UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Oikos, Habitus, Paideia: A Call to Ecological Mindedness in the Ec(h)o of Consumerism

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

CALGARY, ALBERTA

September, 2008

Canada

FRONTISPIECE

We are a rock revolving
Around a golden sun
We are a billion children
Rolled into one
So when I hear about
The hole in the sky
Saltwater wells in my eyes
We climb the highest mountain
We'll make the desert bloom
We're so ingenious
We can walk on the moon
But when I hear of how
The forests have died
Saltwater wells in my eyes...

We light the deepest ocean
Send photographs of Mars
We're so enchanted by
How clever we are
Why should one baby
Feel so hungry she cries
Saltwater wells in my eyes...

We are a rock revolving
Around a golden sun
We are a billion children
Rolled into one
What will I think of me
The day that I die
Saltwater wells in my eyes...

– Julian Lennon, Leslie Spiro, and Mark Spiro, *Saltwater*

ABSTRACT

The Earth, the natural environment, the Ecosphere, our home (*Oikos*), has historically been subjected to, and in some cases subjugated by humanity's culturally diverse conditions, practices, and habits (*Habitus*). Encased within cultural interpretations of the world are one or more discourses or worldviews which influence beliefs, behaviours, and patterns of existence. Not uncommonly, a particular way of being, behaving, thinking, and communicating achieves dominance and permeates everyday life. This *dominant discourse* pervades the syntax and vocabulary of a culture and/or society and has long term implications regarding both personal and societal relationships with the Ecosphere. These in turn have repercussions on the ecological integrity of a society's biophysical surroundings as well as the spiritual well being (*Spiritus*) of its members. The formal education system (*Paideia*) forms a critical juncture between *Oikos* and *Habitus* and therefore provides the opening to explore the relationship between the two.

In this interpretive study, I investigate the tension between the Westernised world's dominant [productivist] discourse and the subordinate ecological discourse with an eye to exploring the potential for reframing the prevailing mindset within the context of a changing worldview. I seek to discover a clearing, to identify and enter into the spaces and gaps, to find a pause into which to settle and respond to the residual ecological echo (*Ec(h)o*) that resonates and reverberates in the hidden recesses of the consumerist drone. Ecological mindedness, as integral to an ecological discourse, provides the backdrop for this inquiry. In my search for how and where the pulse and impulse of ecological mindedness might be located, I draw on dialogic conversations which I held with five participants from the teaching profession. These dialogues are based on their experiences both within and beyond their classroom practice. Pursuing this understanding also involves a recovery and uncovering of and for the 'other,' not solely on an intellectual level, but emotional and 'spiritual' as well. This pulls forward the power of an echo to resonate and reverberate with related 'others' themes such as peace education, participatory democracy, global education, tolerance, difference, and inclusivity – in other words, transformative education.

possesses compassion, high energy, and an unfaltering dedication to social and ecological justice.

I also wish to thank Dr. Dianne Tapp and Dr. Florence Glanfield, my external readers, for their sage remarks, for their evident support for the foundations of this dissertation both during the oral defence and in their written comments on the dissertation, and for their perceptive questions. Their voices remain with me and will engender further inquiry and deeper consideration of this topic.

I wholeheartedly thank the participants in this study – Carol, Deb, G.R., Leila, and McAvity – for their willingness to share experiences and to enter into unknown, uncharted, and sometimes indefinable territory. Each time I revisited our conversations, I discovered yet another layer of thought and insight in their words which in turn generated yet another shift in my understanding, another way of seeing this work and the world of teaching and learning differently. Their collective sense of humour and wisdom helped breathe life and sense into this dissertation. The vibrancy, integrity, honesty, humility, and courage that emanate from their very being are a constant reminder of the valour of those teachers who know how and when to lead, how and when to guide, and how and when to follow.

I also thank my friends. There are far too many to list but I trust they know who they are. Although writing this dissertation has in some ways been an isolating experience, never was there a time that I felt entirely alone because in this exceptional network of friendships I have found a steadfast loyalty, an ever present willingness to talk, laugh, and listen, and an enthusiastic readiness to share coffee, lunch, and a glass of wine.

My final thanks go to my family. They have sustained me, held me up, and cheered me on through the joys and the difficulties associated with undertaking such a hefty endeavour. I could not have dreamt or wished a better family and support system into existence. My brothers, Larry and Ervin along with their wives and their children, my husband's relatives, my nieces and nephews, have each entered and informed this work in their own unique way, from those who never questioned the wisdom of my decision to enter a doctoral programme at this stage in my life to those [Shannon and Ashley] who fondly expressed annoyance at the length of time I have spent reading, researching, writing, and revising. Melissa, my daughter, constant inspiration and shining star, coffee buddy, someone to converse deeply with, to learn from, to share laughter with, to dream into existence a kaleidoscope of creativity and clarity, I thank you for the gift of being your mother. Chloe

and Sneakers, whose constant companionship and canine kinship have kept me grounded and connected to the natural world, I thank you as well.

And last but certainly not least, ineffable gratitude goes to Ed – my sweetheart, my life companion, my devoted husband and steady support. He has been with me every step of the way and has given me more than I can ever repay in one short lifetime. Not once did he lose confidence in me when I was plunged into self doubt. Not once was he unavailable to listen, encourage, support, to celebrate the high points and lift me during the lows. Not once did his love waver during even my darkest moments. He not only buoyed me with words of love and beneficence, he supplied me with words when I was at a complete and utter loss. Through his ever optimistic outlook on life I have discovered the delight of seeing the world in ways I never would have imagined – from bird watching to his spontaneous geological wonder tours – and the charm of listening to the raging storms and quiet, stunning beauty of Beethoven's music, particularly his Symphony Number Six, the Pastoral. One of Ed's favourite songs, *Imagine*, by John Lennon, is a statement of his hopes, beliefs, and imaginings. It serves as an accurate commentary of his desire for the world to be a 'better place.' I continually marvel at the good fortune bestowed upon me in becoming his life partner. Ed, you have my heart and soul for all eternity.

You may say that I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one.
(John Lennon, *Imagine*, 1971)

DEDICATION

With me in my heart and thoughts throughout this process have been my parents, Ann and George Yaremko, who, although of humble circumstances, gave me priceless gifts. From my mother, whose sense of humour, sense of wonder, love of life, and love of family, I learned to love the Earth, to respect life, and to approach the world with humility. From my father, whose patience, wisdom, unconditional support, and constant encouragement to 'get my education,' I learned the importance of listening, accepting, and careful consideration of differing viewpoints. From both I gained a thirst for knowledge, wisdom, truth, and compassion. Their lives were not without sorrow; the opportunities I have had in my lifetime eluded them in theirs, but they never gave up hope or courage, nor did they ever measure the value of life through material possessions – of which they had few – but they had untold wealth in wisdom, love, respect for all life, humility, and compassion. Mom and Dad, this is dedicated to you.

Through my grandnephews, Benjamin and Carter, within whom I see the embodiment of trust, love, and hope, standing representatives for all children, I dedicate this to all children, born and unborn, the world over as well.

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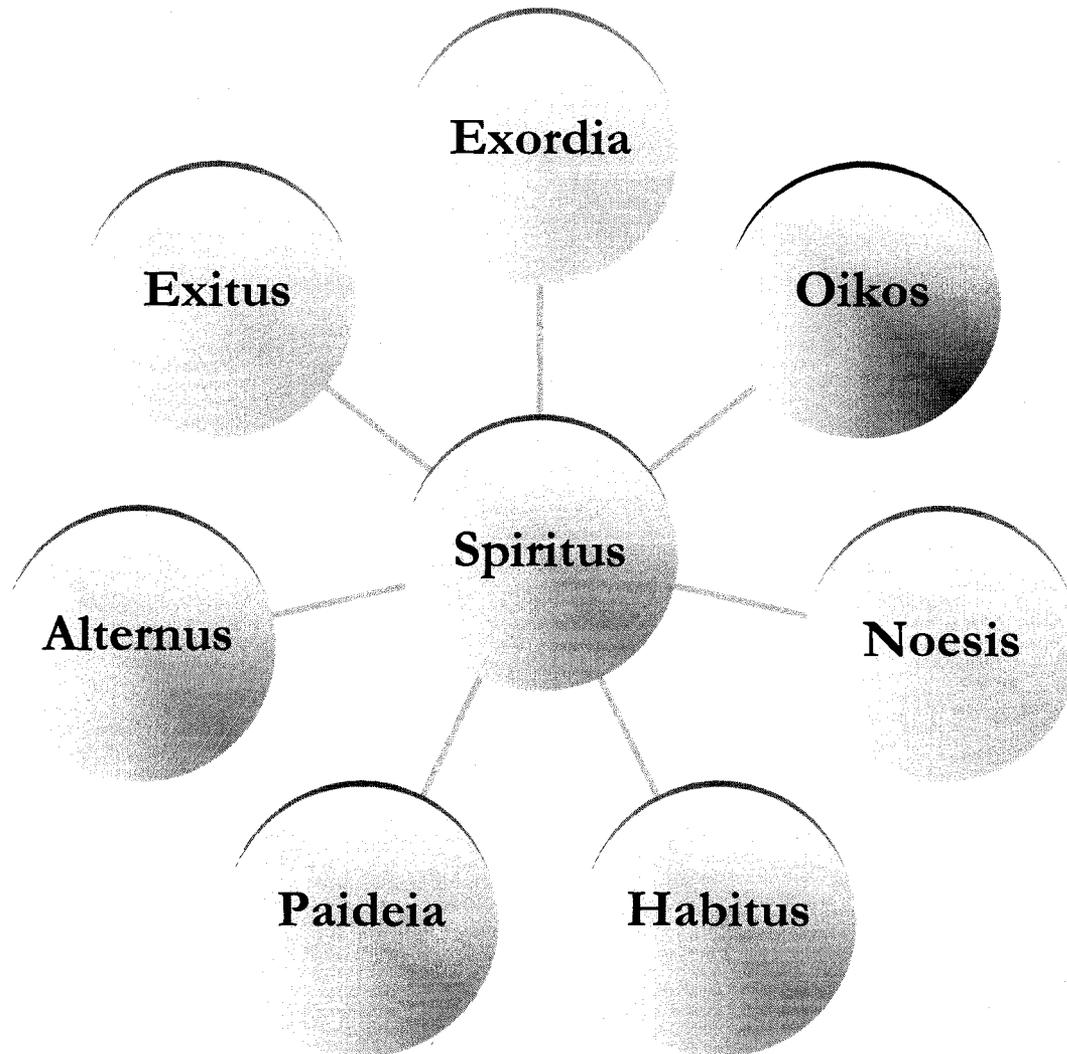
[1] *The words in the outer circles of this blueprint stand as titles for the seven sections or 'phases' of this dissertation. Meanings of these terms derive from original Greek or Latin and are described within the introductory comments of each corresponding section. All outer points connect to the centre, "Spiritus", which is explained shortly. This portrayal depicts the organisation of the text and is to be read clockwise beginning with Exordia (Introductions) and following through Oikos (Home), Noesis (Understanding), Habitus (Condition/Culture), Paideia (Education), Alternus (Alternatives), and Exitus (a leaving).*

Figure 2   **Exordia: Introduction**

Exordia

Exitus

Oikos

Spiritus

Alternus

Noesis

Praxis

Habitus
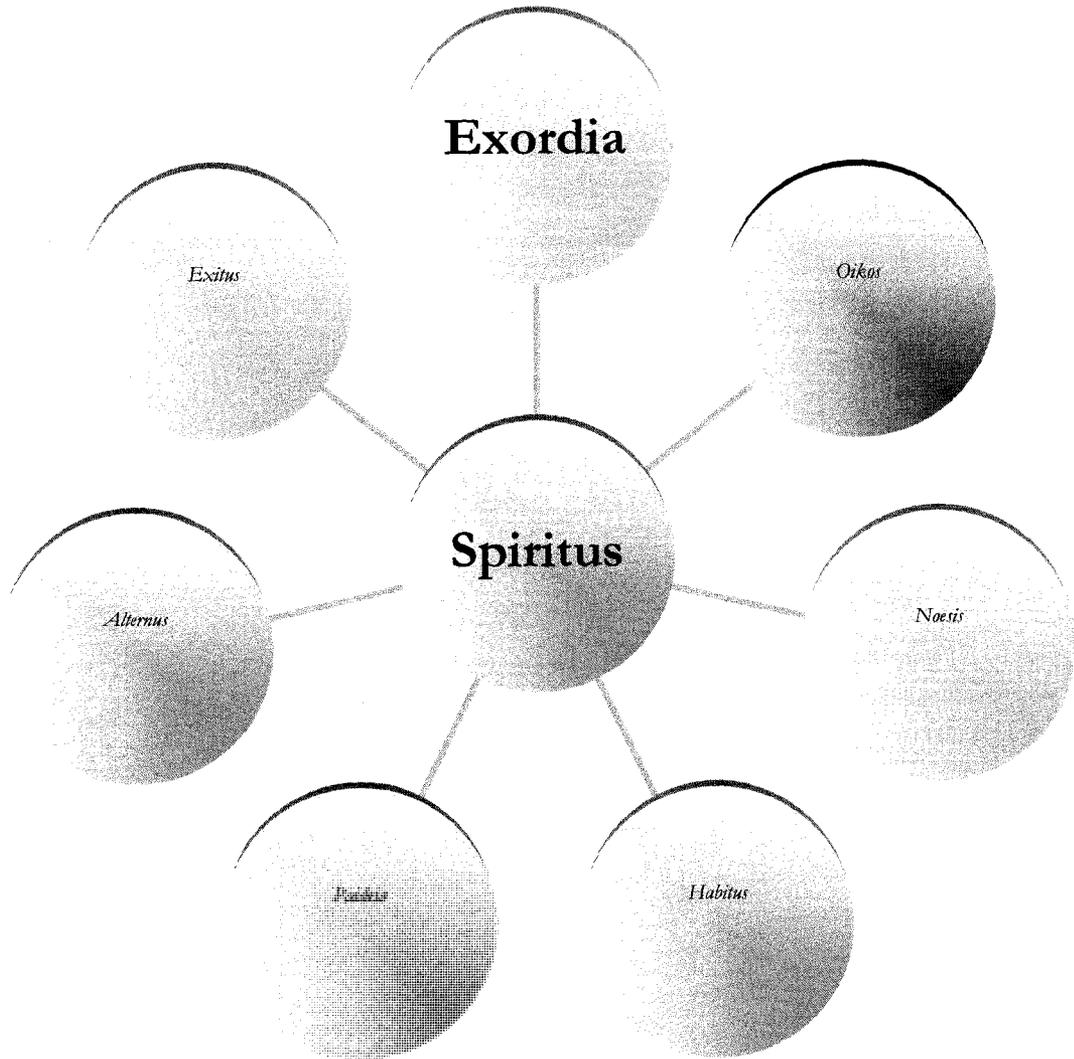
EXORDIA: INTRODUCTIONS

Exordium I: Introduction to the Chart

The pictorial representation on the preceding page(s) is meant to serve as a chart of and through this dissertation. In my search for a way of visually summarising this work, a web immediately came to mind as it is how I have come to view the world – i.e., as a holistic, interconnected, weaving and interweaving with no linear formation to imply dominance or supremacy; however, for the sake of visual simplicity, I have chosen instead to use – as a rendering of holism – a circular formation. At the same time, this arrangement may defuse some of the difficulties in navigating through, becoming lost in the intricacies, or bound by the stickiness of a web. The appearance of spokes leading to a single central core is not meant to lead to one [certain] specific end; the lines which connect to the centre should also be understood as intersecting and connecting lines from circle to circle as well as to centre. If a three dimensional image were possible, this would appear as a spherical assemblage of multilayered, multidimensional, connected and interconnected components with revolving and devolving lines that depict the cyclicality and reciprocity inherent within a holistic viewpoint; however, the written page, a two dimensional surface, necessarily restricts such possibilities.

The written texts, the conversations, and my interpretations flow through seven somewhat discrete but not disconnected sections or phases, each of which overlaps and intertwines with the others. I call these phases not to incline one's eye towards a developmental structure which implies a temporary period, a 'here today, gone tomorrow' conception of the wor(l)d but return, rather, to its roots, to "phase" as "phainein, to show, to make appear" [1]. By the same token, I mean to make evident that each part of this work made its appearance not as an instantly coherent coming together of ideas, thoughts, and understandings in the specific order within which it appears in this final written submission. Indeed, this is anything *but* the way the seeing/writing/interpreting process unfolded. It has rather been a convoluted, appearing/disappearing/reappearing orientation of comments, conversations, readings, and interpretations. In coming to these understandings, I have used an interpretive approach which I flesh out more thoroughly in the third section (Noesis). As

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[1] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*

I do not wish to overwork the metaphor, I primarily refer to each of these 'phases' in the dissertation as sections.

Within each of the spheres is a signpost meant to act as introduction to each section. These are drawn from original Latin or Greek words, each of which is explained at the beginning of the corresponding section. I use these words not with the aim of obfuscating meaning or confusing the reader, but rather because of the obfuscation and confusion that arrive with a language that has its origins in numerous others (Anglo-Saxon, French, Latin, Greek). In my traverse with and through the English language as I searched for the 'right' words, all too often I discovered not merely a sticky web, but in many cases, a slippery slide into a muddle of meaning. Thus I have in several cases used etymological origins along with corresponding original definitions. This does not guarantee that my meanings will be perfectly clear to everyone, however, if "Mastering the language is a necessary precondition for coming to an understanding" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 385), then I am bound to make an assiduous attempt at seeking as much clarity as possible.

The size of each circle is identical: my hope is that this may minimise any strong inclination to (mis)perceive a specific order(ing) or hierarchical decree. And in so saying, I do not mean to pretend that this work does not have a starting point or a terminus. As a written dissertation, it *does* have a beginning and an ending – even though in some ways, I have come to see the ending as evolving into another beginning. In using this particular layout, I wish to illustrate the reciprocity and cyclicality that exists amongst the various aspects of this work, of life, of the world. The connections furthermore extend to the centre point in the configuration, *"Spiritus"* [2], the breath which animates life and represents home (Earth) as centre, ground, Being, as the beginning to which we return. As humans, we exist within the fluctuating ebbs and flows of a larger ecosystem, the biosphere. And lest it appear that I have taken an anthropocentric stance in placing *"Spiritus"* at centre, I hasten to make clear that I apply this term to *all* inhabitants of the Earth, sentient and nonsentient. I mean this not as a solitary traverse but as a guided tour through 'charted' territory, a time for conversation, for reflection, and further question.

Just as there are spaces between the circles on the map, I have left spaces within the text to indicate a break, a pause, a moment to catch one's breath, to let the words stand, to give the conversation a rest, to allow it to settle. Of the many significant realisations I have

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[2] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*

arrived at via the research, conversations, and a few personal experiences, one has been the seemingly pervasive societal reluctance to *slow down*. As one of the participants (Carol) quipped, "It's like we're in a society of 'Mad Minutes' [a one-minute math activity used by some teachers to practice basic facts]. Sixty seconds gone and I've only got one done!" (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

Exordium II: Introduction to the Text

> Researchers…have been monitoring the pulse of planet Earth for several decades; and their findings leave little doubt that the Earth is in a state of decline. Atmospheric chemists report steady rises in greenhouse gases; soil scientists tell us that soils are eroding in many places more rapidly than they are forming; physiologists report increases in foreign, sometimes disease-causing chemicals in our bodies; ecologists register the impoverishment of ecosystems and the extinction of species; sociologists observe the breakdown of families and the deterioration of communities; and philosophers and religious leaders discuss the erosion of moral principles and the alienation of humans from the natural world. (Uhl, 2004)

Theodore Roethke (1975), whose poetry was influenced by a childhood largely spent in his father's greenhouse, wrote, "In a dark time, the eye begins to see" (p. 232). The above quotation from Christopher Uhl's (2004) work speaks to both a "dark time" and a time in which we have begun "to see". A new millennium is underway and with it comes an array of problems from the previous century. It is, of course, extremely difficult to predict future events with certitude. However, given all the media attention and 'hard evidence' that seem to support claims and calls for rethinking our actions, I find it difficult to disagree with Ehrlich and Ehrlich (1998) who write that "it is likely that environmental events will be defining ones for our grandchildren's generation" (p. 11).

At the centre of this work lies my interest in the education of children and my concern for the current ecological condition of the Earth. This is not, however, an overzealous quest to find solutions to [global] ecological problems, it is not an attempt to rewrite curricula that could potentially include a stronger ecological/environmental studies component in schools, and it is not [purely] a rant against the dominant cultural and economic forces that may divert our attention away from the extent of the environmental damages on the planet. These *are* important elements to this study, however, my focus gradually shifted towards an inquiry into ecological awareness as well as a recovery, or an

uncovering of what it means to be a teacher, a citizen, and an individual within all the convolutions, conundrums, and complications of this contingent, (con)temporary temporality that is our collective way of life. This is a wondering that rests on the recognition that our perceptions are, at least in some part, based on historical and ideological influences as we are part of an historically situated cultural web, a technological world, and the natural environment.

Four interrelated research questions form the basis of this study:

- o What is our experience as human beings and beings in society – i.e., how do we experience 'self' in relationship to the Earth (*Oikos*) and culture (*Habitus*) as manifest in our attitudes, actions, and responses? (Adapted in part from Thomashow, 2002)
- o How is experience of/to the natural world structured historically and ideologically?
- o What are the major cultural forces that shape our perceptions of ourselves, our beliefs, and the natural world?
- o What are the possible implications for teaching, learning, culture, curriculum – in short, life in schools (*Paideia*)?

This has taken place on two levels. One involves my investigation into a substantial amount of written text and the other, resting on the experience of teachers, is an exploration and interpretation of personal experience of ecological mindedness and how this plays out and/or intermingles within a consumerist network of advertising, easy to access credit, and the promise of the 'good life' as it is framed/represented/influenced by differing conceptions of what it means to 'be' in the Westernised world at this point in time.

To some degree, this study involves an investigation of identity, or at least those identifiable dispositions that seem to motivate the decisions we make, give us cause to enact daily behaviours, and underlie our actions or "habits of mind" (Dewey, 1915/2001). "Identity", as a topic, has strong ties to the discipline of psychology and I do not promise or seek to unravel the complexities associated with any particular psychological approach to understanding human behaviour, motivation, or essence but rather, in using the term I mean it in a loosely configured sense, to be applied in a very limited way as it fits within two primary worldviews – Ecocentrism, which can be conceived as carrying within it an "ecological identity" (Fisher, 2002; Roszak, 1993; Thomashow, 2002) and

Anthropocentrism, which, in one of its forms, can be connected with the fundamental sense of identity that individuals derive from consumerist activities (Aldridge, 2000; Hammerslough, 2001; Storey, 2003). To clarify what is meant by worldview, I draw from the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1996), wherein "worldview" is defined in two ways: "The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world" and "A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group."

In bringing forward two seemingly opposing viewpoints, I do not mean this to appear as a purely dichotomous investigation. Similar to Putnam's (2002) objection to the fact/value dichotomy in which he points out that dichotomising "functions as a discussion stopper, and not just a discussion-stopper, but a thought-stopper" (p. 44), so, too, do I regard antithetical propositions as dead end streets. Thus, I wish to make perfectly clear that I do not claim that people identify solely with one worldview or the other, nor are their accompanying discourses completely distinct and disconnected. Rather, they rest along a complex, shifting spectrum: as one example, green consumerism – ecological in intent yet economic in consequence – encompasses both perspectives. In order to reach some understanding of the discourses and how they have arisen, however, it is helpful to highlight the differences and by the same token, similarities between these two worldviews, which necessitates dealing with each as a separate topic. In so doing, the dominant cultural discourse, i.e., the productivist, consumerist discourse which is predicated on a market economy and underwrites our [mostly unconscious] thought patterns (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) and mode of being (i.e., worldview), will be placed alongside an ecological discourse.

As an exploration of the possibility of ways and means through which we may come to better understand ourselves, an exploration of "self consciousness is profoundly dependent upon what lies outside it – the otherness of different language horizons, of different cultures and persons" (Davey, 2006, p. 9). In this dissertation, I mean 'other' to include the natural environment. This is not, of course, a purely straightforward, step by step, tightly woven framework from which to assess, analyse, synthesise, draw conclusions, and predict future events. Because of the various social worlds we inhabit, within which we become positioned by different discourses and practices, the 'self' can no longer be conceived of as a unified, stable 'whole' (Hall, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Taylor, 1991) as conceptualised in modern and premodern times. An easily discernible, definitive 'self,' even if it were to be, is not to be.

Exordium III: Introduction to the Conversations

In my explorations of this topic – as a 'formal' topic – I came to realise that interpretation of written text *could* stand alone; however, dialogic discussions with others could bring the matter more readily, richly, and dependably to light/life. So along with my exploration of a torrent – at times a torment – of text, five individuals, Carol, Deb, G.R., Leila, and McAvity, met with me over a period of several months (from February, 2005 to May, 2005) on both an individual and group basis. One follow up discussion occurred with Carol in August, 2007. As this research is relevant to schooling and may hold possibilities for carryover into classroom activities – e.g., enhancing ecological understandings, uncovering what changes might need to occur within the education system in order to facilitate ecological awareness – conversations have been held with school personnel (i.e., teachers and administrators). I am also interested in how these understandings or ways of understanding might influence teaching, learning, and classroom culture. I hope to illuminate this through *"how"* questions – how teachers contend with, stand within, and live inside the places and spaces of the classroom, how they sustain themselves in the face of continual interruptions and disruptions, and how they negotiate the terrain amidst the pervasive, persistent, pernicious pressures associated with *time*.

This has taken the form of a dialogic inquiry into pertinent aspects of modern (i.e., Westernised) society along with discussions around personal experience(s) of ecological mindedness, teaching, and consumerism. My attempt has been to understand how or whether we might "link together concepts of the ecological self and an environmental ethos" (Smith, 2001, p. 21) and furthermore how or whether the classroom, which embodies to greater or lesser degree society's dominant discourse, has become a battleground for working through and playing out the various points of intersection and contention. Of interest to me in this study is how those who live and have lived in the teaching profession are able to maintain any sense of equanimity, how teaching professionals tread the "rough ground" (Dunne, 2001) – i.e., how they negotiate the uncertain terrain of the 21ˢᵗ Century classroom space, how they promote or engender a sense of community and belonging amongst their students, and how they understand their role as guides and mentors – in short, how they live well as teachers, individuals, and citizens of a global community.

Although I cannot say that I was initially able to anticipate how this work might evolve, I *did* know that a safe, supportive context would be a crucial backdrop to these

conversations. The topics I had in mind for discussion were not meant to be personally threatening or emotionally wrenching, but as these discussions would be a little more than simple conversations over coffee to talk about the weather – although this topic *did* arise during a conversation that spilled into a discussion of global warming – as Nicholas Davey (2006) outlines, "Dialogical engagement is not necessarily easy or comfortable. It requires a willingness to be subject to the address of the other and to place one's self understanding before the other's claims" (p. xv). Once such engagement is set in motion, we are thrust into a position of vulnerability. Davey explains this as entering into the space between how we see/understand ourselves and how others do: "We are always vulnerable to different narratives of ourselves – hence, becoming different to ourselves" (p. 27). I have found this to be both an exciting event and a rather troublesome one. Letting go of certainty, settling into the discomfort, re-viewing the taken for granted all mobilise a personal re-positioning, a "self consciousness...profoundly dependent upon what lies outside it – the otherness of different language horizons, of different cultures and persons" (Davey, 2006, p. 9). Although we may encounter this 'otherness' that Davey speaks of within our day to day existence, it is a somewhat different sort of integration, or re-integration that occurs in one's own private moments of reflection. In a group situation, where the exposure is public and focused, it can be a rather challenging position in which to find oneself.

With the above in mind, when it came to making decisions around whom I might invite into this study, I did so with careful thought. Due to the dialogic nature of the work and the scope of the topic, a precondition was that people would be comfortable with sharing experiences, entering into the unknown, and willing to listen carefully to what others had to say. I also wanted to ensure that there was some understanding, some prior experience with the topic. Therefore, I looked to former teaching colleagues. Of the five people who agreed to participate in this study, four were known to me on a professional basis. The one whom I had not met before – also a teacher – came highly recommended to me by a fellow doctoral student with whom I had numerous conversations about this work. Within this configuration, there were strangers, friends, and colleagues, united in a common purpose, I with the difficult task of attempting to do justice to their words.

The discussions we held rest upon specific questions and personal reflections – mine and theirs, as well as the ebbs and flows of free floating conversation. My primary goal in holding dialogic discussions was to seek meaning and develop understanding of the impact

of experience in our own lives, both within and beyond the classroom. Participants were invited to share their own experiences, interpretations, explanations, and analyses of culture, consuming (as an "ism"), ecological mindedness, and teaching. Discussions throughout this study were centred around how we perceive ourselves as part of natural and built (i.e., cultural) worlds and how these relationships interact (Kanner, 1998). The purpose has been to open up and into the gap between ecological concerns and consumerism to aid in developing an understanding of tacit beliefs and assumptions. In so doing, the point was not to lay bare and harshly criticise the lifestyle of others but rather through dialogue, to seek to understand what processes may hold potential for sustaining a deeper identification with the natural world (Walsh, 1991) and what factors may induce indifference or perhaps even contempt. Van Manen (1990) refers to indifference (and by extension, contempt) as a "refusal to dwell together...the failure to recognize the other...in a genuine encounter or personal relation. Indifference is a failure or crisis of the 'we'" (p. 108). I seek to understand, then, how/whether a new space, proximity, or way to dwell together might point towards an antidote to the dangers of indifference or contempt. We visited attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and bewilderments as they are embedded within our cultural and individual understandings or misunderstandings. As a collaborative effort, we were enabled to "think together, to listen together, and to inquire into what is important in the lives of individuals and groups" (Nelson, 1998). At the same time, my task was to determine if/where the discourses clash and if/where they may converge.

Our conversations point towards the difficulties and tensions that arise when discussing influences, personal interpretations, and the daily disruptions, disturbances, and dislocations that subtly or forcibly create shifts in thoughts, attitudes, and even stubbornly held beliefs. The culture-language-thought connection, as one of the greatest complexities we face, is a reminder of a specific cultural pattern of thinking (Bowers, 1993), one that we need to unpack so we may get to deeper understandings, to recognise what is problematic so we can be more responsive to demands placed on us via the ecological and democratic imperatives that underlie the 'world we want' (Kingwell, 2000).

Beneath this instalment, this glimpse, lies another in(stall)ment, an apprehension. Peter Wollen (2006), in an unexpected turn, moved me to understand something which I have grappled with in this work. For quite some time, I found myself delaying the process of sinking into the transcriptions of our conversations. It was not that I was actively

ignoring this piece of the study; I had read the transcriptions numerous times, I had highlighted certain parts, I had tagged parts of these discussions with possible categories and I had even 'completed'/achieved some writing. What I delayed was the actual integration of our talks with the theoretical literature. I spent a good deal of time reading and researching various related topics, many of which are now present within this dissertation; however, I came to realise that the basis of this delay was my own fear. There is an enormous responsibility that accompanies this endeavour. On reading Wollen's brief article on *Gaze Theory* – in which he referred to Hegel's explication of the meaning of "I", I came to realise that something else might be at play in my own reluctance or reticence to allow words to leave the safety of my thoughts, to etch them onto paper for all the world to have access.

> Man, Hegel believed, becomes conscious of himself at the moment when – for the 'first' time – he says 'I.' To understand man by understanding his 'origin' is, therefore, to understand the origin of the 'I' revealed by speech. For it is desire which brings the human, absorbed by the external object, back to himself: the (conscious) desire of a being is what constitutes that being as 'I,' and which reveals itself as such by moving it to say: 'I.' (Wollen, 2007, p. 92)

In coming upon the above, it dawned on me that the 'something else at play' might be my own coming-to-consciousness of '*I.*' The words and interpretations were *mine, I* had to claim ownership. This deepened my responsibility to the work. Not only did I need to claim ownership for the words and interpretations, I was called upon to use the word "*I*". Objective, scientific writing offers the opportunity (not to be confused with 'necessity') for one to become somewhat distanced from whatever the interpretations might be; there is an inherent safety within – i.e., the threat of exposure or vulnerability is somewhat diminished. To use "*I*" not only points directly towards *me*, it also seems a forcible insertion into something already undertaken, gone by, something quite lovely in its own right as a moment in time when voices came together in camaraderie and laughter to arrive at understandings – however unfinished they might be. I did not recognise it at the time, but I realise now that it was a coming to be of myself as an "*I*".

In my attempt to find and fuse common meanings through excerpting conversations, in focusing on tidbits that captivated my interest or that seemed to fit with the work, doubt became my close companion. Would I do an injustice to the participants? Would I misinterpret their words, their stories? Would I be up for the task of finding the right words to describe, interpret their experience? Would I fail in adequately portraying what they

mean(t) or who they are as teachers, individuals, friends? Would I inadvertently betray their trust? Would the connections I was seeing and drawing be mystifyingly obscure to everyone else? Would I be reading (and writing) too much into what was uttered? Too little?

It is somewhat troubling to hold such power, to have ultimate control over someone else's words via my own words. My voice, by virtue of having the keyboard at *my* fingertips alone, bears the final word(s) on these pages. And certainly, it cannot be otherwise: I am responsible for the research, the questions, the interpretations. I made the final choice about what would be included in this dissertation and what would not. I must be held to account for all that is encased within this work and all that is not. What lies ahead is my best effort at remaining true to the topic, to my participants, and to my own integrity.

The theoretical background has been condensed and presented as a textual address and comprises the bulk of this dissertation. The conversations with my partners and collaborators were recorded through the use of audio tape recordings. These were subsequently transcribed over the course of many months and many pages – 257 pages, to be exact – marking the beginning of my many, many re-visitations to our conversations. As difficult as it was to physically complete the task of transcribing, it paled in comparison to the next task that lay before me: to sift, sort, summarise, mine for meaning, and interpret words and conversations in search of themes or topics. I was, and remain at times, almost overwhelmed by the ethical responsibility that must preside over such work.

To summarise: I have sought to meld together personal experience(s) with written research on two primary topics: consumerism (as representative of an anthropocentric worldview) and ecological understanding (ecocentric worldview), both of which are implicitly and explicitly embedded throughout the dissertation within the 'real' world of teaching and learning, imagination and possibility. It rests upon my own wonderings and meanderings, conversations and readings, and ultimately, trite as this may sound, primarily on my desire to 'make a difference.' Inherent within this latter statement is a gratitude for having sampled the sweet nectar of what I consider 'the good life' (i.e., my childhood years in Saskatchewan) and a desire to give something back, however trivial this may be perceived, for a life spent living and playing on what Julian Lennon, Mark Spiro, and Leslie Spiro (1991) lyrically characterised in words and set to music as "a rock revolving around a golden sun." From the same song, I, too, wonder: "what will I think of me the day that I die?"

Figure 3   Oikos: Home
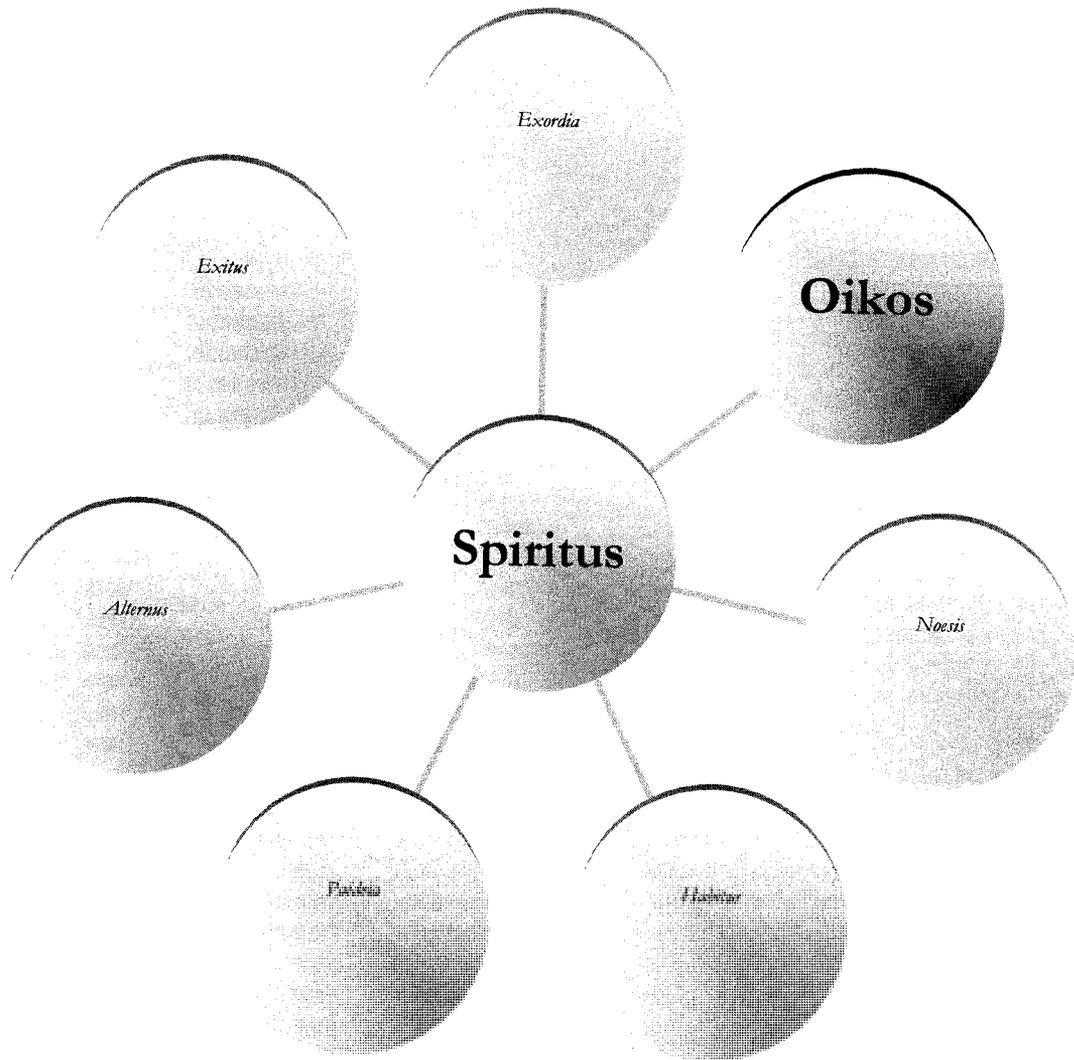
Figure 4   **Planet Earth**
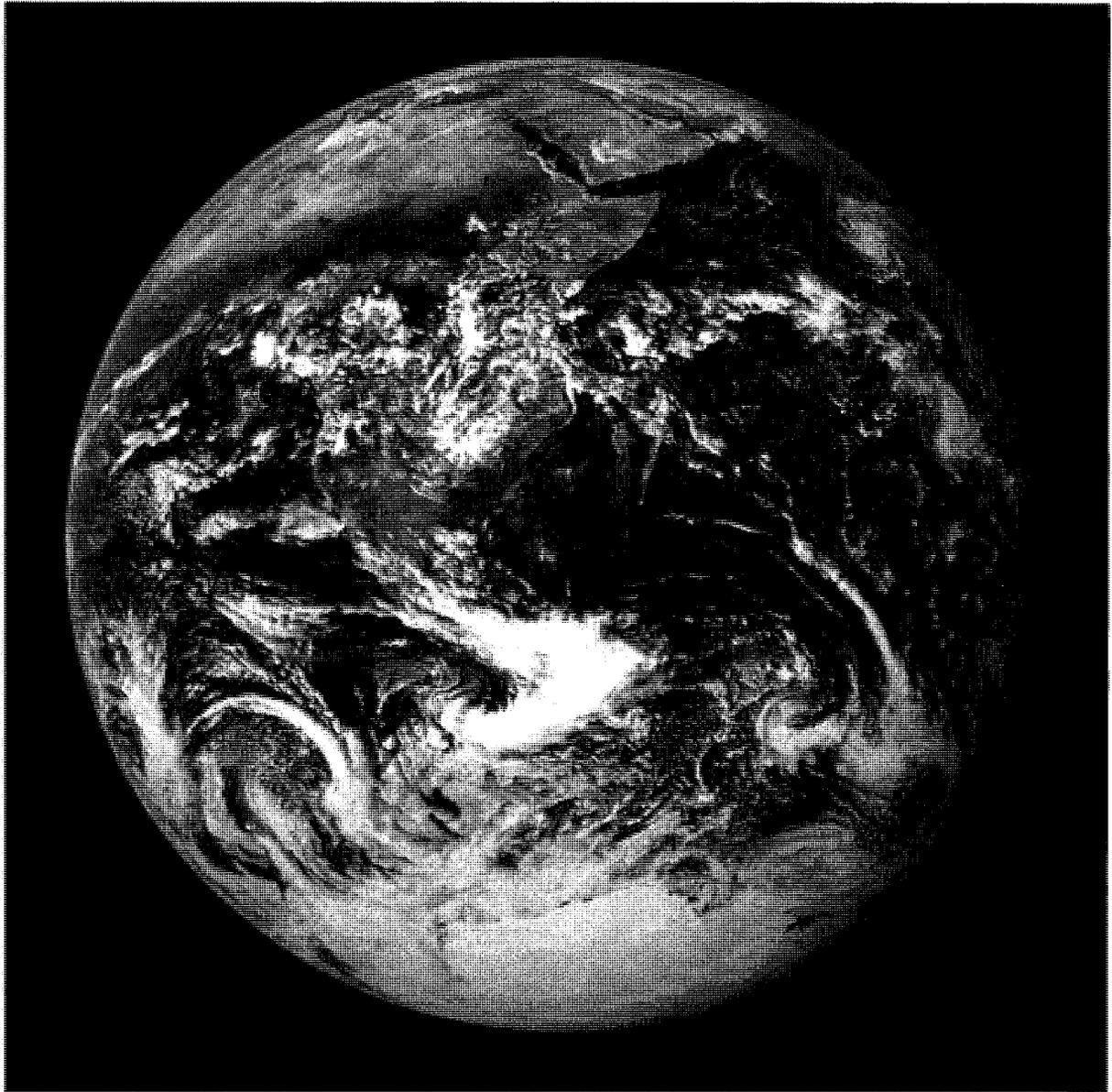
[2] *View of the Earth as seen by the Apollo 17 crew traveling toward the moon (National Aeronautics Space Administration Online).*

OIKOS: HOME

Earth, our home planet, is the only planet in our solar system known to harbor life – life that is incredibly diverse. All of the things we need to survive are provided under a thin layer of atmosphere that separates us from the uninhabitable void of space. Earth is made up of complex, interactive systems that are often unpredictable. Air, water, land, and life – including humans – combine forces to create a constantly changing world that we are striving to understand…The four seasons are a result of Earth's axis of rotation being tilted more than 23 degrees. Oceans at least 4 km deep cover nearly 70 percent of Earth's surface…Near the surface, an ocean of air that consists of 78 percent nitrogen, 21 percent oxygen, and 1 percent other ingredients envelops us. This atmosphere affects Earth's long-term climate and short-term local weather [and] shields us from nearly all harmful radiation coming from the Sun… Our planet's rapid spin and molten nickel-iron core give rise to a magnetic field, which the solar wind distorts into a teardrop shape…When charged particles from the solar wind become trapped in Earth's magnetic field, they collide with air molecules above our planet's magnetic poles. These air molecules then begin to glow and are known as the aurorae, or the Northern and Southern Lights. Earthquakes result when plates grind past one another, ride up over one another, collide to make mountains, or split and separate. These movements are known as plate tectonics. Developed within the last 30 years, this explanation has unified the results of centuries of study of our planet, long believed to be unmoving. (Harvey, n.d.)

Climate change is one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats facing the planet. The warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level. The Earth's average surface temperature has risen by 0.76° C since 1850. Most of the warming that has occurred over the last 50 years is very likely to have been caused by human activities. In its Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), published on 2 February 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that, without further action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the global average surface temperature is likely to rise by a further 1.8-4.0°C this century. Even the lower end of this range would take the temperature increase since pre-industrial times above 2°C, the threshold beyond which irreversible and possibly catastrophic changes become far more likely. Projected global warming this century is likely to trigger serious consequences for humanity and other life forms, including a rise in sea levels of between 18 and 59 cm which will endanger coastal areas and small islands, and a greater frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Human activities that contribute to climate change include in particular the burning of fossil fuels, agriculture and land-use changes like deforestation. These cause emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2), the main gas responsible for climate change, as well as of other 'greenhouse' gases. To bring climate change to a halt, global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced significantly. (European Commission Online, n.d.)

The history of life on earth has been a history of interaction between living things and their surroundings. To a large extent, the physical form and the habits of the earth's vegetation and its animal life have been moulded by the environment. Considering the whole span of earthly time, the opposite effect, in which life actually modifies its surroundings, has been relatively slight. Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species – man – acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world. (Carson, 2002/1962, p. 5)

The children of today stand in line to inherit and inhabit a world that has been in existence for some four billion years; a world not created by humanity but one that has been seriously modified by human intervention. If children are to grow up feeling that they are part of, not separate from a larger biological/ecological matrix of interconnected organisms, living and nonliving, we, as teachers, parents, and interested citizens, need to remember, model, and enact in our daily lives that very principle. Children have a propensity to look upon their surroundings with awe and wonder. They "encounter the world with a minimum of societal censorship...[in a] direct and uncontrolled encounter with otherness" (Evernden, 1992, p. 157). Bookchin (1990) claims that technological surroundings have, to large degree, supplanted natural surroundings, the consequence of which has been to "deprive [children] of a native ability to think organically and to understand the developmental nature of the real world" (p. 13). I bring these forward not as truth claims but as words to ponder.

Prior to moving into a 'formal' rooting into what forms the basis and background of this work, I would like to insert a few words about the derivation of my own personal attachment to ecological mindedness, the ethical basis of which inspires this undertaking and attempted understanding. I do this not to seize an empty platform for a personal rant or to post a personal manifesto valorizing my life or even small town life; I do so because this remains very much alive within me and within this writing. It also has to do with *time*: time which has passed, time which bears its mark, time that waits in perpetuity. I reveal the following with a slight embarrassment, a self consciousness, a reluctance to divulge too much lest it appear narcissistic or foolishly trivial. I am, however, at a point in my own life where a number of people close to me have died, either through terminal illness or tragic accident, others are facing life threatening disease, and my own thoughts are moving between their lives and what they attest to, and my own life and all to which it will attest. It is within this provocation that I seek to investigate and understand what it is that I have learned about teaching and life and time and about how I might play a part in the amelioration of the stresses that have been placed on the Earth in a combined human effort.

The Summons Part One

My childhood years were spent in Saskatchewan towns, villages, and at one point, a quaint little hamlet set amidst rolling hills in an ancient glacial spillway. Amongst these places and spaces that I played and worked and grew to understand my own reality, it is this latter dwelling, the little hamlet, to which I wish to consciously return, to pause, to reflect, to revisit those places and spaces, to listen once again to the bygone voices from a bygone existence that beckoned and beseeched this work, these thoughts, this life.

Some might say the hamlet of Anerley was one of those places in which time was arrested, as if the great invisible pause button in the sky pointed directly to Section 2, Township 28, Range 10w3. In the 1960s and 1970s, central heating (gas run furnaces) and running water – as plumbing was referred to in those days – were ubiquitous. Not so, however, in Anerley. It was almost as if the massive glacier, in its slow, halting progress across the landscape, had somehow managed to halt 'technological progress.' There was a slowness to life in Anerley that was not aligned with the kind of progress that was taking place in other parts of the 'developed' country. Anerley had, of course, many similarities with other small Canadian towns – and admittedly, the bucolic aura surrounding the 'good old days' has in general been exceedingly exaggerated and romanticised, and it is a life to which I would never choose to return – however, there was something in this hidden little Saskatchewan gem that I valued as a child, devalued as a teenager, and have come full circle to revalue, recognise, and reclaim as a consummate opportunity to experience life untreated, unrefined, and unprocessed.

Percy and Mae Higgitt, owner/proprietors of the Anerley General Store/Canada Post Office/Imperial Oil and Gas Dealership, parents of one-time Police Commissioner Leonard Higgitt, ran their business on credit and trust for over forty years. And although the demise of this little hamlet had already become glaringly imminent in the late 1960s and perhaps even before, the local grain elevators – Pool and United Grain Growers, supported by surrounding farmers – bolstered and boosted the local 'economy.' On a social level, people were informal and friendly: getting together for coffee didn't mean booking an appointment weeks or even days in advance and then ensuring an early arrival at a trendy coffee shop in order to queue up and wait ten minutes to order a speciality coffee, followed by the inevitable struggle to find a table and a place to sit. Coffee in Anerley meant stopping everything and dropping over. Neighbours simply, unannounced and unexpectedly

appeared on one another's doorstep and coffee was 'on.' As was the perfunctory conversation about the comings and goings of people in the community – otherwise known as "gossip". And before casting "gossip" in an everlastingly negative light, I must temper it with the communal support, sharing, and unquestioning, unhesitating help that accompanies the form of participation that comes with life in a small community.

As children, most of our time was spent outdoors, inventing games, running freely, exploring the hills, and sinking into, becoming part of the open space – ever beckoning and inviting a particular relationship, one that asked no one to explain or identify or analyse. Time, lingering, bent into an almost stillness, a pause; the glacier re-enlivened, noiselessly but quite assuredly and *slowly* etched itself into my being, *tempo larghissimo*.

While I do not mean to idealistically imply that my life or my self proclaimed idyllic childhood should stand as some sort of exemplary standard by which all others should live or aspire to or desire for, I bring this forward as explanation for the initiative, the foundation, the rootedness I feel for the 'land,' and the subsequent (re)turn and formulating/re-formulating basis and stimulus for the words and pages that follow.

The Summons Part Two

> Obligation transcends me; it is not one of my transcendental projects. If an obligation is 'mine' it is not because it belongs to me but because I belong to it. Obligation is not one more thing I comprehend and want to do, but something that intervenes upon and disrupts the sphere of the I wants, something that disturbs the I. (Caputo, 1993, p. 8)

How does one explain a sense of obligation? Is it duty? 'Calling'? Passion? Commitment? Caring? Heart? Etymologically, "obligation", stemming from the root word "oblige", comes from the Latin *obligare*, meaning "to bind" (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1996). Implicit within this is a pull towards an *'other'*: something other than the self beckons, and in the recognition of that beckoning, one is drawn towards being in the service of something other than the self. Furrow (2005) writes, "One is obligated to the extent one is in a more or less full relationship with that to which one is obligated" (p. 103). In some sense, this is an ethical demand for "recognition of the other and otherness" (Davey, 2006, p. 9) – which *may* be interpreted as holding the potential for self annihilation; however, within that ethical call comes a further obligation, one which speaks to the "joys and pains of ethical involvement" (p. 9). In the classroom this "ethical involvement" carries with it an

inherent responsibility for teachers to develop healthy relationships – i.e., appropriate boundaries must be set to guard against the burdensome bonds of enslavement. Teachers are called to avoid such entanglements not only for the sake of self but for the sake of other.

I have come to realise what a privilege it is to have experienced what it is to be a teacher. Not only did my life become entwined with the lives and stories of many other people in very meaningful ways, each day that I entered the classroom as 'teacher,' I entered also as learner. And of the many things I learned, I came to understand that being a teacher is about much more than teaching or even learning: it is about life – *a* life. A life that calls for courage, for honesty, for compassion, a life that calls for awakening and nurturing the passion to be and see and do something beyond the bland and the banal, beyond the mundane, the routine, the mindless habits that keep us imprisoned within growth-stunting, maladaptive, or destructive patterns. Teaching reflects and highlights the integral ebb and flow of life, *as profession* and *as life*. In a word, teaching is about *heart*. It is heart that motivates teachers to work beyond the basic requirements of just a *job*; it is heart that keeps us awake at nights thinking about students; it is heart that drives our vehicles into staff parking lots on our best days and our worst – and it is heart that brings me to this study.

Throughout my time as a teacher, and particularly during the time I spent with primary grades (K-2), I became aware of a certain quality or characteristic that hovers around and through the lives of children. It is also something I recollect from my own childhood. I find it difficult to describe this succinctly but it seems to be a combination of innocence, trust, love, hope, unpretentiousness, and spontaneity. Perhaps it is best explained as a sense of wonder – which I loosely associate with the existence or development of an 'ecological identity,' or what I have settled into understanding as ecological *mindedness*. And, as I hope the work will make clear, when I use the term "mindedness", I mean not to evoke a 'knowledge' derived purely or even primarily through a cognitive process involving a movement from the unknown to the known; rather, I see "minded" as an opportunity for access into an open understanding, a *process* which involves a coming into being on more than only the level of the intellect. "Mind", which comes from the Latin word "*mens*", means "understanding, reason" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). "Mens" is also related to *memory*. When I use the term, "ecological mindedness", I mean it as *understanding* in the sense of a way of knowing, a way of being, and a way of remembering on a conscious, an unconscious,

and a physical (i.e. feeling, embodied) plane of existence. I return to this at various points later in the dissertation.

I would now like to introduce Carol, Deb, G.R., Leila, and McAvity – colleagues and associates who volunteered to participate in this study. Drawing from my observations and interpretations of their words, I have taken the liberty of extracting a few conversational moments which I trust will highlight distinctive characteristics of each. This also begins the unfolding of what I have come to understand as ecologically-oriented discourse.

Carol, Deb, G.R., Leila, McAvity

The individuals involved in this study would be considered 'veteran teachers,' each having at least 20 years of experience. All were invited to participate because of their interest in the topic and their evident passion for the profession. These introductions are based on my reflections, my playing and replaying of transcripts, and my deepening understanding – in short, my interpretation of my *experience* with each as the research and conversations progressed.

At the basis of each person's comments throughout the group- and one-on-one conversations, was a quiet yet distinct caring, manifest in each – Carol, Deb, G.R., Leila, and McAvity – in a unique way. The following excerpts have been chosen with the aim of making this evident. Needless to say, by no means is this meant to represent a complete summary of each participant.

Carol

I first met Carol in a large, busy school in the mid 1990s. Due to the size of the school and our teaching assignments in different divisions we were not afforded many opportunities to hold friendly conversations beyond a quick "Hello" in the hallway or a smile and wave across the staffroom. The conversations I recollect having with Carol during our days on the same teaching staff were primarily focused on matters relating to the teaching profession as we sat alongside one another during school meetings, committees, or professional development activities. Since those days, I have come to know Carol

differently, in another way, deeper perhaps, and in that 'way,' to my delight, we have more than once turned conversations upside down.

Carol has what I would call an effervescent personality and an optimistic outlook on life. Often referring to or quoting from a wide variety of authors, she has also obviously read broadly and extensively. Her commitment to family, friends, and relationship appeared and reappeared. Finding something in a conversation to highlight this was not easy – not because there were not enough instances – there were too many. A further difficulty lay in trying to unbind from larger conversations. What I hope to show below is the importance Carol places on relationship as well as the way she injects a serious conversation with just a bit of humour – which functions for me as Carol's reminder to the world that she has not lost her humility, yet her sense of self is strong enough to halt diffidence giving way to self deprecation.

> To have meaningful conversations – and I mean, I say these are meaningful but I'm sure other people say they're pure waste of time [*laughter*] …but the last thing I want to do is to overanalyse it. Because I think that when you overanalyse it…the unexamined life isn't worth living [but] the unlived life isn't worth examining. So if you're so busy examining, you're not living. I'd much rather live. Maybe it's because I've done so much examining I'm tired of it. I don't care any more. I don't want it any more. I just want to be. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

The above was not part of a larger group conversation, which I find unfortunate because I often wonder what affect her words might have had on the others and to what terrain such reflections may have taken us, the conversation. For me, it was a "transformative and formative" (Davey, 2006) process over which I still ponder. In saying, "I'd much rather live…I just want to be", Carol brought me to confront and question my own propensity to overanalyse, to default to the crudeness of living in anticipation of the future or dwelling in the past. She reminded me of the importance of the 'pause butto.n She reminded me of the futility of obsessive, excessive self examination, of seeking after or searching for elusive understanding. She sent me [willingly] into what Davey (2006) calls the tense space, the space in between. I have not, and perhaps will not, arrive at a point where I can shed my tendency to [over]analyse and rest into a state where I can "just be", but it was a moment when something else came into focus, something which moved me out of "residing in the quietness of a single interpretation" (Davey, 2006, p. xvi).

Above, I mentioned that Carol's choice of words seem to indicate that she is strongly rooted in relationship. Although it may be redundant or obvious, I am speaking of

relationship to self, to nature (i.e., the outdoor world), to others, and in a reciprocal, cyclic motion, back to self. In other words, *in* relationship – as a living, dynamic, interconnected process. In Carol's case, I have come to understand sense of relationship as synonymous with '*being*': understanding, existence, and relationship are coexistent (see quotation below). The responses, comments, and questions brought forward by Carol not infrequently revolved around the importance of forming a deep understanding of self and what might constitute an 'authentic' existence. An example:

> I think that, in many ways, what we're seeing is [a] deadness that comes from not knowing that very inner core of who we are. I don't see people having strengths or weaknesses, we have characteristics. There are things that are wonderful for us, that work for us with that characteristic, and there are things that don't. One isn't bad, one isn't good, it's just that characteristic. And I think that so much of the deadness is because of technology. When do families get together any more? When do people gather around and sing songs? A few people still go around the campfire, that kind of thing, but that whole interface…like helping people – how many people actually say, 'Can you come and help me?' Or do they hire someone? There's such a loss of intimacy. Technology is supposed to tie people together, it's a vehicle for connection [but] I see more isolation and separation because you don't need to leave your basement. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

The above is one of many reasons I invited Carol into this study. As with each of the participants who agreed to meet and talk, I am simply immensely grateful.

Deb

Deb and I met just prior to my taking a four month leave of absence to complete the writing for my Master of Arts Degree. She was not, at the time, a full time teacher on staff but had been working as a substitute in the school where I taught. When a teaching position became available in the school, she was chosen out of many applicants and thus began a professional relationship founded on collegiality and mutual regard. I came to know her well during the time our teaching assignments overlapped in the school and it was through this contact that I caught a glimpse – more than a glimpse – of Deb as a dedicated, compassionate teacher. What I see in her is a strong sense of self first and foremost. From this, there seems to be an expansion which radiates outward to include a firm commitment to family, to community, to citizenship, to democracy, and finally to being part of something and doing one's part.

> I want so much [for my own children] to feel that connection. [I think it is so important to] take them out hiking…I just feel like they're going to miss out on life if

they don't get that connection with the Earth or whatever it is I feel connected with. My goal as a teacher is to try to get my students to learn that they have to grow up to be strong, to think about taking care of the planet and what they can do and what we as a classroom community can do at school. We're more and more people and there's less and less resources. We are headed in one direction...and we can't stop it; all we can do is make some little contribution and pass it on, to try to make it better in some small way. But it's a huge, big, black problem that I can't solve myself but I can just try to keep my conscience as clear as possible by trying to create some beauty in the world whether it's in my own back yard, or going out into the woods and hiking and respecting Mother Nature. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

Beyond her obvious sense of 'connectedness' to the outdoor world, Deb's life between home and classroom appears to be a seamless interweaving of personal choice and professional responsibility. This observation rests on comments such as, "I feel my own sense of place with the life that I have made with my family who I cherish and I know that they cherish me as much" and

what I do try to give to my students and to [student teachers]...it's just, I really am in awe of this world and I really do love those children [students], and the same with [student teachers]...life will unfold as it will, just try to be grateful and love today. Learn to love life and have some gusto and give off positive energy. It really is what we make of it. You can walk around being negative [or choose not to be]. Yeah, [it's about] relationships – with my student teachers and relationships with my [students] and the relationships you are able to cultivate with nature. And each new student teacher who comes in, I think, okay, I can provide them with an opportunity to explore what they are as a teacher, what it is to them to be a teacher. I just want to give them an opportunity to have a safe place, try anything, and explore, remembering that we're here for the kids and we're here to make those children feel safe and secure rather than to make sure that they know that eight plus eight is sixteen. To me, it's more important that they feel good about themselves. I want to make sure that those kids and my student teachers who come in feel strong about themselves. Just be confident, just go for it. (Taped Conversation, October 1, 2005)

The above indicates to me that Deb's priorities lie with instilling a strong sense of self worth. This does not stop with self, however: "I feel like I'm doing what I should be doing in my life, contributing to society in a way that I should be, that I'm attempting to be a good global citizen, and that's [what] is really important to me" (Taped Conversation, October 1, 2005). From this and other comments, Deb conveys a sense of responsibility to community, to others, to the world – "capturing an experience together and enhancing each other's lives." Her love of life and her desire to engender a sense of wonder are evident in this and many other remarks:

I make a point of talking to the kids about wondrous things in nature or science...because when you think about it, nature is mind boggling to me, the perfection is astonishing and the intricate evolution that we have gone through, that everything works on all of these different creatures. The adaptations for the environment that they live in. And just pointing out the little things with the kids, from books on scientific facts, or newspaper articles – like one I clipped out the other week about the oldest living tree in Alberta...this tree is 1500 years old. This great big, gnarly tree down by Hinton. The kids were just fascinated with this, and I drew a timeline on the white board and said, 'Okay, here would be your grandparents and then there's another hundred years, and another...I think with kids it's quite easy to get that...sense of awe. (Taped Conversation, October 1, 2005)

Deb's desire to provide opportunities for children to explore, question, and create all seems to reside within her own desire to make a difference, to invite understandings of interrelatedness and the importance of participating in something 'bigger' than oneself.

G.R.

G.R. and I were on the same teaching staff when I entered the profession in 1990. Similar to my collegial experience with Carol, G.R. and I were teaching in different divisions but did have opportunity to engage in occasional professional discussions. Although I did not have the language for it at the time, in reflecting upon our conversations, I would say that G.R. believes in education that embraces a holistic, ecological approach to teaching and learning.

The G.R. of our conversations is the G.R. I picture in the classroom: quick to synthesise information, tease out the main points, then play it back as a question, a confirmation, or another comment that would lead to something else. These remarks, musings, observations often acted as catalyst, catapulting us into conversational terrain that spurred questioning regarding received historical 'truths' and working traditions. There are many instances to choose from; what I have included is drawn from a conversation in progress, which means that the context may not be perfectly clear. However, my point is purely to illustrate G.R.'s ability to pull together diverse bits of information, weave something together, and provide impetus for continuing the conversation.

G.R.: I don't know if I'm dovetailing too, and this is just a question because you [Carol] talked about focusing on adolescents and Bev, you've talked about this big machine. Are we an adolescent society then? Is that what we are? So then, what are the implications, if –

Carol: Well you know there's that whole global thing and what's happening, baby boomers are changing how everything is being done because they're not going to die at 55, they're just getting into new things, they're retreading, so that's huge.

G.R.: Baby boomers lived through the time where the money was easy because the government was going into debt: 'We'll build more boats and we'll build more schools, we'll give and we'll give' and so that way they were the parent giving the child money to go shop at Harry Rosen. Government was giving the boomers, of which I'm part of, money to be well educated, and life was pretty good. People walked into jobs. They hired before they got out of university. Life was not difficult. It was made very easy by the hidden adult, the hidden parent. Okay, now I don't know where to go from there [*laughter*].

Carol: You've opened up all kinds of avenues, yeah, absolutely.

G.R.: So what are they? [*laughter*]

Carol: And you look at the 80s, the era of greed.

G.R.: Oh yeah, money was just flowing (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005).

The conversation went on from there, of course, for some time. What came immediately following the above, were comments from Deb and McAvity, each of whom picked up the thread and tied it to consumerism (Deb) and an ecosystem (McAvity). Later, in the same conversation, in another summary movement, G.R. said, "And so we come back full circle." Space constraints prevent further examples of G.R. working somewhat like a skilled craftsperson, but there were many, carried through with an almost effortless flow, often bringing us to new topics and new understandings. Because there were repeated references made to life in school, I assume that G.R.'s thoughts frequently connect to the classroom.

The steadfast, solid commitment to teaching showed itself quite frequently, but perhaps most prominently when asked, "What nurtures you in your job?" G.R.'s response:

> Well, the kids. Love of kids and love of opening their minds and seeing them go, 'Yeah!' Not just, 'I parrot back to you' [but] 'I understand, and I can challenge you and I can ask questions and, and, and, I can see it from different perspectives.' They can throw back at me as 10 year olds, 'You're trying to influence me, you don't have power over me on this' – so comments like that [tell me that] they have that [internalised understanding]. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

This inclination to encourage questioning even when the questions may be directed towards an authority figure such as a teacher is not without difficulty. During another

conversation, G.R. had the following to say, "When you look at [critical thinking and questioning] in the classroom, it almost becomes teaching as a subversive activity, trying to get people to be independent of their society, to be independent thinkers. That's so hard" (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005). G.R.'s seemingly resilient disposition and passion for the profession, however, apparently provide the strength and courage to continue. There may be something instructive within these sorts of comments – an ecologically oriented understanding, perhaps, that connects G.R.'s personal life, teaching, and perspective on the world. O'Sullivan and Taylor (2004) write, "Knowledge in an ecological perspective is firmly imbedded in the practical world….That is, knowledge is not individually derived and held, but rather generated within relationships with others" (p. 21).

With reluctance and one final example, I bring my introduction of G.R. to a close. What I hope to bring forward is the persistent drive to instil the understanding that individuals exist within a bigger picture.

> They're just so entwined that we have to look at them both, so I don't know, I keep going to the bigger ideas in school, the universal themes through books; right now we're exploring good and evil and wisdom. My ten year olds *know* that it takes time to be wise, they know that you have to have multiple perspectives and multiple experiences and that the experiences they have now are just building blocks of a future experience that may change that or reinforce that. And that ability to look backwards and forwards is essential to being human. They can, as children, they can do that. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

Leila

During a conversation with a PhD candidate in which I was attempting to explain my research ideas, she mentioned a teacher whom she came to know, someone she thought would be interested in my topic and could add depth to the research. My graduate friend was absolutely correct.

One of Leila's comments: "All of us in our family, my husband, myself, my three kids, absolutely love the outdoors. That is where they want to spend time. Very much a sense of place" (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005).

When I think of Leila, I think of kinship, interconnectedness, and sense of place. "Kinship", which I take to mean "affinity", "interconnectedness", by which I mean "reciprocal connection", and "sense of place", in Leila's case, I associate with the following definition: "either the intrinsic character of a place, or the meaning people give to it, but, more often, a mixture of both" (*A Dictionary of Geography*, n.d.). I bring these particular terms

forward not only to stand as a [tentative] introduction to Leila but also because her perspectives brought another dimension to our conversations. Each of these seem furthermore connected to a sense of belonging. I explain below.

Leila's words above and elsewhere, her descriptions, her *way* seem to imply understanding, feelings of connection, and immediate sense of belonging in whatever place she lives. She seems willing and able to blend known with yet-to-know through a process of careful listening and full participation. Rather than experiencing a loss of place or identity, she is somehow capable of bridging the gap between different country and new home; moreover, she seems quite matter of fact about it: "I think that's human nature, that you'll look for ways to be free and connected" (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005). I do not wish to become too fixated on Leila's travels; there is, of course, much more to her than multiple residences. I fixed my gaze on this more so as it is illustrative of what I understand to be one of her most prominent qualities, qualities which seemed to impact the others. With each move to a different country, there was a conscious effort to read, to hear, and to learn the stories and mythologies that travel through a particular culture: "A good story is where you can make the connections and move on, keep that story alive by connecting to the future." Understanding is evidently more to Leila than simple knowledge. To recognise the potential in learning about the idiosyncrasies and cultural stories of a different place is indicative of someone who understands that life requires a certain strength and courage to make room for places, spaces, thoughts, transitions, and traditions. When story, tradition, belonging, and sense of place arose during conversations, Leila's perspective seemed to stir responses in the others.

Within Leila's words, there seems to be a conviction. This emerged throughout our conversations whether the topic was the classroom, ecological awareness, child rearing, history, or consumerism. This is not to say, however, that Leila is in any way closed or narrow minded. Her very willingness to assume a new citizenship, to align with and fit in to a different culture, speaks volumes about open mindedness.

> I felt Canadian very early on…and I very much came to feel connected with smaller communities, like the school community. I'm pleased to have taken on Canadian citizenship. I'm so thrilled with my personal evolution. I've taken on another citizenship. And it's made me understand more about me. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

Space and place seem to intersect with identity and community. In some part, this may be due to Leila's optimistic acceptance of the inevitability of change over time, and the subsequent changes and differences in the meaning of freedom.

> My father often says he couldn't be a child in today's world. It's not free enough. And I look at my own kids and I wonder, are they developing a sense of freedom? And I think they are but it's defined a little differently, it manifests itself differently. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

I see this as indicative of a flexibility of mind, of thinking, of being. Leila seems to manage past and present, fondly remembering and reflecting, but at the same time, she is willing to move forward, to meet the future openly, thoughtfully, and prudently.

McAvity

As another former colleague with whom I had occasion to discuss teaching, philosophy, children, and life, I strongly suspected that McAvity's input into this study would take the conversations to different depths, heights, and off on numerous interesting trajectories. I was not wrong.

McAvity's choice of words frequently reflected an understanding of a living connection to personal and cultural history. References to the present were frequently sprinkled with references to the past – the stories passed down and the stories created, the universal themes across cultures, stories which have been further expounded upon and in some way transformed, stories which inform teaching practice, value systems, connections, and a unique way of understanding the world.

> When you look at some of the stories, myths, and legends or whatever, there is a common theme for all. Many, many countries in the world have the same basis for some of their myths, legends, and stories. The underlying themes are similar but making sure that you're choosing a balance [is integral to broader application]. I think that's where the pressure and power that we have, we must use it very wisely....And that's where my job comes in, 'Let me help you connect that; yes, you're absolutely right, yes, but [let me] help you now connect from here to here. ' (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

There was also an overall message in McAvity's words about the busyness and frenetic pace of society. Carl Honoré (2004) observes that Westernised society is largely based on doing everything faster: "Instead of thinking deeply, or letting an idea simmer in the back of the mind, our instinct now is to reach for the nearest sound bite" (p. 12). McAvity seems to characterise "thinking deeply" and "letting an idea simmer."

You're talking about how fast things coming up get swept up in the pace of where things are going. I think you have to step out of it for your own sanity. And those you're dealing with, to say, 'I need to breathe a moment. I can't just keep moving at this pace and dealing with all the little itty bits that come our way'…to balance it with other things is important. Which is what we do with kids. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

To pause, listen, and tune into quiet spaces may offer the means to discover something bigger, something deeper, and something worthwhile. From a conversation that was in progress, I extracted the following because it seems to exemplify quieting, settling, and slowing down:

It's like people who say that Saskatchewan is very boring to drive through, or the prairies are very boring to drive through, yet if you start to notice what is along the way, you see all sorts of wonderful things that are a part of the prairies and very beautiful – but you have to notice. I guess it's where you focus. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

McAvity's understanding, the way of seeing described above, seems to encase a 'how' as much as a 'what.' This is what I would call a 'pause' – a moment where there is a slowing down and within that, a recovery or perhaps uncovering – of self, of understanding, of what Shierry Nicholsen (2002) describes as "reciprocity."

