

Prologue to Part Three

**'Oh happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart
And I blessed them unaware...'**

July, 1996. 'The Ancient Mariner' does not do much in the poem. His first action is to kill the albatross and thus sever his connection to the rest of Creation. The poem makes it clear that in killing the albatross he has also violated himself. His first impulse to goodness is triggered by an aesthetic experience in which he feels his own connection to Being again. The power of love is intimately related in this poem to the powers of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. The Mariner can only feel love when he has sensed his own connection to himself and to others. The moral vacuum which enabled him to kill the albatross is only purged through his acceptance of the responsibility for his actions and is symbolised by the moment of his ability to love. Through this aesthetic experience he reaches an ontological acceptance of responsibility. In other words, the meaning of his life and his own self are only realised for him when he takes active steps in remaining connected to his own responsibility to himself and others.

In the account you are about to read, you will see me trying to make sense of connections between my ethical and ontological concerns. This is because I believe that Life is meaningful. I believe that being an individual amongst millions of other individuals means something significant. I have, like every other human being, encountered circumstances which have tested my belief in its meaningfulness. I have had many more which convince me that my life amongst these millions of others matters. I care what I do in this life and I want to lead a full and productive existence. I believe in leading an examined

life because through its examination I can lead a better life. I believe that taking responsibility for my own life is an inevitable conclusion of my own sense of what it means to be a human being amongst other human beings. The theory of my own being (my ontology) is intimately related to a theory of my ethical relationships with others and it is this connection - the ontology and ethics of my life - which gives rise to my chosen vocation - education.

The account you are about to read begins with an Introduction in which I sum up some of the learning that has occurred in the previous two Parts. I reiterate a list of criteria which I outlined in Part One by which I wanted to judge my own educational research writing. The main text is in three distinct sections, which are characterised through an educational journey characterised by what it means in the name of education to move from 'I' to 'you' to 'we'. Part Three charts the development of my own emerging educational values and within each of the sections I present a variety of approaches to understanding the whole through a series of what I term 'echoes'. These echoes are suggestive of the incomplete nature of my attempts to unify my ontological experience in a written representational form.

I have quoted the above lines from 'The Ancient Mariner' for a specific reason. In the main section of the account you are about to read, I offer you a description and explanation of an ontological experience of my own which inspired a work of fiction about a Utopian community. Through the use of extracts from my novel (Laidlaw, 1992b) I ground my enquiry in its values and show how I use my understanding to evaluate my own educational development. My enquiry at this stage is conducted chiefly through written correspondence with Higher Education students at Bath University. A few of the conclusions I reach here are rendered through my own poetry.

I now find it illuminating to compare my own ontological experience and conclusions to the Mariner's situation in the above quotation: a theory of my own Being should be in connection to a more universal theory of Being. This section comes the closest yet in the thesis to exploring what it means for my own educational development and the creation of my own living educational theory, to explore the connections to be made between my own sense of self and its dialectical relationship to others as we seek to find in what ways and how far we are responsible for the processes we are involved in.

Throughout Part Three I am concerned to show how making connections between the ethical, ontological and aesthetic aspects of my own educational narrative, enables me to draw conclusions about my own educational knowledge and theory. I end Part Three with a series of intentions about my subsequent work in education in the light of my findings in that section.

The experimental nature of this Part enables me to explore meanings in the dialectic between the 'I' of my action research enquiry and its contexts, such that I am able to show a greater understanding about how my values are emerging in my practice over time. This is the most concentrated exploration in any Part of my own 'I'. What I have yet to do, however, is to explore the context sufficiently in the way in which I draw conclusions about the educational value of what I am doing. I do this to a much greater degree in Part Four.

Introduction: Part Three¹

¹ I am grateful to my colleague, Dr. Alma Harris for her constructive criticisms on earlier drafts of Part Three.² In July 1994, Jack Whitehead, with Professor Pam Lomax from Kingston University, is hosting the World Congress (3) on Action Research, Action Learning, and Process Management at the University of Bath and I am helping in the organisation of it.

November, 1993.

In the previous two parts of this thesis I have attempted to show you how I have come to judge the quality of my educative relationships through a standard of judgement I am terming an aesthetic morphology. I have tried to show through the form (morphology) in which the relationships with my students have been conducted (letters, informal and formal dialogue, seminars, and tutorials) how our analysis of the ethics and the meanings of our dialogues have grounded our practice in what we are claiming gives rise to our educational knowledge. In McNiff's (1993) sense:

'teachers become learners, in that they come to know themselves - they engage in their own personal process of education.' (p.49)

One of the aims of this section is to show that an understanding of the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships can, as I have claimed before in Part Two, actually enhance the quality of those educative relationships. It is not simply that I can judge the quality of the relationship through such a standard of judgement, but also that I can bring such an understanding to bear within an action research enquiry as I seek to improve the quality of learning. I wish to show, in other words, how my learning has contributed to my practice, and to my intentions in education.

Throughout the thesis I have been aware, however, that sometimes the forms in which I can communicate to you about my aesthetic understanding, have shrouded the very process of illumination which I seek to gain. Hubbard and Power (1993) state categorically:

'Some people believe that the benefits of teacher research and the knowledge gained from teacher-research are primarily for the teacher

completing the research. We disagree. Teacher-research can enrich your professional life immeasurably. But learning for yourself isn't enough. If you have discovered something which can help other teachers work with their students, you have a professional obligation to share it.' (p.122)

As a revelation of the educational significance of an analysis of, and working with, an aesthetic morphology, lies at the heart of this thesis, I do not wish to deny the art of my own educational processes and insights. Ludeking (1988) clearly recognises this dilemma when he writes:

'Any attempt to state a particular normative criterion for the use of the concept of art will only have the result of prescribing an arbitrary application. It will not actually describe how the concept is actually applied...Conceptual analysis cannot in every case be able to tell us to which things a concept needs to be applied, because this is not always determined by the generally accepted rules of language alone.' (p.125)

Having completed the first two parts of this thesis I recognised that there was something missing. I wasn't exactly sure what it was, I simply knew that I had to wait until a synthesis of my intuitions, ideas and learning, had taken place. This final section of the thesis is the result of that tension. It is an attempt to draw together the strands from the earlier parts and to show the educational significance of what I think I have achieved with this work.

It is presented in an experimental form, because in order to be true to my insights I could not present it in a more traditional format. I have interspersed educational developments since Part Two was written, with extracts from a novel I wrote in 1992 after a visit to East Germany. I recognise that this represents a departure from most Ph.D. theses that I am acquainted with, and indeed from most educational research writing. There is, however, an

increase in interest in fictional forms of representation as a means of conveying educational ideas at the moment. At the recent American Educational Research Association, in his Presidential Address, Eisner (1993) called for experimental forms of representation as a way of conveying more complex and intricate meanings, than, he claimed, are possible through more traditional avenues. He said:

'While envisioning such an integration of forms is difficult, it is the exploration of such possibilities, first imaginatively and then practically, that will enable us to invent an agenda for the future.' (p.10)

At the beginning of my section about my work with Sarah (Part One) I wrote about my requirements for educational writing, amongst which were these:

What do I want?

*** I want a presentation of educational ideas that does justice to my insight that there is a dialectic between knower and known that can be interpreted as creative and representative of educational meaning (Polanyi, 1958; Belenky, 1986; Greene, 1992).**

*** I want a form of communication that confirms the healthily symbiotic nature of form and content (Woodfield, 1990; Saville, 1988).**

*** I want my students and I to explore our worlds in such ways that promote both autonomy for individuals and yet collaboration towards individual health and the creation of a good social order (Apple & Jungck, 1992; Henry, 1993).**

* I want to embrace those descriptions and explanations of emancipatory action researchers who seek to improve their practice and the quality of learning (Carr and Kemmis, 1983).

* I want to reveal through my work my belief in the worthwhileness of humanity through their individual and collective aspirations towards goodness, truth and beauty (Socrates through Plato; Dewey, 1934).

* I want to reveal my knowledge that individual human beings and a good society are greater than the sum of their individual parts.

I want a form of educational representation which does justice to my understanding that it is within a constant struggle to find with my students where the responsibility for the ethics of collaboration, democratic practices, social justice, goodness, truth, beauty, resides at any given moment in our discourse, that the aesthetic of such a relationship rests.

* I want to take as ontologically and epistemologically meaningful, my experience that it is through the enhancement of democratic practices in educational establishments, that valuable learning can occur and be beneficial for individuals and for the contexts in which they live and work (Dewey, 1916, Laidlaw, 1994b).

* I want to reveal through my work my respect for the individuality of humans and their potential to lead good and productive lives (Neill, 1977; Rogers, 1983; Kincheloe, 1991; ed. Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991).

* I believe that the above can help to move the world to a better place.

I think through the writing of this Part of the thesis I will be showing a greater depth of educational significance within these words.

Stephen Rowland (1991) wrote:

'This paper represents an attempt to open up a new field of practitioner enquiry through the use of fictional writing...It is part of the process of facing and investigating this personal and professional dilemma. It also represents an attempt to explore the value of the method of fictional-critical writing.' (p.95)

Proliferation of forms is, Kemmis (1992) argues, almost to be expected in our postmodern world. Indeed, I have already mentioned in Part One, Lincoln's (1993) exposition of the uncertainty in the educational research world about truth, meaning and representation. Together with uncertainty about what counts as valid, there are also issues of verisimilitude which Woodfield (1990) alludes to when writing about the indivisibility of form and content. He is referring to his editing of the papers from the eleventh International Congress in Aesthetics, 1988:

'We have not attempted to improve the style of th(e) papers for the very good reason that style and content are interconnected. Reworking the papers would have necessitated extensive philosophical discussions with their contributors.' (Preface)

I believe that my use of fiction within an educational narrative is an original one because I show that there is a meaningful connection to be drawn between my fictional writing and my educational values. Against the values in the fiction, I set my educational practice. I have always wanted to find a

form of representation which would have some personal as well as educational validity as well as educationally, and in which I could secure for this Ph.D. an aesthetic unity. It is since writing Parts One and Two of this thesis that I am beginning to perceive a link between a theory of my own being, my ontology, educational knowledge, and aesthetics and that as an educator it is ethical to attempt to perceive how that link affects my practice. I believe that such an endeavour will enhance the quality of the educational insights which I am laying claim to as significant in this thesis. I also believe that I will become more able to articulate what is the link between ethics, ontology, educational knowledge and aesthetics, as this section of the thesis is written. I believe that it is important to become clearer as this Ph.D. aspires to be an original contribution to educational knowledge. In addition as an individually-orientated educational action researcher, I am committed to becoming accountable for my own knowledge within an educational framework. My personal knowledge is not at all compartmentalised and this section does seek to show the significance of the unity as I express it within education. And as I have stated in Parts One and Two, I come to understand through living exploration within relationships, not within an inner, mental struggle to know. (See again Belenky et al, 1986.) I would also contend that an attempt to discover the nature of the link is educational in itself and will enhance the educational validity of this thesis.

A search for ontological authenticity, then, is, in Paskow's (1988) words:

'real in the sense of being an existent with certain definite characteristics. The more difficult question is whether it is possible to say that sometimes one of us apprehends in an ontologically significant way i.e. grasps what is most essential or fundamental to that being, bearing in mind at the same time our most deepest needs as human beings.' (p.152)

I find Paskow's words descriptive of my own concerns in this section. I am making a tentative claim that my ontological insights are significant for others, as my ontological reality is the one which I try to bring into education with my students and affects powerfully, the educative relationships which I am able to forge with others. Paskow's insights have enabled me to articulate why I feel that this section is vital, not only from the point of view of substantiating and drawing together insights from the previous parts of the thesis, according to notions of rigour (Winter, 1989; Kincheloe, 1991) and reliability and validity (Gitlin et al, 1993). However, it is in Paskow's next points that I find most with which to identify for this thesis, for my life in education and my existence as a whole. He outlines two principles which he would append to Heidegger's (1931) ascription for (ontologically) authentic people:

'1) Each of the creatures of this world is not only complex matter responding solely to mechanical forces; each is also being attracted by something that lures or provokes it to its own self-development.

*2) Our **task** as humans is to serve and abet this ontological principle, both with respect to ourselves, other humans...'* (p.153, my emphasis)

This insight moves me deeply because I have been looking for months now for a way of expressing precisely that interconnectedness, as I perceive it, between a personal ontology and my own living educational theory. I perceive Paskow's statement:

'Our task as humans is to serve and abet this ontological principle, both with respect to ourselves, [and] other humans...'

as an educational one, because, as I hope I have made clear in Parts One and Two of this thesis, I perceive education as a medium through which people can be helped to lead good and productive lives through a process of self-development. Paskow goes on to write:

'Our task...is to see things from the point of view of a perfected self, one who has realised his or her best possibilities and one who will live on indefinitely (but not eternally). A totally perfected self is not the ideal because such a self would presumably care about nothing; thus I am positing a self who still needs to realise him or herself through identification with the unrealised capacities of others.' (p.154)

As an educator I believe that my task is to recognise those 'unrealised capacities of others' and try to offer an environment and a quality of educative relationships which enable individuals to realise those capacities most suited to leading a good and productive life (as I explained in Part One of this thesis). I will again come back to this later in this final section.

I further believe that a synthesis between my ontology and educational knowledge gives rise to an aesthetic whose power and influence I hope to illustrate in this section. In Part Two of this thesis I believe that this synthesis was more implicit than explicit. I may have outlined that certain linking characteristics impact on my practice. I do not believe until this final section that I have been in a position to explicate the significance of such a link, or to see its aesthetic value. Paskow's notion of **task** (see above) has articulated for me a workable link between ontology and education. I believe that the theory of my own being is at the centre of any work I can do in education. I believe that my ontology is characterised by the desire to enable myself and others to

lead full and productive lives, a claim I will be trying to substantiate and explain within Part Four.

As you may have already seen in my work with Sarah in Part One, I can also value the other by challenging her/him to reveal the best s/he has to offer. It is in this sense of 'task' again from Paskow, that it is partly my ontology which transmutes into my own living educational theory. I begin to perceive the notion of task as one of duty and responsibility. If my ontology rests very much upon a sense of duty to myself and others, then my educational practice and theorising would seem ideal ways for me to formalise my ontological reality. As an individual outside the formalising framework of education, it would be more difficult for me to realise my ontology fully in practice. Within educational processes I am enabled to do that. It is perhaps this enablement which seals for me the vocational nature of my place in education. I perceive what I do in education as a calling, as a vocation. Therefore I will be attempting to show you in Part Three how I have set my ontology within an educational framework.

I am making a claim in Part Three, then, that my ontological understanding influences significantly my own living educational theory to the extent that one cannot be fully understood without the other. Indeed, it seems to me now that what was missing from the Child Out Of Time story (apart from the limitations already discussed in Part One) was precisely this lack of connectedness both in insight and outcome. This connectedness is thus for me ontological, epistemological and of aesthetic meaning. It finds expression in my practice very often as negotiation of ethical concerns which I am trying to address.

My problem has been in finding a form which would not obstruct a harmony which, as I have tried to show in Parts One and Two I perceive as a necessary aspect of this writing. Eisner (1993) said:

'Humans do not simply have experiences; they have a hand in their creation and the quality of their creation depends upon the ways in which they employ their minds.' (p.5)

He goes on to say:

'Representation, as I use the term, is not the mental representation discussed in cognitive science (Shepard, 1982, 1990), but rather the process of transforming the contents of consciousness into a public form so that they can be stabilized, inspected, edited and shared with others.

