

## AN EXPLORATION OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHY: ENHANCING UNDERSTANDING OF REFLECTION

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Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association  
for Research in Education, Newcastle, November, 1994

"It is natural to continue to live in the world in which one was born,  
but to exclude the others from thought is to will to remain  
intellectually insular...Staying home all the time may serve one's  
comfort, but it does  
not serve curiosity, humanity, nor, in the long run, truth"  
Scharfstein et al (1978) p. 127

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the role of reflection in professional development. This interest has been particularly evident amongst teacher educators as they seek more effective ways of preparing student teachers for the complexities of teaching. The proliferation of literature about reflection and reflective practices in teacher education is indicative of this interest. Yet there remains much about reflection which is not understood (Laboskey, 1994). There is little agreement, for example, about what reflection is, or how it might be identified and promoted (Smith & Hatton, 1992). Continuing uncertainty about such essential issues suggests that research into reflection has reached an impasse.

To overcome this impasse, it may be necessary to move beyond the confines of the singular cultural, conceptual and methodological perspectives which have characterised much of the research into reflection to date (Laboskey, 1994; Sumsion, in press; Korthagen, 1993; Loudon 1992; Yinger, 1990). There has been some preliminary discussion about the nature of possible new directions for future research into reflection. For example, Korthagen (1993) recommends turning to psychological studies of left and right brain hemispheres; Laboskey (1994) emphasises the need for greater understanding of the role played by passionate beliefs and emotions; and Yinger (1990) suggests that an understanding of Eastern philosophy may enrich our understanding of reflection. As yet, however, relatively little exploration has been undertaken. The purpose of this paper is to investigate one of these suggested new directions. It explores the potential contribution of Eastern philosophy to our understanding of reflection.

## WHY TURN TO EASTERN PHILOSOPHY?

Theorists from diverse fields including physics (eg. Capra, 1975; 1986); religion (eg. Spretnack, 1991; O'Hanlon, 1981); and philosophy (eg. Allinson, 1989; Rosemont, 1988) emphasise the need to look beyond Western traditions in order to more fully understand the complexities of our world. They have not succumbed to the tendency of Western popular culture to look to Eastern traditions as "a spiritual wonderland and universal remedy for western ills" (Staal, 1988 p.208). On the contrary, they value the contribution of Western thought to the development of many tools for understanding, including analytical reasoning and abstraction. They argue, however, that these tools alone are insufficient for full understanding, and advocate openness to

other traditions as a means of enriching understanding.

Primarily, Western thought has focussed on developing understanding of the external world (Organ 1987). In comparison, Eastern traditions have been more concerned with understanding the inner self (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991; Stambaugh, 1986). The immanent nature of Eastern traditions has resulted in more complex conceptualisations of inner processes than those posited by Western thought. In general, Western interest in inner processes has been limited to the sensory and the rational (Inada, 1994). From an Eastern perspective, this has led to a surface understanding of inner processes, akin to awareness of the tip of an iceberg (Inada, 1994). Consideration of Eastern perspectives may lead to deeper understanding of inner processes by revealing "a refreshingly new and different realm of existence" (Inada, p.31). To those interested in moving beyond the conceptualisation of reflection as a rational process, exploration of Eastern traditions appears to hold promise.

Exploration of other perspectives, however, should be undertaken with caution. Comparative philosophers (eg Streng, 1988; Rosemont, 1988; Scharfstein et al, 1978) refer to the many difficulties inherent in translation, interpretation and comparison. In particular, they warn against oversimplification of important distinctions in assumptions, conceptualisations and vocabulary. "It is only too easy to lift ideas out of their cultural contexts, to translate the terms in which they are expressed into familiar ones, and to come to plausible but misleading conclusions" (Scharfstein, 1978, p.9). Similarly, it is necessary to guard against gross generalisations (Organ, 1987) and "uncritical enthusiasm" for unfamiliar ideas (Stambaugh, 1986).

