

Witness Consciousness
in the
Development of the Individual

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Thesis presented to the
Faculty of The Owen Barfield School of Sunbridge College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Liberal Studies

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Proclaim, exclaim, reveal all ye who are divine and enlarged beyond the standard frame.
Behold your fellow masses, be seen and see for ye are not alone.*

— Walt Whitman

Nothing in this thesis would exist without the contributions and support from others; I am, as Whitman writes, not alone.

To the forty people who took the time to respond to my survey about moving and witnessing in Authentic Movement, you shared your experience, thoughts, and questions with great depth and honesty. I am so grateful that your voices are here to tell the story of the developing inner witness.

To the six women who participated in the group study, your work and words are indelibly imprinted within me. I am deeply grateful for your dedicated involvement and the individual clarity of each one of you.

I have been fortunate beyond measure to find, in my own development, teachers who demonstrate a sense of rigor, passion, and originality in their work. You are all here between the lines. I thank:

Wendy Perron, for affirming and embodying the beauty of blending the physical and the intellectual.

Cathy Weis and Lisa Nelson, for endless inspiration and for showing the intelligence and wit of the moving eye.

Eva Karczag, for sharing the mystery of inner, infinite space.

Aileen Crow, for teaching the wisdom of not-knowing and the art of joyful participation.

Diana Levy, for introducing me to Authentic Movement and the big, wide embrace.

Janet Adler, my mentor, for forging the path that has always felt, to me, like coming home. Thank you for teaching me the importance of finding order and right relationship.

I thank the incomparable faculty of the Barfield School:

Arthur Zajonc, my primary mentor, whose wise guidance has buoyed me at every step. Thank you for helping me to hold the largeness of the vision and the smallest details with equal care.

Patti Smith, Robert McDermott, Gertrude Reif Hughes, Fred Amrine, and Kathy Gower. Each of you has supported me in unique and meaningful ways. I am indebted to the brilliance of mind and generosity of spirit that you each possess.

I am grateful, also, to my fellow pioneer students of Barfield's inaugural class and to the administrative staff at Sunbridge College, particularly Chris Hunt and Anna Claire Novotny.

Throughout this whole project, I have been held in a loving and vibrant circle of friends and family. Thank you:

Wendy Goulston, for your steadfast and warm encouragement, careful reading, and thorough editing support.

Annie Geissinger and Joan Webb, for all that we have done and learned together. I look forward to all that is still to come.

Lizbeth Hamlin, Meg Cottam, and Shelley Tanenbaum. My gratitude extends to each of you. I treasure our years of conversations in movement and words, in presence and absence, in body and spirit.

Beverley Serabian, for your presence and seeing me to the other side.

Mom and Dad, truly you are the shining lights. Thank you for being there, with love and support, always.

Jeremy, Molly, Sam, and Julia. You are my inner circle, my greatest blessings. Thank you for your patience, humor, and love through it all.

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study documents the development of “witness consciousness” through three data sources. A survey of forty Authentic Movement practitioners representing a thirty-year span of experience shows long-term transformational development of the individual. A six-session group study of four “movers” and two “witnesses” reveals how cognitive capacities develop within individuals in the context of relationship. The third source of data highlights the connection between Authentic Movement and contemplative inquiry and offers evidence that movement, stillness, and perception play a role in the act of bearing witness to the unfolding of consciousness. Through the triangulation of the data sources, a continuum of cognition becomes apparent that is inclusive of intellect, imagination, and intuition.

The findings of this thesis confirm the rich contribution of the moving body to human development and emphasize how quality of relationship shapes adult transformational growth.

INTRODUCTION

A *witness* is a person who acts as an important presence at threshold moments, such as birth, death, and major life transitions. The witness affirms the truth of such an experience or occasion, if only to attest to the simple fact that it happened. At this time in history, humanity as a whole is at a threshold. On a collective and global scale it is a time of potentially devastating crisis and a time of tremendous possibility for change. Since history suggests that true and lasting change happens because of the presence and committed action of individuals, what does it take to develop enough consciousness and will-to-act within individual human beings to create the changes necessary for a positive and healthy future?

Looking at the role of witness in the process of self-development, this thesis asks the following questions:

- Can those who develop a greater capacity to bear witness, both internally and externally, help support the development of individual consciousness in others?
- What is witness consciousness?
- What is the impact of the presence of a witness on another person or group of people?
- How can this capacity to be a witness be strengthened and developed?

I explore these questions by looking at how, in the discipline of Authentic Movement, the roles of mover and witness offer an opportunity to support the development of witness consciousness within each participating individual.

The discipline of Authentic Movement is a practice for the age of relativity. It acknowledges and assumes as a working hypothesis that perception is relative to the person having it. Mover and witness learn to distinguish their own experience and perspective from each other's. They learn the value of becoming conscious of projection and the hazards of being unconscious of projection.

While both men and women participate in the practice of Authentic Movement, a higher percentage of participants tend to be women. Exploring the reasons for this is a research topic unto itself. In this thesis, I assume that the “mover” and the “witness” can

be either male or female, and I use both masculine and feminine pronouns unless it becomes awkward to do so. In such cases, I use the feminine pronouns.

The Practice of Authentic Movement

In the practice of Authentic Movement, forms or structures vary, but the basic guidelines for moving are simple:

- The mover keeps eyes closed in order to more readily pay attention to inner impulses rather than to external promptings.
- The mover maintains self-responsibility; so when moving suddenly, quickly, or with large gestures, he or she may open eyes with a soft focus.
- While sound is welcome, the movement time offers an opportunity to enter a non-verbal realm; so speaking is discouraged.
- If contact is made between movers, it is up to each mover to discern if it feels right, as an authentic impulse, to choose when and if to engage the contact.

The mover's primary intention is to attend to and follow inner impulses that may manifest as sensation, emotion, sound, movement, or stillness. The mover may also become aware of activity in the mind in the form of commentary, memory, or an open, non-judgmental awareness.

What makes Authentic Movement unique as a practice is that the mover is in relationship to a non-moving external witness. The primary intention of the external witness is to pay attention to her own internal experience while tracking the spatial, temporal, and physical journey of the mover. A seasoned witness, evolving from practice as a mover, typically has a well-developed *inner witness*, capable of separating her own experience from the mover's and of discerning any tendency to judge, interpret, or project her own experience onto that of the mover. The external witness, who typically sits on the periphery of the space, plays a vital role in supporting the development of the mover's inner witness. For the mover, the process of becoming conscious of one's experience while "in movement" (stillness can be a form of movement) is the ongoing practice of developing and strengthening the "inner witness."

After the movement portion of an Authentic Movement session, time is usually given to a transitional activity, such as writing, drawing, or working with clay or other art material, followed by a set time for verbal processing between the mover(s) and witness(es). The mover is considered to be "the expert of her own experience" and is

therefore invited to speak first (Adler after Weir). The witness is careful to be conscious of how she talks about her experience of witnessing the mover, often deliberately acknowledging her own experience as distinct from that of the mover. For some movers the experience of being witnessed is a relief. For others, especially at first, being witnessed can bring up feelings of ambivalence and discomfort. If the witness can convey a sense of “compassionate-enough presence” (Adler spoken in teaching), the mover will likely, over time, develop greater trust and security.

Inside / Outside Perspectives

The first time I did Authentic Movement, I was a mover in a group of five other movers, led by a teacher who took the role of witness. My eyes were closed; but no matter where I went in the room, I was aware of exactly where the witness was. A part of my observational mind was both noting my spatial relationship to her and also curious about what she was seeing of me. It was not uncomfortable, but there was something vigilant in my need to know where I was in relationship to her. Another part of my observational mind was following my own experience, particularly my kinesthetic sensations of movement and space.

This divide between an awareness of being seen from the outside and an awareness of myself from the inside was an accurate reflection of my habitual state of consciousness. Over time, in my practice of Authentic Movement, I became less interested in my relationship to the external witness and more aware of the other movers and more interested in what was happening in my interactions with them. I also became more interested in my verbal exchanges with the other movers during the processing time after the movement. Eventually my acute awareness of the others subsided and I began to feel more fluidity between what was going on around me and what was happening within me.

In this study of witness consciousness, I look at how the divided nature of awareness changes over time through the practice of relationship between mover and witness. Authentic Movement not only addresses the distinction between inner and outer experience but also works on the distinction between self and other and between mind

and body, between cerebral knowing and the knowing of sensation and emotion as experienced through the physical body.

Authentic Movement pioneer, Mary Starks Whitehouse, suggests that a conscious relationship to one's experience in the physical body is necessary for healthy adult development. In one of her earliest papers, she writes:

But if the kinesthetic sense is never developed, or seldom used, it becomes unconscious . . . a situation I can only call living in the head which fact the body faithfully reflects since it must move, by acquiring a whole series of distortions, short circuits, strains and mannerisms accumulated from years and years of being assimilated to mental images of choice, necessity, value and appropriateness. (Whitehouse, "The Tao of," p. 44)

The moving body, separately experienced from conscious awareness, expresses itself "in spite of" instead of "with the help of" the mental life (Whitehouse, p. 44). In Authentic Movement, "help" can come initially in the form of either emotional or tactile-kinesthetic awareness of movement impulse. "The core of the movement experience," writes Whitehouse, "is the sensation of moving and being moved." In non-habitual consciousness:

both are present in the same instant, and it may be literally an instant. It is a moment of total awareness, the coming together of what I am doing and what is happening to me. It cannot be anticipated, explained, specifically worked for, nor repeated exactly. (p. 43)

After many years of teaching and being inspired by her readings of Jung and Eastern philosophy, Whitehouse, in one of her last papers, elaborates further on the inner process of developing consciousness. Paraphrasing Krishnamurti, she writes:

The little self becomes the one that struggles with self-knowledge, taking the familiar structure of the personality apart and putting it back together again with new elements, new understanding; but the inexhaustible is the big Self, the Unknowable God. . . . The Self guides and directs the Me, once the process of becoming conscious begins. ("C.G. Jung and," p. 78)

In this statement, a relationship between two conceptions of self — one familiar, the other an inexhaustible, guiding source — becomes apparent.

A Practice of Relationship

Whitehouse did not explicitly connect the inner relationship between aspects of consciousness within the mover to the external relationship between the mover and her witness. In the work and teaching of Janet Adler, a student of Whitehouse, the exploration of relationship, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, becomes a central focus in what she names “the *discipline* of Authentic Movement.” In her book *Offering from the Conscious Body*, Adler clearly articulates the dynamics of a developing inner witness within the mover in relation to an external witness who, in turn, attends both to her perception of the mover and to an inner witnessing of her own experience.

The experience of each individual is paramount in Authentic Movement; and yet in this discipline the healthy development of the individual unfolds through the practice of relationship, which is always the fulcrum by which development occurs. In *Offering From the Conscious Body*, Adler’s model describes an experiential path of development — *individual body, collective body, conscious body* — that is inclusive of the following phases:

- The mover in relationship to an external witness.
- The mover in relationship to an internal witness.
- The mover (now sometimes in the role of witness) in relationship to the collective.
- The mover/witness in relationship to Spirit.

In this study, my research leads me to focus less on the development of relationship between mover and witness and more on the development of the individual, specifically in the development of both mover and witness in relation to his or her own inner witness.

Design of Method

Using a phenomenological methodology, I draw on three data sources in order to triangulate my findings. The first is a survey designed to ask Authentic Movement practitioners about their experience in the roles of mover and witness. The survey yielded forty responses from practitioners with from one to thirty years of experience. The assessed findings of the survey provide strong, longitudinal evidence in support of Adler’s model of development.

The second source of data, the six-session group study, is designed to focus on the developmental experience of the inner witness in the transition from what Adler defines as individual body to collective body. While evidence of development that pertains specifically to the transition proves inconclusive, the data from the movers viewed in conjunction with and in contrast to the data from the witnesses provide an unexpected view of how different ways of knowing are employed in the practice of Authentic Movement.

The third source of data used in this thesis comes from the meta-witness experience in the group study. The meta-witness is a role that I designed as a way to incorporate contemplative inquiry into the research. Data from the meta-witness' journal writing further strengthens an understanding of how cognitive capacities — ways of knowing — develop in the discipline of Authentic Movement. Specifically, the modes of awareness of sensing, feeling, and thinking exhibit the capacity to transform. As the inner witness develops, sensing and feeling become integral to the act of knowing along with active aspects of a more unified and refined faculty of thinking/perceiving. All three sources of data, taken together, offer compelling evidence of long-term cognitive development for the individual in dedicated practice of Authentic Movement.

I chose the phenomenological method for this study because it offers a relational approach to the research of experience. From a philosophic standpoint, it appears that some of the core processes of phenomenology have much in common with the witness practice of Authentic Movement. The epoché, in particular, as a preparatory practice of phenomenology, invites the researcher to “abstain from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” in order to see “in a wide open sense” (Moustakas, p. 33). This is similar to the intention of the witness who is “seeing what is here in this moment within and without” (Adler, *Offering*, p. 63). As will be seen in Chapter Two, Edmund Husserl developed, in phenomenology, an approach to research in which the experience and the orientation of the researcher are essential to the prospect of discovering meaningful results. Phenomenologist Clark Moustakas writes of this process:

Each looking opens new awarenesses that connect with one another, new perspectives that relate to each other, new folds of manifold features that exist in

every phenomenon and that we explicate as we look again and again and again — keeping our eyes turned to the center of experience and studying what is just before us, exactly as it appears. (p. 92)

Broadening the Conception of Thought

Looking at the data in my investigation of witness consciousness, I come to see a picture of self-emergence and transformation. Data from both movers and witnesses of the group study reveal a process whereby the subject/object relationship of *self to self* and of *self to other* undergoes change. In the course of this change new ways of knowing become possible. As a result of my findings, I identify four modes of cognition that are evident in the experience of practitioners of Authentic Movement. Each of these ways of knowing includes elements of both perception and thought. Furthermore, I find that a changing relationship between perceiving and thinking, as well as between mind and body, proves to be a function of development. It is useful, therefore, to picture a continuum of cognition, one that consists of four modes of thought: (1) analytic thought, (2) imaginal thought, (3) thought as conscious process, and (4) thought as direct intuitive perception. At one end of the continuum, in the everyday consciousness of analytic or associative thought, perceiving and thinking are two separate phenomena, as are mind and body. At the other end of the continuum, in direct intuitive perception, perceiving/thinking and mind/body become unified as one phenomenon. This is not a hierarchical model; ideally the mature individual has access to each of the four modes of cognition.

In my discussion I look at the work of educational theorists Robert Kegan and Jack Mezirow for models of transformative learning and adult development. From the literature of spirituality, I draw on the work of Rudolf Steiner, in particular his understanding of the three-fold nature of the human being: body, soul, spirit. Steiner offers a detailed, non-dualistic picture of human development and the individual embodiment of I-consciousness. This soul-level process can be seen in the context of and requiring the interpenetration of both physical and spiritual elements of the individual.

Steiner and, intriguingly, Aristotle on the subject of agency and polarities, help to bring a new perspective to understanding the phenomenon of impulse in Authentic Movement. As the external witness attends to the mover, the mover, by way of an increasingly discerning inner witness, attends to impulse. Impulse is the mystery. It continuously beckons the mover toward the unknown. Arising in the context of awareness, impulse is not a random occurrence; it appears

to contain an inherent order or intentionality. Together, mover and witness participate in the unfolding of experience, each developing, and supporting in the other, the potential of greater capacity for consciousness.

Chapter One: BACKGROUND

1.1 Origins of a New Discipline

Beginning in the 1950s, a new movement practice, now commonly known as Authentic Movement, emerged through the exploration, thought, and teaching of Mary Starks Whitehouse. Three of the central figures in the development of Authentic Movement — Whitehouse and two of her students, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow — trace its origins back to the dance and ritual of ancient peoples for whom the body was the most immediate expressive instrument. Adler believes that the present-day practice of Authentic Movement represents a transformation of ways that human beings, from earliest times, have been connected to body, mind, and spirit. She writes, “The work of dancers, healers, and mystics forms the ground of the discipline of Authentic Movement, a way of work in which we practice compassionate witnessing of movement becoming conscious” (“From Autism,” p. 12).

All three women grew up studying dance; and all three, in their published writing, acknowledge that the modern lineage of Authentic Movement began with dancers of the early twentieth century who were discovering new ways to access spontaneous movement within themselves. Chodorow writes of Isadora Duncan standing motionless with her hands on her solar plexus, waiting for an inner impulse that would lead to movement (“Inner-Directed,” p. 32). Whitehouse, who trained with Mary Wigman and Martha Graham, believed that Wigman’s work with improvisation was an indispensable influence on her own work and that of the other early pioneers of dance therapy (Frieder, p. 35). Adler points to the writings of Martha Graham, Rudolf Laban, and others who, in the voice of their own experience, address the spiritual nature of the “inner attitude out of which true dance rises like a flame” (Adler, “From Autism,” p. 12).

Most of Whitehouse’s work and writing focus on the mover’s development of a conscious relationship to impulse, with little reference to what has come to be known, in the contemporary practice of Authentic Movement, as “witness consciousness.” Although, in the following quote from her later writing, Whitehouse articulates an important observation about the process of a maturing inner self-awareness:

[A] balance between action and non-action allows individuals to live from a different awareness. They come to the place where they can view everything,

from a simple movement to the deepest and most poignant moments of their lives, with an element of detachment, having two qualities at the same time. It is not that they do not suffer but that they know suffering is not the only thing, its opposite is also there. It is not that they do not enjoy, they know there is suffering. Finally, if they are lucky, they can contain and be aware of both of these at once. Then something new is created. (“C.G. Jung and,” p. 83)

Clearly, Whitehouse had a profound understanding of the developing inner witness and in her writing she appears extremely cognizant of herself as an observer of her students in movement. She did not, however, make a conscious study of the observer role, either inner or outer, as a phenomenon in and of itself.

Joan Chodorow has written extensively, and far more theoretically than Whitehouse, about the relationship between conscious and unconscious processes as experienced through awareness of movement and the body. She writes:

Although the impulse to move may spring from a source in the unconscious, the body, which allows the impulse to manifest itself, remains firmly rooted in the fact of its own existence. The actual act of moving creates proprioceptive and kinesthetic feedback which serves to confront the unconscious with the body ego's reality. As the unconscious impulse and the body ego encounter each other's different realities, an intense and fully mutual education is likely to occur. (“Dance,” pp. 246–247)

Chodorow clearly articulates the mover's challenge: “to develop the capacity to bear the tension of the opposites, to open fully to the unconscious while, at the same time, maintaining a strong conscious orientation” (“Dance,” p. 310). As teacher and therapist, a generation after Whitehouse, Chodorow works with the model of witness in relationship with mover; but her focus is on the phenomenon of active imagination. Her contributions to both Jungian and dance therapy literature on the role of movement as active imagination are immeasurable.

The Role of the Witness

Janet Adler, as a young dance therapist, had come to her own central question through her work with autistic children:

Forty years ago autistic children were described as those beings who never had an experience of relationship with another human being. In such a child there is no hint of an internalized other, a mother, an inner witness. (“From Autism,” p. 11)

She writes of experiencing flashes of internalized presence in the children she works with and observes that “such moments of grace created resonance within our relationship, revealing a glimpse of light” (p. 11). This possibility of resonance, of light, of conscious recognition between two people and all that lies, unconsciously, in the way of that possibility would become the focus of Adler’s work. At the age of twenty-eight, Adler worked intensively with two teachers who would help define the studio work with students that she spent the next thirty years developing. From Mary Whitehouse came an understanding of what Adler calls “the phenomenon of mover consciousness”; and from John Weir, a psychologist and teacher of human development, came “the foundation of what has become the phenomenon of witness consciousness” (*Offering*, p. xiii).

From John Weir, Adler learned, “Our existential aloneness is the precondition for everything we feel, do and think.” And yet,

It is essential that participants share their experience with others. . . . The sharing . . . performs a kind of witnessing . . . Witnessing seems to be extremely important in connection with many ritualistic and ceremonial activities. Witnessing, and sharing for that matter, seem[s] to validate the event and to give it and the participant public sanction and acceptance. (Weir, p. 321)

It was through Adler’s work that a witness role developed in the practice of Authentic Movement; she made “a conscious effort to train the next generation of students to be witnesses as well” (Stromsted, Vol. 2, p. 247). Her study with John Weir also contributed the use of self-referential, “percept language” where “individuals are asked to own their experience by using the words ‘I saw’ or ‘I felt’ rather than projecting or interpreting or judging other people’s experience” (Haze, p. 87). Reflecting on her own path of inquiry, Adler writes:

Witnessing the emergence of a discipline with authentic movement reverberating at its center, I have been witnessing the body as a vessel in which healing occurs, a vessel in which direct experience of the Divine is known. As the vessel becomes conscious, it becomes more capable of enduring the darkness and receiving the light of our humanity. (*Offering*, p. xvi)

Adler very intentionally calls her work a discipline “because practice has unveiled an inherent order, creating form with a theoretical ground, revealing a field of study” (*Offering*, p. xvi). It is both a practice and study of the unfolding relationship between mover and witness, an unfolding that coincides with the development of individual consciousness. Adler has identified one structural aspect of this inherent order as “three

interdependent realms” of the developing individual’s experience: the *individual body*, the *collective body*, and the *conscious body*. In her book *Offering from the Conscious Body*, Adler traces the development of these three “bodies” and notes that:

The work is developmental but not linear, as both personal and transpersonal phenomena occur in the practice within each realm. Individuals can enter this evolving practice at any time if experience in another discipline appropriately prepares them. (p. xvi)

In Adler’s teaching, the foundation, or as she calls it, “the architecture of the discipline,” is based on “the ground form” consisting of a single mover in relationship to a single witness. The ground form is the basis of the individual body phase that begins, for the mover, with “a longing to be seen in the presence of a witness.” Adler writes that:

The presence of the outer witness can become a compassionate model for the aspect of the mover that is becoming conscious of her own experience. It is the development of the inner witness that creates the evolution of the mover’s consciousness. (*Offering*, p. 6)

As the mover becomes more adept and secure in her capacity to be in relationship to movement and inner experience, the longing to see another begins to assert itself. At this point, the mover learns “to track another mover’s physical movement while becoming conscious of her own sensation, emotion, and thought as she sits in stillness to the side of the space” (*Offering*, p. xvii). Adler considers this phase, of being a silent witness, as a transitional practice on the way to becoming a witness who speaks in the verbal processing time.

The second realm, the collective body, is focused around the individual’s interest in and readiness to “discover one’s relationship to many without losing a conscious awareness of oneself” (*Offering*, p. xvii). Typically, work in the collective body happens within a circle of individuals sharing in the roles of mover and witness. The *circle*, marked by the bodies of the participants, becomes a palpable presence. Adler writes:

In the beginning and ending of each round of work, the circle is empty. As individuals commit to witnessing the emptiness, the vessel strengthens in relationship to the development of embodied collective consciousness. (*Offering*, p. xvii)

The work of the collective happens because of each person’s willingness to open beyond the individual, solitary self and intend toward participation (*Offering*, p. 124). The

movers and witnesses choose to move in and out of the circle for an infinite range of reasons or “for no reason at all.” Adler continues:

People enter when they are tired or at peace, scared or depressed, hungry for pure movement or unable to sit still any longer. They enter because of a glance from another person . . . a shift in the light . . . or the intense purple of the princess flowers, vivid beyond the window seat. (p. 124)

Adler suggests that the circle of the collective body has the potential to hold the full spectrum of human experience and that individuals “take turns descending into different aspects of being human in the presence of each other.” She writes:

Consciously embodying one’s truth in the presence of others can create an experience of wholeness, belonging, and completion as well as an experience of incompleteness, frustration, and alienation. “I am because you are” seems true regardless of our experience of suffering or freedom from suffering. (*Offering*, p. 124)

In the third developing realm — the conscious body — the participant may find that witnessing the emptiness of the circle is experientially equivalent to witnessing the emptiness of self. It is the emptiness that holds the potential fullness of creative offering.

Adler writes:

Another longing, a longing to offer, emerges out of the emptiness. The body moving becomes more transparent, becomes dance, and dance becomes an offering. Words, becoming transparent, transform into poetry, and poetry becomes an offering. When energetic phenomena, which can be known in the body as direct experience of the Divine, concentrates within and moves through the conscious body, the energy itself becomes an offering—to the mover, to the witness, to our world evolving, to our world longing for consciousness. (*Offering*, p. xviii)

Adler’s articulation of the developmental nature of Authentic Movement in terms of the three “bodies” lays the ground for an understanding of embodied consciousness, both in relationship and, in moments of grace, beyond relationship. Such moments are experienced as a unitive knowing of “direct experience in which the boundaries describing all relationships, within and without, dissolve” (*Offering*, p. xix).

Witness Consciousness as a Force of Change

Many practitioners of Authentic Movement continue to build on the work of Whitehouse, Chodorow, Adler, and other early pioneers. People practice Authentic Movement all over the world and in ways that emerge from their own special gifts, questions, goals, and

communities. Even though the work had been developing for nearly fifty years, there were no books or readily accessible materials about the history of the practice. Until the early 1990s, there was no place for Authentic Movement practitioners to share their writing and their questions and become consciously part of the movement's history.

In 1994, I was part of a group of women who started a publication about Authentic Movement called *A Moving Journal*. We had met four years earlier in a teacher-led Authentic Movement group and found ourselves deeply engaged with the work in the studio and exploring the role of mover and witness outside of it as well. We practiced in our living rooms and backyards, and even one day in the baggage claim area of an airport. We made artworks, community events and theater pieces, all driven by the possibilities of sourcing deep creative impulses and exploring new ways of seeing and being in relationship. It was out of this same eager curiosity and beginner's mind that *A Moving Journal* was born (movingjournal.org).

Our intention was to offer a format for practitioners and teachers to share their research and experiences. We wanted to learn from others in a way that reflected core principles of Authentic Movement, such as the importance of direct experience and respect for the individual voice. Over the next thirteen years, my co-publishers, Annie Geissinger and Joan Webb, and I had the opportunity to communicate with hundreds of readers and contributors from all over the world. Many times, we remarked that *A Moving Journal* felt to us like a very large Authentic Movement circle. As editors, we aspired to be witnesses in relation to our contributors. In relation to our readers, we often felt like movers, finding our way in the face of the unknown.

