6 Developing the concept of repose

6.1 Framing

In the previous chapter, I suggested that a nearly overwhelming sense of incapacity, helplessness and/or futility is sometimes experienced by individuals when presented with evidence of ecological degradation, and that it may at times become difficult to sustain our engagement with such complex, seemingly intractable challenges. Furthermore, I suggested that even in the case of self-appointed, would-be change agents, questions are often raised regarding the experience of agency (or lack thereof) in the face of the enormity of the challenges facing us (as was the case with many participants of the *MSc in Responsibility and Business Practice* programme). I explored the kinds of responses evidenced by participants on the Ecological Thinking course, whose progress I tracked, and I indicated that the experiences of these young people were not dissimilar to those of the MSc group, and to my own in going through this inquiry.

In this chapter, I draw on Spinoza's ethical philosophy and on his concepts of *repose* and *peace of mind*, and I seek to develop an understanding of how we might differently position ourselves in the world, and how we might differently understand our potential contribution to action for sustainability.

6.2 Repose in oneself

I propose, following on from Spinoza and Naess, that developing an appropriate sense of agency and place within the world may be akin to creating repose in ourselves (or *acquiescentia in se ipso*, in Spinoza's words). Naess (1995:253) suggests that such repose may be understood as a form of self-acceptance, or as the joy that is 'derived from contemplation of our own achievement, creativity, or more broadly – activeness, and the joy derived from contemplation of causes of joy outside of us'. Naess argues that:

> Lack of self-acceptance (*acquiescentia in se ipso*) accounts for much of the passivity displayed by an important sector of the public in environmental conflicts. Many people are on the right side, but few stand up in public meetings and state how they, as private persons, feel about the pollution in their neighborhoods. They do not have sufficient self-respect, respect for their own feelings, and faith in their own importance. (Naess, 1995:253)

He continues:

> One may say, somewhat loosely, that what we now lack in our technological age is repose in oneself. The conditions of modern life prevent the full development of that self-respect and self-esteem which is required to reach a stable high degree of *acquiescentia in se ipso* (the term *alienation*, incidentally, is related to the opposite of *in se*, namely *in alio* wherein we repose in something else, something outside ourselves such as achievement in the eyes of others—we are 'other directed'). (Naess, 1995:255)

As I make sense of it, such repose in oneself is not synonymous with a heroic, grandiose sense of self, nor with a self committed to strategies of domination or control (Mathews, 2003). It is not synonymous with the quest for complete knowledge and quick-fix solutions. Neither is the sense of humility implicit in the notion of repose tantamount to the experience of incapacity or futility. Creating repose in oneself is not even, to my mind, about finding a midway point, or a balance, between these two extremes. Both of these extremes may be understood as arising from the conditions of modern life which Naess suggests 'prevent the full-development of…self-respect and self-esteem'. Rather, such repose may lie in re-visioning our very sense of how the self may appropriately relate to the world, and to the many challenges and opportunities which may lie therein.

Having drawn, in the last few paragraphs, on Spinozistic notions of joy, repose and activeness, it may be appropriate at this juncture to delve deeper into Spinoza's philosophy. I cannot proceed without something of a caveat. I do not intend, within this thesis, to attend to the minutiae and technicalities of Spinoza's argument. Having spent some time immersing myself in Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677),

in particular, I feel that I can empathise with Woodbridge's (1949) qualified introduction to what is considered Spinoza's greatest work:

> The convictions of philosophers are often more interesting and frequently better than the arguments they use in supporting them. Consideration of the argument is largely a consideration of logical consistency and thorough consistency is difficult to attain. Consideration of convictions leads one to reflect on their character and their power, on what they do or may do to us. Sometimes, when the argument fails to support them, they do not lose their power. (Woodbridge, 1949:xxvi)

I am attracted to Spinoza's philosophy, not because of the logic or form of his argument, but because I believe that some of his key convictions could appropriately inform the challenge that I have identified so far in this thesis: that of creating the personal capacity to *stay with* and engage with complex ecological challenges, and to make sense of the uncertainty, ambiguity and helplessness which may be experienced. So what are Spinoza's key convictions, and how are they relevant to work for sustainability?

6.2.1 Spinoza's blessedness or peace of mind

Spinoza's naturalistic theology is, arguably, the foundation for the rest of his metaphysics. As Woodbridge (1949:xxxii) points out, in Spinoza's study of ethics, or of a life of freedom, he 'puts God first, for God is not the last resort of desperation but the first resort of understanding'. Indeed:

> Integrated order and connection, substance, nature, ultimate essence, existence, idea, and power, God – these are all only different expressions for that in which everything that is, *is* and without which nothing can be nor be conceived. Of nothing else, thinks Spinoza, have we more immediate or more certain knowledge. On it knowledge of everything else depends. Into it our knowledge of everything else must be fitted… (Woodbridge, 1949:xxxiii)

Spinoza's theology collapses the distinction between a transcendental God and earthly nature, referring instead to a single all-encompassing entity, to which he referred (among other things) as God *or* Nature. Philosopher Don Garret (1996:9) speaks of Spinoza's theology in the following way: '…by reconceiving Nature as active and self-causing, and at the same time reconceiving God as nonpurposive and extended, he was able to conceive of God as identical with, rather than as the transcendent creator of, Nature'. For Spinoza, God or Nature is the only substance, and therefore '*all* knowledge is knowledge of God… just as all effects are effects of God's power' (Garret, 1996:9). Particularly relevant to our discussion is the subsequent conclusion that all beings ongoingly participate in the divine (although arguably not usually in full consciousness of this). Spinoza is clear that:

> Individual things are nothing but modifications or modes of God's attributes, expressing those attributes in a certain and determinate manner. (Ethics, Part 1, Prop. XXV, Corollary, 1949:63)

This is not dissimilar to Thomas Berry's (1994:4) suggestion that the Earth's species and beings might be appropriately understood as 'modes of divine presence' and as 'the very basis of our religious experience'. For Spinoza, the highest virtue we can aspire towards is an adequate understanding of God or Nature, and of our place therein:

> It is therefore most profitable to us in life to make perfect the intellect or reason as far as possible, and in this one thing consists the highest happiness or blessedness of man; for blessedness is nothing but the peace of mind which springs from the intuitive knowledge of God, and to perfect the intellect is nothing but to understand God, together with the attributes and actions of God which flow from the necessity of His Nature… (Ethics, Part 4, Appendix IV, 1949:242)