In turning to Eastern philosophical traditions, this paper makes a number of assumptions. First, it assumes that "as humans, we share more than we exclude and that beneath cultural difference lies a fundamental humanness" (Katz, 1981, p.xi). Furthermore, this humanness is not "altered radically by the vicissitudes of time and place" (Katz, p.xi).

Yet, at the same time, the impact of "highly specific environmental circumstances" on conceptual orientations is recognised (Rosemont, 1988, p.37). Such circumstances range from the impact of specific historical events to "the syntactical peculiarities of our native tongue" (Rosemont, 1988, p.37). While conceptual orientations are contextualised, they are not necessarily assumed to be fixed. Conceptualisations are merely "tools for the organisation of experience and for giving it meaning and significance" (Krishna, 1988,p.81). Consequently, exploration of alternative orientations may reveal previously unrecognised alternatives for organising and patterning of experience. "Just as one travels to find a renewed sense of wonder and novelty, one makes conceptual journeys to other cultures to look at the world through new conceptual frames" (Krishna , 1988 p.83). At a time of global cross-cultural interaction, it seems timely to move beyond the confines of one tradition and to explore the possibilities of cross-cultural construction of meaning (Smart, 1988).

#### OVERVIEW OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHY

This paper focuses mainly on Indian and Chinese philosophical traditions, for these are seen by many (eg. Krishna, 1988; Organ 1975; Nakamura, 1964) to be the major traditions of the East. Frequent reference is made to the Indian traditions of Hinduism, Jainism , Buddhism and the Chinese traditions of Chinese and Zen Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Although occasional mention is made of the mystical Islamic tradition of Sufism, Islamic traditions as a whole are not explored because of their close derivative links with Greek

philosophy, a foundation of Western traditions (Krishna, 1988). The paper refers primarily to the Hebrew-Greek-Christian-Roman traditions when comparing and contrasting Eastern and Western perspectives, but acknowledges that the Western tradition is not monolithic. Mystical elements, for example, exist within Western traditions, particularly in relation to religion (Berman, 1989). Because they play a relatively minor role in philosophy overall, however, they are not emphasised in this paper.

In Eastern traditions, philosophy and religion are intertwined to a much greater extent than in the West. Consequently, the notion of philosophy as way of life is as equally relevant as the Greek translation of philosophy as love of wisdom (Nakamura, 1988). In Indian traditions, for example, both religion and philosophy are concerned primarily with liberation from the possibility of suffering. They seek to promote a life free of suffering through the development of self rather than through manipulation or control of the external world (Krishna,1988; Organ, 1975). Similarly, Chinese religions and philosophies are concerned with self development, but within the context of building a harmonious society (Podgorski, 1985). Western philosophical traditions also value the development of self, but in

the sense of developing the ability to control the external world (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991). The notion of self development, therefore, is fundamental to all three philosophical traditions. Indeed it is argued that the need to "know thyself" transcends all philosophical orientations (Organ, 1987). While self knowledge may constitute a shared starting point, the paths of Western and Eastern traditions soon diverge, due to different perceptions of self, knowledge, and the nature of knowing. These perceptions form the basis of the following discussion.

### Perceptions of self

In the Western tradition, the uniqueness and power of the individual is emphasised. Individuals are valued for their knowledge and their ability to use their knowledge to make their mark on the world (Smith, 1989; Organ 1987). In contrast, Eastern traditions value the potential of the individual to merge with the world. "When a drop of water returns to the ocean, although it outwardly loses the identity of dropness, it gains the permanency of the everlasting ocean" (Shaffi, 1988, p.37). Although Shaffi is referring specifically to Sufism, the notion of communion of the individual with the universal in a state of universal harmony is common to Eastern traditions. Hindus, for example, refer to universal harmony as atman, Buddhists to nirvana and Taoists to tao .