[Reciprocity is] a field phenomenon. Reciprocity is not a matter of an external exchange in which one completely separate object encounters and acts on another. Rather, the reciprocity arises within a shared field.…In a field, things emerge into our awareness and become focal points. (p. 64)

Reciprocal, in one of its definitions, is described as "performed, experienced, or felt by both sides" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Its etymological origin: Latin, "*reciprocus*" meaning alternating", and although the *prairies* may not actively respond to human beings whizzing by in motor vehicles, if humans can conceive of *being in* relationship with the external [natural] world rather than outside or above it as Nicholsen suggests, such a shift in perception may "make it possible to acknowledge our kinship with the natural world again" (Nicholsen, 2002, p. 64). Although there may be a hint of romanticism – or romantic language – in Nicholson's words, there may also be some possibilities in what she has to say. She acknowledges that coming to such an understanding – at least for some people – is not without difficulty. What is at least in part called for is a "mental space that can contain experience" (p. 65) – i.e., imagination. This, in combination with a physical space (i.e., a place or places in nature), may generate an awareness or consciousness that might proceed

toward something deeper. Within these places and spaces, reciprocity offers what might be called a 'grounding.' If Nicholsen is on to something, i.e., that to perceive oneself as *in* relationship, might this be applied to a classroom?

To return to the conversation with McAvity:

> I know if I want to be grounded, where I go. Back to the classroom, to the kids. I refresh myself, reenergise myself, and remember why I'm there…How did I learn that? I don't know. I just did it. It's in here [*pointing to chest*]. Where I fit in with everything, it's not just a physical place, it's a belonging. Like when you meet children and they haven't been with you before, you're in…a space that's going to become ours…as children come and belong in a certain space and you're part of each other and you're together. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

When McAvity lost/loses 'grounding,' it is regained and reclaimed in the classroom: the children, the classroom present a space for immediate sustenance and return to 'Earth.' Contact with children halts the hurriedness, the bureaucratic noise, the constant external demands that seem sometimes to interfere with McAvity's 'raison d'être.' In a very broad sense, the above passage evokes thoughts of *home*: as the heart, as the place of intuition, as the landscape where children dwell, as nature, as a calming space, as a place for sense making. I see a connection from *home* to *being* in McAvity's musings on the impact of the past on the present:

> The majesty of being in the world and what was there and what it made you think about has to do with, perhaps, my heritage because I can get immersed in music and culture because I've grown up with it. Where you fit and what it makes you think about in terms of history and place and the images that music will bring to you. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

As I listened, read, and re-read McAvity's comments, I eventually came to see that there was a recurring theme – either directly or indirectly; the language, and in some cases the experiences themselves, held a sense of rhythm, even within comments about hockey. The connection between rhythm and experience seems almost inextricable: "I like the River Dance because you can hear the taps and the beat and the rhythms moving so it can create those images and that can help you think. And that can transport you" (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005). The rhythms expressed here are repeated during McAvity's telling of an experience – one that I interpret as ecological mindedness. In some ways, this mirrors the rhythms of nature, which each participant reflects upon or alludes to in one form or another. In other words, there is an awareness, a consciousness within each

of the participants, brought out by each, and rendered comprehensible – inasmuch as language may permit comprehensibility.

If we are able to locate a pulse – or an impulse – however inconspicuous, that connects human beings to something broader, perhaps we might get closer to understanding how we might develop an ecological mindedness/consciousness. O'Sullivan and Taylor's (2004) explanation of consciousness as "frames" or "mental structures" (p. 6) through which we form interpretations of ourselves and others, may offer a glimmer of possibility in its application to an ecological perspective, in which the person, the community, the 'world' are understood as co participants, reaching inwards and reaching outwards. My parting excerpt of McAvity speaks to what I mean by 'reaching outwards.'

> At [Teacher's] Convention, some of the stories that some of the speakers were sharing about the inhumanity people have suffered in the world today, you wonder how that humanity or self, how some of the people and what they're experiencing now, the little kids – it's the children, thousands of them are in camps…where the conditions are so horrific and how, how are they connecting and healing? (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

History, pace, reciprocity, grounding, rhythm, home: McAvity seems to understand how to settle into the 'pauses,' how to integrate school life and home life, how to connect internal with external, how to 'reach outwards.'

This brings to a close my 'proper' introduction to the participants in this study. It is my hope that this will afford an entry into understanding who they are as well as provide a glimpse into how they have played a significant part in bringing depth and meaning to this work. Their conversation triggered numerous thoughts and brought 'life' to the still voices in the written literature.

In the following section, I discuss a few of the difficulties around varying perceptions, terminology, and the response by several groups (government, education system, general public) to what is called the "ecocrisis".

Worrying the Complications

> All the current environmental problems of the world come to this: that in every country, in every region, people armed with increasingly powerful technology are appropriating more and more from surrounding ecosystems...producing massive garbojunk that is raising global temperatures, destroying the atmospheric ozone, causing acid rain, and polluting the oceans, the air, streams, lakes, soils, food, and organisms. (Rowe, 1990, p. 322)

I first came upon the above work soon after it was published in 1990. It has, evidently, had a lasting impact on me. For over 15 years, I have held those words in mind, returned to them, replayed them, and now, in part, I credit John Stanley Rowe for igniting my interest in undertaking doctoral research on this particular topic.

We are at a point in our evolution where all inhabitants of the Earth are faced with a multiplicity of potentially life threatening issues: atmospheric/climate change, depletion of non renewable resources, soil degradation/desertification, extinction of species, over consumption, waste management, food shortages, accelerated population growth, etc. While some of these issues may not appear to each of us as a visible part of daily life, it cannot be denied that we all are, or potentially could be negatively impacted by their effects. Given the magnitude of these problems, one cannot help wonder why established organisations such as governments and education systems – *especially* in the Westernised world – have not placed environmental concerns as their number one priority. This, as a topic, could well fill an entire dissertation; therefore, I am somewhat restricted in pursuing this beyond a few notes (below) which I present as brief supporting comments as well as potential points for further study.

Given the current condition of the global environment, it seems imperative that discussions about the relationship between human beings and nature take place on many levels. The education system could – and perhaps *should* – play a significant, perhaps leadership role in this regard. This is, of course, no simple task. Along with the numerous difficulties inherent within coming to any sort of agreement regarding the path forward, there are a variety of perceptions and interpretations of the ecocrisis ranging from positions of apocalyptic fear mongering to derisive, propagandistic repudiation. A possible explanation for the latter position is identified by Smith (2001) as having to do with environmentalism trying to impart on society "those things that society finds most difficult to hear" (p. 70).

Detractors range from 'hard core' scientists to economic fundamentalists. With scientific interpretations or economic 'sensibility' safely on their side, they contend that they alone have the 'hard facts.' When vocal/powerful politicians back (or instigate?) these claims, this may tend to garner more widespread credibility than some environmental groups particularly when some eco-activists become aligned with the 'lunatic fringe.' This occurs at an individual level as well as within large, well established organisations such as Greenpeace. As an example of individuals who might fuel the arguments of those who may be sceptical or in denial of an ecocrisis, the American activist Michael Scarpitti took the name, "Tre Arrow", claiming that the trees told him to change his name. Even though his actions may have issued from some 'legitimate' event, his claim that trees communicated *intelligibly* with him colours, or perhaps more appropriately tarnishes public perceptions and diminishes credibility. In other circumstances Tre Arrow may be looked upon somewhat benignly, not receive any regard whatever, or may even be revered – but due to his high profile involvement in activities such as tree spiking, firebombing logging equipment, and other such things deemed eco terrorism by the FBI (Kramer, 2004), he received a good deal of negative press and achieved prominence as a criminal as well as someone who has lost grip of reality. When looking for reasons to discount a contentious issue such as a global ecocrisis, Michael Scarpitti and others like him make an easy target. Admittedly, many of us may not have had the experience of communicating with trees, but it would be difficult to *prove* that it is impossible. When visiting indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest, Howard Charing (2008) learned that shamans determine which plants to use for which diseases by knowing them, understanding them and by *listening* to them.

> We possess an alphabetic code with which we read the world. They (indigenous people) read it by the code of traditions, knowledge of nature, its cycles, each plant and what it is used for, every noise, every breeze, every movement of animals or trees. They know how to decipher that code, and we are totally illiterate… Because for [them] plants have souls and trees talk. (Boff, 1987)

The link between Michael Scarpitti and indigenous shamans may seem obscure; obviously shamanism carries a long standing set of beliefs, traditions, and understandings whereas Michael Scarpitti's assertions may be regarded as outrageous foolishness or New Age fluff within our Western conceptual framework. On the other hand, Michael Scarpitti may be viewed as a Westernised reinvention of shamanism. I bring these two stories together not to confound an already complex issue but to underscore that a different

discourse or way of understanding does exist whether acknowledged as [inexplicably] legitimate or discounted as sheer lunacy.

To complicate matters even further, writers such as Evernden (1992, 1993) analyse the ecological crisis not simply as a collection of scientific facts but as a cultural fact – i.e., nature is created in the minds of humans and acted upon through diverse cultural activities. He states that "we see in nature what we have been taught to look for, we feel what we have been prepared to feel" (1992, p. 48). In other words, nature and by extension, the ecological 'crisis' is interpreted and made sense of through and within a cultural filter and our responses are thus enabled or constricted through these interpretations.

It is difficult to articulate precisely what is meant by 'nature' without running into problems, particularly since it runs the gamut from the external world – i.e., outdoors – to the internal – i.e., human psyche (see definition of "nature" below). Throughout the process of researching this topic, I have been repeatedly confronted with, and have become quite w(e)ary of, those who trouble nature with allegations of social and cultural intervention: who decides what is meant by 'natural'? Are zoos, theme parks, 'naturalised' outdoor spaces, gardens, wildlife preserves, etc., 'natural,' or are they human constructs? What does 'value' mean when referring to nature or the environment? Furthermore, in discussing the environment as object, one can easily slip into an anthropocentric stance, implying that human beings are 'above' nature, that it is something 'out there,' and it is 'ours' to use and/or exploit (Evernden, 1992).

Although it is entirely unlikely that I will end this dispute within one dissertation, or many, for that matter, I will attempt to clarify how I have come to understand this term and how I mean to use it henceforth. I begin with a dictionary definition and work through a few interpretations via the works of several researchers.

Dictionary definitions are unlikely to provide the final answer regarding exactly what "nature" means – particularly in view of the numerous meanings it has taken on, but this may at least provide a starting point:

> [Nature is] the material world and its phenomena; the forces and processes that produce and control all the phenomena of the material world; the world of living things and the outdoors; a primitive state of existence, untouched and uninfluenced by civilization or artificiality; the essential characteristics and qualities of a person or thing: the fundamental character or disposition of a person; temperament: the natural or real aspect of a person, place, or thing; the processes and functions of the body…[etymological derivation] Middle English, *essential properties of a thing*, from Old

French, from Latin *natura*, from *natus*, past participle of *nasci to be born*; see gene- in Indo-European roots. (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001)

Once again we see how sticky the interconnected web of life can be. As one response to postmodern claims that nature is a social construction, Kahn (1999) argues that postmodern theory treats concepts such as rationality, truth, objectivity, logic, morality, and nature inadequately. He uses as an example a rock falling on one's head.

> Is the rock...only a social construction? A linguistic turn? A ploy to be used by people in power to oppress others? A co-constructed metaphor by which you create the rock and the rock creates you?....If a rock falls on your head, it will hurt, whether you are a Western urbanite or Samoan native...nature is not a mere cultural convention or artefact, as some postmodernists maintain, but part of a physical and biological reality that bounds children's cognition. (p. 7)

Von Maltzahn (1994) may also offer at least a partial way out of the "nature" predicament through the following definition: "Nature is that which brings itself forth, and it exists as it has brought itself forth whether we are present or not" (p. 7).

Mick Smith (2001) explains nature, its value, and our ethical obligation as human beings:

> Nature's value does not reside within trees, waterfalls, badgers, or bats but are constitutive of the ethical attempt to recognize such things for what and who they are. Nature calls on us to respond appropriately. Ethics requires attentiveness, a relation of appreciation rather than appropriation. (p. 129)

The complications with cultural constructions do not end with Evernden and postmodern theorists. Yet another complexity lies within the notion of childhood – the space and place of children within this particular society at this particular time. Aries (1962), writing about the evolution of the modern conception of family life, portrays childhood as a relatively recent, socially constructed development. I mention this because this work has at its basis my interest in the education of children, my concern for the ecological condition of the Earth, and my musings around the potential of the 'adult world' to overtake and exploit children, whether through consumerist activities or through the imposition of adult-oriented perspectives (e.g., fashions that are designed for sexual attraction). The relevance to this dissertation lies not so much within whether or not Aries is 'right' but rather within his portrayal of childhood as affected primarily by the adult world.

"Nature" appears to have a close cousin, equally as confusing. The term "environment" is often associated and used interchangeably with nature. Ursula Franklin (2006) draws a distinction between these two concepts:

> The concept of 'environment' is a relatively recent one that is always defined with respect to an organism that exists within that environment....We define 'ecology' as the science of the multitudes of environments that are not only superimposed on each other but also continually interact with each other. Ecology deals with the sum of overlapping environments. 'Nature,' therefore, is the living dynamic of this sum total of overlapping environments. (p. 140)

Franklin acknowledges the influence that human beings over the ages have had on both nature and environments, much of which has "involved irreversible processes that have permanently changed the real world in which we live" (p. 140). This has consequently triggered lobbying for protection and preservation of the planet, resulting in both solutions and further problems:

> But as the environment became a subject of study and of regulation and governance, there also appeared the idea that the environment could – and indeed should – be managed, and that it should be managed well, whatever that meant. In terms of the notion of environmental management, nature became a rather passive background to the man-made environment. (p. 140)

To avert possible objections to my use of the word "nature", when speaking of the environment or the outdoor world, I align my meaning of nature with Franklin's (2006) and Von Maltzahn's (1994).

What arises from within such descriptions of "nature" and "environment" is the concept of "stewardship" – a somewhat complicated term to address as it encases an implicit human (anthropocentric)/nature (ecocentric) dichotomy. In order to circumvent possible misinterpretations or contradictions about my claims not to look upon this work as a dichotomy, I will attempt to clarify, beginning with a(nother) dictionary definition.

Stewardship, like nature, seems to have more than one explanation. Its root word is "steward", which comes from Old English "*stigweard*" meaning "house guardian" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). Stewardship has been taken up by environmental groups ranging from formal organisations (e.g., the Alberta Stewardship Network) to community residents. In general, "stewardship" means taking responsibility for the care of something that does not belong to one: the *Oxford Dictionary of Ecology* (1998) describes "steward" as "one who

manages another's property, finances, or affairs." The Alberta Stewardship Network (n.d.) explains that stewardship

> evokes a sense of personal responsibility for ensuring our natural resources are sustainably managed for our own quality of life, and for future generations....[it] is an ethic whereby citizens participate in the careful and responsible management of air, land, water and biodiversity to ensure we have healthy ecosystems for present and future generations. (para. 1)

According to the Alberta Stewardship Network, Fisheries and Oceans Canada states that "Stewardship is an ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources with organisations, communities and others to actively engage in the prevention of loss of habitat and facilitate its recovery in the interest of long-term sustainability" (para. 3).

Environmental stewardship may also have a religious connotation for some people, as in the Christian suggestion that people should take care of the Earth and its creatures out of duty to God (see, for example, DeWitt, 1994).

Stewardship evidently has almost as many interpretations as "nature." For my part, whether it is rooted in biblical thought or not, the idea of protecting something does carry a paternalistic undertone, which places nature or the environment beneath humanity (i.e., anthropocentric viewpoint). The recent report on global warming from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) is a clear signal that it is time to work this out: perhaps what is necessary is a new interpretation of "stewardship" or perhaps a new term, one which encompasses the *idea* of taking care of something, in this case, the 'Earth,' but which at the same time includes human beings not as governing agents but as part of, dependent on, and interdependent with the ecosystem. I do not promise to achieve such a lofty task within this dissertation, but I wish to at least raise it as a possibility – predicated on and precipitated by my growing concern for the continued degradation of the biosphere and the coexisting absence of any real attention to it in curriculum in schools.

Next, I dip into accountability – to whom might we ascribe responsibility for the ecocrisis and how might we reasonably address this issue?

Roles and Responsibilities: What Are We Waiting For?
Government

The Canadian government's slow response in accepting the Kyoto Accord, and at the time of this writing the governing Canadian Conservative party's outright rejection of the Accord (endorsed, in a form, by the other two major political parties), combined with its subsidisation to the fossil fuel industry in the amount of $5.9 billion annually (Myers and Kent, 2001) whilst investment in 'greening' Canada is minimal, is an example of a governing body whose principle concern clearly lies with economic growth. Further evidence of this is reflected in the government's failure to increase tax breaks and subsidies to companies developing renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power – companies that now receive minimum tax incentives in comparison to the oil and gas industry (Boyd, 2003).

Also at the time of this writing, the debate concerning the Canadian government's commitment to developing and instituting 'green' policies continues amongst the major political parties in Canada. The current reigning government (Conservative minority) have allocated millions of dollars for various climate change initiatives – a seemingly positive step towards addressing at least *some* environmental issues. *However*, opposition politicians are quick to raise doubt about underlying motives: i.e., that decisions are politically driven (i.e., populist) rather than focused on resolving environmental or other dilemmas (see, for example, CBC news report, *Harper's Letter Dismisses Kyoto as 'Socialist Scheme,'* January 30, 2007). Irrespective of whether these initiatives, or at least injection of money, are aimed towards solving problems or whether they are politically motivated, I have not yet come upon any funding allocations that are directed towards the education system specifically for ecological research and curriculum development. Perhaps this is not deemed important, perhaps government officials do not feel it is their place to be involved in final decisions regarding funding initiatives within the education system, perhaps the connection between the two is too obscure, or perhaps I have just missed something. Whatever the reasoning may be, the links amongst government, the education system, and ecological mindedness do not seem to have yet become part of common, everyday conversation.

I wish to make one final point before letting the government rest: Canada has the dubious distinction of being amongst the top producers of garbage in the world: we stuff landfill sites on average with one tonne of garbage per person per year (Environment Canada, 2007). At the same time that garbage dumps are filling with waste, the Earth's

resources are being depleted. In turn, as garbage biodegrades, methane and carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere – both of which contribute to climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). Over the past thirty years, one-third of natural resources have vanished due to human consumption but 'ordinary' people are not harvesting these resources themselves; in fact, estimates of interaction with the outdoor world range from four to six percent of time spent outdoors (Gruenwald, 2004). The connections and interconnections amongst these factors are sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, but doubtlessly always complex. As statistics and 'facts,' this information must surely have a place in the classroom, and, indeed, likely do appear in classrooms via environmental education initiatives and activities. My question, following researchers such as Suzuki (1997), Gruenwald (2004), and Thomashow (2002) is, "Can statistics and facts have any real meaning in the absence of direct contact with the outdoor world?"

Education System

To date, I have found very little within our local (Calgary Board of Education) public school board policy documents or provincially designed Programs of Study to indicate that ecological issues have primary importance. I take a somewhat closer look at this later in the dissertation, but as a preliminary comment, it would seem that education policy discourse encompasses a business model of education much more so than an ecological one, a topic which has been investigated by such writers as Barlow and Robertson (1994), Harrison and Kachur (1999), and Seabrook (2001). I do not mean to imply that ecological discourse in some form is completely absent in the Program of Studies or staff room discussions. Environmental literacy has become a common enough term in education circles and I have even heard the word 'ecopedagogy' used; however, in my experience, this is relatively rare and meanings are not always consistent and coherent. Learning *about* ecological mindedness or Ecocentrism or the ecocrisis may not always translate into deep understandings. For example, if humans *are* spending less time interacting with the outdoor world, does this lead to a *detached* awareness? And if so, can detached awareness facilitate a shift from a state of knowing *about* the world to a state of being *in* the world – assuming this is deemed worthwhile?

Maxine Greene speaks about "the importance of wide-awakeness, of awareness of what it is to be in the world" (Greene, 1995, p. 35). For her, a necessary facet of

understanding involves engaging (or "releasing") one's imagination. In coming upon
Greene's work on imagination, I found clarification and support for my own thinking:
imagination may have a somewhat narrow scope in schools. This means that it is only or at
least primarily addressed within 'creative' activities such as story writing and art based
activities. Furthermore, it receives highest regard in early grades. Would reexamination of
dominant beliefs or myths about imagination in schools be helpful in coming to a
reconfigured understanding of what it means to be in relationship to the ecosystem? Could
this aid a shift from *knowing* to *being*?

> Imagination...as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world...makes
> empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves
> and those...called 'other'....[O]f all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one
> that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the
> taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions. (Greene, 1995, p.
> 3)

It would seem that if a shift is to occur, that shift might begin with a psychological
alter(c)ation – i.e., *get outside*, play, feel, experience. In exploring ecological awareness and
consumerism, I seek, in part, to search for ambiguities, bring these to surface, and in so
doing, raise possibilities for transformative learning opportunities. I return to this concept
later in the dissertation, but it may be helpful at this point to briefly explain what is meant by
"transformative education" as a *framework*. This is a conception of education that involves a
re-visioning, one that engenders a transformation of consciousness, an exposure of the
current dominant Westernised worldview that "exacerbates the [ecological] crisis we are now
facing" (O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 7). This requires an effort to understand our "present
educational institutions which are in line with and feeding into industrialism, nationalism,
competitive transnationalism, individualism, and patriarchy" (O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 7).
Leading away from this dominant attitude may open doorways to understanding what
education might mean in a re-imagined, reconfigured, transformative light. Transformative
education encompasses such topics as peace and human rights education, environmental
education, citizenship education and participatory democracy, and global education.

These few initial remarks barely make a dent in such a comprehensive concept as
transformative education; this is merely meant as an introductory passage to the possibilities
encased within such an approach to education. I turn now to the general public.

Public Response

Paul Shepard (1982/1998) asks, "Why do men persist in destroying their habitat?" (p. 1). Given the widespread availability of information regarding what appears to be a pervasive ecological problem, I frequently wonder why the general public have not rallied together in a much larger way to exert pressure on our elected representatives to introduce more appropriate, comprehensive legislation to address ecological crises? To rephrase Shepard (1982/1998), why do we continue in such a destructive bent, when it is our very – *only* – home that that is being destroyed in the process? Has 'market logic' seeped into our consciousness, clouding or occluding any sense that such things as overconsumption have an origin, a destination, and a point of no return – writ egregious ecological consequences?

This is not to say that ecological problems have been completely ignored; various non governmental agencies, not for profit private organisations, conservation groups, community activists, and individuals have been sounding the ecological alarm for many years. I also do not mean to place blame on silent individuals, amongst whom I must include myself to some degree; I make this lament more so as a statement of perplexity. Why, when we are so well informed and aware, are we not lobbying politicians and curriculum developers more energetically? Are we too afraid to get involved? Too complacent? Too mired in the hope that someday, someone else, a new scientific discovery will solve all the problems on our collective behalf? Are we too sceptical to believe that anyone would listen anyway? Do we not fully believe that we, or future generations, are in any danger? Or is there a collective societal madness, if a society *can* be sick, as Shepard suggests? Has George Howard (1997) hit on something in saying that participating in self or socially destructive activities has to do with a lack of full awareness as to why *not* to do them? And furthermore, in our collective individualism, do we fail to recognise that individual actions have multiple effects, one of which is that we fail to value the future? Maxine Greene (1995) comes once more to mind: "If we can link imagination to our sense of possibility and our ability to respond to other human beings, can we link it to the making of community as well?" (p. 39).

Prior to moving into the next phase, "*Noesis*", I recapitulate: the origin of my interest in this topic is difficult to pinpoint precisely. Undoubtedly my life and career experiences have played an enormous part in the arrival of this topic. It also has to do with a recently arrived interest in exploring the possibility that human beings have access to a sort of 'eco-

sensibility,' a quality or perhaps 'natural' wisdom possessed by all human beings that has been passed down through generations, either through direct interaction with the world or, as suggested by Damasio (1994), Gottschalk (2001), and Wilson (1984, 1992, 2002), through an evolutionarily biological encoding or predisposition. Wilson (1984), having coined the term 'biophilia,' describes it as a function which has enabled the human species to adapt and survive within an ever changing natural environment over thousands of years of evolution. He is quick to state that he does not mean this to be an instinct: "There is no evidence of a hereditary program hardwired into the brain. We learn most of what we know, but some things are learned much more quickly and easily than others" (Wilson, 1984, p. 106). Kellert (1997) explains biophilia as a "collection of *weak* biological tendencies", which, without appropriate experiences and learning opportunities, "lie dormant and frustrated" (p. 4). In a manner, biophilia might be seen as representative of a "clearing" (Heidegger, 1977), a space in which understanding might occur but without a watchful, listening *presence*, the clearing becomes a thick underbrush of noise and visual confusion. I present biophilia not as something which I will argue for or against within this study, but rather raise it as a possible response to calls to entertain new ways of thinking about human existence and species survival. In this way, it may serve to present a possibility to (re)awaken 'something' we possess or at least point us towards a reconsideration of the way(s) we enact our daily lives in terms of the impact – direct and indirect – we have as individuals, as a community, as a global society on the Earth. Biophilia, as love of living things, is a recurrent theme throughout this work. In an abbreviated description, I explore its relative, "ecopsychology" in which an individual's disconnectedness from nature is seen as a psychopathology: a severance from nature creates a severance from self (Roszak, 1996).

The preceding pages constitute my arrival at, and outline of the topic as I have come to understand it. Having identified the '*what*,' I now move into a description of the '*how*': the *approach*, the theoretical foundation I use to contend with, understand, and anchor this work.

Figure 5   Noesis: Understanding

Exordia

Exitus

Oikos

Alternus

Spiritus

Noesis

Passibus

Habitus
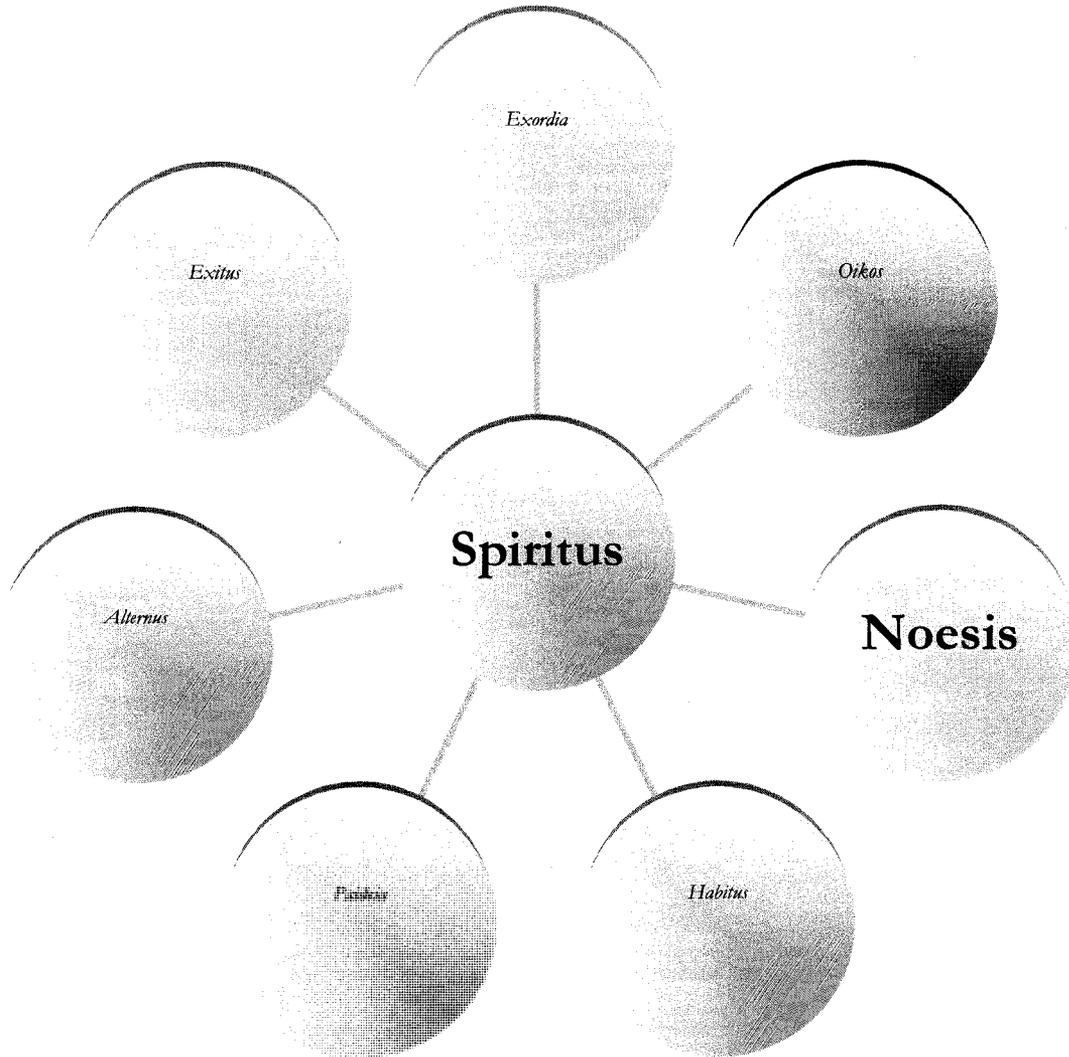
NOESIS: UNDERSTANDING

Part One

There was little doubt when I conceived of this *as topic* that the most appropriate stance would be interpretive; however, narrowing the focus, finding a solid ground on which to anchor these interpretations required a substantial time commitment and a seemingly unending reading list. Amongst the most prominent interpretive methodological possibilities that arose were: action research, ethnography, autoethnography, ethnomethodology, discourse analysis, grounded theory, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and critical theory. After serious consideration of what such a topic would entail – based primarily on experience, conversation, and reflection – it became clear that a hermeneutics-based approach would provide the most cogent passageway into understanding.

The understandings that precede and follow are *interpretations*. Indeed it cannot be otherwise, for "Understanding occurs in interpreting" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 389). Furthermore, in my desire to approach this work with honesty, integrity, and meaningfulness, I am bound to admit that I carry certain perceptions and pre-understandings – some of which I have become aware of, others which have yet to surface. As I have wended my way through the words in this work, a weighing (and a weight) variably erupted and lifted as language failed, exceeded, and at times even triumphed over me. Language, constitutive rather than purely expressive (Bowers, 1993), not only communicates the inner thoughts of persons or cultures but gives form and reality to them (Taylor, 1992). Part of the difficulty in generating interpretations, then, lies with the limitations and complications inherent within words themselves: language is not unambiguous and does not arrive and remain in neatly tied, easy to assemble and disassemble little packages. As the primary transmitter of cultural ideas, encoded within everyday discourse (Bowers, 1993), language offers both clarification and obfuscation.

Noesis is a Greek word which means understanding – from "noein, to perceive, [and] nous, mind" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). I have chosen to use this term because of its extended meaning as something we *do*, not something we merely hold to be true – i.e., it is an act of consciousness. I have found this to be necessarily founded on, and at times confounded by language with its various linguistic twists and turns as meaning variously slips and slides, nears but not infrequently falls short. As I have already mentioned, my interpretations of both written text and the conversations held with the participants are

rooted in my own understanding(s), experience(s), and prejudices (the latter as illuminated by Gadamer, 1968/2003). Underlying this work, in part, is a re-evaluation, a re-valuing, and a re-valorisation of experience. It is also an account, albeit limited, of my understandings of contemporary, modern society. This is not, of course, without pitfalls. Perspectivalism, pure subjectivity, and unsubstantiated interpretation are risks to which I concede and while I am reluctant to promise to fully eradicate all those risks, my hope is that in the acknowledgement that these exist as distinct possibilities they may in some way at least be tempered by the recognition that the work could be construed otherwise.

Interpretation

> A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before…language games are the minimum relation required for society to exist: even before he is born, if only by virtue of the name he is given, the human child is already positioned as the referent in the story recounted by those around him, in relation to which he will inevitably chart his course. (Jean-François Lyotard, 2002, p. 15)

This is not a study of postmodernism, I am not using a postmodern approach to understand the research I have undertaken, and I am not a dedicated proponent of postmodernist thought. It may seem curious, then, that I bring forward the above excerpt from *The Postmodern Condition* by J. F. Lyotard. My reason in doing so is to point to the complexity in using an interpretive approach to understanding social phenomena – to some degree, do we not have to concede to our embeddedness within "language games"? How do we set out to confirm or refute that human beings are or are not "already positioned" from infancy to adulthood? On the surface, there appears to be some legitimacy to such statements; for example, unless one chooses to live as a hermit, can we deny that we exist in a "fabric of relations"? Is it *not* the case that "life is more complex and mobile than ever before"? As stated by Kearney (2002), "We can hardly deny that the notion of continuous experience, associated with traditional linear narrative, has been fundamentally challenged by current technologies of the computer and Internet" (pp. 125-126). If these statements are accurate – which I hold them to be – what does this mean for finding validity or credibility within research involving life experiences or one's interpretation of cultural phenomena? Life and meaning are surely not easily derived from any tightly packaged, preconceived "meta-narratives" with specific, clear cut 'truths.' How, then, are we to understand and

interpret experience when complexities such as positioning, subjectivity, and language (as *game*) are brought into the conversation, or into play (as elucidated by Gadamer, 1968/2003)? Do we play language games or do language games *play us*? Gadamer (1968/2003) states, "all playing is a being-played…the game masters the players….The real subject of the game is not the player but instead the game itself" (p. 106). Are we fooled by language, are we the fools *of* language, or do we have *some* (perhaps ultimate) control over it?

The above questions constitute some of the difficulties that I have wrestled with throughout this work. Via the work of philosophers such as Hans Georg Gadamer (1968/2003), Nicholas Davey (2006), and Martin Jay (2005) I will attempt to strengthen experience, conversation, and interpretation as reliable sources from which to draw. It is in conversation, through dialogue, both with people (the participants) and a variety of written texts, that I have come to understanding, to make meaning.

How and Why a Hermeneutic Approach?

Hermeneutics, which derives from the Greek *"hermeneus"* meaning "interpreter", is connected to the ancient Greek god Hermes whose role it was to deliver and interpret the messages of the gods (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Hermes was also known as a trickster, not infrequently changing and distorting the messages he was charged with delivering, hence influencing interpretations (Morford and Lenardon, 1977). Distortion, of course, is what I aim to avoid. Although I do not – and have not – claim to unearth the 'final' truth, I aim to understand *and communicate* understanding which, according to Gadamer (1968/2003), is the point of a hermeneutic approach: to make understanding *possible*.

In his analysis of hermeneutics and its relevance to education, Shaun Gallagher (1992) includes a discussion of differing perspectives within hermeneutics (conservative, critical, radical, and moderate). After a good deal of thought and an eventual overcoming of my own resistance to all but a strictly critical hermeneutic perspective, I finally came to see that 'moderate' hermeneutics (as represented by Gadamer, 1968/2003) best fits with interpreting the words and experiences(s) of the teachers in this study as well as the numerous written texts I access to assist in understanding ecological mindedness and consumerism. I have not lost interest in a critical perspective; rather, I have come to see 'moderate' hermeneutics as carrying an inherent invitation to *critique*. This does not mean

that this form of hermeneutic interpretation is a somehow 'softer' approach, that it is bland or lacking in rigour: I regard it rather as an offering, an opening towards "arousing a critical consciousness through the analysis of the generative themes of the present era" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000, p. 289).

I wish to reiterate that I do not present this as a specific model of interpretation that will reveal 'the final truth.' And while this may not satisfy those who understand the world through a modernistic, positivistic lens, Lincoln and Denzin (2000) remind us that "qualitative inquiry is properly conceptualized as a civic, participatory, collaborative project" (p. 1049) and that there is "an elusive centre emerging in this contradictory, tension-riddled enterprise [as we move] further and further away from grand narratives and single, overarching ontological, epistemological, and methodological paradigms" (p. 1047). Indeed an opening for conversation.

Playing With/On/In Language and Conversation

To participate in conversation is to participate *in* language, *as* a languaged *event*. Gadamer (1968/2003) explains that this involves *play* – not as some crude, irresponsible, meaningless diversion but rather as a serious activity, one that involves "inquiring into the *mode* (italics added) of being of play as such" (p. 102). In this conception, play contains its own essence; the player recedes in a manner, and the subject, whether it be a piece of art or a text or a conversation becomes the focal point, and "it is not aesthetic consciousness but the experience (*Erfahrung*) of art and thus the question of the mode of being of the work of art that must be the object of our examination" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 102). The "play" takes hold of the player, and has its "true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it" (p. 102). To play, then, is to participate in a releasing *of* something such as art, conversation, or text. In this case, the work, the art, the play is constituted in conversation, experience, and interpretation.

To Converse, To Interpret, to Understand: A Cyclical Movement and Moment

From Gadamer's (1968/2003) work, it has become clear to me that to interpret the world is to understand it. Meaning is personal, meaning is contextual, and meaning is shared. Gallagher (1992) explains interpretation as an "interchange that involves not only a questioning of subject matter between interpreter and the interpreted, but a self-questioning" (p. 157). When I came upon this many years ago, I came to realise that a hermeneutic approach means being drawn into and becoming implicated in a way unlike that of other approaches to understanding phenomena. While this is a buffer, a relief, a release-ment due to the acceptance and expectation that I cannot possibly provide definitive answers to the issues contained within this research, it also raises questions: if I cannot get to solid 'answers,' final conclusions, the *truth*, what would be the point of delving into the topic in the first place? How might I explain, justify, defend a work that is based on tentative, partial interpretations, particularly when speaking to/about/on behalf of numerous writers and five other people? What does it mean to *interpret* in the first place?

"Interpretation" comes from the Latin word "*interpretãri*" and means to "explain, expound, understand" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). One of the meanings of "explain" is "to grasp, to seize", implicit within which is the idea that something is being thrown, caught, and hung onto. This act of seizing or grasping in terms of human interaction occurs in conversation with others or in conversation with text (Gadamer, 1968/2003), which does not make the task any easier, but it may provide some sense of assurance. "Conversation", which comes from the Latin "*conversationem*" means an "act of living with" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). In my search for understanding, I am not alone. The experience(s) of my colleagues, my reading of text, and my own willingness to remain open to understanding *differently* meant that I would not be entirely isolated in this endeavour. I find further solace in Caputo (1987), who states, "The essential thing is the opening it creates, not the resolution" (p. 5).

What, Then, of Experience?

Martin Jay (2005), in a comprehensive historical review of experience as it has evolved within thinkers and philosophers of the Westernised world, discusses the difficulties and the possibilities inherent within claiming and reclaiming experience as a viable avenue into – and perhaps out of – research. At one time, experience provided the basis not only for making sense of daily life but for substantive philosophical explorations. However,

> [t]here was…a widespread inclination during the last decades of the twentieth century, especially among those who characterized themselves as poststructuralist analysts of discourse and apparatuses of power, to challenge 'experience' (or even more so 'lived experience') as a simplistic ground of immediacy that fails to register the always already mediated nature of cultural experiences. (Jay, 2005, p. 3)

Thus, research involving experience (or 'lived experience') bears complexity on more than one level. Not only must one contend with the precariousness of interpreting someone else's words or text, one must contend with postmodernist claims that by the time we arrive at giving expression to an experience, it has – *we* have – already been positioned, layered, and determined by the meaning-laden language systems located within a particular culture (Lyotard, 1984). Postmodernism, because of its overturn of language and seeming plausibility, is rather alluring; however, despite its claims otherwise, it is somewhat totalising – and in seeking to understand experience, an openness, a willingness to learn "not just from the object [other] encountered but from the character of the encounter itself" (Davey, 2006, p. 6) must be present. Although we may be embedded within a particular culture and language system which *may* have limiting factors regarding certainty or 'truth' or even provisional 'knowableness,' and even though a conversation does not guarantee that understanding will be equivalent to agreement, we can still be receptive to seeing things differently, to participating in the creation of new understandings. This may seem to create somewhat of a discomfort or perhaps a paradox, but as Jay (2005) suggests, it may be "more fruitful to remain within the tension created by the paradox" (p. 6) than to attempt distancing oneself or trying to resolve the "linguistic turn". This is reflective of interpretive work, which is "based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness…a tension….The true locus of hermeneutics is this in between" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 125).

Jay (2005) takes on Lyotard's claim that "experience in whatever guise is in terminal crisis, undermined by capitalist techno-science, the mass life of the metropolis, and the loss of any sense of temporal dialectic culminating in retrospective meaning", referring to this as

"ruthless dissolution of the integrated self" (p. 362). He adroitly points out that "the story is considerably more complicated and its implications more interesting than this flat rejection narrative might suggest" (p. 365).

This should not mean that personal experience loses all validity or that it is to be outright distrusted. Nor should it mean that the work of Lyotard and other postmodern thinkers should be outright disregarded. The relevance of postmodernist thought to my work lies within its proclivity to inquire into dominant narratives. As Smith (2001) points out, "certain elements of postmodernism might ally themselves with an environmental critique" (p. 11). Questioning Western society's dominant discourse and inquiring into Anthropocentrism involves, in some degree, doubting residual modernist notions or metanarratives.

In everyday life, experience is what must be relied on for learning, feeling, knowing, remembering – in other words, coming to meaningful understanding of the world. At the same time, experience is burdened with the contingencies of interpretation particularly since memory is involved, as memories fade or become distorted. This does not mean, however, that there is no validity or legitimacy in recalling past experiences. If recollection lays claim to confusion or falsehood based on the passage of time, a counter suit or dispute may be launched in *favour* of the passage of time. I arrive at this understanding via Gadamer (1968/2003), who explains that understanding is an ongoing process involving mediation and dialogue. In the process of understanding we come to know ourselves and our past and as we remain open to new 'experience,' by being willing to test and to extend what we know, we place what we have learned under review. Only then are we able to reevaluate and perhaps transform what we know and become 'more' (Davey, 2006, p. 57). Memory, then,

> is not rightly understood if it is regarded as merely a general talent or capacity….[F]orgetting, and recalling belong to the historical constitution of man and are themselves part of his history….Whoever uses his memory as a mere faculty – and any 'technique' of memory is such a use – does not yet possess it as something that is absolutely his own. Memory must be formed….Only by forgetting does the mind have the possibility of total renewal, the capacity to see everything with fresh eyes so that what is long familiar fuses with the new into a many levelled unity. (Gadamer, 1968/2003, pp. 15-16)

What this furthermore means to me as someone investigating experience *of* something (ecological mindedness, for example) is that the act of recollection, in its return to a consciousness of a particular experience, might itself be regarded an experience, which in

itself produces some form of validity to the experience. Because the experience is being recalled, the re-call is a verification of the initial experience. The consciousness in both cases is, in effect, still a consciousness of being in the world. Additionally, if something – an experience – is purely and only temporally bound, the opportunities for new learning or understandings may be foreclosed. Gadamer (1968/2003) reminds us that "The truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience" (p. 355).

In some part, questions surrounding the validity of experience are rooted in the desire for precision, a requisite for scientific and mathematical proof.

> [S]cientific experience tended to privilege the visual, with its capacity to produce knowledge at a distance, over the other senses....Abetted by innovations in the perspectivalist depiction of space on Renaissance canvases, which seemed to be in tune with the rationalized universe assumed by the new science, the hegemony of the eye meant not only the denigration of the other senses, but also the detextualization of experience in general. (Jay, 2005, pp. 37-38)

One final reference to Jay as it relates to this dissertation lies within his exploration of John Dewey's standpoint on experience.

> Dewey argued [that] education for democracy was an absolute necessity. Such education must be based on experiential rather than book learning, creative investigation rather than rote memory, and a transactional relationship between child and environment rather than a passive, spectatorial one....But such a goal did not mean retreating into a life of narcissistic self absorption. Education for democracy, Dewey argued, must also involve the development of communicative, collaborative, and deliberative skills, which are the preconditions of any genuinely democratic culture. (p. 296)

On Whose Authority?

Connected with the responsibility to claim "I" is the matter of authority. As the author of this study, I, taking the words, the experience(s) of the participants in this study, must assume authorship, *authority* for the thoughts, memories, and interpretations uttered within. However, as I have discovered in numerous other places and spaces, this is not as simple and straightforward as I assumed. Questions demand to be addressed – or at least articulated. What *is* authority? How does it play into conversation, experience, and the written word? Is this something to be attained purely by virtue of *claiming* this or that to be my experience, my interpretation? Does it have to be earned after somehow proving that we are 'correct' or exemplars of something or other? Is it *bestowed* upon us by some superior

external source? And who or what might confer that authorisation and who or what might declare 'access denied'?

Authority is defined as "the power to enforce laws, exact obedience, command, determine, or judge" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). The root word of "authority" is author, which stems from the Latin "*augēre*" meaning "to create" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). In creating this work, in the sense of putting forth these words on paper *as interpretations*, I have authorial status. My use of the word "create", however, is not meant to imply that I act as quintessential creator. As Gadamer (1968/2003) points out, "interpretation probably is re-creation, but this is a re-creation not of the creative act but of the created work" (p. 119). As well as being stopped at the door of creativity, I am also stopped at the door of authority because of one relatively short yet very potent word: *power*. This is not to say that I am unwarranted in claiming that I have author(ity) over this work; rather, the implicit power differential (by definition of "authority") compels me to provide some form of justification for the words and work encased within this dissertation. Whether authority – on an individual or an institutional basis – is dutifully accepted or vehemently challenged, there is a call to understand how or whether or why a "power" differential may exist and how such a differential may be defused or at least neutralised such that *all* are on equal footing. A key distinction I would like to make lies within the difference between authority and authority *figure*. Authority figures may bring into existence something else: as figures, often as not, they call *not* to be questioned. For instance, religious doctrine may send forth a clear command not to be questioned, patriarchal/authoritarian family 'heads' and employers expect compliance, dictatorships demand obedience, etc. In such cases, conclusive statements are accepted. In this conception of the word, some form of fear is attached: fear of reprisal, fear of expulsion, fear of physical or psychological injury, etc. In my case, in assuming authorship/authority over this work, I mean only that I select words, as do the participants, that seem to best describe experiences, perceptions, and workings-out. Stated another way, this work stands as a conversation, in the hermeneutic sense, one that invites dialogue, further exploration, and coming to new understandings.

History, Tradition, and Prejudice

Within the above is an identifiable impulse towards holism and as such requires a (re)formulation of "new and old voices" (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000, p. 1055). Through all of this, as Gadamer (1968/2003) points out, it is essential to acknowledge an historical embeddedness – i.e., speaking, acting, and interpreting the world is based at least to some degree, on tradition: "Historical knowledge can be gained only by seeing the past in its continuity with the present" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 327). Tradition, in the Gadamerian sense is not meant to imply a stale or dying accumulation of received knowledge, information, or customs. It is, rather, an impulse with a living component, a *process* which allows, invites, and perhaps insists on dialogue and renewal: "Tradition as conceived by philosophical hermeneutics is not just a stock of inert ideas or values but a manner or style of becoming critically engaged with…the influence of a set of questions or subject matters" (Davey, 2006, p. 53). We may be embedded within a particular history; however, "history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 276). Rather than tradition as inherited, established, customary (such as a religious practice) or "a time honored practice or set of such practices" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001), the philosophical hermeneutic conception of tradition requires, *insists* upon acknowledgement of ties to one's past *and* engagement: "[tradition is] not so much a body of work but more a manner or style of becoming engaged with those sets of questions of subject matters that are communicated by a body of received work" (Davey, 2006, p. 50). Meaning arises from interpretive interaction which begins with an acknowledgment that we think and act from existing biases or "prejudices". This speaks *not* to an unquestioning acceptance of "conservatism but to an anti-essentialism" (Davey, 2006, p. 53). Assumptions, then, rather than being set aside or "bracketed out" (van Manen, 1997), have been an integral part in my process of coming to understanding in a new light, a new way, differently. A final, single interpretation is never fully possible because understanding is a continually evolving process (Laverty, 2003). Conversation, dialogic encounters form the impetus for understanding – what Gadamer (1968/2003) refers to as a "fusion of horizons", within which is held the potential for new meanings or understandings to arise. This "hermeneutics of everydayness" seeks to illuminate and articulate what generally goes unnoticed because it is omnipresent, ordinary,

and commonplace; a "hermeneutics of everydayness" is always first (Laverty, 2003). To work towards developing deeper understandings of power relationships and power brokers within our culture is to seek entry into a deeper form of questioning. The point is to expose the "ruptures and gaps…the textuality and difference, which inhabits everything we think, and do, and hope for" (Caputo, 1987, p. 6). O'Sullivan and Taylor (2004) point out that "an opportunity to reflect on one's lived experience is an absolutely essential component of learning that results in attitudinal and behavioural change" (p. 88).

This approach helped illuminate many topics of conversations but in no way could or would be regarded as a tightly woven framework within which we might come to clear, complete understandings. Indeed, at times, my interpretations and the participants' comments sometimes seemed to be inconsistent and/or almost contradictory – which verifies, paradoxically, the complexities with attempting to find truth or even enduring consistency. There is some solace to be found in two of Jay's (2005) concluding comments: "the different notions of experience [demonstrate] that if it means anything at all, it involves an openness to the world" (p. 408); and that we might "see the struggle itself as the reward" (p. 409). This latter point – "the struggle as the reward" is one which I have yet to fully integrate. I remind myself that "Every encounter with tradition…involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out" (Gadamer, 2003, p. 306).

Difficulties, Slippage, Sachen: A Deepening Understanding of "Topic"

In seeking a theoretical basis on which to lay what I am interested in examining, i.e., what constitutes ecological and productivist discourse, I want to understand how it shows itself, under what circumstances, and how it is expressed. I initially conceived of discourse as a *thing*, a topic to investigate, a cultural artefact of sorts. However, upon closer reading of *Sachen*, which Davey (2006) explains are "the subject matters…a given language brings into being" (p. 47), it became rather absurd to continue in such a vein, for it is *through* discourse that we participate in, and become part of culture; it is *through* discourse that we come to understandings of cultural artefacts. It is discourse that opens us to "becoming literate with regard to the *Sachen* that form a given culture" (Davey, 2006, p. 69).

As explicated by Davey, because it is language that mediates understanding, our understandings can only ever be partial. This is because "the objects of understanding (*Sachen*) are beyond interpretative capture" (p. 32). The very possibilities that this holds almost seems to foreclose the possibilities it holds. We are, however, spared a spiralling free fall into a bottomless tomb of obfuscation: Davey continues on to say that "each interpretation has the potential of bringing a different *aspect* of its intended object into view" (p. 32), which makes for a nice return to possibility and serves as reminder that language and interpretation are slippery but not interminably beyond reach. *Sache*, as "an *objective* entity….[will] have a scope of cultural and historical reference larger than any individual can grasp….[and yet] their cultural effectiveness depends upon whether they are engaged with" (Davey, 2006, p. 69). Discourse, Janus-faced, seems either to suspend meaning or surrender it. More than mere words or concepts or descriptions, more than the sum of its parts, even more than its whole, since its whole is never wholly exposed, in this work I have come upon this elusive condition on more than one occasion. This I have experienced as an absence – not in the sense of 'nothingness,' but rather as a pause that rests between words, a pause that *holds* something, where image or imagination, or prior experience may be invoked or revoked. As one response to the tension created by the latter, where previous 'knowledge' fails, I default to an adjustment in gaze, a pause, a settling into the discomfort, a submitting and falling *into* the gaps, the mystery, the ambiguity. And although the *whole* experience may be more than words can convey, this does not mean that language is pointless or that we might *never* reach an understanding: "inexplicit strands of meaning are not…in principle unknowable, they are simply not seen, not registered or attended to" (Davey, 2006, p. 78). A possible way through the discomfort may lie within the concept of *becoming*: whether exploring a painting, a piece of music, a discourse, or a moment, "understanding lives in or from a certain situation-specific interpretive disposition" (Grondin, 1994, p. 96). Thus, rather than act as a limiting and stifling agent to experience, or deny adequate description of it, this can awaken and open into something interesting.

> Discontinuous strands of meaning…inform how a semantic 'whole' can be perceived….[suggesting] openings or loose ends enabling other strands of meaning to be woven in….[for it is] precisely the moments of difference and discontinuity within a *Sache* that challenge our understanding (expectancies) of it. (Davey, 2006, p. 71)

After a good deal of struggling with language, concepts, and understanding, I have come to realise that, at least in some part, my difficulty in locating the topic as *Sache* has to do with what "topic" itself means: etymologically, it comes from the Greek *"topos"* meaning "place" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). It is discourse that I am trying to understand; however, the focal point, the topic, the "place" that discourse shows itself is in the *experience*. At times, within those moments where something is exposed, something changes. Through the cracks in the discourse, understanding becomes *event*.

> *Sache* depends upon being 'backed up by the ground' of the *withheld*, the dark and sustaining presence of the withheld is, as such, brought to light. This does not mean that it is objectified in language but it is brought to mind by language as an intentional object of our understanding. (Davey, 2006, p. 74)

The word, or rather the text, helps to elucidate an experience, and the success or lack of success to make that experience comprehensible lies within interpretation. The inherent reciprocity between topic and discourse seems to have much to do with linguistic immersion, which variably acts as buttress and barrier.

Further Tensions, Apprehensions and Suspensions

At some level, my interpretations, and the complications, can be viewed as a response to the question, "What does 'the good life' mean in this culture, in this time, and what responsibilities does it carry in personal and professional terms as it relates to classroom, community, culture, social milieu, environment?" To phrase the question another way, "What is the meaning of self in relationship to *other*?" These explorations are, of course, contained within the sphere of the conversations and publications used as basis for this dissertation. Running alongside, within, and throughout are my own biases, beliefs, [hermeneutic] "prejudices" (Gadamer 1968/2003), and my difficulties with language. I am working with and through a productivist discourse which foremost requires, or at least seeks logic, objectivity, and replicable, measurable data – i.e., hard facts. Although the language and the dominant way of knowing that I, and the participants in this study use may be seen as closely aligned with the current Westernised dominant discourse, I wish to underscore that there is a distinction, however subtle it may appear to be, between an *ecologically minded* understanding and technical ways of knowing. The inevitable tension created by attempting

to stay the middle ground, "'in' or 'through' the experience" (Jay, 2005, p. 35) is evident throughout the conversations with participants as well as within this written piece.

When our conversations centred around describing and understanding feelings and experiences *in nature* (i.e., being at the ocean, going for hikes in the mountains, rowing, driving through the prairies, digging in one's garden, watching birds, etc.) – or during those moments I have described as hitting the "pause button" – there was a tendency to connect the feeling with the body, ranging from descriptions of the senses: "I can almost smell it and I can feel the mist, I can see it, I can hear the rhythm" (Deb, Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005) to full body associations: "becoming part of that space" (G.R., Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005). The limitations that this carries in trying to describe a *feeling* and a consequent *understanding* on the part of the listener is given account by Abram (1997):

> Linguistic meaning is not some ideal and bodiless essence that we arbitrarily assign to a physical sound or word and then toss out into the 'external' world….[M]eaning sprouts in the very depths of the sensory world, in the heat of meeting, encounter, participation. (p. 75)

A possible cause for the difficulty or disconnect we may experience when attempting to articulate a particular feeling is summarised by Jay (2005), who writes, "it does seem clear that modernity was accompanied by an increasing specialization of function and the loss of a more integrated sense of life" (p. 38). As Jay traces the roots of contemporary valued and valorised ways of understanding, it is brought to light that we – individually and collectively in the world – are in some ways *bound* to hold a certain scepticism surrounding experience be it for religious or scientific reasons. This applies even more so within academic undertakings where questions of validity come fully into play. Eugene Gendlin (1962) reveals that "We are most aware of the dimension of felt meaning when our symbols fail to symbolize adequately what we mean. At such times, felt meaning appears clearly different and richer or more specific than the meaning inherent in the available symbols" (p. 64).

In the following section, I enter the precipitous terrain of 'discourse' and 'worldview.' I include a brief overview of the discourse that underwrites consumerism and its historical lineage – i.e., the events that apparently led to this as a dominant mode of thinking, communicating, and deriving, in some part, a sense of identity. This discourse is carried forward and in some way is an *invention of* modernity, described by Smith (2001) as

the social condition of our contemporary world...characterized in thought and in deed, by its Promethean striving to go beyond all given limits....[a] continual and accelerating movement [that is] the basis for that dominant myth of progress that typifies and justifies the modernist enterprise. (p. 1)

In the next section, I delve into ecological discourse. An underlying question throughout this study is, "How do we understand, describe, and (de)construct the [dominant] discourse?" The distinction between the Westernised dominant discourse, which Smith (1998) refers to as "productivist discourse" and an ecological discourse is not meant to serve as a dichotomous exposition but rather as a way to highlight the nuances contained within each perspective. To consider different streams of thought as invitations is to do "what Socrates tried to teach us: to examine who we are and what our deepest convictions are and hold those convictions up to the searching test of reflective examination" (Putnam, 2002, p. 44). This may in turn enable recognition of any inconsistencies that may exist between actions and beliefs on a personal level. Furthermore, we may discover to what extent, if any, we derive a sense of identity from external forces and how these may become manifest in our actions and behaviours.

God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the Earth." (New American Standard Bible, Genesis, 1:28)

Life is sacred, nature is sacred. Therefore we should have – must have – a deep, profound and unquestioning reverence for all life, for human life as well as other than human life. Human life is no more sacred than that of the plants or the animals. All life is equally sacred. (Satish Kumar, 2004)

The central issue is economic growth. The most important means of adaptation is the marketplace: If governments prevent people from freely producing goods and services, charging prices that reflect changing resource values, and responding to diverse human needs, then worsening poverty will result. Third World countries are impoverished not because they are populous, but because their governments have enforced anti-capitalistic economic policies. (Doug Bandow, 1993)

One of our greatest hopes is young people…Our challenge now, which requires the education of us all and the raising of our collective awareness on a global basis, is to restore and save the earth even as we add still more members to the human family. This will not be easy or simple; there will be setbacks, and fierce resistance from those who profit from pollution. (Al Gore, 1992)

It's that feeling you have had all your life…that something was wrong with the world. You don't know what it is but it's there, like a splinter in your mind…(*Morpheus, The Matrix*, 1997)

Discourse

The above quotations, chosen from a plethora of possibilities, are meant to serve as representative samples of differing discourses, discourses which are inherent in the worldviews mentioned above. Central to deriving some understanding of worldview as it may exist within a specific culture/society, however provisional that understanding may be, is an understanding, or at least a survey of the particular foundational discourses that underwrite, guide, and gird the actions, beliefs, behaviours, and thoughts carried out by individuals, groups, communities, cultures, societies. In some part, this has involved looking into where and why we – as individuals, as teaching professionals, and human beings living in a high-tech, Westernised society – might be situated along a spectrum of beliefs, fantasies, and assumptions, all of which are encased within a particular worldview.

What follows is a very brief outline of discourse as conceptualised by Foucault (1969). I then explore an anthropocentric worldview via productivism and a brief discussion of an ecological worldview. To some degree, in adopting a particular worldview, we also ascribe to a certain identity, or at least something with which we identify. Additionally, when speaking of identity, I do not mean to assert that either of these perspectives or worldviews may lay claim to representing or determining one final, complete definition of identity. I use these as a means of shedding some light, however tentative or incomplete, on needs and desires – on both a personal and societal level – and how these may come into being in cultures.

The Role of Discourse in Meaning-Making

Stated simply, discourse is a form of communication – i.e., written or spoken language. For theorists such as Foucault (1969), however, discourse means much more than a specific vocabulary used by groups of people. In his analysis, discourse is not merely the equivalent of language but rather encompasses the products and processes of a given society: the habits, conventions, norms, social practices, institutions, etc. – i.e., the very way things come to have meaning. Any particular discourse derives from a particular culture, which is defined by Frow and Morris (2000) as "a network of embedded practices and representations (texts, images, talk, codes of behaviour, and the narrative structures organising these) that shapes every aspect of social life" (p. 316). To combine Foucault's (1969) work with this definition of culture, then, is to say that social meanings are carried

primarily through language – or to use Lyotard's (1984) reinterpretation of Wittgenstein's term, "language games"; therefore – to follow this line of thinking – relationships of power can be seen as deeply embedded within discourses. Language or discursive practices, as a conduit of power, constitute "a set of tacit rules that regulate what can and cannot be said, who can speak with the blessings of authority and who must listen, whose social constructions are valid and whose are erroneous and unimportant" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000, p. 284).

Foucault was interested in rules – how they are produced, transmitted, and how they establish "regimes of truth". While dominant discourses are reinforced by existing systems, Foucault does not believe power to be purely a top-down, repressive/oppressive process which constrains personal freedom, but rather that people become involved in *relations* of power. In this viewpoint, power, carried through discourse, can also be productive. Besides carrying and even generating power, discourse holds the potential to defuse, unravel, and rework power. I do not claim to be a Foucault scholar and I have only touched upon a small part of his voluminous work. I bring his work on discourse forward because it is relevant not only in laying the basis for a broader, perhaps better understanding of the way that discourse(s) function within society, but also in pointing out that critique does not fulfill its purpose in merely uncovering what is not 'right.' Foucault calls us to challenge the assumptions, modes of thought, and practices that we may otherwise unwittingly accept (Gruenwald, 2004). Mills (2003) reminds us that "we should not assume that Foucault has all of the answers...we should draw on his work as a resource for thinking" (p. 7).

From Discourse to Worldview

Ecocentrism and Anthropocentrism, as separate worldviews, are each carried through a particular discourse. The disagreement between these two discourses can be summarised through the work of Wilson (1991). Borrowing on Cotgrove (1982), he describes environmentalism and industrialism (roughly equivalent to what I present here as "ecological discourse" or "Ecocentrism", and "productivist discourse" or "Anthropocentrism") in the following way: one the one hand, environmentalists inform us that the society we have is destroying nature and that such an individualistic bent must shift towards a more community oriented mentality. On the other hand, industrialists promote a

society wherein individuals should be able to realise their potential to become wealthy, free, and receive rewards for their hard work. Both of these approaches speak to a distinct value system, and that value system furthermore speaks to what is considered by each approach to be the 'good life.' Wherever we may locate ourselves along the consumerist/ecologist spectrum, it seems a worthwhile endeavour to uncover and understand accompanying value systems, to know where we stand, what it is we 'stand under,' and what we mean.

Historical Warrants: A Glance In the Rear View Mirror

Amongst the various definitions of "warrant" provided by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2001) are: "authorization or certification; sanction, as given by a superior; justification for an action or a belief; grounds; something that provides assurance or confirmation". I use it here to indicate that the highly expurgated overview of European history below – if the texts I have used are to be believed – bear validity, that they have been authorised, certified, sanctioned, confirmed by a 'superior.' This overview of the rise of the 'modern' world is meant to serve as an underlay – the background to the dominant discourse in the Westernised world. It is laid out in a time-sequenced, linear format; however, this is not meant to imply that history emerged or evolved from a simple, straightforward, sequential succession of events and processes. It has, rather, been a process involving political, cultural, social, and economic dimensions which overlap, intersect, and sometimes conflict. That is to say, a number of discourses are in play at any particular time.

There is no shortage in the literature on the history of the Western world, but for the sake of manageability, I have drawn largely on the work of Berman (1989), Bordo (1987), Capra (1988), Leiss (1972), Merchant (1990), and Russell (1978). To understand the roots of the modern "malaise" (Taylor, 1991), many historians point to the development of the modern outlook in the rise of science during the 16th and 17th Centuries (e.g., Berman, 1972; Bordo, 1987; Leiss, 1972; Merchant, 1990). Others trace the roots of our malaise deeper, to the separation of God from the universe in the Judeao-Christian tradition (Leiss, 1972), or to the rise of patriarchal societies (Merchant, 1990). Although the modern worldview undoubtedly had antecedents, it is apparent that a new way of viewing nature and a new relationship between humans and nature developed during these centuries.

A Rupture from Rapture

Throughout the pre-modern world (and beyond), nature, the physical environment, was revered, cared for, and recognised as a powerful guide to existence on Earth (Merchant, 1990). For cultures that worshipped the Earth (as goddess), or the forces of nature (for example, the ancient Egyptians believed that the sun god Ra carried the sun through the sky each day), or animal spirits, their deities were ever present; they were not separate or necessarily subordinate but rather walked amongst them, intimately linking human life with all life, animate or inanimate (Merchant, 1990). Humanity, nature, reality were all one and the same (Berman, 1989). This is not to say that people lived in an uncorrupted, pristine world where brutality, violence, oppression, and slavery were non existent. Rather, there was, generally speaking, an understanding of one's place in the world and a recognition of humanity's dependence on the external environment.

From here, I provide a very brief historical account of two worldviews, specifically the Judaeo-Christian view followed by the rise of the scientific view. I also include a commentary about the Romantic Movement as a response to the Enlightenment period, encased within which are the seeds of contemporary ecological mindedness.

Judaeo-Christian View

> God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the Earth." (New American Standard Bible Genesis, 1:28)

Prior to the 1500s the universe was largely viewed as an organic whole, the Earth was embedded within a spiritual universe that was God's creation (Capra, 1988; Merchant, 1990). Through participation with/in nature, people identified their own lives with aspects of nature and believed in an absolute reality that transcends this world (Von Maltzahn, 1994). Communication with the non-tangible was important; everything that an individual did affected everyone else in the group and their surroundings; the soul was viewed as a natural object and therefore as part of nature (Von Maltzahn, 1994). The moral order in the universe was expressed as a hierarchy of being with God and the spiritual realm above 'man' and the rest of creation below. 'Man' was comprised of both spiritual (soul) and corporeal elements. The hierarchical structure of the universe with God, lord of creation, was

paralleled on Earth by the child of God, 'man,' above all creation on Earth. This arrangement of being was rigid with people tied to specific roles (Capra, 1988). Although people were 'fixed' within the hierarchical order, their lives had meaning within the broader moral order and purpose of the universe – i.e., it was part of God's plan (Capra, 1988). People understood that "everything [was] enmeshed in complex webs of power and that appropriate access to this power [was] necessary for survival" (Zimmerman, 1994, p. 246). All power and meaning flowed from and to God. The spiritual realm of God and man was of greatest significance; mundane existence was secondary. Salvation in heaven was of more importance than Earthly existence, an outlook evident in the practice of baptising babies prior to killing them during the "conquest of the Americas" (Wright, 1993).

The hierarchical moral order was expressed in nature by the structure of the cosmos: the Earth lay at the centre of the universe in the Ptolemaic geocentric cosmos, planets and stars, perfect spheres in the heavens, orbited the Earth in perfectly circular orbits (Russell, 1978).

Epistemological Shift: The Rise of the Scientific Worldview

Ancient cultures tended to look upon nature as nurturing but with the rise of tools and technologies, the emerging scientific worldview began to draw human beings away from or outside of the natural world while at the same time permeating religious, social, political, and philosophical spheres, all of which was furthermore reflected in literature and art forms (Merchant, 1990). This change became particularly pronounced in the 16th and 17th Centuries: the values associated with the former organic worldview were being supplanted by a value system associated with a commercial, technological mindset; along with changes in perception of needs and how to access them, a concomitant change in assumptions about the *value* of nature was occurring (Merchant, 1990).

The holistic organic view of nature and the cosmos was gradually replaced by the world machine metaphor – i.e., world as mechanism. For this conception of the universe to take hold required a breakdown of the belief in moral order within the universe and a loosening of religious authority on Earth to be replaced by a belief in the evidence of the senses and the strength of the human intellect (Russell, 1978).

This breakdown in religious authority contributed to and was furthered by a breakdown of belief in moral order in the universe. The geocentric cosmology of Ptolemy,

replaced by the heliocentric cosmology of Copernicus, resulted in the displacement of 'man' from the centre of the universe (Russell, 1978). Both Kepler and Galileo confirmed and elaborated on this heliocentric cosmology: Kepler demonstrated that the planets moved in ellipses that could be described mathematically, and Galileo, using a telescope, demonstrated that the moon was pock marked (Russell, 1978). This meant that no longer were the heavens composed of perfect bodies traveling in perfect circles. Galileo's work, using mathematical language to describe observations, which he confirmed by experimentation, was the first expression of the scientific method – the evidence of the senses was to be trusted over religious authority, an attitude that earned Galileo nine years of confinement to his house (Russell, 1978).

The developing logical, positivistic, empirical scientific method was furthered as well as provided its philosophical underpinnings by Rene Descartes. Descartes provided a new ontology for the scientific epistemology (Berman, 1989). He strove to obtain certainty in thought through a method of systematic doubt. What could not be proved absolutely was to be doubted. What *could* be known with absolute certainty was one's existence as a rational, thinking being (the famous "cogito ergo sum"). Beyond one's own existence what could be known with a high degree of certainty was mathematics, which is a human construct based upon fundamental axioms (Russell, 1978). The aura of mathematics derives from this certainty. Descartes differentiated between the subjective world of thought and the objective physical world of particles (abstract matter) in motion (Russell, 1978). The objective world, which we construct with science, cannot be experienced as such, but we can attain knowledge of it through ideas arising within human consciousness (Von Maltzahn, 1994). Descartes' dualistic ontology prepared the way for the materialism of science (Russell, 1978); it also introduced an irrevocable split between 'man and nature' which mirrors the split between spirit and the corporeal world. The corporeal world of 'nature' is merely dead matter in motion without spiritual significance: Descartes considered animals as mere mechanisms (Russell, 1978).

Descartes furthered the development of scientific analysis by breaking problems into their smallest components and then re-assembling them into a logical pattern. This methodology, he believed, could be applied for knowledge of everything (Berman, 1989). Descartes' prognosis in this matter has proven correct as evident in almost universal application of what Taylor (1991) refers to as instrumental reasoning. All other modes of

thinking – moral, aesthetic, etc. – are devalued. This reductionistic technique of analysis contrasts with the holistic approach that endeavours to make sense of the particular by seeing it in relationship to the whole, a view that has emerged in the science of ecology and quantum theory (Capra 1988).

Bordo (1987), rather than condemn philosophers and scientists of the 16th and 17th Centuries, in particular Descartes, for our current dualistic, rationalistic, scientific, reductionistic paradigm, takes into consideration (as does Merchant, 1990, and Berman 1989) the social milieu within which they existed. What she is seeking is an understanding of the experience of the time in which they lived and worked. She explains Descartes' work as reflecting the anxiety, dread, denial, and chaos of the Enlightenment, which she uses as "hermeneutic tools" to understand the anxiety, dread, denial, and chaos of contemporary society. Her project is to read Descartes' Meditations as a psycho-cultural story, representative of his confrontation with the existential and epistemological changes occurring within the midst of the "chaos and processes of reconstruction" during his era. His was a time of defining the self in relationship to the world (Berman, 1989). Bordo explains this coming to consciousness characteristic of Descartes' work as a

> separate self, conscious of itself and of its own distinctiveness from a world 'outside' it…born in the Cartesian era. It is a psychological birth – of 'inwardness,' of 'subjectivity,' of 'locatedness,' in space and time – generating new anxieties and, ultimately, new strategies for maintaining equilibrium in an utterly changed and alien world. (p. 7)

Part of what Descartes was attempting to do, according to Bordo's psychoanalytical analysis of the Meditations was to seek a sort of purification from the "messier (e.g., bodily, emotional) dimensions of experience" (p. 4). The body was regarded as a kind of prison, opposed to reason. To purify was to separate the intellect from this messiness that was created by emotion and experience, which could then quell the anxiety. In this purification process, there was a serious epistemological rupture: no longer could human beings rely on sense data to know the world.

Bordo reads the Cartesian separation as separation from the female, organic universe. Rationalism and the masculinisation of thought are the defence, a "flight from the feminine", the means of regaining control; rationalism could tame the power of the wild, female universe, which had become recognised as powerful. Descartes was in search of a unified view of nature; astronomy had broken down the integrated universe of before

(Bordo, 1987). There was a gap; something was missing. The rise of reason filled in one of the missing parts; the other missing part was to be found in the soothing embrace of God the Almighty Father. Human beings, thinking beings, are essentially mechanical (Berman, 1989), but the soul was connected to God (Bordo, 1987). The ontological and the epistemological were united into a coherent understanding of the universe once again. And it was good.

