Article

The Esoteric Thesis: Unspeakable Things & Unknowable Truths

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Abstract

This article explores aspects of the conventional research thesis and identifies one approach - the 'esoteric thesis'- for explicating inner meaning of the outward 'research quest'. Often, when researchers are completing their external world oriented - 'exoteric thesis' - based on research, literature review and so forth, little time or attention is directed to their inner world. Such a huge investment of life energy, often over a period of years, has the potential to offer substantial insights for the researcher and intriguingly may even elucidate what, in the first instance, created interest in the research question itself. An inward-focused 'esoteric' process of inquiry creates the opportunity for identifying patterns in the researcher's past professional activities that may help explicate the 'exoteric' task at hand. This article argues the importance of an inner journey that spirals with the conventional outward-looking research quest and in doing so offers an approach that respects and accommodates both.

Key Words: esoteric thesis, exoteric thesis, unspeakable things, unknowable truths.

Introduction

Let us begin by identifying, from the perspective of the researcher, a list of attributes of what we call 'deep-study' but can in some instances be found in post-graduate and research-based study in conventional disciplines. We are most particularly concerned with those attributes related to higher degrees that require a dissertation, project or major self-directed research component, such as a thesis. The list would probably include certification (achieving the higher degree), publishing the research, achieving peer recognition, career advancement, and (it is hoped) contribution to knowledge and the betterment of humanity in general. Seldom, if ever, is recognition of the potential for self-investigation given to the mammoth investment in time embedded in the outward or public thesis effort. This effort, which often represents an investment of thousands of dollars and a significant amount of life energy, is realised through professional experience, research activity, dissertation writing and the subsequent development of a publication.

Some of the concepts used in this paper may need explanation. The notion of research is defined as an epistemological framework (concerning the investigation of the origin and nature of human knowledge) that is enacted as a methodology, which in turn is used to engage with or investigate an area of concern. Over the course of the research, each element is more fully understood and modified in light of an increasing understanding. The first author coined the phrase 'exoteric

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thesis' to refer to the conventional academic dissertation, usually made up of literature review, hypothesis stating and testing, statistical manipulation, observations, and conclusions (typically 25,000 words in length for a Masters degree and 80,000 for a PhD).

The authors assert that the esoteric thesis[1], when undertaken alongside the exoteric thesis, enables the researcher to achieve a better understanding of the inner meaning of the conventional research work. This article outlines the principal aspects of the esoteric thesis and explores the potential for self-investigation and even self-realisation during the research process. Over the past decade we have sought to apply this approach in our various roles as academic, co-researcher and supervisor.[2]

Researcher motivation

It is important to consider the nature of the researcher's motivation. Is the researcher motivated to follow a particular course of study because of external extrinsic factors, such as career or family pressure, or does the researcher's research question stem from a genuine inner, intrinsic drive or urge for self-transcendence and conscious realisation through knowledge? Consciousness, in this instance, may be seen as a continuous spectrum from reflective states (including discursive and analytical – the home of the exoteric thesis) through non-reflective states (ecstatic and meditative) to direct apperception (intuition, gnosis, and esoteric experiences) Tacey (1995); Wildman (2000).

Pathways to achieving higher levels of consciousness may include: spiritual discipline such as diet and meditation; displacement events such as trauma and stress; some drugs; epiphanies rational and otherwise; intuition, apperception, gnosis; and methods such as Quadruple Column Action Research (QCAR) (see Table 2). Consciousness may also be achieved through detached

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[1] (1)This article is a sister piece to our article (2) Miller, I. and P. Wildman (2012). Ancient wisdom for today: Harnessing the Demiurgic Field with Human Artifice. *SGJ (Scientific God Journal)*, and forms a trinity in my work with (3) Wildman, P. (1995) on Reflexive Praxis. Respectively: (1) methodology for praxis, (2) situating praxis, and (3) modality of praxis. In all a comprehensive look at what may be called Praxology. See also www.crafters-circle.com for examples of Artificers Exemplar Projects which have esoteric overlaps.

[2] Paul Wildman's direct experience, over the past decade, includes many of the elements of developing an esoteric thesis covered in this article, such as:

. **Story telling** – he included in his dissertation a modified Dreamtime story, which incidentally was not read by any of the three male examiners.

. **Poem writing** – leading to a CD-Rom. McCubbin (1999).