Indeed, in Eastern traditions, the attaining of universal harmony through the fusion of the individual with the universal is the ultimate goal. The path to universal harmony is through personal equilibrium which can only be attained by relinquishing attachment to needs, wishes, goals, possessions, opinions and similar binds (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991). The importance of relinquishing attachments is highlighted in the following Zen story:

"A university professor once came to Nan-in, a Zen master, to enquire about Zen. Nan-in served teas. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself. 'It is overfull. No more will go in,' he said. Nan-in said, 'Like this cup, you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?' "

(cited by Organ, 1975, p.175)

The more attachments can be relinquished, the closer the individual becomes to the celebrated state of non-being. Non-being is an emptiness, like the void within an empty bowl, or between the spokes of a wheel. Non-being represents infinite possibilities and is inherent to universal harmony (Chung-Ying Chen, 1991). From an Eastern perspective, the Western emphasis on self as individual being with a multitude of attachments to the physical world hinders attainment of non-being and

ultimately, universal harmony.

### Perceptions of knowledge

Traditionally, Western perspectives have emphasised the absolute, unchanging and exact nature of knowledge. Knowledge is conceptualised as part of a logically ordered and structured reality "free from inconsistency and complete in principle if not in details" (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991, p.121). Knowledge is accessible through abstraction and deduction, and communicable through language. Because of this emphasis on order, Western thought tends to be antagonistic to paradoxes, contradictions, and "anything that is not clear, well-defined and capable of determination" (D.T. Suzuki cited by Organ, 1987, p.117). Distrust of ambiguity is apparent in the underlying duality of Western thought.

Dualism is inherent in Western thought. Distinctions between man and nature, male and female, reason and emotion, right and wrong, objective and subjective are indicative of this dichotomy. The separation of subject and object is fundamental to the traditional Western conceptualisation of knowledge. Indeed, the legitimacy of knowledge is dependent upon the distance between the knower and the known (Heshusius, 1994).

In contrast Eastern traditions see reality, and consequently knowledge, as dynamic and non-dualistic. In Hindu, Jainist and Buddhist traditions, reality has a vertical context. It consists of hierarchical levels determined by degrees of consciousness. Thus reality has depth, and being is but a moment in the eternal process of becoming (Organ, 1987). Hence the belief in reincarnation (Smart, 1988; Goldman, 1986). In Chinese traditions, reality is similarly dynamic, although the process of harmonisation is as equally important as the process of evolution.

Harmony is perceived as a never-ending "dialectical interchange between yin and yang" (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991, p.87). Yin and yang are degrees of a continuum in which yang is in the process of developing into yin, and vice versa (Allinson, 1989). This process has been likened to the harmony underlying surf of the ocean, with its rhythmic balance between the vibrant breaking waves upon the beach, and the unseen backward thrust into the ocean (Inada, 1994). Both waves and backward thrust are inextricably interwoven in the process of becoming one another. The analogy of the surf represents the constant interplay between the states of visible and vibrant state of being and the non-discernible but equally important state of non-being.

While such analogies may be helpful, ultimately, from an Eastern perspective, the dynamic nature of reality and knowledge precludes expression through language. This is partly because language is far less fluid than reality and thus unable to capture the essence of

reality (Doeringer, 1994; Tang Yi, 1985). In addition, the complexity of understanding is beyond the explanatory power of language. Hence, Taoists refer to the tao as that which cannot be named (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991). Indeed, Chinese philosophy as a whole has been described as the study of "what language cannot describe, define, or otherwise

capture" (Hansen, 1989, p.75).

From an Eastern viewpoint, words can be as much a trap as a tool if the inherent limitations of language are overlooked. A traditional Buddhist saying (cited by Organ, 1987) likens words to fingers that point to the moon, but warns that fingers must not be confused with the moon. At best, words can only seek to illuminate the otherwise unperceived. Thus Zen Buddhists, through "a special language of paradox" (Doeringer, 1994, p.6), seek to illuminate the complex, ambiguous and the unperceived while cautioning against literal interpretation.