Francis Bacon, a contemporary of Descartes, although contributing little to the development of the scientific method or worldview, acted as a promoter of the empirical, scientific approach (Russell, 1978). He, more than his scientific colleagues, grasped the change in moral outlook implicit in the new ontology of Descartes and application of the scientific epistemology. To overcome religious censure Bacon tied the scientific endeavour to Christian theology, arguing that science would return 'man' to his rightful place in nature before the fall (Leiss 1972). Through science 'man' could dominate nature and turn it to his purposes. Science in this process was portrayed as value free, an inquiry done with the innocence of 'man' before the fall (Leiss, 1972). To secular authorities, Bacon stressed the utility of science not only of controlling nature but also for controlling other 'men,' noting that men are tamed by development of the scientific outlook: not only could internal nature be perfected through science; similarly, external nature could be improved upon (Leiss, 1972). The modern concept of development/progress became imbued with a moral purpose.

Development of the scientific method and the scientific conception of the cosmos met their full expression in the mechanistic worldview of Newton, who provided the mathematical key to the universe (Russell, 1978). The motion of both celestial objects and Earthly objects could be described with mathematical precision. The Newtonian universe consisted solely of matter (mass) and energy (power, impersonal force), God was displaced to the position of prime mover (a position later served redundant by purely physical explanations), and once in motion the universe functioned as a grand mechanism: a clockwork universe (Russell, 1978). Newton's concept of impersonal forces in the universe released these from religious censure; no longer was God present as a force in the universe. Lightning and floods were no longer the manifestation of God. By removing the concept of force (power) from the domain of God, it was freed to be used by 'man.' Force lost its mystical properties along with its moral censure.

Implicit in the mechanistic conception of the universe developed by Newton is the notion of linear time. God as prime mover set the universe in motion from which it developed, i.e., changed through time (Berman, 1981). This conception of time replaced the cyclical notion of time prevalent in the Middle Ages (Merchant, 1990). A linear concept of time was necessary for a belief in progress, which was implicit in Bacon's plan to return 'man' to his rightful place as lord of creation. Rather than space being imbued with moral significance, time took on a moral dimension (Berman, 1989). Not only could 'man' be perfected, the world could be perfected. With the displacement of humans as the centre of the universe, locatedness also became a central category of thought (Bordo, 1987).

The success of the reductionist technique is evident in its application to all modes of thought that form the basis of what Taylor (1991) terms "instrumental reasoning". It also forms the basis of prescriptive technologies (Franklin, 1990), which met their fullest development in the factory system of production promoted by the 18th Century British philosopher and political economist Adam Smith. Smith advocated that the production process be broken down into a series of discrete steps, each undertaken by separate individuals (Russell 1978). The factory system allows for maximum production of goods, of uniform character. The ultimate value of production is efficiency – measurable and quantifiable. Individuals are separated from their work, thus, rather than being a product of their skill and ingenuity, they are merely a component of mechanistic production.

Newtonian mechanics led to the rise of new technologies which joined with the application of prescriptive technologies (i.e., application of the scientific technique) to the production process (Franklin, 1990). Consumerism, a necessary corollary of the production system, is one of the triumphs of industrialisation and although science and technology can be viewed separately, they are better viewed as separate aspects of the same thing (Sale, 1996). The spectacular success of industrialisation has led to a technological imperative; what can be done must be done (Sale, 1996). Increasingly, we inhabit a world that is a human construct; our experience of the world is mediated by technology and in some instances totally created by technology – e.g., virtual reality (Ihde, 1990). The view of human societies as embedded within nature has been replaced by a view of nature as 'other,' something to be dominated, controlled, and improved upon (Merchant, 1990). Nature within modern economics is viewed as an external, a source of raw material and a sink for wastes (Goodland and Daly, 1990).

Prior to Bacon, the goal of scientists was to find ways to live in accord with nature: developing wisdom, understanding natural order, and living in natural harmony (Capra, 1988). Newton's description of the motion of celestial bodies provided the necessary mathematical key (Russell, 1978), the final reductionistic approach. For Newton, what was important was the experimental method. Why was of relative insignificance. A new way of perceiving reality, a new consciousness, had taken hold: quantification, atomism, and distancing oneself from nature – the legacy of Rene Descartes – provided the support for Bacon's dream of a scientific, technological society, fully in control of nature, to become reality (Berman, 1989).

And lest the above appear to be a rant *against* science and technology, following Robyn Eckersley (1992), I wish to point out that Ecocentrism draws much of its understanding *and support* from science; in many cases, it is science that has brought to light the inconsistencies inherent within a purely anthropocentric worldview. Eckersley writes,

> [c]learly, ecocentric theorists are not against science or technology per se; rather they are against scientism (i.e., the conviction that empiric-analytic science is the only valid way of knowing) and technocentrism (i.e., anthropocentric technological optimism). The distinction is crucial. Indeed, many ecocentric theorists are keenly interested in the history and philosophy of science and are fond of pointing out the reciprocal interplay between dominant images of nature (whether derived from science, philosophy, or religion) and dominant images of society. (p. 51)

From Worldview to Discourse

Productivism

> The central issue is economic growth. The most important means of adaptation is the marketplace: If governments prevent people from freely producing goods and services, charging prices that reflect changing resource values, and responding to diverse human needs, then worsening poverty will result. Third World countries are impoverished not because they are populous, but because their governments have enforced anti-capitalistic economic policies. (Bandow, 1993, para. 38)

Productivist discourse derives from a scientific worldview (Franklin, 1990; Smith, 1998; Taylor, 1991); it is the dominant discourse within our modernist technocratic society, and it is the main frame for consuming as an "ism" (Aldridge, 2003; Smith, 1998; Suzuki, 1997). Toby Smith (1998) provides an account of the way that the dominant discourse works through the hegemonic transmission of productivism (or "productivist discourse") – this is the principal paradigm within which human beings of industrialised societies interpret

the world, identify problems, and develop solutions. She defines productivism as "a discourse that embodies a wide collection of beliefs, practices, concepts, and sedimented structures that have been woven together from at least the time of the Enlightenment [and exemplifies] an expansionistic, growth-oriented ethic" (p. 10). For her, productivist discourse is equivalent to Anthropocentrism – i.e., in the industrialised world, humans are placed at the centre of a hierarchical, hegemonic system wherein the "expansionist ethic of productivism" (p. 26) is not questioned or critiqued. She explains that, despite recognition of ecological concerns, productivist discourse continues to be dominant because of hegemony, which she defines as: "the popular acceptance of a coherent world view, which includes a wide range of conceptual and material elements. This matrix is constantly dynamic, fending off 'explanations' of events that threaten the apparent naturalness and truth of the dominant explanation" (p. 4). Graham (1993) maintains that something else – another discourse – is called for. He emphasises that the key to our survival lies not in changing our surroundings but rather a change in human character and lifestyle instead.

The Romantic Movement: A Counternarrative

With the rise of the scientific worldview came a slow and steady countermodern response/discourse in the form of Romanticism. This gradually developing resistance challenged the dominant viewpoint and was primarily expressed through literary, poetic, and religious appeals (Merchant, 2004). The romantics denounced "the mechanisation of nature that had resulted in a cold, calculable order of Newtonian forces and a deforested, polluted landscape" (p. 133). It was not, however, strictly limited to the arts. Sale's (1996) summary of the message underlying the Luddite movement, which arose in tandem with the romantic era as a response to early industrialisation, is illustrative of 'romantic' discourse.

> [B]eware the technological juggernaut, reckon the terrible costs, understand the worlds being lost in the world being gained, reflect on the price of the machine and its systems on your life, pay attention to the natural world and its increasing destruction, resist the seductive catastrophe of industrialism. (p. 19)

While the idealisation of nature, with its inherent notion of "an untouched pristine nature created by God" (Merchant, 2004, p. 133) may have brought forward a prehistoric, Arcadian myth of a society rooted in nature (Smith, 2001), it also brought a message of recovery, a quest for a sense of wholeness, which may not be an entirely unhealthy

enterprise. I do not mean to suggest that we should turn or *return* to Romanticism as some sort of messianic force that will lead us from temptation and into salvation. By the same token, however – after a serious personal struggle and disdain for some of the syrupy language and dreamy ideals that arose during the Romantic period – I have come to believe that we are at a point where it may be wise to reconsider some of the primary messages that arose in the Romantic period, for example, emotion and experience are legitimate ways of knowing. Romantic discourse is similar to what Bowers (1993) refers to as the "silenced discourse". This discourse of which he speaks is a form of understanding which is de- or under-valued because of its lack of 'rationality,' its association with feeling rather than reason. Reason, he writes, is rooted in modernity and places emphasis on "a supposedly open, competitive arena where argument and evidence are the basis for establishing truth claims" (p. 29). However, "[f]orms of authority that are grounded in experience…are not recognised as credible by those who uphold the norms that privilege their own patterns of rationality" (p. 29).

Rowe (2006) writes that Alfred North Whitehead believed the split between "objectivist reason and subjectivist imagination" (p. 187) could be healed through a holistic view, but this mathematician-philosopher "did not view the Romantics as irrational. Their nature poetry, he said, is 'a protest on behalf of the organic view of nature, and also a protest against the exclusion of value from the essence of matter of fact'" (p. 187).

Guignon (2002) outlines three general features of Romanticism that remain relevant to us in the 21st Century: the first involves a recovery of oneness; the second involves an immersion in self reflection and exploration of one's deepest feelings, "turning away from the pretence and deception of society…getting in touch with something greater than ourselves" (p. 60); and the third has to do with, "the limits of all experience…[wherein] the self is the highest and most all-encompassing of all that is found in reality" (p. 51). Whether these factors may be regarded as benefits or impediments in addressing the ecocrisis depends on one's interpretation. There is an undeniable anthropocentric flavour in Guignon's words and I do not mean to permit or promote the sort of self seeking that Taylor (1991) speaks of as reaching absurdity, however, Guignon's words do bear consideration. Although it is beyond the scope of this work to determine whether there is an inseparability or even connection between self formation and dominant discourse for every single person, there is some persuasive evidence that this is indeed a possibility.

Towards Ecological Understandings: Into the Web of Life

> A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. (Albert Einstein in Borysenko, 1984)

"Ecology" comes from the Greek "*oikos*", or house, and "*logia*", a systematic treatment, which in turn comes from logos – word, reason, discourse (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Ecology began as a formal science in the 1800s and has grown as a political and social movement in response to various environmental predicaments that have occurred as a result of human impact; therefore, it can be identified as both an area of scientific study – which encompasses a spectrum of practices from highly rigorous, reductionistic mathematical treatment of natural phenomena to observing living things in their natural habitat – and as a social/cultural movement, which includes a variety of topics from philosophy to the study and interpretation of humanity's place in the environment (Marshall, 1992). As a science, ecology encompasses a number of streams: physiological and behavioural ecology (the study of individual organisms); evolutionary ecology (the evolution of organisms); population ecology (the dynamics of species populations); community, landscape, and ecosystem ecology (interactions among populations of different species and their physical-chemical environment); paleoecology (environments from past times); soil, atmosphere, and geochemistry (studies of the planet's physical characteristics); and even studies of the potential for life beyond our planet (Belovsky et. al, 2004). All approaches hold the same underlying principle: we are embedded within an ecosystem in which a variety of living organisms interact in mutually beneficial ways with their living and nonliving environment – e.g., forests, wetlands, lakes, grasslands, deserts.

> [Contemporary ecology] has now established the fundamental insights that humans are not unique in nature, that all life is interdependent. ... It implies that humans can only change their way of life if they take into account their natural capacities and their complex relationship with their environment. It emphasizes our intimate links with the four elements of ancient science – earth, fire, air and water. It has erased the old, fixed boundaries between humanity and other species, between mind and body, matter and spirit. (Marshall, 1992, p. 338)

What human beings can learn from this, assuming there is anyone who has not yet come to this realisation already, is that we are one part of a larger ecosystem, entirely dependent on the natural world. We, amongst the most recent species to appear, and all living organisms are on this planet as a result of billions of years of evolving and interacting with the environment. In this vast web of life at the present time, human beings have become the dominant organism primarily because of our technological ability to modify ecosystems (e.g., decimation of the rain forests) and create artificially sustained new ones (Marshall, 1992). Ecology emphasises such wholes as species, biotic diversity, ecological communities, ecosystems, and biological, chemical, and geological cycles (Suzuki, 1997). It is a typically undisputed scientific fact that ecosystems have always been in flux (species rise, decline, and extinctions; global climate change; habitat fluctuations, etc.); however, it is also a fact that humanity has tampered with, altered, and accelerated so called natural Earth events through the impact of various technologies (Rowe, 1990, Mungall, 1990, Wilson, 2002). For example, the current rate of extinction is 1,000 times the typical rate of extinctions over the last several million years (Wilson, 1992), the ozone layer has deteriorated dramatically and will need hundreds of years to repair due to chlorofluorocarbon pollution (Mungall, 1990), global climate change has been accelerated, acid rain and other pollutants have entered water systems, and old growth rainforests – the "lungs of the Earth" – have virtually been razed in many parts of the world (Wilson, 1991). It would seem, therefore, that many "natural" Earth events have been hastened and worsened, not by specific individuals, but by the collective activities of people, particularly, it seems, within the industrialised world. Wilson (2002) describes this as pulling the web of life apart one strand at a time. This, of course, has not gone unnoticed. The scientific community have rallied together in numerous ways to understand and preserve the physical world as well as traditional knowledge held within indigenous peoples. It should be noted that this may not always be for purely altruistic reasons – for example, pharmaceutical companies, in mining indigenous knowledge for medicinal plants, have not uncommonly been accused of placing economics as their top priority which may not take into account or serve the best interests of the environment or the people in the long term (see, for example, Hunn, 2003). Mick Smith (2001), in a similar vein, argues that "institutionally appointed 'experts'" bring with them an "unawareness of the limitations that their intimate relation to, and inclusion within, bureaucratic social structures, imposes on their theoretical pronouncements and methodologies" (pp. 14-15).

To help shed light on why and how the 'ecological crisis' has been so named, I provide short descriptions of two terms that have become closely associated with the current ecological crisis: "ecological footprint" and "sustainability". This is followed by another related topic, ecopsychology. I then explore facets of radical ecology.

Ecological Footprint

This term is used to describe the carrying capacity of the planet. The ecological footprint measures the amount of land in hectares that a certain population (individual, community, country) uses in the production of all the resources that it needs – in other words, human demand on the Earth.

> The appropriation of productive land – the ecological footprint – is already too large for the planet to sustain, and it's growing larger. A recent study building on this concept estimated that the human population exceeded Earth's sustainable capacity around the year 1978. By 2000 it had overshot by 1.4 times that capacity. If 12 percent of land were now to be set aside in order to protect the natural environment, as recommended in the 1987 Brundtland Report, Earth's sustainable capacity will have been exceeded still earlier, around 1972. In short, Earth has lost its ability to regenerate – unless global consumption is reduced, or global production is increased, or both. (Wilson, 2002, p. 27)

Statistics appear to vary regarding the average Canadian's ecological footprint. One point of consistency, however, lies with the claim that the eco-footprint of North Americans far exceeds that of the rest of the world. Amongst the unfortunate offshoots of this are: tonnes and tonnes of garbage dumped in burgeoning landfill sites – much of which *could* be recycled (Environment Canada, 2007); greenhouse gases; and polluted rivers, lakes, and soil. In demanding, consuming, and discarding 'stuff,' we are clearly number one. A dubious distinction indeed.

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability gained prominence with the Brundtland Commission (1987) which warned of the growing threat to the Earth from pervasive world poverty, environmental degradation, disease, and pollution. The report called for a major international effort to reduce negative human impact on the environment. Sustainability evolved as a concept during the 1970s and 1980s when the extent to which human beings modified the landscape, ecosystems, and even the climate in our progressive struggle to

survive and prosper was first recognised. This recognition led to the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm and the formation of the United Nations Environment Program and the International Institute for Environment and Development. Environmental concerns formed the basis of the concept of sustainability.

Key to sustainable development are the concepts of carrying capacity and maximum capacity. Loosely defined, "carrying capacity" is the population capacity that an ecosystem can sustain indefinitely and "maximum capacity" is the population that an ecosystem cannot tolerate indefinitely (Howard, 1997). It seems that ecologists cannot definitively determine the carrying capacity of the Earth; however, authors too numerous to mention present compelling evidence that we may be wise to heed warnings that continuing on our current path is simply not sustainable. The *"World Scientist's Warning to Humanity"* (1992), a manifesto created and signed by approximately 1,700 of the world's leading scientists, outlined what the Earth was and was not capable of sustaining. Their appeal included the following.

> The Earth is finite. Its ability to absorb wastes and destructive effluent is finite. Its ability to provide food and energy is finite. Its ability to provide for growing numbers of people is finite. And we are fast approaching many of the earth's limits. Current economic practices which damage the environment, in both developed and underdeveloped nations, cannot be continued without the risk that vital global systems will be damaged beyond repair. Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about. (para. 10)

Along with air and water pollution from a variety of sources (fossil fuel emissions, toxic chemicals, pesticides, industrial waste, non-biodegradable products such as plastics, etc.), climate change is making its presence increasingly known in the form of unusual weather patterns and increased severity of storms, droughts, floods, and fires. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) has unequivocally stated that global warming is a reality and that human action/ignorance/carelessness has had, and continues to have, a direct effect. Graham's (1993) call for a change in lifestyle/discourse appears to have greater currency than ever. Below I present another lens with which we might view the world, one that may offer a response to calls from Graham and many others.

Ecopsychology

An intimate bond with nature has been linked to emotional security, sociability, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Although these benefits accrue under normal circumstances, they become especially critical during times of mental and physical stress and disorder. Studies by [doctors] Aaron Katcher and Alan Beck....present an impressive body of evidence demonstrating nature's therapeutic value for the sick and disabled. (Kellert, 1997, p. 115)

The term "ecopsychology" and a vision of the field of ecopsychology were first defined by Roszak in *The Voice of the Earth* (1992), although he asserts that many of his central ideas can be found in his earlier work (e.g., Roszak, 1979). He also credits the work of Paul Shepard (1982) as having a major influence on his thinking. Roszak (1992) describes the goal of ecopsychology as an effort to "bridge our culture's long-standing, historical gulf between the psychological and the ecological, to see the needs of the planet and the person as a continuum" (p. 14). Disconnectedness from nature, however it may become manifest, consumerism, technology, work/career, entertainment, etc., is regarded a psychopathology: a severance from nature creates a severance from self (Roszak, 1996). He suggests that 'healing' can be achieved through awakening an "inherent sense of environmental reciprocity...to heal the more fundamental alienation between the person and the natural environment" (p. 320).

Fisher (2002) discusses other definitions of ecopsychology that have been put forth, such as "synthesising ecology and psychology; placing human psychology in an ecological context; and mending the divisions between mind and nature, humans and the Earth" (pp. 3-4). He aims at "ground[ing] ecopsychological inquiry in lived experience" (p. xvii) and asserts that the loss of closeness to the natural world means also a loss of connectedness, at some level, to the social world. He describes it as a

psychological intervention aimed at contributing to the transformation of society by encouraging or providing for the recovery of our nature and our experience, for the regaining of lost world-relations and life-meanings. It is an effort to remember that, and how, we are a part of the big life process: to get us back into the service of all life. (p. 186)

He also offers Shepard's (1973) simple but clear commentary that "If [the] environmental crisis signifies a crippled state of consciousness as much as it does damaged habitat, then that is perhaps where we should begin" (p. 4).

Conn (1998) explains ecopsychology as bringing psychology and ecology together with the aim of developing new models of health to promote sustainable practices not only within intra/interpersonal relationships but also at the level of "interbeing" – i.e., between humans and the nonhuman world. Canty (2004) further expounds upon this, saying that,

> [e]copsychology identifies the dysfunctional relationships humans of western civilization have developed with the rest of the natural community, over time, as a result of the dominating values of western culture. It is a study of the rift between the human psyche and that of the natural world. A true ecopsychological view recognizes that the individual's psyche is embedded within the natural world and that the natural world is, in turn, affected by the individual's psyche.

Michael Cohen (1997), environmental educator and psychologist, claims that the Westernised, industrialised, urbanised world has promoted a physical and mental disconnection from 'nature,' thereby creating a sort of 'eco-illness.' To restore balance and wellness, he suggests that we need to seek a reconnection with the natural world – a relearning and reunification. This does, of course, raise questions: Is he speaking on behalf of everyone in the Westernised world? Is his plan to "simply unbury [nature's way] in ourselves and each other" (p. 17) really that simple? What about people who are not able physically, financially, emotionally (etc.) to dash into the country and commune with the 'natural world'?

I do not pretend to speak on his behalf, but he includes as possibilities for a 'partnering with nature' experiencing such things as a walk in the park, spending time in one's backyard, owning an aquarium (with aquatic animals in it, I presume), or even caring for a simple potted plant. This seems to suggest observation, silence, time, and perhaps the sort of deep listening recommended by Levin (1989) is foremost required. I am reminded here of a classroom experience wherein we undertook vermicomposting. Not being a great fan of worms or insects, I, the guide, teacher, and leader of this project, knew I must disguise my distaste for these creatures to the children. To my surprise, I not only grew to respect these earthworms I developed a sort of affinity towards them that has remained with me ever since. I relate this as means of supporting what may *seem* to be an oversimplistic solution (i.e., caring for a potted plant) to reinstating one's so-called lost connection with nature but which may hold potential to alter one's perspective. Cohen's overall message, based on sixty years as an environmental educator and guide, seems to connect with David Levin's (1989) work on *hearing*. As a sort of clearing for hearing, Cohen (1997) claims that

nature experiences – whether these constitute hikes through the forest or watering a plant – not only offer a reconnection with nature, these activities have the potential to move one to experience, recognise, and understand a "sensory moment", something which he evidently believes is missing in the Westernised world. He substantiates these claims with affidavits from numerous individuals whom he has guided on nature tours and spoken to in classes.

The turning-away from nature in favour of a technologically oriented lifestyle is posited at a societal as well as individual level, and is referred to as a social pathology called "techno-addiction" – in this case, the road to recovery lies in rejecting a technology dominated lifestyle and slowly returning to a simpler way of life (Howard, 1997). In this conception, we would have not individuals in recovery but an entire society. If this were ever to happen, the group support meetings would require a very large hall.

To bring the perspective of a physicist into the conversation, Fritjof Capra (1988) claims that we have reached an ecological, global crisis, a turning point, and that we need to undergo "a deep reexamination of the main premises and values of our culture, a rejection of those conceptual models that have outlived their usefulness, a new recognition of some of the values discarded in previous periods of our cultural history" (p. 33). He furthermore states that our "obsession with economic growth and the value system underlying it have created a physical and mental environment in which life has become extremely unhealthy" (p. 248). His words call for a review and re-turn of the mechanistic worldview promulgated by Newton and Descartes, with a re-placement of a holistic outlook that promotes a different understanding of our place in the universe, one that recognises and emphasises a fundamental biospheric interdependence. Although he does not frame it as ecopsychology, his words are reminiscent of those uttered by ecopsychologists.

Albert LaChance (2006) claims that the ecocrisis and addictive behaviours are two sides of the same coin, the result of which has been an "illness of spirit, mind, and body. Its name is *consumerism*" (p. 2). His twelve-step program to wellness is drawn from other twelve step programs (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous) and he calls for a reunification of body, mind, and spirit in part by reconnecting with the outer world. Although this may not be for everyone, I mention it more so as a creative offshoot of ecopsychology and another possibility for exploration.

Richard Louv (2005) speaks of "nature-deficit-disorder" – which is to say that children have become so far removed from the outdoor world that they are suffering a loss

of connection with who and what they are – as beings, as human beings, as part of a larger interconnected ecological web of life. He quotes a grade four student from San Diego: "'I like to play indoors better because that's where all the electrical outlets are'" (p. 10). I do not include this with a view to denigrate the preferences and experience of a grade four student, this is, after all, the opinion of *one* student, but I wonder whether Paul is symptomatic of the dis-ease Charles Taylor (1991) speaks of, and whether he is representative of a much larger population of young people who reside within, and valorise confined spaces (i.e., indoors) as opposed to the outside world. What this might mean in terms of connectedness to, or distancing from 'nature' is another thing. Louv (2005) is less hesitant than I. He speaks of a "third frontier" – today's children – who, unlike the baby boomers, no longer share "an intimate, familial attachment to the land and water", but rather form a new frontier,

> characterized by at least five trends: a severance of the public and private mind from our food's origins; a disappearing line between machines, humans, and other animals; an increased intellectual understanding of our relationship with other animals; the invasion of our cities by wild animals (even as urban/suburban designers replace wildness with synthetic nature); and the rise of a new kind of suburban form" (p. 19).

The above, say Louv, comprise a de-natured childhood, resulting in what he calls "nature-deficit disorder" (p. 10).

> Doug Bandow (1993), a dissenting voice, writes that

> The new eco-spiritualism does more than threaten traditional faiths, which are being pressed to accept doctrines contrary their basic tenets. More broadly, treating the earth as sacred distorts public policy. Our objective should be to balance environmental preservation with economic growth and personal freedom, and to rely on market forces to make any environmental controls as efficient and as flexible as possible. Unfortunately, however, treating the environment as a goddess has caused environmental activists to advance the most frightening theories, irrespective of the evidence, and demand the most draconian controls possible, irrespective of the cost. (para. 50)

As a response to Bandow and an introduction to the following section, I include a few words from eco philosopher Henryk Skolimowski (1992).

> Life continues through the stuff of which it is made. It would be foolishness to think that a novel paradigm of knowledge or of values could be created by *deus ex machina*. Even the most novel departures are rooted in old concepts and visions. Evolution goes on, new patterns *are* created….we need to clear a cosmological path. For if the scientific cosmology continues to hold us in its embrace, we shall be grounded and frustrated. We must no longer cherish the illusion that the scientific worldview is still our salvation and, given a chance, will deliver us to a harmonious, humane and satisfactory realm. (p. 96)

Radical Ecology

Radical ecology has appeared as a response to the stresses placed on the Earth by humankind. It is described by Mick Smith (2001) as "an ethical and political protest against [a] seemingly irresistible hurricane of destruction, a protest against a mode of existence that has been largely insensitive to the environmental devastation 'progress' has left in its wake" (p. 3). He describes this protest as one which acknowledges such problems as deforestation, ozone depletion, smog, loss of biodiversity, and climate change, all of which need to be understood as a whole: "They stem from, and are entwined with, our modern forms of life. For this reason the critique of environmental destruction necessarily becomes a critique of contemporary society" (p. 3).

Below I describe three forms of radical ecology: social ecology, deep ecology, and ecofeminism. Each has its own subtle, and at times not so subtle, differences and theoretical divisions but they fall approximately within the same discourse and may all be placed within the broad categorisation of radical ecology. I bring these forward not to claim that my research into this topic led me to adhere to one or the other; instead, I have come to see that these distinctions bring to light various possibilities and topics for further conversation. Again, when speaking of interconnected webs and holistic thought, I run the risk of linearity in presenting these in a seemingly fixed order with seemingly fixed rules of conduct but this does not reflect my view.

Social Ecology

One of our greatest hopes is young people...Our challenge now, which requires the education of us all and the raising of our collective awareness on a global basis, is to restore and save the earth even as we add still more members to the human family. This will not be easy or simple; there will be setbacks, and fierce resistance from those who profit from pollution. (Al Gore, 1992)

Social ecology emphasises that the current ecological crisis has its origins in social relations – in the way in which human beings have been organised into various economic and political institutions – over the course of history. In this account, social ecology is concerned with changing society in order to change our relationship to nature (Marshall, 1992).

What literally defines social ecology as 'social' is its recognition of the often overlooked fact that nearly all our present ecological problems arise from deep-

seated social problems. Conversely, present ecological problems cannot be clearly understood, much less resolved, without resolutely dealing with problems within society. To make this point more concrete: economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts, among many others, lie at the core of the most serious ecological dislocations we face today--apart, to be sure, from those that are produced by natural catastrophes. (Bookchin, 1998, para. 1)

In the above, Bookchin emphasises that moral regeneration needs to occur particularly at the social level, with an ongoing critique of systems of domination that do not consider the potential environmental consequences of their activities. This is echoed in the work of Jagtenberg and McKie (1997) who state that "Ecological thought is holistic. It requires the strategic bracketing of human centeredness and the development of language and concepts that can draw in the interests and activities of other species and their ecologies" (p. xii). On the other hand, they point out that social ecology "is not a particularly reflexive, introspective, or deeply philosophical discourse" (p. 130). For Bookchin (1990), placing the human being too much in the centre becomes one more expression of Anthropocentrism.

Social ecology adds that the mastery of some human social groups over others in early societies made it possible for people even to conceive of mastering the natural world in the interests of social and finally class elites (Marshall, 1992). According to Ronald Wright (2004), at least some credit for contemporary individualism and Anthropocentrism must go to agricultural societies wherein habits of communal land sharing shifted towards individual ownership.

Several questions arise: "Can we ever fully rid ourselves of an anthropocentric stance? If the problems are social (economic, ethnic, cultural, etc.), who *is* at the centre, who *is* responsible in the first place, and who must initiate action to alter course? Can this be done in the *absence* of being 'in the centre,' at least initially?"

Deep Ecology

Life is sacred, nature is sacred. Therefore we should have – must have – a deep, profound and unquestioning reverence for all life, for human life as well as other than human life. Human life is no more sacred than that of the plants or the animals. All life is equally sacred. (Satish Kumar, 2004)

"Deep ecology" is a term coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in the early 1970s. It is explained by Zimmerman (1997) as

founded on two basic principles: one is a scientific insight into the interrelatedness of all systems of life on Earth, together with the idea that Anthropocentrism – human-centeredness – is a misguided way of seeing things. Deep ecologists say that an ecocentric attitude is more consistent with the truth about the nature of life on Earth. Instead of regarding humans as something completely unique or chosen by God, they see us as integral threads in the fabric of life. They believe we need to develop a less dominating and aggressive posture towards the Earth if we and the planet are to survive. The second component of deep ecology is what Arne Naess calls the need for human self-realisation. Instead of identifying with our egos or our immediate families, we would learn to identify with trees and animals and plants, indeed the whole ecosphere. This would involve a pretty radical change of consciousness, but it would make our behavior more consistent with what science tells us is necessary for the well-being of life on Earth. We just wouldn't do certain things that damage the planet. (p. 24)

Comments such as these may be interpreted or perhaps misinterpreted as irrealisable calls for en masse, back-to-the-land move(ment)s. The (im)possibility of this is romantic at best and preposterous at worst. In a recent report by the United Nations Population Fund (n.d.), we are told that in 2008, the world will reach "an invisible but momentous milestone: For the first time in history, more than half its human population, 3.3 billion people, will be living in urban areas. By 2030, this is expected to swell to almost 5 billion" (para. 1). By all accounts, the world's population will continue to explode, one result of which has been an en masse flock to cities to find work, resulting in [continued] rapid urban growth. Needless to say, there are no signs of slowing or stopping.

On another note, as pointed out by Louv (2006), the very landscape that we seek to preserve could potentially be destroyed via humanity's 'intimate' contact with nature through trampling plants and frightening away animals. However, alongside deep ecology's calls for 'intimate' contact with nature is another, perhaps more achievable, call for a shift in attitudes and behaviour based on such things as voluntary simplicity, rejection of anthropocentric attitudes, decentralisation of power, support for cultural and biological diversity, a belief in the sacredness of nature, and direct personal action to protect nature, improve the environment, and bring about fundamental societal change – many, perhaps all of which may be achieved irrespective of where one makes one's home.

Social ecologists and deep ecologists have a radical component in their call for change and appear to have many similarities. They do, however, differ on a number of points. As explicated by Marshall (1992): social ecology's emphasis is on humanism, deep ecology's focus is more spiritually oriented; social ecology seeks participatory democracy,

deep ecology draws inspiration from Eastern religions and Western process metaphysics; social ecology regards human beings as important change agents, deep ecology tends to regard people as "nature's pests"; social ecologists sympathise with the disadvantaged in society, and deep ecologists "like to retreat to the wilderness and identify with bears, trees, and rocks" (p. 404). This final comment by Marshall may be a bit overstated, but it does emphasise the social/individual differences between the two approaches.

The difficulties do not end there. Within its own movement, deep ecology is marked (marred?) by a distinct split: some appear to regard the world as divided: human/animal, nature/culture, male/female, intellect/emotion, self/other, etc., while others regard the world holistically (Belshaw, 1992). Zimmerman (1997) adds that deep ecologists have aroused suspicion because of the potential for eco fascism (i.e., governments could assume complete authority and force people to adhere to specific regulations, hence freedom would be threatened) while at the same time they call for an end to authoritarianism. This would subsequently lead to the development of a much more fragmented society. At the extreme end, some deep ecologists are very supportive of the idea that the total collapse of the industrial world is the most preferable scenario (Keulartz, 1998).

Ecofeminism

Marshall (1992) describes ecofeminism as a theory that rests on the basic principle that patriarchal philosophies are harmful to women, children, and other living things. Parallels are drawn between society's treatment of the environment, animals, or resources and its treatment of women. In resisting patriarchal culture, eco-feminists see their role as resisting the plunder and destruction of the Earth. They feel that patriarchal philosophy emphasises the need to dominate and control unruly females and the unruly wilderness. Ecofeminism may also be viewed as sort of retrograde movement: patriarchal society is relatively new, something developed over the last 5,000 years while matriarchal society was the first society. In matriarchal society, women were the center of society and people worshipped Goddesses. This is known as the Feminist Eden. According to Jagtenberg and McKie (1997),

> [e]co-feminism is particularly important in the articulation of green politics. For many environmentalists, their location as women has influenced their environmental views. Women's identification of patriarchy as a dominant institution of oppression has enabled environmentalism to develop a more thoroughly pluralist

movement....Like deep ecology, eco-feminism encourages us to think of ourselves as simultaneously living different sorts of connections, all of which we can effect in some way...With the development of these themes comes a rethinking of our favoured position on the top branch of the tree of life. (pp. 118-119)

In a similar vein, Marshall (1992) points out that ecofeminism "in some ways goes deeper than deep ecology and is more social than social ecology" (p. 409).

Just as there is an element of extremism in deep ecology, ecofeminists, too, can, and do, assume an extreme stance; for example, in worshipping the 'goddess(es)' to the exclusion of males, we are faced with the flip side to male power. In some ways, then, ecofeminism becomes the antithesis to ecological thought: if we are all part of an interconnected web, then all parts should be valued equally, gods and goddesses alike. In this conception, a few feminists are caught and held by their own form of logic within the interconnected biosphere. Here we see that a web can be very sticky indeed.

Shadows on the Lens

As outlined above, there is no widespread agreement between or amongst interest groups concerning what radical ecology means, nor is there any consensus on statement of intent (Evernden, 1992). Radical ecology, in seeking to challenge dominant societal forces, inevitably becomes hooked into social, cultural, and personal values, which furthermore complicates the issues and hinders cohesion. A prime example of this is the dispute that takes place amongst proponents of deep ecology (outlined above). It is yet another reminder that an interconnected web invites and creates almost as many challenges as it offers hope of clarity. Evernden furthermore cautions that ecological viewpoints can be both totalising and restrictive.

[I]n a sense, we may simply be acting out roles created for us by playwrights or wordsmiths of old: our only apparent options are the ones they set forth, effectively blocking the way to further exploration. The semantic tools at our disposal may lend themselves to only certain types of conceptual excavation. (Evernden, 1992, p. 22)

In his critique of radical ecology, Jozef Keulartz (1998) discusses 'scientific' ecology. His work particularly focuses on two theories: systems ecology (mathematical modeling of the interactions of species that focuses on stability of populations) and evolutionary ecology (change, adaptation, and mutation is inevitable and indeed more 'natural' than stability). He maintains that radical ecology has "revealed itself as a pseudo-science that is increasingly out

of step with academic ecology" (p. 143). In his opinion, not only does radical ecology lack adequate scientific grounding, its own internal dissension and lack of agreement diminishes its credibility and therefore cannot realistically guide us towards sustainable practices. He argues that evolutionary ecology is not only a much more a viable account of the natural world than systems ecology or any other form of radical ecology, but that it provides a better theory through which ecologically sustainable solutions may be sought.

At one time, it was my ardent belief that *only* science could be relied on for explanations and answers. Through the process of this study, however, I have become increasingly convinced that science may have something to 'learn' from other discourses (writ radical ecology). This is not to say that I believe that the role of science should be deemphasised or disregarded, but rather recognised as having certain limitations, which might point towards other openings. For instance, ecological mindedness as *life practice* – which may or may not be recognised by the 'scientific' community – may be a suitable partner to scientific data, information, and insights.

In 2002, Gro Harlem Brundtland made the following statement.

> My message in 2002, to future generations is the following: Reflect about the consequences of our acts or those we are planning, in terms of benefits for society as a whole, now and in the long-term and at every level: the family, the community, and the world. We need to share responsibilities to eliminate poverty, fear, and injustice. The type of passport we have is no longer important, we are all citizens of the world. Citizenship gives us rights and privileges but also responsibilities. As citizens of the world, we must be ready to assume them. It means to control continuously what we are doing and how we live to reduce our ecological footprint and make the world a better living place for all. (para. 2)

Although there may be some romanticised notions about returning to a simpler, less technologically-mediated society – and this has been attempted or achieved by numerous people through such approaches as voluntary simplicity or back to the land movements – for the majority of us, this is simply not practical. To hope that everyone on the planet would willingly submit to systematically eliminating every form of technology developed over the past few centuries in an effort to "save the Earth" is utterly preposterous. What we can do, however, is perhaps alter and/or modify our attitudes and work towards sensible, sustainable practices. The question arises, "What does this mean?" If this requires developing better understandings of ourselves, our value systems, and what we truly believe and desire as the 'good life,' how do we get there?

Gro Harlem Brundtland, in the above address, is, in essence, outlining a new ethics for our time. Caputo (1987), drawing on Heidegger and MacIntyre, elaborates this point, stating that an ethic comes by way of history, that it "belongs to each epoch and culture" (p. 256) and that what we need now is an ethics that

> corresponds to the sociology of the Gestell, the ethics for what Heidegger calls 'the time of need,' the time of ever-increasing powers of objective control which go hand in hand with the consignment of what is not technico-objective to caprice. (p. 257)

At this point, I would like to highlight a few relevant concepts: ethics, sense of place, and consciousness. These are threads that are woven throughout this dissertation, emerging at various points in the discussion. I acknowledge that these are vast topics in and of themselves but due to space and time constraints, they are meant here as descriptions as I have come to understand them in relationship to the topic(s) I am investigating.

Ethics

> A set of principles of right conduct; a theory or system of moral values; the study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy; the rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession…Etymological derivation: Middle English ethik, from Old French ethique (from Late Latin ethica, from Greek ethika, *ethics*) and from Latin ethice (from Greek ethike), both from Greek ethikos, *ethical*, from ethos, character. (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001)

It did not take long for me to grasp why "ethics" is a term I have been cautioned to handle with care. Not only its definition(s) but its etymology is daunting. Not I, nor any of the participants in this study, are philosophers; we did not come together to study moral values and we are not in a position to judge "specific moral choices". Our understanding of ethical responsibility primarily relates to the teaching profession in Alberta, succinctly laid out by the Alberta Teacher's Association (2004) in the "*Code of Professional Conduct*".

Fortunately, ethics, as it relates to sense of place and ecological awareness, has been unpacked and repacked by Mick Smith (2001). Drawing from, but not stringently adhering to philosophical ethics, he frames – or reframes – ethics to encompass a link between an "ecological self and an environmental ethos, an ethics of place, in order to demonstrate how radical environmentalism might re-envisage morality as an expression of a heartfelt but uncodified *modus vivendi*" [mode of being] (p. 21). This "heartfelt" way of being entails a

sense of caring in addition to thinking – this needs to be "lived and breathed as an integral part of an ecological 'form of life'" (p. 204). In this [reconfigured] way, Smith expands ethics beyond "interchanges between individual humans [and must]…include our relations to nature; it is a lived multidimensional relation of care for natural (and human) others, a relation that originates in part from the environment itself" (p. 70). Ethics, *as/in relationship*, does not open into an 'owning' or envelopment; rather, it "preserves difference" (p. 184). It is in the opening between "freedom and constraint" Smith tells us, that "thinking, caring, and critique maintain their tenuous existence" (p. 12).

Framing this within Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Smith points out that this ethical relationship is inherent within *Bildung*, in becoming 'cultured': without the *'other,'* self formation, *becoming* ['who we are'] is stunted. *Bildung* is bound up within an ethical responsibility to the 'other.' If the relation is purely, merely, simply *desire*, we can never become who we are – "desire that is not tempered by wonder leads only to the eradication of difference and to the impossibility of genuine self-hood, of individuality" (p. 217). Smith's project is only in part about ethics. A critical other piece is place. He writes,

> [t]his 'ethics of place' would require us to come to an understanding of our *situation* with respect to the natural world around us, to come to feel 'close' to it but also to know how to keep a respectful 'distance' when necessary. This 'practical sense' of what is required, this ecological *habitus*, will not in any way satisfy modernity's wants. It is not amenable to bureaucratic (mis)respresentation and accepts no substitute for genuine engagement….Accepting this 'ethics of place' entails valuing a kind of self-formation that can only occur through 'fusion' with one's surrounding environmental horizons (natural and cultural). This 'fusion' must be ethical in that it must not seek to colonize or appropriate nature, to reduce it into an economy of the Same but to sustain its excess. (Smith, 2001, p. 218)

Place

Published articles, books, and professional literature have without question been invaluable as I have made my way through this research. Indeed, it would not have been possible to do it otherwise. And with each topic or subject matter that I investigated, I discovered entire bodies of knowledge, invariably far too much to cover in one dissertation yet still worthy of mention because of direct relevance to my work. Thus it is with 'sense of place.' Definitions or descriptions range from "feng shui" to "bioregionalism". For this next section, however, I have chosen to set aside 'formal' research and use instead the writing of Polly Knowlton Cockett (2006) as an example of what "sense of place" means as I

have come to understand it. What follows is her autobiographical account of feeling, being

'connected' to the Earth, the ecosphere, an ecological mindedness, in an embodied sense.

> Growing up, growing into an adult, there was never a time when I didn't feel connected to my…environment. Generations of it were in my blood, in my soul, implicit in my being. It seemed so natural when I eventually took up geology studies, finding out more about what shaped the land, what created the patterns in the sands, what the underlying and unseen might be based upon its surface manifestations. Clues to a deeper meaning. So, when I left…my roots, left my touchstones, I felt disarmed at first. With new situations, I go cautiously, make mistakes; tentative until I find my rhythm. Each new place I go, I explore slowly, on foot, on bike, through literature, through meeting people who've lived there forever, who've just moved there, who've met there. Finding my bearings. Connect to the place through the land, through the seasons, through the senses, through shared experiences. Time is required. Several years sprinkled with trips to Europe and Mexico, across Canada and around the USA. Exploring living landscapes on a shoestring. Then living in the Midwest, black, black soil, corn and soybean fields, borrow ponds and irrigation ditches. Humid afternoons with thundering storms. Flat. Flatness. Different again. Studying geology in the British Isles, the classic locations, the highlands of Scotland, the Caledonides extending, detached, westward over the sea to the Appalachians. Moving to Tennessee, the Smoky Mountains, the other end of the same orogeny. But different again. And then a huge shift, to Australia. A world turned upside down; the mammals, the birds, the plants, the weather, all so different from the northern hemisphere temperate zone. And the way the shadows fall: to the *south*. I was forever turned around. Endless fascination; endless opportunities to explore with my children. And then finally to Canada. Alberta. Calgary. An unfamiliar prairiescape to come to terms with, to turn into my home, to become a citizen, a steward, in a new land.
> Eighth Grade Earth Science. The year long immersion in earth studies, in the lab and on field trips, had more impact on me than any other class in my K-12 studies. I still remember the topographic mapping exercise on the wooded hill behind the junior high, with my friend…as my partner, using homemade surveying equipment, and my father's boat compass in its wooden box. Measuring, recording, plotting, mapmaking. Tangible results, bringing a 3D space to life in two dimensions. Knowing the space. And the field trips, nearby to a kettle pond, a roche moutonée, and slickensided epidote; further away to coastal Nahant, a blow hole, and tombolo; and the great camping trip in the Catskills, through limestone caves, and collecting brachiopods under a waterfall. (pp. 13-17)

This account, a presage of what is to come in the conversations I soon bring

forward, seems to me a blending together of my experience in rural Saskatchewan with Mick

Smith's (2001) theoretical/practical discussion on ethics of place.

A Note on Consciousness

Another matter that needs mention is consciousness. I proceed with reluctance, not only because this is a phenomenon that takes on differing meanings depending on the scope of the inquiry (i.e., this has been investigated by philosophers, psychologists, psychoanalysts, ecologists, environmentalists, sociologists, physicians, biologists, religious scholars, new age thinkers, etc.), but because it may seem an odd insertion at this point in the dissertation. On the other hand, however, consciousness may be viewed as directly related to the foregoing two topics (i.e., ethics and place). In using this term within this dissertation, I do so with the same sort of cautiousness I use "ethics". Because these terms arose during conversations and are embedded within most of the written research I have utilised, to fail to address these even in cursory form would be to fail to acknowledge the significant presence they hold in this study and in day to day life.

"Consciousness" comes from the Latin word "*conscientia*", which originally meant "knowledge within oneself…to be mutually aware" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). Psychologist Susan Blackmore (2005) examines conceptions of consciousness from philosophy to neuroscience. She states – and this is in part the reason for my reluctance to face 'consciousness' head on, as it were – that consciousness is

> at once the most obvious and the most difficult thing we can investigate. We seem either to have to use consciousness to investigate itself, which is a slightly weird idea, or to have to extricate ourselves from the very thing we want to study. (p. 1)

Amongst the ways that consciousness is taken up by various approaches (e.g., philosophical, psychological, etc.), the one that seems to most closely apply to my work lies in what Blackmore (2005) defines as qualia: "The ineffable subjective qualities of experience, such as the redness of red or the indescribable smell of turpentine" (p. 7). This both releases and confines: the experience of another cannot be perfectly explained by one who is interpreting, thereby making it difficult to dispute and by the same turn, easy to question – i.e., where is the validity, the 'proof'?

Gadamer (1968/2003) explains that consciousness, experience, linguisticality, memory are tightly bound together in the same discussion and direction – i.e., that of becoming 'who we are.' To begin with, because we are "always already affected by history" (p. 300), consciousness *as a historical event* is a given. This is to say that one's interpretations

rest within, and are dependent upon the experience[s] that have brought us to where and who we are.

> [W]e are always already affected by history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation, and we more or less forget half of what is really there – in fact, we miss the whole truth of the phenomenon – when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth. (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 300)

Based on Hegel's inquiry into experience and consciousness, Gadamer (1968/2003) furthermore explains that "experience is the experience that consciousness has of itself", which is to say that "a kind of unity with oneself is…established" (p. 355). This process of experience (and consciousness) is one that begins with, and continues through life and it is something which rests upon language: "All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter's own language" (p. 389).

While such an abbreviated version of such a vast work may create more difficulties than it might pre-empt, the difficulty is (in part) what I wish to underscore. With so many variations on the meaning of consciousness, making sense of the role(s) or traditions that are cut for, through, and to some extent *by* us as individuals and as a society, particularly when language may either help or hinder understanding becomes quite complicated.

> When our old ways of understanding the world no longer work, we need not go blind. Instead, we can learn to see with new eyes. It is never easy. For a time we may lose our balance; but, if we persevere, we will eventually find our way to a place of expanded consciousness. (Uhl, 2004, p. 122)

Uhl, as Edmund O'Sullivan (2001, 2002, 2004), is issuing a call for a change in consciousness. O'Sullivan and Taylor (2004) speak of consciousness as "the 'frames' or mental structures through which we interpret our world, understand ourselves, and find meaning" (p. 6). Yet the question persists, *How* do we get to that place of 'expanded consciousness,' what route must we take, how do we arrive at understanding that "old ways…no longer work"?

(E)merging Discourses: Biophilia and Gaia

To take Foucault's (1969) explanation of discourse – i.e., as embedded within a cultural or societal mode of being and understanding, I have found it difficult to draw distinct boundaries between productivist discourse and ecological discourse. Both have

become encoded within images, talk, codes of behaviour, etc., and both are present within the products and processes, habits and attitudes – in short, lifestyle – of society. On an individual level, perhaps the only difference that can be reasonably drawn lies within the degree to which one may adopt or live out one perspective or the other. In speaking of lifestyle – a term virtually unheard of until a generation ago – and discourse in the same breath, I do not mean to diminish the theoretical underpinnings of the latter. Rather, what I seek to do is find an opening, a non restricted, non restrict*ive* way to understand and discuss this topic in an accessible way. In applying this description, my hope is that it may release the work somewhat from the confines of a strict set of parameters or rules which, depending on one's perspective, may clarify or constrict the intention of the word.

I do not claim that people adopt an extreme view on one side or the other. My readings and interpretations of discussions point more so towards a transient *resting-upon* a sliding scale. There is a difference to be drawn in the degree to which one might embrace an anthropocentric or an ecological stance as it becomes manifest in lifestyle choices, but in coming to an understanding of discourse as having at least *some* distinct features or characteristics, at least a few generalisations might be made.

I wish to briefly mention two instances in which discourses seem to meld. These are E. O. Wilson's (1984) "Biophilia Hypothesis" and James Lovelock's (1979) "Gaia Hypothesis". The former I mentioned earlier in this work wherein I suggested that this hypothesis may have something to say in terms of ecological mindedness. I will return to this yet again as a possible portal into understanding how this affinity might show itself during what I have called "Manoeuvring Through Moments of Ecological Mindedness". At this point, I mean to explore the possibility of converging discourses. To mention the "Gaia Hypothesis" may seem somewhat misplaced as I do not develop or explore this concept in depth; however, in my search for merging discourses, this appeared and I have come to see it as another instance of scientific and ecological discourses converging. I bring it forward as support for the possibility that 'hard' science and ecological mindedness can coexist on the same node in the web.

Both E.O. Wilson and James Lovelock are scientists, and both, in developing their hypotheses – Biophilia and Gaia, respectively – predicated their deductions on scientific findings. They also – and this is where two discourses may be seen to converge – speak of the Earth as an interconnected whole in which human beings live *alongside*, not above, not

beneath, not in a dominant position, not absent from 'other,' but in concert with all else on the planet. In some ways, this is a call to shed an anthropocentric worldview and move towards a more Earth-centred, or ecological perspective. Wilson and Lovelock each approach the topic of interconnectedness from a slightly different angle. Wilson's work has a strong human-emotional aspect, whereas Lovelock looks at the Earth from an external perspective. However, I interpret the work of both scientists as arriving at approximately the same place in terms of discourse.

Although neither Wilson nor Lovelock seem to locate themselves with/in a particular ecological discourse, and I am referring here to social ecology, deep ecology, ecofeminism, I see implicit connections within their words/work to radical ecology in general. Wilson, in positing that human beings possess a deep sensitivity to and need for other living things and that we subconsciously seek contact with the rest of life *as* biological need, almost points us towards deep ecology. In Lovelock's case, implicit within his rendering of Earth as goddess (1979) is a message carried by some (not all) ecofeminists – i.e., nature as feminine and Earth as 'mother.' Lovelock's usage of Gaia may have more to do with Gaia *as name* for planet Earth than with adopting 'Earth-goddess' or 'Mother Nature' mythologies per se; however, intentional or not, some ecofeminists have embraced – indeed *claimed* – "goddess" as inherent within ecofeminism.

To further explain the evolution of Lovelock's (1979) "Gaia Hypothesis", his concept of Earth as a living organism arose during his time as a scientist at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in the 1960s. His work involved using satellite data to determine whether and how life might exist on other planets. In studying Mars, the atmosphere, landscape, etc., he was struck by its seeming lifelessness – a sharp contrast to Earth. Rather than merely a circular, cooled rock issuing forth as a second generation effect of the universal "Big Bang", Lovelock began to regard the Earth as a living organism. Rather than living *on* a planet, all inhabitants, living and 'non living,' are *part of* an interconnected, interactive, complex living system, an integrated whole. The air, the ocean, and the soil are much more than a mere environment for life; they are a part of life itself. According to Lovelock (1979), no longer is the Earth something to be viewed from an objective scientific gaze. In his recent publication, *The Revenge of Gaia* (2006), he states that unless we regard the Earth as a living organism, as a "planet that behaves as if it were alive, at least to the extent of regulating its climate and chemistry, we will lack the will to change

our way of life and to understand that we have made it our greatest enemy" (pp. 21-22). Lovelock, as Wilson, seems to endorse the view, based on scientific research, that human interaction with the 'natural world' can have a restorative or healing effect.

The above discourse, which I read in part as scientific ecology and in part as radical ecology, is an example of where and how two seemingly competing discourses may merge and converge in the creation of a new language system or 'language game.' At this juncture, I wonder several things. Might this be considered a vital turning point? Will this new discourse, if indeed it can be considered a new discourse, quietly, subtly seep into our collective Westernised psyche? If so – assuming a change in discourse is even necessary – will the accompanying understanding be sufficient to effect a change in action? How much time might this take? Will a 'new' discourse need to be made explicit in order to make it on time? Is there a role for the education system to play? Should it become a priority for schools to take on a leadership role in prompting and promoting a 'new' discourse? And under what circumstances? The complications with embracing any form of radical ecology are somewhat mind boggling, particularly when different teachers, administrators, school boards, school *systems* are invited to interpret what that might mean within their particular contexts. Perhaps the fundamental question to ask is, "Is this even possible?"

I do not presume to have answers to any or all of the above, but just before concluding *"Noesis Part I"* and proceeding to *"Noesis Part II,* I would like to include what I believe to be optimistic words from John Stanley Rowe (2001/2006): "To understand the material world as fully as possible via the socially shared, measured knowledge that is science, while maintaining an openness to the immeasurable, mysterious and wonder-filled experiences of existence on Earth, is an attainable goal" (p. 165).

More – a good deal more – remains to be said about radical ecology. Calls for a new/renewed/revised ethics, understanding of 'place,' and consciousness – in short, a new/renewed/revised discourse – are surely worthy of conversation, difficulties notwithstanding. What this might mean in terms of everyday language (beyond labels such as the "biophilia hypothesis" and the "Gaia hypothesis") is explored within the next section in which I seek understanding via another avenue: through conversation. I include a description and excerpt from the first conversation we held as a group. I begin with my reflections on the preparatory moments leading to their arrival.

Noesis: Understanding

Part Two

"I am trying to tease my way through a tangle of relationships I don't quite understand…I tug on one thread…and am startled by the threads that move in response…" (Jensen, 2002, p. 66)

Reflections on the First Meeting: Winter, 2005

A bright, warm winter morning, a radiant sun shines through the kitchen window, rainbows dance around the room as the sunlight strikes the crystal pitcher of ice water. A carefully arranged array of fruit, biscuits, muffins, cheese, crackers, vegetables, coffee, tea, and juice stand as offerings of gratitude and sustenance to the participants of this study, whose arrival I await. Dishes, napkins, and food, spread out with care and precision on the table and the island. I take a clean dishtowel and polish the faucet. Again. And once more I readjust the dishes, cups, cutlery, and napkins, making sure that they are perfectly aligned and spaced. Then I try to wait as patiently as my two new imaginary friends – Sustenance and Gratitude.

I pace, I pause, I catch a reflection of myself in the faucet and I stop – where only a moment ago I saw a piece of polished chrome, a device that delivers water to me on demand, glistening in the sun – I now see an oddly distorted yet recognisable image of myself – or is it me? Somehow, in that instant, a moment of time, is contained and revealed a double reflection – thinking and seeing, together contiguously. The image on the faucet reveals more than the face which I am certain is my own. There is another layer, a different texture, something that tugs from the past, those molecules as mirror contain a history – my history. Like a kaleidoscope, the faucet as facet, I am reminded of the woman who held the elevator for me, saying 'I saw your shadow in the window'…but what do I reflect, what did she see? Did she see my life, my childhood, my pursuit of understanding? No, of course not. What simple foolishness… But something not quite discernable tugs, and I strain to comprehend. What is this curious eclipse? Has 'reality' become distorted like my reflection in the faucet? Has the preparation, the anticipation, the flurry hastened the leave of my senses?

And then, in a moment, suddenly, I understand. In that faucet, I see my mother. As a child, I watched, participated, felt the texture, understood the meaning of 'mindful.' This childhood understanding was encased in my very cells. I understood, but never had to articulate what it was, and it is only now that it returns to me, that I become fully conscious of it. My mother's work was done with love and care both when my brothers and I lived at home as well as when we returned for visits…the same home, the same welcome,

the same feel, but somehow, in those return visits, there was a textural difference. We added our own weave, intertwining and blending. And now I briefly wonder as I stand mesmerised in my kitchen, how will this texture be altered? What, who will I see in the faucet after today?

And then, finally (thankfully), my reverie is broken. The doorbell rings, and one by one – strangers, acquaintances, colleagues, friends begin to appear; some shortly before 9:00, some shortly after. By 9:10, all five have arrived. Coffee, snacks, introductions, light conversation. I sense a slight nervousness in the air; this could be my imagination or it could be my own combination of nervous energy and excitement. The food and drinks are there to help – now, along with Gratitude and Sustenance, I absurdly award food and utensils a label: Diversion – this because somehow the act of gathering around food, as a communal act, detracts from or eases the tension that might be felt when people are on the verge of exposing themselves, sharing their inner thoughts, revealing more than simply their opinions about the weather or chatting about their weekends past and future. Everyone knows that this conversation will consist of formulations and interpretations of self, culture, and identity; hence perhaps a greater responsibility is felt…personal words will be unleashed, sent forth, words recorded, words that hold their speaker to account. Despite my assurances that our conversations are only explorations of a particular topic, no judgements will be passed, everyone is bound by a code of ethics, Apprehension seems to have taken its place in the room. I try to rest into the pause.

Also present are the unheard voices of the children – more impersonally known as 'students' – those to whom we, as teachers, devoted a career, a life, a 'home.' To not acknowledge the gifts they gave us, throughout the myriad classroom joys and worries and gratifications and frustrations would be to not acknowledge our own presence and the basis for our coming together. In a sense, they are with us always, in all circumstances. How could we possibly shed their influence on our lives, our perceptions, our very being?

So with food and drink as tangible means of drawing attention away from the hands that would otherwise flail helplessly and the feet that would shift self consciously from one to the other, this act of 'consumption' seems somehow to invoke the trust we will need to deepen the emergent bond as we move from easy chatter into focused dialogue. The anticipation of a shared experience founded on trust and food, social convention and metaphoric sustenance is how we begin.

Down to "Work"

In an attempt to elaborate on the introductory letters they all received, read, and signed, during our first meeting, I plunge into what I believe will provide further clarification of the project. First, a rush of words: far too quickly they come spilling forward, I am caught up in my own self conscious prattle and not even I can fully make sense of what I'm trying to say…"consumerism…ecological identity… biophilia… connectedness to nature" – then after a few more starts and stops, I bring the babble to an end and eagerly ask, "Is that clear?"

Interestingly, even after studying this topic for several years, playing [with] it, *living* it for many, many more years before I ever identified it as a "topic", I still seem to struggle with clarity. I do not wish to imply that this topic, this work, this matter has already evolved, arrived, been fully defined, understood, and given account. At times it seems perfectly clear to me, but to speak of it, to name it, to describe it, define it, sometimes words fail, an inadequacy hovers above, below, around, engulfing and obscuring the words – and me. And on that first day, during that first meeting, perhaps it was expecting too much to be able to bring forth a simple explanation of a topic so complicated…and yet somehow, despite my ineffective starts, stops, and stammers, a conversation was begun.

"Tell Me More About Biophilia"

After another run at explaining the research project, Deb, by way of trying to understand what on Earth I was talking about – and perhaps to a lesser extent, to bail me out of my verbal predicament – asks to hear more about E.O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis. "Tell me more about biophilia…" I recover from my awkward self consciousness, my awareness of my inarticulateness, and settle into a story, a brief account of the way my life has been influenced by my childhood and even more so, by my mother, whose love of life and fascination with nature and the natural world – in such profoundly simple gestures from gardening to bird watching – always held me in awe.

> For me, my connections [to nature] are primarily through my mom…she just had this sort of affinity and great care and concern for anything that was living…every spring, I just love to get outside and dig around in the dirt and feel the feel of the Earth…[it gives me] a kind of feeling of just being at home. (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005)

Thankfully, the anecdote hit 'home.' A sensible conversation was finally launched.

Within 20 minutes, as that first convoluted conversation wound its way around my kitchen table, personal connections to the outdoor world (bodies of water, plants, the wind, the mountains, the horizon) were interspersed with observations and interpretations of cultural effects (consumerism, technology, cultural artefacts and impacts). In trying to understand how and where we fit – as human beings, as a collective, as individuals, and as teachers – our conversations inevitably focused on personal experiences. Beneath this first conversation, as all the others that were yet to come into existence in this search for understanding, for identity – or at least a pursuit of 'identifying characteristics' – for who and what we are, as human beings, family members, friends, teachers – was what I came to understand, or at least interpret as our groundedness and rootedness in relationship to one another, to community, to culture, to the ecosystem. In other words, we were led always and foremost to that difficult to define yet omnipresent sense of responsibility, that unwritten, unspoken directive which beckons us, addresses us, holds us to account, and tests our "response-ability" (van Manen, 1990), the manifestation of which we find embodied within our daily actions and infused throughout our thoughts as caring, empathy, compassion.

Un-warranted Travel

"*Warrant*": "authorization or certification; sanction, as given by a superior; justification for an action or a belief; grounds; something that provides assurance or confirmation" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). As "beings *at the limit*….always hovering about those frontiers that mark the passage between same and other, real and imaginary, known and unknown" (Kearney, 2003, p. 230), there were difficulties: there was "no credible authority to sanction passports and verify identities" (p. 230). These difficulties, and there were a few, were not so much with the discontinuities as with trying to settle into the pauses. Minor and major eruptions, disruptions, interruptions, continually appearing, sometimes as annoying disturbances and sometimes as welcome relief, but ever slightly beyond control. Giving up and giving in to living in chaos and unpredictability was not something my life experiences adequately prepared me to face – particularly in a situation (i.e., this research) wherein *someone* has to be in control. Then, one day, I saw a young woman sitting on a suitcase on a busy street near my home. As I sped by in my vehicle, I was caught by the anomaly: a busy shopping mall just across the street from her,

traffic lights controlling the chaos, turning red, turning green, cars, buses, trucks, people, perpetual motion, in control, some seemingly out of control, and there she sat, motionless, watching, waiting, for a ride, I presumed. It was as if for a very brief moment in time, the invisible cosmic 'pause' button had been engaged, only for her and by extrapolation, me, for these brief moments. Life arrested – hers, mine also, albeit fleetingly, but in those moments of reflection afterward I realised there was something in that moment, something that seemed to connect with my work. It was not so much an arrested moment but rather a moment to rest into the pause. In a culture saturated with motion and speed and beckonings and *control*, the Alfred Adler quotation I came upon in Robertson's (1998) *Dictionary of Quotations* – "Trust only movement. Life happens at the level of events, not of words. Trust movement" (p. 3) – took on an entirely different meaning. Movement not only happens on a physical plane, it also happens, very dramatically or very subtly, within.

> [T]he human self has a narrative identity based on the multiple stories it recounts to and receives from others…[O]ur very existence is narrative, for the task of every finite being is to make some sense of what surpasses its limits – that strange, transcendent otherness which haunts and obsesses us, from without and from within." (Kearney, 2003, p. 231)

This process of narrative telling and retelling, translating *knowing* into *telling* (White, 1981), reviewing perspective and understanding, offers a reflective lens which furthermore offers an opportunity – albeit, perhaps, only temporarily – to find some sort of ease, solace, and epistemic quiet. That same lens also carries the potential for disquiet, disorder, and disorientation. Depending on one's discursive stance, bliss – whether framed as ignorance or enlightenment – may be found amidst any of the aforementioned states. And lest I give the impression that 'positive' states (i.e., ease, solace, and quiet) are more desirable than what might be considered 'difficult' states (disorder, disquiet, disorientation, etc.), I do not mean to imply this whatever. I mean it in neither a negative sense nor a positive one. While it may seem more 'comfortable' to be in a position of ease, solace, and quiet, without disorder, disquiet, and disorientation, learning may be stunted, new situations closed.

I begin this next section with a few notes about my own meanderings through disorder, disquiet, and disorientation as I retrace my steps from "ecological identity" to "ecological mindedness".

Unpacking the Ecological Identity Suitcase

> Belief in the word and doubt about it constitute the problem that the Greek Enlightenment saw in the relationship between the word and thing. Thereby the word changed from presenting the thing to substituting for it. The name that is given and altered raises doubt about the truth of the word. Can we speak of the rightness of names? But must we not speak of the rightness of words – i.e., insist on the unity of word and thing? (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 405)

How do we find "unity" between an ecological orientation or perspective on life and the words used to describe it? How can we ever hope to reconcile words with such a complex notion as identity?

Discourse – *language* – is the very thing over which I have repeatedly stumbled. I am discovering that my own clarity about the discourse to which I primarily (at)tend seems to appear and then disappear. My use of language, what I mean by using certain words, along with the *way* I structure those words raises questions: is it strongly oriented towards a productivist stance or is it oriented towards an ecological stance? Do I default to what I believe was my initiatory discourse (ecological) or is my default 'language' productivist? Which has had the greatest influence? Is there an 'in between'? Whatever it may be, I do have a comfort with rationalistic, logical, scientific, objective writing – perhaps because it seems that in such cases the words 'mean' what they 'say' – but feel somewhat tentative with the sort of telling that merges into and is immersed in story. I believe I *understand* but something seems to almost get lost in trying to *express* experience. This seems to happen on several levels: describing and interpreting the experiences of others; describing and interpreting my *own* experiences; and describing and interpreting my own experience of stumbling with trying to interpret the experience of others. Perhaps it is experience itself that withholds. Gadamer (1968/2003) writes that an experience

> cannot be exhausted in what can be said of it or grasped as its meaning....[M]eaning remains fused with the whole movement of life and constantly accompanies it. The mode of being of experience is precisely to be so determinative that one is never finished with it. (p. 67)

I have been searching for a smooth movement from collision to collusion but it does not come easily. While Gadamer's insight is an uncovering, it also seems to be a covering. In revealing, there is also a withholding; the whole is elusive (perhaps impossible). I seem to catch glimpses of it from time to time, but how to bridge the gap – or even just how to hang in the balance, stand the middle ground – slips quickly away. I find a glimmer of

understanding – or at least a temporary reprieve – from this uncomfortable in-between-ness via Nicholas Davey (2006), who writes of the mystery of linguistic being: "the finitude of understanding suggest[s] that the subject matters (*die Sache*) of understanding are mysteries rather than problems. Mysteries....are not to be explained away but are to be discerned as an ever-present limit to our understanding" (p. 29). And lest this appear to send language – or linguistic being – spiralling out of control, driven into never ending fragments of meaningless nonsense, Davey assures that the "*mysterium*" does not render linguistic being hollow or pointless. "The notion of linguistic being as an ever-present but inexpressible *mysterium* underwrites the case that philosophical hermeneutics tirelessly defends, namely, that unspoken meaning is indeed communicated through the said" (p. 30). This seems to help, yet I remain perplexed, especially where complex notions such as "identity" are concerned.

As previously mentioned, this is not a psychological study involving explorations of the self. However, in trying to find innovative ways to address the ecocrisis, it seems worthwhile to take time to explore how or if human beings possess a 'connectedness' – not to be mistaken for some sort of esoteric 'otherworldliness' – to the Earth. Thomashow's (2002) use of the term "ecological identity" refers to a particular facet of the self as it can be understood in relationship to the Earth while at the same time opening new ways to internalise concern for the well being of the planet. In other words, working towards understanding ecological identity offers a means by which individuals may become consciously aware of their particular worldview as it becomes manifest within their personal connections to nature. This also entails (re)awakening one's own sense of wonder towards nature and is inclusive of

> all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the Earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self. Nature becomes an object of identification. For the individual, this has extraordinary conceptual ramifications. The interpretation of life experience transcends social and cultural interactions. It also includes a person's connection to the Earth, perception of the ecosystem, and direct experience of nature. (Thomashow, 2002, p. 3)

To find one's ecological connections, Thomashow (2002) recommends "ecological identity work" – i.e., "reflective processes…[including]…childhood memories of special places, perceptions of disturbed places, and contemplation of wild places" (p. 5). This is meant to involve "critical reflection and deep introspection, a kind of personal awakening

which allows people to bring their perceptions of nature to the forefront of awareness and to orient their actions based on their ecological worldview" (p. 23). In providing another method to interpret personal experience, ecological identity also allows for uncovering inconsistencies between thoughts and behaviours.

As stated earlier, it is with reticence that I use the word "identity", even when it is attached to "ecological", not only because of the complexities, but because I do not mean to convey that an ecological identity leans toward a narrowing and/or defining/definable human trait. Researchers such as Thomashow (2000) and Roszak (1979, 1992, 1996) have found ways to manoeuvre through this terrain with seeming ease – and indeed, my work is informed by their work; however, in my case, it is much more an exploratory phasing into and within ecological discourse rather than reaching a final conclusion regarding the necessary steps to an ecological identity. It has been, and continues to be, a working through, an attempt to understand how or whether a sense of identity – in a limited sense of the word – might be attached to worldview. This does, in several ways, incorporate ideas from various streams of ecological thought (e.g., deep ecology, ecofeminism, ecopsychology, social ecology) but I do not form specific attachments to a single, unitary format. As I trust I have already made clear, attempting to arrive at a clear understanding of discourse and what meaning it holds within this study has not been without difficulty. Rather than finding greater clarity, as the readings and discussions deepened, I seemed to find greater complexity. Lifting myself out of this predicament continues to be somewhat of a work in progress – in the sense of not fully and finally being able to locate and subsequently resolve the myriad contentious issues associated with language, understanding, and interpretation. However, after numerous revisits and reflections, I have arrived at what I believe might be a provisional way through – or at least into – this dilemma. What follows is a condensed account of this process.

Several years ago, when I came upon ecological identity and biophilia, I thought I had found my touchstone. I thought I found a solid link to my childhood, to my parents' outlook on the world, and to the way I have come to see the world myself. In continuing the research and reviewing the conversations, however, I found that my own understanding was clouded by inner difficulties. Too many questions tugged at me – if we have an ecological identity, does it mean that we purely, primarily, solely must identify with that? Is this what makes me who I am? And if so, what does that mean? Must I join a back to the

land movement? Go on daily nature hikes? Talk to the trees? Must I try to define my existence in metaphysical terms, as having some elusive, ineffable spiritual connection to nature? And what would this mean for the participants in this study? Would I have to lead an expedition into the jungle or head off to the moors or the mountains to seek a spiritual (re)awakening? Once we claimed allegiance to an ecological identity, would we have to form a commune and move to the interior of British Columbia, grow organic food – perhaps a grow op? – become vegan? Break all ties with friends and family not of the same ilk? Can we never go shopping again?