. **Sculpture and Boat making** – in particular a piece called 'A Question of Balance' and the boat 'Sea-date'.

. **Applying Reflective Praxis** in developing text for a chapter in his doctoral dissertation, as well as in further research, application and publishing an eBook series on Artificer Leaning (2001-20011) – see www.kal.net.au top RHS menu button 'Adult Learning'

. **Theory development**, trialing and application (Reflective Praxis) independently and then with researchers (see Wildman (1995); and the link between 'math' and 'myth' in Wildman and Inayatullah (1996).

Generally in such exercise we see the operation of the '10,000hr rule' whereby over the past decade of praxis for the transition from apprentice to adept has spent this period in such artificer learning experiences. See Gladwell (2008:Chapt2).

objective observation (rational), involved yet separate participation (relational) or integrated as one of many (participatory) Jantsch, (1975:105).

Indeed, the esoteric thesis may be viewed as a form of 'speculative intuition' and as such another conscious vantage point for the exoteric thesis.[3] Even though the researcher's primary motivation may well be aligned to extrinsic drivers, the intrinsic urge is present in the majority of thesis research and writing situations, and by using a conscious and judicious approach, the internal, esoteric thesis can be encouraged to emerge Cundy: 1999).

Balancing the workload

While arguing the esoteric thesis has merit, the researcher must also balance the competing needs of private life, study, research, field time, write up, supervision and the requirement to publish from ever-present examiners and perhaps employers. The potential workload of an esoteric thesis is best viewed as a percentage of the time allocated to the exoteric thesis. We suggest that ninety per cent of the researcher's overall effort be directed to the external (analysis, fieldwork, research, literature review, writing, editing and publication), with ten per cent directed to internal analysis including synthesising, reflecting, connecting, surfacing, illuminating, identifying and tracking important internal markers and understandings that may emerge from external sources, although this may vary considerably.

An esoteric thesis is not in itself an esoteric journey (*in*side looking *in*), nor is it an esoteric view of the outside world (*in*side looking *out*). Rather it rides on the back of the external thesis and seeks insights that contribute to the researcher's 'self-knowledge' (the box below provides a metaphor for this process). The two theses should be kept in equilibrium; the goal is to strike a balance between the excessive effects of both rationalism and esotericism, just as esotericism can remove the importance of 'dancing with detail' and concrete evidence, so exotericism can remove the importance of inner meaning and 'learning about self and other'.

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[3] Latin recognises several types of cognition/thought, some of which have become all but discarded today, for example: abstraction, discernment, practical, synthetical, speculative and intuitional. Interestingly, Maturana and Varela's (1980) work, as phenomenologist biologists, describes cognition (not thought) as the activity involved in the self-organisation of all living systems. In other words, cognition does not represent 'the world out there' as thought might, rather cognition is 'a bringing forth of the world through the process of living'. Cognition is the process of life.

Metaphor for the Esoteric Thesis

When I was a child, each year my parents would buy a Christmas Pageant calendar. On each day of the last month of the year, as we approached the 25th December, my sister and I would take turns opening a series of little (1cm by 1cm) windows in the Christmas calendar. Slowly, window-by-window, the hidden pageant appeared.
On the last day the whole pattern was revealed.

The pageant, like the esoteric thesis, was an inner pattern already present, yet initially not evident to the outside world. Each day added a further perspective on the overall underlying picture.

Source: Paul Wildman (2012)

Writing an esoteric thesis, then, is about the realisation and fulfilment of one's potential capacities (gained through learning to develop insights and understanding from one's research), and applying this to the self in ways that demonstrate understanding of, and service to, self and humanity.

Characteristics of the esoteric thesis

The esoteric thesis has a number of specific characteristics[4]. First, the esoteric thesis acknowledges emotional experiences and personal development outcomes achieved through writing the exoteric thesis. Next, the esoteric thesis uses external research, as a subtext, to harness both the outer and inner search for meaning and it seeks their integration. It also assists in the development, revelation, or exploration, of *an internal frame of reference* or paradigm.