A book of collected essays by Whitehouse, Adler, and Chodorow, edited by Patrizia Pallaro and published in 1999, had a significant impact on the level of discourse among our readers and contributors. With the publication of these essays, the fruits of rigorous personal research into the role of movement in the study of conscious and unconscious experience became available to the growing community of Authentic Movement practitioners.

Seven years later, in 2006, as we finished production of our thirty-eighth and final issue, Annie, Joan, and I were invited to join Pallaro as speakers at the first International Gathering of Authentic Movement hosted by Daphne Lowell and Alton Wasson at

Hampshire College. Many of the contributors to a second volume of Authentic Movement essays, again edited by Pallaro, were also present. Participants of the gathering, some of whom had never met before, came together to discuss ways that the impulse to share and connect, begun by *A Moving Journal*, might find new form. Less than a year later, the Authentic Movement Community Web Site was up and running with a directory, classified ads, and a committee to oversee the creation of a blog (authenticmovementcommunity.org).

Perhaps what is most striking about the second volume of essays is the sheer quantity of words that have emerged from a practice grounded in the non-verbal. Close to forty contributors are featured, displaying the extraordinary range of thought and application that current practitioners of Authentic Movement have to offer.

Here is just a sampling of some ways that *Authentic Movement, Volume Two*, documents how Authentic Movement is moving out of the studio and into the world through those who are exploring “its power as a force that can support the development of personal and global conscience” (Tsetse, p. 406):

- As an important adjunct to psychotherapeutic practice and clinical use.
- As a spiritual practice in and of itself and as it intersects with other spiritual practices.
- As an enhancement of the arts and creative expression.
- As a support for the health and well-being of individuals with illness or disabilities.
- In relationship to deep ecology and a more-embodied understanding of nature.
- As practice and inspiration for peace and social justice endeavors.

The main common link Authentic Movement offers to individuals working in these widely divergent fields is an inner witness strengthened in the context of the physical body and in relationship to others. It is through the embodiment of the two—mover and witness—that witness consciousness develops. It is through the discipline’s exploration of the relationship between the two that authentic presence can be discovered, cultivated, and can ultimately manifest in the world.

1.2 Review of Central Questions

If teachers and practitioners of Authentic Movement believe that the principles of the practice have relevance for some of the pressing social needs of our time, it is important to understand how Authentic Movement can serve those needs. In my study, I am interested in looking at the phenomenon of witness consciousness in both the mover and the witness roles and, in particular, at how the inner witness for each arises and develops through the relationship between a mover and a witness.

Adler identifies and describes three distinct realms of experience (individual body, collective body, and conscious body) that comprise a non-linear arc of the developing inner witness. In my own research, I look at the development of the inner witness in three different contexts:

1. Responses to a survey that I sent to Authentic Movement practitioners ranging in length of experience from one year to over thirty years.
2. The subjective experience of a group comprised of four movers and two witnesses, as evident in their journal writing during a six-session series of Authentic Movement.
3. My own documented experiences of contemplative inquiry as meta-witness in the group study.

These three avenues of research are intended to generate data to see how and if individual development of witness consciousness becomes apparent. The data in turn reveal four phenomenological themes, each of which highlight different aspects of the inner witness experience. For example, will the **modes of awareness** of which Authentic Movement practitioners are already cognizant, such as sensation and emotion, help make the phenomenon of development visible? How is **agency** experienced and how does the phenomenon of being moved appear distinct from moving? What does the **use of pronouns** tell us and what impact does the first-person-subjective experience of the mover have on the witness, and vice versa? How can the **relationship** between mover and witness be understood as a phenomenon, and how does it serve the development of each individual participating in Authentic Movement? I will elaborate on the questions raised by these four themes in the rest of this chapter.

Modes of Awareness

I asked my collaborators in the six-session group study to use a journal, much as they would in a typical Authentic Movement session, to record whatever they wanted about the movement experience. The journals became my primary source of data for the group study. In my assessment of the data, I find that the writing consists of four modes of awareness. In the following examples, the same gesture is experienced through each of the four modes:

1. Physical body — *I am standing upright, arms by my sides. My fingers spread wide and arms rise to either side.*
2. Sensation — *I feel tingling in my hands. Arms seem to float up. I feel a slight heaviness in my chest.*
3. Emotion — *I notice a feeling of yearning, some sadness.*
4. Thought — *I remember the lake and how I loved to go there when I was young.*

These four modes of awareness appear to be the principal means whereby subjective experience can be known, although in the actual moment of experience, awareness is generally integrated in a seamless fashion. In any given moment, an individual may be aware of one or more of these four modes or may be unaware of any of them. The fact that it is possible to be aware of each mode separately, through the process of attention, already demonstrates a capacity to self-witness. It is this capacity to observe oneself in both action and perception that is called the “inner witness” in Authentic Movement.

Awareness of the kinesthetic sense, on the part of the mover, provides the ground of self-knowing. Neuroscientist Gerald Edelman has studied how consciousness arises “as a result of particular neural processes and of the interactions among the brain, the body, and the world” (Edelman and Giulio, p. xi) and speculates that:

among the earliest conscious dimensions and discriminations are those concerned with the body itself — mediated through structures in the brain stem that map the state of the body and its relation to both inside and outside environment on the basis of multi-modal signals that include proprioceptive, kinesthetic, somatosensory, and autonomic components. (p. 174)

Authentic Movement, with its primary emphasis on impulse as manifest through the physical body, taps the earliest, most foundational modes of human cognition. While movement may be the doorway into the self-experienced world of Authentic Movement, the door opens to the entire sensorial realm. How we name that sensory experience raises

questions of self-awareness and identity. Authentic Movement teacher Aileen Crow, bringing aspects of Arnold Mindell's Process-Oriented Psychology to her work, explores the experience of different "sensory channels" and observes:

Every sensory channel holds vital information that is complementary to the others. All are essential. If one is stuck in one channel, that's a problem, because other necessary information becomes inaccessible. If one particular channel is not available, often because of past trauma, that can impede the natural flow from one channel to another, again blocking some access to important information. . . . Intentionally limiting our experience to only one main sensory channel, especially if it's one we don't usually occupy, can take us into an alternate state, alternate to our usual consensus of reality. (Crow, p. 8)

In her work with students and peers and in her own art, Crow personifies the "dream-figures" that she finds living in different channels as a way of reclaiming lesser known aspects of self that may be projected onto others. She suggests that such a process gives rise to the question: *Who Am I?* Crow asks:

Has one of my personality parts taken over my identity at present with its dynamics and its beliefs? Which of my parts thinks s/he is ME? *And do I have a choice?* (Crow, p. 8 [italics mine])

Another teacher, Alton Wasson, describes his own approach to accessing the vast range of ways that experience can be interpreted through awareness. He uses the metaphor of a chest of drawers as a way to understand how the inner witness can relate to experiential awareness:

The awareness that I am functioning within a drawer can enable me to be less identified with the specific contents of that drawer. . . . The chest of drawers also reminds us that there is a larger container, a larger Self with which we can identify, rather than identifying with only one drawer, or just a few familiar ones. (Wasson, p. 71)

Both Wasson and Crow demonstrate sophisticated methods of exploring the content that emerges through the experience of movement, and both indicate an interest in the question: Who is the "I" that is aware of the awareness of a particular drawer or that wonders if "I" have a choice?

The articulation of modes of awareness by the participants in the group study provides a window into understanding the process of cognition as it appears in the discipline of Authentic Movement. Perception of the physical body, sensation, and emotion are commonly seen as essential aspects of the Authentic Movement

practitioner's means of being aware of experience. The capacity for thought appears to be less well understood as a mode of awareness and even, at times, considered antithetical to deeper, more refined states of consciousness. My findings suggest that even as habitual ways of thinking become transformed, the activity of thought continues to play a central role in the development of the individual's capacity for awareness.

Agency of Movement

Mary Whitehouse was keenly aware that she was teaching her students to become conscious of a new experience of movement, one that, she suggests, "always carries an element of surprise" ("Physical," p. 54). She was particularly interested in the moment when a person finds himself or herself moved and describes just such a moment when a student "sat up white-faced and trembling with shock. Her description came: 'I didn't know what would happen. I didn't do it'" ("C. G. Jung," pp. 82–83). The phenomenon of being moved is one Whitehouse returns to throughout much of her writing. Here she describes some new possibilities of physical experience that can arise when the mover does not intentionally direct the movement:

Again and again, the physical action takes a form which would not be possible at will or which would take a long time to learn by conscious intention. People balance incredibly without knowing how to balance, twist or turn in a way quite out of keeping with their normal rigidity. . . . Shrunk to the size of the ego, movement appears as inhibition, self-consciousness, poverty of gesture, deadness. The openness of attitude allows the totality and therefore the body to function freely, producing much more of the natural range of physical action, which is the birthright of the human being. ("Physical," p. 54)

Whitehouse frequently identifies this change in movement range and quality with a change in "attitude." It is, she writes, "a moment of unpremeditated surrender" that constitutes a non-habitual relationship to the physical body ("C. G. Jung," p. 82).

In her doctoral studies, Shelley Tanenbaum explores the experience of moving in relation to "the sense of I" as seen from the perspective of mindfulness. She distinguishes among five modes of moving: habitual, consciously directed, creative, free-flow, and intuitive. Habitual movement is our familiar, ordinary way of moving without much kinesthetic awareness. Tanenbaum writes, "In habitual movement, the sense of 'I' reacts to world and identifies with experience" (p. 36). In consciously directed movement, on the other hand, "the sense of 'I' intentionally directs, repeats, or alters experience" and in

the case of creative movement “intentionally creates and explores movement experiences.” Tanenbaum describes free-flow movement as a type of creative movement, one in which “the body moves freely without intention or mindful attention.” Intuitive movement, in contrast to these other ways of moving, happens when “the sense of ‘I’ is not the doer but a presence that is both receptive to and mindful of unfolding body-based experience” (p. 38). A distinction between an “I” who is the agent of movement and an “I” who is a passive recipient of the movement is characteristic of the practice of Authentic Movement. Both forms of agency appear in all three data sources.

It turns out that this balance of the active and the receptive in terms of agency may not be such a new experience after all. The Greek philosopher Aristotle was interested in the polarity of *poiein* (to do) and *paschein* (to suffer) that were for him:

not the insubstantial, semi-mystical abstractions which we make of them, when we translate them “active principle” and “passive principle.” They were, at the same time, respectively — “To-move,” and “To-be-moved.” (Barfield, p. 100)

In other words, the polarity of passive and active was not an abstract idea to Aristotle but rather an experiential phenomenon. Furthermore, it is not clear that, in his thinking, these two different instances of agency were actually separable, as is evident in his description of the movement of a ball-and-socket joint:

For there the convex surface (the ball) and the concave surface (the socket) are respectively the end and the beginning of the movement: consequently the latter is at rest while the former moves. They are distinct in definition, but spatially inseparable. (“On the Soul” [a], p. 191)

To Aristotle, the two states of rest and motion share the same space such that “the motive instrument [agent] is found where a beginning and an end coincide” (“On the Soul” [a], p. 191). To contemporary mainstream thinking, movement at the site of a joint would be considered an aspect of body mechanics; but for Aristotle, the cause of movement is central to his inquiry into the nature of the soul. In *De Anima* (“On the Soul”), perception and thought are found to be governed by the same principles of movement that apply to the hip joint (p. 191).

Another polarity essential to Aristotle’s thinking is that of *energeia* [the actual] and *dynamis* [the potential]. He writes, “The actuality of each thing is naturally inherent in its potentiality, that is, in its own proper matter” (“On the Soul” [a], p. 81). The

potential exists latent and unmoving until it becomes awakened or energized by the activity of the actual. Aristotle writes, “Soul is an actuality or account of something that possesses a potentiality of being such” (“On the Soul” [b], p. 264). According to Aristotle, potentiality lies in all physical matter in nature and has the capacity to be vitalized as an organism only if its vital or soul qualities are exercised. Awareness of an impulse to move, which in Authentic Movement is the first glimmer of actuality that appears in the context of potentiality, arises as a soul activity. To Aristotle, the form of a being is not its physical appearance but the activity of its soul.

An attunement to movement was so inherent to the ancient Greek sensibility that Aristotle would name the defining characteristics of God by its terms. The “Unmoved Mover” is perfect and fully realized because of not requiring any external agency. Aristotle, with an unprecedented capacity for rational thought, established the presence of God as first cause “by logical necessity rather than religious conviction” (Tarnas, p. 63). His description of the quality of God, the Unmoved Mover, is “characterized by a state of eternal unhindered activity—not the struggling process (*kinesis*) of moving from potential to actual, but the forever enjoyable activity (*energeia*) made possible only in a state of complete formal realization” (p. 63). This immaterial and utterly unsurpassed Supreme Being “is simply that of eternal consciousness of itself” (p. 63).

Aristotle was not interested in a philosophy of transcendent being, as Plato was, but in a philosophy that begins with a particular and evident phenomenon and leads, by way of logic and reason, to the universal. For Aristotle, rational thought was the means to understanding, sense-based reality was the subject, and comprehension of the essence and intelligence of the Divine was the goal. For example, close observation coupled with lucid and logical deliberation of something as immediate as the hip socket could, in conjunction with observation of other phenomena, yield insights of a more universal nature on the subject of movement and agency.

To return to his mysterious use of the word *paschein* (to suffer), Aristotle writes, "So it is clear that in all these cases the thing does not move itself, but it contains within itself the source of motion — not of moving something or of causing motion, but of suffering it" (“Physics” 8.4). In the more psychological context of Authentic Movement, the words that long-time practitioners use for the polarity of *poiein* and *paschein* are *will*

and *surrender*. The latter word, perhaps, comes closer to what Aristotle intends by “to suffer,” meaning an inner quality of acquiescence rather than a specific expression of emotion. *Suffering*, in Aristotle’s more formal sense of the word, so very different from modern usage, describes the awakening of potential by the activity of the actual.

Aristotle’s way of thinking about movement and agency is intriguing because of his apparent capacity to see as unified, processes that modern consciousness tends to regard as separate and distinct from each other. Given the central importance in Authentic Movement, of the phenomenon of being moved, I am interested in how a perception of agency appears in the data sources.

First- and Third-Person Ways of Knowing

The presence of an observer in relationship to an object of study is a central premise of the scientific method. In Authentic Movement, the object of study for the external witness is twofold and includes both close attention to the mover and an awareness of self-experience *in the presence* of the mover. From the perspective of the witness, the mover is not an object at all but a fellow human being with his or her own subjective experience. The attention of both mover and witness is grounded in first-person experience but at the same time is subject to mental constructions of second- and third-person perspectives.

The use of first-person methodologies is discussed in *The View from Within: First-Person Approaches to the Study of Consciousness*. The editors, Francisco Varela and Jonathan Shear, explain that their intention is:

to survey some major current approaches that attempt to provide the basis for a science of consciousness which includes first-person, subjective experience as an explicit and active component. (p. 2)

This body of research provides a significant context in which to understand the role of the developing inner witness within the scientific study of human consciousness. At the same time, Authentic Movement, with its focus on first-person experience in the mover and witness relationship, offers a new perspective to understanding relational functions among first-, second-, and third-person positions.

The Second-Person Role

Varela and Shear find that in order for a method of capturing first-person experience to be useful, another person is required. A “mediator” is someone who “is eccentric to the lived experience” but at the same time occupies the position of “one who has been there to some degree, and thus provides hints and further training” (p. 8). They suggest that the individual who embodies this perspective is likely to understand the role as one of “empathic resonator,” that is, one who maintains a necessary degree of critical distance and of critical evaluation but for whom “the intention is entirely other: to meet on the same ground, as members of the same kind” (p. 10). This definition of the second-person position applies well to my role as researcher in the study, as well as to the practicing witness in the discipline of Authentic Movement.

At the same time that the contributors to *The View from Within* provide evidence of the value of first- and second-person perspective, they agree that there is also a significant role for the third-person position. They argue that what is most important, particularly for validation purposes, is how these three positions — (1) I, we; (2) you; (3) he, she, they — relate. Varela and Shear suggest that the distinction of position is, “to some degree, a descriptive convenience” and that, in fact, they are part of a continuum such that “each one is layered as a function of the emphasis one puts in accomplishing a particular mode of validation” (p. 12).

I find evidence of this same phenomenon of a layering or interweaving of first-, second-, and third-person perspectives in the data from the group study. This phenomenon suggests that to value one position over another could prove counterproductive to an investigation into consciousness. A method that presumes that the three points of view are inextricably separate, may, in its own way, impact the data.

The following question, posed by Varela and Shear in allusion to Thomas Nagle’s famous 1974 essay “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” addresses what is most promising about the inclusion of first-person experience into the realm of research:

When considering the human/consciousness entity, what is there about its first-personness that is special to it — that is different from the first-personness of entities such as a bat, a brick, or a computer? (p. 310)

This question lies at the heart of my study. What can we learn about the possibilities and pitfalls of being human when the individual as an “I,” not just as a “he” or “she,” is a central focus of the inquiry? Can the practice of Authentic Movement help to illuminate first-person experience as a valid form of knowledge?

Relationship

The phenomenon of relationship is central to the practice of Authentic Movement. For the mover, there are “two separate but mysteriously related realms . . . interpersonal and intrapersonal” (Adler, *Offering*, p. 5). The ground of the interpersonal is the relationship with the external witness. Adler writes, “There is a felt need, so profound in the West, to be seen doing what one is doing.” On the level of ego, the mover’s desire to be seen is, paradoxically, often matched by a fear of being seen (p. 6). As a result, the experiences of being in relationship to an external witness stimulate the intrapersonal work within the mover. The heart of this work is the forming of an inner witness for whom “the outer witness can become a compassionate model for the aspect of the mover that is becoming conscious of her own experience” (p. 6).

While the mover’s experience is dependent on the presence of the witness, the experience of the witness is, in another sense, equally dependent on the mover, “who is the primary catalyst for all that stirs within her [the witness]” (p. 61). The witness is also working in the two realms of interpersonal and intrapersonal. She is continuing, through her developing inner witness, to be in relationship to her own experience with the intention of seeing herself more clearly. At the same time, she is attending to the activity and the presence of the mover, intending to see him or her more clearly (p. 62).

It is no surprise that both interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship become visible throughout each of the other three themes — modes of awareness, use of “I,” and agency — that emerge in the data. For example, the four modes of awareness (physical, sensation, emotion, thought) are often the means of experiencing relationship for mover and witness. The themes of agency and use of “I,” however, highlight who or what the mover or the witness is in relationship to.

In my assessment of data from the survey, the group study, and the meta-witness role, these themes help to build a picture of how the relationship between mover and

witness contributes to a strengthened and refined capacity for awareness in both mover and witness. Consciousness of the physical body in space is the foundation for exploring relationship between mover and witness. From here, all further awareness of experience diverges. Neither mover nor witness can know exactly what the other is sensing, feeling, or thinking; and yet these inner faculties are what allow for qualitative nuances of relationship and are what ultimately lead to greater self-knowing on the part of each individual.

Chapter Two: METHOD

2.1 Phenomenology

In order to meaningfully assess the highly subjective nature of my data sources, I use a phenomenological approach to the research. Phenomenology as a qualitative method is particularly useful when the subject concerns the “meaning of experiences” for individuals and offers a more philosophical framework than a social science analysis (Creswell, p. 52). Both features — individual experience and philosophical framework — are true of this thesis. All of the data derives from individual experience, and the research addresses philosophical questions relating to body, soul, and spirit.

The Greek root of the word phenomenon is *phainein*, meaning “to bring to light, cause to appear, to flare up,” or “to show itself.” The implication, from the ancient Greek perspective, is that there is something behind, beyond, or within a thing that becomes apparent because of its phenomenal appearance. Yet, in order to be an appearance, a perceiver is necessary for the thing to appear to. The tree, as a phenomenon I am looking at, is dependent on the activity of my consciousness in order “to show itself.” Phenomenology is based on the premise that there is a relationship between what exists in conscious awareness and what exists in the world (Moustakas, p. 44).

Phenomenology as a method “requires that we allow the phenomenon of experience to be just what it is and to come to know it as it presents itself” (Moustakas, p. 86). In this way, the subject of study, in my case the inner witness, can be seen as a process revealing itself. “Staying close to phenomenology is the doorway to imaginative cognition,” says physicist Arthur Zajonc, adding that the “experiential phenomena are the doorway to the inside of what we, at first, can only see from the outside” (Personal conversation, January 2007).

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), as founder of modern phenomenology, developed a philosophical method that orients the mind of a researcher to a subject of study or observation in a focused and intentional manner (Moustakas, p. 28). How, then, does the phenomenon reveal itself? Husserl writes:

We win the reply to our question as we wait, in pure surrender, on what is essentially given. We can then describe ‘that which appears as such’ faithfully and in the light of perfect self-evidence. (p. 260)

For Husserl, this attitude of waiting “in pure surrender” is achieved by conducting what he calls the *epoché*, a Greek word meaning “to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of seeing things” (Moustakas, p. 33). It consists of clearing from the mind any presuppositions that would inhibit a true “reading” of the phenomenon. The *epoché* has been called an approach to research that “places ultimate knowledge in the regions and powers of the self” (p. 41).

While the phenomenological method guides the research of this study, it is worth noting that experiential practices such as Authentic Movement have much to offer the phenomenological researcher by way of “methodical, observable, teachable ways of bracketing” (Johnson, “Intricate,” pp. 479-490.). “In defined steps that can be repeated by others,” writes somatic studies professor, Don Johnson,

[these practices] slow down the rapid pace of thinking, draw attention into experience, weaken the tenacity of preconceived ideas and emotional self-interest to the point when, after long practice, the ideas and the biases wither in the face of the vitally pulsing things themselves. (“Intricate,” pp. 479–490)

To access the interior of a phenomenon in the phenomenological method requires “entering a pure internal place, as an open self, ready to embrace life in what it truly offers” so that “new ideas, new feelings, new awarenesses and understandings” can arise (Moustakas, p. 86). To enter such a “place” necessitates leaving behind the familiar and habitual ways of observing and thinking that Husserl, a mathematician by training, felt had become greatly limited by cultural bias and “the mathematization of nature” (Simms, p. 163). As a philosopher living in the first four decades of the twentieth century, Husserl saw ample evidence that the intellectual and technical achievements won through quantitative thinking, had come at a qualitative and ethical cost to humanity.

The importance of Descartes to the development of Husserl’s thinking is well documented (Simms). Less well known is the impact of a fellow German who lived one hundred years before Husserl. The writer, Goethe (1749–1832), was a lay scientist with a voracious intellect and poetic mind, working to create a natural science of life processes. Books about Goethe’s experimental studies of light, color, and the natural sciences were part of Husserl’s library (Simms, p. 172). In her essay examining the relation between Goethe and Husserl, phenomenologist Eva-Maria Simms writes, “Goethe used his poet’s

imagination to envision the principles of formation and change which allow an organism to develop” (p. 162).

Goethe’s mode of inquiry involved the cultivation of consciousness, both subtle and penetrating, through objective observation of natural phenomena *and* of the activity of his own mind. He developed an approach to the study of the natural sciences that reconciled the separation of subject and object and their correlates: percept and concept. It was his experience that “the phenomenon is not detached from the observer, but intertwined and involved with him” (*Maxims*, p. 155). He described his mode of inquiry as “a delicate empiricism which makes itself utterly identical with the object, becoming true theory” (Goethe, *Scientific Studies* p. 307).

Husserl’s quest was philosophic and somewhat abstract in nature, whereas Goethe, with a more poetic and at the same time practical outlook, conducted his investigations “in the field” of the empirical world. Goethe sought the transcendent within the transient world of nature, the universal in the particular manifestation. Arthur Zajonc describes the difference between quantitative method and the qualitative method of Goethe as follows:

By refusing to translate seen phenomena into a hypothetical or abstract theory, the full value and content of the phenomenal world remains. The Ideal is not projected onto a limited conceptual grid which stands ready to hand. Rather, faculties adequate to the Idea are formed by reflection, practice and observation. (“Facts,” p. 242)

Goethe’s method can be understood as a practice that develops cognitive faculties within the researcher: a schooling that can lead from what Zajonc calls an “epistemology of separation” to an “epistemology of love” (“Love and”). Acknowledging Goethe’s contributions to phenomenological research is particularly appropriate for a study of witness consciousness in Authentic Movement because of the shared commitment to observing external phenomena simultaneous to self-observation.

2.2 Design of Methodology

For my research, I designed a methodology that would allow access to the phenomenon of the inner witness as a self-aware aspect of consciousness. My specific interest is in how the inner witness arises and develops as a result of the relationship between mover and witness in the practice of Authentic Movement. Since the inner witness is an experiential phenomenon and not one that can be readily verified by the physical senses, I look at this question from three different perspectives: (1) a survey, (2) a six-session group study, and (3) my own contemplative inquiry.

Triangulation of Data

Certain principles from Authentic Movement are valuable from a methodological standpoint, including:

- Respect the truth of each individual's voice.
- No single voice holds the one truth.
- One comes closer to truth as each separate voice speaks its own truth.

In order to include as many voices as possible in the research, I created a survey [see Appendix] that I sent to about seventy practitioners of Authentic Movement, ranging in experience from one year to over thirty years. Many of these individuals I found on an Authentic Movement community website; others are former and current students of mine, while the remainder are colleagues. I received completed surveys from forty respondents.

The survey generated a lot of in-depth reflection from a range of practitioners; however, it does not provide documented material from an actual experience of Authentic Movement. For this reason, I include a second source of data that directly derives from movers and witnesses practicing Authentic Movement: a six-session series in which a group of four movers, two witnesses, and myself participate.

In order to triangulate the data and further refine the validation process, I use my own experience as meta-witness in the group study as a third source of data. Again, use of my own voice in the research reflects the fundamental value placed on direct experience and the first-person perspective from the practice of Authentic Movement and affirmed by the findings of Varela and his colleagues (Varela and Shear).

The Survey

The survey encourages respondents to write from their experience as much as possible in response to the following topics:

- The mover's experience of (1) own inner witness and (2) the external witness
- The witness's experience of (1) own inner witness and (2) the mover

To each of these general subjects of inquiry, I provide a couple of questions as prompts (see Appendix A). For example, under the subject of the “mover's experience of the external witness,” I include: “As a mover, has your experience of having an external witness changed over time?” and “What expectations do you have of an external witness?” I also ask the respondents to provide such background information as where they live, their age, how long they've done Authentic Movement, and a brief chronology of the nature of their practice (i.e., with a teacher, in a peer-group, as a teacher, etc.) After following the phenomenological process of working with the data of the survey I wrote an assessment of my findings.