Blessedness, then, or peace of mind, might be understood as emerging out of an enlarged understanding of God or Nature, and all that this encompasses, including the nature of our relationship to, and place in, God or Nature. Spinoza grounds his ethical philosophy in his observation of human bondage to the affections. Experience teaches Spinoza that human beings are often enslaved by mental anxiety, by passions and affections which make us, to his mind, less free. Spinoza is convinced that such disturbances of mind arise from the love of that which we

hold dear, and which is simultaneously perishable; in other words, from the knowledge that we are always in danger of losing that which we love. Spinoza claims that 'when a thing is not loved, no quarrels will arise concerning it – no sadness will be felt if it perishes – no envy if it is possessed by another – no fear, no hatred, in short no disturbances of mind' (*On the Improvement [OTI]*, 1949:5). The challenges identified by Spinoza are of course similar to those that Freya Mathews (2003:11) considers when she asks '…how it is possible to sustain an erotic engagement in the world…in full knowledge of the possibilities of suffering and death that this world holds for us'. How then, might we free ourselves from the enslavement of mental anxiety, from the fear, envy, possessiveness and malice which Spinoza points to as causing much grievance and unrest to ourselves and to the communities to which we belong?

Spinoza suggests that such peace of mind may be attained by a love of that which is eternal: 'But love toward a thing eternal and infinite feeds the mind wholly with joy, and is itself un mingled with any sadness, wherefore it is greatly to be desired and sought for with all our strength' (*OTI*, 1949:5). This 'true good' or eternal love, can be inspired by 'the knowledge of the union existing between the mind and the whole of Nature' (*OTI*, 1949:6). Indeed, the experience of blessedness might rest on the understanding and appreciation of our own ongoing participation in nature (which is one and the same with the divine). This, to me, is a key point. Insofar as we develop an adequate understanding of the role and place that we occupy as modes of an eternal divine essence, we experience blessedness, peace of mind, repose; the equivalent, Spinoza suggests, to the glory referred to in sacred writings.

Spinoza begins his analysis of the nature of the emotions with definitions and descriptions of the so-called primary emotions, from which he believes all others arise: namely, desire, joy and sorrow. He refers to desire as a being's endeavour to 'persevere in its own being'. Indeed, a being's desire, essence and endeavour to persevere are identical to one another. Spinoza's concept of desire is closely linked to his concept of freedom, which he defines in the following way:

> That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its own nature alone and is determined to action by itself alone. (Ethics, Part One, Definition VII, 1949:41)

Spinoza understands freedom, or perfection, as he also refers to it, as being an approachable but not a completely attainable model or limit. According to Spinoza, an individual may be understood as always striving towards a greater power to act, and this experience of greater power is simultaneous with the experience of joy. Indeed, apart from desire, the primary emotions are joy and sorrow, where joy is an affect by which a being passes to greater perfection or freedom, and where sorrow is an affect by which a being passes to a lesser perfection or freedom. Our experience of freedom is therefore intimately linked to our experience of capacity for action, and also to our experience of joy. This raises a number of questions relevant to the challenge I explore in this thesis: that of creating the capacity to engage with and respond to the ecological challenges facing us in a complex world. What does 'capacity for action' entail? What is this 'greater power to act' about, and is this indeed a capacity which human beings strive towards, insofar as they strive to fulfill their own nature (and indeed, how is our own nature, our own essence, understood)? How might we describe and understand this power; how, if at all, might we seek to foster it? And how might we understand power and capacity for action in a way that is consistent with ecological wisdom, rather than with anthropocentric dominion?

It is significant that Spinoza's thinking focuses particularly on the *transition* to greater or lesser perfection and freedom, rather than on the attainment of an ideal end point. Indeed, Spinoza suggests that such perfect freedom is nonsensical, since all individuals are part of social and natural systems where external laws and causes are always interacting with and shaping the course of an individual's life, so that he/she is never the only adequate cause of his/her own actions. Indeed, this very understanding of ourselves as necessarily following the laws of nature, and as being part of more powerful, more encompassing systems and patterns, is the kind of enlarged understanding which Spinoza refers to as adequate knowledge, the transition to which moves us towards greater freedom.

> But human power is very limited and is infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes, so that we do not possess an absolute power to adapt to our service the things which are without us. Nevertheless we shall bear with equanimity those things which happen to us contrary to what a consideration of our own profit demands if we are conscious that we have performed our duty, that the power we have could not reach so far as to enable us to avoid

> those things, and that we are a part of the whole of Nature, whose order we follow. If we clearly and distinctly understand this, the part of us which is determined by intelligence…will be entirely satisfied therewith, and in that satisfaction will endeavor to persevere; for, in so far as we understand, we cannot desire anything except what is necessary, nor, absolutely, can we be satisfied with anything but the truth. (Ethics, Part Four, Appendix XXXII, 1949:250-251)

6.2.2 Spinoza's repose and joyful living

We may now return to Spinoza's notion of repose in oneself, which I argue, along with Naess, may help us to appropriately reframe how we position ourselves in relation to the ecological crisis. One way that Spinoza defines repose in oneself is as self-satisfaction, as follows: 'Self-satisfaction is the joy which is produced by contemplating ourselves and our own power of action' (Ethics, Part Three, Definition XXV, 1949:179). This may be akin to experiencing contentment with oneself, where this is defined in the following way: 'He who has done anything which he imagines will affect others with joy will be affected with joy accompanied with a consciousness of himself as its cause, that is to say, he will look upon himself with joy' (Ethics, Part Three, Prop. XXX, Dem., 1949:150).

Developing repose in oneself may therefore be understood as concurrent with increased self-awareness, and with increased consciousness of our own positioning and the effects of our own actions. In acknowledging that we are 'part of the whole of Nature, whose order we follow', it is possible to develop an adequate appreciation of our own sources of power, *as well as* of our own limitations. Experiencing repose in oneself is therefore not equivalent to the experience of conceit, or contempt for others, or unaware self-exaltation and uncritical self-importance. Spinoza suggests that it is indeed possible to think too much of oneself, and that this is equivalent to an *in*adequate understanding of ourselves, where we allow imagined or fantastical views to take the place of what is real, what is evidenced in our living in the world, and how we are actually experienced by those with whom we interact.