In a similar way to language, Eastern traditions see sequential deductive thought as having a limited role in understanding reality and accessing knowledge. This is not to say that it is not valued. Indian traditions, in particular, have developed highly complex systems of logic (Staal, 1988; Padmasari de Silva, 1981). Rather, sequential thought is recognised to have inherent limitations, not least of which is an inability to understand higher levels of consciousness. Empirically verifiable levels of reality are relatively lowly, and higher levels of reality cannot be reached by the logical mind. As an old Sanskrit saying asks, "How...can you grasp what is beyond the mind with the mind?" (cited by Goldman, 1986, p.352).

In addition, over-reliance on logic can be inhibiting. If one "clings to a thought by allowing the thoughts to link up in a series, which means having one's next thought 'caused' as it were by previous thoughts" then this may result in "self conscious paralysis of all thought" (Loy, 1986, p.304). As well, much of the energy involved in logical thinking may be wasted. "Most of the effort involved ...is due to selecting and organising into a rational pattern thoughts which naturally arise, which in themselves have no such pattern" (Loy, p.305). In Western traditions, reason is seen as the primary, if not the only, means of accessing knowledge. From an Eastern perspective, however, because of its perceived limitations, reason is regarded as less significant than intuitive knowledge.

Eastern philosophies recognise different forms of knowledge. The Buddhist tradition, for example refers to vijnana and prajna. Vijnana is deliberative, analytical and predictable; intellectual, abstract and wordy; concerned with parts and concepts, and dualistic in nature (Organ, 1987). Prajna, on the other hand, is immediate, spontaneous, and unpredictable, akin to a flash of lightning. There is no

intervening moment for deliberation, interpretation or analysis (Loy, 1986). Prajna is holistic, often paradoxical, and essentially incommunicable. Prajna is valued more highly than vijnana which is described in a traditional Buddhist saying as "the raft to be abandoned upon reaching the other shore" (cited by Organ, p.100).

The difference between vijnana and prajna is highlighted in the following account of the Taoist butcher:

When I first began  
To cut up oxen  
I would see before me  
The whole ox  
All in one mass.  
After three years  
I no longer saw this mass  
I saw the distinctions.

But now, I see nothing  
With the eye. My whole being

Apprehends.

My senses are idle. The spirit  
Free to work without plan  
Follows its own instinct

Guided by natural line  
By the secret opening, the hidden space,  
My cleaver finds its own way  
I cut through no joint, chop no bone.

(Merton, 1965 cited by Yinger 1990, p.73)

Analysing this traditional Taoist story, Neville (1989) points out that the butcher did not acquire his expertise "by ever more advanced courses in bovine anatomy. Rather he learned to let the placing of the blade and the shove of his shoulder be in tune with the nothingness, the hollows and spaces, that pervade the ox as much as himself" (p.71). In comparison, Western traditions have developed little understanding of intuitive knowledge (Doeringer, 1994). Instead, there is distrust of anything which fails to fit within established hierarchies, or is not directly communicable (Blofeld, 1981).

Perceptions of knowing

From a traditional Western perspective, knowing is associated with reasoning and language. Eastern traditions utilise knowing based on reason and language, but emphasise that different ways of knowing are needed for deeper understanding. Meditation is valued by all Eastern traditions as a means of enabling more significant understanding than reasoning (Shaffi, 1988). Within different traditions there are many types of meditation and meditative techniques (Bilimora, 1989). This

paper refers to meditation in general terms, however, rather than identifying and describing particular approaches and techniques.

Meditation, whether silent or mantric, receptive or concentrative, is based on an appreciation of the "significance of silence" as a means of gaining insights and understanding (Shaffi, 1988, p.126). Silence represents a stilling of the body and mind, and the gaining of freedom from "repetitive and compulsive use of body movement, language and thought processes" (Shaffi, p.146). Through internal silence, one becomes more perceptive to "invisible rhythms within and around"; to "wholes rather than parts"; to "internal and external clues" (Shaffi, p.146). In short, silence has the potential to open up new dimensions of understanding.