Each of the numerous promising entry points I discovered as I was trying to find my way around and into this topic seemed only to open a door to another lengthy passageway, but none led into what I sought: that radiant beam of (en)light(enment), streaming through an open window of understanding whilst I had only to sit passively by in the warmth and comfort of an invisible omniscient presence, drinking in and becoming intoxicated by the light of knowledge and understanding. This, however, was not to be. Scientific ecology, radical ecology, ecological identity, ecopsychology – all seemed to contain elements of relevance but each had its shortcomings, at least in terms of what I thought I needed. It was not until ecological mindedness, ecological thinking, and ecological sensibility appeared that I finally found a space in which to [tentatively] frame this work. Although these terms *sound* very similar to "ecological identity", my discomfort in using the latter lay within the meaning of identity. The "I", as self, as ego implies an essential quality on an individual level – if one human possesses it, then all must. Thomashow (2002) and others (e.g., Cohen, 1997; Marshall, 1992; Roszak, 1992) have evidently been able to settle this within their work and indeed, Wilson (1992) fronts his work with this as the basis for biophilia. However, I have found it quite difficult to apply these theories or hypotheses to my own work in any comprehensive way.

A Bringing to Mind

Through the conversations I had with the participants and via the many hours (which have now accumulated into years) that I have spent thinking and reading about this topic, I have come to understand that ecological discourse has to do not purely with language but with being *of* a mind –in other words, as *inclined towards* something and within that mindedness, there is an accompanying embodied sense or sensibility. Memory, as one

of the explanations for "mind", is one of the oldest senses and is now almost obsolete (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*). Through a great deal of thought and exploration, I have arrived at "ecological mindedness" as the most appropriate term to apply – if indeed I must apply a specific term – to this work. Although "mind" is strongly associated with cognitive function, it is also the doorway to feeling, imagining, wishing. We are not locked into a specific *way*, we are not required by law or nature to function solely from and within a single *essence*. Mind includes emotional as well as rational *and* it includes the capacity to learn, to change, to understand things *differently*. Moreover, Deb convinced me that it is entirely possible to learn how to become ecologically 'minded.' To illustrate what I mean, I include an excerpt of a conversation in which she speaks to her understanding of ecological identity. I have left in the 'fillers' ("you know", "like") because I wish to illuminate the 'working out,' the exploratory moments, the unscripted, unedited, 'natural.'

> One of the things that has been a common thread throughout my life that I can remember from back, see, I didn't discover this until I was at university and I started working as a gardener at university on the grounds. And that's when I discovered that, 'Oh, this gives me a sense of peace.' Like, I didn't know [about gardening] it was a job, but you know, when this little old guy taught me, he was my supervisor, 'And this is how you edge, and this is how you weed, and you've got to make sure you do this and you water this way.' And I did it and I felt this sense of satisfaction from doing it well. And I felt this sense of peace being out there doing it. And that's been part of that, I never gardened before as a teenager but my parents, it's always been in the blood, I mean everybody in my family is a gardener, my two sisters and my brother all love to garden and my mom and dad both love to garden. But you know, I'd never really done it and then, so every house that I've been in, it's just, I can remember being pregnant and going out and having nine yards of topsoil delivered and hauling them all to the back yard, and you know, and I'm, I was, like, you know, five or six months pregnant, but that, just feeling of, really feeling like I could use my body and I've been outside and I was creating something and it grew and watching it and every house that I've been in, where it's been a new house I've made flower beds, so it's just been sort of a common thing that made me feel good. And it still makes me feel good. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

Although she does connect her love of gardening to her family, it was the focused period of time she spent as a groundskeeper that engendered the feelings of "peace" that she furthermore translated or transmitted into an embodied sense – "feeling like I could use my body....And it still makes me feel good." This can be read as the hermeneutic change that Davey (2006) speaks of when a new understanding has begun to unfold: "Whatever I understand I come to understand through the mediation of another" (p. 9).

Immersion, Emersion, Emergence

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is
our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what
is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If
I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening
of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of
wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote
against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation
with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.
(Carson, 1965, pp. 42-43)

Rachel Carson was perhaps the first author I came upon who provided me with an

adult understanding of my own childhood as a time of being engulfed in, charged with, and

mesmerised by a sense of wonder. There was no waiting or planning for the 'right' time for

something to happen, I did not [need to] design my days in that way. The timing was always

perfect, the right circumstances ever present, all that was needed was my willingness, my

curiosity, and my imagination to bring into full bloom a new experience. My little hamlet

offered wide skies, open ground, and almost unlimited opportunities for an inquisitive child

to explore, discover, create, and imagine. Waking up each morning, winter, spring, summer,

fall, no matter what childhood worries there might be, they were overridden and washed

away by feelings of anticipation and joy for what might lay in wait on a new day. The slightly

frozen spring puddles where the ice was opaque, thin, and veined, crackling beneath a

footstep, the wide mouthed culverts big enough for our playtime hideouts, the heavy, red

clay that we dug from a 'secret' cliff, the little treasures we buried for future generations to

find. We were explorers, scientists, ecologists.

I love the sky and I think that's a reflection of every place I try to have a view. Even
downtown I'm on the 11th floor so I can look at Nose Hill Park so I line up Nose
Hill Park with my Georgia O'Keefe [painting] so that the horizon line is the same.
So that I can trick my eye into believing that wall really isn't there. But that sense of
space is a huge part of identity. (G.R., Research Participant, Taped Conversation
February 5, 2005)

I understand G.R.'s desire to line up the painting with the horizon. I understand it

as deeply as I understand anything. I understand it as a longing to return, to re-feel, to re-

imagine. I have no regrets about the way my adult life has unfolded, nor do I mean to slide

into dreamy, nostalgic longings for a past now embellished by exaggerated imaginings of a

long past, worry-free childhood, an identity immersed in and taken from simple outdoor

playtime, but I do mean to emphasise the legitimacy of being deeply and constantly connected to the outdoor world.

The excerpts I used to introduce the participants in this study are indicative of the sort of thinking that seems to align much more closely with Ecocentrism than Anthropocentrism, but it is a distinction that comes with difficulty, particularly since I have come to understand discourse as something more so encased in an entire thought or way of being than encased within specific individual words.

Although we did not venture into 'wild nature' or focus specifically on childhood places, when group conversations focused on moments of a sense of connectedness to the outdoor world, there was an appreciable difference in the level of involvement which I detected both during the discussions as well as in replaying the taped transcriptions. At the same time, however, it was not always easy to express viewpoints; the flow and fluency in the conversation often became more halted and tentative. Describing physical experiences – as descriptions of feelings – were much easier: "experiencing the fresh outdoors and feeling invigorated...I get that feeling and I love that feeling of going outside, doing something, feeling invigorated...it's just a whole different layer of experience for me" (Deb, Taped Conversation March 15, 2005). Smith (2001) tells us that "there are aspects of an environmental ethos that may even be ineffable in our present language and society...language facilitates the transmission and reception of certain messages but also necessarily restricts what it is possible to say" (p. 70). Inn other words, sometimes language simply falls short.

Manoeuvring Through Moments of Ecological Mindedness

> It may be that the new 'environmental ethic' toward which so many environmental philosophers aspire – an ethic that would lead us to respect and heed not only the lives of our fellow humans but also the life and well-being of the rest of nature – will come into existence not primarily through the logical elucidation of new philosophical principles and legislative strictures, but through a renewed attentiveness to this perceptual dimension that underlies all our logics, through a rejuvenation of our carnal, sensorial empathy with the living land that sustains us. (Abram, 1996, p. 69)

The following is an excerpt of our second conversation (February 19, 2005) as a group in which we tried to get in/at/to the sort of discourse that might accompany ecological mindedness – i.e., an experience or a 'pause,' in which the demands of work and

society were shut down or out, and we settled into moments when it felt safe just to 'be.'
Carol was unable to join us on this particular occasion. For her part, I have included a piece
of a one on one conversation on the same topic. Rather than simply allowing the
conversation to speak for itself, I interrupt the dialogue to include my observations and
perceptions. In the unravelling of these conversations, I am looking to discover how we
orient – or perhaps re-orient – ourselves in an ecologically troubled world that now more
than ever petitions an ecological discourse. Coming to some understanding of what this
might mean remains a process overflowing with complexity. I do not wish to exclude the
possibility that experiences of ecological mindedness can occur within buildings, during
focused work activities, or even during a shopping excursion, but as it will become clear
from the conversation below, this was not the case for each of the participants in this study.
Their stories were of 'nature' experiences – i.e., hiking, boating, sitting by the ocean,
watching wildlife, etc. – *not* of magic moments at the mall.

I sought to engage the group in reflecting upon a time that issued forth a
"becoming", a "moving away from and a moving toward something" (Davey, 2006, p. 69).
My explanation:

> This is just a little exercise to think about a time when you felt deeply yourself, when
> you could just let down your guard and feel safe to be who you are. Like a moment
> when you're with people you really get a sense of belonging from, or on your own
> when you're pursuing a hobby and just became so immersed in it that you almost
> became lost…(Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

I handed out paper, pens, and pencils for writing or drawing.

Deb: So this is a time when we felt totally in tune with ourselves?

Bev: Yeah, just sort of like when you felt –

G.R.: Comfortable.

G.R.'s insertion, which arrived before I had a chance to complete what was likely to
be another lengthy description or convoluted personal story, seems to indicate an immediate
understanding of what I was trying to say. "Comfortable" instantly hit 'home.' There were
no further questions from Deb or any of the others about what I meant in my faltering
explanation of the "little exercise" I had asked them to participate in. Because
"comfortable" seemed to work and because I was struck by the alacrity with which Deb
picked up the thread, I was stirred to investigate its original meaning. Defined as "providing
physical comfort; feeling free from stress or anxiety; at ease, producing feelings of ease or

security" – it stems from "comfort", which is etymologically rooted in the Latin word "*confortare*": *com* meaning intensive; *fortis* meaning strong (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). At first glance, I was puzzled. Are intensive and strong not reminiscent of aggression? Upon further reflection, however, I began to see these words as also implying passion and power, neither of which – if channelled positively – need to lead us down the road to violence. Although its original meaning seems to have become slightly altered over time, I began to see that the basis – intensive and strong – is embedded within our understanding of the feeling that accompanies 'comfort.' What furthermore comes to mind here is van Manen's (1990) discussion of home as "a very special space experience which has something to do with the fundamental sense of our being….that secure inner sanctity where we can feel protected and by ourselves….where we can *be* what we *are*" (van Manen, 1990, p. 102). "Comfort" is not a word I would ordinarily use in this context – nor would I likely have thought to use "home" – but G.R.'s insight seemed to strike an immediate chord with everyone. Might this have something to do with comfort and home being somewhat synonymous with experience of "parents as the solid ground, the home of our existence" (van Manen, 1990, p. 90), which perhaps (re)calls connections to a sense of familiarity that may inform and evoke embodied understanding? We circled around and touched down upon the "home of our existence" (van Manen, 1990).

In some form, I use the following conversations as exploration for/of biophilia. I again state that I have not set out to prove or disprove whether biophilia 'exists'; rather, I have come to regard it as one of many possible links to understanding why or how certain people seem to possess a connection to, or feel an affiliation for the natural world in a way that sets them apart or perhaps identifies them differently from others.

A Singular Little Space: Deb's Experience

This is about [a hike] when I was with J and A and we were collecting fossils on the slope on the mountain. J just knows all the fossils and it was so amazing because we were right up on the top of this mountain and there was this slope and we were just focusing in on looking for these little tiny fossils and we had to throw them away, and J was like, 'Oh that's such and such,' and 'Oh, that's a good sample of this' and I took some back to school. So on the first day of school we wanted to talk about introducing ourselves and I showed the [students] these fossils that I found under a magnifying glass and I had some of them on my desk. And sometimes when I'm feeling really harried and I haven't been outside all day, I just pick up these fossils and it takes me back to that experience. I like the texture of them, the feel of them.

They're so earthy because they're, you know, rough and [even though] I didn't know what they were, they were on this one slope and they were just everywhere. It was just so neat to be thinking these things have been here for thousands and thousands of years and I sat up there on this mountaintop thinking, 'I'm going to be gone but these will still be here on this slope and how many people have been there' and it was just a really powerful experience. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

Abram (1996) speaks of indigenous oral cultures as experiencing language "not as the exclusive property of humankind, but as a property of the sensuous life-world" (p. 154). In Deb's description of her experience on the mountain and the subsequent re-living that experience with her students, I was struck by the *vitality*, the living awareness of her words. Although this may seem a contradiction, in her spoken utterance (i.e., on the audiotape), I also felt a silence in her words along with a sense of immediacy, a return to a particular feeling. I draw on Abram (1996) to assist in what I am trying to convey.

> As we reacquaint ourselves with our breathing bodies, then the perceived world itself begins to shift and transform. When we begin to consciously frequent the wordless dimension of our sensory participations, certain phenomena that have habitually commanded our focus begin to lose their distinctive fascination and to slip toward the background....The countless human artefacts with which we are commonly involved – the asphalt roads, chain-link fences, telephone wires, building, lightbulbs, ballpoint pens...all begin to lose some of their distinctiveness; meanwhile, organic entities – crows, squirrels, trees...all these begin to display a new vitality....Even boulders and rocks seem to speak their own uncanny languages...inviting the body...into silent communication. (Abram, 1996, p. 63)

I asked Deb what it was about that experience that was different from her everyday 'work' life. Her response confirms to me that her experience on the mountain was almost beyond language – at least in the sense of having immediate access to the 'right' words. It required a story, an explication, a discourse somewhat different from what might be used in a rationalistic, scientific context that requires clear, succinct empirical descriptions of phenomena and their observable features. "Well it was, I was in a totally, sort of singular little space, like there was no other world around. And I could feel really quiet and still."

This description of a "singular little space" where she could "feel quiet and still" orients towards what Paul Shepard (1998) wrote as "An ecologically harmonious sense of self and world" (p. 128). We sat silently as Deb spoke of this experience, but in that silence, I felt an understanding and I suspect the others did as well. She continued,

> the people I was with were both, you know I just kept asking all these questions, J, oh look at this one, look at that one,' and he just was so into it. It was like we were connected just on that level, with him sharing his knowledge and he was so into it.

And A was just kind of in awe because he was a farmer and doesn't get to be out and see that kind of stuff. So it was just that we were out and away from everything and for that hour or half an hour, Bev, I didn't think about anything else but just looking down for these little rocks and wondering and kept picturing what the world looked like when these things were alive. You know, it's sort of like a time warp going back, take you away from all this, you just sort of moved in on what this little creature had been like, and what the world looked like, and this rock, I had been touching something that had been there. I just feel really special that once in awhile I get really lucky – not special, lucky – that I get to experience that, you know, go out someplace and just be…you know, you're just up there, and don't even think about anything else; just totally absorbed. And so I've got that little bit of it on my desk that kind of pulls me back. All this [work] that I'm doing so that I can get out and have experiences like that one. I feel like that's what motivates me. The other things that I do – I like my job not only because it's my calling or I can do it for the kids or whatever, but so I have an income so I can do those kinds of things, go hiking, go cross country skiing. But then I wrote down here too that I feel regret in my life that I'm not doing that more but when I do experience that once in awhile and it's so –

Leila: Elusive? Or is the word slippery?

It seems to me that Leila's interjection applies well to the experience as well as to language. Also wrapped up in this discussion is time – the external demands associated with such things as work seem to subsume the sort of experiences described above by Deb. This is not to say that feelings of quiet and stillness cannot come from one's career; indeed, G.R. melds the two (see below). However, Deb seems to be pointing towards some sort of difference between being immersed in work or a creative pursuit inside a building and being outdoors. In her case, she seems to be speaking of a sort of recovery or restorative function from being 'in nature,' an aspect which ecopsychology maintains is a vital link to physical and psychological wellness (see, for example, Canty, 2004; Conn, 1998; Fisher, 2002; Roszak, 1979, 1992, 1996). In some ways, this almost seems to evoke a Cartesian mind-body split, a separation of action into two elements: bodily, feeling experience occurs in 'nature' while the experience of work is associated with something else: a primarily cognitive experience? The disembodied, cognitive mind (reason) is in a sense 'severed' from the *feeling* body (as 'proven' by Descartes). Reason, having a long history of primacy over feeling in the Westernised world is disembodied and literal whereas experiences such as described by Deb have a tendency to bring the body front and centre: the feelings of stillness, the textures, the earthiness – all of which tends to be dis- or under-regarded in a society that has inherited a view of rationality that valorises+ objective knowledge, logic, and systematically discernible cause/effect explanations. This is not meant to imply that embodied reason is not rational,

but that we may overlook that "forms of rational inference are instances of sensorimotor inference" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 555). Van Manen (1990) describes this as a rationalism that allows "human life to be made intelligible, accessible to human *logos* or reason, in a broad or full embodied sense" (p. 16).

Deb's reply to Leila follows.

> Yeah, and then it just kind of happens and then you think, I'm just not doing enough, I'm spending too much time doing these other things and those experiences just seem so rare but...at least they happen. So that's what I wrote about. The big sun in the sky that's looked over civilizations and brachiopods and the mountain and the slope that's gradually worn away and shown these rocks. And so it's kind of like that book that's from the great big huge down to the little wee tiny; you know, it's that little tiny thing and I was looking at this one or that one, seeing which was the better example; 'Well, this one because you can actually see the little tail or head.' So when you look it's just so small. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

In describing this experience, much of Deb's language was evocative of physical sensation: "And sometimes when I'm feeling really harried and I haven't been outside all day, I just pick up these fossils and it takes me back to that experience. I like the texture of them, the feel of them. They're so earthy because they're, you know, rough." When she mentioned feeling "harried" and not having "been outside all day", it almost seems as if she were missing something vital. The sense of frustration is almost palpable. There is also a sense of deep fascination, of wonder: "touching something that had been there" – it is as though in touching the ground, the rock, she was feeling some sort of connection to something once living – something still, for her, very much alive. Her comment about the enigmatic passage of time further indicates her desire to understand what it might have been like: "[it can] take you away...you just sort of moved in on what this little creature had been like, and what the world looked like".

Part of the Process: G.R.'s Experience

> I ended up talking about rocks and water, on the edge of America. A small cove on Long Beach and similar things [as Deb] – when [I'm] there, and I go back there as often as I can, I become, just part of that space. And it has tourists traipsing all over and you don't notice that they're all there. You become, just, almost in a bubble, where you're part of that whole process. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

G.R., too, seems to understand what Deb was referring to in speaking of a "singular little space". G.R.'s immersion in "that whole process", in these moments of solitude

hearkens forth what Fisher (2002) speaks of as "an extralinguistic space within our experiencing" (p. 64). This extralinguisticality may offer at least a partial explanation for why experiences, bodily experiences, moments of 'harmony,' are difficult to describe. The shutting out of the rest of the world – "tourists traipsing all over and you don't notice" – may seem like a separation of self from, or indifference to, the world but read another way, it is an interaction, a direct contact *with* the world. "Contact is the opposite of in-difference. It is our being changed by interacting with that which is *different*....when the ground of our existence is altered" (Fisher, 2002, p. 65). To continue with G.R.'s narrative:

> For me, it's the wave and the rocks interacting so it's the same way as you [Deb], I have a rock from there only mine's a smooth rock. And after I'd done my writing, I realised that I sort of described it as a dance between the two forces, bigger than I am and yet as they come into the cove they realise that there's something even bigger beyond them – or whether they realise it or not, I realise it – that forces are bigger than that. But I realise that in some ways that's a metaphor for teaching, of the force that is very subtle and keeps going back time after time after time. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

This too, speaks of bodily experience – a recognition and remembering encased in the body, in physical sensation. G.R., too, has a rock, a physical remembrance as it were, something to return the sensing body to a 'comfortable' place, a place of perceptual integration. The metaphor of the dance furthermore suggests a bodily awareness and recognition that forces need not be in antagonistic opposition to one another but rather hold potential for integration. Along with this is the recognition that as human beings, we are part of something bigger. Another interesting insight lies within the metaphor for teaching: "the force that is very subtle and keeps going back time after time after time". In linking perceptual experience, language, and thinking, G.R. brings to mind the notion of gestalt – i.e., that "we do not primarily perceive parts that we put together afterwards; rather we perceive whole configurations" (Von Maltzahn, 1994, p. 87). G.R.'s understanding of the "joint meaning of the parts within the context of the whole...[only occurs by] dwelling in them" (p. 95). The forces of nature, the physicality of space(s), and life in the classroom link together "perceptual experience, language, and thinking" (p. 87). I hear within this an echo of the persistence, tenacity, coherence, and power as constructive/instructive forces in what might be a convergence of ecological and scientific discourse. G.R. continues,

> [t]he fluid force can surround the rock, changing that rock one molecule at a time. So for me it was, I don't have the same feeling then; but teaching gives me that same

experience every day that I'm sloooowly changing – the form is the same – but changing the exterior –

Deb: But I don't feel the stillness inside me when I'm teaching [as] when I'm out someplace in nature.

An interruption. G.R. and Deb were speaking the same language, as it were, until G.R.'s mention of collusion between personal experience and teaching experience. Is this, then, an occasion, a moment wherein Deb and G.R. are dependent on one another *as other*, to arrive at an understanding of their own particular perspective as being *distinctively* their own? (Davey, 2006)

G.R.: When I'm in one of those moments where you know you've broken through with the students then I do have that same feeling of there's just me with that student or me with that book or me as that person that –

Deb: Well that's good, you're lucky.

Deb, silent until this point, seems to become immersed in understanding as *event* "because its random but autonomous occurrence breaks [her] control over understanding" (Davey, 2006, p. 33). In a sense, Deb seems to relinquish her experience to G.R.'s – or perhaps this is better stated as being sent to rest in an 'in-between' space in which new understandings may be brought into existence. Or might Deb already have felt this in her own classroom, perhaps numerous times, but language – hers and/or G.R.'s have not been adequate to explain? Whatever the case may be, when G.R. connected ocean experience with school experience, a beckoning of another sort appears: ecological discourse, ecological mindedness, ecological moments are *not* restricted solely to experience 'outdoors.' This thinking – or understanding – seems to be present in the classroom as well. Boundaries become blurred, and in that blurring, an ecology of the classroom becomes clear. I am reminded of Jardine (2006), who writes that "*education itself*, in its attention to all the disciplines that make up schooling, can be conceived as deeply ecological in character and mood" (p. 179). This seems to connect with what I above called a "gestalt" – a part to whole understanding, or a holistic perspective that repeatedly appears in the work of John Dewey (see, for example, *The School and Society and the Child and the Curriculum*, 1915/2001; *Experience and Nature*, 1929; *The Quest for Certainty*, 1929).

Bev: So would you say it's like a deep connect?

G.R.: Deep connect, yes, that there's an awareness of forces, an awareness of, almost your place in the universe.

This comment, plunging us all into our own finitude, limitations, and – in the context of the universe – perhaps even inconsequentiality, was a sort of coming full circle from G.R.'s beginning description of a particular space – a singular space, in a sense an inner space – to an embeddedness within a much larger, vast, incomprehensible *outer* space. To close G.R.'s experience and enter into McAvity's, I put forth the following quotation from John Stanley Rowe (2001/2003), in which he considers "life in context."

> An alternative to the view that organisms possess 'life' is that 'life' possesses organisms. By this hypothesis the secret of 'life' is to be sought outwardly and ecologically, rather than (or as well as) inwardly and physiologically...Whatever life may be, it necessarily involves ecological relationships....organisms are alive thanks to their embeddedness in larger encompassing 'living' systems: the sectoral geographic ecosystems that Earth comprises. (p. 145)

Infusion: McAvity's Experience

McAvity: I didn't write.

G.R.: You did a picture?

McAvity: I didn't write because there are certain situations where, certain feelings of where I am can help me look at where I fit and think about where I fit, and over the years that has been in water, through swimming, and whether it's in the pool or, the rhythm and the solitude, I can just immerse myself in the water. And what I think about and the rhythm helps me think about what and where I fit in or those situations [and] you can kind of analyse, that was one place, whether it's a lake which has a slightly different feel, or whether it's in a pool, but I can just block everything out and let my own thoughts flow because I get into a rhythm in the swimming. And if it's a pool, I go back and forth, back and forth, and just get into that rhythm, and if it's in a lake, you have to pick your spot so you can swim great distances and get into that rhythm.

McAvity's discussion of rhythm and flow evokes an ecological layering: on one level, it is reflective of an ecological standing of/in nature; on another level, it is reflective of the ecological metaphors within which human beings become embedded and subsequently understand the world; and on yet another level, it is reflective of the ecological development of words themselves. To proceed with McAvity's explanation of the drawing:

The little picture I drew had to do with when we were driving back and forth whether it was through the mountains – [my partner] used to teach at UBC, [and] the University of Saskatchewan. So we'd drive back and forth a lot and it's just that majesty of being in the world and what was there and what it made you think about. But you're with somebody. You didn't need to talk but you knew where you were and what [the other was] thinking about. Often. It was uncanny because you would say, 'I was just thinking about' and [the response would be], 'I was just thinking about the same thing!' And then you'd get a conversation. Another thing I drew has to do with part of my heritage. It gets back to that [issue of] time and what makes you think. And [for me] it's bagpipes. I can get immersed in music and culture because I've grown up with it. Dance was a huge part of my life, besides swimming, and [integral to understanding] where you fit and what it makes you think about in terms of history and place and what are the images that the music will bring to you. And then what does that have to do with what you're doing in a classroom? What part does music play there? And what part of music is the life amongst those children? Or it's the river and the history and the dance part of it too, or swimming or whatever, but it brings rhythms, it brings thoughts – our world goes in pulses and rhythms and what part does that play to our kids as they go through pulses and rhythms? Those were kind of three images that I drew because they meant something that makes me think. It's the solitude of some of those because it's how it makes you think or feel…it can change it from if you're kind of down to being up.

To comment on McAvity's comment – whether solitude means the absence or presence of others – the remark, "it can change it from if you're kind of down to being up" brings to mind the therapeutic, restorative effects of nature, physically and mentally, that ecopsychologists speak of. Based on his research into the adaptive benefits of nature, Kellert (1997) writes,

> [e]xposure to the vitality of any living creature, the bright colours of a flowering plant, the splendour of a mountain, or the life-giving quality of water can be inspiring and restorative….Paradoxically, we feel calmer but more invigorated. Our sense of vulnerability…is replaced by the reassurance of life-sustaining process. (p. 117)

G.R.: But solitude is different from being alone and when you're in that place you feel connected even though you are very much –

Deb: You're at peace, at peace with the quietness.

McAvity: There's a certain quality to that quietness.

G.R.: But being comfortable, that's your safe place, that's where you go.

Deb: So maybe, the key thing is to try, for me, [to divert the] many little dissatisfactions. [Getting to] the essence of what I really feel, those good things, and trying to simulate it on another level. If I'm feeling regret that I can't always be up on the top of this mountain,

what was it about that experience and how can I, on a smaller level, fulfill that because it's just not possible to always be out doing those things.

G.R.: Or there's the rock climbing wall [*laughing*] –

Deb: No, no, I'm terrified of that. I actually don't like heights. But somehow I get so caught up in, like when we did that [hike to Ha Ling Peak in the Rocky Mountains] I got up to the top a couple of times but I amazed myself that I can sit with my legs over the edge and look down and I'm terrified of heights but yet I'm just oblivious, almost to the height.

McAvity: It's where you're focusing though.

This comment by McAvity, "It's where you're focusing", is evocative of the "singular little space" that Deb spoke of or the 'pause' that I felt as a child. This calls me to wonder whether this may be a link to 'biophilia regained.' Orr (1994), in his exploration of biophilia and its claims of innate presence within human beings, mentions that "people can lose the sense of biophilia" (p. 139) and asks, "Do we, with all of our technology, retain a built-in affinity for nature?" (p. 139). Deb, G.R., and McAvity, in their various musings about returning to those 'spaces,' along with evoking a sense of familiarity and healing, seem to hold an implicit message – that whether it is in the direct moment of an experience or memories of particular places and events, one can find meaningfulness and sanctuary.

Deb: Yeah! I'm just sitting up there and feeling it –

McAvity: Yeah, it's part of you. But recreating those things –

Deb: Yeah, it takes you back –

McAvity: And even with, I like the River Dance because you can hear the taps and the beat and the rhythms moving so it can create those images and that can help you think. So that can transport you, perhaps, into that environment where it's not exactly real right now but it creates the image. So this will do for now, until I can get to that place where it's real.

Deb: Yeah, and so you think about some of those futuristic movies where they're simulating real world experiences artificially and I often wonder, can it do the soul, the spirit the same thing? Can we artificially [create those experiences]?

The impulse to understand something through or *as* rhythm, and to name it as such was abundantly clear in McAvity's descriptions. In using such language and in expressing the *feeling* of experience (as embodied), this dialogue is also illustrative of ecological understanding in a broad sense of the term. In describing experiences with swimming or

dancing or the classroom as rhythms, McAvity also seems to be speaking about life itself and being part of something else. This was evident in the response to Deb: *"Yeah, it's part of you."*

Rhythm: Leila's Experience

> Mine's not unrelated to [that]. It's interesting, there were any number of things I could pull from but I went back about 30 years ago to my youth when I was strong, when I was on a [rowing] team. So this is to do with water, it's absolutely to do with rhythm, connected [to the] river. I used to get up incredibly early in the morning – dark – there were five of us staying in a dormitory and we all piled into this boat. We just had such a rhythm of doing that; nobody ever questioned what we were doing. And you get to the boat house and the other people are there and you just do all the things that are your role to do. There's no – there's smiling, interacting, joking, whatever – but no one isn't without a purpose in all the little details that you're doing. You know, the river, and it's a solitude type of experience even though you're on a boat with all these other people. I've never actually had anything else quite like this in my life even though it wasn't very long lived; it was a year or two – but your whole purpose is to be in absolute rhythm with other people. And it's totally dependent on that focus or that concentration of team work.

Leila's experience was similar to the others' in her description of rhythm as *felt* experience, in her explanation of solitude as being *with* yet somehow slightly apart from others, and in her expression of focus. To be on a rowing team is to participate in an activity, one which requires cooperation, movement, and concentration. Through that activity, however, Leila's words convey a peacefulness and a stillness. Within this, there seems to be an ambiguity. Laing (1969) tells us that "All experience is both active and passive" (p. 32). In the case of Leila, as well as Deb, G.R., and McAvity, recapturing the active seems to occur within the passive – the moment(s) when focus shifts towards the inner and outer in the same gesture. Leila's rowing experience, as embodied experience, enters into the ruptures and textures of life itself.

> I particularly remember mornings when the air is getting colder but the water is still warm so mornings there's this fog, it happens on the Bow River too, so you're in this morning mist that you can't see much and you always start out going up the river, against the current, you get warmed up, you feel your hard work. So there's this current going by and I have the same, I have a love/fear relationship with water. I never was a good swimmer but I've always been around water but living in Alberta, it's the least shore of water I've ever seen. But it's a very powerful force, that water thing, and I grew up on the ocean on the east coast and I'm rambling but I wrote down things like hearing –

Deb: You know, something that strikes me – all of us, there's been some physical exertion involved in this experience because I know for me I feel more connected with nature when I'm feeling more connected with my body and I feel more connected with my own body when I'm physically exerting or exercising, using my muscles.

Leila: It's that breathing. It's like all that oxygen is going into your understanding I mean, your own physical self as well as the environment, too.

Leila's metaphor of "oxygen going into your understanding" suggests to me that breath, as life force, invisibly sourced from the external, enters, nourishes, and (in)forms the body, the physical, as well as the mind. This might further be interpreted as illuminative of a perfect integration of forces, in rhythmic unity, creating, or at least sustaining, self and understanding as one. The ecological impulse within this speaks to a cyclical, holistic act and action, bearing upon the individual yet signalling the communal as essence and essential.

G.R.: It's forces, too, that's the other thing I heard all this time too, was forces.

Deb: Yeah, you're connecting with having to make your body work in tune, you have to be so singularly focused on, I mean, you watch those rowers, it's just amazing how they're almost breathing in exactly the same rhythm you know, it's the river, you're in tune with the river, Mother Earth.

This brief exchange between G.R. and Deb represents a moment when their understanding of forces, rhythm, breath, the Earth seemingly converged. It is as if they reached some sort of recognition. Uhl (2004) writes, "you are not so much breathing as you are being breathed by your body" (p. 41). Had I been able, at the time, to give voice to Uhl, I wonder what impact it might have had on the conversation or our understanding of what, specifically, we were saying and meaning? Would/does this alter our notion of selfhood? Might this line of thinking take us down another path that leads to understanding biophilia? Uhl goes on to discuss *spiritus* (breath) as connected to *"soul, spirit, liveliness, emotional vigour, and essence"* (p. 41). In coming to a recognition of the breath as an *experience*, as embodied act/action, as connection with and to natural 'forces,' are we incidentally connecting with and to a particular *affiliation* with the natural world? Orr (1994) describes biophilia as a choice, as recovering a sense of place. Might this "choice" include an active decision to tune into/with our connection as living, *breathing* beings? Could this be the initial awareness that transports us to an understanding of biophilia?

To return to the conversation following Deb's comment (above):

Leila: [In tune with] yourself and with these other humans. I don't know why I went to this one but what's interesting to me as I started thinking about it, it wasn't just me alone having a walk somewhere or whatever, I was with other human beings, having this experience by myself with them. And then the other thing, in crew, for safety there's someone on the launch, the coach or whatever, with a little motor, so in the morning mist, gathering call, or megaphone, you know, so there's a sense of support in this, too. Encouragement. And I never had the sense that I was helping other people – although I hope *they* might have thought that – but I always felt very supported by a common purpose and by doing what we were there to do. And by the time we were finished, the rest of the world was waking up and I'd fall asleep in my 8:00 a.m. lecture on oceanography. I always seemed to be going [to class] with my crew stuff.

G.R.: The comment that you were with other people strikes me because even when I do something by myself, there's always a story or image of somebody that comes to me. When you were talking, [McAvity], about being in the ocean or being in the lake swimming, I go to my parents at the ocean and will float in the water, and just let that force of the waves take me away. And my mother does that and my grandfather did that. And even when I go do that by myself, I'm always with one of them. Even if I'm alone they're with me, so that historical support [is there as well]. It's interesting how you're saying things that are making me think and connect things that I haven't before.

McAvity: There's still that connection.

Bev: And when you're talking about being in the mist it sounds like…going to another place, a deeper place for those few moments. And breathing. The rhythm of the breathing, the current, the cyclicalness –

Deb: And all the senses. Like the story you told [Leila] – I can almost smell it and I can feel the mist, I can see it, I can hear the rhythm of you know, this guy calling out once in awhile, [and] the waves, the paddles or oars or whatever.

Leila: The rhythm of oars in their lock. And the other thing I went off on a tangent on too is, we'd train through the winter and we'd run and lift weights and it's just a phenomenal amount of time put into this but I can only think of a handful of moments where we actually achieved that sense of really being together. I mean it happened, sort of all the time when we were doing it but it was just this slippery elusive stuff, the moments where you feel like you actually succeeded but you don't recognise it at the time.

Through the above conversation – and others to follow – I am left with the impression that between the profundity of the words there seems to be an accompanying sense of loss or a lack. This could be interpreted as nostalgia; however, in replaying the conversations, it seems much more so a sense of something retrievable either through a return to outdoors or through focused (re)attention.

Deb: I wonder if people of civilisations in the past had the luxury of thinking about these things and experiencing these things.

Leila: I think so –

Deb: You know, like were they just trying to survive, some of them.

Leila: There was that, but whenever you're doing a task together with other people, humans have a way that you bring song to it, or you bring rhythm, you know, even the slaves.

Solitude, Stillness, Breathing

Leila's experience had similarities to that of Deb, G.R., and McAvity. Each was about physical contact, about being part of something, and about being still. There is also an element of loss but it is not without optimism. Leila's comments in particular bring to mind Paul Shepard (1982/1998), who writes that "there is a secret person undamaged in every individual" (p. 129), an "impulse…[that] awaits only an authentic expression" (p. 130). In Shepard's words, as in Leila's and the others,' there is an implicit message: that whatever form it may take, a conscious awareness of our humanity (as embodied) as well as our connectedness to *other* is never completely lost.

And the Tree Looks Back: Carol's Experience

As Carol was not present during the above discussion, during a one on one conversation (March 17, 2005), I raised the topic of 'natural' and what it might mean.

Carol: Natural would be what comes from you unfiltered. So your natural response, say you meet someone, and instinctively you just know you can't trust that person. That, to me, is a natural response. It becomes unnatural when it becomes conditional. But natural response, a natural state is almost the pure essence of what you really think, feel, believe, without having to work it through one of your stories. I don't know if it's wildness but it's like you haven't been tamed. You haven't been conditioned, you haven't been socialised, this is gut (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005).

Carol's explanation of natural as "unfiltered", "instinctive", "pure essence", "[un]conditioned/[un]socialised", "gut" – bespeaks a bodily (or embodied) response, an existence in an interactive world. To meet someone and respond with intense mistrust (in her words, "instinctively") seems to imply that there is indeed a story that has been worked through, that there are some characteristics that are unconsciously recognised from an encounter with someone who may have become a threat; however, Carol's understanding, as bodily *knowing* is also reminiscent of the "fight or flight" response wherein a perceived threat or danger is accompanied by an instant physical reaction: adrenalin and norepinephrine release, increased heart rate, muscle response, etc. in preparation for self defence or escape.

"Essence" in a hermeneutic sense carries a slightly different meaning. It is the process of 'becoming,' described by Gadamer (1968/2003) as *Bildung* – i.e., "that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own" (p. 11). A fundamental 'nature' in the sense of "*an* intrinsic determining essence" (Davey, 2006, p. 54) cannot exist; however, this does not deny that *Bildung* "can exhibit and retain emergent characteristics but it does deny that such a process is driven teleologically" (p. 54). Because "essence" implies a quality that *all* human beings must have – for example, a spiritual soul – the process of coming to the sort of understandings or transformative experiences described by Gadamer and Davey above would be highly limited and limiting. A being without essence, on the other hand, opens into the world: "we are able to constitute and transform ourselves continually through our hermeneutical encounters" (Davey, 2006, p. 56).

Carol: [And] good luck trying to find nature-nature. The other day we were out at the lake, it was still frozen over in the middle, and a bald eagle – there's one that hunts there, so you get to see it once in awhile – flew over me. And the wingspan! They can go up and down that lake in three flaps and they're done. And he landed on the ice, normally we can see them fish, and he landed on the ice and he's tapping on the ice because he's trying to get the fish but the ice is still there. And you know, for that 30 seconds that I watched this eagle, because they don't hang around in one place too long, it was like, I don't know how to describe it – as a connection, you know what I mean? You aren't filtering thoughts, you're just present.

Carol, in speaking of "just [being] present", not "filtering thoughts", brings to mind Heidegger (1977), who writes, "[t]he quiet heart of the clearing is the place of stillness from which alone the possibility of the belonging together of Being and thinking, that is, presence

and apprehending, can arise at all" (p. 445). In finding her 'place' within the space (clearing), she seems to open to the possibility of presence(ing) and apprehending. She seems to have wandered into a moment, an event, a concatenation. In my terms, this was entering into a "pause", in Heidegger's, an understanding that "[t]hinking must first learn what remains reserved and in store for it, what it is to get involved in" (p. 436).

Carol: I think that nature can allow you to 'be' because it can be a place of walking meditation. I mean, you could stare at a rock for half an hour and watch what happens to it and what lands on it and what doesn't and for that time, you're transported, so I think that, for me to be in nature, extreme freedom –

Bev: Clarity?

Carol: What do you mean by that? The ability to think better?

Bev: Well, when you were talking about the eagle, it *sounded* like you were saying there was this understanding, there wasn't – no?

Carol: There was no understanding. I was definitely on his turf. I'm trespassing. But for that 15, 30 seconds that I watched that, I was outside myself.

In a discussion of environmental philosophy, David Wood (2004) uses as a section title *"The Other Looks Back…and It's a Tree"*. He writes,

> [t]he other looks back, or speaks, or cries, and this structure of capture by my gaze is shattered. I have to recognize a recentering in which I am no longer the center, or at least not the only center….[T]his experience is clear in the case of the other person, and indeed, other animal existences. (p. 34)

Carol's experience as 'intruder' evokes the recentering that Wood mentions above, and in her understanding of this is furthermore communicated her understanding of self as *other*. Her encounter with the eagle has made obvious her *difference*, but unlike the eagles who "can go up and down the lake in three flaps and they're done", I am not quite as swift to see, to understand what Carol means. I seem to need far more than "three flaps". In a way, Carol's experience invokes "gaze theory" in which "I am conscious of my activity as a spy and an eavesdropper" (Wollen, 2007, p. 97). Davey (2006) explains that engagement with the other is crucial to understanding oneself: "The contrast between our perspective and that of the other allows the other to be *other* while the relation between the perspective of the other and that of our own, reveals our perspective to be distinctively our own" (p. 10).

The "dividing line of visibility and invisibility…the relation between what presents itself to us at any one time, and what we know we are seeing, but cannot see" (Wood, 2004,

p. 40) encapsulates the way I am stumbling through my difficulty. I think I can *feel* her experience and yet I evidently do not. In my certainty, in my 'knowing,' I do *not* see, I do not feel, I do not understand her experience. I only *think* I see, feel, understand. But at this point, I do not even realise that. I forge ahead:

Bev: I guess that's what I mean when I say understanding and clarity. I've had a few instances of clarity, where all of a sudden – and it's been seconds only – everything makes sense to me. There's this understanding, and there's no separation any more, it's becoming part of, and that's what it sounded like –

Carol: No, no.

In my attempt to understand, or rather second guess, Carol, I dig myself even deeper into my predicament. I just do not seem to grasp what she is trying to convey. Am I too mired in my own experience? Am I caught up in what I think Carol's experience *should* be? How could I feel so 'in tune' with what she was saying and yet miss the point entirely? Another attempt (now I back off and let her explain):

Bev: You didn't feel like you were *part of*?

Carol: No, no, I was an observer. No, because I think that nature is the most powerful force in the world, I mean, you look at the tsunami…we're just kidding ourselves. To me, the lake [*her cabin*] is a wilderness area. It's in a provincial park, there are only 40 cabins, and really small motorboats. So they're [eagles] just fishing but they sort of know when they can come and visit and when they can't. To me, that's their turf and I'm just a guest, but technology has never been that inviting. If I think about a physical state, when I'm through with technology – unless it's an email and it's silly – there isn't the levity, I mean, it's all intensity. It's like you're focused down on that bloody keyboard, and two hours can pass and you forget to move, whereas [in a wilderness setting] it's totally different.

Carol, in her attempt to help me come to an understanding of what she meant, seemingly tried to simplify her explanation by making a fundamental distinction between nature (as wilderness) and cultural construct (in this instance, as computer technology). On the one hand, she is a "guest", which implies an invitation of some sort, and on the other hand, "technology has never been that inviting." Although in describing her experience *in* nature and her experience *using* a computer I had a strong impression that she felt fully in her body, there was also a hint of lack of control – seemingly favourable in the former and less so in the latter: "nature is the most powerful force in the world"; "focused down on that

bloody keyboard and two hours can pass and you forget to move". Being lost in nature is different from being lost in the computer. When she described being on the eagle's "turf", she said, "[b]ut for that 15, 30 seconds that I watched that, I was outside myself" – where did she go? Was she 'home'? She seems to have likened her outdoor experience to a physical *understanding*, a seemingly pleasant, awe-inspiring moment and her indoor, technology driven work to an exertion. In this occupation of time, there is a different form of gratification, a preoccupation (in nature) versus an occupation (at the computer). This is not to say that there is an implicit lack of effort or physical exertion in her experience at the lake, but in the instance of watching the eagle, her engagement might be better described as the effort of no effort. Technology – the computer – seems to represent *intensity* and it is an intensity for which she appears to hold some disdain ("focused down on that bloody keyboard for two hours"). When I replayed this part of the conversation on tape, I could hear the tension in her voice as she was speaking of the "intensity" in contrast to the "levity" that comes with "silly emails" – i.e., she apparently 'feels' a difference between 'work' (intensity) and 'play' (levity).

I have come to understand that in my initial zealousness to complete *her* thoughts, to put words forward before she had an opportunity to fully explain, to anticipate what she meant, I took a position, and I *positioned* Carol, thrusting us both into what Gadamer (1968/2003) might call an "authoritative form of welfare work"; an I-Thou relation. In my attempt to understand, I performed a sort of theft:

> By claiming to know [one]…robs…their legitimacy. In particular, the dialectic of charitable or welfare work operates in this way, penetrating all relationships between men as a reflective form of the effort to dominate. The claim to understand the other person in advance functions to keep the other person's claim at a distance. (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 360)

At some level, I must have finally come to realise that it was time to stop anticipating, guessing, pretending to know *exactly* how Carol felt. I try a question:

Bev: Do you see humanity as outside of nature then? As different, as other?

Carol: The way it is now, yeah, because those quads and things like that…It's safe down in that area, it's a beautiful wilderness area and people are going in with quads and they can go anywhere. And it's interesting because I don't think technology necessarily empowers everyone – so do they then think, 'Well, I can have power over nature, because I've got the gun, I can kill the deer, I've got the quad, I can go anywhere I want.' Is that man's attempt

to feel powerful? When they built those small towns in Saskatchewan, in Canada, you know why they have the false fronts? The store is only one story but they've got the false front on it, it's square and it looks like two stories. And that was man's attempt to impress upon nature their size. Because there was such a vastness of area, this was the only way they felt they were big enough. [By] pretending they were twice as high. I don't know too many Bill Gates, and that guy from Apple, but in technology, there are not too many people that have really made their mark on technology. I mean it's Bill Gates' world. Not too many people have that kind of power over technology that they are the lead dog, whereas the rest of us are still trying to jump onto the sleigh, all we can do is go and dig a hole in the ground and plant a tree or make a firepit or kill the deer for hunting, or…

Bev: Why do you think it's [like that]?

Carol: Did the Native Americans need to do that? We're more the cultures from Europe that moved over here and we're so used to war, and you look at how many times this country has changed leaders, and so their whole culture from the get-go has just been about building empires, and having power over the people within those empires. So I think that that would be more of a European [influence]. I mean, I'm sure that the cave man, the Neanderthals probably, 'That's my cave, clomp, my woman.' If we're all homo sapiens, why would, then, just the Native Americans and Canadians have learned to live in harmony with nature? And maybe all tribes didn't, I'm not sure but if we all originated, like we're all Cro Magnon, how did that happen? I don't know enough about that.

Bev: Is the simple answer to that technology? Because when the machine got going –

Carol: Right – the tools – and I think that, say when our grandparents settled the land, I think they really had to work hard but there were the farmers that lived with the land and there were the farmers that had power over the land. I mean, it's not everybody…[And] when you think of all the countries, I mean, my goodness, some of the violations that Africa does – it's amazing that some of those people can still breathe. Same with China, better bring a mask and be prepared for three months of spitting up once you come home because of the amount of coal that's in the air. And in the United States they've got two polar groups, one that's buying up the land and leaving it as preserve and the other group that's trying to suck the oil out from it, so it's everywhere. Is there any place in the world where people live with nature? So when you talk about technology, I mean, back in B.C. it was he who had the best tools won. So technology has always advanced, in quotation marks, man's

relationship, because once you had tools, you had power over animals, you could hunt them. So tools have always given us power, and I think our brains are hardwired for that whole hunter-gatherer survivor. It's in us, it's instinctive, it's innate within us. So maybe that's it, we're just living out the cavemen who now have a method of bringing down the animal, taming the beast – technology – we're still living that out. It's just that we're not sure if we're taming the beast or the beast's taming us. Because when you think of the introduction of guns, at first it was probably something really good and then all of a sudden they realised, 'Oh good, we can kill someone, we can take over their land.' So there's always been a struggle. When you look at the technology of guns – it's wild these days. People are going around just shooting people – I mean, it's *wild*. So that [form of] technology hasn't been tamed. What has? But the last thing I want to do is to overanalyse it. Because I think that when you over analyse it, the unexamined life isn't worth living, but the unlived life isn't worth examining. So if you're so busy examining, you're not living. I'd much rather live. Maybe it's because I've done so much examining I'm sick of it. I'm tired of it. I don't care any more. I don't want it any more. I just want to be.

I had assumed that I understood everything Carol was talking about. I assumed that I could anticipate what she was meaning, what she would say next. I was evidently wrong. But I am certain that Carol's experience with the eagle and her discussion of power and technology all speak to a way of being. Conversations with Carol bring to mind the work of Carl Honoré (2004). I end this section with a quotation from his work that seems to parallel Carol's comments.

> Fast and Slow do more than just describe a rate of change. They are shorthand for ways of being, or philosophies of life. Fast is busy, controlling, aggressive, hurried, analytical, stressed, superficial, impatient, active, quantity-over-quality. Slow is the opposite: calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality-over-quantity. It is about making real and meaningful connections – with people, culture, work, food, everything. (Honoré, 2004, pp. 14-15)

Biophilia Revisited

In my attempt to come to an understanding of what biophilia might – or might not – mean, several questions trouble me: "Am I trying too hard, am I looking too deeply to find 'real' connections to something merely speculative? Am I too driven by my own [possibly false] conceptions of what *needs* to be done to salvage the planet? Are my own childhood recollections clouding my ability to think rationally? Am I exaggerating the importance of

attending to ecological awareness in the first place?" I am in some degree reassured by J. S. Rowe (2001/2003), long time ecologist and advocate for seeing, understanding, and living life 'differently.'

> Ecological ignorance today is inexcusable. The truth is we are Earthlings in body, mind, and spirit. The very fact of existence means that in the past our ancestors successfully adapted ourselves to the realities of Earth life. Today the need is urgent for a paradigm that again harmonizes us with the cosmos, accepting as right and good and affectionate, child-like outlook inoffensive to Earth and all its parts, a worldview that recognizes not only the spark of creativity in people but also the fountainhead of that creativity in Nature, manifest in the spirit of place. (p. 61)

What is the story in all of this? Where and how are we to locate ourselves? I am drawn again to Uhl (2004) who writes,

> [c]ulture, more than anything, shapes both personal life stories and societal belief systems. Thus, a lasting solution to the ecological crisis now confronting humanity lies – of necessity – in the gestation and emergence of a new life-affirming belief system: a new story. (p. 246)

The fourth "phase" of this work ("*Habitus*") dips into culture, primarily with a focus on consumerism and what might be interpreted as an accelerated pace of life in the 'high tech' Westernised world.

Epigraph

I have spoke with the tongue of angels

I have held the hand of a devil

It was warm in the night

I was cold as a stone

But I still haven't found what I'm looking for...

U2, *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*

Figure 6   **Habitus: Behaviour, Disposition, Practice**
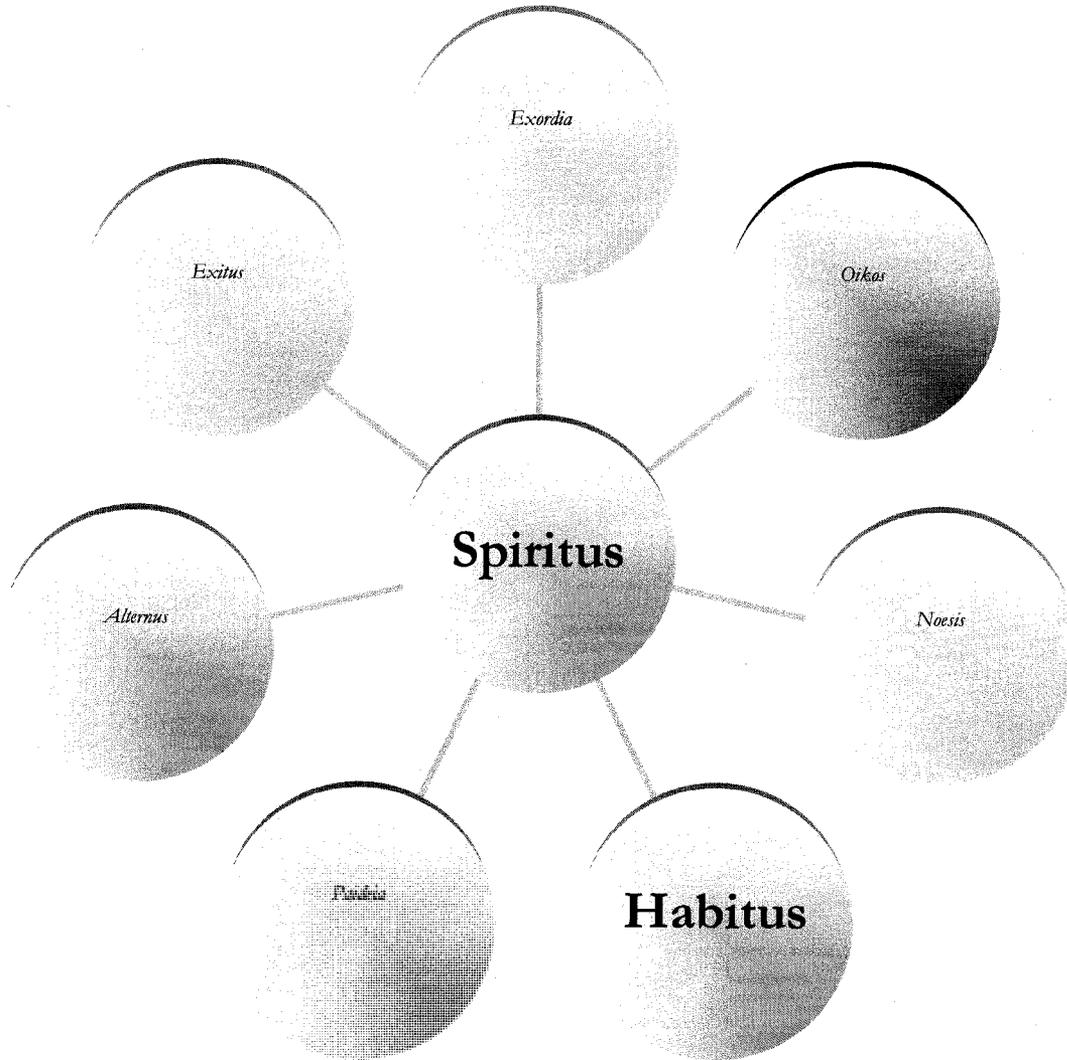
HABITUS: BEHAVIOUR, DISPOSITION, PRACTICE

Habitus: "condition, demeanour…applied to both inner and outer states of being" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). From the Latin word "habitus" comes the word "habit", which is defined in the following ways: "a recurrent, often unconscious pattern of behaviour that is acquired through frequent repetition; an established disposition of the mind or character; customary manner or practice" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). And to what might habit be ascribed? How do habits come into being? What are the key factors in the acquisition of habits?

As both a tangible and intangible determining factor of our behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes, our external environment or condition is in some degree responsible for who we become and how we understand. Inextricably tied to this external environment is culture (Gadamer, 1968/2003). To greater or lesser degree, the practices that are associated with a particular culture become absorbed at an individual level, whether these stem from religious beliefs, political perspectives, child rearing practices, music, art, language, philosophy, etc. (Hall, 1996). Culture, however, does not stand on its own as a single 'thing' or entity. It derives from, is embedded within, and proceeds from a particular set of conditions which are in some part historically mediated. Gadamer states that "we are always already affected by history. It determines in advance both what seems…worth inquiring about and what will [be]…an object of investigation, and we more or less forget half of what is really there" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 300). This does not, however, mean that we are reckless recipients of received knowledge. We can

> acquire an awareness of a situation…however [it is] always a task of peculiar difficulty. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished. (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 301)

Gadamer further explains that the task is not impossible, but it does require "special effort.…[I]t is constantly necessary to guard against overhastily assimilating the past to our own expectations of meaning" (p. 305). This, then, asks something of us: if we are to understand, we need to remain open to the possibility that we might understand *differently*.

What I seek to understand in the following section has to do with a seemingly pervasive Westernised cultural necessity/pastime/passion/obsession/habit. I am speaking

here of consumerism, a 'condition' which might be seen to emanate from the cultural warrants of contemporary Westernised society. If consuming as *"ism"* may be broadly conceived as being embedded within a broader cultural context, the *act* of consuming, or *over*consuming is the role that may be accepted or rejected at the individual level. I begin the following with a possibility, one which contains a low rumbling echo reverberating from within the recesses of the space containing the conflicting commands of consumption and conservation, lying somewhere beneath the 'consumption' mentality.

Shopping, buying, consuming – for most of us – is a requirement. When it moves from necessity to obsession (see, for example, De Graff et al., 2002; Hammerslough, 2001; Head, 1990; Smith 1998), however, something else comes into, or is at play. It is this elusive underlying 'something,' this propensity or impetus that I seek to understand, or at least raise some possibilities around.

Underneath the Restlessness

The song lyrics written by the rock group "U2" in 1987 (see epigraph beginning this section), might be interpreted as a love ballad, have been interpreted and recorded by a group of alleged Gregorian monks on the Internet website *"YouTube"* as a spiritual quest, and now have come to rest within this dissertation. In my case, I use this excerpt to symbolise what might be representative of our current contemporary culture: a restlessness, which I interpret as somewhat akin to what Charles Taylor (1991) refers to as the "malaise of modernity". Although Taylor uses "malaise" in the sense of a loss of meaning, I would like to entertain the possibility that restlessness might be loosely ascribed to, or interpreted as the cultural expression of this loss. Part of the impetus for this comes from the following comment by Carol:

> What I heard from you was a restlessness...What can you change? Your house, your physical environment, things like that. It's something you have power over. So, is that what nature is to humans? Because to them it seems passive, it's an easy target. So when I am out there [at her cabin], I can find out how restless I am. And when you go underneath the restlessness, you often meet the demons. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

Having learning from the 'eagle experience' not to assume I understood what she meant, I telephoned Carol to ask her to elaborate on the "demons". My fingers raced across the keyboard while she explained.

People are so focused on 'good.' We are a very strength focused nation and vulnerability is perceived as weakness. We *train* for "goodness". 'Oh, good. It's all good. Good women do this, good wives do this'…Sometimes we have to hide the anger, which society perceives as negative. The shadow side has to be hidden or suppressed. But if you don't face it, it will bite you in the ass in the end, it won't allow you [not to deal with it at some point]. It's the [so called] 'bad' stuff. [So we have] the good and the bad, [and we] split off parts of ourselves. And they're demons because they've not been loved, not been brought to the surface. But when you do [face the 'demons'] you find they're very manageable and loveable. As a teacher [you have to] figure out what parts are unacceptable, but they sneak out all the time; you just don't know it. [I refer to them as] demons because the more you suppress, the more powerful they become. Anger based people say, 'I never get angry,' but they just haven't met it and owned it. And sometimes it can control you. Teachers do that to kids all the time. And if they get the same thing at home…That's why, when we keep ourselves really busy, watch TV or have our own little addictions or whatever, you can keep the demons at bay. But when you're in the quiet and in the solitude, and in that silence, you're head on with them. There's no escaping, there's no running away and you meet them – sometimes for the first time. (Taped Conversation, August 18, 2007)

If I interpret my own 'restlessness' as a "demon", might this be the case with many others as well? Has Carol uncovered something much broader than her own personal experiences with "demons"? These are questions for which I do not have answers, but I can speak to my own personal reaction.

When Carol mentioned restlessness – hearing *my* restlessness – I felt an abrupt awakening, a discomfort, an unsettling, a dismantling. I did not immediately put words to it, *language* it, but I *felt* it instantly. At the risk of sounding melodramatic, it was as if an unarticulated gasp shuddered through my body and shattered my self delusions. I was startled, embarrassed, unmasked. I had not expected to be exposed. She was right, of course; I had just not anticipated that she might enter that zone I thought to be so well disguised. She was accurate on another count: "to go underneath the restlessness, you often meet the demons." To this point, we had been having an interesting conversation and quite suddenly, this disruption broke through with total impact: emotional, rational, bodily.

Davey (2006) states that "[h]ermeneutic exchange may bring with it the promise of translation and transcendence but precisely because it does so, it also brings with it the inevitability of disorientation and disquietude" (p. 230). Carol's comment indeed elicited "disorientation and disquietude". I discovered that complacency is not impenetrable. It is this which leads me to believe that my experience was a hermeneutic *event* rather than a

simple, or complex, exchange of ideas. My foray into attempting to understand this restlessness – on both a personal and a cultural level – follows below.

It is true. A restlessness lingers. I recognise it as the basis and the impetus of this search, this work; it hovers like a shroud, almost imperceptibly, almost dreamlike, yet somehow I 'sense' it – in the conversations, in the (re)search, in myself. It is this sense of restlessness that drives this work, any work, perhaps; I feel it as a disturbance, an agitation, a disquiet. Perhaps it is a 'malaise': "I still haven't found what I'm looking for" (U2, 1987)…perhaps this is broadly the case with society. We still haven't found what we're looking for: is compensation sought in diversions and activity? Is Carol right? We fear to go too deeply because we fear the demons? Or are we, as Richard Rorty (1989) proclaims, merely a series of contingencies – a cluster of identities, manifesting here on this occasion, there on that, floating hither and thither with no clarity or consistency, no stability, no predictability? Is this what it means to live an inauthentic life? And what meaning can be made of "authenticity" in light of the many complications and stories that arrive with trying to comprehend something so elusive and so vulnerable to multiple interpretations and explanations?

I partially pull myself out of my 'restlessness' dilemma as I reflect on, detect, and find solace in a few recurring themes, or threads, located in the conversations, in the tentativeness of the voices, in the willingness to listen and negotiate. In that uncertainty lies the hope that getting to some understanding of the 'restlessness' will not prove to be a solitary, interminably elusive, unrelenting tentativeness, a partial uncertainty, a partial understanding…a restlessness lingers: "I'm trying to tease my way through a tangle of relationships I don't quite understand. I tug on one thread…and am startled by the threads that move in response" (Jensen, 2002, p. 66).

The Westernised World's Dis-ease

Charles Taylor (1991), in his brief but 'thick' work, discusses what he believes to be significant markers of contemporary Westernised society. In this work, he explores the modern identity, the search for authenticity, and the general overall quest for self fulfillment that seems to be a prevailing characteristic of the modern world. In this, I find a starting point for coming to some understanding of how 'restlessness' rather than 'authenticity' might be waiting at the threshold and what role the "quest for self fulfillment" might play in

helping or hindering one to find a way out or through. In highlighting the term "authenticity", I do not mean to enter the murky waters of identity, nor do I mean to imply that I understand what this might mean for every individual. My intention is more so to enter the murky waters of ambiguity in an attempt to find some understanding of what authenticity might mean in the context of this work and the conversations held within.

Before continuing with my brief explication of Taylor's ideas, it may be worthwhile to look at definitions of "authenticity" and "restlessness". "Authentic" – the root word of which is "author" – is defined as "having a claimed and verifiable origin or authorship; not counterfeit or copied" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Restlessness is defined as "a lack of quiet, repose, or rest; not able to rest, relax or be still; never still or motionless" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). In both cases, there seems to be an inherent option, a choice – once there is an awakening to the possibility that there *are* choices to be made – provided one is ready and willing to remain open (Gadamer, 1968/2003) to that which awaits understanding. As Davey (2006) explains, the "experience of being addressed…involves, first: recognizing something that one was already acquainted with but had not fully grasped, and, second: in reappropriating what had not been initially grasped, coming to realize its significance for the first time" (p. 117).

"Malaise" is a French word which means "a vague feeling of bodily discomfort" or "a general sense of depression or unease" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). And although this may be a departure, perhaps a leap, from the way Charles Taylor uses "malaise", I see some similarities to what the participants in this study have had to say. Each of their commentaries seem to speak to a sort of "malaise" or perhaps restlessness, either as a *lack*: Deb in her candidly stated dissatisfaction at not being able to engage with the outdoor world with greater frequency; or as a *pull towards* something seemingly meaningful, as G.R.'s reminiscences of and eager anticipation to return to quiet moments at the ocean, Leila's river excursions, McAvity's road trips, and Carol's encounter with the eagle. Although no one spoke explicitly of a "general sense of depression or unease" in the *absence* of [meaningful] experience, there was a hint, in recounting their experiences, that something else might be at play besides retelling a good story. In between the words there seems to be an implicit statement that these experiences were something longed for or remembered with great fondness. Or, to use Carol's phrase, there is something hiding "underneath the restlessness". If a link can legitimately be made between malaise as Taylor uses it and 'the

restlessness' as I have attempted to describe it, in both cases, there seems to be somewhat of a deficiency. This may furthermore connect with Davey's comment above, as an experience of being *addressed*, as something tugs or beckons but rests just slightly beyond conscious awareness. The reason for the difficulty in arriving at what might seem to be a straightforward process – i.e., to recognise that something wants grasping, something that will draw one into or towards *understanding* – is attributed by Davey (2006) as an innocence.

> We are, in our innocent beginnings, beings who are essentially both outside and more than ourselves…[not knowing] that everything we might think or express lies virtually within that linguisticality which stretches beyond our subjective consciousness, and even more disconcerting, nor do we have any awareness that the very words we now use can point to what will befall us. (Davey, 2006, p. 119)

The key, perhaps missing piece seems to be reflective awareness, which can be brought forth within us when "unexpected experience…disrupt[s]…unreflective assumptions" (Davey, 2006, p. 122). In a manner, this connects to what Taylor (1991) discusses regarding a movement away, or withdrawal from the 'common': within the withdrawal is an embedded deficiency, a general lack that rests on our forgetting that certain vital aspects of human life require transcendence (e.g., history, community, family, unions, nature). By transcendence, he is not speaking of a religious experience or metaphysical phenomena. "Transcend", which comes from the Latin "*transcendere*", means "to pass beyond the limits of, to be greater than" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). In the context of Taylor's (1991) work, it applies broadly to a consideration of the self in relation to others: as human beings, we require some sense of belonging to something larger than an individualistic self. The very identity we derive arises out of dialogic conversations with significant others in our lives. In a similar vein, Davey (2006) describes transcendence as "the transforming experience of coming knowingly to see, to think, and to feel differently" (p. 8). In this, there is an impulse towards *other*, something must come into view, something must cause a rupture or disruption wherein "two parties engage one another….[bringing] a differential space into being" (p. 15).

In the absence of engagement with 'other,' in trying to live only and/or foremost as an individual, a fragmentation occurs which in turn creates and is fuelled by a sense of powerlessness (Taylor, 1991). With this powerlessness comes a general loss, a separation, which may well be the basis for the profusion of self help books, support groups, and a

quest to 'find oneself,' all of which Taylor might regard as a search for *in*authenticity. A link

may be made here to Mark Kingwell's (2000) suggestion that

> relentless acquisition of goods is just a symptom of a deeper ailment, a lack of secure
> placement in a world of shared understanding, a failure to be at home. We are,
> finally, happier not with more stuff but with more meaning: more creative leisure
> time, stronger connections to groups of friends, deeper commitments to common
> social projects, and a greater opportunity to reflect. (p. 281)

Taylor (1991) describes three contemporary features that have contributed to the

fragmentation of self and society: (1) individualism, by which he means a severing or cutting

off from larger meanings along with self absorption to the point of narcissism; (2)

instrumental reason, which he defines as "the kind of rationality we draw on when we

calculate the most economical application of means to a given end" (p. 5); and (3) apathy

towards political participation, which may result in loss of political freedom or "political

control over our destiny" (p. 10), which might mean that as citizens, we forfeit our power or

at least relinquish decision making power to political representatives. On this latter point,

Mark Kingwell (2000) has the following to say:

> Without a background of commonality, without some form of civic responsibility,
> autonomy degenerates into mere special pleading. Without a strong notion of
> commitment to other people and our shared undertakings, without a sense that we
> are together creating a just world, a world not ruled by cheap acceptance of
> inevitability or the easy superiority of wealth, our hard-won individualism loses its
> deeper significance. (p. 15)

Taylor (1991) avers that a culture based primarily on self fulfillment harbours

individuals who have lost sight of the 'bigger picture,' the concerns which transcend the

individual. From this comes a life of "soft relativism": that is, any way of being can be

"higher" than any other; the 'good life' is whatever the individual alleges, resulting in

> trivialized and self indulgent forms...even a sort of absurdity, as new modes of
> conformity arise among people who are striving to be themselves, and beyond this,
> new forms of dependence, as people insecure in their identities turn to all sorts of
> self appointed experts and guides, shrouded with the prestige of science of some
> exotic spirituality. (p. 15)

Taylor identifies this as authenticity "improperly understood". Van Manen (1999)

describes a loss of connection as constituting a "refusal to dwell together [which

subsequently ignites] indifference. Indifference is the failure to recognize the other...in a

genuine encounter or personal relation. Indifference is a failure or crisis of the 'we'" (van

Manen, 1999, p. 108). If Taylor (1991), Davey (2006), van Manen (1999), Kingwell (2000) are on to something – that we are a society disconnected, in crisis, living as isolates – what does it mean in terms of our daily interactions with one another? What does it mean for 'sense of self' or sense of community? How could an entire society come to see the world in such a way? A reprise from Kearney (2003):

> [T]he human self has a narrative identity based on the multiple stories it recounts to and received from others…our very existence is narrative, for the task of every finite being is to make some sense of what surpasses its limits – that strange, transcendent otherness which haunts and obsesses us, from without and from within. (p. 231)

As individuals we are, by and large, carriers of broad cultural stories (i.e., myths) which, to a greater or lesser degree, form the backdrop, often at an unconscious level, for a personal identity. Taylor (1991) argues above that the inherent malaise which influences individual identity within individuals in Westernised technological societies is a manifestation of a cultural malaise. Rowe (2006) states that,

> [a]t its deepest level, culture is an interlocking system of myths carried and transmitted by discourse, i.e. by all the signs, symbols, vocal and behavioural languages through which members of the same culture communicate. The myths are socially cohesive, giving people a common sense of history, of who they are, their purpose in being in the world, and where (optimistically) they are going. Language is the chief carrier of culture, enriching it with the cumulative knowledge and sensibilities of the past as well as with imaginings of the future. (p. 172)

In the succeeding section I explore the role of myth within society in general as well as specific myths that animate modern society (e.g., the myth of progress) and are pertinent to this study.

From Story to Myth

The word "myth" generally conjures images of magical stories with gods, heroes, and creation stories from bygone days and ancient cultures. Their place in the 'developed' world is almost certainly relegated to children's stories or adult fantasy because, after all, the 'developed' world has arguably become synonymous with rational, logical, scientific, empirically sound thinking. Myth, however, for some (Roland Barthes, 1957; Mary Midgley, 2004; C. A. Bowers, 1993), extends beyond ancient invention and rests, indeed, *lives* within present societies as cultural mythologies.

The first definition listed for "myth" in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2001) is a "traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes [serving] as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world by delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society". Its second definition is "a popular belief or story that has become associated with a person, institution, or occurrence, especially one considered to illustrate a cultural ideal". It is this latter definition to which I refer in the following discussion based on the work of Roland Barthes.

Barthes analysed the way in which value systems create modern myths and formulated a characterisation of myth that revolved around the everyday images and messages of entertainment, advertising, and popular culture. His target was largely the bourgeois culture and society of his time (Allen, 2003). Expanding on Ferdinand de Saussure's system of sign analysis (structuralism), Barthes added another dimension, that of the capacity of signs, as social constructions (i.e., social phenomena are created by humans), to take on mythic proportions (Chandler, 2002).

Myth, according to Barthes, had the inherent power to give universal validity to images that were created by a producer of myths (Allen, 2003). In other words, myth is a message that carries certain assumptions, and, similar to ideology, at the same time that it *tells* or portrays something, it also hides or distorts something. Embedded within this is an unquestioning acceptance of ideas or beliefs that may not be in the best interests of those who unquestioningly accept these ideas or beliefs. It is from this that worldviews can be created or reinforced, legitimising, for instance, hegemonic relationships as well as providing a potential basis for one's identity as a social citizen; in turn, these are perpetuated through social institutions such as schools or through family interactions (Chandler, 2002).

Integral to Barthes' project was semiotics, which involves "the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else" (Chandler, 2002, p. 2), and as furthermore explained by Chandler (2002), its importance lies in its potential to assist us in becoming more aware of the "mediating role of signs and of the roles played by ourselves and others in constructing social realities [and] make us less likely to take reality for granted as something which is wholly independent of human interpretation" (p. 14). In addition, he points out that "Deconstructing and contesting the realities of signs can reveal *whose* realities are privileged and whose are suppressed" (p. 15).