> When a man thinks too much of himself, this imagination is called 'pride', and is a kind of delirium because he dreams with his eyes open that he is able to do all those things to which he attains in imagination alone... (Ethics, Part Three, Prop. XXVI, Dem. and Note, 1949:147)

We may therefore find repose, or joy, in an understanding of ourselves neither as saviours nor as irrelevant, but as participating in processes of creativity and activeness, and in nourishing relationships and important work. We may find repose in the knowledge of our openness to phenomena, and our willingness to enter into relationship with the world as it is, in its unfolding, co-created mystery. So I may find repose in my willingness and ability to be in love with my husband, to care deeply for the intimate relationships I participate in with family and friends, to care for the place in which I live, and the beings and patterns of life I encounter here. My very engagement in this PhD inquiry, the knowledge that I am willing to face my own sense of self-doubt and hopelessness, to question my own role and positioning, and to begin to push myself to edges with which I am less comfortable, gives me some sense of repose, or restfulness.

We may also find repose, or restfulness, in a sense of humility, understood as '…a humbling of the self, an admitting that we emerge from and are beholden to serve a natural world much deeper and greater than our individual and personal selves' (Fisher, 2002:119). Indeed, as Naess suggests, following Spinoza, it is through such an understanding of Nature, or the total field of reality, as much deeper and greater than our individual selves that we might find joy: 'We can come to know adequately more potent things than ourselves. This gives us joy because of *our activeness in the very process of knowing them*. The realization of our own potency, and *our active relation to the more potent*, results in joy' (Naess, 1995:255, my emphasis). At the time of writing this, my most immediate memory of such restful, joyful humility is one I experienced while driving home one recent evening, at the close of winter, with Matthew next to me. In the silent companionship of that moment, I felt myself moved, and simultaneously swelled and humbled, by the beauty and grandeur of the rose-coloured dusk, which enveloped the earth around us, and us within it.

Spinoza argues that humility is not a virtue, since it is accompanied by the experience of sorrow and not of joy, and therefore leads to a decrease in perfection

or freedom. Importantly, though, humility might also be understood as arising out of an adequate understanding of ourselves as relating to something more powerful. In this case, we might argue that the experience of humility, though often accompanied by a kind of sorrow, also has the potential to bring forth a kind of joy, to the extent that we are humbled by more adequate knowledge of something greater than us. In the following extract, Spinoza argues, somewhat paradoxically, that understanding something to be more powerful than ourselves also increases our own power of action, to the extent that we then *understand ourselves more distinctly* than we did before.

> Humility is sorrow which springs from this that a man contemplates his own weakness…But if we suppose that he forms a conception of his own impotence because he understands something to be more powerful than himself, by the knowledge of which he limits his own power of action, in this case we simply conceive that he understands himself distinctly, and his power of action is increased. (Ethics, Part Four, Prop. LIII, Dem., 1949:226-7)

6.2.3 Repose and power of acting: what's the link?

A reading of Spinoza does not necessarily leave one clear about what he means when he talks about our 'power of acting'. We may infer that such power is closely related to our endeavour to persevere, to carry on living and being, but there does not appear to be much further detail or specification of how this power might be embodied and enacted. The extract quoted above seems to afford a clue regarding the nature of this power of action. Is it possible that our power of acting is intimately linked to an adequate knowledge of ourselves and our place in Nature, so that any increase in such knowledge is inextricably linked to increased power and increased activeness? Naess talks about Spinoza's power of acting in the following way:

> An increase in power is an increase in the ability to carry out what we sincerely strive to do. Power does not presuppose that we coerce other people; a tyrant may be less powerful than some poor soul sitting in prison. This concept of power has a long tradition and

> should not be forgotten. What we strive to do is defined in relation to what actually happens; thus 'to save the world from pollution' is not something anyone strives to do, but is rather a kind of limited effort to save the things around us. (Naess, 1995:254)

It may be that a more adequate understanding of ourselves and of our place in the world is synonymous with distinctly understanding what it is that we strive to do and also what it is that actually happens as a result. So our power and capacity for action may be increased not through vague fantasies and impractical ideals, such as that of 'saving the world', but through carefully contemplating what our intentions are in each moment, and how these might influence things around us. Understood in this way, it seems to me that there is much richness and subtlety to the concept of power of acting, and to the practice of developing repose in oneself. Importantly, such a practice would seem to be grounded in seeking always an *adequate understanding* of oneself, and may usefully draw on inquiry practices which create capacities for self-awareness and self-reflection. Knowledge of oneself would be adequate insofar as it conceives the self as active participant in a more powerful cosmos. The experience of repose would not serve to aggrandise the individual so that she believes that her own power rivals, or eclipses, that of the whole, but rather, would appropriately ground the individual as a local mode or part of God or Nature. Indeed, Woodbridge (1949:xxiv) suggests that this discovery of place is at the core of Spinoza's project and of his critique of the human condition: 'We are what we are because of our place in nature and no other reason, and we are bound to be unhappy and miserable so long as we are ignorant of what that place is'. Woodbridge continues to ask:

> But what is our place in nature? The question is now no longer one of geography…It is discovered by the mind. It is the same place as that of the sands of the desert, or of the stars, if you will. It is a necessary place, a place, that is, which nature does not and cannot get on without and without which neither we nor the sands of the desert can get on. (Woodbridge, 1949:xxx)

Arguably, then, developing repose in ourselves requires that we understand both our geographical place and our place, or role, within a wider pattern. It requires that we understand ourselves as a necessary part, and also as part of something that is much more than just us. It requires us to feel confident of the ground from

which we speak and act, and also to understand that the experience of joy is an essential part of such groundedness. Such joy, groundedness, repose and restfulness, could be seen as antidotes to the anxiety and agitation of the human condition, described by Spinoza in the following way: 'It is plain that we are disturbed by external causes in a number of ways, and that, like the waves of the sea agitated by contrary winds, we fluctuate in our ignorance of our future and destiny' (Ethics, Part Three, Prop. LVII, Note, 1949:172). The anxieties and disturbances referred to by Spinoza are ones that I experience daily, the fluctuating between hope and fear of what lies ahead for me, for those I love, for humankind and for the earth. As a matter of course, I find myself agitated by doubts regarding my own self-worth; by dreams and aspirations of all that I might or might not achieve in an uncertain future; by shame and modesty and apprehension and all of those things which Spinoza recognizes as coming hand-in-hand with the experience of sorrow.

