning, I was mindful about all of that and a conscious effort was required in order to remember each of the principles during the class. After a couple of classes, the reminder was no longer needed. I made those aspects a part of my customary teaching, applying them as much as possible in the class. At the end of each class, I used to complete the questionnaire, evaluating in an honest manner the extent to which I had followed each of the directives from the SCE.

The sixth and last principle from the SCE is to apply self-review as part of the pedagogy. Thus, after each class, I consciously took my attention inwards to reflect about my demeanor during the session. In order to do this I was connecting with my insider to the self and I introspected. This inner inspection helped me to see how the blockages in my chakras have been triggered by things that had happened in the class and how that was connected to past obstructions of my energy centers. I was then using that information to continue to improve the qualities of my chakras.

It is difficult to provide a reliable quantitative outcome to consistently account for this experience. The results from the self-applied questionnaires provided only one indicator. On the basis of an 'always' answer to all questions in all seminars, the ideal score would be 5. In one of the groups my average score out of six weeks of classes was 9.3, while in the second group the score came to 7.7. In addition, at the end of the experimental period, I asked students to evaluate some of the most obvious principles of the SCE used in our classes. The vast majority of students, 95 percent, indicated that they found the playful dynamics implemented in the class very conducive to their learning. The majority of students, 92 percent, reported that two of the methods were very useful: self-reflection and the invitation to locate their attention. The one aspect that was less favorably evaluated was spaces of silence. The majority of students, 83 percent, felt uneasy and did not know how to deal with that. Given the strong resistance that silence stirs up, as discussed in Chap. 6, this result does not come as a surprise.

It is not possible to draw valid conclusions from such a small experiment—it was put in practice only in two seminar groups, during six weeks only. Also, there was no control group. Thus, these results in isolation might not mean much. Outcomes have more of an impact in terms of

qualitative and subjective aspects. One of the most rewarding results was the fact that it unleashed my creativity to devise methods through which to apply the principles of the SCE. The range of new activities and techniques used to deliver the contents of my module went beyond any of my previous years teaching on that subject. Throughout the whole process, I was also much more aware of my teaching and of ways to enhance that according to the SCE. I found that very stimulating. A further positive result was obtained through the process of self-review conducted after each class. By taking the attention inwards, I could notice how challenging the whole process was for some rigid structures of my inner self. Two of the most obvious conditionings that were challenged were my attempts at keeping control of the class and my expectations to obtain certain responses or specific behaviors from the students. By implementing the SCE, my attempts at control were subverted.

In this chapter, I have discussed how in the process of writing this monograph and of putting in practice the SCE, the state of thoughtless awareness kept revealing blockages of my chakras and how these had prevented my creativity. At times, the blockages were evasive. My awareness, from time to time, was at the level of thought and from there I could not see the parallelism between my life and the text and between my inner and outer worlds. In those moments, unawareness manifested as an impasse in my ability to write. At times, I would feel bored, disheartened, anxious and unable to concentrate and continue with my work. Suddenly, however, I would become aware of the perfect synchronization of my inner self and my ideas, which I was attempting to capture in written form. By reflecting on this assemblage, I could see the blockages of my chakras very clearly. Awareness allowed me to go over and beyond that, immersing myself in the creative process with no thought. Subsequently, words would start flowing like a river with a strong and powerful current, encountering stones and pieces of wood on the way, flowing nonetheless, despite the myriad contours and detours. When I write in the state of thoughtless awareness, that is, while experiencing the present, it feels as if a hand is moving mine on the keyboard with no conscious intervention on my part. That hand is happily putting an end to this book right here, right now.

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