There are, of course, difficulties.

Mythological Indeterminacy

Understanding what constitutes cultural myth as well as how/if it works 'magic' or can have something akin to a supernatural hold on people is not without complications, one of which is the approach taken in the very process of coming to an understanding.

It is with some caution that I enter the terrain of cultural analysis vis-à-vis Roland Barthes. His work, which embraces post structuralist theory, may be seen to run somewhat against the grain of hermeneutic interpretation. I do not mean to force together incompatible viewpoints, ignore fundamental theoretical differences, or pry out meanings which are not credible. I have, however, come to see some of the points of departure or foreclosure as also holding potential to become gateways or opportunities, not only in working out or working through *understanding*, but in adding another layer of interest, i.e., in working out or through a *conversation* between philosophical hermeneutics and post structuralist thought. What I seek to negotiate is a starting point, an entry into a dialogue, a space which invites new conversation/new understanding to come into view. James Risser (1991) holds just such a conversation as he considers the similarities, differences, and possible points of convergence between Gadamer's and Barthes' conception of the text.

Risser explains that Barthes finds hermeneutics to be of an "older order" of interpretation; that is, in the search for understanding, there is a search for hidden meaning. This is something that post structuralism denies because of its claims that a particular text may contain a multiplicity of meanings and an interpretive stance such as that taken by philosophical hermeneutics cannot hope to locate the one 'true,' final meaning of a text. However, as Risser (1991) points out, in Gadamer's conception, interpretation does not hold the intent to reconstruct the text; rather, the reader "*participates* in an event in which the text is made to speak again. The act of reading becomes, as it does for post-structuralism, an act of production" (Risser, 1991, p. 94). The key difference here seems to be the way each perspective takes up the meaning of meaning. Where post-structuralism holds that hermeneutics attempts to translate words, hermeneutics maintains that meaning can be – and is – made without the necessity of decoding.

Risser continues with his discussion of post structuralist theory, pointing out that the author becomes displaced as the centre of the work because it is not the author who holds control of the text but rather *language*. The implication of this "death of the author" is that we no longer have a "final signified which holds the key to the secret of the text" (p. 96). In

his further exploration of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Risser points out that this seeming point of departure may not be as clear cut as one might think: "for Gadamer the text remains plural by virtue of the structure of interpretation itself....It is always the same text presenting itself to us that is understood in different ways" (p. 99).

One of the most compelling reasons to understand cultural myths today, if writers such as Roland Barthes, Mary Midgley (2004), Daniel Cook (2004), C.A. Bowers (1993), and Naomi Klein (2000) are correct, is that myths function at approximately the same level as ideology. This implies that the way we think, the actions we perform, and the messages we subsequently convey may be subject to the potential influence of others: policy makers, corporations, politicians, marketers, advertisers, etc. While it would be sheer fallacy to state that *everyone* falls prey to those who the means to exploit naïveté or gullibility, the fact that advertising is a multi billion dollar industry (Klein, 2000) suggests that this form of persuasion is indeed highly effective, perhaps not with entire populations, but certainly a significant proportion of the population. As I discuss in a little more depth later via Wollen (2007), Felluga (2003), and Žižek (1992), desire carries with it a story, a fantasy, and it is that fantasy that kick-starts desire. We are offered not simply something material that may assist in achieving some form of status, we are offered, promised, a way to establish our own coordinates of desire, a string of desires yet to come. Drawing from Žižek's (1992) reading of Lacan, this fantasy

> stages...not a scene in which our desire is fulfilled, fully satisfied, but on the contrary, a scene that realizes, stages, the desire as such....desire is not something given in advance, but something that has to be constructed – and it is precisely the role of fantasy to give the coordinates of the subject's desire, to specify its object, to locate the position the subject assumes in it. It is only through fantasy that the subject is constituted as desiring: *through fantasy, we learn how to desire.* (p. 6)

Fantasy, desire, and ideology seem to have a point of convergence. Each claims to strike within the human psyche at a level at which we are not fully 'conscious.'

In other words, generally speaking, we typically do not lean towards a strong belief in fantasy, and to refer to fantasy in a Lacanian sense, if we are ensnared by a desire which arises from or within a larger fantasy, to say that we believe or do not believe in fantasy becomes a moot point. By this I mean that we may be unaware that we have been drawn into a fantasy because it strikes at an unconscious level. This is yet another instance wherein the word(ing) makes difficult rather than clear one's intention. When/if we *understand* that

we are presented with a story, we might typically believe we are presented with innocent entertainment. However, upon close examination, some of the seemingly innocent story lines that are carried within myths and ideologies may hardly be innocent.

At the level of pop culture, while there is some potential for films such as *The Matrix*, or readable books such as *No Logo* (Klein, 2000), or the act of culture jamming to encourage changes in attitudes or habits, it is virtually impossible to determine with certainty whether, how often, or to what extent this actually occurs. We can be fairly certain, however, that stories are created, carried, and shaped through a dominant discourse (Midgley, 2004). In the Westernised world, that dominant discourse is based on a scientific model, the basis of which is reductionistic, rationalistic, and progress oriented and it carries its own mythology. This, according to Midgley (2004), has had a direct impact on the way we function in Western societies.

> [T]he reductive, atomistic picture of explanation, which suggests that the right way to understand complex wholes is to break them down into their smallest parts, leads us to think that truth is always revealed at the end of ...the microscope. Where microscopes dominate our imagination, we feel that the large wholes we deal within everyday experience are mere appearances. Only the particles revealed at the bottom of the microscope are real. Thus, to an extent unknown in earlier times, our dominant technology shapes our symbolism and thereby our metaphysics, our view about what is real. (p. 1)

Within myths live metaphors, which Midgley (2004) describes as "dramas....patterns [that] shape [our] mental maps [and]...our mental habits. When they are bad they can do a great deal of harm...distorting our selection and slanting our thinking. That is why we need to watch them so carefully" (p. 4). She further speaks of change as a *process* that takes time, particularly when dealing with wide reaching and deeply embedded systems: "such large scale items don't suddenly vanish" (p. 4).

Midgley, in speaking of the metaphors embedded within our language and which are embedded within us, may explain the difficulties that some people have in trying to integrate, come to terms with, or even consider that global disasters, pollution, and climate change, for example, are the consequence of human action. She furthermore points out that the term "modern" is hardly a suitable word to use any more to describe our "range of faults" and suggests replacing it with "'dogmatic,' 'one-sided,' 'simplistic,' and 'monolithic'" (p. 13).

To explore the role of metaphor a little further, in a related but slightly different conception, Joel Weinsheimer (1991), points out that "All understanding occurs...through

the medium of language; and thus if language is fundamentally metaphorical, as Gadamer suggests, that metaphoricity must be reflected in understanding as well" (p. 181). Because we are so immersed in language, so languaged, and so language-*ing*, we do not easily bring to conscious awareness the inherent *meaning* of the words we put into play. Yet when we engage in interpretation, we inevitably engage in understanding metaphor. Weinsheimer (1991) points out that Gadamer addressed metaphor only briefly, but succinctly: language is fundamentally metaphorical, and we are so bound within that it is only *through* language that we form understanding(s). The role of metaphor in language, then, is part of the interpretation that language, conversation, already requires and is not outside the bounds of interpretation. Weinsheimer (1991) explains this in the following way:

> This is not to say that speculative and metaphorical discourse are identical, but only that they do not differ in respect to their invitation to think more. Neither kind of discourse understands itself, as it were. Neither is self-interpreting, and precisely this common lack of self transparency accounts for the fact that both require understanding and interpretation. (pp. 183-184)

What this means to me is that the vigour that enters into, and exits from interpretation immediately *assumes* the presence of metaphor, for "as in Gadamer's view, language is not something ancillary to understanding but its condition" (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 191). Another key to understanding metaphor has to do with the conception of spirit which, in the hermeneutical sense, "consists in movement – first in its departure from its home into the strange and unfamiliar, the otherwise. If the move is complete, spirit finds a home, makes itself at home in the new place" (p. 188). This interaction between the familiar and the strange, rather than acting as competing moments, are ever in concert, ever oriented towards moving forward to a new understanding, resting in a new 'home.' As Weinsheimer (1991) points out, if we accept that metaphoricity makes understanding possible, the "resultant interpretation will be metaphorical whether it contains any metaphors or not" (p. 191). This seems to imply that it is redundant to speak of metaphor as something to be teased out and examined separately; what may be more reasonable to unpack are the "prejudices, the perspective, and the horizon already implicit in the interpreter's language" (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 197). This, however, is not regarded as a deficit; rather, it is exactly what authorises interpretation in the first place.

Understanding metaphor as described by Weinsheimer above seems to imply that it must be treated as one would treat ideology: something highly suspect, something to be

uncovered, something to be mistrusted. Rather than arriving at a 'true' understanding, a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1968/2003) is the probable outcome. What this furthermore means in terms of this dissertation, is that I have once again been startled into a new recognition, a recognition that I may have been so focused on critique that I was oriented more so towards critical theory rather than on deriving *understanding*. With a nod to Gadamer, I have come to understand that my fore-understandings have limited my view. Through the process of this work, writing, reading, deliberating, I am coming to see things differently. I have left my former way-station, I am coming 'home' to a new place, and unravelling the "hitherto unrecognised possibility" (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 188).

Part of the relevance of cultural mythologies to this work lies within the message encased and propagated by the advertising industry to spend, spend, spend – an extension, or rather another iteration of my next topic of discussion, the myth of progress.

The Myth of Progress

Ronald Wright (2004) begins *A Short History of Progress* by taking up the latter of the three questions scrawled across the top of the painting created by the grief-stricken Gauguin after the sudden death of his daughter, "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" The idea of progress responds to all of these by placing us as actors within a historical continuum. Wright informs us that "most people in the Western cultural tradition still believe in the Victorian ideal of progress" (p. 3). This ideal of progress, he continues, consists of a belief system driven by seeking improvement. It is rooted in a history that promotes "faith in progress". This faith, Wright writes, has "ramified and hardened into an ideology – a secular religion which, like the religions that progress has challenged, is blind to certain flaws in its credentials. Progress, therefore, has become 'myth' in the anthropological sense" (p. 4). When something strikes with the intensity of religious fervour, when myths carry such power, authority, and meaning, they are our cultural road maps, "we live and die by them" (Wright, 2004, p. 4). Rowe (2001/2003) would seem to concur: "Societies function on the basis of the cultural myths they espouse. Belief systems channel and constrain the thoughts and action of all people. Paradigms lead, facts follow" (p. 60).

The ideal of progress grew out of the rise of science and the concomitant displacement of religious authority. Belief in the emancipatory power of knowledge grew out of the enlightenment ideal – i.e., that "the growth of knowledge is the key to human

emancipation" (Gray, 2004, p. 18). Application of scientific knowledge to social phenomena acted as a cornerstone of faith for social theorists. This faith was expressed by both Karl Marx and John Stuart Mills in their belief that "as society and economy become increasingly based upon science so our outlook on the world will become more and more rational" (Gray, 2004, p. 18). The role that these myths of progress play, although couched in scientific language, is not the need for truth, rather,

> [i]t is to find meaning and purpose in history. The Christian myth of salvation in history did not vanish with the arrival of secular thought. On the contrary, it has shaped secular thinking, giving rise to the idea of progress that inspired many of the political movements of the past century. (Gray, 2004, p. 70)

The modern version of the myth of progress derives from the German Idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel, as discussed in Russell (1978), viewed history as teleological, but also as imbued with moral purpose. He interpreted history as operating through a dialectical process towards what he referred to as the Absolute Idea. The final outcome of this historical process, the Absolute Idea incarnate, was the Prussian state.

Karl Marx adopted Hegel's view of history as teleology as well as his use of dialectical process in the unfolding of this history – rather than seeing this as an ideal process he viewed it as a materialistic process, dialectical materialism, which operated through changing modes of production (Russell, 1978). The positive outcome that this process would lead to would be the egalitarian Communist state.

Darwin's dynamic view of the development of life, expounded by his theory of evolution, although implying no moral valuation, has also been adopted – or perhaps more appropriately, perverted – as the paradigm of progress (Midgley, 2004). [Biological] history, in Darwin's viewpoint is not imbued with moral purpose. Social Darwinism, in particular as expressed by Spencer, viewed the market place as the mechanism for human evolution where "commercial freedom would ensure the 'survival of the fittest'" (Midgley, 2004, p. 79). Any interference in the market place in this conception is regarded as a distortion in the natural working out of the evolutionary process. The appeal of social Darwinism, or cultural evolution, was to equate evolution with progress (Gray, 2004).

Capitalism also has an implicit teleological view of history particularly in its modern guise of economism. The process is the operation of free markets which, guided by the unseen hand, assigns all values. The term "free", arising most prominently out of the

historical period of the French and American revolutions, is a value laden term which implies that any restrictions on the market impinges upon peoples' options. The moral purpose implicit in capitalism is the ideal of material progress. In this manifestation, progress becomes synonymous with economic growth. Markets are viewed as the engine of economic growth and therefore any restraint placed upon them even to preserve communities will impede growth and are therefore seen as error of policy (Gray, 2004). By placing our faith in the unfettered market place, the arbiter of all values, we will be rewarded by having our material wants and desires gratified – a heaven on Earth. Francis Fukuyama (2006) views the modern capitalist state, governed by democratic institutions, as the end point of history. This is not unlike Hegel's view that the "Absolute Idea", as embodied by the Prussian state, was the end point of history (Russell, 1978).

Within a capitalist society individuals participate in this story line as consumers. Consumerism defines the self only in relationship to capitalism – the meaning and purpose of life is to consume. Ironically, as Wachtel (1989) points out, a society founded upon a growth imperative and the ideas that support this, although able to produce immense riches, paradoxically renders us unable to satisfy our desires.

> Our restless desire for more and more has been a major dynamic for economic growth, but it has made the achievement of that growth largely a hollow victory. Our sense of contentment and satisfaction is not a simple result of any absolute level of what we acquire or achieve. It depends upon our frame of reference, on how what we attain compares to what we expected. If we get farther than we expected we tend to feel good. If we expected to go farther than we have then even a rather high level of success can be experienced as disappointing. In America, we keep upping the ante. Our expectations keep accommodating to what we have attained. 'Enough' is always just over the horizon, and like the horizon it recedes as we approach it. (p. 17)

Within a capitalist system, as pointed out by Marx (Wolff, 2004) all of nature becomes commodities (resources). The environment is considered as an "infinite source of raw materials and an infinite sink for wastes" (Goodland and Daly, 1990, p. 270). The "environment" rarely enters into the language of economics and when it does it is treated as an externality, "a minor imperfection in the circular flow of production and consumption" (Goodland and Daly, 1990, p. 273). In concert with Marxism, capitalism, at least in it most doctrinaire forms, is markedly anthropocentric.

A current variant of the myth of progress has allied pursuit of scientific knowledge with technological optimism to create a technological utopianism. The enhancement of

human power through technology allows this utopia to develop. Implicit in this view is the notion that "we can control the technologies we have invented" (Gray, 2004, p. 19). Genetic engineering provides the latest example of how the natural world can be reformulated towards human purposes, or perhaps recast in our own image – which exposes the technological hubris of this view (Midgley, 2004). Knowledge, supplied by scientific pursuit, with its close relative technology, provides the means to alter the world for human purposes and capitalism provides the means of social organisation and valuation.

A dystopian view of progress has begun to emerge particularly with the deterioration of the biosphere. Wright (2004) retraces 'progress' from earliest civilisations through to the present, warning that we, Westernised humanity, are dabbling in a dangerous experiment. The biosphere simply cannot sustain unbridled progress, and he insists that it is time to bring it under control. Cautioning against technological determinism, at the same time he does not promote magical thinking: "The reform that is needed is not anti-capitalist, anti-American, or even deep environmentalist; it is simply the transition from short-term to long-term thinking. From recklessness and excess to moderation and the precautionary principle" (p. 131). Rowe (2001/2003) maintains that Western philosophy, religion, science, and technology have contributed to an over emphasis on culture and de-emphasis on the natural world: "In the interest of efficiency, speed, comfort and provision of consumer goods far beyond our needs, Western culture entices us away from our biological-ecological roots....Too much culture, not enough Nature" (p. 43).

C.A. Bowers (1995) points out that the "progressive and modernizing nature of beliefs and values" (p. 3) has been promoted in the education system which has helped to solidify "an anthropocentric view of the universe…and the assumption that our rationally-based technology will always enable us to overcome the breakdowns and shortages connected with the natural world" (p. 4). If this is so, and if these underlying story lines are indeed contributing to – or at least not detracting from – the destruction of the ecosphere, one must ask how this *system* may be interrupted.

In trying to come to some understanding of what drives our thoughts, behaviours, and beliefs, the myth of progress does seem to bear some validity. I end this section with a final quotation from J. S. Rowe (2001/2003) which applies to the Westernised world.

> For the God-word of the current ruling paradigm is growth – economic growth, population growth, agricultural growth. Based solely on human wants, it shows not the slightest understanding of the close psychological and physical relationships

between the human race and Earth's ancient ecosystems. It recognises no limits to the expropriation of Earth's wealth. Such a ruling paradigm, forged by our ecologically naïve ancestors, is clearly false and foolish. (p. 61)

The following section is a further extension of my explorations of contemporary myths and personal stories and how these might influence, overtly or covertly, positively or negatively the choices we make and the plans we formulate. Conversations with the participants are interwoven throughout. I begin with an account of my attempt to introduce this topic sensibly and understandably to the research group.

A Mythological Conversation

For all our sentiments of disorientation…we have not forfeited the capacity to narrate. The hermeneutic self is still resolved to travel with Hamlet to those countries 'from whose bourne no traveller returns' and tell the story: to relate the impossible tale; to put a face on the visored ghost. Even in our world of fuzzy edges, many continue to wrestle with gods until they yield their names, to talk to strangers and reckon with monsters. In short, to say the unsayable as if it were somehow sayable. (Kearney, 2003, pp. 230-231)

Careful not to ask 'leading' questions, the sort that drive the answers I 'want' to hear to get confirmation about my own biases and beliefs, I try to focus on finding another way 'in,' another way of reaching understanding, another entry point. I wish to explore interpretations and experiences of societal/cultural stories, the ones that we connect with, the ones that draw us away from other large stories, the spaces filled, the spaces created, the spaces left gaping.

As with other conversations I initiate, I want to make sure that the words are the 'right' ones. How do I provide a condensed version of the work of Roland Barthes – whom none of them likely ever heard of, or even Joseph Campbell, whose work, more accessible to the general population, perhaps, but likely widely understood as the man who said, "Follow your bliss"? And how do I make a quick and simple distinction between Ancient myths – Greek, Roman, Egyptian – and contemporary cultural myths? I suspect this might be a difficult task, I partially rehearse how I might explain this, but when the moment arrives, I again find myself struggling with the right language. I take a deep breath, I try to collect my thoughts, and then I come up with this bit of brilliance: "What I would really like to talk about today is mythology. Cultural. Mythology as a theoretical framework through which to look at the way we're functioning as a society…" Sentence fragments, thought fragments.

Another instance of my pronounced difficulty with language, as if I need to provide further proof to my colleagues or to myself. I try to recover by rambling on about the difference between Greek myths and contemporary cultural myths – the former easily understood, the latter a bit less obvious. It does not seem to get better when I begin talking about archetypes, so I shift gears, attempting to explain that the stories that circulate in society, carried through advertising, popular culture, politics, etc., contain neatly packaged teleologies that some theorists believe – I mention Roland Barthes but know not why – operate at the level of ideology. Somehow or other, however, they seem to make some sense of it. McAvity tentatively responds, "What we know about mythology that also works with language is we use our own filters and experience to interpret them, which can lead us to various kinds of assumptions that may be so or may not be so?" (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

A silence falls as they absorb or puzzle over or perhaps try to relate to what I and McAvity have said, so – to fill the space – I resort once again to a personal story, my own instance(s) of magical wishes and hedonism, of desiring instant gratification, of wishing as escape. We are into another conversation and another movement towards reaching understanding of something.

> [I]it is equally true (and equally false) to say that we are all free to produce our own myths or alternatively we are all tied to producing the myths of our place. It is precisely in this space, between freedom and constraint, (whether individual, linguistic, material, etc.) that thinking, caring, and critique maintain their tenuous existence. (Smith, 2001, p. 12)

Once again we enter into the difficulty.

What followed were personal stories from the past, stories that have currency in the present, stories that spoke of moderation, less disposable income than children seem now to have, stories about ties to childhood spaces. As human beings, we are in constant dialogue with our environment. This includes conversations, images, written text, media messages, sensory experiences, etc. However, there are indications that the dialogue may not always be equal. As a primary transmitter of fads, fashions, and fictions, culture has the narrative potential to speak to its citizens, through its citizens, and for its citizens. Later in this chapter, I present an excerpt, one chosen amongst many popular culture possibilities, that highlights the power of a story to both reveal and conceal the potential effects of an 'unconscious' acceptance of story lines. I am speaking of the multi-million dollar-grossing

movie, *The Matrix*. This movie, the brainchild of Andy Wachowski and his brother Larry, is a combination of postmodernist philosophy – Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) in particular – and science fiction. What follows is part of the conversation in which G.R. insightfully connects cultural stories to Plato's famous Allegory of the Cave.

G.R.: Sorry – can I jump in here? We're about ready to start [a particular unit] and one of our essential understandings is history of story. And we've been struggling with the unit and one of the things I realised is we're struggling because we're looking at personal story and cultural story. So we're trying to take on both of those things, and we keep jumping between them and we're not clear exactly where we're going to look at personal story and where we're going to look at cultural story. They're just so entwined that we have to look at them both.

Bev: Well, we are so much part of our context we can't – I think, anyway – separate ourselves from our culture. So it is difficult to isolate –

G.R.: Yeah – you're integrating your personal story because you're meeting that culture through the personal. So the two overlap all the time and that's their experience.

Bev: Yeah, and we don't understand, or as we attempt to reach an understanding of something, something else erupts and we get a little knock on the head telling us that understanding can be fleeting, too. You can have it for a moment and then it slips away because something else has moved in. There is an uncovering but when you uncover something, you reveal something. So at the same time that something is uncovered, something else is covered up.

G.R: And yet it's Plato's Allegory of the Cave, too.

G.R.'s mention of Plato's Allegory of the Cave turned a light on for me, as it were. I had been looking for an appropriate metaphor to apply to a consumerist mindset and although I had already considered the Wachowski Brother's (1999) movie, *The Matrix*, it was not until G.R. mentioned Plato's Cave that I could see a parallel that might fit with my study. Andrew Lawless (2005) discusses Plato's cave as

> a journey between two worlds, the dark, subterranean world of the cave and the one that lies outside it…the sunworld. Each is filled with images that may either instruct or mislead those who gaze upon them. This is because some images are faithful copies of their originals and some are not. (p. 15)

The connection I see amongst Plato's Allegory of the Cave, *The Matrix*, and my work lies in raising questions about the possibility that human beings may not always find clarity

through 'established' ways of seeing/understanding. And increasingly, those ways of seeing, at least in the Westernised world, seem to be colonised by media. In Plato's Cave, prisoners are chained and unable to turn their heads. They see only shadows on a wall, which they take to be real; however, what they are seeing and living is an *appearance* of reality. I see *The Matrix*, as another iteration of Plato's Cave. This movie arose more than once during conversations with Carol. What follows immediately is what she had to say during one of those conversations.

> When I'm out at the lake and I unplug, I'm no longer in the 'Matrix,' we don't have a TV, no phone, in the winter we haul our own water, in the summer we've got plumbed in water. But you know, it's work, it's work when you're out there. There's a fireplace and that's it....And so when I go out there, sometimes, [*laughter*], I just *wanna get back fast*. So I think that nature can be quite intimidating. When you unplug from all the technology that we use, because there's these vast silences and if you don't have activity – we have a CD player out there but we don't play it that often, it's not like it's our life, so it's very selective – so it's like you really meet yourself. And sometimes when I go out there, especially if it's been a bad week or whatever, if I haven't come to peace with things, it's hell out there for me. I just want to get home as fast as I can because there's nothing I can do to escape. Whereas when I'm at home, I just do this or I do that or I go to a movie or I go to the mall or I – so there's always a technology to soothe. So I think human beings, and I'm generalising and I got heck for doing that – but if human beings find that nature is overwhelming, they conquer it, right? I wonder if there's something there. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

When Carol was speaking about unplugging from the "Matrix", she also seemed to be speaking to the difficulty of the change from her home to her home away from home, which, read metaphorically, necessarily involves "difference, deviation, and excursion but also similarity, return, and reunion" (Weinsheimer, 1991, p. 185). Punctuating the alienating character of 'home away from home' are her words that seem to echo the difficulty that arises from a dramatic difference between homes – i.e., from the steady familiarity of roaring noise to the disquieting foreignness of crushing silence. Her description of the "vast silences" with no "activity" has an unsettling undertone – which seems precisely to be what happens: there is a movement, a dis-placement, a dis-order, a con-fusion.

'Home away from home' *as metaphor* brings about a dramatic alteration in one's environmental space and a corresponding dramatic alteration in one's mind space. There *is* an unsettling. From the constant hum and movement of the city, being almost crushed by communication tools, 'entertainment,' the mall, light switches, remote control devices, movie

theatres, to being almost crushed by the utter silence and self reliance one experiences in a 'wilderness' setting – hauling water, lighting fires, kerosene lamps, and the 'hell' that she experiences if she has not come to terms with her preceding week. And to top it off, in this silence, in the alien space, "it's like you really meet yourself". In this transition is an unexpected movement, a beyond-words moment, a reckoning.

I do not mean to belabour the point, but in some ways, this bears some resemblance to shifting or perhaps sliding along the spectrum from a productivist discourse to an ecological one. In Carol's description, there is almost a shock, an abrupt difference which is only noticeable as difference in the dramatic absence of the 'other,' which, in this case is the natural outdoor environment. From a heavily worded, externally noisy, vigorously eventful yet somehow empty environment, she moves to a silent, still, 'beyond-words' environment where contact with life and the natural world offer deep absorption, and in that absorption, a demand seems to be made for one's full attention, one's *presence*, physically and mindfully. Gadamer (1968/2003) refers to presence in the following way: "Being present does not simply mean being there along with something else that is there at the same time. To be present means to participate" (p. 124). This does not mean that the worded, noisy, busy world is *not* a world of life or participation or absorption but in the instance described by Carol above, what it means to be present and to participate unfold quite differently between these two settings. In a natural environment, one's integrity is confronted, one's 'truth' seems to be forced in a way quite different from the 'busy' world. This difference, issuing forth a moment of discovering, uncovering, *being* the other (i.e., self *as* other) rather than simply being *with* or distanced *from* the other, seems to hold the potential for a breaking point or a break*through*. The former, a breaking point, might be seen as a power unleashed, unexpected, and unwanted, whereas the latter, the breakthrough, holds the potential – a potency/power – to move towards engagement, integration, and understanding. Even though an experience may occur in isolation, even though there may not be any external sound or noise, it is never fully 'silent' if it is fully felt or if one is fully present, fully participating.

From here, I will pick up a few threads from the above and move towards a discussion of consumerism. This will constitute a further view and re-view of the conversations held with the participants in this study and select pieces from a superabundance of published research as it applies to consumerism and contemporary

culture. As described above in numerous ways and places, the inherent difficulties and tensions in trying to interpret and express understanding of our own lives frequently arose, erupting, interrupting, and disrupting.

The Progress of Myth: Consumerism

Consumerism is described by Smith (1998) as a "lifestyle that centres upon owning and accumulating commodities, where self-worth, the meaning of life, and personal satisfaction all are defined in relation to it" (p. 9). The term "consume" originates in the Latin words "com", meaning intensive, and "sumere", to take (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Even a quick glance through the various definitions of the "consume" family: "to waste…destroy totally…ravage…absorb" gives a strong sense that the original meaning "to intensively take" may now be more accurately interpreted to mean "to intensively *use* up." In a similar, rather graphic vein, Smith (1998) tells us that "[i]n strictly denotative terms, consume means destroy and devour…also rot, decay, and perish" (pp. 43-44). As recently as the early 20th Century, the word "consumption" also held meaning as a medical tag for tuberculosis. During the 18th Century, the meaning of consumption seemingly underwent a transformation: the long standing, Puritanical disdain for waste and self indulgence gave way – at least for those who could afford it – to pleasure, abundance, luxury, and the circulation of capital – the formerly loud dissent against acquisition of material goods became an even louder assent in favour of it (Smith, 1998). Helping this along was the 18th Century philosopher and political economist Adam Smith, who did his part in promoting the view that it is a 'natural' tendency for human beings to desire (*more*): need was supplanted by preference; no longer was acquisition a sin; humanity's true 'nature' was finally set free (Smith, 1998).

During a discussion in which I introduced the topic of shopping, consumerism, and desire and/versus need, I had not proceeded very far before I admitted my impulse to be "at the front of the race to get a new car, new clothes, and jewellery." This confession, in which I fully recognise that I am caught up in the sense of identity, or power, or prestige, or temporary (false?) sense of feeling 'good' that we may get from the clothes we wear or the vehicle we drive came almost immediately after I had spoken of the "garbojunk" planet (a term borrowed from J. S. Rowe, 1990) that has come about as a result of overconsumption

and subsequent landfill dumping. As the person conducting this research project, I find myself, yet again, doubly conflicted.

As the conversation(s) continued, others also spoke of personal encounters with desire, guilt, and uncertainty.

> I feel like I'm a bit of a hypocrite because even though I do try to get [students] to think about taking care of the planet and what they can do and what we as a classroom community can do at school, and yet I'm one [a consumer] too...I need a new computer, let's put this one out on the corner...I'm just as involved in all that consumerism, too. (Deb, Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

The rejoinder from Carol [*laughing*]: "I'm just feeling guilty – I can't have any fun."

This response, even though Carol was quite obviously joking, is indicative of the guilt, inner conflict, and the challenge that arises when trying to determine where to 'draw the line.' De Graff, Wann, and Naylor (2002), use the term "affluenza" to describe the unbridled consumption that occurs in the United States, but which can be reasonably extended to numerous other countries in the Westernised world, not the least of which is Canada. The definition they provide for "affluenza" is: "a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more" (p. 2). They advocate for change, ecological mindedness, voluntary simplicity, and they advocate for sensible choices: "The message... isn't to stop buying; it's to buy carefully and consciously with full attention to the real benefits and costs of your purchases, remembering, always, that the best things in life aren't things" (p. 8). Although they do not explicitly state this, they do not seem to be endorsing a Spartan existence wherein all diversions or 'little pleasures' are revoked and repudiated. They are, rather, calling for thoughtfulness, careful reflection, and moderation. As John Barry (2006) puts it, "the issue is to attempt to cultivate and support mindful as opposed to mindless consumption, and to seek a balance between the extremes of excessive consumption and no consumption" (p. 38). In a similar vein, Louv (2005) writes,

> [y]es, we're enamoured with our gadgets – our cell phones connected to our digital cameras connected to our laptops connected to an e-mail-spewing satellite transponder hovering somewhere over Macon, Georgia. Of course, some of us (I include myself here) love the gizmology. But quality of life isn't measured only by what we gain, but also by what we trade for it. (p. 59)

North Americans are notorious for being the world's greatest consumers, thus greatest despoiler of the Earth's natural resources (Head, 1990). This is not to mention that "[w]hat we consume we also discard" (p. 160).

For those of us who get caught up in, or are 'called' to voracious consumption as a remedy to quell or calm the 'restlessness,' we might attribute, at least in some part, this susceptibility to the mixed messages with which we are confronted on an almost daily basis. On one hand, consumers are purported to be self reliant, assertive, able to express individuality through purchases; on the other hand, paradoxically, through purchasing and displaying commodities, consumerism involves "buying into" a particular system, one that has closed, or at least tight, conditions and criteria, in effect subsuming/consuming that very individuality purportedly obtained through being 'discriminating' consumers. This does not mean that individuals are inert, unconscious bodies giving over an entire life force to some sort of beastly consumption-contraption – obviously, not everything is purchased or accepted. But is it possible that human beings are becoming so 'hyper activated,' as it were, that existence is taking on a state of heightened alertness which acts as interference to being fully conscious? Has over stimulation had a reverse effect? Rather than fully awake and fully conscious, are we *partially* awake and *semi* conscious? At the same time that something is being sucked out of us, we are getting something in return, which can perhaps be acknowledged through allusion to illusion, thereby creating a paradox of sorts – we are both consumed and consuming at the same time. But does this become a sort of consumption of the self, consumption as a psychological disease?

Perhaps the above is an extensive exaggeration. The fast pace we maintain, the continual play of images before us, accumulating material 'stuff' – perhaps this is merely the spirit of the times, our Western zeitgeist, and we should not be too bothered by it, nor should we try to over analyse it. However, as the point of this project is to *understand* this phenomenon, I continue, over-analysis notwithstanding.

From the Good Life to the Goods Life [3]

> Consumerism, corporatism, and technological progress [have] become the central principles for constructing who we are and how we act. Democratic identities are replaced by consuming patterns, and the good life is constructed in terms of what we buy….media are engaged in a cultural pedagogy marked by a struggle over meaning, identity, and desire. (Giroux, 2001, p. 24)

Carol, referring to an article she read about personal debt, mentioned that in North America, many people have more debt than income –

> And…I always wonder why? Why are people doing this? Everybody has needs and you have to have those needs met but it worries me that people sell themselves short…it's like their identity, their image, their sense of belonging depends on who cuts their hair, what they drive, where they live…(Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

De Graff, Wann, and Naylor (2002) state that "Each year, in fact, more than a million people – up from 313,000 in 1980, and including one in every seventy Americans – file for personal bankruptcy, more than graduate from college. That's been the case since 1996" (p. 20). They furthermore state that these bankruptcies are not confined to lower income citizens as one might think – being unable to keep pace with inflation is certainly a concern; however, it is more than low income that propels the parade to insolvency. Another element that enters into this discussion is the remuneration (via interest charges, lawsuits, and insurance claims) that banks and lending agencies receive for those who claim bankruptcy. Lending institutions get wealthier as people get poorer and deeper in debt. Presumably, these institutions must also *lose* money; however, at the same time that banks are pushing for stricter bankruptcy laws, they are also issuing credit cards as never before, not infrequently to teenagers (de Graff et al, 2002).

In fairness to those who are caught up in buying primarily for the sake of acquisition, it must be noted that we, in North America, are subjected to a continual outpouring of ads and admonitions promising and imploring a plethora of pleasures and it is extremely difficult to resist, or even to know where to draw the line or how to find the 'middle ground.' As Carol pointed out, "Gap for Babies – starts at birth" (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005). Daniel Cook (2004), in exploring the roots of children's consumer culture, outlines the way that adults of today are the living legacies of commodified childhoods gone by.

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[3] From *Affluenza: The All Consuming Epidemic (De Graaf et al., 2002)*

Memory, sense of personal history is to some extent connected to the commercial culture of youth. Carol's comment, when placed alongside Cook's work, is an astute observation of the way that marketers have created a 'need' and a consumer mentality even before birth.

Alison Armstrong and Charles Casement (1998) point out that advertising has successfully extolled the 'virtues' of high-tech toys from the time that children are toddlers: "Of the ten best-selling [software products as far back as 1995]...four were considered suitable for children aged three, and one was advertised for users as young as eighteen months old" (pp. 56-57). They furthermore cite the National Association for the Education of Young Children as "approving computer activities for children of three and four years old" (p. 57). Seabrook (2001) states that "Video games now [provide] kids with the same sense of action, speed, and power that pro football used to supply" (p. 90). I do not mean to say that there is no value whatsoever in electronic equipment and computer technology, only that with the growing trend of indoor activity comes a greater lack of contact with outdoor spaces, which, as psychologist Jane Healy puts it, renders children "out of tune with phenomena" (Healy, 1990, p. 43). Additionally, spending a great deal of time on inert activities, as opposed to running and playing and participating in physical activity, has been linked to child obesity, which is rapidly increasing; this in turn is accompanied by health risks such as Type II diabetes (Healy, 1998). In contrast to the negative effects of lack of exercise, physical engagement – along with developing muscles – has a positive effect on mental abilities as well as assisting with coping skills: "chemicals secreted by the brain during and after exercise enable it to deal better with stress and anxiety, counteract the effects of depression, and help [with]...learning and memory" (Healy, 1998, p. 121).

Susan Thomas (2007) speaks of the "baby genius phenomenon – the widely held notion that infants and toddlers can be made smarter via exposure to the right products and programs" (p. 9). This in turn has had an impact on the toy industry: "to be competitive in the baby and toddler business, a toymaker's products must encourage 'learning'....The fastest-growing segment of the $3.2 billion infant and pre-school toy business is represented by 'educational' products...advertised as stimulating babies' and toddlers' cognitive abilities" (p. 9).

The promises, the flashy advertising, and parental responsibility/guilt to ensure that their children get the 'best' opportunities in life make for a powerful incentive for parents to 'buy into' these programs. The title of Thomas's book is *Buy, Buy, Baby*: is this the double

message that is being transmitted to children by their parents as they become drawn into the swelling ranks of consumer society? Is 'childhood' forfeited in the process? Are teachers also being drawn into these flimsy assertions? Might this somehow wend its way into the classroom, whether through casual conversations with parents or outright recommendations to the students they teach? Do schools and teachers bear some responsibility in raising concerns about these so-called educational programs?

The caption I used for this section ("From the Good Life to the Goods Life") comes from De Graaf, Wann, and Naylor (2002) who (re)play and modify Benjamin Franklin's words, "Waste not, want not" to "'waste more, want more'…the good life [has become] the *goods* life" (p. 142). Tangentially, this brings to mind a conversation in which Leila spoke of a "huge to-do" with her daughter "because she wanted to go…shopping [with her friends to buy more jeans]." Leila's response to her daughter: "'I just bought you two pair of jeans' – how many pairs of jeans does a person need?" In part, this conflict, or in her words, "to-do", may be representative of contradictory value systems: in Leila's words, their family has "been around the world…on top of several volcanoes, several continents…mountains…that is what [her children] love" (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005). Shopping, perhaps, may run contrary to this. While I do not mean to associate Leila's family with a slogan such as "waste more, want more", nor do I mean to imply that her daughter is wasteful and irresponsible, my point/question centres around the overriding influence of peers, and, in a form, advertising, over what might be termed parental 'sensibility.'

The power of peer pressure, which stems to some degree from the power of popular culture, which furthermore exerts its authority via media, does not necessarily ensure a permanent shift from enjoying the gifts of 'nature' to revelling in the gifts of the mall, which, given the cost of many purchases, are hardly gifts:

> Authentic role models turn out to be the persons who nurtured and made us feel secure…the ones who not only provided material protection and educational opportunities for us but, as the best of friends, safeguarded the mind fields in which our identities were explored and developed and our selves consecrated. These weren't just people, moreover; they were and are caretakers, mothers, fathers. (Cottle, 2001, p. 104)

The "caretakers" Cottle refers to include teachers and school personnel. While his work focuses on adolescent consciousness and the formation of identity, it also bears direct relevance to schooling and ecological mindedness. He does not, in his work, nor do I in

mine, purport to save children and youth from the 'evils' of marketing, but he may provide some insights and pedagogical understandings that have application in the classroom, particularly in his reference to John Dewey and the possibilities that "self reflection" hold within teaching and learning situations.

> A mystery that some adolescents begin to appreciate, particularly if they study at the feet of admirable teachers, is that the supposed nature of culture is itself partly a collection of the products, artefacts, ideologies, and social rituals that adolescents themselves perpetuate and create. (Cottle, 2001, p. 121)

What Cottle offers here is an invitation for children and youth to recognise the role they have to play in either perpetuating or questioning a consumer-oriented, "sensation-driven culture" (p. 128).

Susan Linn (2004), as a parent, instructor, and psychologist at Harvard Medical School studying the effects of commercialism on children, parents, and schools, begins her book thus:

> My daughter is a popular kid these days. Taco Bell wants her, and so does Burger King. Abercrombie and Fitch have a whole store devoted to her. Pert Plus has a shampoo she'll love. Ethan Allen is creating bedroom sets she can't live without. Alpo even wants to sell her dog food. With a single-minded competitiveness reminiscent of the California gold rush, corporations are racing to stake their claim on the consumer group formerly known as children. (p. 1)

As an aside, it is interesting that the spell check on my computer is not programmed to recognise words such as "alterity", "anthropocentric", or "neoliberal" but "Abercrombie", "Fitch", and even "Alpo" are not only in the Microsoft dictionary, they are also detectable by the 'auto correct' function: misspellings are easily automatically corrected. Are these words more common than I realise or have corporations made their way into computer software as well as mass media?

Linn's words above may appear to be strong and impassioned or perhaps emotionally driven, but she backs her claims with 'hard evidence': "children influence more than $600 billion in spending a year" (p. 1). In speaking of young people as "the consumer group formerly known as children", is she over romanticising childhood? Is she stuck in her own past? She explains that her concerns rest on the foreclosing of *experience* that attends mass response to commercialism. She emphasises that it is the responsibility and "ongoing obligation" of all adults to nurture a sense of wonder not as a "naïve, romantic perception of blissful early years, but rather [as] a recognition of the amazing possibilities inherent in each

child" (p. 3). By the same token, she acknowledges the difficulty parents must contend with in the face of "well-funded, brilliantly strategized, and relentless commercial assaults on their children" (p. 31). A simplistic response such as admonishing parents to 'just say no' is the same, she says, as "telling a drug addict to 'just say no' to drugs" (p. 32). A final point I wish to bring forward from Linn's work is the connection between marketing and education. Along with vending machines and business partnerships, some schools in the United States (approximately 12,000, adding to a total student population of more than eight million) have negotiated deals with "Channel One" – a daily video program that broadcasts news and, of course, commercials. In this agreement, schools receive an assortment of electronic equipment (e.g., VCRs, blank video tapes, satellite dishes, etc.) in exchange for ten minutes of broadcasting interspersed with two minutes of commercials – the advertising cost of which is $200,000 per day for thirty seconds. Linn (2004) reports that the school time lost in this transaction amounts to $1.8 billion a year in taxpayers' money, the "equivalent of five instructional days watching Channel One…teaching time lost to the ads alone is equivalent to one entire school day per year" (p. 82). Of the $1.8 billion dollars that taxpayers unwittingly release, $300 million pays for commercials. I do not mean to stray too deeply into the intrusion of the marketplace into education at this point; I mention it here because of the questions it raises around consumerism and the broadening sphere of the advertising community. I pick up this discussion of school-business partnerships in the section entitled "Paideia."

In a slightly different interpretation, Benjamin Barber (2007) claims that consumerism is undermining citizenship at the same time that it encourages infantilism in the adult world and adulthood in children – as one example of this, he mentions eight year olds who are practically wearing push-up bras and adults who are wearing overalls – all of which is driven by a global economy that does not manufacture goods, but rather *needs*,

> aiming both to sell to a younger demographic and to imbue older consumers with the tastes of the young….hoping to rekindle in grown-ups the tastes and habits of children so that they can sell globally the relatively useless cornucopia of games, gadget, and myriad consumer goods for which there is no discernible 'need market' other than the one created by capitalism's own frantic imperative to sell. (p. 7)

In his conception, productivism has given way to consumerism. He does entertain the idea that consumerism may perhaps be *liberating* rather than stifling, and asks, "what if…infantilising consumerism is itself a beneficent rather than a destructive process, the

liberation of consumers…rather than…incarceration? What if…the mall is a happy, even civic place and shopping a benign, even invigorating pastime?" (Barber, 2007, p. 271).

This is, of course, not without pitfalls and disturbances. Even after exploring this topic for many years and attempting to unravel the mysteries and ideologies transmitted by advertisers and marketers, I too feel the pull and desire the distraction offered by the false sense of security offered by consumerism. And I know I am not alone.

Hammerslough (2001) claims that the deeper issue associated with consuming lies in the power we seek from material objects. Wrapped up within this is a sense of values: "In this skewed framework [of materialism] only some values are worth possessing; others, such as patience, forbearance, acceptance, compassion, modesty, thrift, and, uh, self restraint, are notably absent" (Hammerslough, 2001, p. 19).

On one level, consumerism becomes manifest in physical (material) form: I consume, therefore I have. It has been suggested that, inextricably interwoven into the fabric of consumption, is another level, that which takes hold as psychological effect: I consume, therefore I *am* (White and Hellerick, n.d.). To *not* consume, to *not* have, implies to not '*be*': the self is subsumed and consumed in the very absence of consuming. In both forms, physical and psychological, consuming fulfills some form of desire: in accumulating tangible 'stuff' or – in providing something to identify with or draw some form of identity from, its psychological equivalent is encased: a seemingly appropriate image. From this erupts the question: "Why?" Are human egos so fragmented and fragile that we must draw a personal image from external sources? Could this be connected to what Charles Taylor (1991) speaks of as the "malaise" of modernity?

Zygmunt Bauman (2001) might explain this, at least in part, as the unifying promise presented by consuming: living within a "chronic deficit of certainty" (p. 25), individuals gain identity through their purchases. In his view, consumerism is not about satisfying needs but rather desires.

> In the consumer society, consumption is its own purpose and so is self-propelling. Orthodox psychology defined 'need' as a state of tension that would eventually disperse and wither away once the need has been gratified. The 'need' which sets the members of consumer society in motion is, on the contrary, the need to keep the tension alive and, if anything, stronger with every step. Our ancestors could recommend 'delay of gratification.' Consumer society proclaims the *impossibility* of gratification and measures its progress by ever-rising demand. (Bauman, 2001, p. 13)

Not unrelated, or rather, *utterly related*, to what Bauman speaks of above is the advertising industry. Williams (1961) speaks of advertising as a "magical system", which, through effectively blurring the difference between human beings as users, satisfying needs, and human beings as consumers, gratifying desires, is successful in persuading the purchase of material commodities from which can be derived some form of psychological gratification.

> [I]t is clear that we have a cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meanings…the short description of the pattern we have is magic: a highly organized and professional system of magical inducements and satisfactions, functionally very similar to magical systems in simpler societies, but rather strangely coexistent with a highly developed scientific technology. (p. 422)

Head (1990) takes this a step further, claiming that consumption is an addiction which is unremittingly marketed by the advertising industry, driven partly by myths and partly by "emptiness and alienation", via

> television commercials and magazine ads…[that] present images of a warm and magical world full of love…[assuring] us that we will gain access to that world if we buy the product – whether toothpaste, long distance telephone service, or jeans.…The implication is always that our own life is less perfect than the lives of those who wear this fragrance or that label. It is our own gullibility that empowers advertising, which in turn triggers craving through visions of a world that doesn't exist. (p. 163)

This brings to mind the work of Slavoj Žižek (1992) who describes the subject-object relationship as similar to a dream: "the subject, faster than the object, gets closer and closer to it and yet can never attain it – the dream paradox of a continuous approach to an object that nevertheless preserves a constant distance" (p. 4). The magical thinking spoken of by Williams (1961) and Žižek's (1992) psychological attachment to pursuing the unattainable (i.e., dream) both bear an illusive quality. The advertising industry seems to feed off and back into that magical sense and dream sequence, seizing an opportunity to promote the promise that all can be 'well' – but the *chase*, elusive though it may be, is the caveat. To formulate this as a question, might consumerism's calling card be an illusion/elusion sequence that maintains hold like the addiction Head (1990) speaks of? If there is any credence to that possibility, might this, in some part, account for our current altered understanding of need (see above reference to Bauman, 2001) which seems to encase a blurred meaning of desire and need?

What Rational or Emotional Need is Being Met?

Toby Smith (1998) asks: "If popular concern regarding the environment is to be tapped and consumption voluntarily reduced...[we] must make some attempt to understand....What rational or emotional need is being met?" (p. 10). Rather than seek specific answers or solutions to this query, I wish to move towards developing some *understanding*, however partial or tentative, of the phenomenon of consumerism itself. To assist in this weighty process, I begin with the work of Gabriel and Lang (1995, as cited in Aldridge, 2003), who present nine different stereotypical images of the consumer. I bring these forward at this point as a means of focusing attention on the different aspects of consuming as an "ism". This section is followed by a few words regarding the changes we have purportedly undergone over the past 50-odd years; from here I proceed through to a consideration of how or why media messages might play into what "rational or emotional need is being met".

According to Gabriel and Lang (1995), stereotypical images of consumers include: *choosers* (rational actors who believe that consumer choice will sustain social stability and promote growth); *communicators* (people who consume for social status: i.e., to convey symbolic messages about themselves to others and to themselves); *explorers* (on a quest for new experiences, particularly bargain hunting); *identity seekers* (craving wholeness and authenticity but not finding it through or in current society, the discontented identity seeker looks to repair a fragmented self through consuming); *hedonist/artists* (pleasure seeker who finds satisfaction in the emotions – negative as well as positive – that accompany consuming); *victims* (the unsuspecting who are taken advantage of by unequal power relationships established by ideology); *rebels* (non conformists who use mass market products subversively and iconoclastically); *activists* (those who attack large corporations and seek radical alternatives such as green, ethical and fair trade consumerism); and finally, *consumer as citizen*. Another form of consuming that does not easily fall within the categories presented by the above authors might be that which is carried out for aesthetic purposes – i.e., purchasing art, artefacts, etc.

The above classifications are not meant as traps into which we fall and remain permanently ensnared but rather as loose, sometimes overlapping categorisations that serve as a tool to develop better understandings of consumption as a social movement, way of life,

and ideology. Consumerism may be about intent as much as content, but intentions can well become contentions, depending upon consequences, potential and actual.

As another admission and [conflicted] recognition of my own consumeristic tendencies, during the process of this research, I acquired more than a few books. On one of my book browsing excursions to a local bookstore, a quick scan through *Why They Buy: American Consumers Inside and Out* (Settle and Alreck, 1989) piqued my interest. A promising title, I thought, and in a few short minutes it became part of my burgeoning book collection. My assumption was that it would provide insights into why people consume, and in some part, it did. Soon after settling into it at home, however, I found myself in my vehicle on a return trip to the bookstore. Although it did contain information about consuming, it was written to and for marketers as a 'how to' book. This was not at all what I had in mind. This particular book came back to me a little later, however, through Uhl (2004), who was able to mine its worth as an explication of the psychological basis for consumerism. The power of books such as these lies within their particular slant, which heavily influences one's interpretations. To bring to light the power of marketing, Uhl includes eleven of the sixty-odd psychological 'needs' that have been attributed to humans and which are open to further interpretation and exploitation by the advertising industry to further their purpose in persuading people that wants are actually needs. Included amongst these eleven needs are visibility, identity, gaining acceptance, winning over adversaries, and being free from threat of harm. On this latter need, Uhl points out that the response within the marketing world is to promote alarm systems, motion sensors, firearms, etc. – in other words, ramp up the 'need' for more stuff. On this topic, Barry Glassner (1999) asserts that fear is a largely manufactured, intentional exaggeration. Whatever way one looks at it, it seems that fear has reached greater proportions than ever before – appropriate, perhaps, given our current tendency to 'supersize' everything from meals to SUVs. With more fear, more stuff, and more food to sink our teeth into, one has to wonder what has happened to attitudes and perceptions of happiness and how has it come to be this way? And what might be sacrificed in the process?

Paul Wachtel (1989), in his book *The Poverty of Affluence*, highlights several key points: the quest for abundance ultimately leads to psychological discontent because of a leading away from social connections, experience, and personal growth. In this conception,

individualism and consumerism work as together as a downward spiral of diminishing returns.

> Our present stress on growth and productivity is…intimately related to [a] decline in rootedness. Faced with the loneliness and vulnerability that come with deprivation of a securely encompassing community, we have sought to quell the vulnerability through our possessions. When we can buy nice new things, when we look around and see our homes well stocked and well equipped, we feel strong and expansive rather than small and endangered. (Wachtel, 1989, p. 65)

As far as the personal satisfaction that might be derived from purchases, Wachtel believes this is a false perception, an illusion comprised of an overemphasis on the 'worth' of objects. At the same time, the "sacrifices are either blotted out or reinterpreted in ways that make what we're doing seem to make sense" (p. 32). While I am reluctant to state with certainty that our contemporary Westernised civilisation has been fraught with degraded values and unwitting sacrifice based on market-generated greed, it would be difficult to deny that there have indeed been some significant changes during my own lifetime. There is, of course, nothing unusual about, or anything to dispute in societies changing – *how* and *why* these changes occur, however, may be worth pursuing.

Jane Hammerslough, researching attitudes and perceptions of American college students between the early 1970s and the year 2000, found that the 'key to happiness' appears to have changed substantially. Some thirty years ago, 34 percent of college students in the United States believed making money was primary in achieving happiness; in 2000, that figure was 70 percent. At the same time, 70 percent of students once believed that developing a philosophy of life was important, now only about 40 percent do. We may hope that Canadian statistics are less focused on monetary and material acquisition, but given our close alliance geographically and culturally with the United States – particularly in the face of claims that we are in the midst of a global monoculture based on dominant American habits, one of which is consumption (see, for example, Lasn, 2000) – Hammerslough's research could well be an accurate portrayal of Canadian attitudes as well. Although it is not clear what exactly is meant by a "philosophy of life", these results imply a significant difference in attitude towards the meaning of life. If this is the case, one might wonder what brought this about. And lest this sound like the "adult monologues that romanticize the past and gripe about the present and future ('let me tell you how things were so much better when I was

young')....when such dialogues form part of engaged conversation, they have their place" (Kahn, 2002, p. 112).

Carol linked consumerism with fear. "What is it within their own stillness that they run from? If you're afraid of that stillness, you can buy as much and stuff as much as you want into it and never have to find that stillness" (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005). McAvity, in speaking of conversations with students, commented,

> and you ask them [students] what they did on the weekend or after school, the [video] 'game-y' things become what occupies them. It might be because of parental [issues], or that this is what will keep [their children] occupied so [the parents] can go and do [what they need to or desire to]. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

An important distinction calls to be made here. In speaking of "parental issues," McAvity did not refer specifically to parents who might be seeking a way out of parenting – i.e., that they simply want to abandon their children to technological (or other) diversions so that they might steal some solitary moments; this was, rather, a broad statement of what seems to be, at least in the school in which McAvity currently dwells, a seemingly pervasive phenomenon (the "game-y things become what occupies them"). In some, perhaps many cases, parents are not 'available' because they are simply *not available*: it is not unusual for single parent families to work late hours; nor is it unusual for dual parent families to *both* work late hours – in some (perhaps many) cases, this is necessary to just make ends meet. This is seen across the employment spectrum.

Whether it is parents 'needing' time away from their children or parents believing that they are providing the 'best' learning opportunities for their children, sales of video games and electronic equipment for children rose 8.2% during 2006, the strongest increase since 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2007). This bears out the comment by McAvity that "game-y things" is "what occupies [children]". This, of course, has a decided middle/upper middle class bias – there are many families who are unable to afford these 'luxuries'; however, poverty does not exclude anyone from 'mainstream' societal pressures. In Westernised cultures, advertising is ubiquitous. Why would the *desire* amongst poor children and families not be as strong as any of their well-to-do counterparts? If financial limitations were removed, would they not also join the 'high tech' throng? The resultant pressures that come to rest upon [all] families may sometimes be overlooked, but it seems difficult to dispute that decisions concerning 'to buy or not to buy' are far from simple and straightforward. This is not something attended to specifically in this work; however, it does bear relevance.

Furthermore, based on the conversations we had, there is little doubt in my mind that the participants in this study would readily acknowledge that not all 'toys' are divided equally amongst children and youth. Embedded within conversations and comments was a deep understanding that the children who do have access to expensive pastimes and toys in their home environments are very privileged indeed.

Next I will bring forward some research that may assist with understanding how or why media messages might wield power over purchasing decisions. I include the following topics of 'mind': "Hegemony, Ideology, Interpellation, and Subjectivity", "The Gaze", and "The Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic". These represent different approaches to understanding how we might come to our interpretation(s) of the world, what might lie behind the choices or decisions we make, and whether something might be at play beneath the 'conscious' – none of which is meant to imply that we do not have free will or that we do not *consciously* make choices. It should be well noted that these are *excerpts* from larger works – to derive complete understanding, the texts should, of course, be visited in their entirety.

How Do We Come To "Be" (Or Not to Be) "Of A Mind"?
Hegemony, Ideology, Interpellation, and Subjectivity

Antonio Gramsci is credited with naming the modern concept of hegemony (Belsey, 2002). This is a term that derives from the ancient Greek word *hegemonia*, which comes from *hegemon*, meaning "leader" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Gramsci expanded the term to include a consensual component – i.e., political, social, and cultural leadership can only occur with active consent on the part of those involved in the relationship. At the same time, hegemony allows room for varying degrees of dominance, persuasion, and manipulation on the part of those who wield power. Bound up within hegemony are two key components in making for successful manipulation of the masses: i.e., ideology and interpellation, both of which are outlined succinctly and thoroughly in Belsey (2002). Her explanation of Althusser's explanation of Marx's explanation of ideology is as follows.

> [I]deology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world – real in that it is the way that people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their

existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them...as the necessary condition of action within the social formation...Ideology obscures the real conditions of existence by presenting partial truths. (p. 53)

The impact of ideology is further solidified, according to Althusser, through the process of interpellation – i.e., our everyday, common sense language is so thoroughly imbued with [whatever may be] the prevailing ideology that when we are presented with something that seems to be unfamiliar, we can form an immediate [at least quasi] understanding of it (Chandler, 2002). Part of the power of interpellation lies within the power of common sense, which Althusser describes as a moment of being hailed – which is subsequently followed by a recognition and acceptance:

"Someone knocks at the door. A question is posed. 'Who's there?' 'Me,' comes the answer. The door is opened; a friend has been recognized. The door opening closes the sequence. It confirms the recognition" (Chandler, 2002, p. 181).

The subject is thus interpellated as a free subject in order to [freely] accept subjection. This permits the subject to claim responsibility for decisions while at the same time submitting to a higher authority (Belsey, 2002). Stated another way, this is the point of intersection between the outer message (cultural, political, etc.) and the inner sense-making wherein a narrative is created.

In Althusser's view, as explicated by Belsey (2002), individuals are produced by 'nature' and the subject is produced by culture. That is, the subject is a social construction, not a natural one. This is a key distinction and it is one which almost eternally entraps one as subject. Moreover, he contends that this occurs through ideological state apparatuses, which includes such social institutions as the family, schooling, religion, and more recently, mass media – what subsequently occurs in and for the subject, then, is a sort of unconsciousness in behaviours, practical attitudes, and participation in various social systems (Belsey, 2002). And to bring this full circle, these are all narratives created for and by those of us who [actively or passively] participate, and each of these narratives carry ideologies. One of the most obvious transmitters of capitalist ideology is, of course, mass media, which takes full advantage of this form of subjectivity (overtly or covertly, knowingly or unknowingly). Chandler (2000) explains that "the subject (viewer, listener, reader) is constituted by the text, and the power of the mass media...to position the subject in such a way that their representations were taken to be reflections of everyday reality" (para. 6).

The way "out" is not simple because being able to acknowledge one's own interpellation means being able to acknowledge that one is encased within a set of ideological beliefs. If we are to believe that the text, in whatever form, determines the subject's response, then how can one ever get outside the ideology? Herein lies the conundrum. Belsey (2002) is clear on this point: "[W]e cannot simply step outside it. To do so would be to refuse to act or speak, and even to make such a refusal…is to accept the condition of subjectivity" (p. 59).

Smith (1998) reminds us that once something becomes infused into common sense, any sort of questioning, doubting, or refusal to participate in the prevailing belief system is virtually unthinkable – not to mention undesirable. After all, cultural myths are the conveyers of norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs – and who really wants to contest such powerful social codes? But clearly, we are not merely passive, empty shells awaiting gratification through a variety of mythic attachments but are, rather, active participants in creating our own understandings of how the world works. So what else may be at play?

The Gaze

In at least partial response to the above question, I bring forward "human gaze" theory. Peter Wollen (2007) takes this up via the Hegel scholar Alexandre Kojève. The following constitutes an abbreviated version of Wollen's foray into understanding human desire as it resides within gaze theory.

Wollen (2007) brings forth a key feature of human desire: "human desire, as opposed to animal desire, only becomes truly human when it is directed towards another desire, rather than simply towards an object" (p. 92). The basis of this must be the "I", the point of self consciousness. Quoting Kojève, Wollen brings forward the further understanding that

> it is human to desire what others desire, because they desire it. Thus, an object perfectly useless from the biological point of view…can be desired because it is the object of other desires. Such a desire can only be a human desire, and human reality, as distinguished from animal reality, is created only by action that satisfies such desires: human history is the history of desired desires. (p. 92)

This competitive impulse within desire seems to keep the very spirit of desire alive as well as give significance to that which is desired. And, as pointed out by Wollen, competition carries with it an implicit risk – that of struggle and ultimately, death. I am

brought immediately to mind of a conversation I had with Carol in which we discussed
desire, control, and identity (March 17, 2005).

Ben: Again, that returns us to control: who is in control and who decides?

Carol: Yeah. Who *does*? Who sits there and spins out all these ideas that we absorb? And
why do we guiltily pick them up?

Ben: Do we know? My guess is it has something to do with fear. Because I think that desires
are really defined for us. Why is it that there is [a particular] vehicle that we must have…or
whatever the latest 'toy' might be? What is the fear if we don't have it?

Carol: [What are we afraid of?] *Exclusion*.

Although Carol never indicated that she had ever read Hegel, Kojève, Wollen, or
Lacan, her ensuing comment seems to be a fairly astute 'read' of Hegel's work on desire as it
relates to the 'ultimate' *risk*:

> I went right back to that very first conversation that we had…talking about the lack
> of rituals – it's no longer a tribal world. Now, people belong to the Guess tribe or to
> [some sort of 'product' tribe]…because it gives them a sense of identity, a sense that
> they belong to something. And so, I might throw out that what people are really
> afraid of is exclusion because if you don't belong, you're an outcast. And if you're an
> outcast, you're going to die. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

The "desire for recognition by the other, the desire for seeing that one is, or has, is
what is desired by others; that…is of value to them" (Wollen, 2007, p. 93) carries with it an
inherent sense of struggle – one that occurs on a psychological level *as desire* and translates, at
least potentially, to a physical level *as need* (for survival). I wonder, through all of this,
whether there might also be an accompanying risk of *recognition* by the 'other' as it might exist
as, or consist of a lack? I ask this because to be recognised as not *having*, or not *pursuing*
whatever the desire 'du jour' might be, one becomes, as Carol stated, "an outcast". To
connect this to the topic of consumerism, might there also be a risk of *self* recognition which
carries as much fear of exposure as being recognised by the 'other'? Does consumerism
divert one's *own* attention away from the potential risk of self disclosure? To protect oneself
from self disclosure seems to require a self *en*closure, one that serves and protects the self
from [self] annihilation. Can consumerism *as escapism* – i.e., as escape from the self – achieve
this?

Žižek (1992), in discussing the Lacanian perspective on self and deception, explains
that

movement 'from outside inward'...[enables us to] effectively *become* something by pretending that we *already are* that....To grasp the dialectic of this movement, we have to take into account the crucial fact that this 'outside' is never simply a 'mask' we wear in public but is rather the symbolic order itself. By 'pretending to be something,' by 'acting as if we were something,' we assume a certain place in the intersubjective symbolic network, and it is this external place that defines our true position. If we preserve an intimate distance toward 'the social role we play,' we doubly deceive ourselves. The final deception is that social appearance is deceitful, for in the social-symbolic reality things ultimately *are* precisely what they *pretend* to be. (pp. 73-74)

To respond to – or perhaps speculate on – my own question regarding risk of recognition, Lacan seems to indicate otherwise, that there would be no, or perhaps only minimal risk involved, at least for the external world. But I still wonder what might happen *internally*, how we might reconcile this deception within ourselves, what fears might lurk around being 'found out,' particularly if we take into consideration the gaze, which denotes power on the one hand – the one who gazes owns some control – and on the other hand, the gaze is incapacitating – as a recipient of the gaze, one becomes a passive witness (Žižek, 1992).

To delve a little deeper into the theory of the gaze as conceived by Lacan, Wollen (2007) explains that Lacan took the 'I' to mean "the social 'I,' whose own desires reflect the desires of others and, in so doing, plunge the subject into aggressive relationships with those others" (p. 94). It may be useful at this point to interrupt Wollen's discussion of gaze theory to insert a brief overview of Lacan's phases of development. I will subsequently return to Wollen.

The Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic

While Smith (1998) describes the historical, material basis of consumerism and Althusser fills in the gap between the individual and the political space, Jacques Lacan's work, picking up from Kojève, offers another way of understanding how such things as consumerism might operate on a psychological plane. To understand how desire might be created *for* rather than strictly *within*, I draw from Dino Felluga (2003) and Slavoj Žižek (1992) to shed light on Lacan's phases of psychological development from birth to maturity. I later return to the topic of desire and the gaze as these concepts relate to popular culture – specifically within the film, *The Matrix* (1999) – and consumerism. I once again wish to clarify that this is not a research project on psychoanalytic theory: I am not a trained

psychoanalyst and I do not pretend to 'analyse' conversations or research in this way. Rather, this has become one [relatively small] part of my search for understanding. My intent is to broaden the possibilities in understanding the complexities of consumerism.

In another turn of individual as 'subject,' Jacques Lacan, having derived [some] impetus for his work on psychoanalytic theory from Hegel via Alexandre Kojève (Wollen, 2007), posited that the unconscious was structured like language. Before continuing, I reiterate: the following is a rudimentary, very brief overview of Lacan's theory of the unconscious.

To begin, via Felluga (2003), I will flesh out what Lacan meant when he spoke of the unconscious as structured like language. Based on Freudian psychology, the unconscious is a chaotic, shifting site with no 'real' centre. In other words, the unconscious is controlled or mediated by desires, drives, and shifting signifiers (i.e., having two or more meanings) and it is language that brings these to consciousness. Lacan believed that in becoming an adult, a "self", the aim is to make sense of, or fix these shifting signifiers in order to move towards stable meaning. It is through this stabilisation of signifiers that the "I" becomes possible. In Lacan's conception, individuals progress through phases or realms which he called the "Real", the "Imaginary", and the "Symbolic". This is not meant to imply that these are distinct stages that come and go, rather, they appear in a progression, and may perhaps attain greater prominence during different phases, but once apparent, they remain intact throughout life, intersecting and interacting in relationship to one another. The following highly expurgated description of Lacan's three phases is drawn from Felluga (2003). I also include a cursory explanation of the other phases as each, according to Lacan, interacts with the other.

The *Real* represents need. It begins at birth and continues to between six and eighteen months of age. The dominating principle is need; it is an order of *experience*, hence there is no loss, lack, or absence unlike later phases when knowledge of 'self' develops through interaction with others, through language – a new sense of *subjectivity* leads to feelings of loss or lack.

The *Imaginary*, within which is encased the "Mirror" phase, occurs between the ages of six and eighteen months. Lacan dubbed this the "Mirror" phase because this is typically the time that a child catches a glimpse of him/herself in a mirror and subsequently comes to the realisation that the reflection, the image in the mirror, is its 'self' (as distinct from others).

However, this is a misconception purely *because* it is only an image and not actually the self. This fixes (and fastens) the child to an imaginary realm, a space in which there is a lack of wholeness. A lifetime is then spent attempting to return to this phase in order to experience a reunification with the self. There is some promise of integration, some hope that 'identity' will fix what is lacking; however, the *Symbolic* seems to dictate otherwise.

As the child enters the *Symbolic* realm (between the ages of eight to fourteen years) language becomes dominant, bringing forth an accompanying [linguistic] understanding of otherness. This becomes complicated and confused: others are 'other,' but the individual still regards its own self as other (due to the original blunder that occurs with the misrecognition in the mirror). An attempt to purge its own self as other – to get to the centre of the system – sets up a sense of lack (translated by Lacan as desire) which can never be fulfilled because it is not desire for some*thing* but rather desire to be the centre of the *Symbolic* realm – i.e., the centre of language itself. Thus there is no hope for complete wholeness because desire enters everywhere, thereby plunging those self seekers into an interminably elusive enterprise.

According to the above, then, the *Imaginary* realm, as the world of images that we enter into as children, provides the very basis for our own vulnerabilities or susceptibilities. Images catapult us back to the time that we began to form a separate sense of identity. This imperative/impair-ative sets forth a longing for the *Imaginary* (and the desire for reunification) and unless this is brought to conscious awareness, we remain fixated, stuck, ever-seeking, never finding. If Lacan, Althusser, and Belsey are correct about the 'true' location of the self as rooted in the unconscious, might this point toward the place that permits entry into, and at the same time exit from, the consumptive/consuming power inherent within consumerism? If the desire to consume strikes in the *Imaginary*, in its promise of unity through an outside image, is it possible that consumerism may turn back on itself, unwittingly leading us back into and eventually out of, the neighbourhood of make believe? Does this open the possibility that Althusser's pessimistic prediction: "But the greatest and most insidious power of ideology…is its capacity to represent to human beings an imaginary conception of their own subjectivity" (Payne, 1997, p. 41) might be reversed, or at least read otherwise?

Wollen (2007) includes in his work Jean-Paul Sartre's thoughts on the 'gaze.' He tells us that, for Sartre, the "look always objectified. The looker was active, aggressive, and the

looked-at the victim of the gaze" (p. 95). To bring consumerism [back] into the conversation, in some ways, advertising might be seen to assume this stance, that is, of the looker who objectifies, actively and aggressively. I am somewhat uncomfortable, however, with the conception of the "looked-at" as *victim*, because, as I have already mentioned, might we not decline the call of interpellation, refuse entry as well as welcome it? The word "victim" comes from the Latin *victima*, which means "animal offered as a sacrifice" (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). To understand "victim" in this way implies a complete lack of agency, a total relinquishment of any decision making ability. Is this what we, as consumers, are reduced to? Sartre claims that "the one looked at, the one made vulnerable, finds his identity draining away as he, or she, becomes merely an object for the other" (Wollen, 2007, p. 98). What does this mean in terms of consciousness – and by that I mean awareness of self and other *in relationship* to one other? Would such conscious awareness initiate an exposure – or at least a demystification – of the seemingly hidden power of, for instance, marketing and advertising?

Davies and Harré (1990) discuss the role of discourse in positioning the self. They contend that a particular discourse carries the potential to strongly influence one's position and/or sense of selfhood; however, there not only is the *possibility* for one to alter, challenge, or pull out of a particular story line, it *does* occur by virtue of one's engagement in the conversation/story line: "discourse is a multi-faceted public process through which meanings are progressively and dynamically achieved" (p. 46). Furthermore, they state that "One lives one's life in terms of one's ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production" (p. 48). This may not erase the potential for power *over*, but it does point toward the power that an individual has to break free from the bonds of subjectivity or positioning: at the same time that discourse *positions* or constitutes a self, social interactions invite *re*positioning and *re*constitution. If this is the case, then how is it that agencies such as advertisers are able to spin stories and invite individuals into the drama so successfully that the discourse and story line is bought and owned for themselves? Is it art? Is it craft? Is it that they know how to manipulate the discourse in which individuals are embedded?

After a few preliminary-as-summary comments, I enter a conversation with a cultural story/myth that may play into, drive, or feed a response to the gaze.