Authentic Movement Group Study

The six-session group study is designed to see if and how evidence of a developmental process in the practice of Authentic Movement becomes apparent. The study focuses on individual development, examined through the lens of Adler's model, specifically in the progression from work in the individual body format to work in the collective body format. Sessions One and Two focus on the former, emphasizing the relationship between the individual mover and a single witness — something Adler calls “the ground form” (*Offering*, p. 61). In order to help facilitate focus on this relationship, the group is divided in half with two movers and one witness working together in one room and the other two movers and other witness in a second room.

Sessions Three and Four serve as a transition between individual body and collective body with the two groups together in one room. This transition is marked by the mover's internalization of the witness and a growing awareness of other movers, and it supports what Adler calls the “moving witness” aspect of the mover's consciousness (*Offering*, p. 43).

Movers and witnesses continue to work as one group in Sessions Five and Six, which focus on the collective body aspect of the practice. The movers join the witnesses in the “circle” at the beginning and ending of the movement time, a format that supports inner work relating to participation and belonging.

As researcher, I was present at all six sessions in the role of *meta-witness* and, except for Session Three, sat in a central foyer between the two rooms as witness to the whole process. This role was designed as a way to integrate contemplative inquiry into my research of witness consciousness.

The developmental passage from individual body to collective body might, in the real-life practice of weekly Authentic Movement sessions, normally take a few months to years depending on the person and his or her previous experience in other contemplative, artistic or therapeutic disciplines. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen the aspects of Adler’s model and teaching of the three realms that can best be looked at in a short-term study. The following were determining factors in the design of the study:

- The level of experience of the people available to participate in the study: All of the participants have previous experience with Authentic Movement.
- Three of the four movers have studied Authentic Movement with me for about two or three years and the fourth studied with another teacher for about the same length of time. I consider all four on the cusp between the *individual body* phase and the *collective body* phase. All four participants are familiar enough with their own inner process to comfortably focus on and articulate their experience.
- The two people whom I chose to be witnesses are colleagues of mine with lengthy experience in the roles of both mover and witness. I felt confident that both would be articulate about their experience as witnesses.

Because of these various factors, in designing the study, I adhered closely to many elements of the basic model of Authentic Movement while diverting from others. My intention in making these choices was to not betray the fundamental tenets of the discipline. I will subsequently review the elements that I have included in the study. (See Appendix D for a detailed overview of how these elements are incorporated and sequenced in the study.)

The Opening At the beginning of each of the six sessions, all seven participants in the group study gather together. I give a brief overview of the format of the session. We take

a moment, silently holding hands, to acknowledge the good will and commitment that each person brings to our work together.

Tracking Exercise Adler addresses the question of how to support the capacity to remember the non-verbal experience of the movement session in a practice she calls “tracking.” Much like the explorer who enters new territory, the mover tracks the route.

I include a short tracking exercise in the beginning of each of the first three sessions of the study for three reasons: to establish a ground of practice that would give the participants a consistent way to share their experience; create a common framework for verbalizing internal experience; and build trust between the movers and the witnesses. Session One focuses on the *physical body*, Session Two on the *physical body and sensation*, and Session Three on the *physical body, sensation, and emotion*.

Movement The actual movement time is twenty minutes of uninterrupted time and open space for the movers to close their eyes and follow inner impulses that can manifest as sensation, emotion, sound, movement, or stillness. The witness or, in the case of Sessions Three, Four, Five, and Six, witnesses sit on the periphery of the space, attentive to their own inner experience in the presence of the movers.

Instead of tracking with the same rigor practiced in the beginning exercise, the movers are invited to be aware of *pools* of experience, which is another way of helping the mover to map her own unfolding experience. Just as a story has a beginning, middle, and an end, the temporal flow of experience is seen to have a particular sequence. Awareness of pools of experience supports memory and later, the verbal exchange between mover and witness during the processing time.

Writing Transition At the end of the movement, all participants take twenty minutes to write in a journal. This is a common practice especially in the individual body and collective body phases of Authentic Movement. Writing, drawing, or some other form of art-making helps create a bridge from the non-verbal experience of the movement to an integrated consciousness of the experience. The act of writing provides the vehicle to re-experience and, therefore, discover the language that describes gesture, sensation, and feeling.

Processing The coming together of mover and witness for processing the movement session and writing transition is important. A general guideline in Authentic Movement practice is that the mover speaks first, honoring the fact that the mover is “the expert of her own experience” (Adler, spoken in teaching). The mover listens within for an impulse to speak, then, finding words, chooses to speak. The witness attends to the mover’s words and to her own memory of witnessing the mover. Both mover and witness commit to a continuing quality of presence and awareness. It is here that the witness models and the mover learns to practice, listening “to the subtleties of verbal expression in order to know more clearly what our experiences actually are” (Adler, *Offering*, p. 34).

Writing Reflection A typical Authentic Movement session might end with the processing period, followed by a short closing. In this study I include time after the processing for each participant to reflect upon the session and to respond to a series of questions related to the central investigation of witness consciousness.

The Closing Just as there is an intentional, contemplative moment of coming together in the beginning of an Authentic Movement session, a similar mood and act of coming together happens at the end. This serves as an acknowledgment and a sealing of the work done together. At each of the six sessions, we take a few moments to close in this manner.

The Meta-Witness The role of meta-witness in the group study enables me, as researcher, to observe my own experience as well as the unfolding process of the overall study without the responsibility of direct interaction with the movers and witnesses in the movement and processing times. This role was designed to incorporate contemplative inquiry into the practicing structure of Authentic Movement.

I changed the original plan to join the two groups for Sessions Three through Six after finding that being with the other participants in Session Three brought up new sets of questions. The fact that for the first two sessions, I was not physically present with the other participants and yet was still in relation to them had elicited an inner process for me that, for the integrity of the study, was important to follow. I returned to the middle room for the remaining three sessions.

Contemplative Inquiry

In my studies at the Barfield program, contemplative inquiry is treated as an integral component of the research process, one that Arthur Zajonc calls “a way of bringing experience and reason together, a way of perceiving meaning in the given, even when the given arises through deep meditation” (*Meditation as* 179). Our method of contemplative inquiry, with many parallels to Goethean phenomenology, follows a sequence of guidelines inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and the contemplative practice he called Spiritual Science. For Steiner, meditation is a central component of a “path of knowledge,” guiding “the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe” (*Anthroposophical Leading* 13).

Contemplative inquiry starts, as with any research, with a question or an object of study. Attention is also paid to the manner in which the question or object is held. Precisely because of our capacity to distinguish one thing from another — the knee bone from the anklebone, the flower’s stigma from its style, myself from another person — we know ourselves and the world around us as separate. An inward acknowledgment of one’s divided nature and the longing to overcome it brings a sense of humility and the possibility of respectful relationship with something more than the solitary self. Zajonc suggests,

[that] the first stage of contemplative inquiry is to respect the integrity of the other, to stand guard over its nature, over its solitude, whether the *other* is a poem, a novel, a phenomenon of nature, or the person sitting before us. We need to allow it to speak its truth without our projection or correction. (“Love,” p. 4)

Another important step at the outset of contemplative methodology, as in Authentic Movement, is the reclaiming of projection. To recognize “what’s here” as hindrance to the inquiry in the form of mental or emotional distractions is the practice of what Zajonc calls “soul hygiene.” Attention to one’s own quality of soul invites a more intimate relationship with the object of inquiry, raising such questions as: How do I hold the presence of the other in me? How do I let myself be held in the presence of the other? In this way, the two, self and object, can become one mutual and participatory process.

As the researcher pays attention to the unfolding process of consciousness, it becomes vital to allow for the vulnerability of foregoing interpretation, for not knowing

what “it” means. A tolerance for uncertainty at this phase of the contemplative inquiry allows for the possibility of transformation. Zajonc writes,

What was outside us is now internalized. Inwardly we assume the shape, dynamic, and meaning of the contemplative object. We are, in a word, transformed by contemplative experience in accord with the object of contemplation. (“Love,” pp. 4–5)

As a result, the researcher forms new capacities for perception. Goethe describes this not as a singular achievement but as a lifelong commitment to build upon a metamorphosis made possible by the contemplative act. He writes, “Every object well-contemplated creates an organ of perception in us” (*Scientific Studies* p. 39). This increased capacity to perceive can lead to the discernment of meaning, experienced as intuitive insight.

The task of holding the insight up to critical scrutiny is necessary; but prior to doing so, the researcher closes the contemplative inquiry with a feeling of gratitude and perhaps a thought, such as: *May this experience flow into my life and into the world.* After all, as Steiner writes, “The purpose is not to accumulate learning as our own private store of knowledge but to place what we have learned in the service of the world” (*How to*, p. 24).

In this way the actual inquiry is framed by a conscious setting of mood. The feelings of humility and reverence in the beginning and the feelings of gratitude and dedication at the end create a positive and healthy container for the meditative experience to unfold.

I used the practice of contemplative inquiry in my role as meta-witness and throughout the course of my research and found that it helped me to refine my central question, to enrich and illuminate both my reading and my findings, as well as to support the phenomenological approach to research described by Husserl as the *epoché* and reduction.

Phenomenological Procedures

In preparing to review the data, in the manner of Husserl’s *epoché*, I turn my attention away from the books and articles that serve in the literature review. The intention of the *epoché* is to set aside preconception and bias by “bracketing” the contents of one’s cultural lifelong learning, including knowledge and inference gained from the

preliminary research phase of the study. In concert with the act of bracketing is the practice of phenomenological reduction, a rigorous and ongoing internal meditative process whereby the phenomenological researcher can enhance an unpremeditated focus on the research at hand. Each interface of the researcher with the data requires just such an activity of self-meditation.

In order to tease apart and make visible the phenomenological aspects of the research, the process of *horizontalizing* the data enables the researcher to

find statements about how individuals experience the subject, list out these significant statements and treat each statement as having equal worth. The list consists of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements which will be the invariant meaning units of the experience. (Moustakas, p. 122)

Moustakas describes Husserl's use of "horizons" as "the perceptions that emerge from angles of looking" (p. 53). The researcher, with a view from different angles, can then observe discrete units of meaning from the full array of an individual's perception of the experience. The next step is to relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes. As themes become visible, the meaning units, with verbatim examples, are synthesized into descriptions of "the textures of the experience" (p. 122).

By contrasting and comparing the data in this fashion and incorporating reflections from the researcher, a more developed "structural description" is written. This document of how the phenomenon is experienced involves "seeking divergent perspectives, and varying the frames of reference" (Creswell, p. 150). The resulting assessment of the data offers an overall description of the meanings and essence of the phenomenon under inquiry.

Chapter 3: DATA ASSESSMENT

3.1 The Survey

In my first round of sorting the horizontalized data of the surveys, I create separate categories based on length of experience doing Authentic Movement. The groupings are 1–3 years, 3–5 years, 5–10 years, and then every 5 years after that. As I review these groupings of horizontalized data, other commonalities between the subsets of respondents begin to be apparent. I notice that respondents with less than 10 years of experience tend to share ways of writing about their experience that are different from those with 10–20 years of experience, which are distinct again and differing from respondents with 20–30 or more years of experience. There appears, through the data, to be a “voice” for each decade of continuing practice. As a result, I look at the data in terms of three years-of-practice groupings:

1. **Group A: 1–10 Years of Authentic Movement Experience (N-9/40)**
2. **Group B: 10–20 Years of Authentic Movement Experience (N-22/40)**
3. **Group C: 20–30 Years of Authentic Movement Experience (N-9/40)**

In each of the three groups I then look at the four major experiential aspects of Authentic Movement practice:

1. **The Mover’s Relationship to the External Witness**
2. **The Mover’s Relationship to His or Her Inner Witness**
3. **The External Witness’s Relationship to the Mover**
4. **The External Witness’s Relationship to His or Her Inner Witness**

I find conclusive, often dramatic, development in all four of these categories over the thirty-year span of time represented by the surveys. In the following pages, I focus on three examples that illustrate what I see as a developing witness consciousness.

The Mover’s Experience of the External Witness

According to many of the **Group A** respondents, the presence of the witness helps to create a space in which the mover feels safe to be in. For one respondent, to move with a witness is “like coming home.” To convey the experience of being witnessed, many respondents use positive parent-child terms, such as “being trusted,” “given independence,” “self-responsibility,” and “like a mother watching a child.” One respondent writes that “without the witnesses there would be no grounding for me,” and another: “I depend on the witnesses to hold the space for me.” These last two comments

explicitly identify the dependent aspects of this first phase of the mover-witness relationship.

The first developmental phase of Authentic Movement practice marks for the mover a time of coming into new relationship with body, with movement, and with stillness. There is a deeper awareness of the internalized impact of being seen by others. It is also a time of discovering and coming to terms with personal history and idiosyncratic patterns of movement. The survey respondents indicate that the presence of a supportive, non-judgmental witness greatly enhances this process.

A sense of safety continues to be important for **Group B** respondents; and while they express less need for a witness, they have greater appreciation for the quality of witness presence. Many respondents feel strongly about what constitutes a good witness, mostly in reference to the verbal processing time. Respondents in this middle range of experience are interested in specific and generic ways that a witness can signal support to a mover, such as tone of voice, eye contact, silence and stillness while witnessing. They identify certain skills and attributes as positive for a witness to embody: “patience,” “attentiveness,” “honesty,” “good listening skills,” “display loving-kindness,” “share own experience,” “should be awake and alert.”

Quite a few respondents feel that witnesses “working with their own projections” provide a good enough semblance of a non-judgmental witness from their perspective as movers. Some respondents acknowledge the discrepancy between their vision of an “ideal” witness and the challenges they face in their own experience of being a witness.

Negative experiences of being witnessed are less likely to have a detrimental impact on movers with at least ten years of experience. Some respondents describe using such experiences as opportunities for further self-knowledge. They observe that as the inner witness becomes stronger, they have more recourse of response in these situations.

As a group, the 10–20 year respondents display a voice that is more independent from the witness than the 1–10 year group is. Group B respondents are focused on an engagement with their own inner experience: “I know I am being held,” “I don’t get attached to what the witness sees or doesn’t see,” “I can protect myself and my experience,” “I can make choices,” “I can play with being seen or what it feels like not to

be seen.” These I-statements indicate a pro-active exploration of relationship dynamics that the movers are willing to play out within themselves.

The qualitative presence of the witness provides for the mover the safety for inner self-exploration and a relational context for exploring projection. This period is essentially focused on the development of the relationship between self-awareness and self-experience. As one respondent writes, “I’m aware of needing more of a partnership between my conscious being and my unconscious.”

In general, **Group C** describes the qualities and actions of both a supportive witness and an unsupportive witness similarly to Groups A and B. There is, however, a difference in the tone of writing. The responses from Group C tend to be simple and often convey a depth of feeling. For example, one respondent writes, “Being seen also arouses profound love and gratitude in me as a mover.” Another writes, “When I feel seen, I often get tearful and relax deeply.”

Group C respondents indicate less need of affirmation from the witness. As one respondent writes, “A brief acknowledgment from my witness through eye contact when I open my eyes is sufficient for me to feel that my external witness was present for me during the movement.” It is as if the primary role of the witness, for Group C respondents, is to be a reminder for the mover “to keep witnessing my self more and more often, more and more deeply.”

While the importance of a witness’s awareness of his or her own projections was almost universally acknowledged throughout the surveys, there is little mention of projection by respondents from Group C, except in reference to unsupportive witnessing. “Presence” is the defining quality of the supportive witness for Group C. This happens, according to respondents, when the witnesses “allow themselves to be connected and moved by their experience of watching,” and “maintain connection and alignment to [themselves] as primary” and “focus attention on present experience.”

For some of these respondents there are elements arising in the movement practice that bring up new and particular needs to feel seen or supported by the witness. Most striking of these newer experiences are those related to energetic phenomenon (mentioned by some in Group B as well) and what some respondents refer to as “the

spiritual aspects of the work.” An experienced witness can be of profound service to the mover who is having unfamiliar experiences and new insights. “The witness,” writes one respondent, “allows me to imprint into myself more deeply, these experiences of direct embodied knowledge.”

The presence of the witness as a particular person seems less visible and not as clearly defined in the words of Group C respondents, suggesting that their experience of the mover-witness relationship is more participatory/collaborative in nature. Not only is there far more independence from the witness, but these long-time practicing movers often describe an experience in which separation in the mover-witness relationship is no longer apparent. Instead, their experience as movers is of “a unified field,” “a synergy of connection,” “an intersubjective field of the container,” “the third thing,” or “the unified mover-witness.” One respondent writes, “Being seen by another and seeing myself becomes a seamless experience of being ‘present.’”

As more than one respondent reports, there is a sense of “belonging” to something larger than a separate mover and a separate witness. Instead, “both are changed, and the witness in both develops along a new continuum of experience.”

The Mover’s Experience of the Inner Witness

Group A respondents, even those who have done Authentic Movement for one to three years, are surprisingly articulate about the mover’s inner witness. They consistently remark on the difference between the presence of a critical voice within and a more loving presence that many respondents describe as “something or someone within” that has the quality of a “being.” The play of relationship between two different experiences of awareness, one critical and the other benevolent, appears as an important dynamic in this first phase of Authentic Movement practice. A couple of respondents write of experiencing the two as distinct from each other, while others suggest that the first is developing into the second. One respondent is aware that “another inner witness watches the interplay between the movement and the inner witness.” This phenomenon of awareness within awareness is one that is explored in more detail by Group B.

Another prominent dynamic that appears in the developing consciousness of the movers in Group A is the relationship that respondents describe between body and mind.

It is a dynamic that seems to arise in concert with the appearance of a more compassionate inner witness. As one respondent notes, “I’m tough on myself in the thought realm; bringing my body into the experience seems to bring an opening.” It involves the “shift from the chatter of inner critic to a more relaxed inner witness who allows me to be and has less talk and more body sensations.” A third respondent writes, “Body speaks and mind gets quiet.” This is an inner witness that “speaks to me in images and sounds rather than words.”

Group A respondents first write about an inner presence that is observant but prone to judgment and busy thoughts. They describe a second inner presence as more benevolent, wiser, often silent, and, in some cases, more spiritual. Some refer to this presence as “a Guide” or an “inner elder.” One respondent writes, “My inner witness is my better Self. God.” Other respondents use more neutral language to describe their sense of the non-critical inner witness with such phrases as: “an alter ego,” “the watcher,” “the noticer,” “a quiet voice,” or “a reporter.” From early on, it seems that many movers are aware of this distinction between a habitual, critical self-consciousness and another warmer, more compassionate presence that notices, observes, and helps remember.

For many **Group B** respondents, the inner witness of the mover is no longer associated with the critical inner voice. It has become “stronger,” “stillier,” “more grounded and paradoxically enlivened at the same time.” It is also “patient, forgiving, attentive without intruding.” Associated with the inner witness is an “ability to sustain presence on many levels” and also a “sense of dynamism and possibility.” As one respondent puts it, “The inner witness doesn’t just track and observe but helps one know when and how to make choices.” For some movers, the presence of the inner witness is not always consistent: “She fades in and out of greater and lesser presence and sometimes gets distracted, weary of witnessing and cannot stay awake.”

Other respondents also personify the inner witness, often as a “she,” sometimes as a “he,” and once as a “He/She.” Intriguingly, one respondent even writes about “a feeling that there is ‘we,’ which can include or encompass any number of others present, be they people, animals, things. In these moments I feel a resonance.” All in all, the inner witness as portrayed by Group B is a fluid and metamorphic phenomenon. As one respondent aptly puts it, “She is a bit of a mystery.”

The inner witness can be “present but unseen” or “it seems to be behind me, or behind my images (or maybe it’s within)” or, it’s “an aspect of myself connected to the universe.” On one hand it is “the part of my consciousness that’s reflective,” and on the other, “it’s a comprehensive presence.” Another person poses the question, “Am I witnessing or is it my inner witness?” and proposes in a fashion reminiscent of the paradoxical drawings of artist M. C. Escher, that “I guess it is I who is witnessing, and my inner witnessing is witnessing me witnessing.”

In the middle phase of development, the movers express a need to let go of a certain level of awareness of the external witness in order for relationship with the mover’s own inner witness to flourish. The following observation underscores the mover’s much strengthened independence from the external witness:

[Releasing an interest in what the external witness is thinking] is very liberating and allows me to receive the support of the witness much more than when I am concerned about pleasing them. It’s really my own inner judgment that is suspended, and so I can be more of who I am.

The path of becoming “more of who I am” is a central one for some in Group B for whom there is beginning to be an active awareness of a distinction between “experience of the transient and experience of the intransient, unchanged by emotion or thought.” This difference between transient and intransient experience appears to be directly related to a growing awareness of and, at times, embodiment of what one respondent calls, “a resonant space within myself — the transcendent one.” Paradoxically, such moments may bring an experience of loss —

I am lost to all that exists. I am in its flowing current of movement. I dwell in the inner sanctity of my being. I internalize its reverence of my existence.

A loss of the transient comes with a finding of the intransient. For one respondent with close to twenty years of Authentic Movement experience, “What’s really new, increasingly, is the tolerance for not knowing the immensity of what IS and the awareness that the transcendent is within and without.” Another writes that when “the pathways that I need to follow are felt and when I am attentive and not threatened by this, I am moved.” The inner capacity for both surrender to the experience and the will to be attentive to the experience is essential as the work deepens. A growing openness to the

presence of a compassionate and strong inner witness is the key to this developing capacity.

For many in **Group C**, the inner witness of the mover is no longer described as a “being,” it has become a “place.” As one person writes, “It is a wise place that feels like home in a deep cellular way.” When the mover arrives in that place, there is a feeling of being “grounded, centered, connected, and present to internal and external experiences.” In this place, the respondents write, it is “still and quiet.” It is “the center of me knowing/ perceiving,” and there is “not a division or separation from inside and outside or otherness.”

And yet, there is nothing static or fixed in location about this “place” that arises when “the unity of both mover and witness creates the third: a resonate field of direct experience with what is.” It is a feeling, one respondent writes, “of being tethered between heaven and earth . . . as above, so below.” It is fluid and unfolding and includes awareness of “the flow of impulse and process — in both moving and stillness.” The experience, writes one respondent, “feels both like a choice and not a choice. This is a place, a paradox.” It seems to be a paradox because it is “not a concept, but a known experience of ‘being’ rather than ‘doing.’” One respondent writes,

These “it”s are really “I.” I am merely separating my inner witness from myself for purposes of description. My inner witness is me and experienced separate from me, *and* [itals. mine] there have been experiences in which I am united, in a unitive state, with my inner witness.

The tone of these observations reflects an open-minded inquiry. There is a commitment to clarity but little attachment to figuring it out. As one respondent writes, “the distinctions between Witness, self, and non-self are very subtle. I am still distinguishing: Who or what is moving? Who or what is witnessing? And what is beyond both?”

Two recurring words appear in many of the surveys from Group C: *love* and *trust*. The respondents write of their experience of the inner witness as “compassion” or “unconditional love,” or describe a “loving of the movement that I am doing or the process I am in.” Another respondent writes, “I love more and more all the different ways that a movement process can happen.” One person writes of her experience that the inner witness “shines the light through her love of all of me . . . my body, my feelings, my

images, and whatever comes through me.” Another person writes, “I love it [my inner witness] very deeply.”

Some respondents describe opening to more love as being “in direct relationship to a deepening sense of trust.” One respondent writes,

I have been practicing with NOT being an inner witness for myself, but just doing and being as I move. This has to do with deep, basic trust for me, that I don’t have to be always present, which can at times be almost vigilant.

Another respondent who has developed “more trust in the process over time,” also indicates that trust comes along with a letting go of “trying to get it all.” Instead the inner witnessing comes “from a lens that is wider and softer,” less focused on every detail, more sensitive to how “the qualitative experience along with the energetic experience speaks to me.” This same respondent writes that, “Sometimes when I am moving and have an outer witness, I let my own internal witness soften or even let it go, knowing it is there anyway.” Letting go of the “I” that is aware of the inner witness appears to happen without any diminishment of awareness. In such moments of trust or faith, the mover experiences the opening to a “unified field” of consciousness.

Hindrances to the External Witness Experience

Only one respondent in **Group A** did not have experience as an external witness (henceforth referred to as “the witness”). Among the other respondents there is a great range in what is described as the experience and focus of the witness role. One person finds that the inner witness is “more relaxed” as witness than as mover because “I don’t know the meaning of the other’s movement so I just enjoy and explore my own imaginings.” In contrast, another person writes, “Witnessing of other is actually an inner experience of myself. I am witnessing a mirror of myself in another.”

A number of respondents mention becoming aware of a particular qualitative experience of “being present” as a witness. One person notices that the “ability to offer this quality of witnessing to myself or another is hampered when my judgmental mind is acting out or when I’m not recognizing a trigger.” Other hindrances identified by Group A are, “insecurity,” “concern about doing it right,” “a strong emotional reaction to someone,” or when “I am projecting some denied part of myself onto the mover.” In general, Group A respondents are becoming aware of the challenges of the witness role.

One person remarks that it has become “harder to witness now and difficult not to make judgment on the other.” Another writes, “I’m not sure how to do that [witness] yet.”

For the beginning witness, the challenge of differentiating the experience of self and other can be heard in the following reflections from Group B and C respondents: “In the old days I would be seeking patterns and meaning”; “I would get involved with a story that I thought was unfolding before me”; and “I used to be excited about my own experience; it was, of course, more about me than the mover. ‘Aren’t I amazing?’” As one respondent writes, it’s hard to make “a clear borderline between the mover and myself.”

Many **Group B** respondents articulate a growing sense of appreciation for the role of the external witness and an acknowledgment of the responsibility it entails. “In the witness role,” writes one respondent, “there are more things to be aware of at once.” The witness is “paying attention to the effect the mover is having on me” and finding that “it is a body experience but I’m choosing not to move it (or move much), but sitting with it, containing it in a different way.” The witness is learning to consciously contain impulses that arise within, rather than following them into movement.

There is keener interest, among Group B respondents in supporting the mover, and there is a deepening awareness of the witness’s connection with the mover. As one respondent writes, “I have grown in the realization that the witnessing of another person is webbed profoundly within me”; and another observes that this “inner connection has a life of its own.”