Representation is what confers a publicly social dimension to cognition. Since forms of representation differ, the kinds of experience they make possible also differ. Different kinds of experience lead to different meanings, which, in turn, make different forms of understanding possible.' (p.6)

I want in this Part to release more powerful educational meanings than I believe I have been able to do up to now in this thesis, and I want to do it in a way which is fitted to the task.

As I outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, and have tried to articulate in practice in Part One, the creative nature of the work I do in education should be reflected within my forms of representation. I do not want my writing about the processes I am involved in to be a technical exercise, but actually to enhance their educational value. As I also wish one of the principal standards

by which you judge this thesis to be drawn from the significant balance I achieve between educational expression and meaning, I am drawing your attention to this aspect yet again.

Part Three (written in 1993/4)

Echoes: Returning to the Golden Tapestry

Ph.D. Journal entry:

'5.10.93. 4 a.m. How can I possibly draw together East Germany, 'Returning' (1992b) what matters to me in my educative relationships, my economic situation, the choices I am making for the future, The World Congress ², what I am now going to do as a result of the work I have already done, in a way which matters to me more than the writing I have so far done in the thesis?

The golden thread (Henry, 1993). That's what I have to find. That's what I have to show in Part Three. Because within that golden thread is the reason that money doesn't matter to me much at all, and why continuing to work in action research (for nothing if necessary) does so very much. What partly constitutes the aesthetic of my own existence (Foucault, 1984) as well as my educative relationships with students. Why some of my students are still contacting me after the work is done, our 'educative' relationship having transformed into something else, and why I will not be content with a thesis which finishes in ways which do not answer for the place of

my own creativity in my life. Because somewhere I know that it's part of this golden thread. I could call it a common denominator, but there's no value in that for me; but something does inform everything I do in Education and in my life. In fact this golden thread binds together the personal and the professional for me in bonds too powerful to sunder. I think I need to extract that golden thread and hold it up to the light of day, that in making it visible to a reader of my thesis, I might also explain it to myself.

Spring, 1994. I finished Part One of this thesis dissatisfied, and Part Two even more so. I would like to ask you to be patient in this final part of the thesis, as I intend to go back into my recent history. It is only because after finishing Part Two that I could understand its limitations. I want to express in an educational setting what my golden threads might be. I believe as well that I will find it deeply linked to the aesthetic morphology of my own life and work. It starts becoming manifest during a visit to East Germany (actually in 1992 it was no longer East Germany at all, but that was and is the way I still think about it), and was expressed in a short novel written within weeks of coming back. I think this work of fiction articulates more profoundly my commitment to education and to life in general than anything I have written so far in this text. This golden thread runs through my educative relationships with students at the University, and into my decisions for my present activities in this academic year (1993-1994). It is a glimmer in every decision I make in my life and explains (if I can express it) my actions in the world. A short while ago I wrote to my supervisor. I was discouraged, almost despairing, for I knew that I was failing one of my own living standards of judgement which I had started to explicate in Parts One and Two. Indeed this standard of judgement was one of the most important aspects of Part Two at all. However I didn't then know quite what it was I was failing:

'30.9.93. All my adult life I have been carried along by a spirit...My literature (fictional) was an expression of this spirit. Now I feel uncomfortable in my own skin. My fiction was an expression of spirit. Once however, I started to understand what I was doing and what it meant, and the place it occupied in my life and in the lives of others, then it could no longer serve the same purpose and I was doomed to write about a world in which spirit and self were becoming separate. In caring about 'violation' I violated myself. In knowing about 'caring relationships' I have written only dulled approximations and something of the care is lost. My educational writing seems to me on one level to be perfectly adequate. It is possible that no one else would recognise the shadows instead of the real thing, but I recognise them and I am lessened by that recognition.'

The spirit that I write of is one which seeks a reconciliation with itself and others and is always aspiring to express something of my ontological experiences. In 1991 I wrote a story-cum-Practical Criticism of 'The Ancient Mariner' poem which I have already mentioned in connection with a group of eleven year olds and in the section called Educational Practical Criticism in Part One (Laidlaw, 1988). I think it was an attempt, in Bruner's (1990) words to find an:

'ontologically final interpretation...of the [man's] act', (p.118)

because I have always perceived the mariner's problem as one of fragmentation: a harmful and corrupting separation of spirit from intelligence. And fragmentation has always been a puzzle to me. I present a critique of the poem through a narrative written from a postmodernist mariner's point of view:

I remembered my father's words and was somehow split from myself as a child. I could no longer smell his workroom; I could no longer feel the simple love in his years of hard work; I could no longer smile with sweet pangs of nostalgia about such harmony: it seemed sentimental and missing the point. My fellows bored me. The voyage had become an idea in my head, something from which I looked on remotely. I felt, as I looked at my fellows in the aura of the moon that evening, a sense of revulsion from them. Not the nausea of Sartre, although I have explained it like that elsewhere, to try and capture that reality for prior readers. No, it was different. Or at least, you will understand it differently. Let me tell it this way. They were all standing around, or lounging by candlelight. The wind had dropped quite frighteningly. Some were sitting and playing cards and their voices were brash and cut the silence into jagged and bleeding edges. I felt the mists, cool and gentle, floating about me. I breathed the outside into the inside, and the sharp coldness was like an illumination of my soul. And then the harsh voices. I closed my eyes. I saw my father's workroom recede before my inner eyes, I felt the warmth of his love fade before their ignorant ravings and I wept.

I had been whole and now I was not. I was fractured and splintered. You understand that, reader. You understand because you live in an age which splinters and fractures, and dissects into all its pustulent constituents. Your whole lives are spent colluding and collaborating in this Grand Lie. I can tell this story to you because we are opposites, you and I. I was once whole and I fragmented. You are fragmented and struggle to become whole. Was my fragmentation an exposition of original sin?

Bruner (1990) writes, (and I agree with him):

'There are no causes to be grasped with certainty where the act of creating meaning is concerned, only acts, expressions and contexts to be interpreted.' (p. 118)

However, my search for ontological unity is not, in my opinion, misplaced. It enables me to research into my educational, ethical, and aesthetic truths in ways which matter to others as well as to me. Indeed, this section of the thesis is an attempt to show in what ways such a synthesis is educationally valid.

My sense of spirit manifests itself as a desire to be reconciled with a state of being which is in harmony with itself and other human beings, and is well expressed by Bernstein (1991) in writing about Hegel:

'Although the history of humanity is experienced as a diremptive ruptured homelessness, the reconciliation that it promises means a 'return' to humanity's 'proper' abode where all estrangement is finally overcome.' (p.294)

I would like this final section of the thesis to give expression to what Wood (1990) describes, also in relation to Hegel's ideas, this time about 'spirit':

'Mind or spirit is its return to itself. As a natural being, the human being, through its awareness of itself...transcends the merely natural to the level of the spiritual. 'Spirit' embraces not only 'subjective spirit' (individual psychology), but also 'objective spirit' (society or culture...) and finally 'absolute spirit', the realm of art...and philosophy, those forms of higher human culture in which spirit becomes aware of itself as absolute or the ultimate reality'. (p.4)

This writing is an attempt to get back in touch with my spirit in a way which will harmonise my educational, ontological, ethical and aesthetic perceptions. I want to understand what this spirit really is, so that I can focus it

educationally. Writing this final part had to be done: I could not leave the thesis alone. I believe it was my spirit in search of itself.

I am not sure how to represent this present exploration. I do not wish it to become an ego-centred exploration. It is a belief in its educational significance which carries me forward, a sense that I often used to experience before I started to write fiction. This time, though, I want to communicate educationally. I believe that I have transmuted fictional representation into an educational narrative, whose audience, I hope, will come to share directly some of the values and worth of this metamorphosis. As I have tried to show in Parts One and Two, I am beginning to understand the ramifications of an educational epistemology which draws upon ontology, ethics and aesthetics. I hope to reveal how I understand that in this final Part.

In Part One of this thesis I wrote at some length about the significance of the 'I' in an action enquiry (Whitehead, 1989b) and also the shift from 'I' to 'we' (see Griffiths and Davies, 1993, as an example of a collaborative and emancipatory action enquiry). This writing demonstrates, I believe, a development in my understanding of the significance of such a move.

A: 'I': the self.

'Selfhood involves the desire for self-certainty...humans' fundamental desires include the desire to establish their self-worth through self-positing and self-interpretation.' (Wood, 1990: 90)

Let me try this:

East Germany:

The Echo of Values.

I returned from East Germany (my first visit) in April 1992 and knew that my life could never be the same again. I had experienced something there which drew into perspective some of the aspects of my own existence and started me thinking very carefully about what it was I wanted to do with my life. I was awed by the peace and quiet I found there. I shrink from noise which fills space for the sake of it - I love silence because often I find a deeper resonance and connection to existence through it than through what I perceive as this modern tendency to violate every space with raucous and meaningless pap in the mistaken (I believe) idea that silence is meaningless. Through silence I believe I discover who I am and my place in the world. Through silence I believe I understand more about existence:

'We walked a while in silence until we reached a bench and there we sat, watching the world going by for a while, until I felt I could bear the silence no longer. I have now learnt the value of silence, its healing and strengthening qualities, its ability to change reality, to harden resolve, or even to temper justice with mercy.' (My novel, *Returning*, p.12)

(Throughout this part of the thesis I will quote from my novel 'Returning' (Laidlaw, 1992b) using *this italicised font* for your ease of reading, followed by the page number.)

The quiet in Zarrentin was palpable, a mellifluous resonance, which brought tears to my eyes and relief to my heart that somewhere could exist like this. Paskow (1988) describes a very similar experience and goes on to relate its meaning for his own perceptions and actions. Through the silence I discovered the sympathetic vibrations of my own existence. I do not sentimentalise the East German's sorrow and their alienation from what has happened and is happening to them, overtaking them beyond their control. I

simply found something there which I have never experienced before except when listening to Bach's sacred music, and which I believe the West has lost: a slowness in the pace of life; a greater affinity to their surroundings, when without technology they have had to develop closer links with nature and with their surroundings than we in the West are often accustomed to. In this slowness I had time to understand who I was and my place in the world:

Each separate being in the universe
returns to the common source.
Returning to the source is serenity.
If you don't realize the source,
you stumble in confusion and sorrow.
(Lao Tzu: 'Tao Te Ching')

I didn't go there to understand something, but I returned enriched, in a state I can only describe as haunted. As I write these words I recognise the whispers of haunting still. I believe that the echoes of this time will always be with me. I hear them whatever corner I turn and they resonate in various disguises within the decisions I can now make about my life:

'It changed the way I looked at everything since. It grew with me like a Siamese twin, and now that I have come back I know that I do not ever want to leave. I carried Schwerentin about with me over the years and wherever I was, seemed to me only to be real as far as it compared with this place. I know that I've come home. I know that this place is where I belong.' (p.57)

In a few days after coming back I wrote 40,000 words, into which I poured the atmosphere and insights which I had gained there in my short visit. The quotation above is a typical example of the kinds of concerns with which the

novel deals. The little village by a lake that I visited in reality, with a huge dilapidated abbey dated 1080, one dusty street and a village green which edged onto a forest, seemed an external manifestation for me at that time, of meanings which I had all my conscious life struggled to express. I sat on a bench backing onto the green foliage, looking up at the abbey. No cars disturbed the peace. The wind rustled gently in the trees. Nothing drew away my attention but a kind of rural calm.

Those moments I sat there are the closest I have ever come to understanding the purpose of my life. As I do not believe that purpose is only felt but must be lived, then the following pages must attempt to draw out that moment when I became aware that I was weaving a golden thread into the fabric of my life. These pages should demonstrate the most profound significance within this thesis and to my future life in education and beyond. Those moments of stillness signify for me the creative inspiration which has led to this manifestation of the art of my own existence and the place of its representation in this text and beyond.

Let me try this:

Returning:

Echoes of Another Reality

'Returning' is set in a fictional country lying between East and West Germany. It spans twenty four years from the European student-uprisings of 1968, to 1992. It tells the story of a young man, David Myers, who, after graduating from University with a Law degree, travels in Europe for a while, hitting by chance on a tiny country a friend of his, Samuel, had found the previous year. It is a place, the like of which he has never encountered, run by an elder, Ilse, whose wisdom and values are strangely attractive to him. He

stays a few weeks in the community, getting to know many of the people, despite the language barrier, and feels that he has come home, that there is nothing alien about them. In particular he falls in love with a young woman there, Katarina, but she is not interested in him. Then he leaves with great regret to pick up his career in a Law firm in Oxford and then later in another international law firm. The next twenty one years are spent trying to understand the significance of Schwerentin to his life. Katarina marries Samuel and the couple often visit him. His own life is barren and seemingly without love and hope. He keeps thinking about Schwerentin, about going back, but never seems to have the courage. Then 1989 resounds with the knocking-down of the Berlin wall. One day he receives a delayed letter from Ilse asking him to come back as she is ill and wants to see him. He returns immediately but Ilse has already died. She named him village elder and he realises that the whole of his life as a lawyer in England has taught him the value of Schwerentin in his life and as such he is now fitted to lead the tiny country through the years ahead. It ends on a note of great optimism for the future. David has realised his full potential as a human being, has struggled to understand the world and in so doing has come to understand himself. It is a fictionalising of Jungian psychology as well as being a *Bildungsroman*.³

Let me try this:

Ontological Authenticity:

Echoes of Personal Knowledge (Polanyi, 1958)

In this section I want to explain why it is that I start from the premise of the educational significance of basing my explanations within personal knowledge. Here I find something profound in the words of Socrates:

³ By 'Bildungsroman' I understand a form of novel which concentrates on the growing moral and experiential maturation of the main character, usually over an extended time-span.

If my perception is true to me, being inseparable from my own being;...and to myself I am judge of what is and what is not to me...How then, since I never err, and since my mind never trips in the conception of being and becoming, can I fail of knowing that which I perceive?’ (‘Theaetetus’: p. 284)

I am not claiming in this thesis that if I believe something it must be right: I am putting forward the tenet that starting from the basis of respecting personal knowledge (mine and others’) is an educational one, for it sets up a dialectic between self and context which enables negotiation to become a pivotal point of the educational processes. As an active respect of the reality of individuals is a cornerstone of my work in education (as I hope I have demonstrated in previous Parts of this thesis), then I start from a position of self-respect. In education, as in my own life, I seek to understand what it entails to treat others with the respect with which I try to treat myself.

Since writing the first draft of this final part of the thesis created out of the dissonance between despair and hope about a work conceived from a nexus in my own life, I read an article by Alicia Kuczynska (1988), ‘Tradition as Innovation’. Imagine my awe as the significance and synchronicity of the following words began to dawn on me:

‘The archetypal image of the ‘return’ as a positive mechanism is deeply rooted in ancient philosophy, in Orphic and Platonic thought. ‘Return’ constitutes a sui generis bridge linking two different beings which exist in time and beyond time.’ (p.103)

'In his returning we shall be whole again as he will. And we are all in sore need of wholeness. It is, after all, in the search for wholeness that the meaning and the purpose of our lives rests.' (p.63)

I *knew* at a deeply ontological level, that for my own life, as an expression of my unique humanity and its own relationship to the world, 'Returning' gives a poignant and well-written voice to the heart of my insights. If this present writing is to be educational, however, then I need to acknowledge the story as a rhetorical rendering of existential as well as educational values, rather than a realistic one in the name of education. I see education as requiring a transparent mediation between this text and the culture in which it has arisen. To convert 'Returning', or at least the insights within it, into an educationally significant piece of work, I need the illumination of my values to be rendered through the living educative relationships with my students. I believe that this thesis is now ready to exemplify this. I am moving to a perception of the value of truly educational writing and thus my own educational development is enhanced. 'Returning' represents an expression of my ontology in a way which deeply satisfies me. I am now justifying the use of 'Returning' as an ontologically authentic piece of writing against which I can judge the quality of my transferring of my ontological values into practice in education and into this present writing. In this writing I must also manage to convince you that a representation of ontological authenticity for me is indivisible from the kinds of values which I bring with me into education, and that such a portrayal is in keeping with a thesis which seeks to be validated as an original contribution to educational knowledge.