Such a frame of reference can, and at an unconscious level already does, integrate and prioritise one's life direction and ability to identify and valorise the research question, future directions and past patterns of inquiry. Further, it provides a path that allows broader and deeper research questions to be asked about the contribution of the exoteric thesis to the researcher's ongoing life, self and emergent familial and professional roles, and it contextualises the exoteric thesis as an analytical engine or outer journey of intellectual comprehension. Finally, the esoteric thesis is about synthesising, amalgamating and patterning questions, data, insights and answers that arise from research conducted in the external world.[5]

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[4] The first author found during his doctoral studies and subsequently, as have many of his colleagues similarly engaged, that esoteric thesis considerations/issues are initially largely ignored but become more relevant as the research progresses and certainly more relevant than was expected at the beginning of the 'research quest'. As a guesstimate, his experience suggests a majority of doctoral level researchers are drawn to deal with internal even esoteric issues as a result of the 'pressures and sometimes topic context' of external and exoteric research process. Moreover, it is our contention that how well these issues are addressed at the time, directly affects both the quality and timeliness of the thesis and the personal growth of the researcher.

[5] The synthesis/esoteric thesis, created as a consequence of Lyn Cundy's inner journey, makes explicit the theoretical links and language that helped her to develop, describe and most of all communicate the emerging

It has been our experience that, during the exoteric research process, the researcher often realises there is more going on than meets the eye. Thus, we put forward the esoteric thesis as one way of exposing these 'broader/deeper' issues and events to one's critical eye. This is not intended to set up dissonance between the researcher's inner and outer worlds, nor do we argue that either is 'better' than the other.   Rather, we maintain that one informs the other in a retroductive rapprochement between one's own 'lifestream'/process.   Burgess-Limerick (1995) and 'lifestyle'/context (EsT and ExT respectively). Further, we suggest, by becoming aware of the interrelationship between the two, we are better able to achieve some level of congruence between our internal and external worlds.   Indeed, we believe, authentic research actually requires this level of self-critical reflection, and that the ensuing realisation and explication will highlight, at some stage in the research process, the researcher's desire, or need, to review the research question and/or acknowledge the realisation of possible future research intentions, and perhaps life directions.

Descriptors

If we look behind the quest of the human mind for knowledge, we may see something far deeper than a purely human source. We may see knowledge embedded in bold conjectures and myths derived from a morphic field which, in turn, are embedded in archetypal energies that mental activity in its broadest sense releases as if unzipping a file. It is this unzipping that the esoteric thesis seeks to touch. Tarnas (1991).

The esoteric thesis is intensive rather than extensive and can be codified into story, painting, sculpture and video/dvd/blog/uTube clip or in some instances, text. In all instances, however, it is overarching or underpinning in nature, but not rule-governed (by word counts and the like). It is because our consciousness has been so colonised by narrowly defined 'rational' thinking, that we seek out an alternative vocabulary and process that has the capacity to transform the synthetic and intuitional forms of consciousness, methodologies and associated words.

The English language is rich in its capacity to embrace the internal 'left-hand' and thereby 'right–brain' quest (i.e., William Shakespeare). Currently, such capabilities are at best 'silently enabled' and at worst 'audibly disabled' in favour of the right-hand pair in the list below. The esoteric thesis respectfully challenges the view that only theses that satisfy the imperious needs created by the philosophic and scientific positions of the modern world are uniquely of value. The following (left-hand/right brain) list postulates the esoteric thesis from a language perspective with the first word in each pair relating to an esoteric dimension of understanding. These descriptors allow access to additional dimensions of knowing and learning that may be called meta-knowledge.[6]

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grounded theory that was both the purpose and the focus of her exoteric thesis (see chapter three in Cundy, 1999).

[6] Readers unfamiliar with these terms may wish to consult authors such as Gadamere, Rorty, Dilthey or some of the post modern authors. Direct reference to these authors have not been included as this article is primarily a pragmatic discussion drawing broadly on the literature stream of transformational philology – concerned as it is

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Descriptors as additional dimensions of knowing

Aesthetic cycle	Empiric cycle	*Inspiration*	Perspiration
Aggregation	Disaggregation	*Integration*	Disintegration
Apperception	Perception	*Internal*	External
Consciousness	Knowledge	*Intuition*	Instruction
Design Detail		*Left*	Right
Epiphany	Realisation	*Negative*	Positive
Esoteric	Exoteric	*Phenomenal*	Noumenal
Evert	Invert	*Philology*	Philosophy
Gnosis	Logos	*Poetic*	Noetic
Hermeneutic	Promethean	*Subjective*	Objective
Idea	Concept	*Symbolic*	Literal
Imagination	Construction	*Syncretic*	Analytic
Immediate	Mediate	*Synthesis*	Analysis
Induction	Deduction	*Vertical*	Horizontal
Insight	Hindsight	*Yin*	Yang

Some aspects for consideration in undertaking an esoteric thesis

Esoteric biography

In essence an exoteric thesis is written from an *out*side perspective looking *out*, while an esoteric thesis is in part a biography written from the *out*side looking *in* (from the vantage-point of

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with inner-outer relationships – which have become over the past century largely displaced, and indeed discredited, by reductionist philosophy – concerned as it is with outer truths or their negation.