Like perfection or freedom, blessedness or peace of mind might also be understood as approachable rather than ideal states, and indeed, Spinoza readily admits that the experience of mental anxiety is a normal and natural human condition, and that the attainment of peace of mind is not without its challenges. He concludes the *Ethics* with the following lines regarding true peace of soul: 'It must indeed be difficult since it is so seldom discovered, for if salvation lay ready to hand and could be discovered without great labor, how could it be possible that it should be neglected almost by everybody? But all noble things are as difficult as they are rare' (Ethics, Part Five, Prop. XLII, Note, 1949:280). We might thus infer that the process of developing repose in oneself is a challenging one, demanding much attention and effort on our part, and one which we might therefore see as being linked to an ongoing process of personal and spiritual development. Perhaps most importantly, though, Spinoza's philosophy suggests that such ongoing personal transition is *necessarily* accompanied by the experience of joy. How might this understanding inform the way that we think about our work, our responsibilities, our spiritual practices and disciplines of inquiry, especially as these relate to sustainability and ecological justice? As I mentioned earlier, Naess, for one, critiques the joylessness which he suggests is endemic in modern environmental movements:

> The environmentalist sometimes succumbs to a joyless life that belies his concern for a better environment. This cult of dissatisfaction is apt to add to the already fairly advanced joylessness

> we find among socially responsible, successful people, and to undermine of the chief presuppositions of the ecological movement: that joy is related to the environment, and to nature. (Naess, 1995:250)

According to Spinoza, the experience of joy approximates the experience of blessedness, or peace of mind. Indeed, Spinoza defines joy as the 'temporal participation in divine blessedness', as moments when we experience peace of mind, albeit temporarily. So how is it that the transition towards an adequate knowledge of God or Nature, and of our place therein, is simultaneous with joy and with increased peace of mind? Spinoza suggests that the highest virtue we can aspire towards is knowledge of God or Nature, and that the transition towards this knowledge allows us to *knowingly* participate in the eternal and the divine. Through consciousness of such participation we then understand that part of us, at least, necessarily perseveres (since we are modes of that eternal substance which is God or Nature), and in this way, our ability to live joyfully is increased. We experience less fear and anxiety, and feel more at rest and at peace in the face of an uncertain and potentially dangerous world, since we also understand this world (and us within it) as part of that which is eternal substance.

> Thus, as one gains a larger share of adequate knowledge, one's mind becomes something 'whose greatest part is eternal' (E 5p39). It is not that one achieves continued personal existence after one's biological death…Instead, one brings within the scope of one's own mind adequate knowledge which has always been and always will be eternal in God, and one thus achieves for oneself the *perspective* of the eternal while one is alive. In consequence, a greater part of one's mind is composed of ideas that are impervious both to harmful affects—including fear—and to death itself (E 5p38). That is, the mind is less affected by fear in general, and hence by fear of death in particular; and, at the same time, death becomes less harmful and so less to be feared, because the greatest and most important part of the mind will survive (although not, of course, as the idea of the actually existing body, since that body will have perished). (Garrett, 1996:282-283)

6.2.4 The relevance of repose in current times

Given this admittedly brief exploration of some of Spinoza's key convictions, we might now return to the challenge posed by Woodbridge (1949): that of considering what it is that a philosopher's convictions *do or may do for us*. So what is it that an understanding of the Spinozistic concepts of joy, peace of mind, repose, and God or Nature, may do for us? How, in particular, might they help us in navigating our way through the ecological challenges currently facing us? How, if at all, might they help us to reframe how we position ourselves in responding to these challenges? Woodbridge suggests that were we to understand the world and our place within it along the lines proposed by Spinoza, we might be affected thus:

> If we begin with God, thinks Spinoza, we shall not cease to be men, we shall not cease to work hard or have troubles and pains, but our attitude of mind will be changed. We shall not go through life crying, complaining, and afraid. We shall not be docile, submissive, dissolute or resolute. We shall be something quite different. We shall be like one who has found an object which creates an irresistible love which can not be lost, or taken away, or impaired should others love it too. (Woodbridge, 1949:xxxiii)

The Spinozistic concepts of joy, peace of mind and repose may potentially help us to make sense of the extent to which we experience ourselves as capable of meaningful action in relation to ecological degradation.

But Spinoza's philosophy also raises many questions with regards to the particularities of cultivating such states of mind. In particular, the notion that blessedness or peace of mind is concurrent with our understanding of an eternal substance, God or Nature, in which part of us eternally perseveres, begs a number of questions. For how might we come to adequately know the eternal substance of which we, and all other beings, are a mode? Spinoza argues that of nothing have we more immediate knowledge than of this substance: 'We need not be ignorant, because we really are not, that this order and connection is the way that things and mind are held together and that without it, things and the mind would not be at all' (Woodbridge, 1949:xxxii). With Spinoza, we might agree that we are always in the midst of this substance, whether we call it God or Nature or something else,

because we are *necessarily and completely of* this substance. And with Spinoza, we might also admit that such peace of mind or adequate knowledge of our place commonly evades us. If we do believe that such noble understanding is as difficult as it is rare, then the following question may present itself: how do *I* come to know, in the concreteness and presentness of my particular experience, that I participate in such all-encompassing substance?

And indeed, how might we understand the eternal quality of this substance, particularly in view of the ecological degradation which is threatening the continuity of many of earth's beings and systems? And is such obsession with an abstract eternity a symptom of humanity's tendency to live in fear of death, and of our culture's unwillingness to accept the finitude of an individual's life? And if this is the case, how may a wish to know and participate in the eternal, divine substance inform the extent to which we are able to respond to the particularities of the current ecological crisis? How might we understand the eternal and the divine, not in abstract, theoretical terms, but in terms of our concrete experience of participation in such a thing? How might we come to judge the usefulness of peace of mind, and of understanding ourselves as actively participating in an infinitely more powerful, eternal substance, in relation to our efforts for sustainability and for ecological justice?

6.3 Moving forward with repose

I believe that the above are important questions, for which I do not pretend to have answers. It is important to note that Spinoza's philosophy, while possibly contributing to the development of a more appropriate sense of agency in relation to ecological challenges, can also be understood as giving rise to many complex questions. Indeed, some aspects of Spinoza's thought have been strongly critiqued as incommensurate with the ecological wisdom called for in current times (debates around this are developed in Naess [1977, 1980, 1983], Lloyd [1980] and Houle [1997], for example). I want, once again, to echo Woodbridge's (1949) appeal that a philosopher's convictions may best be judged according to what they *do or may do for us*. This, then, is a central theme I wish to develop in the remainder of the thesis: how might sustained engagement with ecological challenges be supported and enabled by the *development* and *enactment* of repose?