Tony Ghaye (1992) poses these questions in relation to this type of authenticity⁴:

'How far have the understandings of the participants improved, clarified, matured, expanded, and been elaborated upon during the process of the research? Can the participant(s) attest to the fact that they now understand the issue better, understand a broader range of issues or appreciate that which they have previously failed to understand fully?'

(p.1)

I believe that I am showing what it means for me to know my own educational development as I have attempted (and still continue to attempt) to engage others in educative conversations and correspondences about their own educational practices. I believe that I am showing in my present actions and this writing, creative and literary abilities and my desire to realise the greatest good in the world, a unity which is in my own terms, a desirable goal also for my own educational development. I will return later to Ghaye's statement (above) to see how far and in what ways I can be said to be fulfilling this standard of judgement.

I believe as well that I am demonstrating a greater understanding of what constitutes my role as an educator, given my now greater understanding of the ontology underpinning it. My writing of 'Returning' was an expression of a personal truth that my inner and outer worlds need to be in a constant and developing dialectic in order that I might both act and explain those actions which satisfy my own standards of judgement. In July I wrote this in my journal:

⁴This idea of ontological authenticity mentioned before in Part Two is unquestionably one of the strands of this golden thread. It keeps bringing me up short every time a piece of writing seems to be finished.

'I can see that in forming a rationalisation about what has happened to me and then acting on it, enables others to understand. It also enables me to understand to a certain extent. But it is not me. It is a formulation of me that misses the point. I think somewhere in here resides my resistance to the politicisation of what I do. It explains how I can write a text about a country, located in space and time and political history and yet create a world in which those are mere trappings, mere clothing for the body of meaning which lies beneath. In Schwerentin I realised a personal metaphor. I came closer to an authentic expression of what I am, rather than what I do, than I have ever achieved in my educational fictions.'

I am attempting to reveal metaphor not as simple rhetoric but as a grounding for my own reality, from which you can begin to perceive the point of this endeavour. This synthesis between form and content becomes additionally significant at the point at which you can identify with my need not to be content with an explanation of my educative relationships but to see the value of using as a yardstick the insights expressed in 'Returning' as illuminations of the ontological basis for that explanation.

By sharing the essence of 'Returning' with you and relating it to the educational insights and living relationships with students (some of which continue despite the course having finished) I believe that I achieve a profoundly aesthetic verisimilitude - that I become the artist who can view her own canvas with some dispassion, who is, in CC's words, 'both artist and art critic' (Lin, 1993). At the same time, however, I express my passion for education in part through the care I am taking to craft this educational narrative. (The point of care is one I will return to a little later.)

Let me try this:

Art and Truth:

Echoes of a Dialectic

'In the section about Art and Truth I need to draw out more, the qualities which synthesise those two aspects of my educational life and show their effect in my educational processes.' (Letter to Peter Mellett, 27.10.93. after the Validation Meeting.)

There is, I believe, literary merit in 'Returning' which enhances its validity as a work of art which seeks to speak the truth about experience:

'I had pictures to take in my mind, angles to negotiate, lights to shadow, shapes to record. I willed my mind to take these snapshots that later I might sit in my flat in Oxford and take them out of a Winter's evening from their filmy wrappings. So that I could bear to live where it was I had to live.'
(p.18)

As I sat in Zarrentin I willed myself to record what I could see so that later I might understand its significance for my life. Much later in my diary I wrote this about my work with CC:

'21.12.92. In the video session with CC this morning, there was a moment when she was sitting, after the great struggle to express what was her sorrow and her need to articulate that sorrow, when she sat up, took up the pen from the table and started writing, when she took control. She led me through what it was she wanted to do. I know that this moment signifies something very important indeed. Not only to her life and not just to my research. But to everything I believe in about education. I need to remember this. I need to remember how it felt. It matters. It really matters! She

seemed to grow before my eyes. She empowered herself and I am empowered by helping her to bring it about.'

'I wondered whether I would ever stop seeing this place in my mind's eye, and whether I would ever be able to come back again.' (p.18)

I want in this section to bring together my literary skills, all those years of writing fiction in order to discover what it was I really cared about as well as expressing it, through a form which satisfies **me**, my own standards of judgements, in which form and content are indeed symbiotically linked, nurturing each other. In which the form and expression of that form are beautiful and satisfy those aesthetic criteria through which I was able to judge the quality of my educative relationships. Not simply for their own sake, but because in such a synthesis, meanings are born, nurtured, raised to full maturity and then multiply:

'I simply know that there is a creative life in everything we do: in any enterprise that is the result of human interaction there is a birth, a growth, a maturity, a falling off and a death.' (p.60) *'I know now that mere reflection on experience...is not enough. I know now that it's about synthesis...'* (p.4)

In a letter to Peter Mellett, the M.Ed. colleague mentioned earlier, I wrote this:

4.10.93. One thing struck me here in your first paragraph. You write about your text being a vehicle which seeks to communicate a redressing of the imbalance of the lost art of living. Without metaphor (and other artistic devices) I wonder whether a writer simply slips into stipulations, guidelines, rather than a work of art. If your life is a work of art and you seek to promote the art of your own life both in the living and the description of it, should not that description itself adhere to those standards of

judgement that you would make about your own life? Crafted narratives (see Shulman, 1992, AERA Presidential Address, and also Witherell, C., & Noddings, N., (1991), 'Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education', Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York and London) recognise implicitly and explicitly the incommensurability of portrayal with experience but make meanings and raise significance through their attempts. It's like perfection. You can never get there, but the point is in the trying.

I perceive an important connection in terms of knowledge between Truth and Art. It is to do with knowledge for it is concerned with ways of laying claim to validity in perceptions and conclusions. If I am trying to judge the quality of my educative relationships and educational practice through an ontological standard of judgement (which is what 'Returning' symbolises), and this ontology is itself connected to what I can understand by 'authenticity' and 'truth' reflected in an art form, then the quality of the 'art' revealed in 'Returning' becomes significant as I attempt to relate my ontology to my educational practice. Furthermore as I have said earlier in the thesis, I perceive education as a value-laden practical activity and as an art form, for the values underpinning good education, I perceive as largely similar to those characterising good art. **(See again Part One, the Introduction to my work with Sarah. (N.B. 1996, see Epilogue to Part Four.)**

I will take an above example from 'Returning' as an example of an excerpt with literary merit. I perceive literary merit to be concerned itself with issues of ethics and ontology coined in ways which embrace aesthetic sensibilities. It will also contain episodes which mirror in significance the whole, i.e. critical moments which reveal symbolically the intentions of the author. (See again the exposition of a critical moment in Bach's Matthew Passion in the Introduction to Part One.)

'I had pictures to take in my mind, angles to negotiate, lights to shadow, shapes to record. I willed my mind to take these snapshots that later I might sit in my flat in Oxford and take them out of a Winter's evening from their filmy wrappings. So that I could bear to live where it was I had to live.'
(p.18)

The level of imagery in this excerpt seems unforced to me. Others have noted the same. A literary critic in London reviewing the work had this to say:

August 1992...Some of the imagery is strikingly original. [Cites the above]. This gripped me. I was convinced by the description and the characterisation which this represents.'

David (the hero) has a flaw. He confuses expediency with inevitability. He is therefore unable to act cogently. He has not grasped the responsibility for his own decisions in his life: he wants to stay but dare not step outside the framework in which social expectation takes responsibility for an individual's actions. Thus he takes 'snapshots in his mind' rather than staying in Schwerentin. And the wrappers are 'filmy', underlining again the synthetic nature of his desire, the lack of clarity and authenticity. Until he has reconciled his intentions with his incipient insights, he is condemned to live an inauthentic existence. This is reflected in all the imagery in the above. Even the light is shadowed - suggestions of taint and darkness. Light is a leit-motif within the novel and represents clarity and determination. There is also here an implied confusion: the descriptions of the mental photographs are represented almost cosily, and yet embedded within the words are 'had to live' and 'bear to live'. This is contained within a grammatically incomplete sentence, which emphasises it. Until David recognises that he will never be

comfortable until he has taken an ontological responsibility for his own life, he will continue to waste his precious time. He envisages 'Winter' evenings back in England. Not warm and light and loving, but cold and dark and isolated.

On another level of verisimilitude, David is, of course, a symbolic representation of my own innermost self. I have come to comprehend about my own life that until I can act from a conscious understanding of what it means to act from a standpoint of ontological authenticity, I will not be bringing to my educative relationships the cogency that I perceive them as deserving.

I do not believe that I am capable of portraying adequately the synthesis between a self and representation, but the point, as I said to Peter Mellett in our cited correspondence, is in the trying. It seems to me that it is only in the aspiration that we can realise how to communicate what is of value.

Let me try this:

Expediency or Authenticity? Echoes of a Curiouser⁵ World

Employment Service, 8.9.93.

...The Adjudication Officer has decided, based on the information held to date, that your entitlement to Benefit is as follows:

⁵ Lewis Carroll coined this word 'curiouser' in 'Alice in Wonderland'. It was meant to denote Alice's alienation from the reality around her.⁶ This refers to the Initial Teacher Education Guide to Action Research which exists at the moment in mimeo form and which all the action research PG students received.

FROM 19/07/93/ AT £0.00 A WEEK

You may be able to get Income Support as this is not affected by the decision on Unemployment Benefit claim. Ask at the Office for a claim form if you do not have enough money to live on. If you are already receiving it, your overall payment will be unchanged.

If you disagree with the decision you have an immediate right of appeal to an independent tribunal. If you want to appeal you should write saying exactly what you are appealing against and why you disagree with the decision.

This payment represents:

'insufficient contributions sometime during the tax years to April 1991, and/or April 1992.

It has also come to our notice that you have been paid £301.22p

of Unemployment Benefit which is an excess payment of £301.22p. Please forward this amount by return.

I received this letter on the day when I was about to leave the house to attend the BERA conference in Liverpool. I had about £80 between myself and destiny and a rent payment of over £200 looming. I had made a decision in July that I would not be seeking much paid employment as there was so much Action Research work that needed (in my view) doing here at the University. However, by taking on Undergraduate teaching of two hours a week in the form of a tutorial with about twenty students, I would both

manage to survive materially and continue to facilitate within developmental educative relationships. I recognised the time I had before me as an opportunity. It could also become a way of fully living out my values. Above all I was apprehensive about not making this commitment:

'My growing victories were essentially pyrrhic, for they replaced idealism, love and authenticity with compromise, ambiguity of purpose, lack of vision and alienation, both from myself and my fellow human beings, many of whom I objectified to foils for my own needs and insights.' (p.27)

I felt that I was in danger of:

'looking back and seeing that everything I had done in my life ha(d) been a compromise between what I really wanted to do in my heart of hearts and what I settled for - the path of least resistance. There is a hollowness in putting your own life together like that, seeing the patterns evolve out of your memories like ghosts, haunting the places of your dreams, and seducing you away from promise into regret and even despair.' (p.46)

In a letter to my supervisor, I wrote:

July, 1993. I feel that I am about to enter a stage of my life over which I have both no control and total control. I feel scared and disorientated. I wonder at my commitment and my persistence. At the moment I feel that I am living almost on blind faith. I don't like being blind. It feels precarious and strange, dangerous. I might fall, break my neck. I might lose my way. I might lose contact with the people I love. I might cease to understand them...I cannot look forward now unless I look back. I have to understand why I am doing what I am doing. I really don't know.

I got on the 'phone to the DHSS immediately. I believe it is because I am white, middle class and expect to be dealt with fairly, that I am articulate and can be assertive when I am threatened, the whole mistake was cleared up very quickly. But it gave me a fright. It unsettled me and made me look again very closely at the choice I had made. To give up the security which employment gave me I knew was not something to be taken on lightly. But always in the back of my mind I was driven to avoid something which would negate what I had discovered through my educative relationships about the value to me of living out my values, of enabling others to speak with their own voices. Of not only empowering myself but enabling others to empower themselves too. I was desperate to avoid this:

'exchang(ing) idealism for...ambition and comfort...As if although my body were here going through the motions, doing a competent job, my heart and my soul were elsewhere.' (p.49)

I was afraid to make a compromise which would occasion any split between my values and my actions: I preferred to make a substantial compromise in my standard of living. I also want to make it clear that I am no Mother Teresa! The joy I experience in living out my values is sustaining and for me life-affirming. Jennie, a PGCE student (1992/93) wrote to me:

1.9.93. *Dear Moira, What are you doing now? Have you found anything for next year? Are you looking? Don't you feel the Uni has taken advantage of all your enthusiasm? I know you said you felt you were the one who was getting the most out of the situation, but I do feel that it's more difficult for us to encourage next year's students into doing Action Research as they won't have you like we did.*

I suppose I see something personally inauthentic in my acting purely out of material expediency when I have experienced the power of educative relationships to affirm a theory of my own being which enhances my life, and, I think I can now claim, the lives of others.

About a month ago, however, I wrote this to Lara (PG student '92/93) about my thesis:

'Jack thinks I ought to be including stuff about my financial circumstances and the choices that I have made, but in a sense I don't feel affected by the change in my economic circumstances and I don't want to be read as if I believe that material well-being can affect the meanings in my life. But I think somewhere he has a point. I just hope I can express this in a way which does justice to my point of view. I suppose it might be a point worth making.'

Apart from revealing a development in my way of thinking as regards the significance of my economic situation, this letter also bears witness to the desire to include my (ex) students in my decisions about education. Writing to Lara helped me to understand in retrospect, what is the impact of my economic circumstances on my life. For example in their recent article, Tasker and Packham (1993) discuss the conflict between industrial and educational values and conclude their *'incommensurability'* (p. 127).

McTaggart (1993) describes their contradictory nature thus:

'the new 'economic rationalism' is a worldwide phenomenon which 'guides' not only the conduct of transnational corporations, but governments and their agencies as well...We have moved beyond the reductionism which leads all questions to be discussed as if they were

economic ones (de-valuation) to a situation in which moral questions are denied completely (de-moralisation) in a cult of economic inevitability.’ (p.50)

His conclusion is that educational processes require:

‘a reversal of the subordination of moral idealism by materialism and a more egalitarian world.’ (p.59)

This thesis does not show what appears to be a causal relationship between a decision to act against material values and a process of education, but rather an affirmation of qualities which I believe in action stand against this ‘demoralisation’ and ‘devaluation’ which McTaggart refers to. I do not wish my work to be seen as the result of a negative dialectic but one which affirms a constructivist view (Kincheloe, 1991) of human existence. At the beginning of my novel, the hero believed he:

‘was going to deal with the great issues of right and wrong. These were impermeable and unshakable truths, not subject to human frailty. Not the premises of fallible subjectivity. Great issues of right and wrong were to be [his] stage. Not people and their petty squabbings for power and influence. [He] didn’t formulate this at the time, merely spoke about it, eloquently and emptily to anyone who cared to listen.’ (p.2)

He has yet to learn about the relativist and constructivist view of reality in which personal responsibility for one’s own actions in the world (a personal ethic in other words) becomes an ontological epistemology. And which enables individuals to develop and use this transformation to help others develop. The hero David feared that he:

'[might] give up for what he knew, what was expected of him, and, yes, what he felt a degree of security in.' (p.22)

I want you, the reader, to be aware of this factor in the forming of my educational life. I see around me what I consider to be expediency (McTaggart's economic rationalism) masquerading as predestiny, and believe that a conscious part-freeing of myself from the constraints of economic decisions mistaken for educational insights, will enable me to explore within my educative relationships those human qualities which I believe enhance our ability to lead full and productive lives. To lead a full and productive life is, I contend, the aim of education, and what I mean by 'full' and 'productive' I am trying to reveal in the context of the ontology and epistemology of my educative practice in this final section.