In their comments about hindrances that can arise when witnessing a mover, mind-wandering and fatigue were frequently cited. As one respondent writes, “distracting thoughts that keep me from being fully attentive to the mover and my experience of the mover” can be an obstacle to being an effective witness. Distractions may also come from “harboring or recollecting a worry or anxiety or problem or my own story, and then my mind wants to ‘go to work on it.’” Another person writes, “Judgments can enter, but these seem less powerful than my getting lost in my thoughts or worries.”

One respondent suggests, “Projections can sometimes allow me to focus on a mover and overcome the tendency of my mind to wander. I can give over to letting the

mover's movement become some sort of story or drama and thus stay focused." Another respondent experiences a different sort of self-reflection: "I notice that the wish to think about the experience is a way of escaping for me, a way of trying to make meaning, rather than attending to and knowing direct experience in my body."

Another hindrance identified by Group B is "the self-imposed tension of wanting to be even more empathic with the mover, to meet their experience as fully as possible . . . so much responsibility." An expectation of what constitutes a "good witness" may actually create, as this respondent notes, a physical tension and increased separation from the mover. This, in the words of another respondent, is a kind of "self-absorption," when an inner feeling "arises and gets in the way of being able to be with someone. I then get outside of myself, wondering if I am being a good witness."

The experience of getting "outside of myself" is referred to by a number of Group B respondents. One person writes, "I literally experience, sometimes when using my vision, my verticality moving sagittally forward pulling me off my centeredness." It is interesting that being pulled outside of oneself can happen through either an internal stimulus or an external one. Being pulled out internally can happen when a kind of "busy mind" takes over, whereas being pulled out externally is generally attributed to the power of the visual sense. The phenomenon of losing one's center is described by one respondent as being "seduced by perception of another's experience." The dominance of the visual as a sensory channel tends to, in the words of one person, "take me often away from what is. [When this happens,] I have to really realign myself often." And another person observes that in becoming more centered, "my eyes soften in their sockets, my visual not taking me out." These respondents are learning to "hold the simultaneous experience of self and other," which requires "more stretching of my consciousness." As one respondent notes, "it is a very useful challenge, a great skill to develop in life."

The capacity to make choices about the hindrance is a development to which many in Group B allude. One respondent writes, "I can witness this and make a choice to come back to the mover" and adds that there is "compassion about this." If the hindrance is what "blocks out my awareness of my inner witness, who is attentive and nonjudgmental and present," it is the strengthened inner witness who helps find the way back to being present in the moment.

Another issue of concern to the practicing witness is the presence of unconsciousness. There are times when “the mover is going somewhere I have no idea where they are going. I don’t have any idea about this place.” Another respondent finds that, “sometimes I can’t self-witness as I am entering into something very unconscious” and gives the following example:

Yesterday I felt in a very sad and empty space. My inner hindrance was: do not stay there — it is not a good place — you can do better.

The respondent stays with the experience and finds that something else happens: “It turns into the opposite. *Stay there* — it is the best possible place — never can I do better.” By staying with the experience and tolerating the discomfort of feeling “sad and empty” and in “not a good place,” the experience changes, becomes “the opposite.” The negative voice of self-observation becomes a positive, encouraging voice. The respondent describes it as “the process of this unconscious place coming into consciousness.”

Many of the Group B responses about hindrances to witness consciousness point to an agent of awareness, distinct from the inner witness, who tends to be identified as “I.” For most respondents in this group, it is an awareness of the presence of an inner witness that gives rise to further thoughts about the activity or non-activity of the “I.” One person notes that “the distinction between me and my inner witness is much more subtle when I am witnessing. I am watching the mover and my inner witness is watching and sensing me watching.” The following comment from a Group B respondent reflects this subtle, sometimes confusing, and often elusive relationship with the inner witness:

As in meditation practice, my inner witness calls me back to one.
Or is it me who calls me back to one?

The distinction between an “I” who witnesses and an inner witness who also witnesses is evident in such responses as, “I generally have more mind chatter when I am witnessing, or perhaps more accurately, there is a witness to the witness who comments on how I am witnessing.” This ambiguity about functions of the mind in the act of perception and cognition is reflected in the following statement: “My mind intrudes more with thinking which can distract my inner witness.”

For the most part, the inner witness is experienced as an accessory to the activity of awareness; but the relationship between self and inner witness is unclear. There is also

some ambiguity between a thinking mind and a perceiving mind and a question about who or what is the ultimate authority. One respondent writes, “Who is telling me to relax? Who is trusting in me and in what I can do? Is it not my inner witness with some qualities of loving-kindness?” Another respondent observes that witnessing is different from ordinary, habitual perception and writes, “While witnessing I am also my inner witness. In ordinary everyday perceiving, “things” get easily mixed up.”

In general, the inner witness, as described by Group B respondents, is a trusted guide that tends to be “responsive, curious, moved, even excited by what I see or feel.” Compared to earlier years, the inner witness “feels more relaxed and more trusting that I can respond supportively” and “does not judge me so much as direct me to the discipline of witnessing.”

For many **Group C** respondents, the experience of the external witness is succinctly stated: “I sit in the presence of another.” The perceived complexity and confusion of the relationship between different aspects of awareness has subsided.

Being present to another, writes one respondent, means “inviting *my* presence” and in this, “my inner witness is crucial” as “I lovingly tend to my own inner parts.” It is, writes another, a “rich, challenging, profound, and ever-growing practice” whereby the witness learns that “as I lovingly see myself, I grow toward lovingly seeing another.”

For Group C, the distinction between different aspects of the perceiving and the cognitive mind can be refined into a single statement: “I am aware of the inner witness as I witness others.” In this place, a witness is likely to “feel more grounded and present,” whereas when not in this place, “I feel distracted.”

When such distractions are present, “it often helps to move, if possible” writes one respondent. Another writes that the movement is a “practice for myself to get my inner witness aligned so that when it is my turn to witness, I am here from a more embodied way, my inner witness aligned and fuller in myself.”

Alternatively, a distraction “can be noted and attended to later, although sometimes just noting that I am distracted can quiet things down, for example, the inner critic.” Here again, a double loop of awareness is hinted at. It is an experience of being a witness to the witnessing. If, in the moment of becoming aware of an inner critic, the

awareness arises as a compassionate and non-judgmental presence, the inner critic is likely to disappear or be transformed. One respondent describes it as a process of being able to “soften the inner lens and still be able to track both the mover and my own experience at the same time.” Many in Group C write that hindrances tend to apply equally to witnessing another person and to witnessing oneself.

Many respondents write that they consider the distracting thoughts and uncomfortable feelings to be part of the witness experience and not a hindrance per se. As one person writes, “I might find that I am judging someone, but what I am really feeling is boredom or distraction or confusion.” Such a realization can let

me in on the deeper issue of knowing there is something here, but I cannot see it or it is obscured at the present time. This is when I need to listen intently, be patient, allowing myself to sit with this discomfort.

The hindrance, once it becomes conscious can then be the doorway to deeper attentiveness. This example suggests that the act of witnessing another leads to inner experience that prompts self-witnessing, which then leads to a greater attentiveness and presence to witness the other.

Another respondent writes of a different kind of hindrance: “I am more intuitive in nature and can jump to conclusions too fast to satisfy or deal with my fears of not knowing.” As a result, writes this same respondent, “I can become impatient and distrusting of what I know.” This question of knowing and ultimately expressing “what I know” is raised by a number of Group C respondents. Again there is evidence of a double awareness and an entwined relationship between the “I” who knows and the “I” who can articulate that knowledge. For example, as one respondent writes, “It is not always easy to put into language what I know, and I can stumble to find the real words to translate my experience so that it stays in relationship to my self and others.” Learning how to take the knowledge of direct experience into speech and action is an important leading edge for advanced practitioners of Authentic Movement.

Overview of Findings

My assessment of the survey data suggests that in the first developmental phase of Authentic Movement, the mover is dependent on the external witness to provide an open and accepting environment in which to learn about his or her own relationship to impulse

and projection and to discover the difference between an inner critic and a less judgmental inner voice. Consciousness of the distinction between inner judgment and inner acceptance gives rise to awareness of an inner witness that serves as an attentive and supportive presence to the mover.

For those who are exploring the role of external witness in the first phase of development, it is hard to discern the “border between self and other,” so there is justifiable caution about taking on the responsibility of being a witness. Most practitioners do so in the context of teacher-led or peer groups.

In the second phase of development, the mover is primarily focused on relationship with his or her own inner witness, often experienced as a being-like presence. As a result, the mover is more independent of the witness, though at the same time more appreciative of the quality of the witness presence. The inner witness continues to be attentive to emerging experience, although the relationship between aspects of awareness becomes more complicated. At times, there is an awareness of “becoming aware of the process of the inner witness”; and questions are raised, such as “Who is witnessing whom?”

Some practitioners are aware of opening to the difference between personal or transient content and transpersonal or intransient experiences. A dynamic relationship between will and surrender is at play for both movers and witnesses in this middle phase of development.

A third developmental phase becomes visible through the survey responses from those who have practiced Authentic Movement for over twenty years: The mover’s experience of the witness becomes more collaborative, and, at times, the concept of relationship falls away as the experience becomes one of a unitive state. The advanced mover is learning to trust letting go of the “I” who is aware of the inner witness and opening to awareness of the inner witness as loving compassion. The witness, by attending compassionately to what arises within his or her self-experience, can offer an attentive presence to the mover.

For many mature practitioners, the inner witness is “more solid” and “has grown more accessible.” It is the inner witness that “inspires me to be non-judgmental and

compassionate in both directions” [inwardly and outwardly], writes one respondent. There is an “easier flow between self and other,” writes another. One person speculates that “the inner witness and the external witness become one over time” and then adds, in parentheses, “I don’t know, this is a question.” Other respondents refer to a “cross-over, meaning a more unitive state between mover and witness,” describing it as “a place of dual awareness (in and out together).” The responses from Group C suggest that when the external witness experiences a unitive state with her own inner witness, the unitive state is inclusive of her perception of the mover; so there is no separation between awareness of self and awareness of other.

One Group C survey respondent describes the Authentic Movement developmental process as a spiral that continues to unfold with ongoing practice. Most of the others in this same group write that the relational practice of moving and witnessing is a discipline that supports them in life. Advanced practitioners recognize the impact of an inner witness that is “stronger because it comes with me more into my life.”

The inner witness, an aspect of awareness that first becomes known in contrast to an inner judge or critic, develops in relation to a warm and accepting external witness. As the inner witness becomes an internalized presence, relationship with one’s own self-awareness becomes a focus. With practice and over time, a self-identified awareness of the activity of the inner witness falls away and opens to experiences of direct intuitive knowing. For both mover and witness such an experience appears as grace and an opportunity for, as Adler calls it, *offering*, in the form of either creative expression or self-presence.

The arc of a developing witness consciousness within an individual committed to the discipline of Authentic Movement can be seen as follows:

1. Unconscious of relationship.
2. Conscious of relationship.
3. Conscious of the consciousness sustaining and unifying all relationship.

3.2 The Group Study

Working intensively with a small group over a short period of time provides an opportunity to look at phenomena generated directly from Authentic Movement experience and to see the mover/witness relationship in action. Based on the survey results, I expected that all of the participating movers in the group study would exhibit characteristics identified in my assessment of the survey data as “Group A” (less than ten years of Authentic Movement experience).

This to some extent proves true, though not to the degree that I imagined it would. Each of the movers, in her own way, expresses certain aspects of Group A phenomena, although not consistently enough to conclude that the group study affirms the results of the survey. In fact the data generated in the group demonstrates the importance of looking at each Authentic Movement practitioner as a distinct and singular person. Pooling the survey responses in order to discern general developmental trends in witness consciousness is useful and conclusive for understanding human awareness in a relational model, but the group study data affirms the necessity of seeing each individual on his or her own unique path of development.

Even though all of the movers have practiced Authentic Movement for six years or less, placing them in the early-to-central range of Group A experience, various factors distinguish each of them in ways that defy systematic analysis. The design of the group study does not specifically account for age difference or range-of-life experience or any other external variables among the participants. My interest is in the phenomenon of witness consciousness, so I focus on the inner experience of the four movers and two witnesses as they transition from what Adler has identified as the individual body practice to collective body practice.

Impact of the Study’s Design

I find inconclusive evidence that the study design produced a developmental change in the mover’s relationship to the external witness. In their journal writing, two of the movers do not mention the witness at all during the entire series. One mover refers to the witnesses only twice, once in Session Four and then again in Session Six. Only one

mover articulates an actively engaged awareness of the witness throughout the six sessions.

In terms of the movers' responses to the structure of the study, there is minimal reference to other movers (a total of three references) in the first two sessions. An awareness of other movers is dramatically more evident (eighteen references) in Sessions Three and Four, the two sessions designed to reflect the transition to the collective body work. In Session Four, each of the movers notes that her awareness of the other movers had a significant impact on her own experience. An active inner witness, aware of the other movers, typifies the transition to collective body work; however, there is a sharp decline in the number of references to other movers in Sessions Five and Six (six references). This leads me to believe that the increase in references to others displayed in Sessions Three and Four is inflated due to the change in design in and of itself. It does not necessarily reflect what is clearly evident in the survey data: the growing importance of relationship to other movers in the work of the collective body.

The dramatically decreasing number of references to other movers in Sessions Five and Six suggests that, for the most part, the movers are focused on their own process, relatively independent of the other movers. This is not to say that the presence of the other movers is not valued and integral to each individual's experience. Even the one mover who expresses dismay and, in her movement, defiance about the changes built into the design of the group study notes that the experience was valuable. Her strong reaction to leaving the more intimate structure of the first two sessions points again to the importance of the primary relationship of the individual mover to one trusted witness. Development is founded on this relationship.

When I designed the study, I expected to see an emphasis on the interpersonal relationship between mover and witness and to discover new insights concerning the transition from individual to collective experience. I did not realize the extent to which the written journal data would provide a window into the cognitive process of both mover and witness. The data, unexpectedly, leads me to a new understanding of intrapersonal relationship, that is, the individual's relationship to consciousness of her own experience.

Four Phenomenological Themes

I concentrate my phenomenological research on the data that emerge from the journal writing because this is the linguistic material closest to and derived from the actual subjective experience of the movers and witnesses in the movement session. I see a number of clustered themes that appear consistently in the data from all of the group study participants. Aspects of these themes would, incidentally, be experientially familiar to most practitioners of the discipline of Authentic Movement. The variables of each individual's inner experience can be discerned in answer to the questions that arise in relation to the following phenomenological themes that appear in the journal writing of the participants:

1. Modes of Awareness

- How is the experience registered through awareness of physical body, sensation, emotive feeling, and/or thought?

2. Use of Pronouns

- Does the mover or witness identify the subject of a statement?
- When is "I" the subject?
- Is there significance in the presence or absence of the "I"?

3. Agency of Movement

- How is agency of movement expressed?
- What is the qualitative difference between the following statements?
I lift my arm; arm rises up; arm wants to rise up; arm is drawn upward.

4. Relationship

- How is relationship experienced between self and:
 - a.** self?
 - b.** witness (or movers)?
 - c.** other movers (or other witness)?
 - d.** non-present others?

Using the data from the journals, I assess my findings in each of the preceding four themes in order to discern a clearer picture of the activity of each person's inner witness, first for the mover and then for the witness. The two themes, use of pronouns and agency, are separate phenomena; but they almost always appear in conjunction with each other. In my assessment of the data, I discuss these two themes together.

The Mover

Modes of Awareness

For all of the movers, a movement impulse appears to arise in relation to thought; and/or proprioceptive, kinesthetic, or other sensation; and/or emotive feeling. In the writing we don't see the impulse directly; we see the result of it as remembered by the mover in the process of writing. In Authentic Movement the writing is, in some ways, a translation of experience that arose initially from the intention to consciously follow internal impulse as it expresses through the physical body. As such, it is a voice of the inner witness.

For the mover and the external witness, perception of the activity of the physical body is the ground of shared experience. It is the primary mode of awareness. For the movers, this awareness is obtained by tactile-kinesthetic sensing; whereas for the witnesses, it comes primarily through the visual sense. Both mover and witness can accurately write: *Left hand rises to ceiling*. In this example the left hand and the ceiling are indicators of the physical world. While the word *rises* expresses a physical action, it hints at a subjective, sensory experience. Identifying the activity of the physical body without introducing language associated with sensation can be challenging. Obviously some sense-based, primarily tactile-kinesthetic-proprioceptive awareness is necessary in order for the mover to know what her body is doing physically. Therefore, the data that best *represent* the physical are those that indicate what the physical body is doing in a way that is recognizable to both mover (from an inner perspective) and witness (from an outer perspective).

The following are examples of modes of awareness that are experienced by the mover but are not physically visible to the external eye of the witness:

- *Sensation* indicates an inner sentient experience and presupposes physical phenomena, for example: *My hands slip. The pressure in my shoulders and head is too great.*
- *Emotion* typically indicates an affective response to the sensation, for example: *Sound of my foot against the wall makes me self-conscious.*
- *Thought* as a mode of awareness often becomes apparent in the form of reflective responses to sensation and/or emotion, for example: *I guess I don't want to face what I may be really feeling about this.*

Thought as a Mode of Awareness Often thought appears in the journal writing when the mover is in dialogue with herself. For example, a mover writes, "What makes me move away?" Dialogue, which can be considered a central feature of analytic, associative, or

discursive thinking, also appears in the form of interpreting, pondering, doubting, noticing, comparing, or contrasting. In general the mover's journal writing takes the tone of the writer talking to herself.

While the data itself, in the form of journal writing, is created through the medium of thought and language, it is possible to "see through" the language to glimpse the sentient and emotive nature of the mover's experience. Likewise, it is possible to discern when language is being used to express an experience or a way of knowing that is not physical, sensory, or emotional. In this regard, thought as a mode of awareness becomes visible as an activity of consciousness, quite distinct from sense-based or emotion-based awareness. As stated previously, for the purposes of this thesis, I distinguish between two kinds of thinking as cognitive process: One is the discursive or analytic/associative way of knowing that is meant by the conventional use of the word *thinking*. The other is non-discursive thought, which, as becomes evident in my findings, appears to be self-organizing and, at times, akin to perception. In my assessment of the group study data, the activity of thought can be seen to manifest in many different ways.

On one hand, discursive thought appears as a mode of self-awareness in and of itself, as in the following: *Just before the bell, I realized I was digesting the layers making my way back to myself*. The act of realizing is, in this case, the primary mode of awareness and is obviously conscious. On the other hand, the *activity* of thinking can be considered as an organizing principle that integrates the modes of awareness. Thought, in its integrative and non-discursive function, organizes experience in the following sentence: *I move up to wall ahead of me and push against it – move around like a sea snake*. In this sentence, movement, sensory perception, and imagination are seamlessly woven together in a pre-reflexive and intuitive manner. For the movers, the act of thinking as a cognitive process is likely to be unconscious, even though the experience being thought about is obviously conscious.

Image-making as a Function of Thought In my assessment of the data, I find that metaphoric imagery stands out as a unique kind of cognitive experience. In the earlier example of the sentence in which the mover "moves around like a sea snake," we see the faculty of thought creating a metaphor.

In the writing, imagery is often used to express meaning. For example, one mover in Session One writes, “I like the sound, a scratching like a mouse making a nest.” The sensation is the sound of scratching, but the image of a mouse making a nest, is an act of imagination on the part of the mover. The image creates metaphoric meaning of her experience of sensation.

While this particular image of a mouse is expressed after the fact in the writing, it is safe to assume that it occurred to the mover during the movement rather than in the process of writing because the image is clearly and, as seen below, repeatedly integrated with the ongoing description of the mover’s physical activity. After writing that her toes are warmed by her “cupped hands,” the mover again makes a metaphoric connection: “The mouse is making a shelter to warm itself — the toes.” Then later, in a seemingly unrelated sequence of movement, the mover makes contact with a pillow on the floor and writes, “Leg finds pillow — toes play with it. I think of the mouse. A plastic crinkle sound as toes play with puffy pillow.” Here the image of the mouse is re-evoked through the tactile contact, the feeling of toes playing and the “plastic crinkle” sound.

Repetition of an image or a word throughout the writing of a single session is not unusual. In fact, once an image appears, it frequently becomes a recurring motif as the movement experience continues. Another mover’s use of the word *spinning* in Session Two is an example of this. What begins as a full-bodied kinesthetic experience that the mover identifies as spinning takes on meaning when the motion transforms into a spinning gesture of her arms. Her awareness of the gesture leads to an insight about her relationship to others. She discovers, “I am spinning them, they are not spinning me.” Near the end of the movement, “when the spinning is done,” the mover sees herself as “a circus person spinning plates” and asks, “How many plates can I keep in the air?” In this example the word *spinning* undergoes transformation as the movement experience unfolds. In this way, it seems that words — language itself — follows a kind of movement.

Another mover remembers peeking her eyes open and finding herself directly in front of the witness. She writes, “I am mortified and quickly turn myself and travel to the corner of the room where I thought I was. Phew!” She then describes a movement in which her hands, in prayer position, are like the “peak” of a roof, leading to an awareness

of the archetypal nature of the gesture. She finds this connection and insight, “tremendously comforting.” In this example, the unconscious sequencing of the mover’s experience and observations result in a surprising play between language (i.e., peek and peak), image, and movement, suggesting that a form of self-organization is at work, unfolding through self-experience.

Somato-Imaginal Process and Language In looking for other instances where imagery serves to create meaning for the mover, I find that images are most often identified as arising from some combination of the kinesthetic, sensate, or emotional nature of the movement experience. For all four movers, the articulation and engagement of image through the movement process acts as a bridge to language that can ultimately serve self-knowledge.

I refer to this process and engagement of movement and image as somato-imaginal because of the degree to which production of the image is indebted to awareness of the body. Don Hanlon Johnson’s understanding of the field of somatic studies also inspires my use of this phrase. Johnson notes the recovery of the term, *somatic*, from its use by the Christian mystics. In the New Testament, “Paul distinguishes between the Greek word *sarx*, which has the sense of a “hunk of meat,” from *soma*, which Paul used to designate the luminous body transformed by faith” (Johnson, p. xv).

As already made evident, the data from the movers in the group study shows a significant connection among awareness of the moving body, imagery, and the formation of meaning and language. In one instance, in the data from the journal writing, an image comes to a mover as a thought *prior* to the movement. The mover writes, “I just want to be ROUND.” Here the movement impulse arises as an idea that is seeking manifestation through movement. The mover writes, “I search for this roundness throughout my movement.” At one point she finds, “I move my arms up and over and back and up and over as I am curled down onto my knees, my head on the floor.” She then realizes that by doing this movement, “I feel round.”

It is worth noting that after the mover finds roundness as a physical and sensory experience, she is able to make metaphoric connections (her belly, the moon) that are germane to her life. This is the same mover who is “drawn to” the hands in prayer

position. In both cases, a word (round/peek) occurs to the mover and then, through movement, connects to images that the mover does not consciously generate. The data points to a lively relationship between physical experience and the formation of language. It's as if language seeks to be known through the physical body and, alternatively, awareness of physical movement sometimes inspires an imagistic use of language that in turn makes new awareness and insights possible.

In another example, one mover writes, “staying rooted to my spot the whole session, I didn't want to move.” In fact, she stands motionless the whole session. Later, in her journal, she records the inner movement of her changing modes of awareness. She is aware of her physical position, sensations, and feelings of defiance. Eventually she becomes aware of the “solidity of my two legs like a tree trunk.” She imagines herself “like a tree in a winter landscape — my breathing the wind.” The image proves to be important as a way to stay with the inner experience that is unfolding within her. She writes, “I hold onto the image of a lone tree.” The image helps strengthen the mover's sense of self in the midst of questions and strong feelings about her place in the group. At the end of the writing, she reflects on the experience: “In the beginning I wondered if I could do it. What would the witnesses think with so little movement? But by the end I had moved through something inside and felt no longer defiant.” For this mover, the changes from one mode of awareness to another happen internally in the absence of apparent physical movement.

By tracking the modes of awareness through the data, it is possible to see how an awareness of sensation and emotion often leads to the production of images. Metaphoric imagery serves the mover by making meaning of and, perhaps, further shaping the movement experience.

Movement Becomes Dance Another change that is evident over time relates to the movers' awareness of the physical body in the act of movement. In the first few sessions, the movers generally refer to discrete gestures or separate parts of the body, whereas by Sessions Five and Six, the movers describe more full-bodied movement and seem to participate more fully in their kinesthetic experience of the movement. For example, in Session Four, a mover writes, “I am moving through space, covering ground, bound to touch other movers.”

This same mover in Session Six writes, “I am a hula dancer in a come-hither dance. I am a Maypole dancer. I touch another with my back, we roll our backs and dance.” Another mover describes a sequence of circling arm and torso movements. She experiences herself “almost in dance, movement freeing somewhat, but exposed.” Both of these movers allude to a change in their awareness of movement. It is becoming dance. For one mover the experience is a celebration. For the other, her experience creates discomfort. The question of when and why movement becomes dance, or at least is perceived by the mover (and/or witness) as dance, is thought-provoking, as is the question of when and why a mover would choose the equally valid impulse of embracing or rejecting a change in her self-experience of movement becoming dance.

Use of Pronouns and Agency of Movement

The example of the mover who writes “staying rooted to my spot” provides an interesting view of agency and the use of “I.” In her writing, the absence of “I” does not negate the self-agency of the experience but instead puts greater emphasis on the activity itself. In other words, the “I” is inferred but is not identified with the act of “staying rooted,” which is now the subject with its own sense of agency. In this case, the phenomenon of stillness is experienced as the agent of movement. By following the impulse to refrain from moving physically, the mover allows awareness to move through her, so that ultimately she has “moved through something” and feels “no longer defiant.” An awareness of the difference between an experience of “*I move* through something” and one of “*something moves* through me” is an important phenomenon that also appears in the writing of the witnesses and the meta-witness.

Who or What Is Doing the Movement? In the following example, one mover expresses a feeling of ambiguity in relation to her awareness of agency. She writes, “Not sure what I’m doing holding head but not focused.” The mover, as “I,” is identified as holding her head at the same time that an unidentified sense of self is “not sure why.” The implication is of an awareness that *I am doing something but I am not consciously “doing it” or making it happen.* Here, there is evidence of an unconscious motive that exhibits agency of movement.

The self, whether identified as “I” or not, often expresses agency through an awareness of likes and dislikes in the form of such feelings as longing, wanting, searching, or reacting, as well as through thinking in the form of mental imaging and language. Self-agency of movement does not seem to be exhibited through awareness of sensation. Awareness of sensation, for the movers, is a more receptive mode of being that may lead to a feeling or thought that can in turn be an impulse to move but is not in itself an agent of movement.