In enlightenment terms, philology reified the conscious stream of expression from artists, poets and theatre, quite separate from philosophy. The philological processes, such as, *bildung* and erlebnis are appropriate 'right brain' counterparts of the philosophical or scientific methods like empiricism. It may well be that English, especially its modern variant, has lost much of these subtle yet crucial distinctions. In the root language stream from which English derived – largely German (extant) and Latin (extinct) – one can still find these linguistic echoes. In this context, cycles of inquiry are expanded to include not only the empirical cycle and its variants, but also the action research cycle; cognitive cycle; hermeneutical cycle; philological cycle and alchemaic cycle. These latter cycles all contain a vertical or consciousness component.

learning insights and deep reflections gained from the exoteric thesis). In this way, the esoteric thesis seeks to reveal the inner scaffolding that has generated, and will continue to generate, the external activity associated with the actual research question.

Retroductive congruence

The esoteric thesis is not a journey around one's psyche, nor is it an exploration of one's inner world. Rather, it is devoted to seeking inner patterns that give rise to the external research question. It seeks a harmony or congruence and integrity between the outer research question and its associated activities, on the one hand, and the researcher's inner world, on the other. This harmony is arrived at through a cyclic, retroductive process, in which inductive and then deductive processes are followed: working both from the particular to the general and then from the general to the particular, and so on. This, in turn, has the effect of assisting in the development of an internal frame of reference with the potential role of integrating and prioritising life directions, as well as enhancing our capacity to identify future directions from past lessons.

Interior|Exterior holon

The esoteric thesis, in effect, links to Wilber's (1995) notion of 'interior' whereas the exoteric thesis links to his notion of 'exterior'. The esoteric thesis represents an inner mirroring of the exterior actions, behaviours and measurements of the exoteric thesis. In Wilber's terms, the western esoteric|exoteric holon (which favours the exoteric) might be described as spinning on an inner|outer axis. Some Asian and indigenous cultures, on the other hand, are often described as spinning on an individual|social axis (which favours the social). Wilber (1995) captures this dilemma well when he says '[t]he permanent sign of [western] enlightenment is domination over an objectified external [read exoteric] nature and a repressed internal [read esoteric] nature' (p. 443). In this regard, readers may recall the 'integral' nature of the esoteric thesis: it is a step towards uniting the interior and exterior aspects of the researcher's being.

From supervision to supravision

Supravision moves beyond technical and academic correctness and the politics of examiner selection, although for a complete and successful outcome the cognitive, linguistic and evidential requirements of the exoteric thesis are still crucial. Yet, the supravisor need not become the navigator of the researcher's inner journey, exploring issues from the mundane to the rational or the spiritual at various levels of consciousness (see Table 1). Rather, the concept of supravision recognises the potential importance for the researcher of navigation devises such as reflective questioning, joint questing and pattern identification.[7] The supravisor's goal is to assist the

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[7] The reader should note that the exoteric thesis is almost always a Promethean work (explanatory, literal and analytic) whereas the esoteric thesis (interpretative, symbolic and synthetic) is often a Hermeneutic work. Generally speaking, universities do not take kindly to the latter. While vocational education may well strive for behavioural competence in the material world, tertiary education reaches for understanding of the mental world.

researcher in developing the capacity to take the process forward themselves through, for instance, Quadruple Column Action Research (see Table 2).