B. 'You'

'Self-certainty requires recognition...What I need is an object capable of reflecting back to me my conception of myself as a free self, and that object can only be another free self.' (Wood, 1990: 90)

Let me try this:

Being and Becoming:

Echoes of a Journey

'I want to talk with you. I want to get to know you. I cannot simply talk to you. We need to talk together.' (p.58)

On 9.9.93. CC and I had a conversation. She was within days of completing her dissertation. She wanted me to write to her about what it was I thought she was achieving in her work. I wrote the following:

Dear CC,

You asked me what I thought you had achieved in your dissertation. In some ways I am rather reluctant to write this: it is your dissertation, after all. However in the explaining of this reluctance, I might paradoxically be able to say something of value. Let's see.

When I was looking through the Wordsworth last night, and I found the poem about Tintern Abbey, it led me to think about the harmony which you seem to be seeking through your life and in its written expression. Whereas Wordsworth gives voice to his existence as resonating in harmony with nature, in a kind of pantheistic expression, your dissertation seems to me to find the sympathetic vibrations between your own struggle to live and to write about that struggle. The result is a work of art whose aesthetic constitutes an affirmation of the art of living educational insights and processes. There is, it seems to me, a very fine line you are asking me to tread here. I recognise your right to express yourself authentically. I also recognise that you have been both the artist and the art critic in this work. Your art criticism is a further expression of your own right to set the standards of judgement for your work, a further way in which you are speaking with your own voice. My comments could therefore on one level appear to be a violation of your own right to speak on your own behalf.

'I realised that I could not expect her words to speak for me. Ilse never spoke for another. Such was her belief, lived rather than stated, that each individual has to find her own pathway towards expression.' (p.65)

But if you see not only 'being' but 'being together' as forces for development in the human spirit, then by giving you these words to use as you see fit, you can integrate anything which appears to you to be of use and to amplify those sympathetic vibrations. (This is not to suggest that my words must be in agreement, for even in constrained disagreement these ideas might still be resonating with your own in ways which develop the harmonies into counterpoint.)

What have you achieved? Your dissertation is, it appears to me, to be so appositely named: 'a process of becoming'. In a sense it is open-ended, as educational processes so often are. You have experimented with a form to bring life to your educational experiences and insights. The result seems to me to have become a fusion between form and content, much as happens within poetry and music. Because I believe this process of becoming cannot ever be finished there is a sense in which your dissertation, in its multiple sections and areas of interest, might necessarily be partially fragmented. But because you are both artist and art critic, you seize this paradox particularly through the language you use to express your understanding.

I think you have achieved something of what Lao-Tzu writes about:

We join spokes together in a wheel,
but it is the centre hole
that makes the wagon move.

We shape clay into a pot,
but it is the emptiness inside
that holds whatever we want.

We hammer wood for a house,

but it is the inner space
that makes it livable.
We work with being,
and non-being is what we use.
(Lao Tzu, 'Tao Te Ching')

*Especially those final lines: 'We work with being/and non-being is what we use.'
Your dissertation is a testament to hope in a world which, you seem to perceive, is
both heaven and hell.*

I think in this letter I demonstrate a desire to help CC without preempting or taking away from her, the responsibility for her own learning. I believe that I seek to communicate with her in ways which show my valuing of her as a unique human being (Holley, 1992). In which I am recognising her right to perceive the world in her own unique way as she struggles to give voice to an educational set of experiences. My inclusion of Lao Tzu was a conscious attempt to show her that I had remembered past conversations and that I thought her words significant. I am also showing a concern to reveal my understanding of her work in ways which affirm her worth but also challenge where necessary.

I believe that CC recognises the care that has been taken and the significance of this concern. In her dissertation, she writes this:

'As the title of this dissertation suggests ('Action Research: a Process of Becoming'), this piece of writing is aiming to present a process, a process of an educative awakening, as process of becoming...It - the process of becoming through the search for a living educational theory - implies the potentiality of synergetic growth between both parties in an enquiry....:

'Since I now have gained the understanding of the essential basics of the meanings of human existence, I will be able to enlarge my capacity to embrace the realities of others. From the meaninglessness of life to the meaningfulness of life through an intense, mutual and trusting relationship between Moira and I, I have gained a strength that will enable me to have the sincerity to respect others' realities. I have come to the stage of recognising the uniqueness of each individual's search for ...meanings...the struggles in the process of becoming and the need for a real communication between them.' (diary entry)' (p.101/102)

In her conclusion she writes this:

'Only when Being and Being Together co-exist, will it then be meaningful for any pursuit for 'Perfection'. (Educative Conversation between Moira, Jack and CC, 9.8.93.)' (p.120)

We work with Being
And non-being is what we use.
(Lao Tzu, 'Tao Te Ching')

I have always tried to hold onto non-being as I wrestle with being. Only now am I able to articulate this in a way other than in my practice:

Return is the movement of the Tao.
Yielding is the way of the Tao.
All things are born of being.
Being is born of non-being.
(Lao Tzu, 'Tao Te Ching')

CC's struggle to construct a representation of a form which did not violate her own sense of authenticity became the focal point of all her academic endeavours. She was wrestling with existential and ontological dichotomies (life and death, meaningfulness and meaninglessness, hope and despair, love and hate, to name but a few). In her dissertation she then tried to offer a synthesis in a form which would communicate the reality of her struggle. For this she characterised the externalisation of the process she was going through as a notion of becoming, which was in itself a sign that within her she had tipped the balance towards a life-affirming choice. My role in this was to enable her to do it - by recognising the significance of what she was trying to do, and giving her the space in which to explore the limits of her original insights. And all this within the necessary parameters of deadlines and M.Ed. regulations. I recognised as crucial her attempt to create something positive and life-affirming, something of educational value within the implications of 'becoming'.

Kuczynska (1988), again in her article 'Tradition as Innovation', writes this:

'The expression of the acceptance of the category of 'becoming' instead of 'is', is the ennoblement in theoretical thought of the principle of 'in between'...'In between' is the sphere of the appearance of potentiality which is to be exploited.' (p.105)

Although I do not relate to the way in which Kuczynska has expressed her ideas, I feel a powerful resonance with the essence of what I understand from it:

'A mutually fulfilling future cannot be taken for granted. It must always be a dialectic between our needs, our actions, our understanding and our

historical and geographical locations.’ (p.62)‘[We need a] true communion between oneself and others, in which a working together, a harmony of perspective reached through negotiation and trial and error, were the cornerstones of our lives.’ (p.56)

In his search for existential fulfilment the hero of ‘Returning’ is consolidated through his acceptance of the necessity of becoming rather than simply being. My educational development is characterised by the degree to which I can integrate my ontological reality into practice within my educative relationships. CC’s dissertation has enabled me to articulate the educational connections between being and becoming and the significance of so doing.

‘She (Katarina) came over to the window and stood next to me and held my hand, resting her head on my shoulder and gazing out. I do not know what she was seeing out of that window, opening on a blue sky of opaque clarity, but I glimpsed Schwerentin. I could even smell the woodsmoke, see the delighted looks of welcome, hear Ilse’s measured and calm tones of love and clarification, and touch at that moment my own utter peace and tranquillity. I closed my eyes against a too great explosion of pleasure, and held tightly onto Katarina’s fingers.’ (p.43)

A short while ago I wrote this to Sarah:

7.9.93.

Dear Sarah,

How goes it? I thought I would write to wish you lots of luck for the new job. I hope it’s everything you want it to be. I remember my first few weeks at Wenlock. Nerve-racking and exhilarating all at the same time. I think it was the recognition that I

was in the right job. It's a harder job you're going into than I did, though, and I really hope it all goes well.

*As you can see I've enclosed the stuff about Advanced this and that! And also a few ideas about a newsletter and a network. I'm actually loathe to be formal about this. I've seen networks destroyed at a stroke when there was no really good reason to sustain them, and when people felt that they had not had the opportunity to say what it was they wanted from it. As you can also see, I've put together a few ideas about how I see things, but it relies completely, this sort of thing, on collaboration **and a reason for being!** (present emphasis). I think we've got that, but I also think this first meeting and newsletter are important. I know you've got loads of other things on your mind, Sarah, but I do hope you'll be able to think about a few ideas for an entry in the newsletter and for the subsequent meeting.*

I have finished, at last, the first draft of the thesis. I am really pleased with the sections on our work together and the parts with CC. In fact she turned out to be a godsend. Out of the blue she wrote to me to bring up some points about some conversations and writings (which you haven't read, I don't think - it concerns some of my early work with her last year). Amazing points. So I simply copied out her letter and replied to it, drawing together all the stuff that seemed still to be outstanding in the thesis as a whole. Jack clearly thinks it's a good piece of work. I now need to rewrite the introduction which I really ought to be getting round to now. I'm off to BERA on Thursday, however, and this week has been spent largely helping CC with her dissertation.

...

*Again, wishing you all the best. **DO** keep in touch, if only for a natter and to let me know how you are.*

Love from Moira XXX

I wanted to keep in touch with students from 1992-1993. I believe that the work we had done together was educationally significant to us all and there might be a worth beyond simple friendship in corresponding. I had experienced what it meant to be asked by my own Ph.D. supervisor to critique his work: it seemed to demonstrate a democratisation of the learning process between supervisor and student (see Laidlaw, 1994b). I had found that process of democratisation educational so I wanted to offer that to my own students. I had already shown Sarah my work which explored our collaboration. I wanted to extend her access and the other students' to what I am doing.

To another student I wrote this about her final report as I had typed it up from its original handwritten form:

6.9.93. It's a lovely piece of work, Gail. Every time I read it it moves me very deeply. It is so full of the values that I came into Education to promote. It's a tour de force.

I enclose details about the network and the addresses of the other people I am trying to keep in touch with. I hope you feel that you want to be involved in keeping in touch. You know there's a meeting on 27th November (a Saturday) at 3 o'clock. Sarah, Emma, Lara, Cath, Nigel, CC and Jack will be there. I do hope you can join us. The enclosed might give you an idea about the sorts of things you might want to contribute to a newsletter, for example. Or simply to talk about at the meeting. See what you think.

I also wanted to write to you to wish you luck in the teaching job. Have you started already? I'm sure you're going to be fine. I remember my first few days and weeks at Wenlock. Nerve-wracking but exhilarating somehow. I'm sure yours will be the

same. I wish you all the luck in the world, Gail. And really hope to hear from you by the beginning of November, also with the news that you will be coming to the meeting!!

See you,

Moira XXX

I wrote individual letters to all the action research group (1992/93) and enclosed this:

Newsletter

O.K. folks, this is it. Except it isn't! I haven't, obviously, got anything concrete yet, but I thought I would put a few ideas down. And set a deadline. We talked at the last meeting about having a newsletter for our 'network' and that it would be a good idea if I co-ordinated it. Whether or not you're thinking of undertaking an enquiry, it would be lovely to keep in touch with all your news about being a new teacher, or simply your ideas and experiences of what you're doing.

O.K., the questions I want to keep in mind are:

How can I facilitate in any way with new teachers as they induct themselves into the profession and try to improve the quality of learning with their pupils?

'How can I facilitate a network of new teachers?'

What have I been doing since I saw you last? *Well, writing my thesis mostly. It's now in three parts. The first part deals with my ideas about education, what it's for, then there's a section about my work with CC. The second part is the study of my own educational development through a study of the literature and my work in particular with Sarah this year. The final part is a response to CC about a letter*

which she wrote to me about Part One. No doubt the whole thing will need tampering with. Jack doesn't like the introduction, but then, nor do I!

What do I want to do in the coming months?

Finish my thesis of course! I want to prepare your Final Reports for publication and rewrite the Guide ⁶. I'm also determined to consolidate the action research resources collection, not only the PG stuff but also the M.Ed. material. There's some cracking stuff there and I think it deserves a wider readership.

How will I do it?

Sheer plodding, I think. But also, practically I have an idea of getting all the material into the open through Jean McNiff's publishing company. ⁷I wonder whether at our meeting on 27th November, at 3 o'clock, we can spend some time discussing what might be the best way of doing this. You see, Jean suggested that in your papers, there would be real scope to punctuate the text she publishes with conversations we have about each one. Does that sound like a good idea? I think it is, but anyway, think about it. As this is your work I'm talking about here, I think there has to be a 'we' in the question, rather than simply an 'I'. As to the network, well, I can't do that on my own. You agreed at the last meeting to write something down which you would send to me and I would collate and send out to everyone before the meeting. How about getting ideas about anything from the above or your own educational stories that you think might be of interest to us, to me by the beginning of November? Word limit, no, not really, although I might have difficulty copying out 5,000 words for each of you!!!

Jean McNiff (1992) writes this about the value of sharing one's work within a network:

⁷ This is Hyde Publications.

'The relationship between individuals who are all committed to this view is not grounded within power-structures, but in the trust of the one for the other to improve the quality of life for self and others.'

(p.62)

Seixas (1993) stresses the educational value of such a forum:

'students learn not only by actively making knowledge of their own but also by doing so within a community that shares a common culture.' (p 321)

When those others (as in my case) are students or ex-students there is a potential power differential. In seeking criticism and comments on my work from these people, I aspire towards educative relationships with individuals 'who are all committed...to improv[ing] the quality of life for self and others'. And after all, as Socrates said:

'In education, an improvement has to be effected.' (p. 265)

C. 'We'.

'Universal self-consciousness arises only under certain conditions. Individuals must belong to a community in which they are socialised mutually to claim and grant to each other the right to exercise their freedom within an...external sphere.' (Wood, 1990: 91)

Let me try this:

Community or Communion?:

Echoes...

I

If this thesis is partly an explanation of an aesthetic morphology within the significance to my educative relationships and more widely to my life, of being and being together, of care and attention to individuals; if it is about becoming and speaking for ourselves and helping others to do so in a language that is theirs as well as ours, then all of this is about the dialectic between communion and community. What is communion?