Silence is a means of transcending the limitations of thought and language. It is also a way of gaining entry to the unconscious. The unconscious includes aspects of understanding such as association, illumination, and inspiration. At the core of the unconscious is the link between the individual and the universal. This link can only be accessed through the state of non-being, for attachments to the external world must be relinquished in order for the knower and the known to become one. Harmonisation of the external and the internal, the individual and the universal, the knower and the known constitutes enlightenment (Chung-Ying Cheng 1991; Shaffi, 1988).

Although enlightenment has been described in many ways, the metaphor of a mirror is often used. A mirror is significant in that it has the ability to project and reflect light. Ihlan (1993) uses this metaphor to describe how the enlightened mind "shines out towards external objects and illuminates the principles inherent in them. The illuminated external principles then shine back into the mind, producing knowledge by brightening internal and external principles" (p.453). Using a similar metaphor, Laycock (1989) develops the image

of an infinite chamber of mirrors. Each mirror is arranged in a such a way that it reflects within in it all the other mirrors in the chamber. The effect is a "vast, universal, multidimensional network of independence and intercausation"(p.179). Enlightenment occurs when there is no obstruction impeding the projection and reflection of light. Concepts and abstractions can be likened to opaque objects obstructing the path of the light and concealing what is behind. As such, they can impede enlightenment (Laycock, 1986).

While enlightenment can be sudden (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991), it is more frequently the outcome of a lengthy process of transformation through the unfolding of successively higher levels of consciousness (Wilber, 1983). Each Eastern tradition has a hierarchy of dimensions of consciousness. Western traditions have somewhat similar hierarchies, including those developed by Piaget, Kohlberg and Maslow. In Eastern

and Western hierarchies, sensory awareness is regarded as relatively undeveloped consciousness. Emerging symbolic awareness is also seen as belonging to the lower hierarchical order by both East and West. Indeed, there is much similarity between East and West, up to and including, the level of rationality. In Western hierarchies, rational thought constitutes the highest level. In Eastern hierarchies, however, it is only middle-ranking. Eastern conceptualisations of levels of consciousness continue for several stages beyond rational thought concluding with universal consciousness or enlightenment (Epstein, 1990; Wilber, 1983).

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR REFLECTION

The preceding discussion of aspects of Eastern philosophical traditions highlights the existence of alternative conceptualisations of self, reality, knowledge and ways of knowing. The traditional Western emphasis on reason, language and objectivity is not the only means by which the world and its inherent complexities may be known. Yet what significance do these alternative conceptualisations of understanding have for Western researchers wanting to enhance their understanding of reflection? How relevant is awareness of Eastern alternatives to teacher educators in a contemporary Western context? Responses to these questions will be influenced by perceptions of culture-boundedness and one's optimism concerning the likely development of new research methodologies.

#### Culture-boundedness

One could argue that people are born into "a set of cultural constructions and constraints" and live their lives "in the embrace, or stranglehold, of various ...socially invented systems of perceptions, meaning, and knowledge" (Spretnack, 1991, p.14). For those from Western traditions, a dualistic outlook and belief in the supremacy of language and rational thought is likely to be deeply ingrained. Add to this a human tendency to see one's own cultural norms as the most desirable, and the outcome may well be a tenacious adherence to one's cultural traditions (Spetnack, 1991). Those who adhere to this argument are unlikely to perceive any relevance of Eastern philosophical traditions to a contemporary Western context.

Postmodernists, however, argue differently. They emphasise the need "to reveal the cultural construction of concepts" generally assumed to be natural, universal and unquestionable (Spretnack, 1991, p.4). They see awareness of the existence of alternative cultural constructions as a necessary preliminary step in overcoming the constraints of particular cultural backgrounds. Openness to alternative conceptualisations, therefore, can lead to deeper understanding. If one

accepts the postmodernist argument, then turning to Eastern

philosophical traditions in an attempt to enrich understanding of reflection is indeed worthwhile.

While sympathetic to the postmodernist stance, this paper acknowledges the strength of cultural ties, and values the contribution of cultural orientations. Certainly, it does not propose the abandonment of Western conceptualisations and the adoption of Eastern perspectives. This would not only be impossible, but also profoundly disrespectful to both Eastern and Western traditions. It does suggest, however, that while cultural binds may be tight they can, and should, be loosened. Indeed, this seems necessary if the current impasse in research into reflection is to be overcome.