My sense is that, although Spinoza's central arguments are ultimately directed towards the concepts of blessedness and peace of mind (both of which could be understood as relating to and emerging from *acquiescentia in se ipso*, or repose in oneself), his seminal work, *Ethics* (1677), does not give us much of a clue as to what such repose or peace of mind would look like in practice (and even if it did, of course, one would have to consider the relevance of his proposals to current times). Naess, in his treatment of Spinoza's notion of repose, suggests that repose in oneself would mean possessing sufficient self-respect and self-esteem to stand up for what one believes is right, but again does not address the *development* and *practice* of repose in much detail.

In the remainder of this thesis, I build on both Spinoza and Naess's notions of repose, and by drawing on my experience of participating in various fields of practice/inquiry spaces, I seek to show what acting and leading from a position of repose might entail.

Furthermore, in developing the notion of *repose in oneself* throughout this thesis, I draw on a number of theoretical perspectives on the self (and the self in relation to more-than-human nature) and on personal and spiritual development. These perspectives could be understood as being rooted in participatory worldviews and, I believe, are capable of affording us great ecological wisdom and insight. The various theoretical perspectives I draw upon could broadly be understood as emerging from the fields of ecopsychology, panpsychism and deep ecology, and could be described, following Fisher (2002) and Davis (2005) as ecocentric, organic, radical, pluralist and inclusive of both environmental and psychological concerns.

That throughout the thesis I draw primarily on worldviews and theoretical perspectives which could be described in this manner is indicative of the frame of reference in which I have grounded myself as I engaged in my doctorate inquiry. Along with many proponents of participatory worldviews (see Reason, 2002; Skolimowski, 1994; Tarnas, 1991; Bender, 2003), I concur that the pervasive mind/matter, human/nature, subject/object dichotomies which characterise modernist ways of thinking are at the roots of the present planetary condition, and so I consciously seek out those perspectives which challenge such degenerative dichotomies. One such thinker is Thomas Berry, a Catholic monk and cultural

historian with special concern for the foundation of cultures in their relations with the natural world. He argues that:

> The deepest cause of the present devastation is found in a mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between the human and other modes of being and the bestowal of all rights on the humans. The other-than-human modes of being are seen as having no rights. They have reality and value only through their use by the human. In this context the other than human becomes totally vulnerable to exploitation by the human, an attitude that is shared by all four of the fundamental establishments that control the human realm: governments, corporations, universities and religions—the political, economic, intellectual, and religious establishments. All four are committed consciously or unconsciously to a radical discontinuity between the human and the nonhuman. (Berry, 1999:4)

Instead, Berry proposes that the Earth and all its beings (human and more-than-human) be understood as an integral community of subjects, capable of meaningful and life-affirming engagement with one another:

> In reality there is a single integral community of the Earth that includes all its component members whether human or other than human. In this community every being hast its own role to fulfill, its own dignity, its inner spontaneity. Every being has its own voice. Every being declares itself to the entire universe. Every being enters into communion with other beings. This capacity for relatedness, for presence to other beings, for spontaneity in action, is a capacity possessed by every mode of being throughout the entire universe. (Berry, 1999:4)

The majority of the perspectives upon which I draw throughout the thesis are consistent with the sentiments expressed by Berry above; that is, they represent ways of thinking which raise serious questions about the usefulness and appropriateness of anthropocentric and egocentric standpoints and of human dominion over the planet. Both instinctively and deliberately, I have been most attracted to those perspectives which seek to transcend shallow approaches to

environmentalism and ecological justice. The terms 'shallow' and 'deep' were first defined in connection with the ecological movement by Arne Naess (1973). Shallow approaches could be described as those which contend that major ecological problems can be resolved within, and with the continuation of, industrial capitalist society (Orton, 2003). The concepts (and practices) of sustainable development and conservationist environmentalism are often criticised for their seeming acceptance of the value systems underpinning our modern ways of life, and for allegedly perpetuating business as usual; indeed, in his original use of the terms shallow and deep, Naess (1973) argued that one of the underlying objectives of shallow movements is to safeguard the health and affluence of people in the developed countries by, for example, fighting against pollution and/or resource depletion which affects such privileged minorities directly.

Alternatively, deep ecological approaches could be understood as posing a head-on challenge to dualistic worldviews which 'frame humans as subjects standing in cognitive, affective, and practical relations to a world of independent objects' (Bender, 2003:397). Nondualist ontologies challenge both the dualist assumption of a world composed of independent human subjects and separate objects, and the monist belief that all beings exist in undifferentiated unity, as one thing. Deep ecologist Frederic Bender makes the point well:

> Nondualists, including Lao Tzu, Nagarjuna, Spinoza, and Naess, reject dualism and monism alike as one-sided. Thus, monists' mystical experience of all-encompassing unity yields to the nonmystical, nondualist two-truth doctrine, according to which ontological particulars reemerge, as it were, framed from the relative standpoint as interdependent particulars-in-relation (corresponding to Spinoza's *natura naturata*), and from the absolute standpoint as nature's spatiotemporal manifestations (modifications of Spinoza's *natura naturans*). There's nothing 'mystical' about this way of describing ontological particulars, though it happens also to be found in various contemplative traditions. Significantly, it is fully compatible with current developments in science. In Buddhism, the technical term for the ontological quality of particulars, incorporating both their phenomenality and their interdependence, is 'suchness' (Skt. *tathāthā*). (Bender, 2003:398)

Bender (2003) equates the depth of an ecological movement with its nondualist insight, and with the extent to which it has the potential to deactivate the discriminating intellect and open us to awareness of interbeing and/or at-one-ment with the sacred ground of Being. He describes depth metaphorically, in the following ways, and suggests that any approach to the ecological movement which grounds itself in nondualist insight may be described thus:

> *Depth*, in sum, metaphorically means nondualism. Temporal depth stands for the deeply archaic, long-repressed hunter-gatherer, even hominid or primate sensitivities and lifeways, or deep mind. Depth also connotes rootedness in place, for example, in local ecosystems, food webs, and the ecosphere as a whole…Depth connotes also an aesthetic of joyful finitude, heightened sensibilities associated with experiencing and affirming ourselves as parts of the Great Round of life and death. Attaining depth connotes spiritual transformation or enlightenment. It refers also to depth of commitment to bringing nondualist insight to bear on philosophical and practical issues. (Bender, 2003:404)

In what remains of this chapter, I explore some of the philosophical contributions of the broad theoretical perspectives upon which I draw for the purposes of this thesis. I return to the various thinkers and ideas to which I refer here later in the thesis, as I seek to develop an understanding of what it would mean to act and lead from a position of repose, and to show how this might be understood as a relevant and appropriate praxis for responding to ecological challenges in current times.