'To be with him was perfect harmony. We did not always need words like other people. Sometimes I used to watch siblings talking to each other and wondered why they simply wouldn't listen with their inner ear, why they wouldn't let the silence speak as Dieter and I did. And then I knew it was because they could only communicate to each other in that way. They had no other recourse. It was only by comparison that I learnt how unusual was our love for each other.' (p.40)

And in my educative relationships it is love which is able to form the links in this dialectic. Love which is drawn out of my ontological spring and finds voice through the actions which draw people together and enable them to find their own ontology:

'I wondered how she (Katarina) might feel being in a strange country without the ability to speak the language and then remembered how it had been for me. Because of the friendliness of the people, because of the way in which they had treated me as a respected individual, I think I had almost experienced it as an advantage. Each interaction had had to be worked on so hard. Effort had been made when normally such situations would have occasioned no thought at all. It is only now that I begin to perceive the value of being made to communicate the simplest truths...And Ilse's answer came

back to me from the time when I asked her about how it was that she spoke such good English...'By listening and hearing the real significance. Language is not just about words. It's also about use and habit, about private meanings and realities. By watching the eyes to see the meaning. That's how I've done it!' (p.34)

I think that's how I've tried to communicate with my students. And I want to foster interactions with students and others in education which will develop a sense of community, for in so doing I think we tap into our essential humanity. We can be gripped, as CC and I were, by the power of being (Tillich, 1952) and by extension the power of becoming. I believe that the power of being is also communion with the humanity of others and at such a level Foucault's Power of Truth (1980) becomes a creative dialectic. In the power of integration between all the aspects of my practice to which I am trying to give a authentic voice in this writing, I am learning something about Tagore's (1913) insights that:

'Man seems deeply to be aware of a separation at the root of his being; he cries to be led across it to a union and somehow he knows that it is love which can lead him to a love which is final.' (p.227)

He goes on to say:

'Love is not a mere impulse, it must contain truth, which is law. It accepts limitations from truth because of its own inner wealth'. (p.227)

I am powerfully drawn to this because of the juxtaposition of love and truth and the dynamic between them. I believe that it is within this dynamic that a wholly positive power can emerge. A power which seeks to enhance the love

and truth in any situation. This brings me to the heart of my own aesthetic sense and the synthesis I attempt to draw out of an educative relationship.

In 'Returning', Ilse the Elder, tells David:

'When Olaf was still a very small child, a neighbouring child stole his toy elephant. Olaf saw Matthias doing it. At first he was very cross with him, but when later that same evening he heard the child's father scolding him for simply making a noise in the village square, he began to feel very sorry for him. He went home and wrapped up another toy and walked over to Matthias' house and gave it to him. The two are now inseparable friends and always will be.' (p.10)

Recently I have started acting as critical friend to Justine who is in her second year of teaching at Wootton Bassett school near Swindon. She is entering an action enquiry for an Advanced Certificate. On 7.10.93. Jack Whitehead and I went to see the group of which she is a member and I helped her clarify her initial question. She seemed very stressed about the implications of her question and so I immediately wrote to her to express this concern, but also to suggest areas of development for her enquiry:

7.10.93.

Dear Justine.

What a treat to be working with you again. Sorry I couldn't come back for supper, but I really wasn't feeling too good. You were looking better than I saw you at the end of last term. (I suppose a trip to South East Asia for five weeks is bound to make some difference! I'm pea-green with envy!!) You were stressed, though, it seemed to me and I suppose that's why I wanted to write to you, so quickly. I know I'll be seeing you for

that drink on Monday, but I wanted to put down some ideas we talked about this evening.

Am I right in thinking that much of the stress is due to undertaking an enquiry which probes at the heart of your values...?

I really felt for you this evening. It's important that you express this frustration (if I'm right about it) and then recognise that 'bite-sized' chunks is all we can take on.

I don't know how much you're going to like this idea, but I think we trust each other and so I'm going to risk it. When Jack and the others were talking you wrote down your question on a piece of paper: 'How can I do what I know is right when I am not allowed to?' We laughed about the question, so simply worded, and yet profound in its implications. Bear with me when I say I think it has two fundamental shortcomings built into it, and that if you run with that question it will become self-limiting.

*'How can I do what I **know** is right, when I'm not allowed to?'*

*If you do not explore what you believe you know, you will not develop. Jack constantly reminds me of the danger of dogmatism. If you were to alter '**know**' to something more exploratory for the time being, then this action enquiry could take upon itself a justification of those values which are implied by 'I know'. By understanding **why** these values matter to you and why they could matter to others, you can win through reality and not rhetoric. You would evolve your own standards of judgement which are less refutable than, 'well, I simply know!' The other point is about the focus. In this question, where are the pupils? Of course you have to resolve something of this tension because otherwise you are not going to be able bring out the best in yourself and in your pupils. And after talking to you again on Thursday, I*

was so moved by the reasons for your concern, your genuine commitment to comprehensive education as a process of democratisation. Yet again I was reminded why working with you is so good and wholesome. Let's talk about this on Monday or whenever.

Lots of love, Moira.XXX

As a critical friend to Justine I hoped to express something of my concern through a concentration of the issues of values which her particular enquiry would probably give rise to. The contentious nature of her proposed enquiry needed to be looked at carefully. I wanted to alert her to the 'dangers' at the same time as the responsibilities she would necessarily incur in an individually-orientated action enquiry. I recognised, perhaps to a greater extent than she, the implications of such an undertaking. I knew from working with her through previous ethical issues, that she would be concerned about the pupils, and yet in her question I could not see that concern. This seemed to be a contradiction in her espoused value of always taking pupils' needs seriously. This is not written judgementally about Justine, simply as a reconstruction of the reasoning that led me to write to her in the way I did. I felt it was grounds to challenge her on. That I wrote back straight away and showed an interest in the other things we discussed that afternoon would reveal my respect for her.

II

...Within Echoes...

'So at once I was a king being crowned who dreamt of his own exile and saw that it must be so.' (p.56)

A few weeks ago, Kevin Eames (Head of English at Wootton Bassett School) who was present at the Validation Meeting of an earlier draft of Part Three,

came to see Jack Whitehead, also his Ph.D. supervisor, about the progress of his own Ph.D. thesis. He felt he needed a respondent with whom he could explore the living dialectical processes of his own educational development as he comes to terms with this final stage of the thesis. I have developed a great respect for Kevin's ability to hold firm to his democratic principles in the light of external pressures which might seek to quell his voice and the voices of his pupils. It was therefore without hesitation that I offered to be his correspondent. We arranged to write to each other about the final chapter.

I read Chapter Eight again as a preparation, and then read his Introduction to Chapter Nine to which I was to make a response. We were hoping this would act as a springboard for him to understand better his own conclusions and insights and reveal them in the rest of the chapter; for me this is an exciting correspondence through which I am learning about the significance of trying to begin from someone else's starting point, to help only where specifically asked, to challenge, and yet enable the other to have complete ownership of the outcome. This was some of my response to the Introduction:

6.9.93.

Dear Kevin,

...I am aware of how important it is to craft a response to what you have written which does justice to your insights, takes on what you have said and challenges where appropriate, and perhaps more importantly on one level, shows how it is becoming educational to me, if indeed it is. I take these qualities (your educational insights, appropriate challenges, educational potential) from the words you used at the end: 'How do you feel about the territory I have set out?' and 'What do you want me to explain?'. I see these as being challenges for me in which I have the opportunity to enhance the dialectical potential of this correspondence through an authentic

exploration of the issues which you raise and which through them, I can raise. Is that how you see it? At one point you said:

‘The main thing that’s kept me from writing...is the feeling that...after having experienced what a dialectical form of educational knowledge was like...I was worried that...I would have to write in a propositional rather than a dialectical form.’

...The dialectic grows out of time, doesn’t it? It is more difficult to create because when preparing a work of the kind that you and I have been involved with evolving, because of the intense negotiation that a dialectic in education requires. You want to avoid the propositional, you say, because:

‘I’m getting to the stage where writing within a dialectical form, but without someone to communicate with... seems unbearably artificial - a solitary voice echoing hollowly in a confined space.’

*With echoes there is only a fading similarity. Uniformity of expression, input, intended outcome - all these are the limitations, as I think we both perceive them, of proposition. Dialectics offer us (and that’s the key word - us) variety. Less chance of in-breeding and idiot offspring! Propositions take the stance of final truth. Have you read Kincheloe’s ‘Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Enquiry as a Path to Empowerment’? (Kincheloe, 1991) It’s a fascinating book. The best one I’ve read **about** the dangers of propositional knowledge...We need to evolve forms of representation that don’t stymie the natural unfolding of knowledge and understanding and its evolution into educational theory. Propositions give us an apparent power over our material. Let’s look at that. ‘Power’. ‘Over’. ‘Material’. Power to what end and for whose benefit? ‘Over’? Why not ‘with’? And our pupils, students, colleagues, known or not, can never be subsumed under the language of*

'material'. 'What material is this? It is the living fabric which stitches together, over time, people's individuality and social networks. Their lives.

On the telephone you mentioned about not knowing where this correspondence would go, and hinted, I believe, at a sense of destabilisation. I replied, I think, that for it to be a truly educative dialectic, both of us would have to be learning from the exchange. Quite rightly you ask me what I need to know. What do I need to know? And my question from this is: 'How can I express what it is I need to know in a way which enables us both to develop the learning we need?' I don't want my 'need to know' to limit yours...

Are you in effect saying in your writing that there is a direct relationship between the dialectical educational knowledge in which you wish to be engaging with others and a particular approach to teacher professionalism, which you see embodied in a proposed General Education Council?

...Sorry if these thoughts seem random and foolish. I think what Pete Mellett said is true, that we find in other people's words, our own thoughts and questions, our own unanswered quests. I feel beleaguered by a sense of compromise in the way in which I express my own thinking. It really doesn't do justice to my intuitions. I don't have CC's ability to express the soul directly as she seems to. It's that hiatus between the inner experienced world and its outer expression that confuses me. But that, I think, is probably my problem and not necessarily relevant. (As I said before, please edit this and treat all future correspondence exactly as it suits you.)

...Parts of my thesis I am happy with. Your writing has shown me again the importance of bearing the reader in mind when presenting my insights. In the first part of my text, I am so concerned about getting down what I think I know, that I miss the point. A dialectical form of educational knowledge demands uncertainty, but

an uncertainty with rigour and discipline and educative intent. When those are fused, it seems to me there is the potential for a generative educative dialectic. If education is a living art form, then all parts of it - people, intentions, processes, outcomes, context - all these are fused and they are fused (for our purposes in the present writing for example) in the readers' minds as they experience our understanding and between us as our ideas converge, merge and diverge. There is so much to achieve, then, when striving for a representational authenticity. That seems to be one of your aims too...

Best Wishes,

Moirira. XXX

In the sense that I address not only some of Kevin's points, but some of my own. For example in this one:

'When does compromise in personal knowledge become damaging? Is this correspondence actually treading over the line between compromise and meaning?'

and especially:

'I feel beleaguered by a sense of compromise in the way in which I express my own thinking. It really doesn't do justice to my intuitions. I don't have CC's ability to express the soul directly as she seems to. It's that hiatus between the inner experienced world and its outer expression that confuses me. But that, I think, is probably my problem and not necessarily relevant. (As I said before, please edit this and treat all future correspondence exactly as it suits you.)'

I believe our correspondence has the potential to be mutually beneficial. There is no sense in which I am simply helping Kevin. I am helping myself. We are helping each other.

I wrote in my Ph.D. log:

8.9.93. I am enjoying the challenge of writing to people about their work. But this business of personal knowledge. How much of our knowledge should be predicated upon personal responsibility? How can I communicate what I perceive as a necessary fusion between the ethics of what I do and the ways in which I represent it? If I am trying to help others clarify their thinking, that is only all right as long as I am trying to clarify my own. The educative relationships I enjoy with people like Kevin and Jacqui and Peter are predicated upon an absolute equality. We are all seekers after something. I have to be in an interactive process which is generative and which isn't in any way one-sided in terms of control and power. I can't begin to understand all the intricacies of another person's reality. All I can do is try my very best to communicate what I understand by what s/he says or writes in good faith. I have at all times to remain critically open to my own motives and conclusions. Especially those I vouchsafe to others. I want to generate a form of educational correspondence in which an absolute equality is a central part of the epistemology of our actions'

I am concerned about the possible outcomes of this:

'Everyone seemed to know me. A few people called out a greeting to me, adding my name to whatever was said, so that I would know that I was addressed. I felt almost as if I were royalty being taken on a tour of my own kingdom...I felt that there I could become anything I pleased, as long as I really wanted it. In those moments I was a king.' (p.10)

I want to experience as much as possible a full mutuality of regard, respect and challenge in my educative relationships. I want to be no one's expert but my own. I think in the following extracts from Kevin's Ph.D. and my

response to it can be seen a greater reciprocity within an educational research process.

I could identify with Kevin's dilemma (about integrating a dialectical form of representation within his ideas about it) and enable it to help me to distil my own enquiry and in the next two extracts (one from his developing Ph.D. and my response to it) you should gain a greater impression of the mutuality of this educational correspondence.

'I don't think, if it's truly dialectical [the text] that this piece of writing can be responded to in the same way as a piece of propositional writing. But then again, the response may be different and unexpected. With dialectics you never know, do you?'

He goes on to a discussion of Carr and Kemmis' 'Becoming Critical' in relation to the dialectical knowledge which they purport to be promoting:

'The elements of a dialectical form of educational knowledge, as I grew to understand them in the course of my enquiry, are entirely lacking, in that there is no evidence of contradiction or of provisionality, or of relation to practice, or of learning through dialogue, or of existing within a dialogical community, or even of 'tests' for dialectics which I evolved and explored in Chapters Three to Five when I was looking at the idea from the outside, in a propositional way.

Thus the authors fail to practice the approach they advocate, and to use your phrase in your last letter, there is consequently a lack of 'representational authenticity'. If they say action research is so good and that it's a dialectical form of knowing rather than a propositional form, what does it tell us about the (unarticulated) assumptions and understandings of the authors that they choose to write in a propositional rather

than a dialectical form? At the very least it suggests to me that they see a dialectical form as being lower in status than the conventionally academic approach they actually take. We're back with the contradiction on the interview with X, in that even friendly academics who are well-disposed towards teachers' action research seem to make assumptions about power relationships which place propositional knowledge on a higher level of status than the dialectical knowledge of teachers. (However I don't want to appear morally superior about this; you may recall that I was, myself, writing about dialectics, rather than writing dialectically for the greater part of this enquiry.' (Chapter Nine, p.11)

I wrote back to him on the day of receiving his draft:

I think the end of the second paragraph needs drawing out in some way. It seems important. Why do I say that? Do we slip into propositional forms because it seems cosy and expected and makes us feel in charge of our own worlds? Who was it who said that we need 'to strip away the crippling mutilations of centuries of objectivist thought'?...Polanyi (1958)... It seems that there is an underlying predisposition to represent experience in a packaged form because it makes the representer appear powerful and it makes the experience appear contained and fully understood. Do you remember our conversation on the 'phone (I was in Yorkshire) and you said you felt apprehensive about where your work might go? Isn't that something to do with the fact that with dialectics you don't control the discourse? With propositions you do. And it's not only control, it's also what's expected from academics who have controlled the knowledge since the church's hold on it was weakened.

Is there any sense that as you have developed this dialectical approach in this chapter you are beginning to think differently as well and perceiving your experience differently? Is it not possible that this approach is showing, as you do it, the effect of dialectics on to reality and knowledge? That you can say now, that 'you never know

with dialectics', and this is exciting. Knowledge itself, if you can imagine it as a living and growing 'entity', has just received a shot in the arm, so to speak. Knowledge that is drawing sustenance, growing and reproducing, living a life which is dedicated to exploration, finding out, on some journey which can never be predestined, but which develops an understanding of possible destinations, always open to change and modification. You wrote once about growing your own (Eames, 1990). Is this significantly different? I think I can claim that your stepping into a dialectical form of representation (which is also an exploration of meaning) has changed what you are writing about, how you are writing about it and the epistemology and significance of what you (we) are engaged in. I notice a difference in your style and I've already written in this letter about what I think your style means. I am aware that what I am saying here may be the most important aspect of any of my writing to you to date. I think I am perceiving an educational and epistemological transformation directly as a result of your dialectical approach. Was this not an aim? Is not wishing for our understanding of the world to be possibly transformed through our educational processes part of what we're in education for (if that transformation enables us to lead fuller and more productive lives, I mean)? Can I say that? I am really excited by what I have read of your work, Kev. It's stretching me to the limits of my capacity to integrate former insights with present ones, because, you see, I keep thinking, yeah, I can see now the significance of this dialectical form and how I can integrate this into my own Ph.D. Part Four, for example. I really feel that I am grappling with some profoundly meaningful ideas as I read what you have written. As you are showing what it means to put together your own knowledge in a dialectical form, to show what is new about what you have achieved, I find within that resonances about my own efforts to do the same. At the same time I am, as you are, remembering audience and the commitments we have made to come to an understanding of the world, responsibly, and with universal intent, but together too.