While sometimes the mover identifies herself as agent of the movement, there are other times in the writing where the physical body or parts of the body are identified as the agent. One mover, aware of her arms moving “of their own volition,” describes them as “free agents.” Frequently, when parts of the body are identified as initiating movement, they are said to “want” or “need” to do a particular movement or have a particular experience. A mover even writes, “My legs demand to be kept aloft.” Such expressions of desire on the part of the physical body suggest a greater sense of agency ascribed to the body part and less agency on the part of the perceiving self.

Unidentified Agency There also appears to be a difference between the written experience of an active “I” moving, as in “I reach” and a passive “I,” as in “I am pulled down.” In such examples, something unnamed is pulling the mover down. What are the forces that create movement that is not identified as “I” initiated? How is it different from movement that is self-consciously self-initiated?

In another example a mover makes contact with “The Door” and finds that “it holds my head. Pressure feels good.” She then asks, “What makes me move away?” In this example, the mover ascribes agency to the door and then infers that an unperceived impulse has moved her away from the contact with the door. There is a gap between her awareness of being held by the door and of having moved away from it. Another time a mover writes, “Drawn to wall. Draw on it” as if something outside of her is calling her attention (drawn). She meets it with her own self-directed activity (draw on it).

A recurring use of words like *held* or *hold* and *drawn* implies that some unnamed force or presence is active in a way that the mover as “I” does not control or make

happen. Once the mover expresses an awareness of being moved, held, or drawn in this way, there is often, though not always, a reflective response.

Physical Body, Energy Body One mover, in the first three sessions, consistently experiences being moved by a force that she names *energy*. It “lets” her travel or “gives” her strength. In Session Four there is no mention of energy. Agency is attributed to her hands and arms until the moment she becomes aware of the rhythm of other movers who “draw me into another pace.” The mover now identifies *herself* as the agent of movement. She writes, “I do some kind of swaying movement side to side”; and by the end she feels “like a satisfied shape.”

In Session Five, for the first time, she attributes the energy to herself when she writes, “Am cautious of others, not wanting to bump into them with *my* [emphasis mine] frenetic energy.” Her words, “I turn / I stretch / I reach to the sky / I go down to the floor / I am up again and wish there was more room to run around,” also imply that she experiences herself as agent of her movement.

By the end of the movement she is aware that “all my energy has been distilled down to my big toes feeling the door.” Here, a process of *distillation* has occurred that was not consciously or directly activated by the mover herself and yet brings awareness of contact between energy of toes and the physical presence of the door. Even though the mover is aware of herself as an agent of the movement experience, there is a hint here of a parallel source of agency that is hidden from the mover’s conscious awareness until she experiences the sensation of contact.

In Session Six, the mover is consistently aware of both her body and the energy that moves through and around her. In fact, she is aware of a kind of dual agency. She experiences herself, as “I,” actively participating in the movement while at the same time she feels “drawn into the energy of a giant soap bubble” (the empty space of the circle). By the end, she writes, “I am turning my body and the space around me into shapes turned by a lathe.” Her last words in the journal are: “I am solid and ethereal. It feels good.” She is aware of herself as both a physical body and an energy or etheric body. In language, she conveys this double nature, paradoxically, as both herself and “a lathe” turning the same shapes at the same time.

For this mover, the strongest evidence of self-development appears through her changing perception of agency and self-relationship to physical and energetic experience.

Relationship

The phenomenon of relationship is at the very heart of Authentic Movement. In the data from the journal writing of the movers, however, the phenomenon of relationship is mostly focused on relationship of the mover to her inner witness. As mentioned previously, only one mover makes reference to an external witness throughout the six sessions. Nonetheless, there are places where the data from both mover and witness overlap. Since the physical body in space, as perceived externally by the witness and internally by the mover, is the foundation for exploring relationship between mover and witness, I look at experiences that can be identified as shared, and named as such in the journals, by both mover and witness.

In the following example from Session Two, both mover and witness reference the physical activity of the mover standing with arms outstretched. The mover writes, “I hold C., then the hospital, then the whole world . . . all the way to the hospital — light sending light — all the way between my arms.” The witness writes, “Arms lifted and extended make me see another thing. I see this mover in relationship to an unknown, an unseen presence.”

As the movement continues, the witness finds herself “deeply touched by this relating to an unseen something.” In spite of her own strong inner response to the movement, she consistently allows herself to stay with the “not knowing” of what the mover is experiencing. Again and again, the witness resists giving name or image to what she is seeing. There is a quality of spaciousness here due to the witness’s absence of projection or interpretation of what she perceives. She is staying in relationship to her own feelings and to the “unfolding” of the mover’s experience. The mover, however, writes of “holding” a friend, holding the world, and then *seeing* not only the earth but the universe. She experiences her movement in relation to people and images that are not directly present. In her writing, she maintains a first-person perspective until the last line: “But for now the glorious sun is shining down and bringing life.” The mover’s experience, as recorded in her journal, begins and ends with the activity of light.

Light in the Room Each time the sun or light is mentioned in the data, it is in a moment referenced by both a mover and a witness. In Session Three, Mover 4 writes that she feels like a tree “heliotropic to the light in the room.” At the same time, Witness 1 sees her standing, “her whole body rotating.”

In Session Six, Witness 2 writes, “See you by the wall, standing.” Mover 2 writes, “I started standing—leaning against the wall feeling the light on my face as though it were the sun — I believed for a split moment that it was the sun! It felt nourishing.”

Later, Witness 2 writes about seeing this same mover by the wall “sitting, bent over, hair over your face, you part and comb it with your fingers.” In her journal, the mover writes, ““I move to my hair and am in touch with my grief.” The witness continues, “I think seaweed. I see you on the beach, parting wet hair. I see sunlight drying it, sunlight everywhere, tropical.”

Mover 2 then writes of leaving the “solidness of the wall” to move toward “warmth and cushion softness.” She writes, “I am seeking warmth.” The bell rings, to mark the end of the session; and she finds, to her surprise, “I look up for contact and receive another kind of warmth. Smiles.” Here, more consciously in relationship, the mover experiences the gaze and smiles of the witness as the warmth she has been seeking.

For another mover in Session Six, relationship with the witnesses is experienced as “too light.” She feels, “Agh . . . my face is too exposed to witnesses — it’s too light — my sweater-covered arms hug over my face — darkness feels better and warm on my face.” For this mover, the experience of darkness and *not* being seen brings a kind of alternative warmth to the over-exposed light she experiences as the witness’s gaze.

These experiences of sun, warmth, and light in the mover/witness relationship are compelling. In my own contemplative inquiry I came to experience a compassionate inner witness as “love dancing sun.”

The Mover’s Emerging Self

For all four movers, the act of closing eyes and choosing to follow inner impulse activates an engagement of the inner witness. It appears that the inner witness observes the fact of movement and any accompanying sensations, emotions, and/or thoughts. Two

kinds of thought are especially evident in the data: One is reflective or associative thought, and the other is imaginative thought. The production of imagery can lead the mover to make metaphoric meaning of her experience. The resulting images have a life of movement that often brings the mover to a new experience of self-awareness.

Sometimes the mover perceives a non-self-initiated agency of movement. In the mover's journal account of this phenomenon of awareness, the pronoun "I" is not present. An appearance and disappearance of the pronoun "I" appears as a pattern for all four movers over the course of the sessions. The exact nature of the pattern is idiosyncratic, but for each mover it contributes to an emergent sense of self.

The picture that appears through the data is that the emergent self is the invisible, driving force behind the unfolding experience of the mover in Authentic Movement. The experience of the witnesses as recorded in their journals adds further depth to our view of the individual's unfolding awareness of an emerging sense of self.

The Witness

In my assessment of how modes of awareness, use of pronouns, agency, and relationship contribute to an understanding of cognitive development in the witness, I refer to Witnesses 1 and 2 separately in order to follow changes in their experience over the six sessions.

Modes of Awareness

The witnesses exhibit an empathic longing to know the experience of the mover through their own inner experience. One witness writes, "I want to try this movement and share in it." In their journal writing of the first two sessions, both witnesses focus their attention on the physical activity and presence of the movers. Both witnesses express a desire to know what the movement "feels like" and do so through their own inner experience of sensation and emotion. For Witness 1, visual perception of the mover often includes an awareness of the witness's own internal sensations. In fact, at times, the witness actually experiences a proprioceptive sensation of what she sees the mover doing as when she writes, "I'm aware of times when she leans and rolls into the floor, feel her surrender to gravity." It appears that for this witness, visual perception is amplified by proprioceptive sensation. At times these sensations prompt emotional response in the witness. For

Witness 2, awareness of emotion directly relates to what she sees in the movement, and there is very little reference to her own inner sensation. She sees a mover lying face down on the floor; her hands turn slowly over and back again in a repetitive fashion that reminds the witness of “a small leaf or plant in a tide.” The witness feels “deeply moved” as she sees this and writes. “I think of the word ‘surrender.’ I feel tender, safe, relaxed.”

An unfolding relationship between awareness of inner experience and awareness of outer perception over the course of the six sessions is evident in the data from the witnesses. The picture of this unfolding begins, for both, with a feeling of surrender and, intriguingly, a perception of the invisible.

Perceiving the Invisible In Session One, Witness 2 becomes aware of a mover’s shoulders and head as a darkish round shape “reflected on the shiny floor.” In the reflection, the witness sees “the sudden high detail and lightness of her hands reflected against the darker, vague shape.” This contrast of light and dark leads to an awareness of the mover’s fingers tapping the floor “near her toes, reaching out slightly around her feet making a small sound, nearly unheard or unnoticed.” Near the end of the session the witness sees the other mover bending forward, her hair hanging down. The witness writes, “Her hands rise up, barely touching the very tip of her longest hairs as if they are holding something invisible.”

In Session Two, Witness 1 refers to seeing a mover in relationship to something the witness calls “an unseen presence.” Seven times, the witness makes reference to “the unseen thing.” She writes, “Arms lift and extend again. She is staying in this position. I wait to see what will unfold. Slowly, slowly comes the unfolding.”

A phenomenon of perception — perceiving “the unseen” or “unheard” — unfolds uniquely for each witness over the six sessions. The inner witness of each is developing the capacity to perceive in ways distinct from the traditional, physical senses. Sensation and emotion, as modes of awareness, are experienced as inner processes in relation to the witnesses’ external perception of the mover(s).

Emergence of the Unseen Witness 1 displays patience as she “waits” for the unfolding. She also writes, “I am touched by [the mover’s] patience and willingness to stay in

relation to the presence.” Witness 1 experiences this as “a strengthening in me” but also wonders, “Is this all projection?”

Perhaps to test if her experience *is* projection, the witness writes, “I’m aware of directing my own attention to my body sensation rather than images and story. My body sensation ends up giving rise to a kind of story.” This observation raises an interesting question: Does sensation that gives rise to “a kind of story” belong to the body, or is it a process that arises through the direction of “my own attention” to sensation?

The witness notes when she associates an image with what she sees and when she doesn’t. In Session Two, she is “drawn to” a mover’s hands, seeing them “high over her head, vertical with long fingers,” and writes that “I see no images, just a mysterious something between her hands, which she follows.” Again, the witness is aware of an urge in herself to “join in” and do what the mover is doing. This time she writes, “All that is happening in my body anyway.”

By the last session, Witness 1 is clearly articulating a new way of seeing. She is practicing the discipline of tracking her own experience of sensation and emotion and resisting any impulse to attach projected stories or interpretive images to what she perceives. She discovers that she can be present to all that is happening, even though she can’t follow every detail. She realizes, in the act of writing, that “I can only pause now, as I did at one moment during the witnessing, and know that I feel an overall tender emotion.”

In the moment of pausing comes a new awareness. It is something the witness feels “just behind my eyes and in my solar plexus.” Through this awareness, that she experiences as sensation in particular areas of her body, she writes, “I am awake to the sacred.” Not only does she feel “an overall tender emotion,” she writes that she *knows* that she feels it. What is originally perceived externally as “the unseen” becomes the witness’s own capacity to be “awake to the sacred.” Her awareness of sensation/emotion is becoming one of empathic presence.

The Heart-Eye Witness 2, who, in the first session, is aware of the “nearly unheard” sound, hears a mover in Session Two breathing deeply. The witness becomes aware of “a kind of sound encasement of her movement, a kind of blessing somehow.” The witness

feels herself almost “entranced, mesmerized by the sound of breath.” She consciously remembers to move her attention to the other mover because otherwise “I could kind of ‘fall into it’ if I allowed myself. There is such a sense of depth and beauty here for me.”

As noted previously, the word *surrender* comes to the witness as she sees the other mover’s hand turn back and forth on the floor. She reflects on her own sense of feeling “safe, relaxed, and comfortable here as a sharing witness and also within myself.” Then she writes, “This feels inarticulate, and I find it hard to find words.” She expresses both a sense of comfort and ease about witnessing and an awareness of the difficulty in seeing and in finding words to speak or write of her experience as a witness. Later she writes,

I feel drawn to write very little of the details. I am mostly interested in my sense of awe and relief. I don’t feel the necessity to record details and trust my sensate memory to activate when it comes time to speak. This feels like a more enlightened relationship to teaching and witnessing.

Here, the witness is gaining confidence in a new way of knowing through the “feeling” of her experience. She is unsure of how to express the knowing as verbal language but is willing to trust her own capacities to respond and be of service to the mover during the verbal processing time.

In Session Four, the witness observes that as “I write I see the movers clearly / I hold them as images in eyes as well as heart.” The act of writing helps to facilitate the process of understanding this new way of witnessing. She writes: “There seems to be an eye in the heart / Heart-Eye / Heart-eye sees some essence without attachment of words.” The witness also discovers that there is still “an eye which sees the details, specifics — not separate from heart-eye but somehow distinct.”

She wants to see “not so much with love as through love. Though I write ‘through,’ I am thinking of it as a veil lifted. Seeing without the veil.” She experiences relief when seeing “with heart-eye of not-thinking, non-verbal, non-analytical space. It is “alert without effort,” a “dropping-in or dropping down . . . I do not see ahead . . . I don’t see the past either.” She calls it a “see into seeing.” It has a kind of transparency: “see through / see clear / see nothing” — which raises, for Witness 2, the question, “How do words arise from this?” She wrestles with this question: “A dog howling has some meaning but no words. I imagine howling instead of speaking . . . and where does this

lead? What brings this mostly unformed into form? Some kind of willing and necessity — what is that?”

The witness is discovering that her perception of the movers has become intimately woven with emotive feeling. She even names a new sense organ that is now active: “the heart-eye.” For both witnesses, sensory perception and emotion, as modes of awareness, are changing and becoming ways of knowing that extend beyond their perception of the physical presence of the movers. Awareness of sensation and emotion, now heightened in the witnesses’ experience, also offers self-knowledge and greater awareness of the processes of perception. Witness 2’s question about what brings the “unformed into form” can now be addressed by the themes of pronoun use and agency.

Use of Pronouns and Agency of Movement

As with the movers, the phenomena of pronoun use and experience of agency provide evidence of how, and to whom or what, the witness is in relationship. We see, in Session Four, Witness 2 coming into relationship with her own capacities to perceive. She also seeks to know how to articulate knowledge of that perception.

As she becomes aware of perceiving with the “heart-eye,” perception itself demonstrates agency: It is “alert without effort” and has “a kind of transparency.” If the witness as “I” is no longer the agent of perception, to echo Witness 2’s question, “What brings the mostly unformed into form?” Who or what creates language and meaning when the witness’s experience of perception is no longer contained within the subject/object relationship of mover and witness?

The data reveals that a change in the use of pronouns signifies a change in subject/object relationship. Up until Session Six, the last session, Witness 2 refers to the movers by using the third person (“one” or “she”). In Session Six, the phrase “see you . . .” appears like a chant through the first two-thirds of her writing. The “I” is notably absent. It is a song-like listing of the witness’s perception of the movers’ activities, although there is no explicit attempt to distinguish among the movers. They are all “you.”

Sometimes the perception is of purely physical movement, such as “See you standing and turning.” More rarely the perception involves the witness’s imagination, such as “Standing, you are turning slowly, a lighthouse” or “See you by the wall — slide

down the wall as if there are no bones in your body.” When the witness focuses on the movers’ hands, from her perspective, they are “your hands.” The witness appears as an unseen presence through the second-person voice and the use of the possessive, “your.” If there is a “you,” then hidden in the voice saying “you” is an “I.”

Briefly in the writing, the “I” does appear. The witness writes about her perception of a mover: “Sitting, bent over, hair over your face, you part and comb it with your fingers. I think seaweed / I see you on a beach, parting wet hair. I see sunlight drying it, sunlight everywhere, tropical / I see seaweed.” This passage, the only time in this session’s writing where the witness uses “I,” has a clear structure: It begins without the “I” as the witness perceives the mover parting and combing her hair with her fingers. The perception is immediately followed by a thought: “I think seaweed.” The word *seaweed* then expands into a more developed image: “I see you on a beach . . .” Through the activity of her imagination, the witness has a new perception: “I see seaweed.” The word *seaweed*, which had previously occurred as a thought, is now infused with experiential meaning that is inseparable from the witness’s perception. Here, percept and concept are joined as one; and while her syntax is unconventional, the witness, in contrast to past sessions, appears to have no difficulty in articulating the experience.

The final stanza is again addressed to “you,” and the “I” disappears. The witness sees a mover standing, knees bent, shoulders freely moving, “almost like a skier, feet grounded, feet not moving. Feet strong. Your feet are strong.” The chant returns in the last two lines: “See you strong, see you strong.” Now the phrase reads as much about the capacity of the witness to see as it does about what the mover is doing. The phrase “See you strong” could have meaning in two ways for this witness, and it is the absence of the “I” that allows for the dual meaning. The witness sees that the mover has found the ground under her feet and her feet are strong. At the same time, the witness has found strength in a new way of seeing. The “seeing” of the witness has become, in this moment, as strong as the feet she sees. It appears that the witness’s perception of the mover is united with her perception of self. The capacity to perceive in this way is suggestive of what Goethe calls “a new sense organ.” Sensation and emotion, as modes of awareness, develop into new capacities to feel and perceive.

Non-Self Agency as a Way of Knowing For Witness 1, the unfolding of the imperceptible over the course of the six sessions also leads to an awareness of her own heightened capacities of perception. In Sessions One and Two, a perception of something unseen or inaudible is apparent in the physical gesture of the mover. In Session Three, the witness is aware that the space “between or under” the mover’s hands “is alive with energy and mysteries.” Here, the unseen is perceived not in the physical gesture but in the space around the body of the mover. The witness does not know what she is seeing but resists interpretation or making an associative image. At this point, she is still the agent of her own perception.

In Session Four, at the end of a long poetic passage, she writes, “I will greet you in largeness.” This is the first time that the pronoun “you” appears in the writing of Witness 1. It is not exactly clear who the “I” or the “you” is or who or what the witness is addressing when she writes, “Please speak now” and “Please come to me.” There is an allusion here, however, of intimate relationship to something unnamed that has its own agency of speech and action.

In Session Five, Witness 1 continues to observe her own process as a witness. She is “witnessing them and witnessing myself and witnessing my mind witnessing itself.” As she tracks thoughts that arise in the course of her witnessing, an interweaving stream of awareness of both self and other becomes apparent. She writes of seeing two movers cover their heads: “rising up or coming down / faces disappear beneath wool / something hides / Is there room for another new thing to emerge?” Here, it is no longer clear if the witness associates the experience of something hiding or emerging with the mover or with herself.

As she perceives slow gestures and “hands on heads, throat, rubbing eyes” and the “feel” of “touching wall and not quite touching door,” the witness becomes aware of an “unseen hand.” She writes that it “touches my deepest inner tender spots, filling me with longing.” It is “the sad sweet ancient ache.” The agency expressed in the “feel” of the outward small gestures becomes the inward touch of the unseen hand. It gently pulls and opens her “bare wide” and leaves her “trembling.”

For each of the witnesses, following her own unique experience, a non-self-directed agency, expressing through sensation and emotion, becomes a new way of knowing.

Relationship

This assessment of data from the witnesses in the group study shows that changes in the witnesses' capacity for awareness unfolds gradually over the course of the six sessions. The witnesses demonstrate change in their relationship to self-awareness, particularly in their awareness of perception. This change is visible in the writing of each witness and is marked by a change in the use of pronouns to articulate awareness of self and other.

Prose Becomes Poetry While the style and format of the movers' writing stays relatively consistent from session to session, the writing style of the two witnesses changes over the course of the six sessions. In Sessions One and Two, the witnesses are encouraged to attend to each mover individually, rather than in relationship to each other. Both witnesses reflect this format in their journals by keeping the writing related to each mover separate. Their writing from the transitional phase of Sessions Three and Four, where each witness is in the presence of four movers, reflects the change in format quite dramatically. There is far less specific reference to what each of the movers are doing and more attention to the witnessing process. Even more striking is how the use and style of language is changing. It becomes less prosaic and more poetic. By Sessions Five and Six, in the writing of both witnesses, the perception of self and other becomes even more interwoven, giving rise to an expressive and refined use of language that conveys a change, for each, in their self-experience of being a witness.

The Witness's Emerging Self

A transformative process is evident over the course of the six sessions for both witnesses. What appear, at first, as external phenomena become, over time, the witnesses' own capacity to perceive and make meaning of perception. Sensation is no longer merely receptive. Increasingly, sensation expresses an agency of its own that is informative. As one witness reports, what she sees "is happening in my body." As she perceives externally, she is attending inwardly. The inner witness of the witness is participating with external phenomena through internal sensation. Likewise, emotive feeling is less likely to appear as personal reaction to what is perceived and more likely to arise as

empathy. These changes in the capacity to sense and to feel, in conjunction with the presence of an “absent ‘I,’” appear to promote greater presence on the part of the witness. Sensing and feeling, as transformed faculties, are integrated aspects of a non-discursive kind of thinking/perceiving. The witnesses, like the movers, display an emerging experience of self that appears to have its own developmental momentum.

3.3 Contemplative Inquiry

Up until now, the writing of this thesis draws on the work of others in the field and from the voices of the participants of both survey and group study. In other words, I take the third-person perspective in my analysis and assessment of that material. I move now from writing about the experience of others to writing about my own experience.

The Meta-Witness

The powers of critical and associative thinking are essential to the planning, design, and assessment of a research subject. The limitations of critical or abstract thought, however, are primarily a function of the distance between subject and object that such thinking necessitates; abstract thought requires and, in fact, creates a separation between the researcher's perception of the object of research and the researcher's own subjective experience. Contemplative inquiry, as previously described, is a research method that seeks to bridge the separation. The role of meta-witness in the group study is designed to incorporate the element of contemplative inquiry into this study of witness consciousness. As meta-witness, I have the opportunity, as researcher, to observe my own inner experience in relation to the participants practicing Authentic Movement. In my phenomenological assessment of the data from my experience as meta-witness, I return to the third-person perspective in accordance with the rest of my data assessments.

A process of change in the meta-witness experience of cognition is visible in the convergence of two phenomenological themes: modes of awareness and relationship. The themes of agency and use of pronouns also function together to reveal *how* these changes happen in the meta-witness's experience of cognition over the course of the six sessions of the group study.

Modes of Awareness and Relationship

Listening as a Mode of Awareness In the first two sessions, a witness and two movers work in each of two rooms. The meta-witness, in a small middle room between them, sits in close proximity to but not in the physical presence of the movers and witnesses. Her predominant mode of awareness is the sense of hearing. For the witnesses, vision stimulates inner experience; but for the meta-witness, sound is the primary stimulus. The data from the group study shows that in the practice of Authentic Movement, the

witnesses develop a new way of seeing. For the meta-witness, a new way of listening is developing.

At first, listening is the mode of awareness that provides information about the meta-witness's relationship to the other participants of the study. For example, in Session One, the meta-witness writes,

During the speaking time at first the voices are in me — held within. Then over time, *I experience an erasing of the line between in and out* — more fluidity and continuity between awareness of me and awareness of the two groups and their activity.

Awareness of the voices of the other participants, experienced as “held within” the meta-witness, leads to a greater fluidity in her awareness of self and others,

In Session Two, the meta-witness is aware of being very still and of “silence everywhere” during the movement time. She writes, “I feel the silence spread wide within me joining the silence through the studio. One silence.” It is interesting that the “One silence” leads to “awareness of the presence of being seen.” Being seen by the meta-witness is experienced as an active presence that is “even deeper, even wider than the stillness.”

In Session Three, the meta-witness joins the movers and witnesses in one room for the movement time and returns to the middle room for the transition and verbal processing that the two groups do in their separate rooms. The experience of seeing the movers in movement for the first and only time seems to have the effect of creating, for the meta-witness, an experience of sound and vision combined. At the end of her writing for this session, she is “still and silent, like the bell / letting sound pass through the tall green stems of the daffodils / Reaching / like the mover, hands pressed together, high over head / an upward aimed spear.” Here, a remembered image of a mover with hands overhead is superimposed with the witness's visual perception of an upright daffodil.

At the end of Session Three, the meta-witness questions her decision to join the other participants, recognizing the qualitative difference that physical absence makes to the role of meta-witness. She decides to stay in the middle room for the duration of the study between, on one side, the room that the two witnesses and four movers work in and on the other side, the now empty room.

In Session Four, sudden sounds, “a bang on the door, a loud sneeze,” prompt the meta-witness to reflect: “Something here that feels unknown . . . what is my role?” The decision to return to the middle room provokes questions about her role in the group study. But when a mover in the verbal processing begins to speak after a long silence, the meta-witness writes, “My phantom arms spread wide in support and welcome.” She observes, “As the first mover speaks, I am empty. When she stops, the silence fills me. No question now about belonging. I am here in relation.”

Her aural connection to the other participants continues: “As I hear the sounds of movers and witnesses speak — something bubbling in my heart area.” She writes, “Feeling the activity of a bubbling spring — the life of the movement work coming forth in relation to the voices speaking. The movement session becoming illuminated for me: What had felt somewhat distant and removed from me, now awakening within me.”

In Session Five, there is no mention of the sounds of the group, but the meta-witness notices “an aspect, a voice that is accounting for my experience.” In listening to or for this voice, she becomes aware of something more, “just out of sight, or behind the rest, that is inclusive of it all, a kind of pervading presence.” As she shifts her awareness to the presence, “it all continues, maybe the levels of awareness blending more, but I become alert and very *Awake*.” The act of listening is “blending” with awareness of a presence; and the meta-witness experiences “a kind of woosh down into my legs — very energized with a lower center of gravity and expanding heart.”