A Troubling Implication

Theories of subjectivity – and I do not mean to use the word loosely, but in applying this term I include interpellation, hegemony, and Lacan's theorising – seem to point towards the possibility that, as individuals growing up in the Westernised world, we are indeed subject(ed) to a plethora of persuasive pronouncements regarding what we 'need' to become 'complete.' If we are to accept this as a valid possibility – that subjectivity is an explanation for, or a determining factor in decision making, does this mean that *all* human beings have some sort of innate, essential characteristic that permits entrance into a certain malleable(?) part of the psyche? Even if this sort of determinism were so, how is it that those who aim to control our behaviours have broken free? These theories seem to imply that we can never be 'complete,' that desire is something that only a select few (e.g., marketers, advertisers, and perhaps psychoanalysts) understand and may (or may not) subsequently exploit to their own ends. In this scenario, there would seem to be an implicit collapse of the self. To look at this from a cultural perspective, how could we in the Westernised, technologised, information-ised world possibly content ourselves with the knowledge that our individual actions are founded on external motivators – and how could we not know? Might this have something to do with another story, one which creates and suffers the silence?

The following is an excerpt of a scene from *The Matrix* (1999) in which the character *Morpheus* offers *Neo* the disquieting, deafening 'truth.' This movie can be interpreted in any number of ways: as a ground breaking work of special effects science fiction, as a postmodern play and re-play of Jean Baudrillard's work on hyperreality (particularly *Simulation and Simulacra*, 1981), as a metaphor for a life unexamined (in a manner after Socrates), as a religious/spiritual commentary, as an action-adventure film, as a romance, as a story of conflict (war), as a representation of video game violence – etc. In highlighting the dialogue between Morpheus – in Greek mythology, the god of dreams and by extrapolation, darkness/unconscious – and Neo, whose name in a slightly different configuration of letters spells One, as in 'The [chosen] One,' I hope to portray a metaphor for the life unexamined.

Room 1313

MORPHEUS: At last.
He wears a long black coat and his eyes are invisible behind circular mirrored glasses.

He strides to Neo and they shake hands.

MORPHEUS: Welcome, Neo. As you no doubt have guessed, I am Morpheus.

NEO: It's an honour.

MORPHEUS: Please. Come. Sit.

He nods to Trinity.

MORPHEUS: Thank you, Trinity.

She bows her head sharply and exits through a door to an adjacent room.

They sit across from one another in cracked, burgundy- leather chairs.

MORPHEUS: I imagine, right now, you must be feeling a bit like Alice, tumbling down the rabbit hole?

NEO: You could say that.

MORPHEUS: I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he is expecting to wake up.

A smile, razor-thin, curls the corner of his lips.

MORPHEUS: Ironically, this is not far from the truth. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Can you tell me, Neo, why are you here?

NEO: You're Morpheus, you're a legend. Most hackers would die to meet you.

MORPHEUS: Yes. Thank you. But I think we both know there's more to it than that. Do you believe in fate, Neo?

NEO: No.

MORPHEUS: Why not?

NEO: Because I don't like the idea that I'm not in control of my life.

MORPHEUS: I know exactly what you mean.

Again, that smile that could cut glass.

MORPHEUS: Let me tell you why you are here. You are here because you have the gift.

NEO: What gift?

MORPHEUS: I've watched you, Neo. You do not use a computer like a tool. You use it like it was part of yourself. What you can do inside a computer is not normal. I know. I've seen it. What you do is magic.

Neo shrugs.

NEO: It's not magic.

MORPHEUS: But it is, Neo. It is. How else would you describe what has been happening to you?

He leans forward.

MORPHEUS: We are trained in this world to accept only what is rational and logical. Have you ever wondered why?

Neo shakes his head.

MORPHEUS: As children, we do not separate the possible from the impossible which is why the younger a mind is the easier it is to free while a mind like yours can be very difficult.

NEO: Free from what?

MORPHEUS: From the Matrix.

Neo looks at his eyes but only sees a reflection of himself.

MORPHEUS: Do you want to know what it is, Neo?

Neo swallows and nods his head.

MORPHEUS: It's that feeling you have had all your life. That feeling that something was wrong with the world. You don't know what it is but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad, driving you to me. But what is it?

The LEATHER CREAKS as he leans back. MORPHEUS: The Matrix is everywhere, it's all around us, here even in this room. You can see it out your window, or on your television. You feel it when you go to work, or go to church or pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

NEO: What truth?

MORPHEUS: That you are a slave, Neo. That you, like everyone else, was born into bondage...kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. A prison for your mind.

Outside, the wind batters a loose pane of glass.

MORPHEUS: Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.

NEO: How?

MORPHEUS: Hold out your hands.

In Neo's right hand, Morpheus drops a red pill.

MORPHEUS: This is your last chance. After this, there is no going back.

In his left, a blue pill.

MORPHEUS: You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and you believe whatever you want to believe.

The pills in his open hands are reflected in the glasses.

MORPHEUS: You take the red pill and you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit-hole goes.

Neo feels the smooth skin of the capsules, with the moisture growing in his palms.

MORPHEUS: Remember that all I am offering is the truth. Nothing more.

(Wachowski and Wachowski, 2000, pp. 298-301)

As Neo's ignorance/reflection is both exposed and concealed, evident within his reflection via Morpheus's glasses, we are presented with the safety [lens] that protects us from the harsh realities, the disturbing truth. We are offered instead, the blissful state of unawareness. The parallel between this film, or at least this particular excerpt, and consumer culture or rather consumer*ism* lies within the power and triumph over a contingent of largely unaware, 'happy,' stimulus-response bonds. Ignorance, as reflected back to us in the darkened mirrors represented by Morpheus's sunglasses, may offer solace, obscurity, and some sort of protection, perhaps, but this is not without cost.

A point of optimism that I see in this film – encapsulated within the preceding excerpt, and the reason I have chosen to include it in this work – lies within the element of choice. Whether the choice is the "red pill" or the "blue pill", it is a *choice*. Regarded in one light, this choice is a matter of who might become master – or who might *assume* mastery. In another conception, and I pose this as a question – must "mastery" be regarded as the manifestation of a power *over* someone or something? Mastery, to unbind it from possible negative connotations (e.g., master/slave), does not *necessarily* mean control over someone or something in a malevolent way. Mastery also carries with it a connotation of expertise, which derives from Old French meaning "experienced", which furthermore stems from the Latin word "expertus", past participle of *experiri*, which means "to try" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). To try is to experience, and to experience is to open opportunities to understand. Although Morpheus refers to Neo's ignorance as a "prison" and Neo as a "slave", it is a prison sentence and a slavery in which one participates, thus one from which one may wilfully withdraw. As we learn within the film, the price for "truth" may not always be light but, as Carol's experience with her home away from home attests, when we 'awaken,' when we become conscious of it, we can choose to run from the discomfort or settle into it.

On one level, this movie is an illumination of the potential danger in not paying attention to the possible destructive capacity of science and technology – the message: be careful what you wish for. Unbridled power, 'progress,' and technological determinism may create some undesirable consequences. Following Baudrillard's (1981) work, the movie portrays a dual 'reality' – or rather, reality and *hyper*reality. The latter refers to the simulated world created by Artificial Intelligence (AI) – people are 'grown' in gel-filled pods to supply energy to the malevolent AI, whilst at the same time their brains are attached to a computer program (The Matrix). In this unreal world they live a 'normal' life on a self sustaining, rich, lush, 'normal' planet, playing inside – or rather being played by – a computer program. Life is not purely deterministic – people do appear to have choices, but these choices are encased within a video game with external limits, boundaries, and rules. The relatively few 'unplugged' individuals in the 'real' world, however, are living, *hiding*, in a world ravaged by a globally catastrophic war. 'Reality' is not lovely, it is not idyllic, and it is not 'easy.'

The Matrix is not to be taken literally, obviously, but read as an allegory for Westernised society's seeming obsession with consumerism whilst being unaware,

unconscious of the consequences to the planet, there are elements of relevance to be found within the story. Interpreted one way, this movie cautions us to wake up, to become fully conscious of the potentially disastrous effects of a highly technologised, consumptive world. Interpreted another way (violence aside), it is every bit as much about keeping viewers *un*conscious as the message itself is *bought* through the purchase of theatre tickets, through movie rentals, through DVD acquisition (which I have), through accumulating associated paraphernalia; even, secondarily, through buying, consuming, a particular style of clothing, hair, speech – in other words, the products or desires we may have *unconsciously* 'bought' as we were watching the movie.

I do not mean to claim that the purpose of all pop culture movies or artefacts is to exploit our naïveté or create unconscious desires, and perhaps the Wachowski brothers were not literally laughing all the way to the bank as a result of effective marketing – on more than one level, such as ticket sales as well as related artefacts, but one can be reasonably certain that they were not exactly frowning on their way, either. Of course, there is the distinct possibility that they may indeed have been aspiring to say something of significance, to trigger deep thinking – which was the effect this film had on me when I finally decided to watch it some four years after its release. In their explorations of philosophy (specifically the philosophy of Jean Baudrillard in this particular movie) and their extrapolations of unbridled technological progress, they do invite a conversation about the possible consequences of the 'unexamined life.' And however improbable or impossible or limited their film may be in its powers of predictability, to engage with it as a contemporary cultural *concept*, a *Sache*, to – in a hermeneutical sense – throw up tradition and enter into a dialogue, may lay open an invitation to experience to understand the world differently, to recognise that "we are always 'beyond' and 'more' than ourselves" (Davey, 2006).

At this point, I would like to focus on and explore the authority that media attempts to exert on individuals through a return to gaze theory and desire as developed by Lacan (via Žižek, 1992 and Wollen, 2007). This will include a few brief notes on my experiences as well as those of the participants.

And the Mall Looks Back

In considering my own willing receptivity to the call of the mall (ubiquitous in urban centres of the Westernised world), during the process of writing this dissertation, I reflected upon my own impulse to knowingly saunter into the gigantic jaws of the local shopping centre. In my attempt to write through this, I came to realise that the mall was almost like the muscle relaxants prescribed by my doctor as I suffered extreme tension from long days in front of my computer. Even though it is a place of perpetual motion and the pace is almost frenetic, the mall also offers a moment of/for release: a letting go, a loosening, a peacefulness, a comfort, a safety washes over, psychologically and physically, however false and temporary this may be. And, just as the muscle relaxants, there is an intoxication, a false sense of wellness, a promise of utopia that cannot truly be fulfilled. Amidst the people and the stores and the omnipresent advertisements, there are no expectations (other than to buy something you may not really need), there are no demands for falseness (other than to buy something you may not really need), and there is no pressure to think or reflect or to exert any psychological energy (other than to buy something you may not really need). With the muzak as background, the 'simple' requirements are a willingness to be lulled into a [false] sense of security and physical *presence* – minus a thoughtful, discerning mind. The mall takes care of the rest. There is an almost irresistible enticement to sink into a paroxysm of splendour, glory, and sensual pleasure: explosions of colour, scents, tactility, sound, and food, drink, rest, and respite. It is a place and a space flooded with natural light: enormous skylights overhead and bright, cheery, not likely energy efficient, electric lighting. The oversized chairs bid a moment's rest – or longer if you [and your friend] happen to stop to order a tall, no whip, no foam, extra hot, non-fat, sugar-free vanilla, vanilla steamed milk (with the possibility of substituting soy for milk), or if it happens to be a warm day, perhaps a venti soy, sugar-free vanilla, vanilla crème frappuccino. The perfect invitation for a nice, relaxing time-out before the sugar and the caffeine propel you back into the race (or stroll) for bargains until you need once again to linger awhile, perhaps next time for a proper sit-down 'dinner' at the food court or one of the [loud] trendy restaurants where you are greeted by lovely, young, Barbie-doll hostesses with painted smiles and faces to welcome you and seat you. And if you should need to wait for a table, the sure sign you have wandered into a popular spot, the 'latest' is a convenient, electronic leash – a remote gadget with flashing lights (red) to alert you to when your table is ready. So you are freed to wander a short

distance away or plop down on one of the stylish leather benches that await inside the restaurant. The mall can eradicate, or perhaps defer/deflect boredom, it can replicate the outdoors through its display of real and artificial plants, it can promise instant gratification – and I must admit, often frustration – but even in the absence of purchasing, visual attractions abound. And in the mall nearest my home, there is a store with a colossal crystal worth – or rather priced at – $7,000 (the price of which was accordingly adjusted to a modest $6,500 after the Christmas season), and in that particular store, there is an added allure: next door to it is a trendy soap/aromatherapy store, the scent of which has permeated the crystal store. Not only is it visually appealing, there is a blissful fragrance wafting in and throughout. Double your pleasure, double your fun, double your stimulation (double your debt?). I rave shamelessly about this store to my husband. His response to the gargantuan crystal: "What would anyone do with a $7,000 crystal?" He handed – no, force fed – me the 'red pill.' *The dream is shattered. I did not ask to be unplugged from the Matrix.*

I am at once observer, at once participant, and as I try to stand the middle ground, to feel the blend, to become the blend, I am awakened and become detached, feeling, and reeling from the difficulty. My dialogic partners appear to have experienced the same kinds of tensions and difficulties. There is a discourse here, in the mall…

Reckonings: The Red Pill, the Blue Pill – Or Neither?

Wrapped up in, and keeping our current cultural stories afloat, whether fact or fantasy, is *fear*. As I mentioned earlier, Barry Glassner (1999), writing even before the great American tragedy now known as '9-11' occurred, claims that fear is largely manufactured or at least exaggerated. He maintains that the billions of dollars funnelled into policing and prisons would be much better spent addressing major social problems. Terrorist attacks, global climate change, poverty, soil degradation, ozone depletion, etc.: it is a world riddled with fear. And the media, almost omnipresent, are ever at the ready, to report, support, and sometimes seemingly embellish these tales of terror. Looming large and of primary importance in the foreground is the economy. Booming, failing, but always we are summoned to spend, spend, spend. After the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001, U.S. president George W. Bush, in his plea to the American people, advised everyone to go shopping (Wallace-Wells, 2003). Was this to deflect attention away from the 'danger'? Was this an attempt to restore 'order,' to encourage people to do what is

familiar (comfortable)? A national tragedy with international implications occurred but the malls, where time and money can be spent/wasted, are offered as solution and salvation? Is this an offering of 'escapism,' a concentrated effort to ease one's sense of vulnerability?

Taking consumerist stories, and, perhaps, escapism, to an extreme (although it could be argued that this is a form of adventure) – if the mall isn't exciting enough – agencies such as "Space Adventures" now offers the opportunity to hop on a spaceship and venture high into the sky on one of the space vacations available for roughly twenty to thirty million dollars (Space Adventures.com). Space tourism, the up and coming final-vacation-frontier, is already in an expansion phase: a flight to the moon (estimated at this point to run at approximately 100 million dollars) is in the plans. To date, five "space tourists" have had the privilege of viewing Earth from outer space (Space Adventures.com) – a privilege indeed, whilst children starve and people die because of lack of access (writ *money*) to health care. This is not to say, of course, that space travellers are responsible for starving children and curable illnesses, I mean only to return to where I began with Glassner's (1999) assertion that social problems require money.

A Conversation

Carol: I think the biggest thing for me, that I've noticed about my spending habits is that when I'm in a job where I'm stressed out, I go shopping. I know that. It would release for me, I [would] feel 'Whew,' because, I felt like my life, 'Okay, this is working again' (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005).

G.R. and McAvity both acknowledge that they, too, have felt this tug, this relief in the past.

Carol: Now [after a major life altering decision] I'm the happiest…*not* when I get to money, it's *peace* that brings [happiness]. That's why I'm living my life like I am now. Working, then taking time off, then working, then time off, because the chance I get to be with myself and all that external stress is removed, I don't have those same needs.

G.R.: [Does this have to do with a societal demand] to have it faster, [with] more and more being placed on you and higher and higher expectations?

Carol: This is a warped theory of mine. To me, the racket, the rat race, controls people because it keeps them [occupied] so they won't rebel. I think that [we are] controlled by debt because people who are in debt stay in jobs they don't like, they keep spending money

because they're trying to get away from the pain they feel inside and so to me, I think it's almost a form of control. When you're debt free...you know why I could leave teaching? Our house was [paid]. We had no debt. And so I could go, 'G'bye, so long!' If we had debt, I would not have been able to do that.

G.R: I had some events happen over Christmas. My aunt died, my sister in law had chest pains, a very good friend, probably my best friend's mother was flown back from [vacation] with chest pains...but somehow there needs to be a crisis or a moment where suddenly the world is different and then you begin to understand that I don't have to do this money stuff.

G.R.'s comment above is reminiscent of what Nicholas Davey (2006) speaks of as a hermeneutic event, wherein a shift in understanding occurs and suddenly – or gradually, as the case may be – the world seems different. In G.R.'s case, this shift, this event, seems to have made itself known in the presence of our own finitude. The comment "I don't have to do this money stuff" has ties to consuming – consumer*ism*.

At the same time that we are urged to consume, to possess, we are – in a sense – *possessed* and *consumed* by the very process of consumption itself. The act of consuming *as consumerism* is a repetitive motion, and in that motion, there is a possible entanglement, one that turns motion into a never ending, spiralling downwards into possession and consumption of the self. Žižek (1992) explains that Lacan understood this as desire – "not something given in advance, but something that has to be constructed" (p. 6). The trap of desire, in Lacan's analysis, lies within its own paradox: "the realisation of desire does not consist in its being 'fulfilled,' 'fully satisfied,' it coincides rather with the reproduction of desire as such, with its circular movement" (Žižek, 1992, p. 7). Also encased within this is the power of the '*lack*.' For Lacan, the attainment of the lack does not reduce anxiety, it *causes* anxiety because of losing the lack itself. Lacan might explain this as an object perceived "by a gaze 'distorted' by desire, an object that *does not exist* for an 'objective' gaze....because outside this distortion, 'in itself,' *it does not exist* since it is *nothing but* the embodiment, the materialisation of this very distortion" (Žižek, 1992, p. 12).

> This takes us back, surely, to Kojève – we desire what the other desires, so if we see the other desiring soup, we recognise in the neutral face the delight we ourselves would feel. Our perception is determined by our transitive relationship with the other rather than reflecting what we have actually been shown. Perception, as Lacan might have put it, exists in the realm of the imaginary rather than the real. (Wollen, 2007, p. 105)

A Matter of Time in a Moment of Technology

As I proceeded through this research, the numerous opportunities, events, and moments that arrested my consciousness were at times smooth, continuous, and enchanting; at other times these moments were jarring, discontinuous, and unsettling but always they arrived under particular circumstances through a merging of experiences occurring at a particular juncture, a particular *time*. Timing, as a coming together of events, formed the basis for these understandings, and in a manner, became the "relations that enable [understanding and translation] to function" (Davey, 2006, p. 187). It is time, as a phenomenon, if indeed time might be considered a phenomenon, that I wish to shift focus towards in the next section, not as a stand-alone 'thing' to be examined and dissected, but rather alongside its close relative, technology. My reason for this pairing follows forthwith.

Time and technology, as topics, as cultural constructs, might be likened to those almost inseparable astronomical twins, Castor and Pollux. As the brightest stars in the constellation Gemini, Castor and Pollux were mythological heroes on Earth who were later worshipped as gods. Each had different strengths and skills and could act independently of one another yet they were considered to be inseparable (Morford and Lenardon, 1977). Technology and time might also be conceived as shining quite radiantly and for some people, there may even be a heroic quality, more so with technology than time, perhaps, and for others, time and technology, the latter more so, have already achieved the status of gods to be worshipped (Postman, 1996). Just as Castor and Pollux could function independently of one another, each with his own particular form of power, so it is with technology and time. And although Castor and Pollux are not associated with time and technology, in Greek mythology they are, nevertheless, mighty gods to be cherished and revered.

Time and technology arose more than once during discussions with the research group in this study, frequently in the same conversation if not in the same sentence, and frequently in the context of speed – i.e., high speed. An exploration of this *as topic*, however brief it must be (given the magnitude of these concepts), may help to shed some light on how we might better understand what it means to participate as citizens, teachers, and learners within this particular technologically saturated culture at this particular *time*. I deal with each separately and draw upon conversations to bring these topics 'to life.' I begin with time.

Once Upon a Time

> The big question in those days [the 1950s] was what we would do with all of our leisure time because work was predicted to decline to 20 hours a week…But the reality is that all that technology is not freeing me to enjoy more leisure; instead…our work week hasn't shrunk, we are working longer hours than we did two decades ago. The tradeoff has been that we are being paid more money so that we can buy more STUFF. (Suzuki, 2002, para. 1, 2, 3)

David Suzuki's above lament was echoed in our conversations. One instance of this comes from a group conversation. Carol's comment: "Technology was supposed to save people time…All I know is it speeded up life for most people and knowledge, information, has become power, even if it's useless information, it's still power" (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005).

Theodor Adorno (1991) states that "free time depends on the totality of social conditions" (p. 187), which seems to imply that time is a defining characteristic of a particular culture in a particular era. In a fast paced society where "rapid technological advances have resulted in more purchasable, problem-solving options than ever" (Hammerslough, 2001, pp. 13-14), the lure of 'leisure time' activities such as video games and shopping for leisure/pleasure rather than necessity are omnipresent. Adorno (2002) furthermore informs us that free time, or spare time, is a relatively recent addition to our vocabulary: "its precursor…'leisure' denoted the privilege of an unconstrained, comfortable life-style, hence something qualitatively different…time which is neither free nor spare, which is occupied by work, and which moreover one could designate as heteronomous" (p. 187). In this conception, echoing the comments of David Suzuki and Theodor Adorno, the meaning of time is tied to cultural norms. In particular, 'free' time may be rather constricted by, or restricted to responding to the external lures of the entertainment industry or, towards the other end of the spectrum, perhaps succumbing to professional demands to work longer hours.

How we invest, spend, or waste 'free' time does seem to have a strong cultural component: the leisurely Sunday afternoon drive in the country that may have been a thrill, or at least the norm (amongst those who could afford a vehicle), 50 or 60 years ago is not something that is spoken of during coffee breaks at the office or around the table at the local trendy coffee shops today. A drive on a Sunday would most likely occur now only if there were a specific destination. And I strongly suspect it would not be undertaken at a leisurely

pace. The 'Sunday Drive' is, of course, an era past, and it seems to have been largely supplanted with a trip to the mall (at least in urban centres) – the contemporary version of a leisurely activity. The mall, consuming, occupying time with 'things' provides people with a distraction, a diversion, and although it is not 'harmful' in and of itself, what is at issue is the *extent* to which this is carried through and what transpires the 'morning after' – i.e., the accumulation of more 'stuff' that eventually has to go *somewhere*. Hammerslough (2001) states that personal bankruptcy has soared, credit card debt is higher than ever before, and "one of the fastest-growing businesses today [in the United States] is in providing storage space for people's excess stuff" (p. 25).

James Gleick (2000), in *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything*, writes that now, in the Westernised world, we live an accelerated lifestyle: everything from food to television is packaged with the intent of completing more in a shorter period of time. He furthermore suggests that we have been subjected to a socialisation/normalisation process that creates an addiction to speed – not as a drug which we ingest but rather as a drug produced in our bodies in the form of adrenaline as a *result* of speed. In his conception, we are living in a sustained manic state. Mark Kingwell (1999), in a chapter he calls *"Fast Forward: Our High-Speed Chase to Nowhere"*, tells us that

> [s]peed is a drug, and not just in the old-time hepcat high of Dexedrine or bennies, those ingested, on-the-road amphetamines; or even in the newer, hi-tech crystal meth….The experience of speed itself releases into the electrochemical soup of our heads a cascade of naturally occurring drugs, not the least of which are epinephrine and norepinephrine. (pp. 166-167)

In another case of coming to the realisation that I have been living with partial understandings, that language and meaning are not always simple, I consulted the dictionary to see if there was a specific definition that might resolve the mystery over a matter I had not previously thought deeply about. Amongst the various definitions of time, I bring forward the following – not so much to present the 'definitive' explanation, but to point towards the complexities and contextualities associated with understanding so elusive a concept. Of its numerous definitions, I include the following: "a nonspatial continuum in which events occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future"; "an interval separating two points on this continuum"; "a system by which such intervals are measured or such numbers are reckoned"; "an interval, especially a span of years, marked by similar events, conditions, or phenomena"; and "an era; a person's experience during a

specific period or on a certain occasion" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). As Sarah Norgate (2006) contends, experience of time is influenced by one's immersion within a particular cultural/political milieu. To understand time as a cultural construct, it may first be worthwhile to seek an understanding of how it has been taken up as a philosophical construct. This I will do, briefly, through Grosz's (2004) explication of Henri Bergson's conception of time. I will follow with an overview of how this concept is understood from a psychological perspective via Norgate (2006). I would first like to underscore the complexities involved in attempting to understand time via this excerpt from Elizabeth Grosz (2004).

> We 'naturally' think of time through the temporality of objects, through the temporality of space and matter, rather than in itself or on its own terms. This is why it cannot be present or present itself, why we cannot look at it directly, why it disappears the more we try to grasp its characteristics. We can think it only in passing moments, through ruptures, nicks, cuts, in instances of dislocation, though it contains no moments or ruptures and has no being or presence, functioning only as continuous becoming. (Grosz, 2004, p. 5)

In *The Nick of Time*, Grosz (2004) explores temporality via three theorists: Charles Darwin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Henri Bergson, each of whom consider time from a different perspective. Darwin linked life to the movement of time, explaining it as an "irreducible element of the encounter between individual variation and natural selection, the two principles that, in interaction, produce all of life's organic and cultural achievements" (Grosz, 2004, p. 7). Nietzsche saw life not as fulfilling itself "in surviving in its given milieu successfully enough to reproduce" but that it "actively seeks to *transform* life" (Grosz, 2004, p. 11). Bergson puts forth a theory of time in which "the tendencies that mark the present also characterize the future" but his primary task is to elucidate "the distinction between, and the intermingling of, mind and matter, and how they implicate the operations of time and space" (Grosz, 2004, p. 157). Although difficult, it may be of personal and political import to understand what *time* means.

> Political and cultural struggles are all, in some sense, directed to bringing into existence futures that dislocate themselves from the dominant tendencies and forces of the present. They are all about making the future different from the past and present, in rupturing the continuity of processes through the upheaval posed by events. They are about inducing the untimely. The more clearly we understand our temporal location as beings who straddle the past and the future without the security of a stable and abiding present, the more mobile our possibilities are, and the more transformation becomes conceivable. (Grosz, 2004, p. 14)

The above is a reflection of the viewpoint that change – transformation – is something to be valued, sought after, or at least available as an *option*. To cling too tightly to the past, to fear or not be consciously aware that it is desirable or permissible to question one's own tradition (the latter as conceptualised by Gadamer), is to run the risk of limiting not only the present but the future spectrum of possibilities that may lay before us. In Bergson's conception of time, the past is not an overriding factor; he is interested in the "processes of development, processes that induce change….to see life as an active dynamism" (Grosz, 2004, p. 158). Here, Bergson may help to release us from the potential of falling prey to totalising conceptions of the force and future of life. In his discussion of the differences between quantitative and qualitative conceptions of time, he points out that quantitative differences are measurable (e.g., spatial differences) while qualitative differences are "invested in the movement of duration itself, which is that very movement of differing from itself, the movement that ensures that nothing retains absolute self-identity over time" (p. 159). One of the features of qualitative differences of time is its call to valorise and recognise the importance of non measurable ways of knowing (e.g., intuition). This is not to disqualify (as it were) the importance of quantitative valuation: in the absence of the quantitative there would be no "[o]ppositional differences [to point towards] discontinuities, gaps, boundaries, bounded entities" (p. 160) within which we might enter into a conversation. In Bergson's conception, however, these oppositional differences are not meant to stand as representative of an oppositional, dichotomous world. Rather, these differences are recognised as different attributes of differing viewpoints: "diversity is always construed as comparative….neither oppositional nor complementary [but rather as occupying] different conceptual landscapes [which are] qualitatively different" (pp. 159-160). Within Bergson's "qualitative differences" of time the psychological may be seen to reside.

Psychologist Sarah Norgate (2006) seeks to understand how humans relate to time on several domains: cultural, behavioural, and neural. For purposes of my study, I exclude the 'scientific information' (i.e., neural and biological activity) and focus on the realm of culture. As mentioned previously, this is but a brief glimpse into her work.

Norgate points out that the conception of an accelerated lifestyle did not originate only in our lifetime: in the mid-1800s, the French lawyer and social critic Alexis de Tocqueville noted that Americans seemed to be in a constant hurry. She traces at least some of our contemporary staunch allegiance to time to the clock, particularly the wristwatch.

With these devices ever in view, we are rarely not exposed to what time it is, how much we have left before the next activity, and when we might find a moment for leisure. The proliferation of communication technologies such as email, cell phones, and ever ready access to the Internet, rather than save more time actually *use* more time. This constant exposure to technology and the speed with which we are able to access information results in time spent managing information overload. This furthermore, according to Norgate, creates a mindset, almost as a [software?] training program, in which snap decisions and "mental gymnastics" are expected and accepted as a way of life. Her comparison of different points of view brings forward some of the fundamental differences that may exist across different cultures.

From working to deadlines and chasing appointments to perceiving time as synchronous between people and nature, different cultures promote different approaches to, visions of, and understandings about the meaning of time. As individuals within a particular cultural setting, developing an understanding of what time means may be a matter of life or death: the risk of coronary heart disease is higher within fast paced countries. Along with presenting these 'facts,' Norgate suggests that "affluent societies people's lifestyles are heavily invested in a present time perspective" (p. 139). This dominant orientation to the present, both on an individual level – for which she uses as one example the obesity crisis as "people are clearly reluctant to change their eating habits" (p. 139) – and a governmental level (reflected in the slow response to move more quickly to resolve world problems such as disease, poverty, child mortality, etc.) – has implications for the health of the planet as well as individuals.

> Such a limited future time perspective clearly has implications for longer-term problems such as global warming. This contrasts with the approach taken in harmonic time cultures, where the focus is as far ahead as two generations, as in the case of trees being planted for unborn grandchildren. It is realistic to say that people's relationships with time as expressed in terms of longevity will only be transformed if, alongside efforts to increase aid, the governments of the world's most powerful nations are prepared to enforce strategies which redistribute wealth and resources using time perspectives substantially more future-oriented than they are now. (Norgate, 2006, p. 140)

Understanding one's relationship with/to time would indeed appear to be an important – perhaps vital – undertaking.

Christopher Uhl (2004) relates a Zen story about a man riding a horse, galloping down a road when another man standing along the roadside shouts, "Where are you going?" The man on the horse replies, "I don't know. Ask the horse" (p. 149). Uhl uses this story as an allegory of our current fast paced society. "Rushing has become a habit: speed has become a way of life" (p. 149).

Carol, in a passing comment mentioned the Slow Food Movement – "the true enjoyment, taking the time [to really taste food]" (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005). As we continued to talk about time and pace, her comment was,

> you don't have time to process, you just do it or you get left behind…I remember reading an article about working smarter not harder but in order to do that you need time to make strategies and people are just running from one fire to the next fire. You don't have time to figure out what the source is, you're just running from place to place putting it out.

It may be useful to bring Heather Menzies (2005) into the conversation at this point, who writes,

> [i]t takes time to unpack a message. It takes shared time and space, too. It requires not only that people talk but also that they listen to each other, interpreting…and working out what needs to be done. And many people don't have this kind of time any more.…All that's real to them is often only what's in front of them right now, on the screen of the BlackBerry in their hand, the laptop at home or the cellphone.…Here's where a deeper numbness can set in, through the disconnect from lived reality. (p. 6)

As another example of cultural differences in conceptions of time and lifestyle, Joseph Campbell (1972) wrote of an experience he had at an international conference in Japan wherein a prominent social philosopher from New York asked a Shinto priest a question about their belief system.

> There were many Japanese members of the congress, not a few of them Shinto priests, and on the occasion of a great lawn party in the precincts of a glorious Japanese garden, our friend [the social philosopher from New York] approached one of these. 'You know,' he said, 'I've been now to a good many ceremonies and have seen quite a number of shrines, but I don't get the ideology; I don't get your theology.' The Japanese (you may know) do not like to disappoint visitors, and this gentleman, polite, apparently respecting the foreign scholar's profound question, paused as though in deep thought, and then, biting his lips, slowly shook his head. 'I think we don't have ideology,' he said. 'We don't have theology. We dance.' (p. 102)

The cultural differences stand out clearly. Dance, as symbolic of a way of being, calls for resting into a moment. This re-calls Sarah Norgate (2006) and her look into differing

conceptions of time amongst cultures. Shintoism seems to fall roughly within what she labelled "timeless time cultures", where there is "less attachment to fast-forwarding to what's going to happen next, or rewinding to what's been happening....The emphasis is away from physical explanations...and more towards the *experience* of time and individual awareness" (p. 16). This is in contrast to cultures where 'time is money': time is for something, which has an embedded notion of work rather than leisure.

When I related the above story from Joseph Campbell during one of many conversations with Carol, she responded with the following:

> And when I look at commercialism – and I think it's done really well – I worry about people who have been...making consumerism calls [targeting children] about the foods they eat, the clothes they wear. They've been powerful consumers from eight years old, from the age of raising up...In South America, they have monkey traps, and all they have to do is put them in a cage and inside the cage are sweet fruits and the monkey will come and put its hand in to grab the fruit and he's trapped because the monkey wants it so bad all he has to do is let go and he'd be free but he can't – so that's how they catch them. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

And Technology Looks Back

Carl Honoré (2004) believes that the above speed-oriented mentality that we seem to have developed in the Westernised world is closely linked to technology.

> As the clock tightened its grip and technology made it possible to do everything more quickly, hurry and haste seeped into every corner of life. People were expected to think faster, work faster, talk faster, read faster, write faster, eat faster, move faster. (p. 27)

In a similar vein, Norgate (2006) writes, "Regardless of our age, our experience of time at least practically depends on how society treats time and its passage" (p. 78). This does not mean to say that Norgate and Honoré are absolutely correct; however, their words do, perhaps, deserve contemplation. Connecting pieces of conversations:

G.R.: But it was a different place when we were younger. We didn't have the money...(Taped Conversation, May 7, 2005).

Carol: I think that what [technology] has done is take people away from...the ability to go inside and say, 'Well, what do I think about this, what do I feel about it, what do I sense about it?' It's almost that the contact with *themselves* has been lost.

Deb: I definitely think society has changed and maybe there are families that live in an urban environment that spend a lot of time together and still have that camaraderie...but it's not

really my experience now. And I do think it's that there is so much technology....It's not that one was better than the other, things are just different now...it's just a different pace and it's different.

G.R.: How do you get kids to connect to each other, to the world, to themselves?....[L]ooking at global issues and the underlying themes that kids have to be able to identify, to know that this is similar to this experience and feel that confidence as they're going into this huge shift. And we have no idea where it's going. It's an experiment that we're throwing them into.

The above comments by the participants in this study and by David Suzuki (2002), Sarah Norgate (2006), and numerous others point in roughly the same direction: time and technology are somehow very closely intertwined and the excess of one is held responsible for the lack of the other. If this is indeed so, a question to be raised is, "How would this come to be?"

Pulling Away and Pulling Together

Heidegger (1977) referred to humanity's state of relative unawareness, if it can be referred to as such, as 'Enframing.' By this, he meant that humanity has become so immersed in the essence of technology that any other way of understanding the world has been set aside and in so doing, we have come to a forgetting of ourselves, how we are to be as human beings, and are thus prevented from having a proper understanding of our own being. Technological thinking has so overtaken the lives of human beings that all is perceived purely from an efficiency perspective: everything in the world, including humanity, has become "Bestand", standing-reserve. Nature and objects are entrapped and stored up for use. Heidegger explains that the essence of technology is not itself technological but becomes manifest as "Gestell": the wholesale enframing of the world as a standing reserve awaiting efficient exploitation. This essence of technology, Gestell, is a way of revealing ("disclosing", "uncovering", "bringing out of concealment") Bestand (standing-reserve). For Heidegger, the real danger in technology is that the essence of technology, our technological engagement with the world, will not be questioned and that this unquestioning acceptance will become a threat to truth and to human existence. Heidegger allows that technology does bring benefits to humankind, but his fundamental objection lies in the wholesale acceptance of technology as the dominant mode of understanding. But what

makes us human, he argues, lies in our capacity to engage in manifold ways of understanding.

> [E]nframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into the kind of revealing that is an ordering. Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing…Enframing blocks the shining-forth and holding sway of truth. The destining that sends into ordering is consequently the extreme danger. What is dangerous is not technology. Technology is not demonic; but its essence is mysterious. The essence of technology, as a destining of revealing, is the danger. (Heidegger, 1977, pp. 332-333)

While Heidegger refers to Enframing as destiny, he is not necessarily taking the stance of technological determinist. We are, rather, left with a flicker of optimism: our destiny need not necessarily become our fate.

Heidegger's work has relevance to this study in several ways, which I raise as questions. First, he offers an opportunity to explore consumerism as a way of being: has "forgetting" ourselves as human beings left a gap through which we are becoming consumed in our consuming through the essence of technology? Along with Foucault, Heidegger may present an opening into understanding the way that discourse – as a "wide collection of beliefs, practices, concepts, and sedimented structures" (Smith, 1998, p. 10) – influences our behaviours and thought patterns. Are human beings *products* of a technological world and has this expressed itself in a productivist discourse which furthermore expresses itself as consumerism – as "a lifestyle that centres upon owning and accumulating commodities, where self-worth, the meaning of life, and personal satisfaction all are defined in relation to it" (Smith, 1998, p. 9)? Have we been unwittingly "enframed"?

Ursula Franklin (1990) poses the possibility that a "systems thinking" accompanies our technological world. By this she is referring to the ideas, practices, myths, and models of reality that are promoted within society. This speaks to a belief system that promotes the adoption of any technology as fundamental to humans, as a mode of being. Ironically, however, it appears that rather than technology working for *us*, we (generally speaking) work for it: in compartmentalising our time, responding to email, and carting cell phones wherever we go, have these 'time saving devices,' those tools and gadgets that were 'designed' to help us in various ways – timesaving being one – instead turned on us, *structuring* the very way we spend time? Why is it that it has become commonplace at films, talks, performances, etc. to announce reminders to turn off cell phones? Assuming that these are opportunities to

spend leisure time, as time *away*, as diversions from the rest of the world, why must cell phones not only come along to concert halls but stay on?

Charles Taylor (1991) presents the idea that people, at least in the Westernised world, have become so firmly attached to instrumental reason – i.e., granting economics supremacy over all else – that everything is treated as raw material or instruments for the projects dreamed up by humanity. This is a form of reasoning that promotes the belief that technological solutions are superior even when something else may be called for. Such dependence or reliance on technology as almighty saviour connects to a question posed by Carol: "Is technology the removal of responsibility?" Concerning technology and a life 'sped up,' she further went on to ask, "Has it taken us away from the joy of doing things?" (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005).

Looking for 'yes/no' answers to such questions at a societal level is to oversimplify the complexities that fashion together to comprise *a life*; however, if the life we fashion is one which we want to understand deeply, Carol's queries quest after something far more than 'yes/no' answers. Some theorists (a few of whom have been included below) have inquired into related topics, but it remains unclear whether it is necessary (or even *possible*) to pull out of or even withdraw somewhat from the mesmerisingly fast pace that change, largely driven by technology, has taken the world.

In another part of our conversation on time and technology, Carol talked about the impact of the Industrial Revolution. For some people it was an easy transition, for others, less so, but despite all, the Industrial Revolution did not halt in its tracks because of a few objections. It went full-on forward. And so the same with the change(s) we are currently experiencing. Carol's point was that *pace* makes a difference too.

> You don't have time to process, you just do it or you get left behind, so I'm sure there's some fear attached to it…and fear becomes pretty much entrenched [from childhood]… so if you don't have the right jeans or the right vehicle…do you link that to abandonment and then to a really deep, fear of death? (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

Hammerslough (2001) might agree with Carol's speculations on this topic: "within the benefits of the new is a warning that works on a fear that's timeless: If you don't buy in now, you may be left behind, excluded, or even perish" (p. 14).

Graham (1993) maintains that the Westernised world has become so strongly focused on technological exploration that the dystopian side of technology is not ever

considered. This has become, he states, an ethic that has become largely entrenched in mental habits and patterns of action. If a society is caught up in a flurry of activity, and that activity is deemed *normal*, it is usually accepted unquestioningly. Consumerism, technological utopianism, maintaining the status quo – these all reflect a particular way of identifying with/in the world (*as* worldview). If there is some awareness, at some level, that something might be amiss, Graham seems to be suggesting that there are quick and easy ways to divert attention away.

Technology, consumerism, and a fast paced society all contribute to what Carol referred to as "a barrier between what is real and who I am, so I don't [have to] care." She spoke of her reluctance, years ago, to turn on her first computer.

> All I can remember is this sense of incredible panic because it [the computer] has removed people from people. I want a name. We're all faceless now. Most of the dealings you have online, it's all nameless, faceless. Technology has made us into this faceless community. Yeah, it's global, sure you can talk to someone in England and France but can you see their eyes, can you hear their voice? (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

This was furthermore linked to events such as the Gulf War (1990s), "remember when we could watch the war on TV and…'oh there's someone getting killed, pass the popcorn please'…[technology] has removed people from knowing what they're actually doing" (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005). In other words, responsibility is removed or shifted towards something or someone else. This she linked to self perception: "If people look at themselves through the lens of technology, what do they see? Do they see themselves in a better light?" This begs the question, "Do they care?"

It is indisputable that computer technology has enabled important breakthroughs in science, medicine, the arts, and even in understanding the extent of the ecocrisis; however, what Carol seems to be getting at is what Heidegger (1977) wrote of in *The Question Concerning Technology* – that in becoming so oriented towards technology as the dominant *mode* of understanding, there is a loss of, or distancing from how we are to 'be' as human beings. I hasten to add here that I do not mean to give Martin Heidegger the final word on technology or on how we 'should be'; rather, I detect a link between Carol's conversation and Heidegger's philosophical ponderings on the power of technology to alter one's frame of mind or draw attention away from the 'natural' world. This possibility has also been explored by others. A recent study (Loughland et al., 2003) involving young peoples'

conceptions of the environment found that only a minority of students regard the environment as a relation – i.e., as something that supports them and in turn requires their care and support – and that the majority treat it as an object. This objectification means that the environment is 'out there,' a place for plants and animals, but separated from themselves. What leads some children to feel part of 'the environment' and others not? The authors of this study raise the possibility that technology may be drawing children away, physically and psychologically, from the natural world and into the "technosphere" (Ihde, 1990) – the high tech world of global multimedia. Whether more contact with outdoor life would cultivate greater sensitivity or sensibility towards the environment is open to question, particularly within urban settings where the environment is largely comprised of vehicles, concrete, and tall building, technosphere notwithstanding.

As a pre-emptive response to possible comebacks regarding the potential of exceptional computer programs to offer 'nature' experiences, I refer to Healy (1998) who cautions against the reliability of such promises.

> Electronic landscapes reduce reality in many ways. Fewer than ten percent of children in the United States now learn about nature from the outdoors, about one-third from school, and more than half learn about it from some sort of electronic device. (e.g., television nature shows, CD-ROMs) (p. 225)

Berkeley astronomer and computer 'expert' Clifford Stoll (1995) does not dispute that "there's lots of good things happening online" (p. 48) but before becoming too enamoured with what 'needs' computers might fill, particularly in education, he remarks that "no computer can teach what a walk through a pine forest feels like. Sensation has no substitute" (p. 138).

In an exposition different from her (1990) work, *The Real World of Technology*, Ursula Franklin (2006) chooses to focus on technological *developments* as opposed to technology. In so doing, she invites discussion on the impact of machines, devices, and computers on *people* rather than *humanity*. The question she poses is, "What would change if we were to look at machines, devices, installations, and process from the point of view that people matter?" (p. 210). She suggests that not only would the questions be phrased differently, a discussion about costs and benefits would unfold differently. She contends that technological developments fall into two broad categories: those innovations that "make work easier, more effective, or more enjoyable" and those that are control-related, "devices that affect the work of an individual…[for example, those that] assist inventory and labour control" (p. 211).

Her belief is that we have far more control-related technological developments than work-related innovations. She uses as support for this "the amassing of personal files and…data collecting activities of various agencies, official and otherwise" (p. 211). In this perspective, technology, or rather technological developments, could pose a threat to both privacy and democracy – and if one considers identity theft, credit card theft, debit card theft (etc.) as consequence of technological developments, this is slightly more than a 'threat.'

Before casting and condemning technology in a permanently negative light, I would like to bring forward a quotation from Jacques Ellul (1981/2004) whose work centred on technique – a term which he used to include the "totality of methods rationally arrived at" (p. 92) by a particular society or era.

> We cannot bring up our children as though they were ignorant of technique, as though they had not been introduced from the first into a world dominated by technique. If we tried to do that, we would make total misfits of our children, and their lives would be impossible. They would then be highly vulnerable to the powers of technique. Yet we cannot wish them to be pure technical experts, making them so well fit for the society dominated by technique that they are totally devoid of what has until now been considered human. Hence, I think that on the one hand we must teach them, prepare them to live *in* technique and at the same time *against* technique. (p. 66)

Vanderburg (1981/2004) explains that Ellul regarded technique and culture as constituting a tension between two approaches to life. The technical approach to life involves a "network of efficient transformations connected by changes of inputs and outputs" (p. 101). Within this system, "bottlenecks" can occur and subsequently "cry out for further technical improvements, compelling an ever-expanding order" (Vanderburg, 1981/2004, p. 101).

Ellul's "ever-expanding order" seems a prophetic commentary: computers and computer software are continually being updated and revised; within a matter of a few years, one can conceivably 'fall out of the loop' unless the will (and the cash) to stay current remain a priority, in the business world, in home computing, and in education. And now that mention has been made of education, I now turn/return to part of the basis of this dissertation: the implications of ecological mindedness, consumerism, time, and technology on education.

Figure 7   **Paideia: Education and Ethos**
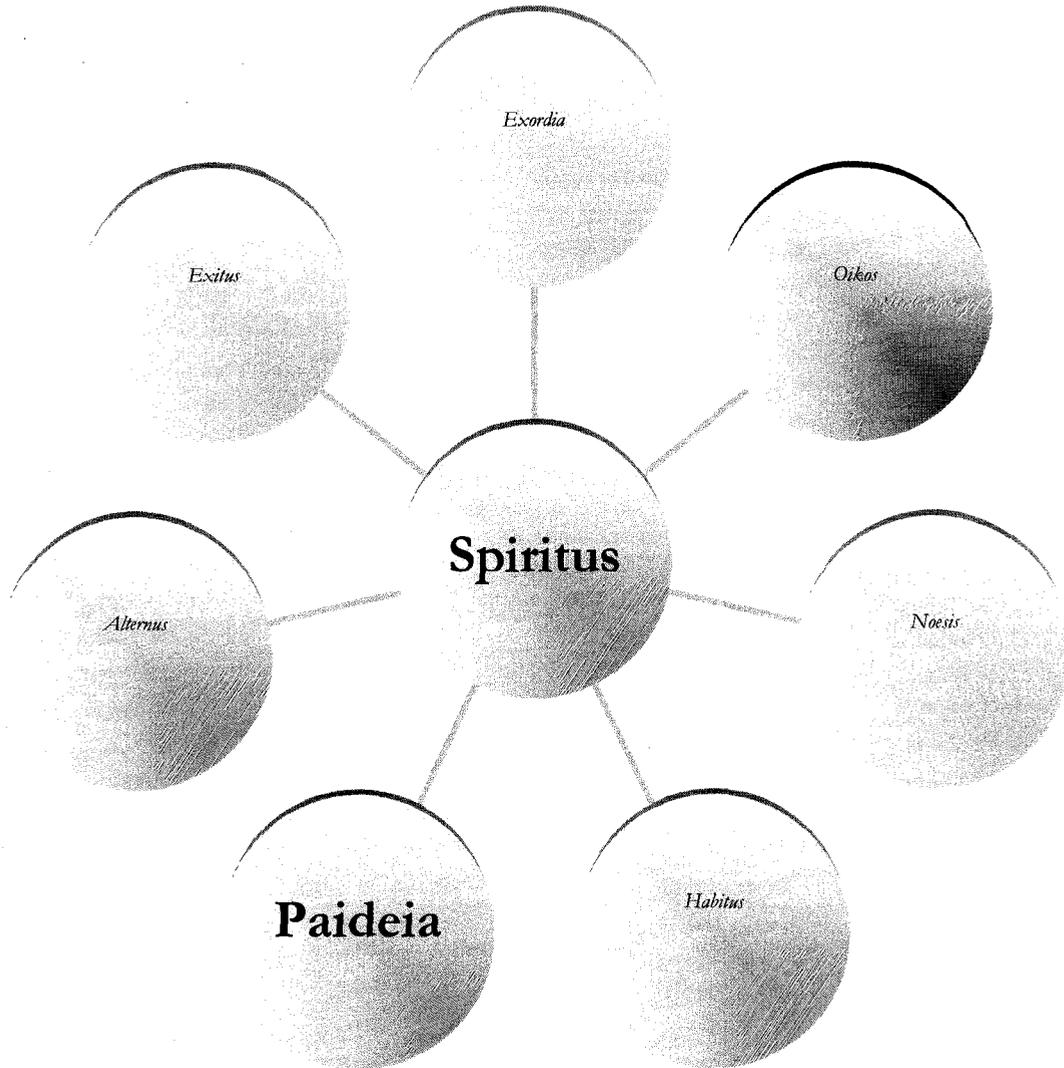
PAIDEIA: EDUCATION AND ETHOS

To the ancient Greeks, "paideia" (παιδεία) meant "the process of educating man into his true form, the real and genuine human nature" (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*, n.d.). It also meant becoming educated into a particular culture, not in the sense of learning a trade or an art but rather the cultural heritage. "Paideia" combined with "ethos" (character) made one 'whole' – capable of becoming a citizen and a 'good' person – it is the cultural heritage continued through generations (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*). I have included it as part of the title to this dissertation because it takes into account the process of teaching and learning as "a cultural heritage". On the surface, the distinction may seem trivial; however, in contemporary society – or perhaps North American society – a narrowing and flattening of the word "education" into schooling as skills, training, and instruction (Britzman, 1991) seems to be occurring. Education, *as a system* has taken on the hue of the sort of institutionalised learning that organises, compartmentalises, and fragments learning into discrete, unconnected subject areas. The use of the term "paideia" offers an entry into something more than schooling as training in discrete subject areas: it engenders broader understanding of self in relation to other, in relation to the Earth, and in relation to the cosmos. In other words, who we are and where we sit within the interconnected web of relations that constitute our existence in this time, place, and event.

I have come to expect two 'standard' questions from people when the talk turns to my doctoral studies. The first is, "What is your dissertation about?" and the second is, "And what does that have to do with education?"

The following page contains my abbreviated reply to the above two questions. The bulk of the text in this chapter is my expanded response. In this I include a broad discussion on the influence of globalisation and the marketplace on the education system. I also provide a short route through some of the policy directives (curriculum) which the teachers in this study were obligated to heed. To bring to light such issues as thinking and the effects of time, pace, and space, I include excerpts of conversations and personal experience.

And What Does That Have to do With Education?

Even though I have been studying ecological mindedness, consumerism, Ecocentrism, Anthropocentrism, and discourse for a number of years, arriving at a simple, straightforward answer to the above question has yet to occur. Connections to the education system seem obvious. However, the complexities that surface and resurface each time I attempt an uncomplicated explanation are a constant reminder that this topic is anything but simple. At least in some part, I have come to understand this difficulty as rooted in discourse. The following few paragraphs, a recap of sorts, constitute my abbreviated response to what this dissertation has to do with education.

As individuals, we are influenced, shaped, or constituted in varying degrees (Hall, 1997) by the language contained within the dominant discourse: "language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings" (Hall, 1997, p. 1). As suggested by Berman (1989), Leiss (1972), Merchant (1990), and many others, our current dominant discourse is inclusive of some things – i.e., common themes and ideas occur across a wide variety of disciplines and areas of knowledge – and exclusive of others – e.g., knowledge as it derives from indigenous peoples. We are living and working within a society that conveys culture, ideas, and attitudes, by and large, through a generally understood, particular discourse.

As outlined earlier in this work, the [now] dominant discourse in the Westernised world flourished during the Enlightenment period (Berman, 1989; Leiss, 1972; Merchant, 1990). This was accompanied by changes associated with the Industrial Revolution, which in turn brought changes within the way that the predominant mode of economics (i.e., capitalism) played out (Smith, 1998). Along with changes associated with culture (e.g., art, architecture, literature, entertainment forms, etc.), Jameson (1991) explains that the modern world underwent a shift from market capitalism, an example of which is the steam engine, prevalent in the 18th to 19th Centuries, to monopoly capitalism, which is the production model that came to prominence in the 19th to mid 20th Centuries, and finally to consumer capitalism, which can be seen as a honing and hardening of the discourse begun several hundred years ago. The shift from an organic growth model to a production model (Franklin, 1990) to a consumption model is, perhaps, the most apparent feature of the modern world, along with intense emphasis on computer and information technologies (Jameson, 1991).

Discourse, Globalisation, and the Education System

Teachers now face the challenge, if they are going to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem, of identifying and placing at the center of the curriculum the more ecologically problematic aspects of the dominant culture: the dominant view of technology, success, work, self-identity, progress, the environment as a natural resource, the science/progress connection, and so forth. Helping students acquire an historical understanding of cultural/ecological relationships, including the metaphorical frameworks that influenced critically important cultural developments in the past, should now be seen as an essential responsibility of teachers. (Bowers, 1995, p. 133)

Bowers' words call attention to an existing public education system based primarily on a rationalistic, scientific paradigm. In a growth-oriented, technological worldview, this approach to education works well indeed, at least for those who have been promised to benefit from being part of the 'dominant' mindset. However, it may be time, as Bowers implores, to ask some pointed questions and consider alternative educational practices, particularly now that globalisation, that phenomenon that might be said to be taking over the world, for better or worse, has entered every day language. The World Bank (2001) defines globalisation as "the growing integration of economies and societies around the world" (World Bank.org, para. 1). In its best light, globalisation has contributed to "[economic] growth and poverty reduction in…[formerly poor] countries.…But [it] has also generated significant international opposition over concerns that it has increased inequality and environmental degradation" (World Bank.org, para. 1).

Globalisation, as a political force, has not remained solely within the political realm. It has also become part of the vocabulary in education. To bring focus to the reality within which the participants in this study live and work, I include the Ministerial Order from Alberta Education (2007) which states, "basic education in Alberta [includes] opportunities to…attain levels of proficiency and cultural awareness which will help to prepare [students] for participation in the global economy (p. 2)." The inclusion of the global economy is unsurprising, given that school is a social institution and will reflect societal trends, directions, and dominant discourse. However, there seems to be an inherent (and unrealistic?) optimism in the globalised market vision: democratic participation for all, realising one's own potential, and recognising difference. Edmund O'Sullivan's (2001) perspective on globalisation and the classroom follows.

> All institutions and programmes [must be] designed to bring to fruition the seeming manifest destiny of the global market...the work of the educator, within this world view, is to prepare and 'skill-train' all of us to go into and have loyalties towards the advance of the global market. (p. 32)

In the same text, he furthermore states that "globalisation [is promoted as]...the key to a better future, the key to better jobs, the key to better living" (p. 33). The excitement wanes and the virtuousness vanishes as he points out that "preparing new learners to be competitive in the global economic community" also means that

> [t]here are no questions asked on the planetary sustainability of this direction. This position accepts uncritically the demands of the global market on competition and consumption. The attitude towards the natural world is fundamentally *exploitative*...There is very little emphasis on the development of local community life and the sense that these communities also have a profound impact on the quality of our lives. (p. 52)

Keller (2002) also discusses the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent within a globalised world.

> The 'official' education system continues to prepare students for life in a society that is highly centralized and hierarchical, and enclosed in the fixed framework of national frontiers and national economies. The process of globalization is breaking down frontiers, and is creating new areas of uncertainty and new dangers. (pp. 119-120)

Orr (1994), in naming the ecological crisis as being utterly entangled with politics and economics, alludes to large scale denial and/or outright refusal to discuss and link these elements together. His evidence lies in what he calls our inability "to question economic growth, the distribution of wealth, capital mobility, population growth, and the scale and purposes of technology", subjects which he says "have not yet entered the public dialogue because they are not considered realistic" (p. 71).

Bowers (2001a, 2001b, 2002) perceives the slow movement in introducing ecological discourse more explicitly into schools as stemming from an incomplete, or perhaps complete *lack* of understanding of the underlying assumptions carried within the scientific paradigm. Having developed long ago, these powerful "root metaphors", as he refers to them, are historically embedded within language, cultural practices, and social institutions and act as impediments to instituting meaningful changes in the way we view the world. He singles out as our most prominent root metaphors, patriarchy – which he concedes is currently being dismantled – Anthropocentrism, progress, mechanism, economism, subjectively centred

individualism, and evolution (in the sense that cultural changes can be understood as part of an evolutionary process after natural selection), all of which he traces back to the beginnings of modern science, the Industrial Revolution, and even the Bible when man was created as superior to and separate from the natural world, including women (Bowers, 2002).

These deep assumptions carried through and within society will necessarily be found in the language used within various school curricula (Bowers, 2001a). Bowers charges that this language is moral and values-laden: "In effect, the language used to name the relationships and attributes in every content area of the curriculum is a powerful and generally unrecognised form of moral education" (2001a, p. 262). In earlier work (1997), he avowed that consumerism, commercialism, unquestioning faith in technological fixes, and escapist forms of entertainment (television or Internet) are all practices that assist in suppressing other ways of viewing the world and other ways of coming to an understanding of humanity's place in the ecosystem, both because of escapism and because these activities do not require direct contact with nature. He also states that in subsuming the voice of other cultures these practices have reinforced the message that nature is regarded as property or 'natural resource,' women are seen as intuitive rather than rational, and oral cultures are considered illiterate and undeveloped – all of which are indicative of the moral codes that exist within the dominant world (Bowers, 1997).

To elaborate on the presence of culture in the classroom, I now explore one particular aspect: the presence/prevalence of a business model, which carries Westernised society's dominant discourse, in education. Although the connection may not be immediately obvious, a link amongst productivist discourse, consumerism, and business partnerships in schools should emerge.

The Business of Education

Education critics such as Barlow and Robertson (1994), Harrison and Kachur (1999), Robertson (1998), and Steinberg and Kincheloe (1997) have explored, discussed, and critiqued the explicit, as opposed to implicit messages carried within the discourse and rhetoric of the public education system, and appearance of the corporate world into the lives of school children. Steinberg and Kincheloe confine their work to the study of the "cultural curriculum" but their research also has relevance to what is occurring in schools in terms of

the introduction of business, in the form of partnerships, into schooling. These business partnerships, formed out of 'mutual' benefit and agreement, frequently include merchandising products such as candy and soft drink dispensing machines, advertising, business representatives speaking to students, etc., in exchange for cash or material goods to enhance existing school programs (e.g., to purchase books, finance field trips, buy computers at a reduced rate, etc.). At times these partnerships are subtle, at other times, not so much. Kilbourne (1999) tells of a high school student who wore a "Coke" T-shirt on "Pepsi Day" (their school sponsor). The administration responded by expelling the student from school for a day. Not an entirely Draconian repercussion, really, but this certainly underscores how seriously these partnerships can be taken. In some cases, as is made evident by Kilbourne's foregoing anecdote, individuals are not allowed to express their own viewpoints. Not only are they silenced, they are disciplined for not falling in step with the [Pepsi] party line. To return to Heidegger, what statement might this make concerning *Gestell*? Have school grounds become 'ground' for standing reserve? And if schools are the ground, how might this position the inhabitants – the *students* who attend [presumably] to become educated? Have *they* become 'standing reserve'? Beyond being students who desire, or are forced into, an education, have they become captive consumers unwittingly being consumed by the corporate world? Have students been put up for sale? Is consumer capitalism driving the fragmentation of the public under the guise of consumer choice?

That the business world has entered the realm of education should not be surprising, perhaps, not only given the emphasis schooling places on preparing citizens of/for the [work] world but also because of the increase in privatisation of public spaces in general. The latter – i.e., the privatisation of public space – has become an increasingly visible phenomenon, as well as *in*visible, which I shall explain momentarily; for instance, charter and private schools have appeared with greater and greater frequency, in some provinces more so than others, and it is not unusual to find these located in former public schools. This is not to say that charter schools – which are typically publicly funded (Alberta Teacher's Association, n.d.). but appeal to a particular segment of the population, from, for example, 'back to basics' to 'girls only' schools – or private schools are malevolent or unwarranted; indeed there is nothing new about private education. The point is, charter/private schools seem to have become more common in North America's recent past (Alberta Teachers' Association, n.d.). This may be seen as a political response to free market advocates –

individual entities or groups who are interested/invested in the aggressive adoption of market values.

> Government decisions to provide public funds to private schools, give parents vouchers redeemable at public or private schools and make fees paid to private schools tax deductible are all examples of the privatization of public education. One purpose is to reduce government expenditure on public education. Generally, it costs taxpayers less to educate students in a private setting because parents cover much of the cost themselves. As well, privatization of public education is philosophically attractive to those who believe that a private enterprise system is more efficient and produces superior results in all circumstances. (Alberta Teachers' Association, n.d., para. 11)

Both advocates and critics argue their points strongly: free market competition is the only way to improve education in the opinion of advocates; privatising education contributes to social and economic inequality (Alberta Teachers' Association, n.d.) is [one] response of critics. Naomi Klein (2007) delves into this controversy somewhat in *The Shock Doctrine* when she discusses American economist Milton Friedman's influence on the privatisation of schools in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina struck in August, 2005. According to Klein's research, Friedman offered a radical and evidently alluring solution to the decimation of numerous New Orleans schools: rather than spend money reconstructing public schools, which, according to Friedman, "reeked of socialism" (p. 5), the government should dole out vouchers to parents which they could use at private schools. He meant this not as a stop-gap measure but a permanent reform. The American government led by George W. Bush, leapt at this opportunity and funnelled funding into charter schools – publicly funded but run by private entities complete with their own rules (Klein, 2007).

Along with the above, privatisation also has its tendrils in education in other ways, i.e., intellectual property. Once knowledge becomes 'property,' it can be bought and sold, and rather than belonging to everyone, it becomes a commodity with a price. 'Experts' or professionals may see themselves as outside the life of 'regular' people. This is another long-standing convention, unquestionably, and it is one which spans cultures; however, with the onslaught of biotechnology companies patenting human genes – one fifth of which have been 'claimed' according to a report by Kate Ravilious (2005) – we may indeed have cause for concern since gene 'ownership' may prevent research on diseases such as breast cancer, diabetes, and obesity (Ravilious, 2005) by publicly funded medical researchers. And on the topic of privatisation within the medical realm, we have also witnessed a greater number of

private [for profit] health care facilities (I refer here specifically to the province of Alberta; see, for example, Emery and Gerrits, 2005), an occurrence that has created a certain unease about disease, at least amongst *some* citizens given Canada's long-time commitment to public health care.

In yet another incarnation of privatisation, it appears that citizens or conglomerates are now able to *sell* airspace. Is it not somewhat absurd that individuals or groups have the right to *sell*, to profit off, something that is virtually indistinguishable (unless smog-infected) for something we not only see but desire, use, or perhaps hoard – i.e., money? In Toronto, Ontario, a would-be high rise condominium development, due to its proposed height, was evidently going to send a historical building, St. James' Cathedral, in the shade (Currie and Grange, 2003). Because the justice system considers it illegal to encroach on other people's property, be it building or shadows, a document was signed between the developer and the dean of the cathedral, which, based on mutually acceptable funding agreement, would provide the developer with the air rights to certain condo plans in exchange for money (Currie and Grange, 2003).

Perhaps the most stunning example of privatisation taken to an extreme is brought to light in a talk given by Naomi Klein to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (accessed from CCPA online). Based on her (2007) book, *The Shock Doctrine*, she tells of a man from Mongolia who attended a free-market think tank training session in Michigan. His interest in understanding free-market capitalism was in part due to his aim to privatise his country's national herd of yaks, which, according to Klein, was a success: after returning to Mongolia, he became Prime Minister and did indeed privatise the national yak herd.

If schools truly are looked upon as an emerging market niche with students as target consumers, are we undergoing a fundamental change regarding the *meaning* of schooling? Are students primarily consumers with parents/caregivers as funding agents? Are schools providers of [commodified] knowledge/information? This topic is, of course, much more complex than I am able to give voice within this dissertation; I raise it here more as a statement of the complexities and challenges associated with contemporary education. The appropriateness of partnerships between businesses and schools is being contested or at least questioned on several levels (e.g., parents, politicians, educational researchers); however, business alliances continue to form, to the glee of some and the frustration of others. With the withdrawal of government funding, both provincially and federally, school boards have

been placed in a difficult position. They need money to support basic programs as well as subsidise 'extras' (field trips, guest speakers, etc.); on the other hand, the 'benefits' may be outweighed by the underlying message that children receive. The presence of business acts as a valuing – if something is present, it is typically condoned. This brings a commercialistic dimension into the classroom, which makes the school an extension of consumerism (Barlow and Robertson, 1994). In this conception, then, schooling serves the needs of business, which carries a specific [productivist] worldview, one that had its beginnings hundreds of years ago.

In some ways, it could be argued that schools have become a battleground for conflicting conceptions of childhood and worldviews. Whether these partnerships prove, in the end, to be appropriate or not appropriate, in the meantime other viewpoints (e.g., ecological) may be implicit, but may not be brought front and centre. This, of course, is not the case in *all* schools. Numerous schools have been awarded special status as "Green" or "Earth" schools as a result of their emphasis on environmental issues and global education.

Is school, in a fundamental sense, meant to open opportunities for learning, exploration, and understanding? Is it a place for discussion, participation, and critique? Is it a place to practice and come to an understanding of democracy? Is it a forward progression towards adult life? Is it meant for inculcating dominant society's ideals? Who decides?

Curriculum: A Course of (In?)Action

My concerted effort throughout this work has been to bring forth the possibility that the classroom is not only an appropriate space to discuss such issues as ecological awareness and consumerism *as curriculum* but that it is also a vital (as in living) place to address these as well as numerous other topics that may not be included within the Program of Studies proper. Children are of the world, they are in the world, and if "education is to have any meaning for life….[it is necessary] to make each one of our schools an embryonic community life…that [is a reflection of] the life of the larger society" (Dewey, 1915/2001, p. 20). This reaches back to "paideia" – education in a general, holistic sense. But what does the "larger society" represent and how do teachers discern what is worth giving attention to and what is not?

While teachers may at times feel constrained by such things as program demands, parental demands, administrative demands (etc.), they are also afforded a good deal of

latitude in their response(s) to the daily, weekly, or moment to moment events that arise in a classroom at any given time. In some cases, this may be (mis)construed as a carte blanche for teachers to act and react from a purely subjective, moral(istic) position. However, if teaching is to be considered an ethical endeavour (see, for example, Noddings, 2002, 2003) wherein a democratic practice may be mobilised, many possibilities open up for conversation, dialogic inquiry, and exchange of ideas.

During a group conversation about teacher roles and responsibilities I mentioned a student teacher who had spoken to a grade five class about the health risks associated with smoking. One of the grade five students brought the message home, a phone call was made by the parent to the principal, and the student teacher was brought in for a discussion (which she described more as a reprimand). Deb's response:

> And why are [the parents] defensive? They're defensive because they know it's bad but they don't want to deal with that and they don't want their kids questioning that. Okay, well that goes back to who in our society has the responsibility or the right to instil those values. Does the parent have the right to do that, and the child only be exposed to the parents' values and opinions, or does the school have the right to do that and is it part of our educational mandate that [teachers] have the right to do that? The government seems to think that, at the school level, we [*teachers*] do, because the government has taken it into their hands that we can educate about that so I don't think the parents should be so defensive about that. (Taped Conversation March 15, 2005)

When I asked her how she thought teachers might facilitate that, she again took a stand, what might be considered an ethical stand.

> Well I think, as a teacher, just like as a member of society I don't have the right to tell a child that this is the right way or that this is the way it *should* be and that it has to be, I can just expose them to alternatives and try to be factual in that smoking has been proven to be harmful to your health. I don't think parents should question that the child should be given those facts so they can form their own opinion. I think the parent is just being defensive if they don't want their child to know. It's like teaching religion. I don't think I can say 'this is the only way or this is the right way or this is *the* God, or this is the right thing to believe in,' but I don't see anything wrong with exposing children to [other beliefs]. Some people believe in Buddha and some people believe in this, and this is just interesting information about our society. Why do we have to hide that away, why do we have to cover it? Why do we have to pretend it doesn't exist? We don't have to pass on any judgement about it, we just, same with, I'm not going to say whether abortion is right or wrong, I'm just going to say that abortion is available, smoking is available, drugs are available, religion is there and children should, I mean, ultimately parents are going to be the ones that are going to influence them the most, but I think as a society we would let down kids if we didn't teach them the bad things about smoking....I think that's opening those

kids up to be thinkers and I think that's part of my right and privilege and job or whatever. I think as a teacher I should be allowed to, and if they go home and [talk with their parents] maybe they can influence [them] or maybe it won't affect [them] at all. But maybe that child might grow up and have a little different consciousness, so it might affect the next generation in some way. But I don't think that I should ignore that, and never talk about it, so I do talk about that. (Taped Conversation March 15, 2005)

Curriculum can be difficult terrain to negotiate. Which 'topics' belong in the classroom and which ones do not? How do teachers 'stay the course' and maintain integrity in the face of numerous directives from provincial mandates, school boards, and school based administrators – not to mention demands from media, students, and parents? Parker Palmer (1998) points to the dubious space that teachers stand within on a daily basis.

Unlike many professions, teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life.... As we try to connect ourselves and our subjects with our students, we make ourselves, as well as our subjects, vulnerable to indifference, judgement, ridicule. (Palmer, 1998, p. 17)

Culture('s) Rules and Ecopedagogy

As outlined by Deb above, teaching carries an inherent tension. Public schools are dwelling places for a diversity of learners, a multiplicity of narratives, and a "hub of the community" (Franklin, 2006, p. 30). Postman (1996) characterises schools as negotiating two contradictory notions.

One is that schools must teach the young to accept the world as it is, with all of their culture's rules, requirements, constraints, and even prejudices. The other is that the young should be taught to be critical thinkers, so that they become men and women of independent mind, distanced from the conventional wisdom of their own time and with strength and skill enough to change what is wrong. (p. 61)

In speaking of an experience wherein a girl came to school wearing clothes that did not have a designer label, Carol described the tears that flowed following the ridicule on the playground. This did not occur in junior high school where the emphasis on clothing is especially pronounced. It was elementary school, grade three. When this anecdote arose, our conversation quickly – inevitably, perhaps – shifted to the role of the teacher. Because teasing and ridicule are considered to be forms of bullying (Beran, 2006), it is the responsibility of the teacher to intervene, thus it is not a far leap to conceive of addressing this as a living issue in the context of a living classroom. G.R.'s comment was, "It almost

becomes teaching as a subversive activity…trying to get people to be independent of their society, to be independent thinkers" (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005). In further reflecting on this, I cannot help but wonder whether designers, advertisers, and marketers, too, could (should?) be held accountable for their role in promoting brand names as indicative of self worth?

Is *this* part of the cultural heritage? Is this what it means to be educated into contemporary Westernised society? Is this the collective ethos of our time? Is this the world we want? Are the personal lives and decisions of students and their families related to the classroom?

From my own teaching experience, I recall a student who excitedly told me about her toy collection. It began when she was in kindergarten and by the time she was in grade four it had swelled to a force of 122. The creators and marketers of this line of stuffed animals were very clever in keeping the story going: there was an assortment of different characters, different colours, different clothes, and different cutesy names. I wondered several things: how could she ever play with all those "Beanie Babies", where did she *keep* them, and where did my responsibility as *teacher* lie? I knew that connections to curriculum could be made through topics such as the influence of advertising on consumer choice and the effect of excessive consumerism on natural resources and the eventual landfill repercussions as people seek to divest themselves of their extra 'stuff,' but was it my place to blend family choices into classroom discussions? Should I even consider opening a debate or dialogue in the classroom about such a topic with young children? Even if this matter could be placed within an ecopedagogical paradigm, would I be overstepping my bounds?