I need to do more thinking about this whole area of how dialectical knowledge can contribute to communities. We are individuals who choose to come together and share and modify our views of and on the world (our epistemologies). This creates not only new knowledge but a view of community. It opens up, it seems to me anyway, perceptible connections between professionalism, educational knowledge, and responsibility. These are larval thoughts. There's something in that, but I need to explore it.

What I find significant about this correspondence is the way in which educational development through a dialectical form can be traced. Because Kevin has taken the plunge into a dialectical form of representation, his understanding of its benefits seem to be accruing (*'you never know with dialectics, do you?'*) This reminds me of Eisner (1993) saying that:

'poetic forms of meaning require poetic forms of representation.' (p.7)

I believe (as I have stated in Part Two, hopefully demonstrated in Part Three and reiterated at the beginning of this section in my own list of requirements for educational narratives) that dialectical forms of meaning require dialectical forms of representation. As Kevin seeks 'representational authenticity' we engage in correspondence in an effort to understand. We engage. And through engaging with Kevin's ideas in this way, in which equality and parity of esteem are cornerstones (this correspondence having been entered into freely on both sides) I too come to new understandings. Not only about the links between professionalism and educational knowledge, but also the beginnings of perceptions about links between our educational knowledge and responsibility. Without knowing it consciously, I was embarked upon a journey towards understanding that would culminate in a thesis which seems to be synthesising reflection and action. And all the while

this understanding is being generated within a community, one to which I feel a great degree of commitment. Hegel (1821) called such a commitment: *'Pflichten der Verhältnisse'*, or 'duties of relationships', and brings into this commitment an ethical dimension which I am pleased to accept as integral. Wood (1990) describes the ethics of commitment to a particular cause thus:

'Ethical life involves...commitment - a disposition to choose acts that forego your own well-being to some degree for the sake of something you care about more than that...Commitment is not selflessness, though. It is not a case where self-interest is overridden by some universal moral principle such as utility or the categorical imperative...Morality tries in vain to provide an ethical theory of duties, but a theory of this kind can only exist in relationships that are necessary through the idea of freedom, and hence in their whole range only actual in the state. Our ethical duties are the demands made on us by other individuals and by institutions through the relationships in which we stand within a rational society, an ethical order.' (p.211)

Intuitively I felt that it was wholly appropriate to respond to Kevin's request to form a correspondence with him about his work. Now our work. I am beginning to recognise the educational and ethical issues involved by so doing. And within this understanding my recognition of what is for me a necessary synthesis between ethical and educational practice is growing. I am recognising the responsibility which I have perceived as ontological is also an aspect of how I can judge the educational quality of my relationships. Ethics, linked to ontology seem now to be moving towards a theory of educational knowledge. If I act with others in ways which grow out my own progressively conscious ontology and these ways impinge on others ethically and educationally, then I would appear to be evolving a theory of educational

practice whose standards of judgement would be those by which I would judge my own existence. I will develop this idea for the rest of the thesis.

Another M.Ed. student, Jacqui, worked with me last year when I was coming to terms with the violation I alluded to in Part One (in the section entitled: 'Who is this particular I?'). In fact she crafted our correspondences into an action research assignment for herself (Stephens, 1992). I have come to trust without question her ability to act in my best interest and to offer me the sort of respect within our educative relationship which Yamamoto (1990) writes about in reference to the mentoring process. When we talked together in the Summer (1993), I offered to act as critical friend for her dissertation in which she is searching for the standards of judgement by which she wishes her work in education to be evaluated. We exchanged a couple of letters and then she wrote this:

26.9.93.

Hi Fellow Traveller (or just hi, Moira!)

You are quite right about what a reader brings to a text. You have to be in the right frame of mind, 'receptive' is, I think, the right word...You state that by fostering organic growth in others, we encourage it in ourselves. I completely agree, for any interaction either written or spoken must by its very nature affect us. It is the verbalisation allowing one's views to develop, To take Dewey's mediaeval cathedrals, it is perhaps the making of the bricks, which in turn will make the structure. You responded to my referral 'to thine own self be true' as a strength you feel I have. Some people may find it uncomfortable as I tend to speak my mind, although I have learnt how to say it...If I understand you right, you are saying that by supporting others through educative relationships, both the guided and the guide grow. Is that right? It's what Yamamoto (1991:184/5) claims...

To sum up: Yamamoto was quite right. I cannot explain it better. It sums up the interaction between 'seeing' individuals. It describes for me the organic nature of educative development, true to oneself and respecting the other. The words I find profound...

You then go on to say that my outer self will be: 'mirrored by inner patterns, polished, shining, glowing with inner security and firm in the knowledge that life is hope. You are, I believe, right when you refer to me as knowing myself, who I am and what I stand for...

In many ways I have explored more deeply my definition of the organic nature of educative development which was useful. I guess I have not thought about an inner and outer me.

Are we about to go where no one has gone before, to seek out new ideas, to form new theories? In many ways our journey is in a spaceship and we can easily get trapped in a time-warp. There is perhaps an important message here. It has been said that no man is an island; we are influenced, change, grow and develop because of the influences of our experiences and people are an important part of that. If we are to do this, we cannot afford to be an island or trapped in a time-warp, for it will stifle our very being; in the end we will die, having given nothing and having received nothing. The greatest of these is giving because having given, we have received. What I believe you term the 'inner', does indeed become polished and glow...

*Love,
Jacqui.*

Again in my journal I wrote this:

'30.9.93. In the kind of work I now doing voluntarily with various people, many of them Jack's students, some of them my own past students, where I feel that there are glimmers of a community emerging through the quality of the individual contact. At the moment with Jack's students there are individuals and me. Together we are exploring all sorts of values and actions and the relationships between them. And I mean 'we'. That's the point. There is in all this endeavour an incipient 'we' which is a natural unfolding of the potential for individuals to grow together. To become. Being together as a process of becoming. Might there possibly here be the strongest community of all? In which there is only mutual respect, warmth of regard and careful challenge, in which genuine exploration reaches out to see who else is there in this space? Me, together with Peter, Jacqui, Kevin, Justine. and others. At the moment it's a bit like my kingdom, though, and I believe in democracy. I will keep writing, keep exploring, keep caring. There's something about power here:

'Ise named you as village elder,' Christiane said softly. 'We would have told you last night. All the villagers know. And they're delighted. You've become quite a legend here. Stories abound about you.'

'But there must be some mistake,' I said. This was the wrong way round. Schwerentin was my dream. I could not be theirs! (p.55)

I do not just wish to be a personal focus, or to focus personally on others, although of course the personalities involved in any process are its cornerstones. In no way do I wish to overlook the complex possibilities within personalities. But the focus seems to me also ought to be upon something which does not as yet exist, and which might never exist, but which our vision might possibly give birth to. It is something composed of individuals and yet embracing a community which defies prior stipulation:

'There was never a moment when I was tempted to play this dangerous game, and I knew I had to start being honest now...I still seem to be the focus for people's intentions and yet our decisions are made very much in negotiation. I knew early on that I did not want to be at the head of Schwerentin, but at its heart.' (p.65)

III

...Within Echoes.

'I had experienced it and carried my feelings about it with me at all times. It had informed every interaction between my soul and myself, between my persona and the real person beneath the mask. Schwerentin had both been me and created me.' (p.49)

CC has written this in her dissertation:

'In my description of a preferred style of educational management, I want you to notice that I do not use the words 'theory' or 'model'. It is the process itself.' (p.120)

As part of my facilitation of CC's work, I immersed myself in the philosophy of Lao Tzu and his Tao Te Ching. I did it because I wanted to communicate with her in a way she had already suggested to me was akin to her own way of thinking:

'For Lao Tzu, reality exists and continues to exist at a level prior to all names. It is, simply, without qualification. The effect of language is to break up, fragment, and splinter what in itself remains unbroken...It can be a guidepost as long as we do not mistake it for what is signified.'

(Wing Tsit, 1963: 297)

In my letter to CC of 7.9.93. quoted above, I ended with these words:

In a sense, again, you have attempted to give names to those aspects of our existence which are essentially unnameable.

I had just re-read the 'Tao Te Ching' and these lines in particular resonated:

The tao that can be told
is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be named
is not the eternal Name.

The unnameable is the eternally real
Naming is the origin
of all particular things.
(Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching)

'I was staring at the village, at the trees drifting in the breezes, at the golden sunshine enriching the hues around me, at the peaceful people going about their daily lives as if each movement meant something, as if the movements themselves were as important as the places to which they were walking.'
(p.18)

And of course the movements do mean something. I believe that each movement I make in the world has the potential to mean something. As an educator it is important that my movements are considered and careful, that their intentions are both expressions in harmony with, and yet simultaneously creative of, what Whitehead and McNiff would call 'a good

social order' and what I have called my golden tapestry; for it is, I believe, an order that contains the social order but extends into the realms of being itself. To concern oneself with being is to be concerned with the social order, for the social order is an expression of being and being an expression of the social order. Whitehead concerns himself with that social order through the engagement of individuals in attempts to improve their practice within the social context; I concern myself with reaching a state of being individually, and communally through facilitating enquiries into self and other, and through a philosophy in which love and truth are mutually dependent. It is in the dialectic between being and an improvement in the social context where educational Action Research resides, the 'I' (being) and the 'improvement' (social context) in a constant state of interaction and development. It is an necessarily unresolvable tension. It is a tension which creates its own aesthetic morphology. I am contending that when the action research cycle is grounded in values to do with social justice, democratic processes and enabling others to fulfil their existential and educational potential (which is what I try to do with my students) then the resulting aesthetic value of such a process is equivalent to a great work of art which also seeks (amongst other things) to recognise the universal in human nature and to enable us all to understand ourselves better.

On 15.1.93. I wrote:

'It is not simply that emancipatory action research insists upon concerns which fit into the shared notions of the above concerns (democratic values etc.) but the process itself has within it a natural potential to realise these principles. And this also resonates with the idea that the individual aspect should mirror the whole. In this case I believe I have an instance here when this is the case. It shows verisimilitude of philosophy and method (an inner consistency); it releases my own potential for

democratic action. It is an aspect which can be drawn upon to explain the whole...My being drawn to Action Research, then, was understandable given my aesthetic experiences with Literature, music and my educative relationships. I am aware that my educative life seeks to live out practically what I perceive in my aesthetic experiences with music. In other words... emancipatory action research has within it the potential to become a practical realisation of doing good in the world, which I see as central to living out my values. Given that I have chosen to see life as meaningful.

On 14.10.93. I received another letter from Jacqui which confirmed my sense of the necessary grounding within communion between individuals if we are ever to move towards community:

13.10.93.

Dear Moira,

It is good to find that we are in accord. There is something very comforting in that and reciprocal. Your letter reminded me of how you described my mentoring of you in your writings. You said something about me empathising/concurring with you and then very gently challenging. I felt on reading your letter, that was exactly what you have done. It leaves one feeling good and confident about the challenge.

I believe that good relationships, and they have to be educative, allow those involved to grow, develop, change and gain confidence. Embedded within all of this are the values and beliefs I know we share...

Your letter really did spur me on. It really did clarify. The whirlpool I found myself in has dissipated and allowed me to continue down stream, or into the galaxy of true knowledge and life. Thanks for that...

In the TES this week there were two articles by Headteachers who had undergone a pilot OFSTED Inspection. One had been a 'good' experience and one a 'bad'. I have analysed the two articles and one thing I am sure of is that the Head that felt the school had a good experience approached it with the right attitude. It was positive, encouraging to his staff and was in it the opportunity to improve and move forward. After reading it I had a warm feeling. It was as it should be. It stood for the 'good' things I believe. I know I need to ensure that I behave in a way that will leave the staff I come into contact with during an Inspection feeling the same. The challenge, of course, is to do it! Take care, Love Jacqui.

In particular I believe that the above letter demonstrates an educational correspondence in which affirmation of the worth of the other is central. In which action and reflection are seen to be mutually enhancing (Day, 1993; Smyth, 1986). There is the recognition of the vital nature of action motivated from a secure basis of regard and interest. It also shows a clear educational intention for the future, a process which lies at the heart of action research processes (Whitehead, 1989b). It demonstrates something of the transformatory ability to be found in educational dialogue, which Elliott (1989) describes in relation to Whitehead's educational theory thus:

'Dialogue is an important context for developing, as well as validating, educational theory of the kind that Whitehead describes. In dialogue, teachers are able to utilize reflectively, not only the repertoires of personal experience which originate in their own life histories, but also the experiences of each other.' (p.97)

I believe I am doing more than I have set out immediately above. I think that I grasp an essential paradox at the heart of all being (that is meaningfulness and meaninglessness) in the educative relationships I foster within a process

of action enquiry. I have to pay due attention to detail by paying attention to the whole. And in a sense by that I mean, by paying attention to individuals, by holding firm to the possibilities within human relationships to reach a state of communion one with the other, even when that has not by any means been my only experience, then communities are formed. Not in name but in reality.

Much of the work I am engaging in at the moment is concerned with the next World Congress in Action Research. In connection with the Congress I have written to date over fifty personal letters to people all over the world. During this Academic year I have written countless letters to the PGCE students about their action enquiries. Once, and once only, I circulated a letter to various students, changing bits of information within it to suit the particular reader. With Emma's letter I was careless and overlooked several details. I knew at the time it was unwise to duplicate. She remarked on my lack of care in this instance at an evaluation meeting on 29.6.93. as the only negative aspect for her of the whole of my facilitation. It still rankled with her:

'We are often bitter with those who disappoint our highest expectations, after all.' (p.56)

Since she left the University and has started teaching full-time, I wrote to her again:

7.9.93.

Dear Emma,

I thought I would write and wish you the very best of luck in your new job at Oakham School. I heard from Lara the other night and she gave me your school

address, so I thought I'd drop you a line and enclose some of the bumph (bumf?) about the network and the addresses. I hope everything is going fine. I'm sure it will be, although I remember my own stomach-butterflies on the first day. Soon settled down though. I was too busy to have much time to think.

It's been a busy summer, as you'll see if you read the enclosed. It feels good to have a draft of the thesis done, although I am sure that every time I look at it I'm going to find things that need doing. I based much of Part One (there are four parts) on my work with Sarah. Sarah liked it which meant a lot to me. It's not much good me writing about someone if they don't recognise their own processes in it. She seems to think I have managed that. CC took me to task that students aren't speaking enough in their own voices though, which is why I have finished the thesis with a letter to her. She really is a remarkable woman. She is now finishing off her own dissertation and I can tell you, it's wonderful!

Anyway, enough of all that. You're into real children and real classrooms at the moment, I imagine. All this 'floating in the clouds' probably sounds inappropriate. I do wish you luck, Emma, but I sincerely believe that you will do a good job. I really enjoyed the time I saw you in action in the classroom. I saw a stimulating, well-prepared and charismatic teacher who knows how to get the best out of her pupils. The school is lucky to have you.