6.3.1 Ecopsychology: psychological and ecological healing

Ecopsychology is the name given to emerging paradigms which seek to integrate ecology with psychology in responding to fundamental questions regarding the state of the world and of the self in current times. Ecopsychology is rooted in the understanding that psychological and spiritual questions—or the study of the soul—cannot adequately be considered without reference to the physical world, and correspondingly, that current environmental problems emerge from our narrow understanding of the self (or soul) and of our relationship with (more-than-human)

nature. Indeed, ecopsychology poses a fundamental challenge to modernity, the metaphysics of which have postulated a clear dualism between the allegedly 'exterior' world of material nature and the allegedly 'interior' world of the mind and emotions since the time of the Enlightenment (Abram, 2002).

The practice of ecopsychology commits itself to considering questions of personal health and personal growth side-by-side with questions regarding the health of the natural world and of global and local ecosystems, and through ecologically-informed psychotherapy and/or therapeutic interventions, seeks to facilitate the development of lifestyles that are both ecologically and psychologically healthy and sustainable (Davis, 2005). Environmental commentator Lester Brown (1995:xvi) welcomes ecopsychology's promise to '[bring] together the sensitivity of therapists, the expertise of ecologists, and the ethical energy of environmental activists' and suggests that 'out of this rich mixture may arise a new, more effective, more philosophically grounded form of environmental politics', while ecological philosopher David Abram (2002:ix) applauds ecopsychology's proposal 'that the psyche cannot really be understood as a distinct dimension isolated from the sensuous world that materially enfolds us, and indeed that earthly nature can no longer be genuinely understood as a conglomeration of objects and objective processes independent of subjectivity and sentience'.

Transpersonal psychologist John Davis (2005) explains that the thought and practice of ecopsychology is rooted in three insights, namely:

- That there is a deep emotional and psychic bond between humans and more-than-human nature;

- That the illusion of a division between humans and more-than-human nature leads to suffering for both the environment (in terms of ecological degradation) and for humans (experienced as grief, apathy and alienation);

- And that acknowledging and respecting the bond between humans and more-than-human nature is healing for both. Such reconnection may include harvesting the healing potential of contact with nature, and engaging in grief and despair work in relation to environmental degradation, amongst other practices.

Lester Brown suggests that every political movement (and specifically the environmental movement) has its psychological dimension, since persuading people to alter their behaviour patterns demands an understanding of motivations and value systems. He argues that 'political activism begins with asking what makes people tick' and asks:

> What do they want and fear and care about? How do we get and hold their attention? How much can people take—and in what order of priority? Have we overloaded them with anxiety and guilt? How do we make credible the threats we perceive? Movements that fail to think carefully about this may fail to persuade. (Brown, 1995:xiv)

At one level, then, ecopsychology addresses the problem of effective communication with the general public and considers how people may be motivated to undertake action for environmental regeneration and ecological justice. As such, it is immediately relevant to the fields of practice with which I have engaged as part of my research, in which many of the facilitators and participants involved are actively asking practical questions regarding how we communicate, educate and engage with others (within and beyond our organisations and localities) in responding to the ecological challenges facing us in current times. Of course, ecopsychology also raises questions of a philosophical kind, which as Brown points out, have everything to do with our understanding of human nature, and of the nature of the soul:

> Psychology is, after all, the study of the soul in all its complexity and contradiction. It is the study of what people love and hate and fear and need. At some point, both psychologists and environmentalists need to decide what they believe our human connection is with the planet our species has so endangered…At its most ambitious, ecopsychology seeks to redefine sanity within an environmental context. It contends that seeking to heal the soul without reference to the ecological system of which we are an integral part is a form of self-destructive blindness. (Brown, 1995:xv-xvi)

In a similar vein, Davis (2005) identifies that ecopsychology involves thoughtful consideration of the 'deep and enduring psychological and spiritual questions—

who we are, how we grow, why we suffer, how we heal'. The psychological and spiritual questions identified by both Davis (2005) and Brown (1995) are again immediately relevant to my experience of participating in various fields of practice, where questions regarding our individual and collective understanding(s) of human and more-than-human nature (and the relationship between the two) were core to the challenges we faced.

These are, of course, also the kinds of questions which Spinoza and Naess consider, and which makes their discussions around the notion of repose so alluring to me. As I explained earlier in this chapter, the conviction that we need an adequate understanding of the place we occupy within Nature is at the core of Spinoza's project. Questions about our place in and relationship to nature are, I believe, key to developing our capacity to appropriately respond to ecological challenges.

Part of the reason I am attracted to the convictions of Spinoza and Naess (and many others) is that they challenge the all too common belief that human beings are solely to be understood as greedy, destructive and narrowly egotistical actors. Instead, the thinkers with whose work I choose to engage in this thesis seem able to both deconstruct and problematise the human condition and the current state of the world, *while also* presenting possibilities for different qualities of engagement with the natural world and different ways of thinking about our role and place within it. These various writers, and the perspectives they represent, recognise that the experience of joy, blessedness, beauty and wonder (in relation to the cosmos and our participation within it) is vital to the development of a healthier mode of existence. Therefore, the perspectives on which I draw are those which caution against the use of coercive manipulation, scare tactics and guilt trips when seeking to communicate with the wider public, and which encourage human beings to act from a position of joy and gratitude for our participation in the wider earth system. Ecopsychologist Theodore Roszack makes the point well:

> Until just a few years ago…the environmental movement went about its work of organizing, educating, and agitating with little regard for the fragile psychological complexities of the public whose hearts and minds it sought to win. As intensely aware as environmentalists may be of the complexity of the natural habitat, when it came to human behaviour their guiding image was simplistic in the extreme. They

> worked from a narrow range of strategies and motivations: the statistics of impending disaster, the coercive emotional force of fear and guilt…Even though many environmentalists act out of a passionate joy in the magnificence of wild things, few except the artists—the photographers, the filmmakers, the landscape painters, and the poets—address the public with any conviction that human beings can be trusted to behave as if they were the living planet's children. (Roszack, 1995:2)