In Session Six, the meta-witness is aware of quiet and stillness and then “a warm stirring in my heart” that spreads wide, “like endless arms extending to either side, they surround the building — encircling, at first through me — encircling out to include the group and then an even larger encircling that includes me.”

When she hears the bell ring, the sound “radiates out like a spreading ring of water passing through this large encircling presence.” She becomes aware of a “small busy voice looking for something to think about.” The meta-witness observes (without the use of “I”): “A calm acceptance of this voice — giving space for it.” She then feels “compassion arise in me.” She turns “my awareness to the group and the hum of the heater in the adjoining room” and hears “little sounds: scuffing on floor, soft vocalizing.” She notices that “the little far-away voice is barely present.” Instead, in the present

moment of writing, the meta-witness is aware of the *writing* voice that is “somehow different from the active, grasping, small, background voice of earlier.” She writes: “Now this voice is foreground, either articulating words as I write, or silent. I am aware of the silence between the words as having a spacious quality. I can enter the silence, deeper within it.”

Over the course of the six sessions, the meta-witness is consistently aware of sound and perceives it in an experiential, participatory manner. At first, sound serves to establish her relationship as an external witness to the movers and the witnesses; but by the last two sessions, her deepening practice of listening includes a new awareness: an inner voice of Self, emerging from the depths of silence.

Agency and the Use of Pronouns

A phenomenon that appears in the data of the meta-witness that was not visible in that of the witnesses is the experience of witnessing as a kind of movement. The phenomenon of inner movement is visible in the data through the changes in description of agency and use of the pronoun “I.”

The Inner Mover In Session One during the movement time, the meta-witness writes, “I feel myself as if in an open room — interior space. Sometimes it’s as if I am journeying, aware of where I’m going; other times it’s as if something journeys through me.” In this case, awareness of non-self-directed agency becomes a conscious experience. The meta-witness writes that the experience seems “a little dream-like” until there is a fleeting sensation of “pressure on my right eyebrow as if someone is touching me there.” It is as if an unseen mover makes contact with the meta-witness.

After the movement time when the transition time of writing begins, the meta-witness feels an “internal shift.” It is “an awareness of my heart area”; and in her writing, awareness itself appears to exhibit agency: “It stays and stays, centered and clear.” Toward the end of the writing time, the meta-witness, as “I,” becomes “aware that I am expanded beyond my sense of body.” Awareness is now identified as belonging to the meta-witness.

In Session Two, more so than in Session One, the use of “I” defines the meta-witness as the one who is the agent of experience. Awareness does not appear as its own

condition but for the most part is expressed as “my awareness.” At one point, the meta-witness notices “a sort of presence that I associate with being seen — a heightening of my awareness of the ‘field.’” At this point, she begins to “feel like a mover. I experience everything that’s happened since I sat here as a kind of movement.” In fact, she then briefly becomes a mover: “My head is very heavy, I let it drop on my chest, weightedness draws me over. I am hanging down, my hands are resting on the floor. A sensation of lightness pouring down my spine — my head makes contact with the floor, like an anchor.”

This is a rare time that the meta-witness follows an inner experience into movement. She experiences sensation as having agency: “lightness pouring down my spine.” When she comes back to sitting, she experiences a deep stillness and silence and the awareness of the presence of being seen returns. The phenomenon of being seen is experienced by the meta-witness as an active presence that is “even deeper, even wider than the stillness.”

Movement and Stillness In Session Five, sensation becomes active when the meta-witness feels “a kind of wave” that carries her “in or under.” She then experiences herself “completely still” and as “both a transparent, permeable container and as movement within or through that container.” Later, this awareness of self as non-physical form and the “wave-like motions” through that form develop into an experience of “subtle inner motion — etheric movement.” She writes,

I see my brain, contained under my skull, as if looking down from above. I see it and feel it: the word *inert* comes, compact coils, cool, almost clammy. My brain is so motionless; and yet, I experience inner movement all around it — etheric forming, shaping — I surrender to the possibility that the movement knows what to do and where to go.

Here, an inner felt experience of movement within stillness is followed by an inner perception that occurs simultaneous to the inner experience of stillness and motion.

A dual awareness appears again in Session Six. Inner sensation displays its own agency, one that is met by an agency with which the meta-witness is identified. In addition to the agency of sensation and the agency of an I-based awareness is a third phenomenon that the meta-witness simply calls “the Presence.” At the end of her writing for Session Six, she notes,

There are a few times I feel drowsy then waken into the Presence again. I am aware of a lot of fluidity between my inner experience of self and my outward directed self-experience of the group and the space we are all in. Continuity — it's all one; what's different is the shift of focus — it's subtle. A presence that includes the continuity and that is aware of the shifts in focus.

In her description of the presence it is unclear if the presence and the "I" who is aware of the fluidity of both inner and outer perception are one and the same. She writes, "continuity — it's all one" but the continuity appears to belong to the presence, as does awareness of the shifts in focus. The meta-witness, as "I," is seeking to articulate her experience of something that is inclusive of more than the self as "I," although the exact nature of the relationship remains elusive.

From Image to Intuition: Behind the Image

The meta-witness, much like the witnesses, is not prone to create images out of her unfolding experience. When images appear, they seem to do so spontaneously, as in Session One when the meta-witness sees "an image of a Leonardo da Vinci man (arms and legs extended out to the sides like a five-limbed star) revolving and floating upward." She observes, "This continues; and then the image disappears, and I experience a kind of column forming, of me, and extending above me — energy coming down, but also just being. JUST BEING."

The degree to which the image and its disappearance are immediately linked to the energetic experience suggests that the da Vinci image of the human being may be a representation of what the meta-witness subsequently experiences. The energetic activity of "a kind of column forming, of me, and extending above me" may be another way of knowing, not through image but through a direct experience of "being" human.

Another example of a spontaneous image appears to the meta-witness in Session Four. It occurs after the meta-witness feels distant from the group but then finds her sense of connection and relationship again. She writes, "A cord out of my navel — first I'm pulling it toward me — feels so long. I wonder where it goes? I follow it out and find it leads to the group, to a soft placenta-like form around the group. The group is contained in the pulsing spaciousness of it."

The meta-witness engages in an inner dialogue concerning the thoughts and feelings evoked by the image. Her thoughts relate to her relationship with the other

participants; for example, one participant had questioned why the meta-witness was in a separate room. The meta-witness, in reflection, writes, “To her it sometimes seems like I’m the ‘teacher’ having time off while the ‘students’ are working or doing a test.” She then wonders if the image of the cord is “too much of me the Mother/Teacher — maybe I’m supposed to be in the placenta, too — I need to be on equal ground.” In active imagination with the image, the meta-witness lets “the placenta form include me, too” but then discovers that “I feel contained, constricted, almost like I’m suffocating. This does not feel right — I let it go and again the cord leading from my navel flows and runs out — the placenta form surrounding the group.” Then the image falls away and “I am aligned, vertically aligned, and I experience the group both separate and within me, like a baby.”

It is worth noting that when the meta-witness actively tries to make the image into something, “It does not feel right.” The image seems to have a mind of its own that the meta-witness ultimately recognizes and allows to be present. In the moment of accepting the image, it “falls away” and she experiences a unitive state of the group “both separate and within” her. Here, the meta-witness is participating in an intuitive knowing of an experience that transcends subject/object relationship. Her description of the experience as “like a baby” serves to turn the experience back into an image in a way that perhaps signals a change in its experiential reality. By making an association, through the use of metaphor, the meta-witness returns to a dialogic relationship with her experience. The question arises: Did the image of “baby” occur to the meta-witness at the time of the experience, or did it come later in the writing *about* the experience?

Even when the process of cognition is moving beyond image, the faculty of imagination is not left behind. It is available to work in concert with or interact with the experiential process that may be unfolding. Limits to this unfolding become evident only when the image is perceived *as* the reality, rather than as a representation of the reality that lies behind the image.

Bearing Witness to Consciousness

A difference between images that arise spontaneously and those that are created in relation to somatic experience is also apparent in the data from both movers and witnesses. In either case, the capacity to perceive what lies within or “behind” the image

indicates another way of knowing. The “dissolving” of image becomes or is replaced by an awareness of the inner activity of awareness. In Session Five, the meta-witness’s experience of “seeing” her brain appears to be a different order of image from images that are either associative or metaphoric in nature. Direct experiential perception is a kind of knowing that becomes possible in the state of unitive consciousness.

Both sensation and awareness in general are perceived by the meta-witness as inner movement; and the data suggests that the phenomenon of mover consciousness is experienced, at times, united with witness consciousness. In such moments direct or intuitive knowing becomes possible. Witness consciousness, as developed through the discipline of Authentic Movement, strengthens an individual’s capacity to “bear witness” to the unfolding of consciousness. As such, the experience of the meta-witness demonstrates a kinship between the discipline of Authentic Movement and that of contemplative inquiry.

3.4 Triangulation of the Data Sources

A picture of individual development for both mover and witness becomes rich and multi-layered when the three sources of data in this study of witness consciousness are triangulated. The survey data, representing the experience of Authentic Movement practitioners over a 30-year span, makes visible a three-phase maturation process of the inner witness, developing in the context of relationship between mover and witness. In addition, the data from (a) the movers and witnesses and (b) the meta-witness of the six-session group study reveals cognitive processes that inform the uniquely unfolding experience of each individual.

In the group study, the inner witness experience is explored more explicitly through the format of an actual relationship between movers and witnesses than it is in the survey. As a result, in the journal writing of the group study, it is possible to see and to hear in the “voice” of the inner witness how sensing, feeling, and thinking, as capacities of consciousness, develop and are employed in the practice of Authentic Movement. In my assessment of the data, I find a continuum of cognition becomes apparent. For the purposes of this thesis, I refer to this continuum in terms of different modes of thought. For example, the consciousness displayed by the movers in the group study relies, for the most part, on the capacity for (1) analytic thought and (2) imaginal thought. The witnesses and the meta-witness increasingly exhibit conscious awareness of (3) thought as an experiential activity. One of the witnesses calls this capacity to perceive the activity of her own perception as “a see into seeing.” Evidence of a fourth kind of knowing, (4) direct intuitive perception, can be seen occasionally in the data from all three roles. A developmental model, consisting of these four distinct ways of knowing, emerges through the assessment of the data: analytic thought, imaginal thought, thought as conscious activity, and directly perceived intuitive thought. The group study assessment, with its emphasis on the individual’s growing cognitive capacities, provides a new lens to see the developmental trends that appear in the survey.

Modes of Cognition

Thought as Analysis In the phase of Authentic Movement practice that in my research I call Survey Group A, the movers make an important discovery. A conscious relationship to an inner witness appears as these movers explore the difference between an inner critical voice and a more benevolent, accepting inner voice. The phenomenon of two “sides” to human awareness is experienced *intrapersonally* as a distinction between the two qualities of inner voice and *interpersonally* as a separation between mover and witness. The capacity to be aware of this division marks an awakening of the inner witness.

Thought as Imagination An active engagement of the imaginal realm and a greater receptivity to and consciousness of sensation and emotion become a bridge from habitual, associative ways of thinking and perceiving to a new way of seeing self and other. The inner witness begins to speak, as one survey respondent writes, “in images and sounds rather than words.” The mover and the witness generally experience the images metaphorically, and there is greater openness to the unexpected. A dialogue, overseen by the inner witness, between aspects of the personality becomes possible. The act of thinking becomes more relational than reactive. The inner witness is also becoming receptive to imaginative thought that is unrelated to aspects of personality. This distinction is evident in the example of the mover’s use of the words *peek* and *peak*. The mover writes that she finds herself peeking and reacting strongly to being too close to a witness. She moves away, across the room. In her subsequent movement she discovers that the image of her hands pressed together above her head, like a peak, leads to a spiritual insight.

Thought as Conscious Process Many of the survey respondents from Groups B and C describe a growing awareness of their own experience of awareness. The mover and the witness come to know thinking and perceiving, once experienced as unconscious processes, experientially.

In the journal writing, the appearance and disappearance of an “I” who is in relation to the inner witness becomes an active dynamic, supporting a process whereby the faculty of imagination becomes known as a conscious activity. In some cases,

metaphor becomes a verb that is known experientially without the conscious mediation of the “I,” as when one mover in the group study writes, “Life is flowering.” Some of the survey respondents discover that it becomes challenging to verbalize such experiences because of their paradoxical nature.

In the data from the witnesses and the meta-witness, it appears that sensation becomes active rather than only receptive, giving rise to a greater sense of participation. Consciousness is experienced by the meta-witness as inner movement and is known, paradoxically, in relation to “an aspect of myself that is completely still.”

Thought as Direct Intuitive Perception Data from the writings of the group study witnesses and meta-witness, as well as from some of the survey respondents, shows examples of thought as direct intuitive perception. The data suggests that, in the experience of direct intuitive knowing, thought and perception come closer together and, at times, are virtually inseparable. Here an experience of I-consciousness returns but in the enhanced and transpersonal state of being what is perceived. What is experienced as a state of becoming (i.e., a verb) can now be known directly as a noun, inclusive of the knowing of self. Some survey respondents provide detailed examples of such direct experiences of knowing. In such moments, there is no separation between subject and object in the awareness of these practitioners. There often appears to be an immediate access to language that articulates what the mover or the witness knows through the experience. As one survey respondent writes, “I receive words, they pop into my head.” Another respondent describes her experience as a mover: “I actually am an eagle, a snake, a dancer from another time. I know both myself in this body now and the other simultaneously. I can let that enter me without losing my sense of self. I can follow energy, a feeling of pressure, warmth.”

At other times, the experience of knowing is described as one that is without words. For example, one Group C survey respondent writes that at such times, “my senses are alert and deep; archetypal/human memories seem to be ever present, even if there is not an immediate naming. I have less words to describe the experience of the unnameable.”

Another respondent describes what happens when movers and witnesses come together for verbal processing: “sensing an inner shift in the silence, an ‘aha’ in our

reflections together, a time when the Other and I felt, saw, understood some common, universal-like feeling or found that we had a similar experience simultaneously.”

While each of the four ways of knowing (analytic thought, imaginal thought, thought as conscious process, and direct intuitive perception) can appear spontaneously during any of the three developmental phases of Authentic Movement, the survey data clearly shows that consistent access to and integration of each *is* a developmental process that happens, with committed practice, gradually over time.

Relationship

Integration through Relationship The most important factor in the growth and stabilization of these ways of knowing, as they develop through the practice of Authentic Movement, is the quality of relationship. The surveys demonstrate that movers at all levels value the experience of “being seen” without judgment or projection. The presence of a compassionate, accepting witness can serve the process of integration for the mover who is just learning to come into relationship to personal, psychologically based inner content *and* by the mover who is crossing new boundaries of transpersonal experience. As one survey respondent writes, it is “like being held gently in a spacious yet safe container, one in which I can be seen expressing freely what is true in the moment without fear of judgment or rejection.”

In a post-study interview, the movers in the group study speak about their experience of being seen by a witness. For one of the movers, “the witness intensifies and magnifies the experience. . . focuses my energy and experience. If I’m just doing it — having it — it just spills out, but the witness energy helps contain it and form it.”

Another mover reports that “the witness really helps keep track of where I’ve been in the movement and . . . gives the exterior form to my interior form. I don’t think of myself externally when I’m in Authentic Movement — I’m so internal. So it’s a great addition to realize I have exterior form.”

Not only can a mover have the experience of “becoming more of who I am,” she comes to know, in an embodied way, that *I am becoming more of who I am because you see me*. In turn, the data from the witnesses in the group study shows that as the

individual more clearly and deeply sees her self, the more she can be present and clearly see another.

Who Is the Witness of the Witness? At times, affirmation works in the other direction: from mover to witness. In the group study, the witnesses gain confidence in their growing capacities as they interact with the movers, especially during the verbal processing. One witness expresses “relief” and a feeling of “connection” after offering verbal witnessing to a mover that “seemed very in touch with her [the mover’s] experience.” The verbal processing time proves important for both movers and witnesses. The mover experiences the presence of the witness implicitly during the movement time and explicitly in the face-to-face sharing of the verbal processing time. The witness, in the verbal processing time, practices discernment and learns to risk sharing her experience in ways she hopes will serve the mover’s needs.

More than any other, the survey question about what considerations a witness weighs before speaking to a mover prompted the most passionate response from Group C. As one respondent writes, “TONS! Where to begin! Therein lies the tale!” Another adds, “This is the fine-tuning of this practice.” One respondent writes, “this point is probably of greater interest to me as a Dance Movement Therapist than most any other question” and “Developing ways to dialogue between verbal and non-verbal material is the ‘prima mater’ of the work in training that I do.”

Authentic Movement practice tends to emphasize the experience of the mover, and the witness role is often thought of as being primarily in service to the mover. However, the witnesses in the group study and many of the survey respondents raise questions about their own needs in the role of witness and about knowing when and how much to speak to the movers. One respondent writes, “I felt the hunger of others’ egos wanting more out of me. I felt my vulnerability as a witness, but there was a witness experience I didn’t always feel safe to expose.” Another respondent writes, “The inner witness seems a more vital relationship to me than my external witnessing of others. In large part I believe this is based in the priority I see myself and others I work with give to moving over the exploration of witnessing.”

One of the witnesses in the group study observes the potential for self-deception and distraction that even the most conscientious witness must face: “I’m aware of how aware I am of the light — can I still see the mover or am I distracted by all these levels of awareness. Am I fully with the mover?”

These observations raise the question of whether supplemental ways of working that strengthen witness consciousness would be beneficial to the practice of being a witness. At the same time, some concerns about the challenges of being a witness appear to resolve over time. For example, one Group C respondent writes, “As I witness I am learning to modulate the intensity of my witnessing experience when I occasionally find myself facing such tender, inner places. I can work with my sense of boundary between me (as witness) and other (as mover).”

In the group study, the meta-witness role unexpectedly casts light on the issue of the witness’s projections about being seen. One of the witnesses reports, “Toward the beginning, a small part of me projected that the meta-witness would be judging me and noticing if we were following the time correctly or that the meta-witness role was like being a teacher.” This witness came, by the end of the six sessions, to have a different experience of relationship to her idea of the meta-witness:

It was like my sense of the largest aspect of the Witness — as big as the world — the ultimate in compassionate holding. To have someone witnessing yet not in direct contact, sight, or hearing, but totally aware of time, agenda, and acting as a witness, emphasized my sense of being held in a much larger sense.

Here, the witness becomes aware of the positive use of projection and finds that it serves her own needs as a witness. In this regard, the role of meta-witness may be a useful one to incorporate into further exploration of witness consciousness.

Agency and the Disappearing “I”

In my assessment of both movers and witnesses in the group study, one phenomenon I see in the experience of the inner witness is a recurring appearance and disappearance of the pronoun “I” in the journal writing. Each participant exhibits a consistent, if idiosyncratic, pattern of going in and out of conscious identification with her experience. It seems that the self-identity expressed as “I” needs to become absent in order that a

process not yet consciously integrated by the self can “move through me.” One Group C survey respondent addresses her changing relationship to this process as follows:

In the beginning, finding my inner witness was a process of lifting the veil, revealing that part of me that sometimes was present and sometimes not. Often my teachers would witness a place I could not remember, or remember only vaguely, and the veil was lifted, and ah, yes, as mover, “I do now remember,” my inner witness then naturally emerged and was strengthened by the process.

In doing so, I really have the experience of finding her. The veil lifts, she stands more clearly within me, beside me. She is more found, grounded in myself. And, of course, I then embody my movement, and embody her within me, with more awareness. And this also leads to her strengthening, and feeling more found.

The process of embodiment, as this respondent describes it, is ongoing. She writes:

Perhaps in Authentic Movement, embodiment always comes first. Without the movement material, there would be nothing to try to stay in relationship to. And so I could say the order is really: embody, lift, find, embody — embodiment on each side of the process. And the cycle, the spiral continues.

As previously noted, participants, even those who are just beginning to practice Authentic Movement, find themselves becoming aware of other levels of awareness. Over time conscious relationship between aspects of awareness and the phenomenon of agency becomes a compelling feature of development in Authentic Movement. In the following example from a Group B survey respondent, a distinct qualitative change in the description of the movement is apparent:

My head is lowering as my torso slowly moves forward and remains in stillness for a short time. A subtle rocking motion from side to side begins and my head is lowering more with a circling movement to the right side and then to the left side. My inner witness brings my forehead to rest on the cool floor and breath saturates every cell in my body with its warmth of peacefulness.

At first the movement is described in physical terms and different body parts are identified as agents of movement. Somewhat abruptly, the mover’s inner witness becomes the agent of movement, bringing her head to the floor. Breath has its own activity — saturating “every cell” — bringing warmth and peace. The mover’s awareness is no longer in relationship to the physical experience of parts of her body. Her awareness shifts to an inner, active presence that she identifies as “my inner witness.”

Another respondent writes, “Everything slows down and my whole body is alive with the sensations of this experience. I can feel a flow and sense the attention from my

inner witness. I am also attentive to what is arising and my feelings are evident and clear.”

“Sometimes,” writes yet another respondent, “there are sensations in my hands like a current moving between my two hands or between my arms and my chest. My heart can swell up. I often stand in wonder.” This quality of presence happens for the witness as well when, as one respondent writes, “I can stay with my own process.” To “stay with” is to be in conscious relationship to the experiential process. At such times, “the inner and external experience join; they become one and the experience becomes more about seeing energy move than bodies moving or anything else.” The word *energy* is frequently and generically used to describe a range of qualitative states based primarily on sensation experienced on the level of the body. The relationship and difference between awareness of a physical experience and awareness of an energetic experience is a subject that is of great interest to advanced practitioners of Authentic Movement as evidenced by the comments and questions from some of Group B and C survey respondents.

The phenomena exhibited in the preceding examples are features of cognitive process as consciously perceived activity. Additional phenomena appear when thought is experienced as direct perception. The energetic sensations continue, often with an awareness of the heart area, as feelings of love, trust, and connection come into play. The mover who observes her inner witness bringing her forehead to the floor then writes, “My hands cuddle and rest upon my heart center. My inner witness wipes any form of glaucoma from my heart.” This experiential insight concerning the capacity of the heart to see clearly is reminiscent of “the heart-eye” that one of the witnesses in the group study discovers as a new way of seeing, feeling, and knowing.

The data strongly suggests that cognitive transformation is occurring at the level of somatic experience for both mover and witness in Authentic Movement. Transformation is seen to occur individually but in a context of relationship with other(s). First the individual moves from thinking associatively or analytically to a way of knowing or thinking metaphorically and in images. As the individual moves into consciousness of thought as an active process, there is evidence of a transformation of the individual’s awareness of the physical senses and of emotion, both serving the

developing capacity to feel empathically. When the individual moves into consciousness of thought as direct intuitive perception, it appears that a loving and open heart becomes the center of cognition.

Another way to see this same transformative process is as follows:

- The inner critical judge, in relationship to a warm and accepting inner witness, develops the capacity to make choices and potentially transforms into a wise and discerning judge.
- Sensation as a pre-reflexive mode of awareness develops into the capacity to be aware of sensation as an inner activity and potentially transforms into a new way of knowing.
- Emotion as a mode of awareness develops into the capacity for empathy and potentially transforms into compassionate presence.

In the course of such transformation, all three — sensing, feeling, and thinking — become unified, reintegrated as one, and experienced as a more highly refined mode of cognition.

The findings of a three-phase developmental process in the survey assessment positively affirm and generally parallel Adler's model of individual body, collective body, and conscious body. The data from the group study and the contemplative inquiry of the meta-witness role further illuminate the phenomenology of witness consciousness displayed by Authentic Movement practitioners.

Chapter Four: DISCUSSION

The triangulated data from the survey, the six-session group study, and the meta-witness experience provides substantial evidence that Authentic Movement as a long-term discipline offers its practitioners a path of transformation. Over time, both movers and witnesses develop new faculties of perception and increase their capacity to make meaning of their perception. The four ways of knowing that have been identified in this study (analytic thought, imaginal thought, thought as conscious activity, and thought as direct intuitive perception) represent a continuum of processes of cognitive development that are gradually integrated and employed by practitioners of Authentic Movement. Once developed, each way can serve the pursuit of knowledge according to its own unique epistemology as appropriate to circumstance and need. For example, one survey respondent with over twenty years of Authentic Movement experience observes:

[W]hen I am in a teaching role [academic], I need to be present as both a witness (holding the container for what any one student is experiencing and learning about); but I also need to have a more external/evaluative way of seeing them, because I will also be grading them.

There is a way that witnessing has a particular set of values and biases that are important but not always the priority in some situations that might have other values or biases. However, I try to stay connected with my witness self at least a little bit in other types of experiences where I am perceiving.

Analytic or, as just described, evaluative thought is especially good at seeing parts as distinct wholes but is not good at seeing how the parts belong to wholeness. Imaginal thought creates relationship, forging a metaphoric bridge between the parts. Thought as conscious process enhances relationship to the activity that enlivens the parts. Finally, intuitive thought or direct perception occurs when relationship itself falls away and nothing stands in the way of a comprehensive knowing or direct seeing of intrinsic wholeness.

In her phenomenological study of the intuitive experience, Claire Petitmengin-Peugeot quotes Heidegger's description of *intuition*: It is "the ideal of all knowledge, the ideal of understanding of being in general" ("The Intuitive Experience," p. 42). Petitmengin-Peugeot finds that intuition "is a mode of knowledge deeply anchored in the body" (p. 47). She suggests that, while an individual can't make intuition happen, it is

possible to “encourage its appearance, and to accompany its unfolding, by a very meticulous preparation” (p. 77). She writes,

This preparation does not consist in learning, in progressively accumulating knowledge. It consists in emptying out, in giving up our habits of representation, of categorization, and of abstraction. This casting off enables us to find spontaneity, the real immediacy of our relation to the world. (p. 77)

Petitmengin-Peugeot concludes that all cognitive activity is rooted in the immediacy of intuition that, she writes, “would be a burgeoning thought, the source of thought” (p. 77).

In the discipline of Authentic Movement, attention to the experiential realm of the body and the development of the inner witness leads participants to greater capacity for intuitive knowing. My investigation of witness consciousness traces a transformational process over time that leads the individual through archetypal and developmental stages of cognition from an intuitive and pre-reflexive activity of thought to a conscious and directly perceived participation in intuitive thought.