...

Jack is well and sends his regards. Do keep in touch and I really hope you'll come to the meeting in November and send something for the newsletter. See what you think, anyway. Oh yes, and this letter is unique. I have learnt my lesson and haven't sent it to anyone else!!!

*Lots of love,
Moir. XXX*

Forgetting an insight upon which I had tried to build my work in education - i.e. treating Emma as if she were not unique - was not a simple error. Symbolically it stands at the heart of a lack of understanding of what it means to be that other. I perceive a need to harness a quality of empathy in my work with other individuals.

I intend to write many more personally-orientated letters for the Congress. In particular I want to encourage individuals from as wide a spectrum of ethnic, experiential and geographical backgrounds as possible to attend and contribute to the event:

'I looked around and there was not a face I recognised and yet they were not strangers. I have long since learnt anyway that it is only from people we love that we create strangers. These people were my people. I felt that as strongly in that moment as I had ever had before in my life, anywhere, even in Schwerentin. I knew that even in the whisper of despair about Ilse's death, about the fact that I was too late for something fundamentally important, I was in the only place I wanted to be. Schwerentin was not an illusion. I didn't know what it was, but an unrealisable dream was out of the question now.' (p.53)

For the moment, however, I will share two correspondences with you, for each of them in their own way, represents the heart of my educational and ontological values:

28.9.93.

Dear Professor Ely,

Strange to call you that when in my mind I picture you as 'I, Margot'! (This alludes to her paper originally given at the CARN Conference and acting as the basis for a collaborative set of papers which Hyde Publications subsequently published (Ely, 1993). Anyway, Professor Ely, I am writing to you on behalf of Jack Whitehead who is convening the forthcoming World Congress on Action Research, Action Learning and Process Management here at the University from 6-9 July, 1994. I do hope that you will be able to come. Perhaps organise a symposium, a workshop or papers. I am enclosing details which should be useful.

I am one of Jack's Ph.D. students (writing up). My thesis is about evaluating the quality of my educative relationships with my Initial Teacher Education students through something I am terming an aesthetic morphology. I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you how much I have valued your writing during these three years. I especially loved the CARN critical conversations no.5. Jack returned from the CARN conference at which you gave a talk buzzing about rhetoric and the power of the orator. Those talks about your address have been central to getting together my own ideas about the place of rhetoric and representation in educational narratives. What you have to say about narrative in educational writing has always struck a chord with me. Maintaining authenticity within oneself and as guardian of it for the other when representing multifaceted experiences is really hard to do. 'Circles within Circles' has also been very helpful in that respect.

In due course (when I can siphon off a copy from the photocopiers) I would like to send you a copy of a dissertation of one of Jack's M.Ed. students whom I helped to tutor. CC Lin comes from Taiwan to where she has just returned. Her dissertation is an appeal to the deep and hidden mythologies beneath the carapace we armour ourselves with against the world. It is called, 'Action Research: a Process of Becoming'. This is her abstract:

This thesis attempts to bring life to the writer's educational development as a process of becoming through an action research approach by asking the kind of question, 'How do I improve?...In finding a form, a way of articulating the unnameable, this thesis is presented in an experimental form in terms of the mythological scenario and the employment of metaphorical devices. It hopes to explicate the art of a dialectician who holds together both the one and the many that is being constituted by a reflective conversation within the writer's inner selves in harmony with the environment. One of the distinctive features of this thesis is the understanding of an aesthetic standard of judgement which can be used to test the validity of a claim to know an individual's educational development as a form of art.

There is something within CC's work which goes beyond any representation of an individual's educational development that I have ever seen. She takes as her theme the juxtaposition of the meaninglessness with the meaningfulness of life and sees how that conflict has affected her own insights this year on the course: she had a tough year.

It's been a real pleasure writing to you. I hope I will see you next year at the Congress. Please don't hesitate to get in touch should there be anything I can help you with.

Warmest regards,

Moirra Laidlaw

(Sort of Congress Administrator)

Because of my reading and, I hope, understanding of her work (Ely, 1991, 1993) I felt that the slightly risky tone of the letter would be met with acceptance, perhaps even pleasure. This seemed to be the case when I received a handwritten reply in which she offered to open up a dialogue with

me on ways of formalising communication between 'strangers' at the Congress next year. I have since written back.

I also wrote to Colin Henry whom I met in 1992 when he was visiting the University.

27.9.93.

Dear Colin,

I am writing on behalf of Jack Whitehead to enclose details of the forthcoming World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management which is being jointly convened by Professor Pamela Lomax of Kingston University, London, and Jack here at Bath. With your extensive experience in the first two world congresses I hope that you will be able to contribute to these proceedings.

I enjoyed meeting you last year when you came to Bath and thought that you might also be interested in the enclosed flier about Jack's new book which has just been published by Hyde Publications (Jean McNiff's publishing house). I also wanted to say how much I enjoyed your contribution to the CARN Critical Conversations. Collective Autonomy! Absolutely. A few additional oxymorons spring to mind. What about 'uncertain positivists' or even 'contented Ph.D. students!' (The latter, you might gather, is a personally heartfelt comment!)

I do hope to hear from you soon. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if there is anything I can help you with.

Best Wishes,

'[The ideal would be that] people would have to know personally every member of the community, and those days are long gone, except for here in Schwerentin. I have long since believed that only in very small communities can one have the quality of communication necessary to promote true comradeship.' (p.11)

I can't know everyone I write to for the Congress, but I can pay attention to detail. I can interact with them in ways which suggest my genuine desire to communicate, always in the hope that something will grow organically and reach a mature flowering. By caring about individuals I care about communities and the link there is communion mediated through love. My golden tapestry is threaded with love, a concern for truth, and a desire to communicate both of them. The highest aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships is my ontology realised within human interactions to enable us to lead better lives. It is a love of humanity which spurs me on, a love which is grounded in an ontology balanced between pain and joy, within the paradox at the heart of all human existence. As an individual exercising the right to act from my own point of view, responsibly, and with universal intent:

*I seize that paradox
and in so doing
tip the balance
from nothingness
to being,
and from being,
to being together,
and from being together
to becoming*

and from becoming to becoming together'.

(Ph.D. Journal)

For as the Tao Te Ching states:

The Tao gives birth to One.
One gives birth to Two.
Two gives birth to Three.
Three gives birth to all things.

I want to present you now with one final excerpt from 'Returning'. It is a pivotal one for it comes right at the end of the novel. And within it, I believe that I express a fundamental orientation to my reality, whether expressed in education or within my life as a whole:

'Sometimes it is hard to allow the flux of our lives and intentions (which after all, are our destinies as well) simply to flow. It is hard not to mix up self-interest with intention, not to confuse desire with need and wishes with rights. Whatever I had found in Schwerentin, I belonged to it and it to me. Whatever had drawn me to this place had kept me faithful for twenty years and it was real. It had enriched my existence beyond the telling and now I owed it a debt of gratitude which only with my life could I repay...

... I had come full circle. I had come home.' (p.60)

I think this final quotation from 'Returning' shows clearly the values with which I have imbued Schwerentin. I find in certain phrases an articulation of what synthesises for me the four aspects of my practice in education. I will now present these phrases and then say how and why they are significant.

The fictional Schwerentin stands as a metaphor for the desire that I set out in the Introduction to Part Three: to fuse in spirit and in practice my ontology (**allowing the flux of our lives to flow**), my educational knowledge (**not to confuse desire with needs and wishes with rights**) which I seek to live out, with the ethics (**I owed it a debt of gratitude which only with my life could I repay**) within my educative relationships.

Let me take each of those phrases in turn and defend its symbolism. What has my ontology to do with '**allowing the flux of our lives to flow**'? I hope that I have shown in this section that for me the theory of my own being is concerned with accessing a state of existence which enhances my sense of value both of myself and other human beings. It is a state of being which perceives the value of humanity and my place in it. It is also one which sees responsibility to others as pivotal within human relationships.

And what has '**not to confuse desire with needs and wishes with rights**' to do with my educational knowledge? My theory of educational knowledge is created from attempts to live out a role as an educator in which I enable myself and others to come to responsible perceptions of the world through communication evolved within educative relationships. I perceive it as axiomatic that responsible perceptions of the world include those in which valuing the worth of others is central. I believe I can only effect this educative communication through a conscious synthesis of the ontological, ethical, aesthetic as well as educational principles which have been described and explained within this thesis.

Pivotal is, I believe, the ethical dimensions of what I have explained above: '**I owed it (Schwerentin) a debt of gratitude which only with my life could I**

repay'. What is the debt and the gratitude? Why are these ethical issues for me? The debt comes from my ontology which perceives responsibility to myself and others as an integral way I can interact with the world, and in so doing I am imbued with a sense of purpose and meaning for my own life. This gives me joy. This is the gratitude I feel. If you like, put simply, I have been blessed with a vocational sense of purpose and meaning in my life. What else can I do but repay it with my life? I have to do it. Anything else would be an abnegation of both how I perceive my purpose and my responsibility.

And where now is the aesthetics of this particular development? When writing the conclusion to the novel, I was deeply moved by what it seemed to enable me to give voice to. I knew then, although I was not able to express it directly (I had expressed it metaphorically) that it meant something profound for my life in education and my life as a whole. I knew that it represented an aesthetically meaningful articulation of my deepest values. I believe it is the synthesis of the ontology, educational knowledge and the ethics in 'Returning' wherein, I believe, lies its aesthetic value. And it is drawing reality out of the fiction and trying to enact it within my educative relationships, and then trying to represent it fairly to all concerned in the relationships, in which the validity of this section and of the values underpinning this thesis reside. Thus to draw out an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships and to use the insights to enhance the educational quality of the relationships and the processes drawn from them, I am claiming, is to realise a significant educational power for the good. I believe I have demonstrated an educational synthesis between the true, the beautiful and the good in my educational life. (N.B. 1996 - See Epilogues for further explanation of this claim.)

At the beginning of this Part Three (after the Introduction) I quoted this from Tony Ghaye in reference to ontological authenticity (which I have shown is related to the educational knowledge, the ethics and the aesthetics of my practice):

'How far have the understandings of the participants improved, clarified, matured, expanded, and been elaborated upon during the process of the research? Can the participant(s) attest to the fact that they now understand the issue better, understand a broader range of issues or appreciate that which they have previously failed to understand fully?'

I believe that I have shown a marked development in terms of my understanding of the issues involved. I believe that this, given the nature of the understanding, will mean a development (however formative) within the work of people like Kevin, Justine, Jacqui, Sarah and CC, although I recognise that it is early days for such a claim. I believe it is partly due to the my perceived synthesis (discussed in Part One) between truth and care which I now consciously try to enact within educative relationships. Holland (1975) has this to say about such a synthesis:

'The connected [group] constructs truth not through conflict but through consensus, whose original meaning...was 'feeling or sensing together', implying not agreement, necessarily, but a 'crossing of the barrier between ego and ego', bridging private and shared experience.' (p.291)

When I started writing this section (a couple of weeks before the Validation Meeting at Wootton Bassett on 21.10.93.) I thought I was outlining a straightforward conclusion to a thesis which was about showing the significance of developing a notion of an aesthetic morphology of my

educative relationships as itself an educational process. My spirit, always more prescient than my intellect, would not let it rest there. It is not that I necessarily understand more about the issues, but I can at least point to a more elaborate awareness of what the issues are.

In a typical Action Research manner, this thesis has encouraged me to search for increasingly educational questions (Nixon, 1981). My search for the golden thread, as I originally termed it, has found the value of developing a conscious and working synthesis between my ontology, ethics, and aesthetics into educational knowledge. Here, then, is my new question:

'How can I utilise my understanding of the significance of a reconciliation (Hegel, 1802) of my ontology with its ethics and their relationship to my educational knowledge within my future educational practice?'

It is out of that reconciliation which I draw the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships. It is within a lived realisation of the educational validity of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships that resides the most worth, I would claim, that I can offer my own existence. I am thinking of my work as an educator who seeks to improve her practice in order to improve the quality of learning for all involved in the processes.

I offer this **tentative action plan** (see concluding chapter, Whitehead, 1993b) as an imagined solution to the above question:

- I wish to edit a collection of my (ex) students' action research enquiry reports. The students, Jean McNiff (with Hyde Publications) and I have already talked about this and have decided that one way forward would be to taperecord conversations between myself and the new teachers at our

meeting on 27.11.93. as preludes to each report. This would minimise my authorial voice and maximise theirs. (See Davies, Kennard and Hogan, 1993, with insights on the value of collaborative reports);

- I wish to publish my initial teacher-education guide (again with Hyde Publications) but I will need to rewrite parts of it to bring up to date some of the political context in which initial teacher education is now placed, and also my own developing insights where appropriate;

- I wish until next July to continue with the organisation of the 3rd World Congress in Action Research, Action Learning and Process Management which I highlighted recently in this section. I aim to improve the quality of my understanding about such organisational processes as I am now beginning to see the value of ways of thinking which encourage others from varying backgrounds and experiences to come together in an attempt to account for our work as we seek to improve the quality of what we are doing. I wish to promote the values underpinning my understanding of communal ways of working which I have explored in this thesis;

- I need to continue to research a process of facilitating educational action enquiries with students as within such a process I come closer to an understanding of how to live a more ontologically authentic existence. And living an ontologically authentic existence enables me in turn to contribute to my life in education. This may in the near future necessitate a change of life-style in terms of location and occupation.

Epilogue to Part Three

My Ontology: A Question of Emphasis

*'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say -
What manner of man art thou?'*

**Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.'**

July, 1996. In this Epilogue I would like to show the relationship of Part Three to the thesis and to the rest of my claim to be creating my own living educational theory through an account of my educational development. I perceive Part Three to be consciously concerned with a search for the place of my own ontology within my educative relationships and development. My second claim to educational knowledge was largely constructed from this section of the thesis: *'The analysis of my own fiction is an ontological guide to my effectiveness in turning my educational values into action.'*

Together with The General Prologue and these Epilogues, I am most pleased with Part Three. This is because I believe they all reveal the greatest synthesis of my ethical and ontological values in action with learners. Aesthetically, they please me because, as Foshay (1995) terms it:

'[something] is aesthetically sound in the sense that its form, content, style and structure fit one another exceptionally well, and that its substance is worth serious attention.' (p.9)

Kivy (1990) also emphasises the importance of coming to conclusions about what merits serious attention. He expresses it thus:

'I would think that those practical issues which we call profound are just those that go to the heart of the human condition.'

Through the fictional device of 'Returning' and the experimental form of the representation (Eisner, 1993), I came near in Part Three, to the reality of my struggle of finding the place of the ontological in my own educational development. I believe that the morphology and the content of the section fit one another exceptionally well and that their substance is worthy of serious attention. Through the use of my own fiction, I was able to access my own values more clearly than I could have done without such an enterprise. I believe that I got metaphorically to the heart of my own condition. 'Returning' I perceive as a personally profound piece of writing.