From knower & known to knower∞known

Table 1: From exoteric thesis to esoteric thesis and return

Exoteric Thesis ←→ Esoteric Thesis*

1 → Exoteric Thesis Research Question 'lived experience' of the professional field in which the research is being conducted →

2 → Research Actions (column 1) conventional research and fieldwork observations – *immersion*** →

3 → Learning Observations (column 2) integration, reflection and abstract analysis of fieldwork observations →

4 → Learning Insights (column 3) epiphany and 'ah ha' experiences become 'what it means for me to be interested in this particular research question, at this moment, in this way' – *incubation*** →

5 → Deep Reflection and Pattern Identification (column 4) creates the potential for deeper understanding of the researcher's inner world and its interrelationship with the research task at hand, as well as links/themes/patterns from past life/professional/research experiences →

6 → Esoteric Thesis facilitates the creation of deeper/meta patterns (or patterns within patterns like Russian dolls and fractal like structures) that may ultimately expose the research rationale/context/field and help explain why we asked the research question in the first place – *illumination*** →

7 → Integrating the Esoteric and Exoteric brings together personal insights and research findings – *creative synthesis*** →

8 → Exoteric Thesis makes sense of (usually through written word) the creative synthesis, so that knowledge may be shared – *explication*** →

9 → Revisiting the Research Question, as if for the first time, yet knowing more deeply about its meaning for you – self realisation – as well as the realisation of possible future research intentions/directions*** → **1**

* Can be codified in a methodology such as Reflexive Praxis or QCAR (col. 4, Table 2)

** *Italics* indicate the steps in Heuristic Inquiry, can include a journeyman's piece i.e.

Both are Promethean tasks. The process of completing an esoteric thesis reaches for understanding and interpretation of meaning in the 'symboligical' inner world of the researcher.

exemplar project

*** One can now make a more conscious decision to continue or change direction

Source: Paul Wildman and Iona Miller (2012)

This element of the esoteric thesis derives from a belief that, to have integrity in qualitative research, the outer world being researched must interact with the inner world of the researcher. In other words, the integrity of the research process demands that the research methodology chosen has the capacity to engage the internal and external worlds of the researcher. Esoteric understandings of knowledge recognise our ordinary knowing as theory-laden, conditioned, relative and provisional, or as essentially hermeneutic. Yet, such esoteric knowledge accepts realities, such that human nature is teleological (having an urge to transcend, for an ultimate purpose) and that there is collectivity beyond the purely rational.[8] Through self-observation, introspective traditions claim that we can break the reactive link between mental processes associated with experiencing and their rational concomitants. Much Zen and Tantra practice, for example, is oriented toward unconditioned, intuitive, immediate experiencing that transcends mental habits.

Chakra activation

In terms of obtaining and inscribing the different types of energy in exoteric thesis writing, another consideration may be the *chakras* or energy centres of the body. Known for millennia in the East, they have been used in Western naturopathic systems for the past fifty or so years. The seven chakras run along the length of the spine. Those familiar with mediation will be aware of these centres, about which much has been written. The seven chakras may be seen to represent different 'ways of knowing' or intelligences. In an intriguing piece on this topic, Passfield (1997) describes these seven energy centres as contributing the following energies:

(1)   Base (bottom of spine) → existence

(2)   Genital → activity esp. generative and procreative

(3)   Stomach area → control and power

(4)   Heart → community and family

(5)   Throat → meaning and decisions

(6)   Between the eyes → integration and discernment, and

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[8] In modern physics, for example, the worldview is a systems view whereby everything is connected to everything else, nothing can be understood in isolation and everything is seen as part of a unified whole. While is not yet clear how this connectedness operates, Jaworski (1988) claims the mind has powers that allow us to go beyond our normal way of being and even beyond what we think is possible. According to Jaworski (1988), when we give something our whole attention things just begin to happen and we experience *synchronicity*. When we join together as a group and rise above our habitual way of being even more possibilities emerge.

(7)   Top of the head → spirit and synthesis

While both types of theses can use all types of energy, the esoteric thesis draws heavily on the last three chakras, because they lean towards deep reflection.

Quadruple Column Action Research (QCAR)

One way of integrating the esoteric and exoteric theses is via QCAR. Although not applicable in all research projects, QCAR illustrates how conventional exoteric methodology can be expanded to include an esoteric dimension. By way of QCAR, the conventional action learning field journal used to record observations and reflections (two column), is expanded to include learning insights and pattern identification (four column). Table 1 explains this process in more detail. Reflective/Reflexive praxis is another method of transforming the data generated, by means of the QCAR process, into esoteric learning. This transformation is in effect another journey of understanding as the researcher searches for meta meaning in the research data.