C.A. Bowers (2001) would, I suspect, be far less reticent than I. Of many questions he poses to educational reformers, the following relate directly to my above wonderings.

> What is the nature of an eco-justice pedagogy, how does it address the twin problems of environmental racism and the need to regenerate community alternatives to an increasingly consumer dependent lifestyle and what curricular reforms need to be undertaken in order for teachers to practice an eco-justice pedagogy? (p. 401)

I do not claim to have answers to these questions, I did not raise these explicitly with the participants in this study, nor do I think it is realistic to have a specific, 'one size fits all,' formulaic method on which teachers may lay their practice. Each classroom and each school rests within a particular context and each of these particular contexts interacts with/in a

particular group of individuals. *However*, this does not mean that these questions are not worth asking.

To some degree, the above questions also ask that we understand the assumptions that coevolved with the rise of the modern world, some of which are: change is progressive (and therefore 'good'); technology is a culturally neutral tool; and an instrumental view of nature is desirable (Bowers, 2001) – i.e., the "myth of progress". These assumptions have accordingly led to: exploitation of Earth's resources as well as other cultures; a consumptive lifestyle; a factory model in agriculture; an anthropocentric viewpoint; application of technology to problem solving even where it may not be appropriate; lack of permanency, lack of rootedness in history; and a mindset of domination (Bowers, 2001).

In conversations with friends and acquaintances wherein I have mentioned my dissertation or referred to current news items related to environmental concerns, I am sometimes met with the look that says, "You-can't-halt-progress." As I do not consider myself to be a fanatic, I am always slightly surprised at such responses. I am led to wonder, at times, whether I *am* fanatical. Does talk of the ecocrisis raise fears that something will be lost, that a currently 'comfortable' lifestyle is under threat? How have they avoided the numerous documentaries, television news programs, newspaper reports, books, articles, scientific reports, etc., that lead quite directly to the influence of people on the environment? Have they not seen the images, or heard the accounts of polar bears drowning in the Arctic because the ice is melting at an astounding rate and they are unable to swim to land or ice? Why would they ignore this information yet tune into the latest advertisements on the newest and best products available to them? Whatever the reasons may be, the "You must be an eco-freak" look is a very effective way of shutting down any further conversation or debate concerning what 'progress' really means.

It may be worthwhile at this point to consider the policy directives that the teachers in this study are required to follow. Since the text(s) I have drawn from (i.e., Alberta Education, Calgary Board of Education, Alberta Teacher's Association) are rather lengthy, I bring forward a few excerpts that underscore or point towards a particular discourse.

Missions and Mission Statements

As one example of discourse in education, I turn to a very general and very brief overview of the 'official' documents as *expressed* within the Program of Studies that the participants in this study referred to in our conversations and are required to follow. I emphasise 'expressed' to highlight a point. Teachers are free to interpret and adapt this document to fit within and reflect their own personal teaching philosophies; my interpretation of this particular part of the Program of Studies is not meant as a single 'correct' analysis. I seek primarily to understand the main discourse carried within education (as it appears to be within these documents) and upon which the participants are required to lay their practice. And which apparently creates tension.

As quick summaries of the beliefs, goals, and directions of education in the province of Alberta, I begin with summaries and quotations from various stakeholders.

The Alberta Government and the Alberta Teachers' Association cite very similar goals for education. Both governing bodies believe that education is essential to fostering responsible, caring and independent individuals. The Alberta Government adds the additional goal of fostering economically prosperous individuals. It is the belief of the Alberta Teachers' Association that public education is essential to maintaining democracy and freedom. Each of the governing bodies believes that it is essential to work with other businesses and agencies throughout the province to set and support the goals for education (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2004).

> The department's vision is to provide 'the best learning system in the world.' The mission is: 'Alberta Learning, through its leadership and work with stakeholders, ensures that learners are prepared for lifelong learning, work and citizenship so they are able to contribute to a democratic, knowledge-based and prosperous society.' (Alberta Learning, 2004)

> The Program of Studies identifies the outcomes for the core and optional learning components for Kindergarten to Grade 12. Content is focused on what students are expected to know and be able to do. Though organized into separate subject, course, or program areas, there are many connections across the curriculum. The reporting of student progress should, nevertheless, be in terms of the outcomes outlined in courses of study for each subject area. (Calgary Board of Education, 2003, p. 1)

Within the "Program Foundations" section (which is taken from the Alberta Learning 2001-2004 Business Plan) can be found their description of "Basic Education in Alberta."

> A basic education must provide students with a solid core program, including language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students will be able to meet the provincial graduation requirements and be prepared for entry into the workplace or post-secondary studies. Students will understand personal and community values and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Students will develop the capacity to pursue learning throughout their lives. Students also should have opportunities to learn languages other than English and to attain levels of proficiency and cultural awareness which will help to prepare them for participation in the global economy. (Calgary Board of Education, 2003, p. 2)

Their mission is stated as follows: "Alberta Learning's leadership and work with partners build a globally recognised lifelong learning community that enables Albertans to be responsible, caring, creative, self-reliant and contributing members of a knowledge-based and prosperous society" (p. 2).

Within the definition of "Basic Education", the language is directive ("students will") and yet somewhat ambiguous: what is, and how do students attain "cultural awareness"? What are "community values"? In this ambiguity, however, lies hope: it is one of the statements which is not specifically directive and prescriptive ("students will" seems to be the preferred way of describing the fate of the successful student who passes through their system).

In the "Health and Life Skills" section of the Program of Studies is this directive: "Students begin to develop practices, knowledge and skills related to career development in *Kindergarten*" (p. 21, italics added). In terms of the dominant discourse in education (as stated within the Program of Studies), it would appear that from the first day that children enter their classrooms, they are being groomed for adult life in the world of work.

In general, the Program of Studies seems to place emphasis on skills development (instrumental knowledge). And implicit within skills development are two basic elements: assessment (gatekeeping, sorting) and competition, both of which are key components found in and required for the 'real' world (of work and business). These [limited] excerpts and examples reflect Franklin's (1990) discussion of the production, or factory model: units of production are judged by quality control (assessment, achievement testing), which is in contrast to self directed, self motivated learners.

This does not, of course, present a complete, accurate picture of what actually occurs in a classroom. It is also not meant to be representative of the entire Program of Studies. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Program of Studies, it should, of course, be read in its entirety. The examples I have chosen were selected to underscore a certain discourse and the primacy this discourse has achieved, but the Program is not by any means utilised as a closed system by every teacher in every classroom. To look carefully at it is to discover innumerable openings and entry points through which various other discourses might enter the conversation – as, for example, the inherent interpretive dimension within the phrase, "cultural awareness". I have yet to unearth a strong orientation towards ecological mindedness within the Program of Studies. This does not, however, mean that the possibilities for such are foreclosed or non existent. There are undoubtedly many classrooms wherein ecopedagogy and ecological mindedness are part of the 'daily routine.'

While critiques of education – and teachers – are ever bountiful and arise from all sectors of society – parents, students, politicians, and even teachers themselves, Bowers (1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003) discusses the complications inherent in critiques that focus primarily on curricular issues or even those that address various social issues and inequities. He uses the example of critical pedagogues such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, who despite their well intentioned efforts to address injustices in society, are not fully successful because, avers Bowers, they are using the same root metaphors (e.g., emancipated individualism, linear view of progress, Anthropocentrism) that developed alongside the Industrial Revolution.

It is these same root metaphors, according to Bowers, that underlie globalisation. Without understanding the connection and exposing these metaphors, they cannot be dismantled and new alternatives developed that could more adequately contend with ecological issues – referred to by Bowers (2002) as "environmental crises". In uncovering the historical foundations of language and the way certain terms become solidified as metaphors, if indeed a metaphor can be said to be 'solidifiable,' Bowers focuses attention on the lingering, almost undetectable impact of the past on the present.

Life in Lockdown

Sometimes I think that the whole world is going to explode and that's what has to happen because change will never happen in closed systems. And yet the school board does its best to keep it closed. It is very structured, the hierarchy...a hierarchical structure is a very, very closed structure, and it's not going to change. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

The preceding comment from Carol speaks to the inherent power structure and the processes that exist within a school system. She was quick to mention that "people are doing the best they can with what they have", but better support – in the form of government funding, or classroom assistance, especially for teachers who deal with "kids who are absolutely dangerous" – is crucial.

The complexities in teaching are enormous as it is, and along with the drive "in Alberta...the better, better, better, good, better, best mentality" (Carol, Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005), teaching, in some ways, is being rewritten. In a separate conversation, G.R. uttered similar words: " [we are living with] more stress in this society [and the pressure] to have it be faster, more and more is being placed on [us] and higher and higher expectations" (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005).

Teachers, students, parents, classrooms, all become part of and participative in a cultural energy, one that requires "some creative thinking – outside the box" (McAvity, Taped Conversation, Taped Conversation, May 7, 2005). In yet another separate but related conversation in which I had mentioned ethical responsibilities, Leila had this to say:

I just had a little fleeting thought that went through...I'm wondering if there aren't enough stories out there for building the ethics for decision making processes which affect our everyday lives...where is the ethical framework for making a decision that can come back to us as a society so that we can all understand how we made that decision....What are the ethics, and what, as an educational institution are we teaching here? (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

To return to control and the 'power' of authority, Carol mentioned that we have developed a "doling out mentality", a basic instance of which is the classroom wherein students feel the repercussions.

Two paper towels [per day]...'Here's your one piece for the day, here's your piece for the day'...[and] they don't have [writing] paper or they've got it tucked away somewhere so the kids can't have it...I'm sure it's done to preserve the environment [but] there's just got to be a better way. I look around and think, 'Would I want my children raised in some of these schools?' (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

This conversation is a consideration of external restraints on personal, and by extension, professional decision making capabilities. Another point that Carol made had to do with another form of control stemming from politically correct language – the term she used was "language police" – in reference to people who decide what is and is not appropriate to say.

> I think we live in a very constrained [society]. I find political correctness quite controlling. I think that when [we are not allowed] freedom of expression but you have to say the right things to the right people, and you have to have the right name…I think it's been really repressive. Not that I [am promoting] racial slurs or whatever, but why do we have to live in a world where '*they*' have to make up rules? It's almost like there's a group of people who are afraid that the right things won't happen so they make rules rather than just letting common sense and decency take over. (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005)

Although there is not space enough to include the conversation in its entirety, Carol made it clear that, in questioning political correctness, she is not suggesting that the reverse should occur – i.e., in the absence of external parameters (political correctness), intentional harm done to others or abusive verbal attacks should be acceptable. She seems to be more so questioning the visible yet invisible self proclaimed 'authority.'

One of the underlying questions is, "Who decides what is 'best'?" The difficulty in arriving at even a partial response to such a question reflects, once again, the tension between the desire for self interest/self pursuit and the desire to contribute to the common good – which, perhaps, might [fundamentally?] include a sustainable biosphere – when the two appear to conflict. It also reflects the way in which teachers and students are positioned. Some of these decisions are based on choice – collaboratively or individually – while others necessarily raise questions about basic assumptions. If we accept at face value the 'l'histoire du jour' – as pointed out in the paper towel (privation?) anecdote above – then one is in a position where an existing structure dictates the essential rules, the parameters, one's place as cog in the great machine, the secret to survival.

I am reminded of a conversation I had many years ago with an administrator in which I questioned the use, use-ability, and utility of computers in early elementary schooling. It was not a question that focused on any sort of either/or scenario; it was merely about the way in which we were proceeding, which, in the early days of mass classroom computer presence, involved an almost frenetic quest to create ways to use the computers as quickly as possible rather than taking time to ensure that the learning that was to be

'enhanced' actually *would* be enhanced. I team-taught in a classroom where five year old children were instructed to draw pictures with a computer mouse that was larger than the size of their hands. This was cumbersome, difficult, and frustrating for many of the students. The logic in this activity? Kindergarten children love to draw, so we will use computers for 'art.' This obviously speaks to lack of professional development for teachers; in responding to directives to *use* this costly electronic equipment, they applied their existing knowledge as best they could. When I opened this conversation with a particular principal, however, there was no 'space in the clearing.' I did not even raise my second topic: ergonomics, or rather lack of attention to ergonomics. I left his office feeling an odd mixture of traitor, saboteur, and Luddite. It was evidently not something open to conversation, never mind question. With this sort of foreclosure, it is hard *not* to shut down, shut up, and follow the status quo. When administrators, policy developers, parents (etc.) are guided/driven/blinded by their own – not necessarily student – interests, teachers are often left trying to piece together innovative ways to incorporate whatever the latest directive may be. I bring this forward not to air an ancient grievance but to point out the difficulty in raising questions if they run contrary to accepted norms and discourse. The proliferation of electronic technologies, at least in most of the Westernised world, may be seen as both a blessing and a burden. The Internet is a prime example of this: just as it is so easy to access information, it is equally as easy to become submerged in a series of hyperlinks, hypertext (hyper-activity/hyper-tension?) as we try to manage, understand, and integrate the massive increase in information brought forth by mass media in its various forms and guises. In my attempts to drive, or rather be driven by, the [computer] mouse in my search for knowledge and understanding, I have not infrequently 'hyperlinked' to the point of losing track of what I was originally searching. A comment by Carol comes to mind: "computers [in school] are the dog right now [humans are the tail]…it's shaking us and we're just [spinning in circles]" (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005). And in this 'spin,' I wonder whether it creates a detraction, a distraction, from *thinking*? And if this might be the case – that thinking is foreclosed or lost or not present because of existing in a perpetual 'spin' cycle – another question arises: what does it mean to "think"?

Seeking Clearance

Heidegger (1977), in an essay entitled *"The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking"*, uses "clearing" to illuminate his conception of thinking: "the path of thinking…needs the traversable clearing" (p. 445). In order for thinking to occur, a space (clearing) must be present and must be attended to *as* a space for *minded* participation. In part, this essay hearkens towards his scrutiny of technology and what he calls "Gestell" (the world as standing reserve). Heidegger (1977) writes: "The need to ask about modern technology is presumably dying out to the same extent that technology more decisively characterizes and directs the appearance of the totality of the world and the position of man in it" (p. 434). Even though he does not use this particular essay to focus purely on the Westernised world's preoccupation, if it can legitimately be termed as such, with technology, which he gave extensive attention to in *The Question Concerning Technology* (1977), he is still working out a way to 'improve the lie' of 'thinking' as not only and merely a scientific discourse driven by empirical data and reductionistic logic but as a pursuit worthy of the social sciences. His use of the forest as metaphor for mind – which he explains as coming to a clearing in a dense forest where suddenly the forest is "free of trees at one place" and it is "light, free, and open" (p. 441) – invites an opening to entertain thinking outside of, or beyond science or metaphysics. In so doing, he bids a sense of darkness and lightness, the latter which I interpret as 'enlightenment' (or lack thereof), wherein thinking, as a bridge between light and dark, lies in wait for its own coming into being: "It [thinking] prepares its own transformation" (p. 436). The turning point seems to occur when one reaches a conscious, a recognition, a receptivity.

> *Enargeia*…means that which in itself and of itself radiates and brings itself to light. In the Greek language, one is not speaking about the action of seeing…but about that which gleams and radiates. But it can radiate only if openness has already been granted. The beam of light does not first create the clearing, openness, it only traverses it. It is only such openness that grants to giving and receiving and to any evidence at all the free space in which they can remain and must move. (Heidegger, 1977, p. 443)

In this conception, the opportunity, the *responsibility* to become 'enlightened,' to participate fully in the experience of coming to a new understanding, rests within the individual, and as the "beam of light…traverses" the clearing, there is a sense of immediacy: should the eye/I miss the light, the opportunity to become enlightened (or en-light-ened, as unburdened) is missed. It would seem that a choice is requested.

Whether or not what is present is experienced, comprehended, or presented, presence as lingering in the open always remains dependent upon the prevalent clearing. What is absent, too, cannot be as such unless it presences in the *free space of the clearing*. (Heidegger, 1977, pp. 443-444)

Stepping into Heidegger's "clearing" has brought to light several things: first, I recognise a similarity in my own musings of understanding occurring in a 'pause.' The difference is that his metaphor speaks most clearly of space, while mine is foremost connected to time. Second – and this is closely linked to the first – I have been brought to recognise yet another of my own contradictions: despite my valorising the 'pause,' I race to get words on paper and thoughts to congeal, I check the calendar, I watch the clock, and I worry that time is running out. My desire is to work faster, to get it done, to work overtime as opposed to working *over time*. In order for the unconcealment, for what is present to become present (i.e., experienced), I need to clear not only a space, I need to clear a time, *time* in which the thinking thoughts have a moment to settle, to congeal, to become understood. Heidegger's words resonate…"We all still need an education in thinking, and first of all, before that, knowledge of what being educated and uneducated in thinking means" (p. 449).

On Time in the Halls of Learning

To contemplate is consciously to possess meanings; to behold them with relish; to view them so absorbingly as to revel in them….when [contemplation] is ultimate, and is a fruition, knowing has stepped out of the picture; the vision is aesthetic.…..Omit the aesthetic phase, the absorbing charm of contemplation, and what remains for a theory of knowledge is that meanings must be had before they can be used as means of bringing to apparition meanings now obscure and hidden. (Dewey, 1929, p. 331)

The above quotation from John Dewey seems to apprehend time as a period of or for contemplative activity in which there is a *determination* to consider something deeply and at length. He seems to be saying that contemplation is integral to meaning-making at a deep level. This, to me, represents a call to take *time* to work through new understandings. Nicholas Davey (2006) explains that "'true meaning' does not refer to the epistemological value attributed to a given meaning but to the ability of that meaning to truly step forward and assert itself as something coherent and distinct in its own right" (p. 238). Forming such understanding could well occur in the absence of deep (i.e., time intensive) contemplation,

however, in order for meaning, 'true meaning' to come about, a "consciousness as *consciousness* of [the] difference" (Davey, 2006, p. 238) seems surely to require *time*.

> If indeed, a text asserts itself against one for the first time and one realizes both how the text was in part withheld from one and how the blinding nature of one's own expectancies was also withheld from one, then one begins to see one's own expectancies and those of the text differently. (Davey, 2006, p. 238)

John Dewey and Nicholas Davey have caused me to wonder whether my own vivid childhood memories – events that occurred so long ago – may have something to do with the *time* we had, the time we took, as children, when life seemed 'slower' and we were free to explore and understand the world with carefree abandon. Might this have some impact on the strong imprint that my experiences have left on my mind? As children, we did not merely watch the world, although observation was certainly key, we were actively, physically *involved* in it, unhurried and unfettered, fully engaged. It was an absorption that I find quite different from that which is activated when I respond to media. The latter requires an abstraction of knowledge, which requires a different form of participation, and understanding can indeed follow such forms of engagement. I do not mean to imply that children now are not using all their senses when they are engaged in mass media entertainment such as video games, nor do I mean to imply that there has been a complete and utter closure of children's free exploration of the [outdoor] world around them. My primary wondering rests on the appreciable difference in lucidity with which I recall those untroubled days growing up in Saskatchewan and how (or whether) this is related to what John Dewey is saying above.

A conversation (February 19, 2005) played its way through culture, the classroom, teachable moments, relationships, self, and most prominently, *time* – how it is spent, how it is taken up, how it is weighed, how it is *valued*. To pick it up midstream:

Bev: In an odd convolution, that brings to mind the license plate I saw on a Mercedes SUV about a year ago that had displayed in big letters, 'MCMOM.'

G.R.: That brings it back to society – how many times do families eat at fast food restaurants? My team partner had a discussion [about universal themes encased within literature] and half [the students in the class] don't want to read. 'I want to get my information from a movie, from TV' – and yes, the themes are there [in books] but TV's better because it's faster and it's quick and 'I don't have to spend a week reading the book.' They like that idea of speed. And yet our conversations are that slowing down, that going

internal...I'm working with my [students] on reading two ways. You can read exactly what's there – I call it reading on the page...or you can take the words and interpret that, bring yourself to the story, bring some experiences to that story, go beyond the exact meaning of the words and I'm wondering whether there are kids who like to interpret the word very literally, like it fast, versus the kids and the adults who enjoy marinating, ruminating.

McAvity: I had read [The English Patient] a couple of times before I went to the movie and it had been out for a long time and then finally one afternoon I was out for my walk and I needed a rest and ended up at [a theatre showing *The English Patient*]...but I kept thinking, about the movie itself, the visual, the technical aspects of it were wonderful...but when I was walking home I [was thinking] I much prefer the written word and what it did for me in the descriptions in the words and the images it created.

G.R.: That whole image of the water being there [in the book], the water disappearing, that was a whole second level of that book that wasn't in the movie because it couldn't be in the movie. It was a secondary story of metaphor and image. So again, is that part of who half our society is, or more than half our society – that they like speed, they like being told what to think, and the literal interpretation is the way it shall be and they're very comfortable with that? And are those the people that are in charge right now of the business and industry? The competitive? Is that too simple?

On Your Mark, Get Set, Think[4]

The above caption seems an appropriate heading for the dilemma G.R. describes in attempting to encourage students to take time, to think things through (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005).

G.R.: Even with mathematics where you constantly prove and prove this, the kids don't want to prove that they're right, they want you [teacher] to prove that they're right, they want to come to you [or] go to a mark book – 'Is this right?' 'I don't know, go back and look for yourself. How can you be sure it's right? Can you do this in another way?' Again, it's the speeding up [wanting, *needing* answers immediately].

Leila: [Kids] haven't been given the freedom, especially at junior high more than in elementary school because they have to move that math curriculum along so fast that there isn't time for the tangents which enrich learning so much. I think it's tough assignments.

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[4] *From* Gleick (2000): *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything*

G.R.: And when we do math we do estimations or conjectures, it's the same brain process and it's done before you do the work to help frame a possible way of interpreting.

If John Dewey is correct in his statement regarding contemplation as key to developing other – or at least deep – meanings, given teaching experiences such as described by G.R. above, perhaps we have something worthy of contemplation.

The Ruminators and the Marinators

When G.R. referred to 'thinkers' as the ruminators and marinators, this brought forward the possibility that a particular perspective or way of being might be implicit within teaching and teachers.

> People who are teachers, who are teaching the way of, of, of, ruminators and – what was the other word I said? [marinators...*laughter from the group*] But...[it is the exploration of] what's behind it, what's the context within [and it is not limited to written work]...it can be a piece of art, it can be [someone's] story, it can be an artefact, the interview of the person that was there...but going back to that interaction as opposed to the interpretation of that interaction. That's key for us as teachers. (Taped Conversation, February 19, 2005)

And what does this have to do with education? As a social institution and a social practice, public schools, the discourse(s) they carry, and the teaching that occurs within are a reflection of dominant cultural views. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) contend that culture acts as a form of pedagogy as it "generates knowledge, shapes values, and constructs identity" (p. 284). Teachers, then, have a role to play in determining the extent to which curriculum, as it lives within classrooms, might support, refute, or bring into question so-called norms and standards of contemporary culture. *Thinking*, on this basis, may furthermore set into motion a deeper understanding of the process of democracy as well as provide a foundation for democratic participation and eco justice.

The "Courage to Teach"

> Here is something that we do not (only) lay claim to but that lays claim to us, that we do not (only) constitute but that is always already constituting us, that comes to us from above, on high, across curved space, commanding and demanding our respect, our response. (Caputo, 1993, p. 83)

The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life is Parker Palmer's (1998) view and review of "Who is the self that teaches?" (p. 4). His writing, though focused

on the "inner landscape" of teachers, also seems to be a call to integrity and hence to ethics as these qualities reside within and beyond the teaching profession. He writes,

> the only way to get out of trouble is to go deeper in. We must enter, not evade, the tangles of teaching so we can understand them better and negotiate them with more grace, not only to guard our own spirits but also to serve our students as well. (p. 2)

Despite all the knowledge, scientific developments, and information that we have available today, some things are hidden, overlooked, misunderstood, or outright ignored. It is becoming clearer that relying *exclusively* on the scientific community for ecologically sustainable solutions may not be the only option that should be explored, particularly since some 'scientific' organisations or research groups may have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, an offshoot of which may be exacerbating rather than alleviating environmental problems. An example of this would be the agricultural company, Monsanto, whose employment roster includes a variety of scientists; however, the ethical implications and long term effects that some of their products, not to mention their program of genetically modifying organisms, have on the natural world as well as the farmers whom they claim to be assisting have come into question ("*Genetically Modified Foods*," 2004).

Moore (2000) speaks of a sort of myopia: "The scientific materialist paradigm of modern society does not reflect connections to sources of life. To understand issues linked to sustainability, we need improved education to re-establish this connection." (p. 108). Bowers (2002) would seem to concur: "One of the dominant features of our times is the failure of scientific studies of rapidly degraded ecosystems to create doubt in the public's mind about the messages of unending material progress communicated through the media and shopping malls" (p. 21).

The next question to be asked, is "*How* do we move towards making the kinds of changes that will place value on and include *both* discourses?"

Through the Classroom Doors

> The use of ecology as a root metaphor (which means it should guide the conceptualization of the widest possible range of cultural practices) foregrounds the relational and interdependent nature of our existence as cultural and biological beings. (Bowers, 2002, p. 29)

What, then, happens in the classrooms of these teachers, the participants in this study? How did they come to believe that, as teachers, they 'should' or *could* teach beyond

the Program of Studies? How do they manage to engender a sense of community, of communality, of connectedness, of place without compromising individual rights and preferences? How do they know when to draw the line between imposing their viewpoints and presenting possibilities? How do they generate a sense of responsibility towards one another, towards 'other,' towards the world, towards the [unknown, frozen] future? How did they come to understand their role as teacher? What might we learn from their practice?

In my readings of theorists/educators and my (re)readings of the conversations held with the participants in this study, I recognise a link, a commonality. And within that commonality I see something else: an opening, a possibility that curriculum, the classroom, schooling, life – can be imagined, understood, and enacted *differently*. And by 'differently' I mean holistically, organically, ecologically, *sans* the rigidity that sometimes accompanies contemporary educational exhortations such as accountability, skills development, a competitive marketplace, the knowledge industry, none of which are dangerous in and of themselves, but all of which seem to feed into and out of the consumerist, competitive attitude that promotes an individualistic stance and valorises an anthropocentric worldview.

I do not mean to narrowly connect the lives of these teachers to specific theorists or theories or praxes; to do so would limit, restrain, and misrepresent the fundamental organic quality that seems to permeate their classrooms. On the other hand, however, they each carry with them a confidence, an attitude, a deportment, or a *way* that aligns their work as teachers with the work of certain researchers. My understanding of their comments, their descriptions, the very *way* they seem to 'be' has thus been enhanced by the literature. Gadamer (1968/2003) speaks of the "dialectic of experience", the "truth of experience", which

> always implies an orientation toward new experience.…'being experienced' does not consist in the fact that someone already knows everything and knows better than anyone else. Rather, the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfillment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself. (p. 355)

As a dialogic inquiry group willing to share perceptions, experience(s), and understandings, along with listening deeply to one another, they seemed very much "undogmatic", fully prepared to "have new experiences and to learn from them", and

entirely oriented towards a forward motion of openness to regard the world anew, towards understanding "dialectic of experience", the "truth of experience".

Their comments throughout are an indication to me that they are not purely technical/rationalistic, they are not purely reactive/emotive, and while they recognise that we are facing numerous eco crises, they are not radical, fanatical, tree-spiking eco terrorists, either. What they do in their classrooms does not rest upon a curriculum solely focused on protecting, preserving, or conserving the world; however, an ecological impulse (mindedness) certainly is present. An [impossible] mission to 'save the world,' however, does not seem to be their sole (pre)occupation. As I did not visit their classrooms or observe them teach, my interpretations rest upon our conversations. What I hope to portray and preserve is [what seems to be] the approach they use in their classrooms. I did not ask each one specifically how a 'typical' day in school unfolds – and I am not certain whether such a question would generate an authentic picture anyway; even though the profound may, and in my experience often does, occur in the mundane, it is difficult to encapsulate the *living* classroom with words. If, however, I were to isolate a single 'distinguishing characteristic' applicable to all of the participants, I would venture to say that they have a sort of independence, which is not to be confused with *individualism* – or rather an in*ter*dependence that speaks of, and to a 'courage to teach.' Something, somehow has set in motion a will to question, a responsiveness based on ethical responsibility, and a willingness to examine and critique society's, and their own, perhaps, taken for granted assumptions. Stated another way, they have an eagerness and a courage to appraise their own *habits of mind* centring on a broad ethical responsibility towards the world around them. This ethical responsibility and responsiveness furthermore seems to rest upon an unspoken commitment to *hearing*, and by that I mean standing within a deep listening for and to the other. This, in a way, asks for a temporary dislodging of *self* as central figure, an overcoming of, or at least a shifting away from a preoccupation with ocularcentricity. A readiness to release control, to listen deeply, is reminiscent of what Levin (1989) describes as a "reversal of figure and ground, a reversal taking place between the listening self and the field of sound, a reverberation-effect which reverses and contests the intentionality assumed by 'consciousness'" (p. 206).

An ability to hear, then, entails a recognition, a *re-cognition*: a return to a certain way of knowing. The word "cognition" comes from the Latin "co + *gnoscere*, to learn, to know" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Levin (1989) explains this as a sort of

return to the listening that comes with "the infant's belongingness...the moment when our hearing is bound to the matrix of sound and entwined, by grace of this field, with all other sonorous beings" (p. 211). "The implicit is made explicit; the potential is realized; a rudimentary understanding is developed" (Levin, 1989, p. 206). This listening or hearing, which I see as resting into a pause, holds the potential to become a summons "and our responsiveness, our commitment to appropriate self formative practices is...a re-ligio [a binding]" (Levin, 1989, p. 212). Levin calls this a "hearkening" – or "condition of possibility" – one in which listening

> needs to learn receptiveness, relatedness, intertwining...of self and other, subject and object; for it is there that the roots of its communicativeness take hold and thrive – and it is there that a non-egological listening-self is sleeping, embedded in the matrix of melodious energies. (p. 223)

Based on their descriptions of life in and beyond their respective classrooms, the following is an articulation of how I understand the participants as listeners and see-ers. For the most part, I focus on the participants separately so that their voices may speak distinctly, but in all cases, their comments were sparked or spurred on by the conversations in which we participated. I include a final summary note at the end of this chapter about the unique gift(s) that each has brought to this study in terms of what I have come to see as cornerstones of ecologically-minded practice.

To end this introduction to the participants' voices, I include a quotation from Maxine Greene (2000).

> We who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we all share. It is simply not enough for us to reproduce the way things are. (Greene, 2000, p. 1)

Carol

> [To] put the ideal of what you believe into the world of education and...what nurtures you, [comprises] a certain percentage of what you do, [what] you become...there's so much else that chips away at that idealism...just leave me alone and let me sit in that classroom with those kids. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

Within Carol's above appeal is encased a tension that teachers are faced with on a regular basis – i.e., competing ideals that appear in various forms of address: administrative demands, policy directives, stakeholder input, [sometimes ill informed] media reports,

cultural pressures, (etc.), all of which may frustrate, derail, silence, or cut short the vitalising energy and impetus that comes from and is engendered within an organic, dynamic open space in which attentive listening extends and deepens experience, invites and stimulates conversation. At some level, this becomes an expression of who decides what is 'best' classroom practice, whose voice is raised above others, who is player, and who is spectator. To mention players, play, and spectator, I do not mean to trivialise educational experiences – i.e., the classroom as *games* room; I mean, rather, to peer into another possibility.

To bring Gadamer (1968/2003) into the conversation, to put into play his exposition of *play*, which he reveals as having "a special relation to what is serious" (p. 102), may provide another way of seeing, understanding, and listening to what Carol said above. Her concern(s) rest upon the foreclosure of *potential*, of other voices assuming authority and imposing that authority on her – and her students' – ability to be co-creators of experience, to allow potential to come into play, to become. For Gadamer (1968/2003), play and seriousness are integrally connected because "in playing, all those purposive relations that determine active and caring existence have not simply disappeared, but are curiously suspended" (p. 102). It is possible and indeed *necessary* for this suspension because we are permitted entry into something different, something which immerses, engulfs, and calls forth experience. In order for the 'work,' the *play* to exist, to come into existence, this immersion or temporary loss of 'self' or perhaps *suspension* of self must occur, for, "[t]he players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation…through the players" (p. 103). And within this moment of play is an inherent movement, but unlike a game of checkers or a contest in which there may be a final 'winner' and 'loser,'

> [t]he movement of playing has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. The movement backward and forward is obviously so central to the definition of play that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement….It is the game that is played – it is irrelevant whether or not there is a subject who plays it. The play is the occurrence of the movement as such. (p. 103)

If the "being of play is always self-realisation" (p. 113) and opportunities for/to play in the classroom are diminished by external – i.e., beyond teacher and student – decision making processes, what happens in the space? What languages and literacies are invoked and revoked? How can teachers maintain a sense of integrity when, in Carol's words, "there's so much else that chips away at that idealism"? Ignore it? Succumb to it? Introduce it into the conversation? What 'groundwork' must first occur?

The following commentary by Carol, which I have included almost in its entirety so as not to lose the continuity, connects play to Maxine Greene's (1995) appeal to allow voice to develop within a secure environment.

> How do you build in rituals so that the kids feel like, alright, this is my place? When I was in [a particular school], we really did a lot of work on voice and creating environment. We were a really tight class and we shared a lot of experiences. [One day] a [substitute teacher] came in and apparently wasn't really using a nice tone of voice or didn't really give the kids any voice or something like that. So two of the students...went down to the office, to the principal at the time and said, the [substitute teacher] is not talking to us very well, she shouldn't be using that tone of voice with us...and the response from the administration [was not positively oriented towards the students]...When I came back, it was like I had done something wrong, but they were looking after themselves...they thought [the substitute teacher] was really belittling them and they said, 'You can't talk to me like that' and they tried to do something...[and] for me, I'm going like this [*applauds*]. Because you could tell that they [the administration team] did not like that challenge. (Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005)

In speaking of developing classroom rituals, Carol is referring to the engendering of a safe, supportive, inclusive classroom community where voices are heard, respected, and accepted. The 'play' in Carol's classroom, the working-out, seems very serious indeed. And lest this appear that I interpret Carol's classroom as an open invitation for a 'free for all' where anything goes including rudeness and cruel remarks, there are many other indications (see below, for example) that boundaries were set *collaboratively* and understood by all. I reiterate: I did not visit Carol's classroom; however, if her descriptions are accurate – and I have no reason to believe they are not – then it is reasonable to believe that the students who dwell within such a community would be given every opportunity to understand the vital role each has to play in contributing to and ensuring that conversations, issues, and *play* are undertaken in a spirit of reciprocity, respect, and thoughtfulness. In other words, an openness and willingness to *hear* (Levin, 1989) other perspectives must be present. This has to do with developing a sense of belonging. From this, and other comments, it would seem that Carol gestures towards a "space in the clearing" (Heidegger, 1977), one in which a sense of belonging is fundamental. Of belonging, Gadamer (1968/2003) writes, the "work is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place" (p. 295). In allowing questions to live in the classroom, Carol conveys the message that compliance and respect do not rest purely upon positions of authority.

Maxine Greene (1995) states that students should be given the opportunity to express themselves in different ways, in a number of different "languages". This includes imagery, music, and dance. At the same time, exploring meaning, sharing insights, and reevaluating their thinking in light of other ideas should also be encouraged. In Greene's view, learning is about nurturing intellectual talents towards the construction of a society that creates a democratic, just, and caring place to live. This includes developing the ability to critically examine the world within, I would add, a supportive, accepting, inclusive environment that acknowledges diversity, accepts difference, and valorises *play*.

Conversations with Carol did not always focus on education or teaching, but the classroom always held a presence, a space, not entirely obvious yet not entirely invisible. Her commitment to the teaching profession and to students seems to be based on a strong sense of caring somewhat akin to what Noddings (2003) articulates.

> Caring requires me to respond to the initial impulse with an act of commitment: I commit myself either to overt action on behalf of the cared-for (I pick up my crying infant) or I commit myself to thinking about what I might do....I may abstain from action if I believe that anything I might do would tend to work against the best interests of the cared-for. (p. 81)

I interpret Carol's 'way of being' as intensely caring but she is not without boundaries: "When I hear politicians say, 'Yes, we'll make decisions for those who can't,' it just drives me nuts because it's like an elitism...'I can think better than you and I can make better decisions for you'" (Taped Conversation, March 17, 2005). The "cradle to the grave mentality" (a phrase used by Carol, March 17, 2005) or the idea that people need to be *"looked after"* is not something she seems to condone, nor does she want to participate in it. Within such comments is an understanding that a purely top-down approach is not a "true" conversation, which Gadamer (1968/2003) explains thus:

> [A] conversation that we have with someone simply in order to get to know him – i.e., to discover where he is coming from and his horizon....is not a true conversation – that is, we are not seeking agreement on some subject – because the specific contents of the conversation are only a means to get to know the horizon of the other person. (p. 303)

This distinction between agreement and *understanding* reflects the level of one's involvement in the conversation. In her recognition that people may become disempowered or disregarded ("Yes, we'll make decisions for those who can't") seems to indicate, once again, her recognition that a "clearing" (Heidegger, 1977) is a vital place holder in the

classroom. At the same time that she bears this recognition, she does not disengage from her sense of caring and responsibility: she is teacher/guide/partner in learning; caring and ethical responsibility seem to be synonymous.

> I always encouraged language. I always had such wonderful conversations all the time…as long as it's about learning, that's all that mattered to me. And I walk in [to certain classrooms] and I see the measurement of a good classroom is a quiet classroom. And I'm thinking, 'I don't think I'd fit in here…my classroom is out of control!' [*laughter*] And yet if you look around, everyone is actively engaged in something…(Taped Conversation March 17, 2005)

Carol as teacher and Carol as learner seem to meld. Her words indicate that she is able to release control – in a 'power over' sense of "control": she participates in those conversations, she shares leadership with her students, yet she does not step so far back out of the classroom that she disappears. She remains the one who leads and follows those conversations: "as long as it's about learning, that's all that mattered to me". Her openness invites a "genuine human bond [in which] belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 361). The following, a continuation from the above, further speaks to her openness to "listen": "So when we impose *our* values, and have not kept up with the values that television has taught, then you're hooped. There's the whole visual [culture] thing" (Taped Conversation March 17, 2005).

> With popular culture as the medium, Carol seems to be referring to the necessity of "the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices" which furthermore "[opens up] possibilities and keeps them open" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 299). Having an understanding that not everyone arrives in a classroom with the same privilege or history leaves a space for doubt, for question, and for seeking deeper understanding.

> [If] you're expecting kids to – 'Look at me [teacher] when I'm talking,' well, maybe they learn better when they're sketching. And yet, if eyes aren't all trained on the teacher, then they're not paying attention. So everybody's on a different page, and it's sad…this is a snapshot that I've seen. But I can understand peoples' concerns. (Taped Conversation March 17, 2005)

In posing these sorts of concerns, Carol takes us "back to the rough ground" – to borrow and reinterpret the title of Joseph Dunne's (2001) work.

> This one child I was teaching [in a] 'special ed' [class], the family couldn't even afford beds. They slept on sheets on a foamie kind of thing…How do I even negotiate this in my mind? How do I even understand this? How will this child be ready or not be ready when they come to school? You have to know who you are, you have to be who you are. You have to take a stand. And taking a stand is very difficult because,

again, political correctness [figures so prominently]. Who are we judging beside it? [What if] we didn't get the rule book? Every place we go there's a different rule book. In a school system, in family systems, there are all these sets of rules, and if you don't play by the rules, then the system's out of whack. You [need] a rule and you have to find out what those rules are because the system exerts the pressure on you so that you can be a cog and make it keep on churning to its effectiveness. [You become positioned into a stance where you feel] like, 'I dunno what I'm s'posed to say?' It's just too hard, trying to guess all the time. (Taped Conversation March 17, 2005)

From these and other comments, it became apparent to me that Carol sought (and fought?) to make the classroom an open space – "their space/our space" – where ideas, thoughts, and questions are nurtured, find expression, converge, diverge, dissipate, and grow. I see Carol as embodying an inclination towards movement and involvement, always mindful of surroundings, of inclusion, of the importance of imagination, of listening, and questioning. In this way, a particular message is conveyed to students, and via them to parents that they are in a safe place where opinions may differ but that difference is welcome to express itself – within, needless to say, respectful limits. If the classroom is a space and place of belonging, community, exploration, and *Bildung*, a place wherein understanding is "co-determined....[and] not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 296), then an atmosphere of respect and reciprocity, dialogue and debate, conversation and caring, has an opportunity to blossom.

> Greene argues for using the arts as instruments to break down barriers to realities other than our own familiar culture and for schools to be restructured as places where the previously silenced or unheard may have a voice....[with high regard for an] education that refuses mere compliance with standards and looks down roads not yet taken in hopes of a more fulfilling social order. (Braman, 2004)

Whether Carol has encountered Maxine Greene's work or not, I think it is reasonable to state that she would well understand what Maxine Greene is talking about. She (Carol) spoke of a particular artist who uses industrial metals to create works of art:

> I call them landscapes but not like people drawing pictures of ...just [mountain scenes]. He does huge skies and prairie and [you can see] all the metal with the rivets. You can see the rivets, you can see the metal, and that's what he's attuned to...that whole impact that humans have had, technology has had, on the landscape...I find peace and stillness, I [am] transported, there is something soothing and so calming...to have people really think about things, and then translate that into an expression...(Taped Conversation March 17, 2005)

The above comment speaks to me of what Levin (1989) called a "hearkening". In between her words, I see – or rather *hear* – a beckoning and resting into a pause, an "authentic hearing", and a "mode of perceptiveness....rooted in the body's felt sense of being....[in an opening] out to the sonorous field as a whole" (p. 219).

Deb

In hearing Deb speak of her classroom, I have an impression of a busy, bustling, high energy place injected with her enthusiasm and love of children and the teaching profession: "I love my job and I love being with the students" (Taped Conversation October 1, 2005). Her references to school hover around a cooperative spirit that involves collaborating and inquiring together. Her optimism and effort to make her classroom an open, caring, lively, living space comes through in comments such as,

> I think that the greatest contribution that I can make and that people can make to making the world a better place, is just to be the best person that I can be and to pass on...in little ways, positive values, being moral, having some integrity, and I think if I can pass that on, if it's my children, or whether it's students that I have, if I can model that to them in some ways...(Taped Conversation February 5, 2005).

In the above, Deb makes evident her sense of obligation as a teacher and as a human being to establish relationships and model compassion. In some ways, this may be interpreted as inspiriting *Bildung*, or *Bildung haben*, which, as Nicholas Davey (2006) explains, means "to be or to become cultured" (p. 39). This does not mean, however, that a static body of knowledge or set of cultural ideals is passed down from one who 'knows' to one who does not know, from wise guides to naïve beneficiary. Rather, it involves "the *process* of becoming intellectually and spiritually tempered by the experiences one undergoes during the acquisition of such knowledge" (p. 39). In other words, the event of understanding, of becoming 'cultured' requires active engagement with the subject matter. As further demonstration of her commitment to engendering thoughtful individuals, Deb continues,

> being patient, kind, tolerant, and non judgemental [would], I think, [make] the world a better place because I think impatience, being intolerant, being judgemental, really are the biggest vices that are destroying the world because that's what causes wars – being judgemental, 'My way is better than your way, my religion is better, my economic values are better.' (Taped Conversation March 15, 2005)

Deb's use of the words "judgemental" and "non judgemental" perhaps need explication. "Judgement", a noun, is defined as "the act or process of judging; the formation

of an opinion after consideration or deliberation" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). "*Judgemental*", an adverb, carries an implicit meaning of the "act or process of judging"; however, it also carries with it the meaning of judgement as "especially moral or personal". The difference between the noun and the adverb and the clarifying point I wish to make here is that I interpret Deb's words not to mean that she is, or that she expects anyone else to be injudicious or unwise, but rather that she is expressing a caution – one that moves the term slightly beyond "consideration or deliberation" – that being 'judgemental' carries the risk not of engaging others in a conversation as a movement (towards *Bildung haben*), but of *imposing* one's values and viewpoints upon another. Davey (2006) explains the process of becoming 'cultured' as involving "the acquisition of sufficient practical experience within a discipline so as to offer a spontaneous and yet informed response to a question" (p. 39). He furthermore explains that Gadamer, whose work he is elucidating, wished to make clear that judgement could stand as another way of knowing, that "alongside scientific and technical knowledge there exists another body of knowledge that is not the result of proof and demonstration but is laid down by tradition, received wisdom, and practical experience" (p. 40). Judgement occurs *over time* – i.e., it is part of the process of *Bildung haben*. Linking Deb's words to philosophical hermeneutics may seem an overly exuberant extrapolation on my part – especially in the absence of clarification with Deb; however, other elements in my conversations with her lead me to believe that my interpretation bears validity. An example of this follows below in her comments about developing a gratitude for, or an understanding of how fortunate she feels.

> I guess a big part of it [is] I want my kids, whether it be my children or my students not to take for granted all that we have in this world. This is a one in a million world...and we are so fortunate to live here in North America. We have so much and yet so many people in our society take it for granted and assume it's their God-given right, whatever God-given means, to have all of this stuff. (Taped Conversation March 15, 2005)

Although she does not give direct mention to it, I read the subtext as an invitation to conversation. She uses the phrase "if I can pass that on" (i.e., "positive values, being moral, having some integrity"), which may seem to imply that she has taken on the role of omniscience, however, she also implies a receptivity to dialogue, an openness to change her own opinions, and "new realignments and reconfigurations of what is already in process" (Davey, 2006, p. 42). In saying that we "have so much and yet so many people...take it for

granted", I do not mean to give an impression of Deb as not understanding that not *everyone* lives a life of privilege. On a number of other occasions, she made comments about inequities in society.

Deb takes me to Nel Noddings (2002) who writes, "[t]he idea is not to argue, refine, or justify, but to give children the thought/feeling that there is good in people everywhere and that people in every walk of life can exercise that goodness" (p. 45). This comment by Nel Noddings may be risky to include here – "goodness" and "good in people" raises questions, one of which lies with the very *meaning* of good. Once again, I am confronted with the difficulties of language. I read and feel these words to reflect caring, courage, and careful *listening*, however, am I unwittingly expressing a conception of goodness that includes *everyone*? Do I have such authority? Do I *want* such authority? (To be certain, I do not.) How to work my way out of this predicament? Noddings (2002) continues on to say, "I cannot be wrong in choosing a way of life characterized by care, and it is that sensibility that we must be courageous enough to develop in the young" (p. 46). As a reminder of the "*hermeneutical task* [as] *itself a questioning of things*", Gadamer (1968/2003) prompts us to "understand something [not through] relying on [our] own accidental fore-meanings....[but] rather, trying to understand a text [means to be] prepared for it to tell something" (p. 269). In remaining sensitive to alterity, this sensitivity

> involves neither 'neutrality' with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings. (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 269)

The difficulty – or perhaps *one* difficulty, as I have discovered it to be – lies within the enactment, the ability to stay the course: "the concept itself is not very difficult to understand, but that what is *extremely* difficult...is living it: putting it into practice in one's daily life" (Levin, 1989, p. 225).

To return to 'goodness' for a moment, I wish to refocus attention on Deb's earlier comment regarding her desire to pass on "positive values, being moral, having some integrity". I do not mean to over read or over work (or over "play") her meaning in these few [seemingly] simple words, but they seem to roughly coincide with "good(ness)". As words that are not infrequent in daily usage, it may be worthwhile to pause for a moment and explore what these words might mean. First, a distinction between "good" and

"goodness", if this is not superfluous to mention: "goodness" is a noun, a characteristic or feature: "the state or quality of being good" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001) while "good", an adjective, has a range of definitions: skilled, considerable, kind, giving, moral, virtuous, pleasant, reliable, useful, adequate, well behaved, complete – etc. Deb's effort to pass on positive values (etc.) extends from the 'inner' self-world to the 'outer' natural world.

> To cultivate a sense of wonder in children, I make a point of talking to the kids about wondrous things in nature or science. Nature is absolutely mind boggling to me. The perfection and the intricate evolution that we have gone through is astonishing – everything works on all of these different creatures: the adaptations for the environment that they live in. And it does make me worry about how much we're tinkering with our environment and thinking that we can adapt to anything, that we can change our world so much and that our body and our mind and our soul and everything is going to be able to keep up with it. When you look at just studying bugs or animals or trees or whatever, how everything's been taken care of in nature, and the perfect-ness of the shapes and the colours and why they're there and how it all evolved…and just pointing out little things from books or newspaper articles – I clipped out one the other week, it was about the oldest living tree in Alberta. And they found through doing core drills and taking out little samples they can tell about [a particular] year in the tree's life, and this tree was around 1500 years ago, 500 A.D. – a great big gnarly tree by Hinton. The [students] were just fascinated with this, and I drew a timeline on the white board and they did have this sense of wonder. I think with kids it's quite easy to get that sense of wonder and sense of awe. (Taped Conversation, October 1, 2005)

In the above, in describing the potential of classroom activities to ignite a sense of wonder, there is a fundamental holistic sense of "values, moral(s), integrity" on a personal level coupled with an ethical call to understand or listen to the world at large. She seems to recognise a kinship, a binding unity amongst life on Earth (Kellert, 1997), a "picture of overall coherence…[in which life]…is viewed from the vantage point of a basic and underlying integrity, harmony, even goodness of purpose" (Kellert, 1997, p. 135).

It is with some reluctance that I include this next comment because even though I regard this as modesty, I do not want to appear to be validating Deb's downplaying of her capacity to guide, encourage, and inspire her students. I bring it forward because it helps illuminate one of the qualities that all the participants shared – i.e., a tentativeness, a 'being-in-the-making,' an unfinished-ness, humility, and above all, it reflects an openness to share, to listen, to deliberate, to change. It also invites a discussion on practical knowledge (phronesis) and theoretical knowledge (episteme) which follows below.

What I do try to give to my students and to the [student teachers] although I don't think I'm the best technical teacher as far as curriculum but it's just, I really am in awe of this world and I really do love those children, and [I feel the same caring for] my [student teachers]. It's not about delivering curriculum...To me, it's not like it's useless but it's [more so] about giving them the skills to go on and be curious intellectually and emotionally. (Taped Conversation October 1, 2005)

Although she does not state it explicitly, Deb seems to be alluding to the difference between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge (i.e., phronesis and episteme). In Gadamer's (1968/2003) explication of these, he notes that "moral knowledge [phronesis]...is clearly not objective knowledge – i.e., the knower is not standing over against a situation that he merely observes; he is directly confronted with what he sees. It is something that he has to do" (p. 314). What Deb seems to be doing is responding to what the event asks of her, as one actively "concerned with what is not always the same but can also be different....The purpose of knowledge is to govern...*action*" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 314). This is not to say that techne (technical knowledge) is of no value in life or in teaching. Gadamer views the two types of knowledge as including the "*same task of application*" – i.e., "as knowledge, it is always related to practical application" (p. 315). A key difference between techne and phronesis, as this relates to the classroom, is pointed out by Gadamer: "We learn a techne and can also forget it. But we do not learn moral knowledge, nor can we forget it" (p. 317). This not only releases the tension somewhat, it also stands as a valuing of Deb's – and the other participants' – way of being in the world and in the classroom, in responding to the task of phronesis, i.e., "to determine what the concrete situation asks" (p. 313). This inherently encompasses listening as described by Levin (1989), for in order to respond to the hearkening, one must surely be prepared first to hear.

G.R.

G.R., placing strong emphasis on the importance of understanding metaphor and history (i.e., personal history, family history, history of the world), presents a teaching approach that pulls towards democratic participation and the careful weighing of actions and consequences, and cyclically back to actions. This cyclicality in itself underscores a holistic approach to teaching and to life. In a holistic perspective, the impact of individuals on the collective and the collective impact on the individual perseveres beyond the rational but at the same time proceeds in continual motion and e-motion, influencing and playing out affect

and effect, all of which I see as embedded in a worldview that encapsulates the part to whole/whole to part thinking spoken of by Capra (1988), Marshall (1992), and many others. Numerous times, G.R.'s comments were imbued with such a worldview. Below, I present conversation excerpts which point toward this inclination.

To arrange a space for G.R., one which reflects the self I detect via conversations, I begin first with a quotation from Levin (1989) in which he describes *Gelassenheit* as a sort of opening into, or a preparatory state of listening, which I notice in G.R.'s remarks. At the same time that a space is opened for deep listening, this does not foreclose a space to exercise one's own judgement.

> *Gelassenheit* does not at all preclude 'negative' or 'critical' judgments, decisions, and moral positions. Rather, it enables us to make such judgments and decisions from positions based on a genuine openness. *Gelassenheit* clears a 'neutral' space for good listening; it situates us in a space of silence that makes it easier to listen well and hear with accuracy; it enables us to hear what calls for hearing with a quieter, more global, and better-informed sense of the situation…*Gelassenheit* is an equanimity which enables us to listen and respond with much greater intelligence, much greater situation-appropriateness. (Levin, 1989, p. 228)

A statement that I find interesting and which links to the above, came from a larger conversation on teaching. G.R. had this to say: "I know my voice is the voice of an outsider, of a person that has watched and listened…" (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005). In this admission of 'difference,' this recognition of self as 'other,' there is also a hint, an echo of hearing "that what calls for hearing with a quieter, more global, and better-informed sense of the situation". During part of the same conversation, G.R. said, "It drives my team [teaching partners] crazy because I do a lot of teachable moments…I end up [straying from the 'teaching plan']…'No, I didn't cover what we agreed to cover; we went this direction'" (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005). Gadamer (1968/2003) states, "If we are trying to define the idea of belonging…as accurately as possible, we must take account of the particular dialectic implied in *hearing*" (p. 462). The hearing required in responding to 'teachable moments' seems very much to be of the sort of 'deep' listening that comes from *Gelassenheit*: that which enables one to "listen well and hear with accuracy". And from within this hearing comes belonging. Gadamer (1968/2003) continues, "It is not just that he who hears is also addressed, but also that he who is addressed must hear whether he wants to or not" (p. 462).

If indeed I am not making too large a leap in connecting G.R.'s teaching to *Gelassenheit*, I also wonder what effect being "an outsider, a person that has watched and listened" might have on developing an ability to notice, then respond to 'teachable moments'? Has this somehow made G.R.'s ability to 'hear' more acute? Gadamer (1968/2003) points out that one can look away, but one cannot "hear away". Would being positioned (or positioning oneself?) as an outsider give an 'other' perspective, an 'other' understanding of belonging or not belonging? On the other hand, if 'belonging' is "brought about by tradition's addressing us" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 463), do we always already 'belong'? Can one truly be an 'outsider,' an 'other,' a stranger in one's own land? In describing life as an outsider, G.R. would seemingly answer this question in the affirmative, which raises questions about position, how this might be interrupted, and how teachers who have had the experience of feeling like a 'stranger in one's own land' *hear* their students. Might such experience enhance one's ability to respond; might phronesis in the classroom have its beginnings in those early encounters? "The questioner becomes the one who is questioned" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 462): would G.R., once existing in a 'silent' land as a watching, listening participant, understand differently? Would there be an impulse to readily trade places as questioner and questioned? Does this somehow play into a deep interest in understanding metaphor, story, history, and the weaving and interweaving of contextualities, diversities, in a co-mingling with universalities?

"What is it that all human beings need, what are those internal gifts as opposed to those external gifts, how do we get wisdom, what are those stories that are common?" (G.R., Taped Conversation, February 5, 2005) In posing this question, G.R. has linked two key concepts which Gadamer (1968/2003) discusses: universality and 'common (communal) sense' (*sensus communis*). What is called for in both cases is 'openness': "keeping oneself open to other" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 17) and 'forgetting': "Only by forgetting does the mind have the...capacity to see everything with fresh eyes" (p. 16). Universality, according to Gadamer, means being able to "distance oneself from oneself and from one's private purposes", which involves an expansion of perspective, a "cultivated consciousness...active in all directions" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 17). This broadening outwards *without complete forfeiture* of self is fundamental to becoming *Bildung haben* (because we are living out an 'inheritance'). *Sensus communis*, defined as "the sensibilities, feelings, metaphors, and memories upon which human culture rests" (Magee, 2002, p. 173), comprehends memory

not only in an individualistic sense, but [vitally] includes *how* a particular culture holds itself together.

And where is G.R. in all of this? The comments above – "what do human beings need…gifts…wisdom…common stories" – evoke a sense of generational connection, memory, culture, and in particular *sensus communis* (as defined by Magee above). As an example of my interpretation of this, I include the following piece wherein life as solitary self is quickly tied to family history and then furthermore united with life in the classroom.

> I go to my parents at the ocean now and will float in the water and just *'become.'* I let the force of the waves take me away. And my mother does that and my grandfather did that. And even when I go do that by myself, I'm always with one of them. Even if I'm alone they're with me and so that historical support [remains]. (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005)

Being aware of and alive to this unity of experience as a worldly *event* ushers in both a loss of self and a recovery (Gadamer, 1968/2003). The swift (re)connection to the classroom reveals G.R.'s consciousness of life as an individual self embedded within a communal spirit.

> But that brings me back – I'm jumping back to the use of literature and the importance of story, of investigating those universal themes through literature with our children: 'Who is your protagonist, what are the characteristics, who's been presented, what are the characteristics of your antagonist and what is the author trying to tell you about the humanness of these people through this story?' I think that recording of stories of society and culture is part of our job to decide which ones we [use] with our limited amount of time. And I'm using the word 'story' very broadly. Literature is literature and story is story but there's a story through music, there's a story through our interactions right now, there's a story in the phys ed class – and so I use story as the construction of the interaction of people. I think of some of the decisions I've made with the ESL [English as second language] group that I've got this year. What stories are they missing [to help them understand North American culture]? [The stories] that part of our Canadian culture is embedded on. So we went back to Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty when we introduced our theme of good and evil before we got into our novel, and, in a lot of the kids' writings they refer back to the fairy tales we talked about and they refer back to the fairy tales that their parents taught them. Or, one of my ESL students the other day talked about Buddha and so started to bring that into our talk of wisdom, virtue, and change. The kids have changed from 'good' and 'evil.' We now call it 'virtues' and 'flaws,' which I think is huge for ten year olds. (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005)

I venture to say that G.R. maintains not only a sense of *hearing* (Levin, 1989) but also a sense of vision, a sense of judgement (Gadamer, 1968/2003), and a sense of application of

experience (phronesis). This hearkens somewhat back to the excerpt I included above from Deb and indicates to me that it is possible to talk about virtues and goodness (Noddings, 2002) in a balanced way, a way that invites inquiry and exploration rather than as something dictated from an authority figure. And on the topic of authority – before things seem a little too 'perfect' – I include another excerpt from a conversation with G.R. in which the difficulties and complexities with negotiating authority and transferring 'power' are brought to light. As much as things can go very well in a classroom, they can also go somewhat awry.

> What stories become the stories of the culture? [Are we] a mixture of a story pool, as a [sort of] mixture of the genes of our cultures? Whose stories are being told? We talked about what things we value in our school, what things we value in our classroom, what things we value as Canadians and…[the students came up with] brilliant things: 'We value equality, we value tolerance, we value knowledge'…but not one student said, 'We value questioning.' It never came up. And we have been working on it all year. 'It your job to ask each other questions'…'These are good questions, these are questions that allow you to do mind mapping…as we did the historical research, you went to this website, you found this artefact, this artefact led you to this question, this artefact led you to this website, this website led you to this artefact, this artefact led you to the next question.' We have modeled questioning but it does not come up as important with students. We trust our authority figures. (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

This last statement, "We trust our authority figures" was evidently quite perplexing (and perhaps discouraging?) to G.R., possibly because it runs counter to what seems to be a fundamental priority and conscious effort to ensure that classroom experiences are organic, active, *inter*active. If this basic understanding is missing in the minds of G.R.'s students, one must wonder what might lie at the basis of such misunderstanding? Have these students become fixed and sedimented by other understandings – i.e., that authority, authorship does not fully belong to them? Are they holding back, are they *held back* by misinterpretations of meaning or lack of experience? Do they see themselves as outside of, 'other,' as 'strangers' in their own land? Is language the problem?

Gadamer (1968/2003) points out that "language as the medium of understanding must be consciously created by an explicit mediation" (p. 384). Was this "explicit mediation" the missing link? He furthermore states that the problem lies not in "the correct mastery of language but coming to a proper understanding about the subject matter, which takes place in the medium of language…Mastering the language is a necessary precondition for coming to an understanding in a conversation" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 385). In some part, G.R. resolves this with the following statement – which I take to indicate a deep

understanding of diverse learners: "[Any child's] route may be different…but as a teacher, you need to have a huge understanding of that…it's the *process* of learning…and [teachers] are not experts, we're learning, too" (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005).

Leila

Leila, like the other participants, holds a particular space for a particular hearing and a particular sense of ethics. Levin (1989), in his review of Carol Gilligan's (1982) work, discusses two different ways of thinking and viewing life: one as competitive, which "gives primacy to the individual and relies on…formal and abstract rules to achieve cooperation and consensus" (p. 221) and the other as cooperative: "primacy [is given] to relationships and relies on contextual narratives and dialogue – communication" (p. 221). From discussions with Leila, I suspect she is closely aligned with the second, which encircles "an ethics of care, responsiveness, and responsibility…and a strong affirmation of kinship and solidarity….represented mainly by images of communicative and collaborative positions, [replacing] images of hierarchy with images of webs, networks, and weavings" (Levin, 1989, p. 221). Embedded within this perspective – and something that became evident through Leila's comments – is a democratic impulse. As one example of this, I turn to an anecdote from Leila surrounding an incident in which a school program was slated to be cut due to funding priorities in her child's school. For her, this brought into question student involvement, parent involvement, and furthermore raised doubts about a very basic democratic impulse that had, to that point, been present within the school. Adding to the complexity of the situation was her adolescent child's apparent acceptance of the explanation provided by the administrative team in her school. Leila regarded this issue as still alive and worth disputing: "there are creative ways to do staffing…other options where you can maintain programs which are in place and fundamental" but she was unable to convince her child to pursue other possibilities. There could be any number of factors at play here, for example, different personalities, different rationalities, different perspectives, different interpretations, etc.; however, I can say that Leila evidently expected more of a 'fight,' not only because the ability and will to critique the status quo is apparently quite important to her, but because she regards school as part of a home base, a sense of place.

> I've had these wonderfully positive experiences as a parent within [a particular school] community. Everyone uses the possessive pronoun, it's *our* school. And if

it's our school, when we're all in the conversation, whatever the ultimate decision is, you can trust the other people that we all understand each other's rationale on any decision. (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

The particular program to be eliminated was amongst the 'fine arts' – not atypical when lack of funding, or perceived lack of funding becomes an issue. Leila's concerns seem to rest on three levels: this was a program from which her children benefited and which they enjoyed; the 'arts' are considered low priority; and there was a complete lack of parent or student input into the decision.

> But this [administrator], who I get along with quite well...just did this one under the covers...everyone is trying to guess what the motivation is and the arguments are not clear....So we are a debt free province. But what does that mean? What does that mean in my real life? I go down and find out [that school programs are being cut]...what do we value, where are we putting our money, what's the bigger picture, and what's the plan? You get the rug pulled out from under you every time. (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

John Dewey, in *Democracy and Education* (1916) points out that

> [w]e are in a position honestly to criticize the division of life into separate functions and of society into separate classes only so far as we are free from responsibility for perpetuating the educational practices which train the many for pursuits involving mere skill in production, and the few for a knowledge that is an ornament and a cultural embellishment. (p. 246)

My point in bringing this forward is to illustrate Leila's conviction and dedication to a democratic, inclusive classroom that includes student voice/input. Amongst her concerns was the power imbalance [principal/student].

> [The principal] is very articulate, and has had a lot of time to think about how to phrase things...and [the student response was] 'I understand the reasons *and* I agree'...and it's powerful, very powerful. And that actually makes me worry a little bit....(Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

Leila's concern for children and the potential for power figures to subsume student voices is echoed also in her following statement of belief about the role of adults and students in decision making.

> But I am the first one to say I don't have the answer but we can figure it out together. And I just think that's the only way to do it. It's the only way I have felt empowered with lots of things because I've been included in the decision making. [The message is] your voice is important, and that's why I think that hierarchical [structures] and signs that say '*Don't*,' don't work for the long term. It's how we bring people continually into the conversation and try to get them to understand that makes something work. (Taped Conversation October 7, 2005)

Leila's comments overall seem to point towards a belief in *conversation*, in working things out collaboratively, thoughtfully, and democratically. This seems to be a particular form of caring, an ethic, that is embraced within a particular way of being, seeing, and hearing. It furthermore seems to be tightly bound within an understanding of ecological mindedness: "We chose to live in that area because my children could walk to school. It's that community school idea and that's environmentally *sound*" (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005).

Leila, as someone who was deeply involved in developing a naturalised play space in a particular school, was invited to speak with students when issues began to arise concerning use of the space.

> I was asked to speak with grade one and two students about stewardship because they're talking about that. Because this great project that's on school grounds…they're already trampling it. They all want to be in the space but of course, that's too many people using it in a way that isn't sustainable for the space. So they're meeting real world issues: how can we come to an agreement about how to use the space so that it's there for us, and for the people who come after us and for the people who finished this? These are incredibly articulate 6 and 7 year olds who were saying, 'We're lucky because we're going to be at the school for another four or five years and we can watch the changes,' but then they were also saying, 'But if we take care of it now, the people who have to go away from the school in a year or two will still want to come back.' I just found that to be profound. They were struggling to find the right ways to take care of it, because the principal's worried that the kids are going to jump off a rock and hurt themselves. So the message that the kids are getting and they're telling the [younger students], 'You're not supposed to jump on the rocks,' or 'You're not supposed to be off the path.' But that's where they *want* to be – well *how* can they be off the path, *where* can they be off the path? And they're struggling within their own classroom and within their own school to develop an ethic for how to participate in a space such that they can then communicate it to the greater community. I think it's just incredibly huge work, and it's so real, because… it [reflects] the problems with the parks all over the world: how do we manage the over-enthusiastic public? Everybody wants to be there but the space can't handle it, so how do we treat the land? (Taped Conversation October 7, 2005)

Leila's mention of stewardship at the beginning of this passage may raise questions about two troublesome issues. The first has to do with Anthropocentrism: stewardship carries an implicit message of domination, superiority, and mastery; and the second has to do with its religious overtones. John Barry (2002) addresses these as possibilities rather than detriments. Seeing ecological stewardship/governance as holding the potential to mean *relationship* rather than power over or superior to the non human world (i.e., fostering an

anthropocentric worldview), he suggests that, in a turn of meaning, it may be likened to democracy, which is "a way of both acknowledging and coping with human dependency on and vulnerability to fellow humans…on this account, [it is] in part about how members of a community care for each other" (Barry, 2002, p. 148). Ecological stewardship, regarded as governance, "extends this notion of vulnerability and dependency to include our dependency upon and responsibility to and for the natural world" (p. 148). In the second instance, that of stewardship as a religiously based idea, he proposes that this concept may merge with a secular view, which might encompass "the notion of stewardship as a particular morally informed mode of social-environmental interaction" (p. 137). In some ways, this brings a new understanding to the word and a new understanding to possibilities. It can furthermore be released or at least somewhat neutralised from its religious connection if one returns to the original [Old English] derivation meaning "hall keeper" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*).

To return to the conversation with Leila, I continue from the above excerpt in which she expressed the contradictions and inconsistencies of democracy at various levels of citizen involvement.

> Where is the ethical framework for decision making processes which affect our everyday lives? This comes back to us as a society – so that we can all understand how we made that decision. As Canadians, we have this Charter of Rights and a few other things, the U.S. has a Constitution, a Bill of Rights, and the UN has a Charter of Rights, but what do we have at our local levels for this framework for making decisions? How can we be agents of change? Here we are saying, 'Kids *you* are the ones who can put the posters on the wall, *you* are the ones who can do the announcements on PA to be agents of lifestyle change.' But then [the politics] happens….so what is the definition of democracy here? There are just so many definitions. (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

John Dewey (1916) describes education as a social process, and as such, citizens of a democratic society are intended to be active participants.

> A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. (p. 95)

Of the unilateral decision made by the administrative team in her children's school, Leila asks: "So what are they doing to my community junior high and what is going to be the impact on both directions: both the elementary and the high school? How is that going to

change the character of the community with this decision?" Both Leila's objections and projections seem to fit with what Dewey was proposing as a "social ideal". Not only does an ethical responsibility [to ecological concerns] come to light, she also seems to assume a responsibility to promote the kind of learning environment that encourages and engenders hope for the future through the eyes and input of children. Teaching, for Leila, calls forth a particular approach in which active participation in daily classroom matters, matter. But her involvement extends beyond *a teacher* in *a school;* it is embedded within her sense of self, teacher, learner, parent, citizen.

> [As a parent of junior high school students] I've been trying to get an environmental program going – well, I've been wanting to do that for seven years. It's interesting, you can't do things at junior high at the parental level as easily as elementary…(Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

With one last quotation from Dewey (1916) and the final word by Leila, I move on to McAvity.

> All education which develops power to share effectively in social life…forms a character which not only does the particular deed socially necessary but one which is interested in that continuous readjustment which is essential to growth. (Dewey, 1916, p. 345)

And finally, a comment from Leila, which might serve as a response to Dewey.

> People *want* to be heard because on the whole, people care and they will start to care more if they know they're being heard. I think that's it right there. When people are continually not heard, why should they care? I think schools play a critical role in social transformation. The whole recycling movement and the stop smoking movement started through schools and through children, and children changing their family's behaviour. And that's the most powerful place [to] change society's behaviour…through the classroom. And there are lots of examples like that. (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005)

McAvity

As is the case with all the participants, it is with difficulty that I isolate a few comments and hope that they might bring into view a 'whole' picture of the McAvity I have come to understand. I enter the following conversation mid stream:

> But is that the code of ethics of the norm? We get back to that good/bad, right/wrong kind of thing because there are communities that collectively, their code of ethics is very different than the norm. And then perhaps, too, from whatever community you have come from to get here, what was the ethics and the culture around where they have lived? (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

What I came to understand as 'typical' of McAvity's comments was an either direct or indirect centring on ethical stance within a broad/global perspective. Although I have not kept a tally, the inclination seemed to be to pose almost as many questions as utter statements. Gadamer (1968/2003) speaks of ethics as a responsibility, a summons, an *event* that asks something of us: "the knower is not standing over against a situation that he merely observes; he is directly confronted with what he sees. It is something that he has to do" (p. 314). This becomes a 'standing-in-as,' a consciousness of the other. This is not merely a recognition of some sort of personal obligation, but rather, it is *requisite* to understanding: "Whatever I understand, I come to understand through the mediation of another....The event of understanding is not an individual achievement but presupposes an ethical encounter with an other" (Davey, 2006, p. 9). McAvity, in holding a space, also liberates a space, and in that liberation, a release occurs which subsequently opens a conversation into understanding as *event*. The socialisation process within which an individual dwells has a dual impulse:

> The event of understanding also depends upon that which transcends the understanding subject, namely the hermeneutic community in which the subject participates and through which the subject is socialized. Yet socialization within an interpretive horizon is not merely a condition of hermeneutic experience: the event of hermeneutic experience also *socializes*. (Davey, 2006, p. 9)

What surfaces in McAvity's words is a willingness to listen and negotiate other experiences, those which are different from the "prior acquisition of linguistic practices and horizons of meaning which guide our initial conceptions of self and world" (Davey, 2006, p. 9). In the case of teachers in the public education system, the opportunity to "encounter otherness in the form of practices different from [their] own" (Davey, 2006, p. 10) presents itself with greater frequency as classrooms become increasingly diverse. As further evidence of McAvity's preparedness for understanding *as event*, in the following words lie an admission and inclination to quell or at least work out naïve presumptions or what might show itself to be a limited perspective.