What I did not manage then, however, were any insights about the limitations of basing my work in education on a fiction. I was aware when I wrote 'Returning' that, as Lemarque (1990) understood:

'We are invited by a story-teller not just to reflect passively on propositional content but also to recognize and take up attitudes to that content.' (p.110)

I perceived fiction as a direct pathway to the kinds of truths I was seeking: in my own ontology and educational knowledge. What I failed to see was:

'What is true in a fictional world...is always truth relative to a thematic interpretation. A reader...needs to make sense of a work, establishing...the points of view and values implicit in it before proposing an account of its content or what it is about.' (op cit, p.111)

I am not apologising for writing fiction at all. I enjoy it, and I believe I have some talent for it. However, I now see parallels between my requirement that

readers themselves interpreted the connections to be made in my previous submission of this thesis between the dimensions of my educational practice - i.e. the ethical, the ontological, the aesthetic and the knowledge which coheres them all - and the values I unearthed through the writing of fiction. Instead of guiding the reader through accounting for my values, I presented my values and left the reader to make their own assumptions, hoping that I had constructed the text in such a way that the reader would be led to my own conclusions. I believed that:

'To a large extent whether we respond sympathetically or otherwise to some aspect of fiction is controlled by the way the fictive content is presented.' (op. cit. p.110)

In writing educational narratives rather than make-believe fictions, I take the risk of being challenged in my own interpretations. However, I maintain that I needed to explore my own ontology before I could understand where I stood in the name of education. To understand my own educative relationships, I needed to know who I was in those relationships.

In order to understand my present practice, symbolised by *The General Prologue*, from the point of view of my relationship to fiction as a way of evolving educational meaning, I would like to reveal the development which has taken place in my use of the fictional in representing my own truths. I believe that fiction and the other arts have a particular power to reveal me to myself as I have already outlined in *The General Prologue* and the *Epilogues to Parts One and Two*. This relation of my present emphasis on the use of 'The Ancient Mariner' both within the classroom and in this thesis, to its antecedents - in former experiments with this same poem in the classroom (Laidlaw, 1990), 'Returning' (Laidlaw, 1992b) and an article (Laidlaw, 1994d)

for the World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management which I administered in 1994 - is a helpful way of illuminating the quality and breadth of my educational development.

When I first worked with Initial Teacher Education students in the School of Education at the University of Bath, I ran an English Elective for those wishing to teach English as a second subject. I wrote an article about my use of 'The Ancient Mariner' with a group of 11 and 12 year old boys and girls in a mixed attainment class of 29 in 1988. I reconstructed the account from journal entries made at the time. In this particular process of educating the children about the poem they decided to put the Mariner on trial for Birdslaughter. Although I was delighted with the responsibility they were taking for their own learning, I did not then see the opportunity to combine the power of the poem with the ethical values underlying it in the way in which I could enable the children to learn more about both. I wrote this:

At times their organisation broke down in the next couple of weeks and only at those times did they appeal to me for help. They sometimes asked me on points of law which I wasn't sure about and then they sent people to pester other members of staff or did research in the library, or asked at home etc. They set each other homework and marked it too...If they didn't ask, I didn't interfere. And I felt it would have been interference, not helping, if it had been unsolicited. (p.4)

The metaphorical power of the poem, as I have shown in The General Prologue and begun to explain in these Epilogues, was still disconnected from some of the processes within the classroom. And certainly at the level of representation in that article I cannot back up any claims that the children improved any of the formal aspects of English, or significantly increased their knowledge about the way the poem was constructed. I would also not now

consider it to be interference for me to intervene with the children. Quite the reverse. I perceive it now as vital that I know when and how to intervene in ways which increase the girls' understanding of the curricular and ethical issues surrounding the work we're doing. The poem was an inspiration to us in that 1988 classroom, something I think the article (Laidlaw, 1990) can substantiate. However, I believe now that I have developed a better understanding of the relationship in my own practice and theorising about that practice, of the ways in which the closer weaving together of the values in fiction and their realisation can enhance the quality of learning.

In 1992, in 'Returning', I created a world in which people always evolve beyond the I-It relationship (Buber, 1923) which is characterised by the objectification of others to one's own designs. They experience I-You and even I-Thou relationships in which all others are respected and honoured. (See the Epilogue to Part Two for a fuller description of these relationships.) The hero has to mature over 21 years beyond his propensity to objectify others before he can take up his place as the head of the community at last. The citizens achieve a relationship with the universe that the Mariner only reaches through the pain he has created in his life. In this small principality people take responsibility for their actions through self-knowledge, and the aim of their existence is evolution to higher forms of relating, both as individuals and members of their community. It was my Utopia. When I wrote it I was moved, and still am, to recreate it around me. However, it articulated insights which I did not then know how to enact in the world. It remained at the level of an ideal, whose expression articulated for the first time something of my own ontology.

An interesting feature of this Utopia is that there is no ontological development in anyone but the main character. They have already achieved

what Jung (1923) called individuation and have no need of living contradictions to teach them how to evolve further. In other words they have transcended the 'inner fiends' which plague the Mariner and force him to kill the albatross, and spend their lives in an appropriate adoption of their personal responsibilities, in harmony with themselves, each other and creation as a whole. In my terms they have settled their aesthetic imbalances. The hero aspires to this state of being through years of hardship and loneliness. His initial intuition of the awesome nature of the principality, which he takes away with him as an ideal, is years in the maturation towards a conscious acceptance of his responsibility in maintaining it in the real world. In the end he sacrifices everything he has in material terms, and returns in order to put into practice what his ontology has been aware of all his life, but for which he has lacked the courage to take the responsibility before.

As Hanfling (1992) says:

'Problems about the ontology of a work of Art are not problems only for philosophers. They are connected with practical questions about how the works concerned should be performed'. (p.87)

Although Hanfling is referring to the performance of music, I can interpret his comments in the context of my own educational enquiry. It has taken me years to understand, just like the hero in the story, what it means for me to try to create in the real world what I created in 'Returning'. Whereas I believe that the analysis of 'Returning' in Part Three enabled me to come close to understanding my own ontology, **it failed to show me how to improve my educational processes** as a result. The wording of my second claim to knowledge in this thesis is revealing in this limitation. This fiction acted as a

guide to my effectiveness in turning my educational values into action, but not as a tutor to my values in order to improve them. I was thus denying a rich potential for development which lies at the heart of this thesis: that values are developmental rather than static, and thus the means through which they can be evaluated should also be developmental. I am not denying the importance of understanding my own ontology, but as a dimension of my educational processes such an approach lacked generativity (McNiff, 1993) which I agree is a vital aspect of the living nature of my educational enquiries (Whitehead and Laidlaw, 1995; Laidlaw, 1996).

When the Hermit asks the Mariner who he is, the 'hero' can only answer through recounting his tale. He has learnt how fully implicated he is in the tales he tells. Indeed, for him, the narration represents his absolute acceptance of his responsibility for his actions. In 1992, 'Returning' was my story and I am still proud of having written it. However, I have moved on since then as I have shown in The General Prologue. My story has now ceased to be one in which I draw analogies without trying to show how they work in the real world. In 'Returning' the metaphors are there to be read: that human existence 'should' be about loving and responsible relationships in which individuals come to know their place in the scheme of things as they lead lives full of worthwhile activity; people are responsible for their actions and 'must' help others to perceive and then live this truth; Life is inherently meaningful and the universe 'requires' positive moral interactions with it in order for evolution to be sustained; we live in a dialectical relationship to Being and we realise this as we try to lead good and happy lives.

In integrating the above metaphors into the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships with my pupils through 'The Ancient Mariner' epic, I believe I have gone much further in my educational aims than when I

explicated my ontological values in my fiction as was my original intention. This development has not happened suddenly. Although I do not wish to attribute a causal link between intention and outcome, I can perceive a pattern in my adoption of fictional devices. When I administered the World Congress I wrote an article entitled: 'Accountability as Responsibility and Point of View' (Laidlaw, 1994d). In it I wrote the following:

'[This paper] traces the pathway from job to vocation. One of the ways it does this is to include extracts from a film, whose theme centres on a growing acceptance of the hero's ontological responsibility for others. I will not be commenting directly on these extracts but using them to show metaphorically my reasons for taking this Congress so seriously: I believe that striving actively towards what I, in collaboration with others, perceive as the good, can help to move this world to a better place. Part of what it means to do good is revealed through my coming to understand what it signifies to take responsibility for my actions in the world and to become accountable for that process.' (p.120)

As usual I am concerned with responsibility (see the Epilogue to Part Two for further elaboration of the meaning of this emphasis). I outlined what I meant by responsibility then by using the fictional character of Katya in the film I am alluding to as a metaphor for the purpose of my educational endeavours:

'I want a world in which individuals and groups can come together to celebrate the variety and richness of our existence...I want a world in which Katya is surrounded by loving adults who enable her to realise her own unique potential within a social framework committed to democratic processes...' (p.124)

This is still, however, in the realm of fiction. Katya is a fictional character in a drama which stirs me in similar ways to 'The Ancient Mariner'. However, I believe that not only has the representation of my educational values improved since I wrote that article (become more trustworthy in other words (Kincheloe, 1991: 135 - see the Epilogues to Parts Two and Four)) but that such an improvement has required me to improve my practice with learners in order for that to be so. This has been partly through the processes I related in the first two Parts of this thesis - with their Epilogues - but also my deeper understanding of what it means to know myself in the name of education. I have had to balance the ethics and ontology of my educational practice in order to describe and explain my educational knowledge sufficiently (see Epilogue One). The ethics of my practice have generally needed enhancing as the Epilogue to Part Two substantiates. In my previous submission of the thesis, I had not balanced my ethics and ontology carefully enough **in the name of education**, to validate my claims to educational knowledge. In Part Three I sought the place of my own ontology **without recognising the importance of connecting whilst finding out**. I thought I could do it in isolation. Take a dimension of my practice and illuminate it.

In the representation within this thesis in terms of the Epilogues and Prologues I am still faced with that problem. Through this structure I am making a partially arbitrary distinction between the aesthetics, ethics, ontology and knowledge in my practice. However, that is explicitly with the desire to render my practice and knowledge comprehensible within my art as a dialectician (which I will explain in detail in the Epilogue to Part Four). Although they do not exist separately, pulling them apart can show more clearly how they fit together. I believe that one of the main functions of these Epilogues is to show how the dimensions of my educational practice and

knowledge fit together. And it is most specifically within my own relationship to fiction that I discover a useful way of describing my own values. It is a useful starting point. My mistake was in thinking it was an end point for ways of explaining my educative relationships, educational development and in creating my living educational theory.

Our introduction to the Mariner is an interesting one. Coleridge does give us a brief description of him in the opening stanzas, describing him as having a long grey beard, glittering eyes and skinny hands. The Wedding Guest characterises him as *'a grey-beard loon'*. Once we get into the story, however, the Mariner tells us nothing about himself as he was before he kills the albatross. He doesn't even mention himself until the simple statement:

*'With my cross-bow
I shot the albatross.'*

There is no emotion, no description, no suggestion of motive. There seems to be no inner landscape. It is as if he does not exist at all as an individual until he disturbs the balance of the universe. Although the other mariners make a pet of the bird over the weeks that it follows their ship, we have no way of knowing that the Mariner is even there. He does not tell us of any interactions with the other sailors. We are not told that he feeds the bird as they do. In other words he is already adrift from the rest of humanity and creation before he kills the bird. After he has killed the albatross, then he becomes a part of the narrative:

*'And I had done a hellish thing
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.'*

He has now chosen to act in this morally-decisive universe - in other words a universe which is not neutral but one in which individuals join forces with good or evil. And it is a conscious choice that the individual has the power to make. The Mariner's choice was for evil. The result of his evil choice is in stark contrast to a good experience which Fisher (1988) writes about:

'Before the epiphany I stood apart from the world and the world was not worth being with. The experience of [the epiphany] was redemptive of the world which surrounded [me] in apparent worthlessness...it was the coming together of world and soul.'

(p. 68)

Had the Mariner chosen good rather than evil, which is his responsibility, then his world would have been infused with good purpose and meaning and eventually awe. I believe it is largely through actions that we reflect back to ourselves and others who we are.

Before I had my epiphany in Zarrentin in (East) Germany I had not experienced my own relationship to the world. I experienced a sensation of being both separate from, and fully implicated in, the universe. The silence that day as I sat on a bench overlooking trees, a clear sky and a dilapidated cathedral, I perceived as the heartbeat of the universe. I experienced this silence as awe and after a while could not distinguish my own boundaries from anything around me. Not only was everything around me beautiful and awesome, but I was too because I was a part of it as everyone else is. I was overcome in a similar way I have often been with works of art, especially the sacred music of Bach. What was different about this experience was that it

happened in the world and not in the contemplation of it. In addition it put me in touch with my immortality.

Let me explain this. When I have an aesthetic experience, as I explained in the Epilogue to Part One, I am moved beyond myself through reaching inside, discovering my capacity for love, and then reaching out again into the world with the desire to act on my feelings. When I sat on the bench in Zarrentin, the world seemed to come into me, not the other way round. It was a different kind of aesthetic experience than I have had before or since. It was characterised by the above perceptions of a widening capacity for love and the desire to move outward in order to effect this feeling with others in the world, but it also contained intimations of immortality: I felt as if I were connected to Being and thus transcended my own physical temporality. My sense of immortality broadened my usual aesthetic experience. It had the gift of pointing out to me more forcefully than with other aesthetic experiences, my space in the universe - not just physically, metaphysically, emotionally, and psychologically but in terms of chronology as well. In T.S. Eliot's (1942) words I experienced '*the intersection of the timeless moment with time.*'

I believe that writing 'Returning', which was a direct response to the experience, was a choice I made for the good. It enabled me to articulate something of what I wanted to become and the kind of world I wanted to inhabit. It also enabled me to hang onto the experience both through the writing of the text and the subsequent readings of it. It has taken four years for that linguistic representation to be turned into actions. I believe that the work in the Year Seven classroom, as represented in The General Prologue, comes closest to the values I outlined in the novel. One of the reasons I think I was able to do the work with the Year Seven group and then represent it in an ontologically authentic way (see below) was because of my grasp of the

connections to be made between representation and meaning. And by 'ontological authenticity' here, I find Tillich (1952) helpful when he writes:

'It is the function of an ontological concept to use some realm of experience to point towards the characteristics of being-itself which lie above the split between subjectivity and objectivity.' (p.34)

In other words what is ontologically authentic is what lies above the split between the subjective and the objective. When I wrote 'Returning' I was attempting to articulate my values in ways which were aesthetically pleasing. I am still aesthetically pleased by it. However, when I used it to highlight my educational values I had stepped between the ontological and the epistemological without noticing. I claimed its values as educational without accounting for my actions in the world. If my ontological authenticity were to have educational relevance, then I would need to straddle the dialectic between the objective and subjective realms more carefully through my intentional actions in the world **over time**. I would need, in the language already used above, to reveal intimations of immortality in my actions and not just my words. To harness my ontological authenticity in the name of education. Yamamoto (1990) says about this in terms of mentoring:

'authentic mentors thus hope and will for their charges. In so doing the mentors themselves may catch a glimpse of their own immortality.' (p.186)

This ties in with my understanding about educational intentions. I perceive being an educator as, amongst other things, an investment in the future. Educating is, for me, an explicit avowal of my faith in the future as a worthwhile place to be. It is also a way of ensuring its worthwhileness.

Sometimes, especially in the classroom with children, I perceive my life as part of a rich continuum of human existence, stretching back and forward beyond my conceptual understanding, yet real in the sense that an aesthetic experience is real to me or that 'The Ancient Mariner' is real. To have such an experience in the classroom shows me the links between my own ontology and the purpose of understanding it in the name of education.

My growing understanding about judging the quality of what I am doing in the name of education **over time** will be dealt with in more detail in the Epilogue to Part Four when I discuss the significance of the immanent dialectic at the heart of all my educational meanings.