Table 2: Quadruple Column Action Research – the QCAR process

(1) Field Work Obs	(2) Learning Obs & Insights	(3) Deep Reflections	(4) Synthesis &Pattern Id

Source: P Wildman 2012

Reflective praxis is the process through which an extended period of professional experience (often a decade or so) engages with action-based research and reflection (Columns 1 and 2), and includes inner review and the application of learning insights (Column 3) and their creative synthesis (Column 4), to produce the final dissertation. Reflective praxis can, to some degree, operate as a methodology for the conventional exoteric thesis. However, with the inclusion of deep reflection and pattern identification (i.e., heuristic inquiry), it can also become a method for explicating the esoteric thesis, Wildman, (1995). The QCAR process forms a triple-loop learning opportunity in which reflective praxis enables the combining of action research with heuristic inquiry.[9]   Other methodologies, such as phenomenology,[10] are also useful in facilitating immersion in the exoteric phenomenon being studied and the esoteric or lived experience of that phenomenon.

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[9] Heuristic Inquiry has five dimensions: *immersion* in the field; *incubation* and *illumination* of learning insights, meta meaning and pattern identification; *creative synthesis* – the application of the lessons learnt in relation to both the researcher and the research; and finally *explication* in the esoteric/exoteric theses. Table 1 and 2 illustrate this process. Moustakas (1990) (Heuristic Inquiry) and Galtung and Inayatullah (1997) (deep pattern identification) are also valuable texts.

[10] Phenomenology is the study of essences. In phenomenology the traditional notions of objectivity and subjectivity are redefined. Objectivity and subjectivity are both aspects of the same thing; they find meaning and significance in the oriented relationship between researcher and the phenomenon being researched. Phenomena make themselves known in moods, feelings and emotions and, therefore, cannot be perceived or studied in the manner of objects through neutral and detached descriptions. Hence, the method of phenomenology encourages immersion and in so doing the lived experience becomes a crucial part of the research process. The major task of phenomenology is to interpret both the essences/meta patterns of the phenomenon and the context of the situation in which it manifests itself.

Through immersion, pattern identification and synthesis, the esoteric thesis seeks to transcend the pseudo-objectivity that enthrals so much of our academic world. In academic research and essays, banishing the subjective by adopting the stance of 'passive observer recording pure fact' typifies this pseudo-objectivity. One of the most important things about the esoteric thesis is that it invites the collaboration between subjective and objective points of view. In this way, the esoteric thesis promotes a new kind of academic honesty and integrity.

The esoteric thesis and academic integrity

The result of investigations on behalf of the esoteric thesis can, in turn, flow into how we understand 'academic endeavour'. Some academic approaches tend to concentrate on 'thought experiments', which ultimately lead to unnecessarily detached 'fence-sitting' positions that effectively distance academic approaches from enactments of the implied value position. Such ambivalence, although sometimes necessary for objectivity and exoteric theory development, tend to exclude other ways of knowing. In action research, for example, it can lead to a certain reluctance to explore and enact the personal and collective compliance implications of taking such a theoretical position.

The esoteric thesis stands in fundamental challenge to the all-too-frequent mantra of 'just do your dissertation according to the conventional formula and then you can do what you want.' Indeed, this article answers that suggestion by asking: 'How can one know what one wants without undertaking deep learning such that is provided by the esoteric thesis?' The esoteric thesis responds by seeking ways to touch and understand the ground on which we stand, while explicating our research question and thereby taking various research positions. The authenticity allowed by the esoteric thesis includes personal and social compliance, public self-disclosure, ethical and integrity development, and contestability. In this way academic integrity is enhanced.

Conclusion

Many researchers in their attempt to complete the exoteric thesis as expeditiously as possible tend to overlook opportunities to embark on their own inner journey. The esoteric thesis, when proactively undertaken, can be effectively and productively linked to the exoteric research process, with just a small allowance for additional workload. This parallel process provides a rich and rewarding field of life meaning and personal learning for the researcher, and in some instances the supravisor. Further, the esoteric thesis presents the capacity to enhance the exoteric thesis and thereby the understandings and knowledge created and developed through the conventional research process.

In a small yet significant way, the esoteric thesis responds to the frequent claim by researchers that the research/thesis writing process is ultimately formulaic, alienating and not sufficiently personally challenging or insightful. It is to these latter two critiques of the conventional research process that this article is addressed.

Little Gidding by T S Elliot

We shall not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
when the last of earth left to discover
is that which was the beginning

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