4.1 Transformative Learning: A Path to Freedom

Several contemporary theorists offer other useful models of transformation that also support the findings of this thesis. Robert Kegan, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Jack Mezirow, at Teacher’s College at Columbia University, and others have contributed a body of research and theory that identifies an epistemological path of development with profound implications for education. In his article, “What ‘Form’ Transforms,” Kegan notes that informational learning promotes “changes in what we know” and adds that it is “literally in-form-ative because it seeks to bring valuable new contents into the existing form of our way of knowing” (p. 49). Transformational learning, in contrast, promotes “changes in how we know.” The development is in the change from what one knows to how one knows. Kegan, citing Mezirow, describes the form as the “frame of reference” and writes, “Trans-form-ative learning puts the form itself at risk of change (and not just change but increased capacity)” (p. 49).

The discipline of Authentic Movement, as is evident in the data, offers an opportunity to observe

the gradual process by which what was “subject” in our knowing becomes ‘object.’ When a way of knowing moves from a place where we are “had by it” (captive of it) to a place where we “have it” and can be in relationship to it, the form of our knowing has become more complex, more expansive. (Kegan, pp. 53–54)

We have seen, for example, a mover experiencing a change in her frame of reference by engaging with the imagery that emerges from her movement. She discovers a different, more autonomous relationship to a personal situation: “I am spinning them, they are not spinning me.”

The mover, in this instance, demonstrates a level of development that Kegan, after Mezirow, calls “the self-authoring mind,” choosing between external values and expectations and ultimately following internal authority (p. 65). The journey from socialized mind to self-authoring mind happens “only by relativizing — that is, only by fundamentally altering — our relationship to public authority” (p. 67). Kegan describes “the self-transforming mind” as a subsequent level of development that requires gaining “distance even from our own internal authorities so that we are not completely captive of our own theories, so that we can recognize their incompleteness, so that we can even

embrace contradictory systems simultaneously (p. 68).” The capacity to tolerate contradiction and paradox, as self-observed by many Group C survey respondents, is aligned with this step toward greater open-mindedness and freedom.

In relationship to an inner impulse and will to act, Authentic Movement practitioners ultimately learn to act with a freedom that goes beyond conscious choice. The individual discovers that the choice is choiceless: *This is what I must do*. In an article called “Transformative Learning for the Common Good,” Laurent A. Parks Daloz quotes Nelson Mandela reflecting on his commitment to social justice: “I simply found myself doing so and could not do otherwise” (pp. 120–121). In his own research Daloz finds:

This sense of inevitability appears again and again in our interviews, often cropping up as a double negative: “I can’t not act,” “You can’t not do it,” “I couldn’t do otherwise.” Whether they worked for social justice, ethical business practice, environmental restoration, educational reform, community health, animal rights, or conflict resolution, people would describe their choice to do their work as if the choice were not entirely their own. (p. 121)

The double negative, noted in the preceding passage, and the sense that the choice is “not entirely their own” is suggestive of the paradox of the self/not-self experience that some Group C respondents describe. They write: “It feels both like a choice, and not a choice” and that “the distinctions between Witness, self, and non-self are very subtle.”

This level of transformation, in which the individual follows an impulse unbound by personality, appears to move beyond the usual parameters of the subject/object relationship. The individual, from this perspective, no longer experiences his or her self as solely separate from the rest of life or from fellow human beings. Adler points out that transformation of this nature, in the context of Authentic Movement, requires understanding the practice “as a spiritual as well as a therapeutic discipline.” She writes that within the psychoanalytic framework, “the mover actually feels bound to her personal body. The qualities of time, space, and weight are specific to her experience of her body. Her body is her ego” (Who is, p. 147). In contrast, Adler and her interns at the Whitehouse Institute in the early 1980s discover that “there were times when the mover did not seem bound to her personal body. Her energy was not contained there, and the qualities of time, space, and weight were not specific. Those qualities were not felt in relation to the body ego (p. 147).”

In describing the experience of a witness in the presence of a mover engaged in transpersonal work, Adler writes,

The witness can experience herself beyond the boundaries of her personality as she shares the same energy field with the mover. She is seeing with much less projection, judgment, and involvement in content. Talking afterwards is often not helpful. There is not the same need to sort, organize and understand the material within the language of psychodynamic theory. (Who is, p. 148)

As a result of her work and teaching in the early 1980s Adler observes “that through Authentic Movement a broad developmental spectrum of energy can be manifested from pre-verbal to trans-verbal, pre-egoic to trans-egoic, from sub-conscious to ‘super-conscious’” (Who is, p. 149). By 2002 Adler identifies three phases of this developmental spectrum: individual body (developing relationship “between moving self and inner witness”), collective body (“between the individual body and the collective body”), and conscious body (“between the self and the Divine”) (*Offering*, p. xix). Movement from one phase to another, as evident in the assessed data of this study, is clearly a process of transformation. My findings shed light, most particularly, on the individual’s experience of cognition throughout the developmental spectrum identified by Adler.

4.2 Transformation of “I” by “I”

Transformative learning can also be seen in terms of how development occurs within the structural makeup and organization of the human being. In the spiritual literature relating to cognitive development, the writings and many published lectures of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) offer a deep, thorough, and highly refined articulation of the nature of relationship between the “I” that is a part and the “I” that is whole. In other words, he offers a model of how the self undertakes what Kegan describes as self-transformation.

In Steiner’s view the individual “I” is an expression of eternal being: in a way a representative of the universal. Its home is in the body and soul. “The “I” dwells in the soul,” writes Steiner, and spirit lives hidden within the “I.” While it is the transcendent spiritual “I” that works on and “lights up within” the soul nature, this activity is veiled from ordinary consciousness (*Theosophy*, p. 58). Steiner, at times, uses the analogy of a seed for this hidden spiritual nature (*Anthroposophy in Everyday*, p. 27), much as Quakers refer to “the inner light of the divine” as a seed (Stephen, p. 247). Steiner writes that “as human beings we are citizens of three worlds. In body, we both belong to and perceive the outer world; in soul, we build up our own inner world; and in spirit, a third world that is higher than both of the others reveals itself to us” (*Theosophy*, p. 25).

To occupy each of these different worlds of body, soul, and spirit, suggests Steiner, requires different modes of observation and cognition. “Through intuitions,” writes Steiner, “the ‘I,’ awakening in our soul, receives messages from above, from the spiritual world, just as it receives messages from the physical world through sensations” (p. 53).

Steiner describes imagination, inspiration, and intuition as levels of cognition that extend beyond intellectual abstraction. Abstract or analytic thinking is the level of cognition that “receives messages from the physical world through sensation.” All three subsequent levels, imagination, inspiration, and intuition, require the individual’s initiative in order to be developed and are what make possible a penetration of the “veils” that separate the individual from knowledge of his or her own spiritual nature (*An Outline*, Chapter 5).

While body, soul, and spirit each have three constituent aspects, Steiner considers the soul to be what actively engages the “three bodies” and potentially receives, consciously or unconsciously, the three levels of spirit. Steiner notes that, “Just as the physical body has its center in the brain, the soul has its center in the ‘I’” (p. 48). The human “I” consciousness acts as the central mediator between matter and spirit. The following diagram outlines Steiner’s view of the human being and shows how body, soul, and spirit are each further differentiated. For example, the body is not just the physical body; it also includes the etheric body and astral body (*A Study Companion to An Outline*, p. 36, diagram adapted from Almon).

BODY	Physical Body Etheric Body Astral Body
SOUL	Sentient Soul Mind Soul (the “I”) Consciousness Soul
SPIRIT	Spirit Self Life Spirit Spirit Man

In terms of being a discipline, Authentic Movement begins with perception of inner impulse, particularly as it manifests in the body; Steiner, on the other hand, is interested in the body-free and sense-free attributes of thinking as the point of origin. Both approaches to self-knowledge are working at the level of soul development, though Steiner’s path is more explicitly oriented to spiritual knowledge. In Steiner’s teaching, the soul capacities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition develop out of artistic practice and meditative thought exercises that can lead the individual to supra-sensory perception of the spiritual world (*An Outline*, Chapter Five). Steiner writes, “Through the physical body, the soul is confined to physical existence; through the spirit body, it grows wings that give it mobility in the spiritual world” (*Theosophy*, p. 56).

Steiner’s explication of body, soul, and spirit offers an interesting epistemological context for my phenomenological findings about development in the discipline of Authentic Movement. For example, Steiner’s description of the transformed cognitive

capacities of imagination, inspiration, and intuition bear a compelling correspondence to the modes of cognition (imaginal thought, thought as conscious activity, direct intuitive perception) that are identified in this thesis.

In Authentic Movement the foundation for such an epistemological transformation begins always with the subject/object relationship of the mover and the witness. In the discipline, the transformative work continues to function as an unfolding process within “the crucible of relationship” (Adler, personal communication, November 2006). The phenomenon of the appearance, disappearance, and changes of pronouns in the journal writing of the group study may be evidence of this transformative process in action. Strikingly evident, from the beginning to the advanced student, is the dynamic of a dissolving and reforming of subject/object relationship within the self and in relationship to other(s).

4.3 A View of Relationship: “The Secret Life of Pronouns”

While the significance of pronouns in the data was unexpected, equally surprising is the fact that a whole new field of research and literature explores this very subject. Traditionally, nouns, verbs, and modifiers—the content words—have been linked to thinking and knowledge (Pennebaker, p. 64). Studies, using a text analysis program, suggest that this assumption be re-examined in the light of evidence that the pronouns “people use in writing and speech reveal a tremendous amount about how they are thinking.” In a research article, provocatively entitled “The Secret Life of Pronouns,” James W. Pennebaker and R. Sherlock Campbell note that “individuals who have written about emotional topics report that the experiment made them think differently about their experiences” and that a change in how people think is reflected in the way they write (Pennebaker, p. 60). The researchers write:

The LSA analyses demonstrated that changes in writing styles were consistently associated with better health, whereas similarity in the content of writing was unrelated to health outcome. Closer analyses of the factors that defined writing styles indicated that particles, and in particular pronouns, predicted the health changes. (p. 64)

Rather than being mere “placeholders,” pronouns convey relational information that is “based on perspective” (p. 64). Pennebaker and Campbell’s use of the word *perspective* is reminiscent of Mezirow’s “frame of reference.” Varela’s understanding of first-, second-, and third-person perspective as used to accomplish “a particular mode of validation,” also comes to mind (Varela and Shear, p. 9). “For example,” writes Pennebaker and Campbell, “‘us and them’ betrays a very different perspective than ‘you and them’ by highlighting whether the author is identified with a group, and which one” (Pennebaker, p. 64).

The question of who, or what, the individual is identified with may account for some of the difficulties for movers and witnesses in articulating their experiences as they develop greater capacity for unitive states of consciousness. As the individual enters experience for which he or she has no previous frame of reference, there is an absence of language with which to express the experience. All the same, Authentic Movement practitioners display a strong drive to find adequate language to “name the unnameable.”

One respondent in Group C writes, “The mover and I are completely in the experience together except for a small voice that says, ‘I am the witness and they are the movers.’” She gives an example of this “way of feeling”: “My body begins to sway just a bit, and my feet anchor more firmly on the ground. I am in a field of energy with the mover and a kind of shimmering light enters.” In this description, the witness first conveys what her body is doing, then what the relationship with the mover is, and finally what happens in that field of energy that encompasses a conscious and embodied experience of self and other. Even though she calls it a “feeling,” the awareness of her own capacity to *perceive* “a kind of shimmering light” and *be* “in a field of energy with the mover” is an act of cognition.

Often the survey respondents, as in the preceding example, articulate their experiences in first-person singular, present-tense language. Writing or speaking in the first person acknowledges the self who is having the experience, while the use of present tense brings the experience to life in the moment. Reliving the non-verbal experience is also an exercise in creating new vocabulary and syntax to articulate the discovery of new insights. It is a moment of identifying with the experience in order to *know* it. However, the process of verbalizing in the aftermath of the experience can potentially diminish what was known directly. For example, the use of “I” can enable the personality aspect of the individual to identify with the experience in a dualistic fashion (*I have this knowing* rather than *I am this knowing*), thereby diminishing its unitive nature. The difference between identification as knowledge and identification as delusion is subtle; articulation, on the part of both movers and witnesses, requires humility, non-attachment, and an appreciation for what Georg Kuhlwind calls the unfinished nature of the human being (p. 79).

4.4 The Hidden Self

The assessed data reveal that pronoun use, particularly the use of “I,” is an indicator not only of processes of identification and integration, but also of agency. For example, when a mover writes, “I go down to the floor,” the “I” is the agent of the movement. If the mover writes “Am drawn to the floor” or “The floor welcomes me,” a non-self-directed agency is inferred. Often, for the mover, it is as if a perception of something beyond the physical body participates in the shaping of the movement.

The use of “I” also serves each individual mover in unique and particular ways. For example, one mover’s use of “I” serves to distinguish her from others. For another mover, the use of “I” distinguishes aspects of herself from other aspects with which she is less identified. As each mover follows an emerging impulse, she is led toward new experiences of relationship, both intrapersonally within herself and/or interpersonally with other(s). The mover’s self-experience appears to emerge in an idiosyncratic and ordered way. Though it is not consciously directed, this order displays agency and purpose. The data reveals the mover’s conscious self, coming into relationship with an emerging, more hidden sense of self.

In the work of the witnesses in the group study, we see this same phenomenon of something emerging that was previously perceived as hidden. In fact (as seen in the data from their journals) the phenomenon of hidden-ness actually becomes conscious for the witnesses. They see the “unseen” and hear the “unheard.” What begins in the first two sessions as something “invisible” and “mysterious” in the mover’s gestures develops, for each witness, into her own capacity to see in a new way. The change in and disappearance of pronouns in Sessions Five and Six appears significant and directly related to a process that is underway for each witness. The absence of the “I” in the writing seems to indicate a letting go or softening of the “I” as agent in order that change can occur.

Each of the two witnesses has, in her own unique manner, embodied as her own experience what she had previously perceived as outside of herself. Over the course of the six sessions, the perception of other and awareness of inner self-experience have become more integrated and less separate. In fact, the more each witness consciously internalizes her experience of the movers, the more deeply she touches her own authentic

self. The capacity of the witness to be present to and for another (or others) is strengthened as a result of being more present to herself. This process of the emergence of a greater capacity for self-presence is visible through the changes in the witnesses' writing style and pronoun use.

One of the important findings related to the phenomenology of pronoun use is that this same process of emergence is happening at every stage of development in the discipline of Authentic Movement. For beginning practitioners this is an unconscious process. As movers and witnesses mature in their work, there is increasing consciousness of participation in their own self-emergence.

The inner witness, of mover *and* witness, is attentive to experience that unfolds from an inner impulse. Meanwhile, the inner impulse seems to contain a kind of inner order or purpose that is seeking to be known. The use of "I," its appearance and disappearance as it relates to agency and the willingness to be moved, reflects an ongoing inner negotiation between intention and surrender, between what is known and what is experienced as new territory, or the emerging unknown. Authentic Movement practitioners develop a remarkable tolerance for the unknown. As a result, their openness to being *moved by the unknown* appears to facilitate the process of knowing. As noted previously, an absence of the personal "I," who identifies with the experience, is a prerequisite to the unitive state and knowledge of wholeness that may arise for the mover and/or witness.

4.5 The Seed of Wholeness

The Goethean scientist Henri Bortroft offers an intriguing perspective on the potency of the absent “I” in his discussion of the presence of wholeness within parts. He writes:

The whole becomes present within parts, but from the standpoint of the awareness which grasps the external parts, the whole is an absence. This absence, however, is not the same as nothing. Rather, it is an active absence inasmuch as we do not try to be aware of the whole, as if we could grasp it like a part, but instead let ourselves be open to be moved by the whole. (p. 15)

Bortroft’s idea of “being moved by the whole” is an interesting way of thinking about Authentic Movement. It is also reminiscent of Aristotle’s understanding of how movement occurs within the polarity of *poiein* (to do or to move) and *paschein* (to suffer or to be moved). To Aristotle’s polarities of active/receptive and potential/actual can now be added presence/absence, part/whole, and self/other. Meaning can be seen to arise within the paradox of these polarities. Wholeness cannot be reduced to a thing — it does not exist in the either/or pairing of opposites or in a subject/object relationship. It can only be discovered as meaningful within the individual’s embrace of contradiction.

Aristotle’s conception of entelechy is also only possible within the context of polarities. Translated from the Greek, *entelechia* means, “having the end within itself.” In other words, the potential end lives within the actual beginning. The seed is a good example of entelechy. The oak exists, invisibly, within the seed of the acorn. Its potentiality is present, though only knowable in absence. The tree does not exist yet.

In a similar way, in Authentic Movement, impulse discovered in and by the mover is the seed of wholeness. When the impulse first enters awareness, its verbal meaning is absent. When followed, the impulse generally leads to movement of the physical body, which becomes known through the soul processes of sensation, emotion, and thought. Another way to think of the unfolding impulse is that, through a pre-reflective process of organization, the mover experiences self-awareness of impulse through kinesthesia and all other sensations, emotion, and thought. While physical movement is perceived through these domains, the physical body alone is not doing the movement, though that is how it may appear. Movement is not simply physical; the impulse is not a physical phenomenon.

This was especially evident when one mover chooses to not move throughout one of the group sessions. Her first impulse, to stand motionless, arises without any emotional or mental content. She follows the impulse and inwardly experiences a sequence of sensations, feelings, images, and thoughts that eventually bring her (without any visible outer movement) to a new awareness of independence and ability to stand on her own two feet. Another mover's awareness, in the last session, that "I am solid and ethereal" as well as the changes in her perception of agency, also affirms that the moving body in Authentic Movement is more than physical. The movement is the physical and non-physical thread through these other domains of experience and consciousness. As a result, there appears to be a profound relationship between awareness of movement, arising of image, and formation of language, all inherent as possibilities in the initial impulse.

The mover has no idea where the impulse will lead but simply chooses whether or not to follow it. The arrival at a place of meaning happens sometimes during the movement itself, sometimes during the writing or artistic transition, and often during the verbal processing when mover and witness come together. Sometimes meaning is a process that may take days, weeks, or even years after a particular experience to come to fruition.

Just as light and nutrients are necessary for a seed to sprout, the data suggests that witness consciousness is a kind of light that stirs an enlivening process within the mover. The attentive presence of the witness, as a force of illumination, seems to stir a quickening or deepening of the mover's ability to self-witness. The inner witness of the mover becomes present to illuminate her own unconscious inner unfolding. The process of writing or drawing followed by verbal processing serves an integrative function. The verbal interaction helps the mover to know that she is visible and that what had been hidden within can be seen in the light of consciousness: seen by self and seen by others.

The data from both survey and the group study suggests that the conscious integration of one's relationship to impulse leads to a greater embodiment of the authentic self. Rudolf Steiner calls this the embodiment of the spiritual "I," or, as one survey respondent writes, "more of who I really am."

Authentic Movement offers a path of development at the level of soul. Steiner's schema of the threefold soul — sentient soul, mind soul, consciousness soul — offers a

non-dualistic way of understanding the nature of body, soul, and spirit. As Steiner indicates, bodily existence is the basis for the sentient soul activity of sensing and feeling. Soul existence is the basis for spiritual existence, though to know soul existence requires the spiritual activity of thinking (the function of the mind soul). To know spiritual existence requires activity at the level of the consciousness soul, which by its very nature constitutes a crossing of the threshold, a movement beyond analytic thought into other experiential ways of knowing (*Theosophy*, Chapter 1). Steiner observes: “When the soul is seen as a unity, its transitory and eternal aspects are indistinguishably bound up with each other, but unless we are aware of the differentiations within it, we cannot understand its relationship to the world as a whole” (p. 62).

The discipline of Authentic Movement, as made visible through the data of this thesis, provides a way of coming to know body, soul, and spirit by way of relationship. The emergence of I-consciousness (seen as the capacity to bear or, in a sense, witness the paradox of contradiction) means that “the soul, or rather the ‘I’ that is beginning to shine within it, opens its doors on two sides, toward the physical world and toward the spiritual” (*Theosophy*, p. 53).

A balanced dynamic between intention and attention is the requisite state of the inner witness. Witness consciousness requires intention of the will in order to be consciously present. At the same time, open-ended attention requires the sacrifice or withholding of the will in order to receive the further emergence of the “I.”

Chapter Five: CONCLUSION

The intention of this thesis is to investigate the phenomenon of witness consciousness. The research focuses on how witness consciousness appears and develops in the context of relationship between mover and witness in the discipline of Authentic Movement. The foundation of this relationship is the expressive life of the physical body as perceived by the inner witness of the mover, who is perceived by an external witness.

The human capacity for critical thinking and objective analysis, while conducive to intellectual and technical achievements, comes at the cost of separation between, for example, a subject and an object. In order for a subject to perceive objectively, it is considered necessary to ignore subjective experience. There is a gap between the inner life of the perceiver and the inner life of the perceived, a gap that is generally presumed unbridgeable. The discipline of Authentic Movement begins by acknowledging this separation. The witness takes the role of the perceiver; and the mover, with her eyes closed, takes the role of the perceived. Soon into the practice, however, the mover discovers an inner tension between her experience of being seen by an external witness and her experience of being seen by her own inner witness.

In my research, based on survey data from forty Authentic Movement practitioners, ranging in length of experience from one year to over thirty years, a path of development appears in three consecutive ten-year phases. This long-term development closely parallels Adler's three-phase model of individual body, collective body, and conscious body, although my research emphasizes the experience of the inner witness of the individual mover and witness. Development of the inner witness, in the form of inner capacities, is evident in all my data sources: the survey; a six-session group study; and my own contemplative inquiry. These inner capacities can be seen to serve the development of thinking, feeling, and perceiving in the individual. Over time, in the discipline of Authentic Movement, cognitive development enables the gap between subject and object, perceiver and perceived, to be bridged.

A textured understanding of witness consciousness would not be possible without inclusion of first-person descriptions of experience. It is important to note, however, that the first-person perspective is not always a subjective one. Varela observes that "the

received distinction between objective and subjective as an absolute demarcation between inside and outside, needs to be closely scrutinized” (pp. 1–2).

The results of this thesis confirm Varela’s observation. I find that an ongoing process of a dissolving and reforming of subject/object relationship within the individual self and in relationship to other(s) is conducive to self-development and transformation. Research on pronoun use in writing about emotional experience provides further evidence that changes in writing style and pronouns reflect a cognitive change in the individual’s relationship to the experience (Pennebaker, pp. 60, 64). Researchers note that these changes are consistent indicators of improvement in health and well-being (p. 64). In the writing of Authentic Movement practitioners, the voice of inner experience moves freely but purposefully in and out of first-, second-, and third-person perspectives. At the same time, in terms of research, Varela’s assertion that second- and third-person perspectives are essential for purposes of assessment and validation holds true (p. 9).

5.1 The Survey: Three-Phase Development

Changes in the voice of the inner witness of both mover and witness can be seen in terms of a transformation of self-awareness. In the beginning, the Authentic Movement practitioner, as “I,” becomes aware of two inner voices, one critical and the other benevolent. Consciousness skills that develop in this phase (Group A) include the ability to tolerate the unknown and stay with inner process. In the second phase of development (Group B), a more complex and “mysterious” dynamic of awareness becomes active. The individual mover or witness is aware of an aspect of self that is aware of awareness. In this intermediate phase, the skill base develops further. The ability to differentiate experience (“this is not that”) and make conscious choices becomes stronger and more consistent. In the third phase (Group C), the dual awareness of the second phase makes way, at times, for non-dual consciousness. The inner witness, at such times, is no longer separate from a unified state of I-consciousness. Body, space, or time no longer limit the sense of self. The individual is better equipped to consciously sustain the paradoxical nature of direct perception. Opposites co-exist and can be known simultaneously. It is no longer the personal, psychological “I” that moves, speaks, or witnesses but a manifestation of the presence, compassion, and authority of the “higher self.”

While a phrase like “higher self” can be problematic because of its dualistic and superior connotation, it is important to acknowledge that the thinking, feeling, perceiving, and moving of the unified “I” is of a different and more refined nature than the “I” of ordinary, habitual consciousness. As previously noted, changes in writing style occur over time in both the survey and the journal writing of the group study. Movers in the group study demonstrate change over time, particularly in their awareness of movement quality. There is less reference, over time, to isolated gestures and the movement of separate body parts and more reference to movement and awareness of the whole body. This development corresponds with instances where movement is referred to as dance-like. The writing of the witnesses, meanwhile, becomes less like prose and more like poetry. Changes in both writing style and movement quality display an increasing refinement. Dance and poetry, in this sense, can be seen as drawing from a more intuitive and transpersonal source. This qualitative development in terms of aesthetics and creative

expression appears to be directly related to the continuum of cognition that becomes visible through the group study.

5.2 The Group Study: Cognitive Development

In addition to the survey data, my assessment of the group study offers another perspective on the developing inner witness of both mover and witness. The data from the group study, not insignificantly, also affirms the importance of seeing each individual on his or her own unique path of development. Four phenomenological themes (all familiar from the practice of Authentic Movement) become visible in the journal writing of the participants: (1) modes of awareness (sensation, emotion, thought); (2) use of pronouns (particularly the absence or presence of “I”); (3) agency; and (4) relationship. Tracking these four themes throughout the six sessions reveals specific and different ways that the movers and the witnesses are aware of their experience.

A surprisingly vital link between movement, image, and language is clearly evident in the journal writing of the movers. Imagery arises most frequently from the mover’s awareness of sensation and emotion, or a combination of the two. At such times, images serve to make meaning of movement experienced in the physical body. Metaphoric language, in particular, most dramatically supports the mover’s grasp of new experience. Furthermore, there appears to be a highly organized relationship between the mover’s perception of her physical activity and her cognitive use of language that is unique to each individual and essential to the process of self-knowing.

The witnesses, however, exhibit far less imagery in their journal writing and sometimes make a point of avoiding the use of imagery or metaphor as a way of interpreting their perception of the movers. Instead, the witnesses write about their perception of the mover’s physical activity and, increasingly over the six sessions, about their own inner process of sensory and emotional awareness. By the last two sessions, the witnesses’ perception of the movers blends more seamlessly with self-perception. Each witness exhibits a greater capacity to “know” the experience of both mover and self through her own heightened awareness of the activity of sensation and/or emotion.