Of course, these perspectives do not suggest that we should ignore and/or deny the anxiety and guilt which many people experience in relation to the ecological crisis; indeed, they argue that such repression is at the root of many of the problems currently facing us, both psychological and ecological. Rather, these perspectives call for a psychologically intelligent and ecologically informed understanding of what such feelings and experiences mean; what their roots are and, importantly, how we might learn to work with and through them. Ecological thinker and activist Joanna Macy argues that this kind of psychological and spiritual work (sometimes referred to as 'despair work', whereby people allow themselves to consciously acknowledge and experience the pain and the fear they feel for the world) has the potential both to sharpen our awareness of our collective plight and to allow us to discover appropriate forms of power, both within and beyond us:

> As a society we are caught between a sense of impending apocalypse and the fear of acknowledging it. In this 'caught' place, our responses are blocked and confused. The result is three widespread psychological strategies: disbelief, denial, and double life…what is it that leads us to repress our awareness of danger, miring so many of us in disbelief, denial and a double life? I believe finding an answer to that question is an essential part of environmental political action. Uncovering the deep roots of repression is part of what psychology can offer environmentalists in pursuing their work. (Macy, 1995:242-243)

6.3.2 Panpsychism and a practice of encounter

I now turn to a brief exploration of panpsychism; a perspective upon which I have drawn insofar as I have engaged with (and been stimulated by) the writings of ecological philosopher and cotemporary panpsychist Freya Mathews (2003, 2005).

Panpsychism refers to those philosophical systems in which 'mind' is understood to be a naturalistic, holistic and universal phenomenon, rather than something attributed exclusively to human beings and perhaps higher mammals, as is the case in the mechanistic, modern worldview (Skrbina, 2001). As David Skrbina (2001) suggests, in panpsychist worldviews, mind (or a mind-like quality) is considered to be present in all things and throughout matter, with human mind being understood as a particular manifestation of this universal nature. Skrbina (2001) argues that panpsychism has deep intellectual roots, both in Eastern and Western philosophy. Furthermore, Skrbina (2001) makes the point that 'panpsychist perspectives often co-exist and correspond quite closely to various aspects of participatory philosophy'.

In a similar vein to Skrbina (2001), Bender (2003), and other proponents of nondualist worldviews, Mathews suggests that the environmental crisis is a symptom of a larger, metaphysical crisis. She asserts that, first and foremost, it is necessary to return to metaphysics, to expound a philosophical argument which supports the panpsychist premise of a world which is a communicative presence and subject in its own right, capable of co-responding with us, rather than a world which is seen as an inert backdrop to human presence. Mathews (2003:4) defines panpsychism as '*any* view that reunites mentality with materiality, and thereby dismantles the foundational dualism of Western thought…[and which] attributes a psychic dimension to all physicality…[and] proceeds from a postulation of the universe as a psychological unity'. The panpsychist metaphysics which she expounds in her book *For Love of Matter* (2003) suggests that the universe is a One, a field of subjectivity, which also self-differentiates into a Many, a manifold of individual subjects. (It is interesting to note that Mathews (2003:3) claims to have become 'completely enamored' of both Leibniz and Spinoza during her undergraduate and postgraduate studies, describing them as 'two philosophers who, in their different ways, sought to capture the intuition that everything is woven

from the same skein, that everything informs everything else, and hence that "mind" in some sense must be intermingled with "matter"'.)

However, in putting forward her particular version of contemporary panpsychism she also warns the reader against becoming trapped within the rational argument or philosophical theory she presents, suggesting instead that the intuitive gist be held:

> …The sketch of panpsychism offered here is intended to be consistent with the evidence of our senses and with the empirical findings (though not the metaphysical inferences) of science, but its claims are of course far from either exhaustive or fully demonstrable…my intention is not that the resulting theory be taken literally. When reason is satisfied, I would ask the reader to step back and drop the specifics of the exposition, and retain only its intuitive gist. This disarticulated gist will surely approximate more closely to the truth of panpsychism, if truth there be, than any explicated elaboration possibly can. It will also serve as permission and motivation for the practice of encounter explored [later in the book]… (Mathews, 2003:45)

As the above quote hints, Mathews (2003) makes a forceful distinction between seeking to *encounter* the world, and seeking to *know* or *theorise* it. Mathews asserts:

> …if the world is actually a communicative, conative subject or field of reality—then the entire scientific project of exposing the structure of reality, bringing to light the inner mechanisms of things, may constitute a moral or spiritual affront to the world…For while there can be no moral or spiritual objection to our investigating of a thing…when the thing in question is a pure object, to adopt the same approach to a subject is an altogether different matter…A subject is entitled to preserve the secrets of its own nature, since its privileged access to its nature is constitutive of its reflexivity, and hence of its subjectivity. It may *choose* to confide its nature to us, or invite us to discover it, but if we attempt to drag its nature into the light of day without consent of the subject itself, then we are presumably violating its subjecthood. (Mathews, 2003:76)

Mathews, then, calls into question the very quest for knowledge, at least when knowledge is understood in its scientific sense, as it has been throughout much of modern times. She raises the following little-asked questions: is the quest for knowledge an intrinsic good, an end-in-itself? Do we, as human beings, have a right to unlimited epistemological access to all other things and beings? '*Must* the world be known?', she asks (2003:75). In response to all of these questions, she thinks not. Indeed, she suggests that if we are to discard our assumptions of matter as dead and of the world as pure object, then it is no longer appropriate to subject this world to an epistemological probe. Rather, 'the appropriate approach to such a world would appear to be not, in the first instance, to investigate it, but rather to *encounter* it. To encounter others…involves recognition of and contact with their independent subjectivity, where such recognition and contact inevitably give rise to a certain respect for their integrity and sympathetic concern for their fate' (2003:76-77). Knowledge, then, seeks to explain, reduce, and pin down, while encounter seeks to engage, to 'make contact with the self as they experience it—as subject…[allowing them to] communicate to us something of the meaning they have for themselves…' (2003:78). Such encounters are, according to Mathews (2003:78), in themselves felt forms of mutual knowing, akin to carnal knowing, 'only secondarily translatable into information', and thus quite different from knowledge in its scientific sense. Understood in this way, the departure between *encounter* and *knowledge* is perhaps most significant to the extent that the quest for the latter denies the sacredness, mystery, and ineffability of the cosmos, making its goal the complete knowledge and representability of everything:

> Knowledge seeks to break open the mystery of another's nature; encounter leaves that mystery intact…where I respect its opaqueness, I retain my sense of its otherness, and hence the possibility of encounter remains. And while knowledge enables me to predict the behaviour of the other, encounter does not: the mysterious other retains its capacity to surprise. Encounter is open-ended, allowing for spontaneity and entailing vulnerability. That is why encounter is *erotic*. (Mathews, 2003:78)

One of the questions I consider later in the thesis is that of how such a practice of *encounter* (understood as respect for and openness to the subjectivity, mystery and

'otherness' of others) may help me to develop my understanding of what acting and leading from a position of repose may entail.