### Connections

One way of loosening cultural ties is through the exploration of conceptual boundaries. Larson (1988) uses this term to describe clusters of key concepts of inherent importance to specific cultures. Investigation of conceptual boundaries may identify possible connections between supposedly different orientations (Spretnack, 1991; Larson, 1988). Investigations of this nature reveal, for example, the fallacy of the common presupposition that East and West are mutually opposed (Nakamura, 1964). Recognition of reason as a means of understanding by both Eastern and Western traditions indicates that assumptions of a complete dichotomy between East and West are unfounded. This is not to deny that there are marked differences in Eastern and Western modes of understanding. These different modes, however, "need not be seen in conflict with each other but, as each needing the other in order to form a more perfect understanding" (Allinson, 1989, p.12). Conceivably, like yin and yang, East and West might also be interrelated.

In order to be able to interpret across conceptual boundaries and explore interrelationships, a mindset which focuses on connections rather than exclusions is necessary (Smith, 1989). Development of this state of mind may be difficult for those from Western cultures, given the traditional emphasis on separateness, objectivity, autonomy and control (Heshusius, 1994; Spretnack, 1991, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). Yet if interrelationships are valued, previously unrecognised connections may be perceived. The possibilities for connections are limitless so the potential for enrichment of understanding is considerable (Allinson, 1988).

How might a connected orientation enrich understanding of reflection? Perhaps most significantly, different conceptualisations of reflection (eg. Dewey's (1933) reflective thought; Schon's (1983) reflection-in-action; Zeichner's (1992) critical reflection) might come to be perceived as aspects of the one multifaceted process. In addition, connections with different fields of study could inform understanding of reflection. Currently, for example, there is

surprisingly little discussion of the possible contribution to reflection of elements such as emotion, intuition, and imagination, even though much of the literature in these fields (eg. Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault & Benton, 1992; Walters, 1992; Noddings & Shore, 1984) appears relevant to reflection. As well, understanding of reflection may be enhanced through connections with literature about feminist epistemological perspectives (eg. Belenky et al., 1986), given its emphasis on integrated ways of knowing.

At a more complex level, awareness of connections may extend to perceptions of universal interrelatedness. Several areas of science

now recognise universal interrelatedness (Griffin, 1988). In scientific terminology, universal interrelatedness is a belief that "everything is composed of a subatomic flux of wavelets and particles, chaos and pattern. Boundaries are fluid... Unrelated separateness is an illusion (Spretnack, 1991, p.21). Similarly, Heshusius (1994) refers to participatory consciousness in relation to educational research methodology. She defines participatory consciousness as "the awareness of a deeper level of kinship between the knower and the known" (p.16). The parallels with traditional Eastern perspectives of interrelatedness are striking.

In Eastern traditions, meditation is the primary means by which barriers surrounding self can be dissolved enabling a merging of individual consciousness with universal consciousness. Thus meditation is a means of transformation. Through meditation, a different way of knowing and understanding may be revealed. An understanding of meditation, therefore, may enhance understanding of reflection.

#### Footprints and cosmic echoes

From a Western perspective, however, attempting to understand meditation is problematic. This is because meditation is associated with higher, or at least different, levels of consciousness than rational thought (Epstein, 1990). Ultimately, it is not possible to use reason to explain that which is beyond reason (Goldman, 1983). While higher (or different) realms of understanding can not be grasped in terms of lower (or other) realms, they may leave behind footprints (Wilber, 1983) or cosmic echoes (Wawrytko, 1989). Essentially, footprints and cosmic echoes are connections between different realms of knowing. They can be difficult to recognise or describe because, by nature, they are faint and indistinct.