5.3 Future Research on Integrative Processes

The data related to agency and the use of the pronoun “I” reveals a transformative and emerging sense of self for each of the movers and the witnesses. This is true over the course of the group study and even within individual sessions. It appears that the process of moving and witnessing continuously generates the basis for self-development of both movers and witnesses. The movement time, in Authentic Movement, is usually followed by a transition time of writing and drawing, followed by a verbal processing time. The transition and verbal processing periods appear to be critical for purposes of integrating the experience of the movement.

The results of my study suggest that transformative process involves three archetypal stages: generation, digestion, and integration. Authentic Movement can be understood, in this sense, as a three-fold process. Future research would benefit from an in-depth study of the transition time as a period to digest the generative experience and of the verbal processing as a time to integrate the experience.

This thesis draws on data from the writing of journal entries rather than from the journal drawings done by the group participants. The drawings represent an additional source of data, since visual art, like verbal language, is another measure of what Kegan calls “meaning forming” (p. 52). An assessment of the drawings done by the group study participants goes beyond the scope of this thesis; but a future phenomenological review of visual imagery created during the transition time of Authentic Movement may offer further insights into the relationship between movement and cognition.

This current study, with data from the group study, leads to new insights concerning individual experience and development. The results may serve future research that more directly focuses on the collective experience and dynamics within groups of Authentic Movement practitioners.

5.4 Contemplative Inquiry

The contemplative inquiry of the meta-witness role provides a third perspective on witness consciousness and reveals that inner movement is an essential feature of cognition. The inner experience of the meta-witness is stimulated primarily by sound (and silence), unlike the experience of the witnesses that is stimulated primarily by the visual sense or of the movers that is stimulated by tactile-kinesthetic sensation. For the meta-witness, the act of listening increasingly “blends” with awareness of “a presence” and becomes, by the end of the six sessions, the self-awareness of an emerging inner voice. For the meta-witness, as with the movers and the witnesses, a process of self-emergence becomes apparent.

The role of the meta-witness highlights the parallels between the discipline of Authentic Movement and contemplative inquiry as experiential practices. As seen in the group study data, the presence of a meta-witness to the Authentic Movement process of mover and witness offers an opportunity for the witness to explore her own relationship to being witnessed.

5.5 Triangulation of Data

Triangulating the data from the survey, the group study, and the role of meta-witness shows how the cognitive capacities identified in the group study and the contemplative inquiry relate to the development made apparent by the survey results. A key finding of this thesis is that transformation in Authentic Movement involves a change of focus from *what* one knows to an evolution of *how* one knows. Four ways of knowing have been identified in this study: (1) analytic or associative thought, (2) imaginal thought, (3) thought as conscious process, and (4) thought as direct perception. Over the course of development, the faculty of thinking does not go away; it changes and reveals other facets and potentialities of itself.

At first, in Authentic Movement, sensing, feeling, and thinking are ways of acquiring information about experience. Over time the practitioner becomes aware of the distinctions between sensing, feeling, and thinking such that these modes of awareness can develop and reintegrate as new ways of knowing. As the mover turns his or her attention to inner impulse, a relationship between mind and body is initiated. The mover, as he or she follows an impulse, observes that an inner quality of body-mind becomes manifest and active. As one survey respondent reports, a kind of reversal takes place: “Body speaks and mind gets quiet.” The mode of awareness or *thinking* of the body-mind can be thought of as a kind of somato-imaginal process of the imaginative faculty. In contrast to the busy, sometimes critical thoughts of habitual self-awareness, the inner witness lives in the quiet of the mind and speaks, as another survey respondent reports, “in images and sounds rather than words.”

Over time, the mover becomes aware of a self-presence that is aware of the inner witness. The dynamic activity of thought as a conscious process becomes apparent. The mover’s faculty of discernment and capacity to make choices, become stronger and more reliable as an aid to knowing his or her right relationship to experience. In the data from the group study, sensation and emotion as modes of awareness for the witness are the templates for new capacities to see and feel. At such times images fall away or become of less interest as awareness turns to the inner activity of awareness.

In Authentic Movement, this process of a transforming epistemology occurs within the context of relationship, although in moments of direct intuitive knowing, even the concept of relationship is no longer present. Survey respondents with more than twenty years of Authentic Movement experience write of a unitive state of mover and witness where inner and outer perception can be known as one. Wholeness is known as the union of opposites: Up is inclusive of down, fear is inclusive of courage, self is inclusive of other, to name just a few of the vast range of polarities. In terms of cognition, so-called outer perception and inner conception become known as one. Percept and concept are unified in the direct perception of consciousness that is sourced from beyond a limited or separate awareness of self. In this sense, the individualized cognitive process of direct perception participates in consciousness that streams toward and within the individual. Rudolf Steiner suggests that a kind of “world-thought” can be intuited through a transformed faculty of thinking. He writes, “It is not merely I who think, for it thinks in me — world-becoming expresses itself in me and my soul provides only the stage upon which the world lives as thought” (*A Way*, p. 63).

In the data from the meta-witness, an awareness of the inner activity of consciousness becomes a direct intuitive perception of the stillness of the physical brain and the energetic movement also perceived as brain. Here, “brain” as a concept held within the individual is joined with a percept of brain that exists within a conceptual sphere beyond, though inclusive of, the individual. In this moment, brain is known as both physical and non-physical, both moving and still. The physical brain does not *do* the thinking and perceiving but helps facilitate the process of a non-self-initiated agency of thinking. Just as, in Authentic Movement, there is a qualitative difference between moving and being-moved, in the process of contemplative inquiry a qualitative difference between thinking and being-thought may be experienced. This phenomenon is apparent in the data from the meta-witness when, in the “deep stillness” of effortless being, the movement of thought arises.

In the act of cognition, paradoxically, movement is inclusive of stillness, and vice versa. In unitive consciousness, there is a reunion of the roles of mover and witness. Just as the mover comes to know witness consciousness in the form of the inner witness, the witness comes to know mover consciousness in the form of an inner mover. The

Authentic Movement practitioner may experience the union of these polarities as a return to wholeness.

5.6 “Moved by Wholeness”

Wholeness is inherent to the process of self-development in Authentic Movement, whether that process is conscious or not—and it appears to become more conscious as the inner witness develops. From their earliest experiences, practitioners have an intuitive inkling of this, reporting that being seen “moving from the core of my being” is like “coming home.” Bortroft’s phrase “moved by wholeness” describes a process of embodiment that occurs throughout all developmental phases of Authentic Movement and is known experientially by the most beginning to the most experienced of participants.

Lapses of memory and gaps of unconsciousness are understood by Authentic Movement practitioners to be part of the process. These gaps may come to be known as previously unconscious aspects of the personality; or these gaps may reveal themselves as gifts from spirit, awakening a sense of self beyond personality. Either way can be a doorway to the universal, to a further embodiment of the spiritual “I.” In Rudolf Steiner’s view, the unconscious is a knowing force, “the wise one within” (*Anthroposophy*, p. 54). What is unconscious is not just the content of forgotten or repressed past experience but also the emerging inner capacity to be conscious of experience, whether of a personal or transpersonal nature.

Adler asks if a developmental view of Authentic Movement is useful:

That is, should personal work precede transpersonal work? It is clear that the stronger the body-psyche connection, the more the body can contain, withstand, and ground the spirit. A well-developed ego structure helps an individual not to identify with material from the transpersonal realm. (“Who Is,” p. 152)

She further speculates that “though the logic of personal work preceding transpersonal work seems convincing,” the opposite may also be true: “Can transpersonal energy guide and direct personal growth?” (p. 152). Does the individual’s willingness to be moved by the wholeness that is inclusive of all parts, known and unknown, allow for self-development?

A non-linear and yet purposeful relationship between agency and the use of the pronoun “I,” as evident in the data of this thesis, appears to confirm that personal growth *is* guided by a “hidden” inner presence and increasingly integrated by an ever-stronger

ego structure. Steiner offers a comprehensive picture of the organizational makeup of the human being — body, soul, spirit — that includes the workings of both the ego of ordinary consciousness and the Ego of spirit. Steiner shows how the three levels of soul mediate experience and receive “messages” from both body *and* spirit. My focus in this thesis is on the capacities of awareness within the soul. In future research, I plan to explore more thoroughly the phenomenological basis of the three-fold body, identified by Steiner as physical body, etheric (or energetic life force) body, and astral body.

When I began my study of witness consciousness, I did not expect to see the data divulge so much about cognitive development. In the discipline of Authentic Movement, it appears that physical movement, sensory experience, and thought are indispensable to each other and in dynamic relationship. While the physical body is the ground of experience, the capacity to think beyond the analytic or associative way of knowing enables the individual to perceive beyond spatial and temporal limitations of the physical world. Both realities, physical and non-physical, can be seen as inherent to human experience. Buckminster Fuller is quoted as describing science as “putting the data of your experience in order” (Scharmer, p. 212). The practice of Authentic Movement does just that. It is one of the contemporary paths of development that supports “a new synthesis of science, spirituality, and leadership as different facets of a single way of being” (p. 212).

The results of this thesis come at a time when the emphasis in education is on the technical means of acquiring knowledge and the external means of measuring it. In contrast, the means of transforming capacities for knowledge — quality of relationship, the physical body, and an open, attentive mind, as seen in the discipline of Authentic Movement — while exceedingly simple, are undervalued. Otto Scharmer and colleagues, in discussing the “U-Theory” of individual and social transformation, describe three integrated capacities essential to the profound change needed in the world:

A new capacity for observing that no longer fragments the observer from what’s observed; a new capacity for stillness that no longer fragments who we really are from what’s emerging; and a new capacity for creating alternative realities that no longer fragments the wisdom of the head, heart, and hand. (p. 212)

As evident in this thesis, the discipline of Authentic Movement cultivates all three of these capacities. At all stages of development, these three capacities are strengthened by

an ongoing commitment of attention to the stirring of impulse. Held like a seed in the warmth of positive intention, impulse unfolds in the darkness of not knowing and the light of open attention. Hidden in the impulse is the potency of originative power, what I have called the *seed of wholeness*.

Aristotle's concept of entelechy proves helpful in seeing the movement impulse as a potent seed from which self-experience and a developing "I-consciousness" can potentially unfold. The appearance and disappearance of a self, identified as "I," appears to be an archetypal phenomenon that supports the unfolding of the emergent self. The kind of *selflessness* that appears when the identified self disappears allows for the possibility of the impulse to manifest in a transformative manner.

Authentic Movement offers a discipline that positively affirms the following statement by Paul Mackay in a report on the social sciences: "We are increasingly discovering that our 'I,' the self, can be experienced in the encounter with the other human being" (p. 15). The study of witness consciousness in this thesis offers evidence that the individual comes to know the developing "I" of self through the phenomenon of relationship. The emergence of the developing self is strengthened through relational practice and the individual's willingness to work at the threshold of the unknown. Here, the wakeful gaze of the witness invites the potential *presencing* of wholeness. In this respect, the role of the witness is to be of service: whether to self-development, to the development of the other, or to a world in need of healing.

Appendix A: Survey on “The Witness” in Authentic Movement

Your response will help support my master’s degree study and thesis at the Barfield School at Sunbridge College. The Barfield program seeks to integrate contemplative practice and academic research.

**If you have any questions, you can contact me at:
paulasager@cox.net or (401) 781-2824**

You have agreed to participate in my study of witness consciousness by filling out this questionnaire. I am interested in learning if and how you think of and experience witnessing, both the inner witness and the external witness. I realize that some of these questions may require some reflection. It would be fine to only answer the questions to which you are most drawn. Any of the questions that you can respond to with whatever degree of depth or time you have will be most appreciated. If you only have time to answer one or two questions, it would still be of value. Please feel free to use more space than allotted for any of your responses.

Name:

(your name will not be used in the writing of my thesis)

Hometown/State/Country:

Age:

You’ve been doing Authentic Movement for (write yes after one of the following):

Less than one year.

A year.

About four or five years.

About ten years.

More than ten years.

You practice Authentic Movement (write yes after one of the following):

Daily.

Weekly.

Monthly.

Occasionally.

Can you give a brief chronology of how you have participated in Authentic Movement?

Please include any of the following if relevant:

Did you begin in a group or in private sessions with a teacher?

Do you currently participate in a group? If yes, what kind: i.e., teacher-led, peer group, etc.?

Do you consider yourself a teacher of Authentic Movement?

Do you use the practice of Authentic Movement in your work life?

The Mover's Experience of the External Witness in Authentic Movement

I'm curious to know anything you can share about your experience as a mover in relationship to an external witness. Here are some possible questions to consider:

As a mover, has your experience of having an external witness changed over time?

What expectations do you have of an external witness?

Are there things that an external witness does that you find supportive?

Are there things that an external witness may do that you find unsupportive?

How would you describe the experience of "being seen" by an external witness?

Have there been times when you have not felt "seen" by an external witness?

The Mover's Experience of the Inner Witness in Authentic Movement

I'm curious to know anything you can share about your experience as a mover in relationship to your own inner witness. Here are some possible questions to consider:

Has your experience of your inner witness changed over time?

How do you conceive of the inner witness in Authentic Movement?

How do you experience your own inner witness?

Is your experience of the inner witness different when you're moving compared to when you're witnessing? If so, how?

The Experience of the External Witness in Authentic Movement

I'm curious to know anything you can share about your experience as an external witness. Here are some possible questions to consider:

As an external witness, has your experience of the inner witness changed over time?

Is your experience of witnessing different from ordinary perceiving? If so, describe.

Can you name an inner hindrance or obstacle and how it compromises your ability to witness another?

Can you name an inner hindrance or obstacle and how it compromises your ability to witness yourself?

As an external witness, are there particular considerations that you weigh before offering verbal witnessing to a mover?

Have you had an experience of clear knowing by your inner witness while moving and/or while witnessing another mover? Please describe what you remember, staying as close, in your language, to the actual experience as possible?

Is there anything further you want to add about being an external witness, about being witnessed as a mover, or about your experience of the inner witness?

Thank you very much for participating in this study.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form for Group Study

I am being asked to participate in a Masters degree research project at the Barfield School of Sunbridge College designed to explore the role of “the witness” in the process of human self-development. I have been provided with a preliminary outline of the study and understand the expectations required of me to participate in this project.

I understand that in giving my consent to participate I will be asked to participate in:

1. a preliminary interview with the investigator (audio-recorded).
2. a series of six sessions engaging in the experiential practice of Authentic Movement.
3. a post-study interview (audio recorded).
4. keeping the confidentiality of others involved in the study as I expect others to honor my confidentiality.

I have experienced Authentic Movement and am familiar with the psycho-physical nature of this practice. I agree to take full responsibility for my experiences during the Authentic Movement sessions of the study. I understand that time will be made available by the investigator to discuss any questions that arise for me during the course of the study.

I understand that a requirement for participation in the study will be the agreement to share documents created during sessions (journal entries, drawings, audio-recorded spoken offerings during the processing time) and in the two interviews.

I understand that my name will be disclosed only to the investigator and the other participants in the study. I understand that material from the sessions and the interviews may be quoted or paraphrased in the write up of the study, but that no information that could identify me with that material will be used. I give permission to the investigator to use the material for subsequent publication, presentation, distribution, or teaching.

I understand that I have the option to refuse to participate in this study or to withdraw from it without prejudice at any time.

I understand that I will not be paid for my participation in this study, but that I may ask for a copy of the final results of this study once it is completed.

I have read and understand fully the details pertinent to my participation in this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss the project with the investigator. The above procedures have been satisfactorily explained to me. I understand that if further questions about my participation arise in the course of the study, I can expect them to be answered in detail and to my satisfaction.

With these understandings, I agree to become a participant in the research project described above.

Signature of Subject Date

I have witnessed the reading of this consent form.

Signature of Witness Date

I have fully explained the project to _____

and have answered any questions to the best of my ability.

Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix C: First Session Introduction to Group Study Participants

Witness Consciousness: A Group Experiential Research Project

This is a research project that intends to look at how and if the presence of an external witness has an impact on the internal, or inner, witness. As soon as we begin talking about the “inner witness,” we are talking about something that cannot be seen directly.

So our method of observation and learning will involve being alert to the phenomena that will arise in each of your experiences, none of which can be predicted or predetermined.

There is nothing special you have to do to change our basic guidelines, which the witnesses will review before you begin. So I invite you to enter into our work just as you would anytime you come to an Authentic Movement session. The main difference is that we will follow a pretty precise time frame that I will outline for you in a minute, and I will be asking you to do some reflective writing at the end.

The structure I’ve designed for us to explore witness consciousness involves starting in two separate groups of one witness and two movers in each room. In a couple of weeks we will come together as one group; but for now, we will be in two groups with me as a silent witness to the whole process in this center room.

Room A	Middle Room	Room B
Witness 1		Witness 2
Mover 1	Meta-witness	Mover 3
Mover 2		Mover 4

The structure for our work tonight is as follows:

Each group in their own room will begin with a warm-up exercise or lab focused on tracking the physical body in space. The whole process will last about 20 minutes, and the witnesses will explain the format and keep track of the time.

Then, staying in your same room, there will be a 20-minute movement session where you’ll be invited to notice at least three pools of experience that might roughly correspond with something near the beginning, from the middle, and from the end of your moving and witnessing experiences. I would also like to invite the movers to notice anything that stands out about your experience or awareness of the witness both as you enter or begin the movement and again at the end as you come out of the movement.

After the witness has signaled the end of the movement and the movers have come out, there will be 20 minutes for a writing transition. This is a free-writing time, an opportunity to let the words come authentically just as you would in a regular Authentic Movement session.

The writing time will be immediately followed by 30 minutes for the movers and the witness to come together for a verbal processing time. Each witness will facilitate her group during this time.

At the end of this time we will all take 20 minutes to write some reflections about the whole session. At that time I will give you paper and a couple of questions and thoughts to direct you with this.

Appendix D: Session-by-Session Outline of the Study

Sessions One and Two — The Individual Body

Sessions Three and Four — Transition to the Collective Body

Sessions Five and Six — The Collective Body

Session One: The Individual Body — Mover and Witness I

10 minutes — Intro: Overview of Session in the middle room; all together.

20 minutes — Tracking Lab: Tracking the Physical body in space.

Witness 1 and Movers 1 and 2 in Room A. Witness 2 and Movers 3 and 4 in Room B.

Tracking the Physical body: 2 minutes of moving (Movers A and B)
 4 minutes for Mover 1/ 3 to speak
 4 minutes for witness to respond
 4 minutes for Mover 2 / 4 to speak
 4 minutes for witness to respond

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Movement

Track pools of experience (i.e., beginning, middle, end).

Witness 1 and Movers 1 and 2 in Room A. Witness 2 and Movers 3 and 4 in Room B.

Each witness speaks, to mark beginning and end of movement time.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Writing Transition: All write independently. Journal and pen provided.

30 minutes — Processing

Movers process with their witness. Movers speak first. Witnesses mostly give witnessing of aspects of mover's experience of which she has already spoken. Witness, out of her own discernment, can ask if it's okay to give witnessing of something of which the mover did not speak. Witness speaks to individual movers without referencing the other mover.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

15 minutes — Writing: Reflection on Session One

Movers: The emphasis is on their awareness of the witness and awareness of their own inner witness in the context of their movement and processing experience.

Witnesses: The emphasis is on their experience of witnessing self and other and of awareness of their own inner witness.

Meta-witness: What is the role and experience of a peripheral, silent presence?

5 Minutes – Closing: All together in central room.

Session Two: The Individual Body — Mover and Witness II

10 minutes — Intro: Overview of Session in the middle room; all together.

20 minutes — Tracking Lab: Tracking the Physical and Sensation.

Witness 1 and Movers 1 and 2 in Room A. Witness 2 and Movers 3 and 4 in Room B.

Tracking the Physical and Sensation: 2 minutes of moving (both Movers A and B)
4 minutes for Mover 1 / 3 to speak
4 minutes for witness to respond
4 minutes for Mover 2 / 4 to speak
4 minutes for witness to respond

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Movement

Track pools of experience (i.e., beginning, middle, end).

Witness 1 and Movers 1 and 2 in Room A. Witness 2 and Movers 3 and 4 in Room B.

Each witness speaks, to mark beginning and ending of movement.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Writing Transition: All write independently. Journal and pen provided.

Witness 1 and Movers 1 and 2 in Room A. Witness 2 and Movers 3 and 4 in Room B.

Meta-witness in middle room.

30 minutes — Processing

Movers process with their witness. Movers speak first; witnesses mostly give witnessing of aspects of the mover's experience of which she has already spoken. Witness, out of her own discernment, can ask if it's okay to give witnessing of something of which the mover did not speak. Witness speaks to individual movers without referencing the other mover.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

15 minutes — Writing: Reflection on Session Two

Movers: The emphasis is on their awareness of the witness and awareness of their own inner witness in the context of their movement and processing experience.

Witnesses: The emphasis is on their experience of witnessing self and other and of awareness of their own inner witness.

Meta-witness: What is the role and experience of a peripheral, silent presence?

5 Minutes — Closing: All together in central room.

Session Three: Transition to Collective Body — The Moving Witness I

10 minutes — Intro: Overview of Session in the middle room all together.

20 minutes — Tracking Lab: Tracking the Physical, Sensation, and Emotion.

Witness 1 and Movers 1 and 2 in Room A. Witness 2 and Movers 3 and 4 in Room B.

Tracking the Physical, Sensation, and Emotion:

2 minutes of moving (both Movers A and B)

4 minutes for Mover 1 to speak

4 minutes for witness to respond

4 minutes for Mover 2 to speak

4 minutes for witness to respond

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Movement: All together in one group.

Track pools of experience (i.e., beginning, middle, end).

Everyone in Room A — 4 movers, 2 witnesses, 1 meta-witness.

Witness 1 rings bell to mark beginning and ending of movement.

20 minutes — Writing Transition: All write independently. Journal and pen provided.

Witness 1 and Movers 1 and 2 in Room A. Witness 2 and Movers 3 and 4 in Room B.

Meta-witness in middle room

30 minutes — Processing

Movers process with their witness in respective rooms. Movers speak first; witnesses mostly give witnessing of aspects of the mover's experience of which she has already spoken. Witness, out of her own discernment, can ask if it's okay to give witnessing of something of which the mover did not speak. Witness speaks to individual movers and may reference other movers.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently

15 minutes — Writing: Reflection on Session Three

Movers: The emphasis is on their awareness of the witness and awareness of their own inner witness in the context of their movement and processing experience.

Witnesses: The emphasis is on their experience of witnessing self and other and of awareness of their own inner witness.

Meta-witness: What is the role and experience of a peripheral, silent presence?

5 Minutes — Closing: All together in Room A.

Session Four: Transition to Collective Body — The Moving Witness II

10 minutes — Intro: Overview of Session — all seven participants.

No Tracking Lab

20 minutes — Movement

Track pools of experience (i.e., beginning, middle, end).

Both groups of movers and witness will be together in Room A.

The two Witnesses are on the periphery of the space.

The four Movers stay in the space to move. They are invited to make eye contact with the witnesses and the other movers.

Witness 2 rings bell to mark beginning and ending.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Writing Transition: All write independently. Journal and pen provided. Movers and witnesses are all together in Room A.

Meta-witness in middle room.

45 minutes — Processing

Movers speak first; witnesses may speak to any mover and mostly give witnessing of aspects of the mover's experience of which she has already spoken. Witness, out of her own discernment, can ask if it's okay to give witnessing of something of which the mover did not speak. The movers practice silent witnessing (containment) and do not speak about or to other movers.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

15 minutes — Writing: Reflection on Session Four

Movers: The emphasis is on their awareness of the witness and awareness of their own inner witness in the context of their movement and processing experience.

Witnesses: The emphasis is on their experience of witnessing self and other and of awareness of their own inner witness.

Meta-witness: What is the role and experience of a peripheral, silent presence?

5 minutes — Closing: All together in Room A.

Session Five: The Collective Body — The Circle I

10 minutes — Intro: Overview of Session — all together.

No Tracking Lab

20 minutes — Movement

Track pools of experience (i.e., beginning, middle, end).
All movers and witnesses will be together in Room A.

Eye contact among movers and witnesses is invited, as is witnessing the emptiness of the circle. Movers are invited to make eye contact with the witnesses and the other movers. Witness 1 rings bell to mark beginning and ending of the movement. After the ending bell, movers return to the circle and again may make eye contact and/or witness the emptiness of the circle.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Writing Transition: All write independently. Journal and pen provided.
Movers and witnesses are all together in Room A.

Meta-witness in middle room.

45 minutes — Processing

Movers speak first; witnesses may speak to any mover and mostly give witnessing of aspects of the mover's experience of which she has already spoken. Witness, out of her own discernment, can ask if it's okay to give witnessing of something of which the mover did not speak. The movers may speak to any mover and reference other movers in their own speaking.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

15 minutes — Writing: Reflection on Session Five

Movers: The emphasis is on their awareness of the witness and awareness of their own inner witness in the context of their movement and processing experience.

Witnesses: The emphasis is on their experience of witnessing self and other and of awareness of their own inner witness.

Meta-witness: What is the role and experience of a peripheral, silent presence?

5 minutes — Closing: All together in Room A.

Session Six: The Collective Body — The Circle II

10 minutes — Intro: Overview of Session — all seven participants

No Tracking Lab

20 minutes — Movement

Track pools of experience (i.e., beginning, middle, end).

All movers and witnesses will be together in Room A.

Eye contact among movers and witnesses is invited, as is witnessing the emptiness of the circle. Movers are invited to make eye contact with the witnesses and the other movers. Witness 2 rings bell to mark beginning and ending of the movement. After the ending bell, movers return to the circle and again may make eye contact and/or witness the emptiness of the circle.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

20 minutes — Writing Transition: All write independently. Journal and pen provided. Movers and witnesses are all together in Room A.

Meta-witness in middle room.

45 minutes — Processing

Movers speak first; witnesses may speak to any mover and mostly give witnessing of aspects of the mover's experience of which she has already spoken. Witness, out of her own discernment, can ask if it's okay to give witnessing of something of which the mover did not speak. The movers may speak to any mover and reference other movers in their own speaking.

Meta-witness in middle room, sits silently.

15 minutes — Writing: Reflection on Session Six

Movers: The emphasis is on their awareness of the witness and awareness of their own inner witness in the context of their movement and processing experience.

Witnesses: The emphasis is on their experience of witnessing self and other and of awareness of their own inner witness.

Meta-witness: What is the role and experience of a peripheral, silent presence?

5 minutes — Closing: All together in Room A.

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