By way of drawing to a close this present discussion of Mathews' (2003, 2005) panpsychism, I wish to briefly consider one final point made by Mathews. This is, in my view, an important point to make because it closely resonates with my own experience of embarking on a process of psychological and spiritual awakening to the state of the world, in its beauty and its perils, and while appreciating both the joy and the pain which this may call forth from us. In a few words, Mathews (2003:11) suggests that the psycho-developmental challenge is to become able 'to face up to the possibilities of suffering in our own lives in ways that do not compromise our openness to encounter'. Possibilities of suffering, she suggests, are immediately abundant when we understand ourselves as subjects openly encountering the subjectivity of others, for we are then vulnerable to experiencing loss, being hurt and feeling pain. Erotic engagement, or 'in-loveness' with the world, simultaneously opens one to joy, delight, mystery, as well as to pain, sadness and even loneliness.

This is very much my own experience of living in loving relationships with those nearest and dearest to me. In my love for my husband, family and friends, I am always aware of a tension or a double-edged sword between being fulfilled, renewed and energised through this love, while at the same time being made vulnerable by it, and by the possibility of the eventual loss and absence of this love and these persons. Similarly, when seeking to relate to more-than-human matter in an erotic, loving way—whereby I open myself to the subjectivity of the food I eat, the earth and grass beneath my feet, the water I drink and the rain that soaks me, the winds that howl, and the trees that sway and dance along with the howling; when I become aware of the delights, joys, pains and sufferings of these more-than-human others—I again run the risk of being hurt and distressed. My own experience is that, particularly when we recognise that the other (human or more-than-human) is in a precarious situation, there is also a sense of vulnerability in being called to respond in a way that engages with their suffering and pain. For how can I ascertain that I have the capacity within me to respond appropriately to that which is required of me? How can I come to judge how best to relate with and how best to meet their suffering? How can I understand my own suffering as related to theirs, and the ways in which we are evoking pain, distress, joy, and so

on, in encounter with one another? And how can we, then, continue to opt into, and to grow forth from, the possibilities held in this encounter?

I believe that these are the kinds of questions and challenges which I experienced at various points during my PhD inquiry, when I came face to face with the partly energising, partly terrifying possibility of experiencing both joy and pain through engagement with an ever-widening circle of subject others (including disadvantaged human and more-than-human others). I venture to make the claim that my own inquiry revolves around the challenge, as identified by Mathews (2003:11), of '… how it is possible to sustain an erotic engagement with the world… in full knowledge of the possibilities of suffering and death that this world holds for us', and that acting from a position of repose calls for the development of psychological and spiritual capacities which enable us to sustain our active engagement with this challenge. I expand on what I mean by this specifically in Chapters Eight through Ten. For the time being, I wish to briefly concur with Mathew's suggestions regarding what may be required of us:

> The key lies in the development of an erotic *modus operandi* that includes both methods of negotiating danger that are synergistic rather than repressive, and a psychological profile endowed with specific strengths not available to a self organized around repressive strategies of control. (Mathews, 2003:10-11)

An erotic *modus operandi,* as proposed by Mathews, appears to call for psychological development of a kind that is profound, complex and presumably also immensely challenging:

> It might…be worth adding here a further note recapitulating what the erotic self is not. It is not, for instance, the flip side of the rational self—it is not the purely instinctual, the intuitive, emotional and spontaneous, or the purely sensuous. Nor is it preconscious, unevolved, unreflective. To achieve erotic selfhood requires, as I have been at pains to demonstrate, prodigious psychological development, and, once attained, such selfhood can be maintained only by a keen attentiveness to the subtle dynamics of situations and by skill in negotiating those dynamics (a skill that can be honed

> through reflective experience). Eros demands, in other words, all the intelligence at our disposal. (Mathews, 2001:139-140)

6.4 Conclusions

I wish to end with some concluding thoughts which might further clarify my decision to engage with the ideas and perspectives introduced in this chapter. As stated in the Introduction to the thesis, I arrived at this inquiry with some awareness and a sense of growing concern regarding the many ecological challenges currently facing us. In considering how I as an individual and we as a human community might respond to such challenges, I have come to the conclusion that many of us (myself included, of course) also face a *psychological* challenge, to do with our understanding of our-selves, our place in the cosmos, and the nature of our relationships and processes of relating with others. Hence, I have chosen to focus on those theoretical perspectives which explicitly and implicitly make links between issues of ecological concern/justice and issues of personal (and transpersonal) psychological and spiritual development. The particular strengths of these perspectives, as I interpret them, is the robust and rigorous links they make between life-affirming development and well-being at the individual, human collective, earth community and cosmos levels. There are other perspectives which, though useful in different ways, I have chosen *not* to focus on because of their restricted (anthropocentric and/or egocentric) understandings of self, psyche and community, and/or because of their lack of grounding in cosmological insight.

The more I appreciate the complexity and breadth of the ecological challenges facing us, the more I understand that my capacity to deal with such challenges is linked to my own personal development. Focusing my energies on developing an appropriate sense of role, positioning and relationship to others and to the cosmos might therefore be one of the specific ways in which I can contribute to forming appropriate responses to ecological challenges. Thus, I agree with Berry's suggestion that linking the journey and story of the individual with the journey and story of the universe has the potential to be mutually fulfilling for both:

> This journey of the universe is the journey of each individual being in the universe. So this story of the great journey is an exciting story

> that gives us our macrophase identity with the larger dimensions of meaning that we need. To identify the microphase of our being with the macrophase mode of our being is the quintessence of human fulfillment. (Berry, 1999:164)

In the chapter that follows, I turn to my experience of participating in the Sustainable Farmshire initiative and offer it as the grounding from which the arguments made in Chapter Eight emerge. My aim in Chapter Seven is to present an account of *what happened* as part of this collaboration, focusing in particular on the kinds of conversations, actions and interactions in which we engaged as part thereof. In Chapter Eight, I reflect on what this experience suggests about the challenges encountered when seeking to act for sustainability.

Furthermore, in Chapter Eight I draw and build on the concept of repose introduced in this present chapter and use it as a lens through which to make sense of these experiences. My aim is to show how the *practice* of repose is relevant to both action research processes and to action for sustainability, and the kinds of qualities, both personal and relational, which might give form and substance to a practice of repose.