Recognising footprints or cosmic echoes requires sensitivity to alternative ways of knowing and different patterns of understanding. It can be difficult for Western minds to develop this sensitivity as they are attuned to equating knowing with thinking and thinking with reasoning (Loy, 1986). Development of sensitivity may involve

challenges to fundamental assumptions. The Western notion of cause and effect, for example, is not accepted by traditional Chinese philosophies because of the recognition of interrelatedness of all being (Chung-Ying Cheng, 1991). Instead, Chinese understanding is likely to emphasise balance, rhythm and cadence (Kuang-Ming Wu, 1989; Scharfstein, 1978). Hence allusions to balance, rhythm and cadence may constitute footprints or cosmic echoes. Because of their significance to Eastern traditions, references to paradox and metaphor as a means of understanding might also constitute footprints or cosmic echoes.

Describing footprints or cosmic echoes is problematic however, given the constraints of language. European languages are particularly limited in their ability to describe mutual interconnections due to Western perceptions of inherent duality and the emphasis on the individual, the objective, external action and control. For example, they have yet to describe a concept or name for the idea of "union of opposites through a middle path" (Doeringer, 1994). Consequently, European languages will be at a loss to describe many Eastern notions.

#### New research methodologies

Despite the inherent difficulties, sensitivity to different ways of knowing is needed if understanding of reflection is to be enhanced. This sensitivity is not evident in much of the previous research into reflection. Although seminal writers such as Dewey (1933) and Schon

(1983; 1987) emphasise logical analysis and problem solving, they also refer to the importance of emotional response and intuitive understanding. Yet most commentators on their work overlook these references. Similarly, research studies supposedly based upon their conceptualisations of reflection (eg. Sparks-Langer, Simmoms, Pasch, Colton, and Starko, 1990; Ross, 1989; MacKinnon, 1987) focus almost exclusively on rational thought. These studies consistently showed little evidence of higher levels of reflection, as defined in terms of rational thought. The results, however, may be more indicative of the narrowness of conceptualisation of such studies, than evidence of lack of reflection in student teachers.

In light of limited methodologies for exploring inner processes, decisions to focus on narrow conceptualisations of reflection as primarily rational thought are understandable. Never-the-less, such decisions continue to constrain our understanding of reflection. If understanding of reflection is to be enriched through awareness of Eastern perspectives, then new methodologies are needed. These new methodologies would not be preoccupied with rationality and reductionism. Rather, they would seek to explore many ways of knowing. Characterised by openness and receptivity, they would push beyond currently perceived boundaries and illuminate previously unrecognised connections. These new methodologies would enable nonverbal experiences

to be recognised and described. They would also enable the subjective-objective dichotomy to be transcended. (Heshusius, 1994). The need for the development of methodologies capable of responding to these challenges is overwhelming.

## CONCLUSION

This paper is a response to suggestions (eg. Houston and Clift, 1990; Yinger, 1990) that understanding of reflection might be enhanced through an exploration of Eastern philosophical perspectives. The paper has concentrated on aspects of Chinese and Indian philosophies, particularly perceptions of self, knowledge and knowing. Differences in perceptions between East and West have been highlighted in the hope of illuminating new possibilities for further exploration of reflection.

It seems possible to "thoughtfully assimilate some elements of Eastern ideas" (Stambaugh, 1986, p.xi) into several of the conceptualisations of reflection currently underpinning teacher education programs. In general, however, Western conceptualisations of reflection would need "to be stretched, bent or significantly extended" (Rosemont, 1988, p.69) in order to incorporate the insights offered by Eastern orientations. For this to occur, cultural binds, including attachment to present research methodologies, must be loosened. If this can be achieved our understanding of reflection is likely to be considerably enhanced.

"To make a deliberate choice between ...philosophical worlds is ...absurd. Whether or not we are attracted to the modes of life recommended in the worlds we are unfamiliar with, these worlds reveal the philosophical potentialities of human thought. To enter these worlds, barriers of dogma and strangeness must be crossed, but the crossing, once made, leads to an endlessly interesting landscape of ideas and nuances of ideas" .

(Scharfstein et al, 1978, pp.126-127)

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