> And you look at some of the little people that we have that have come here from refugee camps in various places; they've never been to school. There's been no formal school and they have had to survive by whatever means they could. So then what do they bring to a school community and the experiences? What they have learned is a way of operating. It's interesting, and when you talk, too, about the ethics around, even within your own school, certain ethics that have become [accepted].

Maybe not [everyone] within the community is aware of what's going on. (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

In bringing forward the impact of new immigrants to the community, particularly children who have suffered trauma, there is an accompanying turn of perspective: rather than leaping to 'rescue' children or expedite their initiation and integration into Canadian society, however "Canadian society" may be interpreted, as soon as possible, McAvity asks us to pause, to consider what "they bring to a school community". This shifts the focus from the *inside individual self* (i.e., the dominant culture) and allows the dominance to be played off – the 'other' is recognised not so much as 'other' as a new element in the conversation. From this, there is a sense that the communal space is broadened, that there is an understanding and valuing of the importance for *all* participants to settle into and with the *community*. In other words, understanding is a *social* achievement in which "the dialecticity of the...encounter, rather than the wills of the participants...achieves a fundamental shift in how different parties understand themselves and each other" (Davey, 2006, p. 10). In some form, this impulse leads and feeds into practical wisdom (phronesis), one of the principles of which seems to be a movement towards a coherent whole. In the case of McAvity, in addition to the propensity to include and understand the other, there is a correlative proclivity to move towards a coherent whole, to view the classroom in a holistic sense where all are welcome and *belong*.

> Some of our [students] don't know their sense of place and I think there are so many adults who don't know that sense of place, where 'I' fit in with everything. Not just a physical place, but a belonging...Where do I fit into all of this, am I a valued person as I belong, or not belong? [As a teacher], when you meet children and they haven't been with you before...this is a space that's going to become ours. You invite them into your space and then it becomes *our* space. (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005)

McAvity has a strong sense of what it means for children to step into a classroom, an unknown 'space,' and that it is an organic, living *process* in which the unknown becomes [better] known in an unfolding together. In saying, "You invite them into *your* space", there is a hint of authority or primary ownership: might this be a contradiction? In all the talk of belonging, not just within a physical space but in a sense of self worth ("am I a valued person?"), is there an indication of private versus public? Superior and inferior? The one with the greatest authority (bestowed or earned) decides how and whom? Everything I have come to know about McAvity shouts, "No!", yet on the other hand, I am compelled to

wonder whether 'authority' must be regarded as suspicious in the first place? In G.R.'s case, when the students did not [overtly] value 'questioning' ("Not one student said, 'We value questioning'...We trust our authority figures"), the overall tone seemed to be that authority figures are to be mistrusted; however, I do not believe that is what was meant. I think, rather, that G.R. was taking exception to authority *as* figure – status granted purely as a result of position and of position*ing*. In this conception, "authority could be viewed as diametrically opposed to reason and freedom: to be, in fact, blind obedience" (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 279). This, according to Gadamer is authority not properly understood.

> Authority...has nothing to do with blind obedience to commands. Indeed, authority has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge....its true basis is an act of freedom and reason that grants the authority of a superior fundamentally because he has a wider view of things or is better informed – i.e., once again, because he knows more. Thus, acknowledging authority is always connected with the idea that what the authority says is not irrational and arbitrary but can, in principle, be discovered to be true. This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the expert. (pp. 279-280)

What Gadamer seems to grant above is a form of legitimacy not only to "authority" but to *teacher* as authority. That someone must stand, and hold space as guide in a classroom is essential, and in McAvity's acknowledgment that the space "becomes *our* space" is a letting-go of authority *as* "blind obedience to commands." This, of course, carries with it a vast responsibility and response-ability (van Manen, 1990).

As another moment of McAvity's seeming commitment to a holistic classroom, as someone with a particular interest in a specific subject area (in this case, mathematics), there may be a risk of claiming personal ownership or a tendency to valorise one's own area of expertise above others, but this does not appear to be the case for McAvity. The following commentary both points towards the importance of a holistic approach to curriculum as well as acknowledges the importance of maintaining the arts in schools.

> [A problem is] the fragmentation, it's the parts...it's like math, 'Okay let's just deal with two-digit addition right now' and we're not looking at it conceptually, or not conceptually connecting it to anything. We [see that] it's now on the list [curriculum guide], so we'll do this. I do feel the whole area of fine arts has been diminished and diminished and diminished and we've tried to keep things alive by having perhaps a specialist or perhaps a person who really has expertise to be teaching more than just their own children [but it's a struggle]. (Taped Conversation May 7, 2005)

In the above, McAvity is referring – in part – to the ever recurring funding dilemma. As seems to be the case in more areas than just education (government, for example), when

budgets become constrained, funds get reallocated and it is often fine arts, social programs, etc., that suffer financial cuts. I do not aim to get to the bottom of the funding problem or to locate and lay blame on a particular person or political party or agency for a lack of vision or blatant disregard for the 'good of all,' but I do wish to pause here for a moment to explore what might be the basis for undervaluing these programs and why they are important to maintain – as McAvity and the other participants so plainly believe. This phenomenon (if it might be called so) is not unique to the 21st Century. At this point, I would like to bring Dewey (1929) into the conversation, in particular his *Quest for Certainty* which connects with McAvity's, and the others' remarks. I also look to Michael Matthis (1979) who incorporates Dewey's above work in his exploration of "value".

Dewey's first chapter in *The Quest for Certainty* is entitled *"Escape from Peril"*. He begins by saying, "Man who lives in a world of hazards is compelled to seek for security" (p. 3). He discusses two ways that this security has been sought: on the one hand, it is through "changing the self in emotion and idea…[through] supplication, sacrifice, ceremonial rite and magical cult" (p. 3); and on the other hand, it is through "changing the world through action" by the invention of arts "and by their means turn the powers of nature to account" (p. 3). He rationalises that knowledge has been elevated above making and doing and that the reason for this has to do with a quest for certainty. He explains it thus:

> The distinctive characteristic of practical activity, one which is so inherent that it cannot be eliminated, is the uncertainty which attends it. Of it we are compelled to say: Act, but act at your peril. Judgment and belief regarding actions to be performed can never attain more than a precarious probability. Through thought, however, it has seemed that men might escape from the perils of uncertainty. Practical activity deals with individualised and unique situations which are never exactly duplicable and about which, accordingly, no complete assurance is possible. All activity, moreover, involves change. The intellect, however, according to the traditional doctrine, may grasp universal Being, and Being which is universal is fixed and immutable. (pp. 6-7)

Dewey's focus on inquiry as means of releasing the self from the sort of authority that demands "blind obedience to commands" (1929) is similar to Gadamer's conviction that through conversation we are permitted entry into new understandings and new (re)viewings. Matthis (1979) further explains that art

> does not simply 'duplicate' or 'reproduce' the world: it transforms the world by injecting foundational value into its very heart. In this way art thrusts confusion into the ordinary realm of fact, the pure, full positivity of that which 'is as it is.' Into the centre of this mass the artist places that which *is not*, that which is volatile, and so he

manages to produce a being with an 'innerness,' an interior that thrusts the thing beyond itself. (p. 424)

Through all of these quotations and writing, the following comes to mind: might at least *part* of the reason for the arts being considered second place to science, mathematics, and technology in schools (based on funding priorities) have to do with some sort of perceived threat to 'reason'? Does the unpredictability of the arts and artists and the potential to see a direct and substantial economic link – i.e., the money making potential (or lack thereof) – render it less valuable than science and technology thereby reducing its 'importance' in schools and in society in general? Matthis (1979), basing his comments on Dewey writes,

> [w]hat separates art from mere technology is that the latter has no interior, is merely replaceable, and is guided by a thoughtless, functional, pre-defined end, such that its creation involves no genuine inquiry…but the mechanical duplication of one thing after another….The work of art, on the other hand, places the volatile question of art, of non-being, into the centre of each created being; without *a* restricted place. (p. 425)

On a different yet obliquely related topic, McAvity made the following comment, indicative of the groundedness that comes from the classroom and the reason to remain in a profession not infrequently punctuated with distractions, detractions, and subtractions.

> When those things [related to administrative duties] like not being able to get the agency support, or not being able to do something, or 'Now you will use a new framework for doing the school development plan,' and 'Now you will do this and this and this,' and 'I want this form in triplicate by tomorrow' (and I just got it today), I go right out to the kids in the classroom. I refresh myself, reenergise myself and remember why I'm there. (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005)

There also seems to be a determination and a dogged pursuit of questioning despite pressure to accept 'authority' and carry out orders.

> At times there's a certain amount of pressure that's put on – like, 'Make this decision now or you lose out.' Well, fine, I lose out. Others will say, 'Oh, gee!' And they get swept up in the pace [and the hurry]. I know I can be a pain in the butt at times, like, 'Why are we having to do this? Help me understand what this is' and I drive people bananas. At times [I feel like I'm being shut down]. I don't know, [if I'm told], 'Just don't ask questions, just go do it.' Well, no, I need to understand. I'm like the children. Sorry. I need to understand why this connects and what it is so I can do it. Or not…(Taped Conversation February 5, 2005)

The classroom is a place for McAvity to 'breathe': "I go to the classroom to reground myself from the things that come across my desk...so I just want to breathe so I go into a classroom." It is interesting that McAvity used the metaphor of breathing, indicative of life, of the classroom as a place filled with aliveness. "I can't keep moving at this pace. Balance is important...which is what we do with [students]" (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005).

Cornerstones of Ecologically Minded Practice

Teaching holds no magical formula. Despite the most meticulously designed plan, as long as students are given voice and teachers are prepared to respond, it is impossible to predict with specificity what may unfold over the course of a 'typical' day. Curriculum may provide a basis for teaching and learning, but the enactment of teaching is wholly dependent on the relationship between teachers and learners. How, then, can an ecologically minded practice be articulated? What is it about the teachers in this study that might be instructive in terms of classroom interactions that promote a holistic sensibility?

Numerous threads of commonality run through the participants' comments. To summarise the above conversations, these include understanding the importance of interconnectedness, *hearing* (as described by Levin, 1989), student voice, belonging, imagination, and respect. In addition, they each also bring forth a slightly different expression of what I understand as ecological mindedness. I speak to this in the following paragraph.

Carol stands as a reminder to me that courage, obligation, and compassion are important cornerstones to ecologically minded practice. From my encounters and conversations with Deb I understand ecological mindedness to contain a strong sense of wonder accompanied by a strong sense of self. G.R.'s words in general speak of a commitment to teaching based on understanding 'other' with deep connections to metaphor, geography, and history. Leila speaks of place, the significance of democratic participation, stewardship, and critical thinking. McAvity's own propensity to question opens spaces for students to emulate and critique the taken for granted; also present is the groundedness McAvity finds in being a co-learner with students.

Although there are many other interpretations and permutations for ecological mindedness, the above are what I consider to be core components, links to transformative education (as articulated by O'Sullivan, 2001, 2002, 2004).

I end this chapter and foreshadow the next with a quotation from John Dewey (1915/2001): "The obvious fact is that our social life has undergone a thorough and radical change. If our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation" (p. 20).

Figure 8   **Alternus: The Other of Two**

Exordia

Exitus

Oikos

Spiritus

Alternus

Noesis

Paideia

Habitus
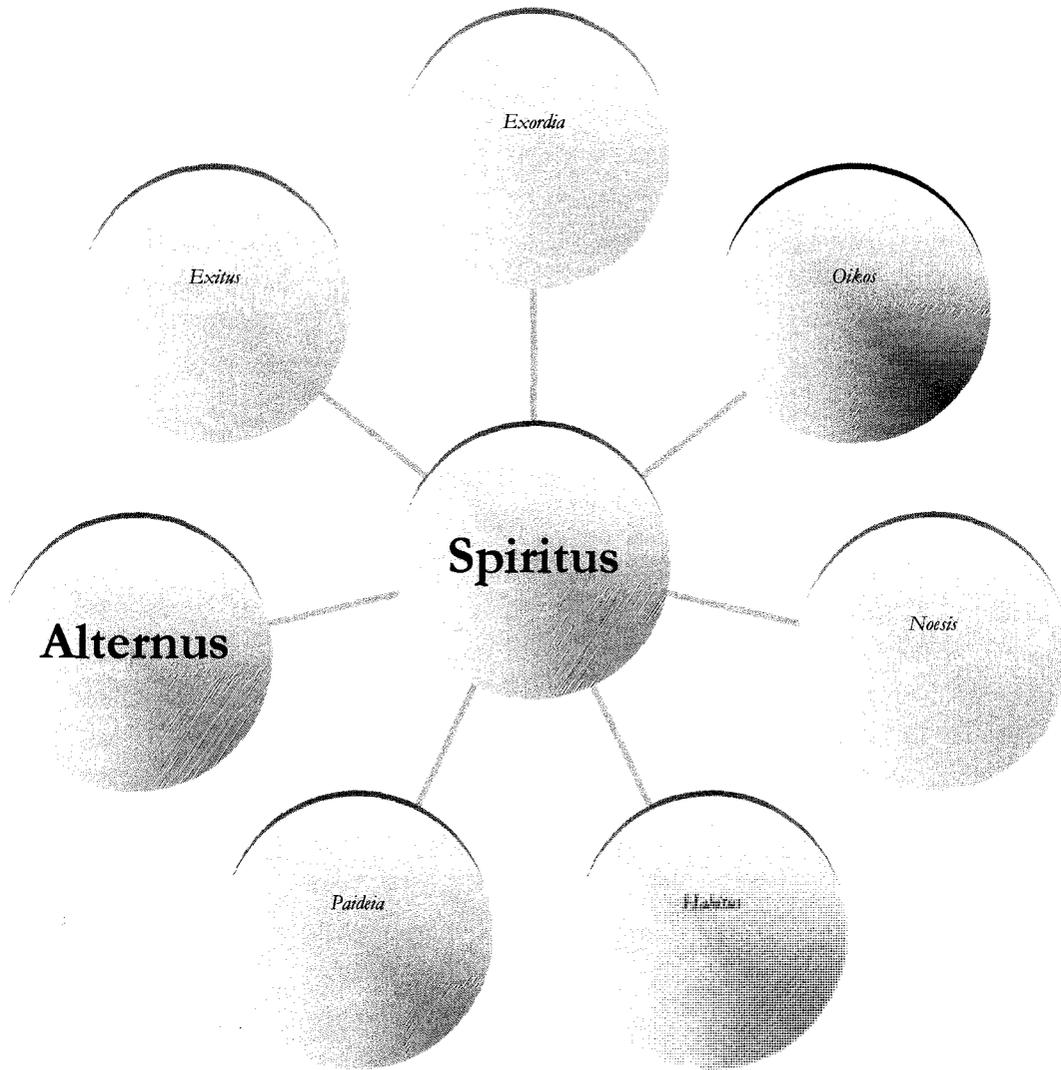
ALTERNUS: THE OTHER OF TWO

The 'ecocrisis' elicits a reorientation of our education system towards promoting an in depth ecological understanding and applying that understanding to undergird sustainable practices. Engendering a fundamental ecological mindedness may assist in rethinking such practices as commerce/consumption, science/technology, and democracy. This chapter focuses on reconceptualising education based on ecological sensibilities.

"*Alternus*" is a Latin word meaning "*by turns*, from *alter, other*" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Words such as "alternate", "alternative", and "alternatively" are its derivatives. I haven chosen to use the Latin rather than the familiar English version for two reasons. The first rests on the now-common definition of "alternative", which means "to occur in a successive manner, happening or following in turns, succeeding each other continuously" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Taking turns and succeeding each other continuously carries an implicit back and forth movement, which may be a necessary *first* step in trying and applying alternatives; however, I wish to focus more intensively on the possibilities inherent within adopting or incorporating a different conceptualisation of schooling. My second reason for choosing "*Alternus*" rather than "alternative" has to do with the specific reference to "other" in the Latin definition. Ecological discourse seems very much "other" in the context of the education system. I discuss this shortly. Additionally, "alter" originally meant "*the other of two*" which applies to situations where the number of choices involved is exactly two (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*, 2006). The "other of two" herein is transformative education, encased within which is ecological discourse and ecological literacy. The following section, then, constitutes my explorations of the possibility that ecological mindedness can enter the conversation and play a more significant role in schools. The purpose is not to suggest that ecological perspectives should supplant all other forms of discourse but rather that our present prevailing productivist discourse may have something to 'learn' from an ecological perspective. After a few introductory notes on ecological discourse and ecological literacy I provide a brief but closer look at transformative education.

Enlivening The Silenced Discourse in School

> What would unreason say were its voice restored? What is the truth of madness, the truth that madness knows but we have silenced? (Caputo, 2000, p. 19)

In discussing ecological mindedness as a silenced or perhaps less prominent discourse in the public education system, I am making several assumptions. Those that have greatest relevance to this work include the following:

- To *some* extent, human actions are responsible for the global ecological crisis;
- At least part of the reason for the above is because of a cutting off, severance, or lack of reverence for/to/with the Earth – lending credence to claims of an anthropocentric worldview;
- An ecocentric perspective has been silenced, or is inferior to Anthropocentrism – as a sort of 'madness' or 'unreason';
- Human beings have a responsibility or obligation to ensure that future life (human *and* nonhuman) on Earth is not placed in jeopardy by our present actions (given all that we know about 'nature' and our relationship to/within it);
- The school system and/or classroom teachers can/should take a leadership role in presenting students with alternative discourses, other ways of looking at the world, and work towards developing an ecological ethic that would run throughout an integrated curriculum (the attached implicit belief is that the impact on children will have a positive, lasting affect on their behaviour and their attitudes toward the biosphere and their responsibility to future life);
- The discourse of ecology is *indeed* silenced, suppressed, or put out of play by the primacy of what I have referred to throughout this work as the dominant discourse.

As outlined earlier, the primary discourse in the Westernised world arose from/within the Enlightenment period and it is a deeply embedded, pervasive, and powerful discourse indeed. Organic understandings of the Earth and its processes became subsumed and disregarded as speculative or madness (Berman, 1989; Merchant 1990). The discourse carried within the scientific paradigm has largely permeated our language, our outlook on life, and our views about relationships. As Oelschlaeger (1995) notes,

> [w]e have been left a legacy of scientific discourse: not only does science have its own discourse, it *is* a form of discourse…through which our own society typically constructs its picture of the world, the things in the world, and the relation among the things in the world. (p. 5)

To state this another way, Orr (1994) asserts that we have inherited an epistemology that emphasises atomism, materiality, and measurement, all of which derives from the time of the Enlightenment, and in particular from three key thinkers: Galileo, from whom we

learned about the dominance of the analytical mind; Descartes, who brought the separation of self and object; and Bacon, who convincingly argued for the combination of knowledge and power as the key to progress (all of which is also laid out in the works of numerous others including Berman, 1989; Capra, 1988; Leiss, 1972; and Merchant, 1990). This tradition is apparent – subtly and not so subtly – in most school systems: school days are separated into discrete subject areas, then students are sorted, classified, evaluated, and graded (outcomes). Not all teachers function purely within this manner, of course, nor do all schools condone or encourage this form of 'education.' However, at the end of the [school] day, teachers are held accountable and must justify their methods, procedures, activities – i.e., their existence as teachers – as they are contractually obligated to provide their students with an 'appropriate' education (which is ultimately based on outcomes). Although some mention may be made of the environment or ecology within curriculum guidelines, we have yet to see a formalised acknowledgement of ecological issues as something urgent to be addressed within standard school curricula. This, of course, does not mean that ecological awareness is *not* addressed; in many cases, it is undoubtedly a priority. The question is whether it can/should be given more prominence within official school documentation (e.g., provincial education directives, Programs of Studies, etc.).

None of the above is meant to imply that scientific 'progress' has not brought benefits and positive changes, at least to some people in some parts of the world, but faced as we are with myriad ecological issues, perhaps the time has arrived to consider adopting or incorporating or at least discussing other discourses and other worldviews. In Berman's (1989) analysis,

> [s]cientific consciousness is alienated consciousness: there is no ecstatic merger with nature, but rather total separation from it...The logical endpoint of this worldview is a feeling of reification: everything is an object, alien, not-me...I am ultimately an object too, an alienated 'thing' in a world of other, equally meaningless things...I do not feel a sense of belonging [in the world]...What I feel, in fact, is a sickness in the soul. (p. 3)

Although this plea presents a rather narrow view of science, Berman's critique of Cartesian, dualistic ontology gives one pause to wonder about ways of living and being in the world. In posing the question, "*Should* we be doing anything in education to address ecological issues?" the appropriate response is perhaps another question: "Are teachers,

education systems, curriculum developers, etc., complicit in deepening the ecological crisis if we do *not* do something?"

The appropriateness, practicalities, possibilities, and plausibility of a 'formal' inclusion of ecological discourse in education raises several questions. How would this occur? Who would be 'responsible' for formalising ecological discourse (curriculum developers, teachers, parents, the government, etc.)? What sort of professional development might be required to develop facility with ecological discourse? How would teacher 'buy-in' (no link to consumerism intended) be addressed?

There are some good indications that some teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers are already in the middle of a conversation, but, with some exceptions, it does not yet seem to have become a visible part of daily classroom life. Developing ecological literacy may be closer than one might think, however (see, for example, Jardine, 1992; Jardine, 1998; Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2003). Orr (1992) suggests, "If literacy is driven by the search for knowledge, ecological literacy is driven by the sense of wonder, the sheer delight in being alive in a beautiful, mysterious, bountiful world" (p. 86). This also means more than simply being in 'nature.'

> To think 'ecologically,' in a broad sense, is to think in terms of the evolution of an interlinked system over time rather than in terms of separate and one-way causal interactions. It is a general habit of mind. Ideas, for example, not just ecosystems, can be viewed in this way. Ethical ideas, in particular, are deeply interwoven with and dependent upon multiple contexts: other prevailing ideas and values, cultural institutions and practices, a vast range of experiences, and natural settings as well. (Weston, 1995, p. 223)

An ecological model of understanding "is a lifelong practice of social learning and knowledge transmission that is carried out in all spheres of life" (Hautecoeur, 2002, p. 3). What comes to mind here is G.R. whose words speak of a holistic approach to teaching – and it is in this holism that an ecological model seems to emerge. As one example of this, we were told of the project, initiated by G.R., in which the class planted bulbs to celebrate solstice to "see that whole idea of growth…[and] nurturing [and seasonality]" (Taped Conversation February 5, 2005). Although this particular activity is closely linked with 'nature' and the planet we live on, it is more than a school ground (or backyard) clean up, it is more than an excursion down the local river, and it is more than a study of [yet] another way to conserve energy. It is inclusive of a way of thinking beyond limited, situational activities. It reflects and encompasses a worldview that includes

new directions, away from conventional beliefs/values/attitudes that the realities of a worsening world are proving false...[towards fostering] a new frame of reference for all that people think and do, a reorientation toward deeper and truer insights with power to set this and succeeding generations on a more charitable and creative path vis-à-vis the surrounding world. (Rowe, 2006, p. 105)

If this were to happen, if an ecological discourse or ecopedagogy were to become a priority in schools, it seems unlikely to automatically 'work' if it is inserted as a separate unit, partitioned off from certain subject areas and included in others. In order for a holistic viewpoint to emerge, ecological awareness must become infused with daily life, integrated throughout and within all subject areas. An ecological, integrated (holistic) curriculum involves not only the 'natural' world, it also embraces the relationships between and amongst other human beings. It "involves the ambiguous and difficult ways in which our lives together with children are interwoven with the life of the Earth" (Jardine, 1998, p. 73). At the basis of humans living in community are shared beliefs, attitudes, and values which are bounded and transmitted by communication and dialogue (Fagan, 1996). Personal values and community values, in an ecological worldview, become linked and bound by sustainability; the boundaries of personal care and concern extend to the boundaries of community/environment (Sterling, 1996).

In seeking another way of understanding the world, Warren (1998), drawing on Dewey's work, states that we need a new ethic, one which "consists in the rejection of any way of thinking about or acting toward nature that reflects a logic, values, or attitude of domination" (p. 337). The roots of this attitude of domination can, perhaps, be traced back to the scientific paradigm; however, this is not meant to promote the complete dissolution of the scientific method or of a rationalistic approach to learning and understanding. Indeed, Dewey's approach was, in his own terminology, the scientific method. Reason, rationalism, and the scientific approach have become suspect as the means to solve problems; however, the very act of critiquing or coming to an understanding of something usually does involve the use of reason and rationalistic thinking. As stated by Manes (1995), this should not be misunderstood as

> a global attack on reason, as if the irrational were the key to the essence of the human being the way humanists claim reason is. [We need]...to dismantle a particular historical use of reason, a use that has produced a certain kind of human subject that only speaks soliloquies in a world of irrational silences. (p. 52)

In a similar vein, Dryzek (1995) writes,

> [t]here is no need here for mystical notions about spiritual communion with nature. Immersion in the world can be a thoroughly 'rational' affair provided we are willing to expand our notion of rationality in the appropriate directions. Reason too can be green. But clearly, much remains to be done in the construction of a communicative ethics of rational interaction that embraces the natural world. (p. 114)

Hickman (1995) points out that if Dewey's approach is to be disputed at all, it is rather in the misunderstanding of what Dewey meant. In his initial work on the scientific method, which he believed could demonstrate the interconnectedness of life and reconnect the severed parts, Dewey had already recognised that a splintering or separation between science and other disciplines had occurred; he believed that human beings were *part* of nature and he posited that non cognitive experience was much richer than science allows (Hickman, 1995). He was, in fact, quite critical of the Enlightenment ideal (Alexander, 1995). Although criticised by Bowers (1997) for his lack of recognition of other cultural ways of knowing, Dewey's was a holistic approach (Alexander, 1995). Dewey furthermore believed that a dynamic approach, which included a "critical attitude to the past combined with a creative approach to the future" would assist in creating the most meaningful experience possible (Alexander, 1995, p. 78).

Ecological Literacy as Pathway to Transformative Action

David Orr (1992) explicates the concept of ecological literacy. In an indirect way of providing a definition, he writes,

> [e]cological literacy begins in childhood. 'To keep alive his inborn sense of wonder,' a child, in Rachel Carson's words, 'needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.' (p. 86)

Difficulties in attaining ecological literacy, according to Orr (1992), stem from several cultural patterns. One involves the inherent call for "the ability to think broadly....[which is] being lost in an age of specialization" (p. 87), a second entails the belief that "education is solely an indoor activity", and a third lies with a "decline in the capacity for aesthetic appreciation" (p. 87). He suggests ways we might alleviate these dilemmas, all of which involve a response to the question, "What does it mean to educate people to live sustainably?" Of the six "foundations" that he brings forward, I mention one: "for inhabitants, education occurs in part as a dialogue with a place and has the characteristics of

good conversation" (p. 90). What he evokes here is a sense of relationship, of listening, and of understanding, all of which requires time.

> Good conversation is unhurried. It has its own rhythm and pace. Dialogue with nature cannot be rushed. It will be governed by cycles of day and night, the season, the pace of procreation, and by the larger rhythm of evolutionary and geologic time. Human sense of time is increasingly frenetic, driven by clocks, computers, and revolutions in transportation and communication. (Orr, 1992, p. 91)

To summarise Orr's (1992) description of ecological literacy, it is an attitude of care, an understanding of the interrelatedness of life, and a way of being in the world, all of which are possible to engender in a classroom. But what might this look like, what might it take, what might it give, and what might it ask of teachers?

Within the foregoing several hundred pages, my effort has been oriented towards understanding worldview via *some* of the constitutive elements inherent within our embeddedness in discourse, history, contemporary influences, etc. My interpretations are founded on conversations, textual readings, and relevant personal experiences. I have alluded to several possibilities for an alternative [to the dominant] discourse to enter more fully into the conversation but have not yet allowed space specifically for theoretical considerations. This I undertake now.

Over the next few pages, I turn attention to transformative education, encased within which is ecological mindedness, as means to stimulate and emulate individual empowerment. "Emancipatory consciousness" (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000, p. 291) and unconditional democratic participation is the vision. In the context of the ecocrisis, what this points towards is environmental citizenship, a term purportedly developed by Environment Canada (The Center for Environmental Philosophy Online) and virtually unheard of until the latter part of last century. It is a term that has achieved global currency, which, as pointed out by John Barry (2006), opens space for dialogue. His vision of what it could be and perhaps should be includes not just environmental issues but "the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of sustainability and sustainable development" (p. 21). Given the documented magnitude of the ecocrisis on a global level, there is a risk that people in the general population may feel powerless to do anything that might assist in alleviating the pressures we face as a planet. A reasonable place to engender a sense of *involved* citizenship might be the classroom. As Dobson and Bell (2006) point out, the likelihood that environmental school projects and student participation will lead to far

reaching environmentally responsible behaviour will be contingent, to some degree on "schools having a sense of their place and role in society as political agents for transformation" (p. 15). While environmental citizenship does not *necessarily* imply political involvement at the polls, this may be one of the offshoots. With voter turnout being what it has in last three Canadian elections – the lowest on record in the past one hundred years (Elections Canada, 2008) – this may be a really rather worthwhile offshoot, particularly since it is citizens under the age of 30 who seem least likely to vote (Elections Canada, 2008).

A New Cosmology

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (Morell and O'Conner, 2002, p. xvii)

O'Sullivan's (2001) call for a transformation of learning includes a transformation of vision, of hearing, of *being*. In contrast to curricula, policy directives, and teacher practice that may invite, promote, or permit, a 'back to the basics' approach he invokes a new vision of education, an "ecozoic vision [that] can also be called a *transformative* perspective because it posits a radical restructuring of all current educational directions" (p. 2). He furthermore states that "[c]ontemporary education lacks a comprehensive cosmology" (p. 3). What he proposes as remedy to the fragmentation and separation of the curriculum and its corollary "industrialism, nationalism, competitive transnationalism, individualism, and patriarchy" (p. 7), all of which bear some responsibility in the deepening planetary ecocrisis, is a rethinking, a revitalising, an enlivening, a new consciousness, and a new discourse. He does not, however, present his ideas in a recipe-book format with step by step procedures to be followed and transmitted. It requires, rather, deep thinking, deep listening, and deep dialogue. As he invites his readers to "enter into a deep cultural and personal reflection on educational paradigms that are operating at the deeper levels of consciousness" (p. 8), I hear the echoes from familiar terrain:

> [A] hermeneutical conversation, like a real conversation, finds a common language....more than mere accommodation....not to be compared with an

immovably and obstinately fixed point of view that suggests only one question to the person trying to understand it, namely how the other person could have arrived at such an absurd opinion. (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 388)

In using the term "transformative", O'Sullivan (2001) is adamant that he not be misunderstood in his treatment of the word, meaning it to be "both rigorous and complex. [In] espousing an ambitious cosmological perspective...[it] is not Utopian or new age", from which he distances himself "strenuously" (p. 6). He defends his use of cosmology in the context of education by stating that "Modern educational theory lacks a comprehensive and integrated perspective that has in the past been identified as a cosmology" (p. 46), explaining that he is working towards an articulation of a cosmology "that can be functionally effective in providing a basis for an educational programme that would engender an ecologically sustainable vision of society in the broadest terms; what can be called a planetary vision" (p. 46).

To further deflect potential misinterpretations of cosmology and dispel "new age" accusations, it may be worthwhile to explore its derivation: "cosmology" comes from "cosmos", which means "the universe regarded as an ordered, harmonious whole...distinct from chaos" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001). Its origin is Greek – *"kosmos"*, which means "order". To take this one step further, into and out of chaos, it should perhaps be noted that chaos, which bears the meaning, "a condition or place of great disorder or confusion" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2001) may be understood as primordial space, from which pure potential issues. Thus, exception may be taken to the use of the term "order" because of a misread implication that an unyielding structure must be imposed and followed point by point; however, O'Sullivan's (2001) work, rather than a 'shutting down,' is far more an invitation to enter into the generation of new understandings – not unlike a "hermeneutic conversation" (see Gadamer quotation above).

O'Sullivan (2001) takes a "critical look" at the prominent features of our times – what he calls the "sacred symbols of modern western societies" (p. 103) – and raises questions about the underlying meanings and how these may be undermining ecological sustainability or at least not alleviating the ecocrisis. These include: growth and development, globalisation, competition, and consumerism – in other words, progress. It is not possible to include a thorough explanation of each but I include the following as summary: "[o]ne of the components of a new vision is a resistance to a destructive older

vision....we are abundantly aware that there must be deep criticism and resistance to these destructive forces that are overrunning the world at present" (O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 125). Within this new vision he calls for a new understanding of what it means to be a citizen, as *active agent* rather than *passive consumer*. An ecozoic vision also promotes education for peace, social justice, and diversity while working towards an understanding of the importance of community and sense of place.

While it is not possible to do justice or give thorough consideration to O'Sullivan's above work within this dissertation, I wish to emphasise that in this highly abbreviated explication, I recognise the possibilities inherent within his proposal for a re-constituted education system just as I recognise the potential for the participants in this study to converse with, raise questions, and come to an understanding of his proposal for a new configuration of classroom practice.

Two other works to which I wish to give mention are collections of readings in transformative practices (O'Sullivan, Morrell, and O'Connor, 2002; O'Sullivan and Taylor, 2004). Again, as these are both 'thick' reads; I can but highlight a few ideas. As these texts hold varying interpretations of how transformative practices may unfold, they should be read in their entirety. At the basis of each selection in these collections is a similar fundamental impulse: that an ecological awareness or consciousness is requisite to understanding and enacting a sense of interconnectedness with and within the cosmos. The readings are geared towards further explicating ecological consciousness as well as understanding the underlying issues that have brought into being the call for a new, or re-conceived notion of education and classroom practice, one which, in some form, argues against the strict 'back to basics' movement that has arisen – in some degree – as a result of (or in response to?) the political intrusion of neoliberal policies into the education system. These volumes are not restricted to ways that we might heed the overused clarion call to jump on the bandwagon to '*save the environment*' but are an interdisciplinary compilation of "radical critiques" (O'Sullivan et al, 2002, p. xvi) of injustices across the board: racism, poverty, disempowerment, marginalisation, exploitation (of people as well as resources), globalism, etc. To be sure, developing ecological consciousness and pedagogical approaches that beckon beyond existing educational frameworks is indeed an important component of understanding how we might see curriculum, education, and the world differently but transformative learning might be seen as a more inclusive concept.

From the abovementioned works, I distil three key points.

The first involves two essential questions posed by Morrell and O'Connor (2002) which they preface with "[o]ur purpose in transformative learning is not to delineate abstract principles about how adults learn, and we are not interested in theoretical 'generalisability' – at least not in the same sense in which this term is ordinarily used (p. xvii)". From there, they continue on to say, "[w]e are asking ourselves why transformative learning matters? And when we speak of transformation, we need to know: from what to what?" (p. xvii).

The second point is an excerpt from the introduction to the above work. I include this because it is a statement of openness not only to verbal conversations or written explications. Morrell and O'Connor conceptualise transformative learning in the following way:

> Our particular vision(s) of transformative learning also differs from other versions with respect to the role and potential of dialogue or rational discourse. There is no question that challenging discussions can stimulate change, particularly when there is safety, trust, and respect. In our view, however, there are also other routes to transformative learning. We do not insist on the primacy of reason or of articulation for transformative learning. We understand that crucial learning often takes place nonverbally, in the inarticulate dimensions of our bodies. We even would claim that essential transformative learning takes place unconsciously and that there is no need to attempt to bring everything into our consciousness....When we dance, for example, or spend a night outside under a star-filled sky, or examine a photograph, we learn. We learn in ways that change us and give us the vision and compassion and strength to work for both personal and social change. (p. xviii)

In effect, the above valorises understanding and experience in the same tone, or perhaps undertones, as David Abram (1997) who describes his experience in Indonesia and Nepal as awakening "different sensations and perceptions" (p. 27) which are undervalued or perhaps largely disregarded in Westernised cultures. Drawing on Husserl's work on phenomenology, he furthermore writes, "[b]y...returning to the taken-for-granted realm of subjective experience, not to explain it but simply to pay attention to its rhythms and textures, not to capture or control it but simply to become familiar with its diverse modes of appearance" (p. 35). In his words, I see a parallel to those of Morrell and O'Connor's above. This way or mode of understanding may not bear validity or relevance in the world of scientific understandings, but experiences such as Abram, Morrell, and O'Connor describe do in fact occur. This is not to say that rational thought should be overturned in favour of falling to one's fleeting moments or whims of *feeling*, but more so, perhaps, a question might

be phrased, one that asks whether learning might be broadened and deepened by at least entertaining the possibility that other ways, "in the inarticulate dimensions of our bodies" might exist. This brings to mind an occasion in which G.R. mentioned documentary film *"Born into Brothels"* which depicts the lives of children of prostitutes in Calcutta's red light district.

> And the filmmaker realised that there was an opportunity [to help the children improve their lives] so she gave them cameras and showed them photography. [So] this film is now about the children [rather than their parents] and how, through photography, they were able to make sense of their world, those moments, because they were able to capture it on their cameras. That's how they were coping. (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005)

In this film, and in G.R.'s attending to it, there is a directing outward, a pointing toward the value of expanding the boundaries of curriculum and the different dimensions that learning can assume if children are given the chance to explore the world in extra-linguistic ways. G.R. "there are so many children who are struggling, but through the arts, through music…they still have joy" (Taped Conversation February 19, 2005).

The following quotation I use as bridge between the conversation with G.R. and the third and final point I wish to bring forward from transformative education.

> An ecological approach to learning might start by endeavouring to understand the complex relationships between the diverse qualities of learners, supportive environments, and effective teachers and the things they do and do not do, the teaching aids they use, and the experiential opportunities they provide. (Hill et al, 2004, p. 49)

The above directs attention towards holistic thought, dialogic conversation, and space/time for reflective consideration. O'Sullivan and Taylor (2004) state that transformative learning "potentially takes place in our most valued spaces and moments. Learning emerges from our experience as environments 'speak to us' and we to each other, where we live and work" (p. 99). I end this section with the work of Yuka Takahashi (2004), which I see not only as summarising the impetus behind the call for transformative educational practice, it also summarises and returns my own work to my own beginning, my impetus for exploring the topics encased within. This in turn sets into motion the final chapter in which I exit from this writing.

As common characteristics of the modern, Westernised world, Takahashi's list provides at the same time the points I have attempted to make throughout this dissertation:

1) belief in limitless material growth;
2) success and happiness seen as the acquisition of material wealth as well as achievement of 'higher' social status;
3) human beings seen as primarily economic beings whose purpose is to produce and to consume;
4) society seen as a competitive marketplace;
5) mechanistic, atomistic view of the universe that gives rise to fragmented thinking;
6) divisions between people, family, profession, nation, race, gender, and religion seen as overriding our common humanity;
7) nature seen as having only instrumental value, a resource to be exploited;
8) patriarchal views and principles;
9) dualistic view of mind/body, mind/spirit, reason/emotion, reason/intuition with mind and reason valued over other (p. 172).

As she wends her way through an exploration of personal and social transformation, Takahashi comes to the understanding that "personal transformation is a process by which individuals challenge the modern consciousness and create new possibilities within them…[eventually shaping]…the process of social transformation" (p. 179). It is this same sort of hope and optimism that I hold as I near completion of this treatise. My own hope and optimism derives from my own life experiences on a personal, social, and professional level and most certainly it is a hope and an optimism that stems from the discussions held with the people – friends, colleagues, partners, and travelling companions who traversed the distance with me from one phase to another and back again.

Exordia

Exitus

Oikos

Spiritus

Alternus

Noesis

Paideia

Habitus
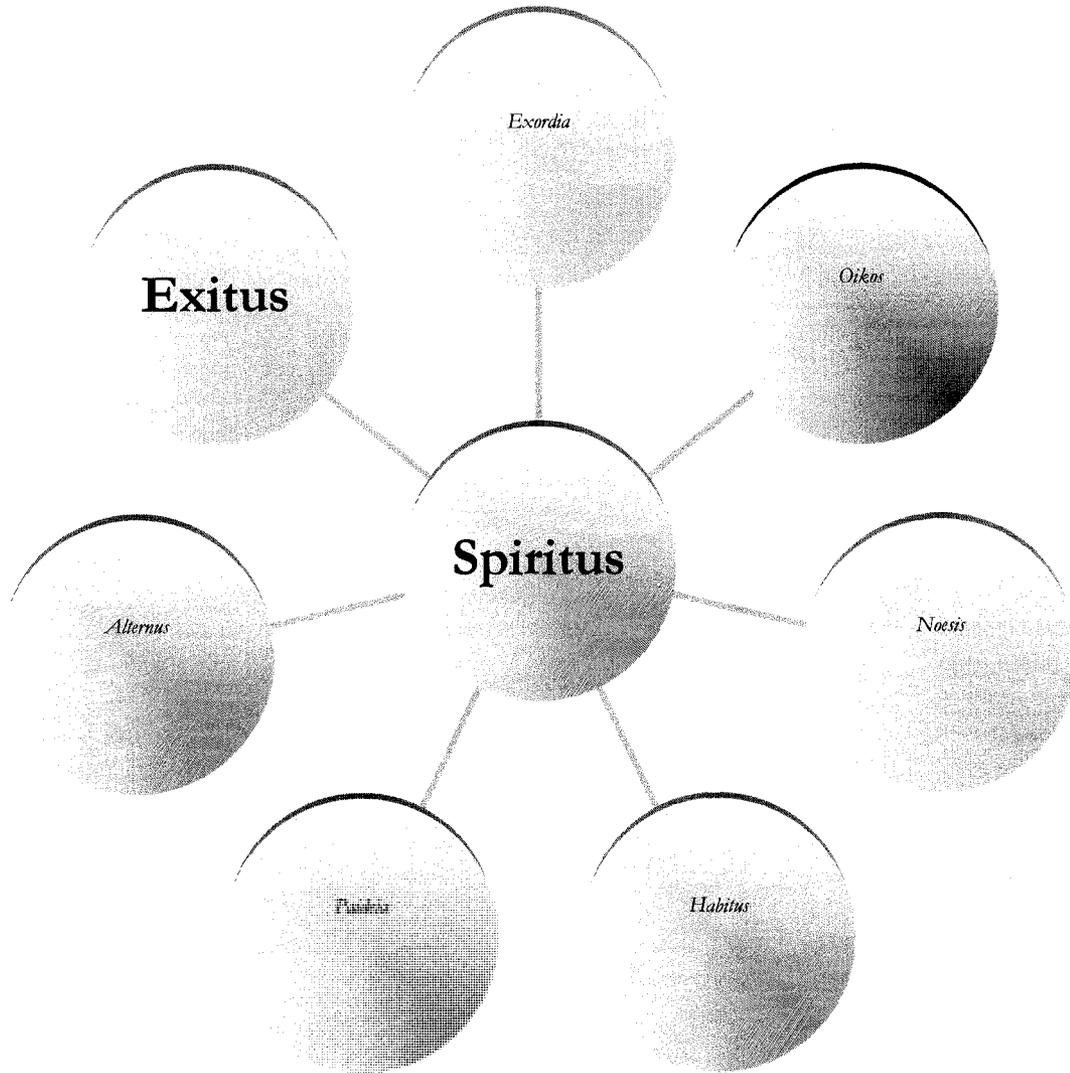
EXITUS: THE RETURN
What Are We Called To Do?

"I am trying to tease my way through a tangle of relationships I don't quite understand...I tug on one thread...and am startled by the threads that move in response..."

– Derrick Jensen, 2002, p. 66.

In this work I tugged on more than one thread and was indeed startled by the others that moved in response. Each of these threads consequently informed, created, or contributed to a phase in this work. The topics and issues that came to rest within these phases – biophilia, restlessness, the 'good life,' authority, experience, discourse, ecological mindedness, consumerism, etc. – brought numerous questions and wonderings, all of which I thought I might resolve completely by the end of this dissertation. Through the assistance of the research participants and numerous texts, I *have* come to some sort of resolution; however, in this ending I also see a number of *beginnings*, particularly within the ecocentric vision encased within and promoted by transformative learning.

I have also come to see that the complex but straightforward way I had envisaged this work unfolding was not to be. It has assuredly been complex. Very little, however, has been straightforward. Coming to deeper understandings of ecological mindedness, teaching, learning, education, obligation, worldview, consumerism, and discourse were all closely attended by complexity. Adding to this was no small bit of difficulty with language. And now, the task that lies ahead in these final pages – to find a succinct way to summarise some six years of working through a tangle of relationships – is far from straightforward. A paragraph, a page, a chapter hardly seem to hold enough space – or perhaps hold too *much* space.

I am thus impelled, *obliged*, to work out a way in which an all encompassing conclusion might give sway to a single thread, one which weaves through the entire narrative and is linked to all other threads. At the risk of sounding anthropomorphic, the *Spiritus*, the breath that enlivens, the unifying characteristic amongst all these words, dilemmas, musings, and questions that have come to rest within this dissertation is "embeddedness". It is this which seems to best represent how and who we come to be, to understand, to *mean* as always immersed and participative in a history, tradition, memory. As human beings we are situated

within a number of dwelling places: families, cultures, societies, language systems, ecosystems, and, of course, the biosphere. And paradoxically, I have also come to see that our very "embeddedness" points towards the occlusion of our embeddedness. By this I mean that the self referentiality that appears to have gained prominence within Westernised societies (see, for example, Taylor, 1991) has obscured or covered over or caused a forgetting of one vital dwelling place in particular. Being absorbed within, or perhaps consumed by, a narrowly configured *cultural* habitat may have contributed to a failed recognition that we are one component in a much larger, connected and interconnected configuration – i.e., the biosphere. John Stanley Rowe (2006) states this well:

> Culture, carried and transmitted by language, can also conceal fundamentals. When narrowly concerned with the human species as individuals and societies, ignoring their Earth-born status and dependencies, culture hides reality from us. We know from history that many cultures before ours were not sustainable....What the media call 'environmental problems' are really people problems: the overuse of Nature's wealth in forests, agricultural soils, the oceans. Increasing pollution and decreasing biological diversity are signals that many of the fundamental cultural beliefs guiding our actions are wrong....Western philosophy, religion, science and technology have developed in ways that separate us more and more from the natural, non-humanized, non-domesticated world....Too much culture, not enough nature. (p. 43)

With embeddedness as beginning point for summary, I move to a final retracing and adjournment of the phases that gave libration to this inquiry.

Phase One: Exordia

Introduction to the chart, the text, the conversations.

As I previously stated, this work has been a series of phases and phases-*within-*phases, appearing, disappearing, reappearing, waxing, waning. The chart I created as navigation tool was meant also to depict the circularity and cyclicality that I have come to know as life. Included in this are the moments where I was caught up in motion and the moments where I was held in suspension, the pause. The four questions I presented in the *Introduction to the Text*, the foundation of this study, rest primarily upon experience, the articulation for which was very much a *phasing.* At some points the process of putting words to experience seemed relatively clear, distinct, and untroubled; at others, this was a shadowy, uncertain, and labyrinthine practice. There was solace, sharing, suffering, and solitude to be found with Carol, Deb, G.R., Leila and McAvity as my travelling companions: solace and sharing – along with immeasurable gratitude – in working something out together in

collegiality and friendship; suffering and solitude in being charged with the responsibility of choosing then interpreting excerpts of conversations, published works, and my own experience(s). The apprehension that came to rest upon me in the early days of research and writing lingers even now, at the end of this work, particularly regarding the participants. Have I done justice to their words? Have I understood their words, their meaning? Have I made clear *who* they are, how they stand as teachers, what they might feel as human beings in relationship to others, to the ecosystem? Will they each understand the deep impact their contributions have made to this dissertation? Will they know the gratitude encased within?

Phase Two: Oikos

Home, dwelling place, Earth.

Obligation transcends me; it is not one of my transcendental projects. If an obligation is 'mine' it is not because it belongs to me but because I belong to it. Obligation is not one more thing I comprehend and want to do, but something that intervenes upon and disrupts the sphere of the I wants, something that disturbs the I. (Caputo, 1993, p. 8)

The real source of this work, of my passion to understand, of my concern for the future of the Earth has to do with a sense of obligation as teacher, as citizen, and as human being. As was the case with finding expression for the experiences of the participants, it has not been straightforward or simple to find expression for my *own* encounters, my own experience(s), even in trying out words to describe what I hitherto considered a simple life, a simple childhood. Finding a name for what I lived, for my worldview in the ec(h)o of my childhood was a mixture of a wish and a will to understand what my own interactions with the outdoor world meant and how this lives yet within me. Retracing my steps to Anerley, Saskatchewan was not part of my original conception of this dissertation, but as I came to realise how the present reflects the past, I began to see this not as a moment of pure self indulgence but one *constitutive* of this work. And lest it appear that I am sliding into nostalgia or promoting Anerley as some sort of 'ideal,' a recent photograph of Percy and Mae Higgitt's store casts a different light, or perhaps shadow. The store, once a bustling, lively little centre with people coming and going, children playing in the field nearby or lingering on the bench out front, eagerly waiting for a stranger or someone familiar to drive through the valley, is now overgrown with wild grasses; the corrugated metal siding, now red with rust, proclaims its evidence of human abandonment, and that 'idyllic' childhood home, the lush little hamlet

(*as* hamlet) of Anerley has become a "ghost town." Granted, the building still stands, there is even glass in some of the windows, and the sign, still nailed securely in its original horizontal position on one of the supporting posts of the storefront, announces boldly that this place, this space, this land once demarcated as "Anerley" was occupied and laid claim by humans; *however*, the overall appearance almost gives an impression of mockery. The final remaining piece of Anerley is just a sign. A human-created symbol. It means nothing to the surrounding landscape. This 'new view,' which initially washed over me as a folly, a misguided, over romanticised glance into the past, now appears to me as an ecological, geological moment of recompense: within the ruin is a return, a renewal. Anerley is still once more; the valley rests within another long pause, to remain in wait, perhaps, for the next geological event; in view of global climate change/warming, dare we think this might be another glacier to slowly etch its way through the valley? Yet in that stillness, in this seeming mockery, I am undeterred in my resolve to do what I can to somehow 'make a difference.'

Biophilia, E.O. Wilson's formulation for that elusive quality that has assisted humanity to survive in the world, is, according to David Orr (1994) an essential *choice* to be made in a movement towards "ecological enlightenment" (p. 146). This includes such things as recovery of sense of place, rethinking education, understanding interconnectedness, moving towards sustainable practices, etc. In response to possible detractors who might accuse him of promoting a form of utopia, he remarks, "Utopia? No! In our present circumstances this is the only realistic course imaginable. We have tried utopia and can no longer afford it" (pp. 151-152).

Whether biophilia – in the sense of frame of mind or backdrop to ecological mindedness, as opposed to *essentialism* – is 'the answer' or not, with the assistance of the participants in this study and the many books and articles I have read, I have come to see that a more mindful, mind*ed* ecological walk with the natural world may cultivate better/deeper understandings of humanity's utter reliance on the biosphere. This may in turn set in motion a series of threads moving in response that may remind us of our embeddedness in the natural world – e.g., advocating and/or practicing such actions as voluntary simplicity, low/post carbon societies, minimal impact urban design, sustainable agriculture and forestry practices, etc. – all of which fall under the broad umbrella of 'sustainable living,' with all its inherent contradictions.

Canadian naturalist, author, and former narrator of the 1960s television series

Hinterland Who's Who, John Livingston notes,

> [w]e are reasonable people all, and we have nice conversations, very profound conversations, but nothing happens. And I think that nothing happens because the overwhelming majority of us did not enjoy that preadolescent identification with nature…It is simply academic talk… What enables natural communities, I mean multi-species communities, to function is the fact that they have a shared awareness of themselves as a community, which we have not lost because it lives in us. But we have deliberately shelved it and filed it away in the interest of the human enterprise of the consumption of what we call resources and what I call nature. (Quoted in Marsden, 2007, *Frontispiece*)

Many would argue that there *is* something happening, that there *is* a collective response to stop the progress of the ecocrisis/exploitation of natural resources, and that we, as a collective do appear to be moving towards a re-envisioning of what we are 'called' to do in response to human-caused or human-initiated ecological disasters. This includes initiatives and responses such as: the Kyoto Protocol – the international treaty endorsed by some 170 countries, ratified but not acted upon by our Canadian government in a meaningful way (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Press Release, December 18, 2007); scientific reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007 Nobel Peace prize winners); well organised, large scale demonstrations (e.g., the December, 2007 UN Climate Talks in Bali, Indonesia); various environmental organisations; and numerous protests carried out by 'common' people in smaller numbers. The success of these efforts I do not deny. By the same token, however, there are obviously still many of us on the planet who are not 'part of the solution': massive consumerism persists, hydro-carbon spewing SUVs are a familiar sight on the streets and highways, rainforests (the 'lungs' of the Earth) continue to be razed for wood products or to make room for cattle raising, etc. Although Livingston's critique may be considered bleak or foreboding, I see two points of optimism, both of which might be seen as an invitation into conversation.

The first lies within his remark that "the overwhelming majority of us did not enjoy that preadolescent identification with nature". In this, rather than a foreclosure, I see a bidding and reference to embeddedness. It is becoming more and more publicised in academic circles (via researchers such as Edmund O'Sullivan, C.A. Bowers, Stanley Rowe, Peter Kahn, and David Orr) that contact with the outside world is vital to developing deepened understandings of humanity's interconnectedness with all beings on the planet.

When this begins in childhood, or to use Livingston's term, preadolescence, the bond with or understanding of 'nature' may enliven or bolster a sense of groundedness. This is not to say that if this is arrested or fails to develop during early years one is without footing. The footing may, however, be more tenuous if one has been primarily ensconced within a human created environment.

Connected to this first point of optimism is the second: that a "shared awareness…lives in us". Rather than being condemned to a permanent *loss*, Livingston's idea that humanity has instead *shelved* this quality, this "shared awareness" is in some ways an iteration of biophilia. And I reiterate: I do not mean to promote biophilia as the ultimate solution to all the world's woes; rather, I see it as a node, a thread that may be worth tugging, something that may lead to a sense of groundedness or reminder of our embeddedness not only in the petty externalities of our so-called 'culture' but to the consummate understanding that we dwell within something much bigger and much more profound. This, *in concert with* understandings derived from other realms such as ecology, biology, Earth sciences, and indigenous knowledge may facilitate a shift from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric worldview.

Phase Three: Noesis

To contemplate, to experience, to understand.

Simple, familiar, unelaborate, self evident, unambiguous words – at least until interpretation and *meaning-making* are invoked. Simple, familiar, unelaborate in this event quickly phase out of view.

The insights and illuminations that arrived via conversations with the research group and various texts represent one phase or facet of understanding – which I trust has become clear through the preceding several hundred pages. Another has to do with my understanding of the research *process* itself, which I discuss forthwith.

Just as a slight kaleidoscopic turn can lead to an entire reordering of the image, a small change in perspective can lead to a reordering of one's understanding. The emergence of my second facet of understanding has flowed from a succession of learning experiences – learning that occurred as a result of reflection, learning that occurred as a result of conversations, learning that occurred as a result of writing. All of these together brought a shift, a reordering, a kaleidoscopic turn in my understanding. This was particularly evident

during the writing phase, which seems more so an *event* than merely the final phase in/of a research project. As I wrote, thoughts and ideas, whispers between and amongst the words arose and awakened me to something further, something beyond, something at times inexplicable, and although fraught with difficulty and complexity, I remain optimistic:

> For the interpreter to let himself be guided by the things themselves is obviously not a matter of a single, 'conscientious' decision, but is 'the first, last, and constant task'....A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting...a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, understanding what is there. (Gadamer, 1968/2003, p. 267)

At one time, hermeneutics was a word and process of great mystery to me. It has now become the most coherent, familiar, *sensible* way to access understanding, meaning, life. Discovering that Hermes, the messenger of the gods, acted not only as deliverer of messages but as trickster was initially both liberating and disconcerting. I need not feel charged with discovering and proclaiming the 'final truth'; however, with the potential for duplicity figuring prominently, how would I manage to convey meaning with any credibility, whether in reference to published work, participants' comments, or my own experience? Gadamer released this burden immensely: I will not repeat the entire section on the interpretive basis of this work, but I do wish to reiterate that he brings to light the potential for conversation, whether it occurs in person or with text, to create opportunities to interpret, to understand, and to understand *differently*. In working through such issues as "authority", "experience", "topic", "discourse", and "ethics" – large spheres in and of themselves – I came to understand that legitimacy need not be founded on letters, degrees, publications, and externally acknowledged 'power' or certification as I once thought.

This did not, however, erase my difficulties with finding the 'right' language, particularly in describing certain experiences that were connected with felt emotion or embodied moments such as 'nature' experiences. Martin Jay (2005) states that "[experience] might be better [thought of] as the site of a productive struggle between...contesting impulses or demands, the place in our lives in which neither binary dualisms nor reductive monisms rule out the experimental moment in living" (p. 404). The existence of this inherent tension, too, releases somewhat the burden that may accompany hermeneutic interpretation. 'Truth-seeking' or even accurately placing a particular experience within a

particular location (e.g., theoretical framework) can be a daunting duty indeed. And amongst these 'daunting duties' are matters of identity and consciousness. To speak of these was messy and risky but – due to an inherent pull towards attitude, behaviour, action, *embeddedness* – necessary. My sustained effort throughout, whether speaking of identity, or identifying characteristics, or even something with which we might, however briefly identify and how this has ties to consciousness has been to underscore the complexities whilst also attempting to raise and address questions and concerns – mine, the participants,' researchers.'

Phase Four: Habitus

Social condition, habits, progress, myth, technology, time, consumerism, restlessness, malaise.

At times this seemed almost impassable terrain. Having others to hold conversations with undoubtedly enhanced my investigation into and understanding of this topic, but overall, the research and conversations stand as another indication of how some of these issues may function roughly as phases, coming into view, receding, changing.

> The Matrix is everywhere, it's all around us, here even in this room. You can see it out your window, or on your television. You feel it when you go to work, or go to church or pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth. (Morpheus, *The Matrix*, 1999)

Although it may have seemed a stretch to imply that a science fiction film might have something instructive to say about being embedded within a consumer society, given the discussions with the participants and the research on both ecological awareness and consumerism, it seems most fitting indeed. Along with a statement about living mindfully, mind*ed*-ly, it is also a statement of the tension that exists in society. To consume or not to consume? In this case, I am speaking of the by-products of films (video purchase/rentals, related paraphernalia, long black leather coats that were worn in the film, escapism, new heroes/heroines, even the theatre tickets themselves). This is not to mention the endorsement that may be read into discussing a film within a dissertation.

I have said much about consumerism in this dissertation along with some of the troubling effects of other cultural 'artefacts' (technology, restlessness, time, etc.); however, the conversation feels far from complete. Perhaps it never *can* be complete: to be embedded within a particular culture at a particular time, along with being in the middle of an evolving

story, is to fundamentally suspend completion. Even finding a way to end is a taxing commitment.

To conversation. According to Gadamer (1968/2003), we become cultured as a result of history and tradition. In his use of the word "cultured", this is an open system. *Bildung* is a space wherein meanings are shared and up for renewal – "not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity" (p. 296), that process "by which and through which one is formed" (p. 11). This engagement in becoming cultured, however, does not occur in a vacuum (writ shopping mall). Engagement, as *pledge* (*Online Etymology Dictionary*), requires participation, listening (see Levin, 1989), reflection, and attention *over time*. Tightly bound up within this is an ethical responsibility to the human and beyond human 'other.'

Although I do not deny that we are embedded in a history and from that we derive at least partial understanding of self, family, the world, it has also become clear to me that culture is invited into conversation, into dialogue. When it comes to conversations around consumerism, an offshoot of the myth of progress, what might be missing is the 'dia' part of dialogue. To truly converse, to come to some understanding of the repercussions and ramifications of unbridled consumption might arrest this proclivity, and in some cases it undoubtedly has; however, with over five million Canadians going shopping on Boxing Day, 2007 (CBC news report), I wonder: are these purchases necessary? And for what? Survival? Happiness? This is not to say that personal happiness is unimportant. Quite the contrary. However, if personal happiness can be linked, directly or indirectly, to the ecocrisis (e.g., through frivolous use of natural resources, effluents released during production, landfill overload when these items have outlived their 'usefulness'), then questions might be raised about the quality, the "dia"(logue) of the conversation. "[D]esire that is not tempered by wonder leads only to the eradication of difference and to the impossibility of genuine self-hood, of individuality" (Smith, 2001, p. 217).

Phase Five: Paideia

Becoming educated into a particular culture – i.e., cultural *heritage*.

To the ancient Greeks, paideia combined with ethos (habits) made one 'whole' (*The American Heritage Dictionary*). Implicit in a holistic approach to education, to becoming part of a culture is openness to conversation (Gadamer, 1968/2003). Deep listening, contemplation, and full intent to understand how and where one rests, *lives*, within the

cosmos draws 'nature' into the dialogue – an essential piece in the holistic puzzle. Our present education system (as curriculum) seems to incorporate *part* of this perspective. The discourse, policy, and business model on which it rests may have openings for deeper conversations and listening, but these openings may not be entirely explicit. I came to know Carol, Deb, G.R., Leila, McAvity as teachers who listen, teachers who *hear*, teachers who want to understand and who are *willing* to understand differently.

To return to a question I posed earlier, "Which topics belong in the classroom and which ones do not?", another, related question arises: "How much 'should' schools become involved in politically oriented issues?" Dobson and Bell (2006) are unequivocal in their response to this: the place and role of schools in society is to act as change agents "for transformation rather than as transmission belts for society's reproduction" (p. 15). David Orr's (1994) perspective on this is 'formal' schooling can be "an accomplice in a larger process of cultural decline" (p. 25). This implies that schooling is embedded primarily within society in a narrow sense of *culture* rather than within a holistic sense, which includes both 'nature' and culture and the existent reciprocity between the two. Orr goes on to say, "Yet, no other institution is better able to reverse that decline" (p. 25). Keller's (2002) discussion concerning the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent within a globalised world also apply: as quoted on page 219 of this dissertation, he states that "[t]he 'official' education system continues to prepare students for life in a society that is highly centralized and hierarchical, and enclosed in the fixed framework of national frontiers and national economies" (pp. 119-120).

David Orr's (1994) declaration that formal schooling risks "imprint[ing] a disciplinary template onto impressionable minds and with it the belief that the world really is as disconnected as the divisions, disciplines, and subdisciplines of the typical curriculum" (p. 23) is in some ways a restatement of what Keller is saying above. Orr furthermore states that students graduate

> without knowing how to think in whole systems, how to find connections, how to ask big questions, and how to separate the trivial from the important. Now more than ever, however, we need people who think broadly and who understand systems, connections, patterns, and root causes. (p. 23)

His summary of the "dangers of education" includes the thought that "formal education will cause students to worry about how to make a living before they know who they are" (p. 24).

To adjourn this section, I emphasise the above with a reprise of John Dewey's (1929) commentary from the section on *Paideia* (p. 207).

> To contemplate is consciously to possess meanings; to behold them with relish; to view them so absorbingly as to revel in them....when [contemplation] is ultimate, and is a fruition, knowing has stepped out of the picture; the vision is aesthetic.....Omit the aesthetic phase, the absorbing charm of contemplation, and what remains for a theory of knowledge is that meanings must be had before they can be used as means of bringing to apparition meanings now obscure and hidden. (p. 331)

Phase Six: Alternus

Other.

Ecopsychology, ecological literacy, ecological mindedness, ecojustice, transformative learning: a new cosmology, a reconfiguration, a reformulation, an 'other.'

> "When the ideological elements of previously held certainties are unmasked we can see the potential for making the social world anew and according to different principles" (Smith, 2001, p. 125).

The criticism that modernity has brought about a loss of meaning as old moral orders crumbled with the rise of a scientific perspective resulting in a lack of embeddedness within the natural world may be met by developing ways of re-embedding students as well as their human communities within their ecological community as well as within the broader ecosphere. This may be thought of as developing ecological citizenship, which goes beyond merely developing ecological awareness, by placing demands, responsibilities, upon the individual. Re-embedding places humans and human communities within a broader context. Sources for this re-embedding include philosophy, world religions, cultural narratives, traditional legends, anthropology, history, and ecopsychology. Ironically, the scientific enterprise provides a foundation for this re-embedding. Science, along with technology, has allowed humans for the first time to view the earth as an integrated whole. The history of the cosmos and of the Earth in addition to the evolution of life on Earth jointly place humans within a broad historical context. Similarly the science of ecology places humans within ecological communities not external to but embedded within a web of relationships within natural systems. Anthropology provides examples of how human societies have interacted with their natural surroundings, both in sustainable and non-sustainable ways. Although too often scientific inquiry is driven by the Baconian desire for power over nature

it also, to quote Robert C. Solomon (2002), "is born of wonder, and love of knowledge is as basic to spirituality as it is to science" (p. 66).

The ecocrisis is a critique, an ec(h)o-logical representation of a highly consumptive society. And within this ec(h)o is a summons to reconceptualise the way we view the world on all levels. Implicit within this is a need to recontextualise education. Transformative learning as alternate, as an 'other' option, offers not just one component of change but promises a covenant, a convening, a re-envisioning of education in a broad sense. In bringing this forward as a separate topic, my hope was to articulate another way of enacting education *as system*. Environmental education, or whatever its curricular equivalent(s) may be, while promoting deeper understandings of the ecosystem at some level, is also at risk of becoming one of the seemingly discrete subject areas that may also subvert interdependence. The fundamental core of changing education at the systemic level (writ transformative learning) bids us to tug on and pull together many different threads, to tighten and mend loose and ruptured connections, to (re)connect diverse relationships, and to bring new threads into the weave. Transformative learning is inclusive of and equally valorises the cognitive, rational, and objective as well as the intuitive, subjective, and imaginative, all levels of which can bring *experience* sharply into focus. This asks that teachers consider how they might help students engage in critical inquiry and reflection while moving towards understanding what it means to dwell within an interconnected whole. This requires work, but it does not seem an impossible task – indeed it is not only possible but *necessary* if a re-envisioning of worldview is the intent.

David Orr's (1994) conclusion regarding the school system, "formal education", is that it should not be abolished or diminished but rather changed. Ecological education

> requires breaking free of old pedagogical assumptions, of the straitjacket of discipline-centric curriculum, and even of confinement in classrooms and school buildings. Ecological education means changing (a) the substance and process of education contained in curriculum, (b) how educational institutions work, (c) the architecture within which education occurs, and most important, (d) the purposes of learning. (p. 33)

Phase Seven: Exitus

"A leaving, a going out" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*): the final phase.

And so I arrive here, at the end, taking leave, going out, shifting my gaze, moving forward. What are we, what am *I* now called to do?

There is much yet to investigate and understand, particularly the possibilities inherent within transformative learning. Further research, further theorising, and practical implementation (praxis) holds great promise to facilitate re-embedding the school system into an ecologically-oriented "paideia".

The following quotation from Martin Jay (2005) is an ec(h)o and testament to the variable ease and difficulty, hope and expectancy I have encountered as I have trudged this terrain.

> The journey that began this experience...about experience has now... itself finally come to an end, or at least a rest stop on the road to a still uncertain destination....but the trip is still, I hope, not entirely over. Those of you who have been hearty enough to read this far are thanked for their endurance. (p. 409)

Although this brings to a close this dissertation, it also brings a return, a recovery, another beginning. And in this return I feel a re-placement of self to home, as *Oikos, however,* it does not constitute a return 'home' in the sense of feeling a landedness, a groundedness, a locatedness, a terminus. Rather, I am left with a mild perturbation, a disruption, a restlessness, within which I feel a beckoning, a call to action.

Figure 10

Exordia

Exitus

Oikos

Spiritus

Alternus

Noesis

Paideia

Habitus
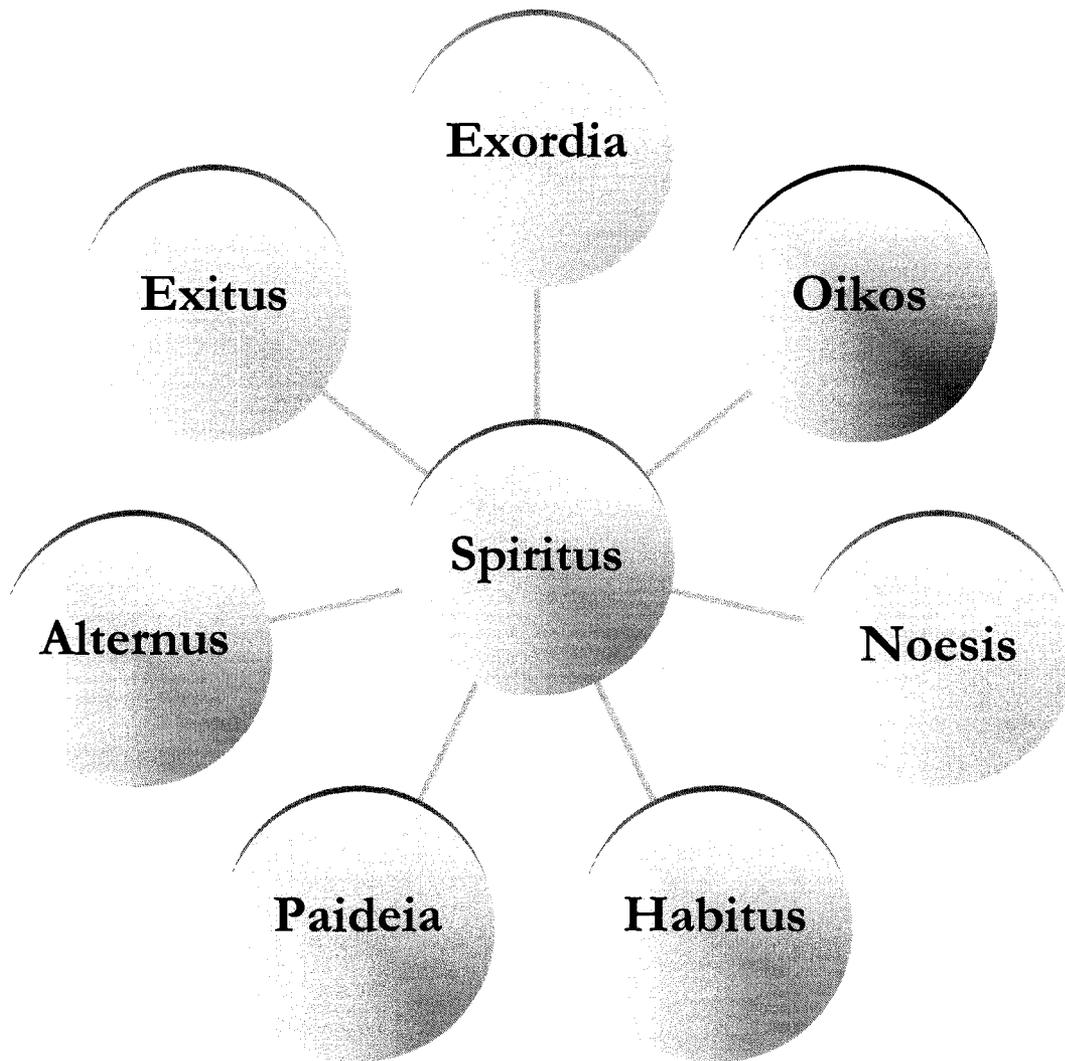
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