

**“LIVING THE DREAM” ATOP WHISTLER MOUNTAIN:
THE MALAISE OF MODERNITY AND VANCOUVER’S LEISURE CULTURE**

by

SAMUEL GREGORY JOHNS

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Abstract

Our modern age is purportedly like a mountain; high and mighty, worthy in stature and significance. Perhaps we live in the Everest era, atop the summit of achievements in science, technology, and innovation. If so, then modernity should be viewed as untroubled progress. Yet Charles Taylor's malaise of modernity presents us with a rather different view. Given the pervasive logics of individualism, instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom, the onward march of modernity should perhaps be met with more resistance. Taylor charges us to recognize such inherent contestation.

The case study of a leisure culture in Vancouver, British Columbia, sheds light on this tension. An elite class of young urban professionals is observed to respond to Taylor's malaise by escaping and returning to nature, notably the Coast Mountains. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted to examine their refusals of the metropolitan auspices of the malaise, manifest in the pursuit of heroism, awe and wonder, and vitality, all of which reify mountain culture. Yet the call and response are far from simple. Rather, a riddle of sorts emerges. Given the logics, technologies, and terrain of escape, the grip of the malaise seems as tight on the mountainside as in the metropolis.

Taylor serves as a valuable guide in this fraught terrain. His 'work of retrieval' informs a pursuit of the richer sources feeding this culture. Logics of social atomism, fragmentation, and instrumentalism are examined. In doing so, a critique of radical anthropocentrism is mounted, challenging the young professionals' attitudes towards fulfillment. Does this quest for meaning negate nature, society, history, tradition, and even God? These questions reveal potential limits to the modern frame, in its individualized, secularized, and subjectivized versions.

The mountain emerges as a powerful conceptual image amidst this analysis. In times of clarity and confusion, the permanence and perspective of the mountain are to be treasured. Whilst Leopold's call of 'Thinking like a Mountain' is considered, the limitations of *a* mountainous group, *in* the Coast Mountains, *atop* the 21st Century informational mountain are duly noted. The hope is that Taylor's 'work of retrieval' can, after all, enlarge the frame.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent intellectual work by the author, S. Johns. The fieldwork reported was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H12-02624.

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Acknowledgements

I believe it was the French essayist Montaigne who first said ‘I have here only made a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the thread that ties them’. This phrase has since been used in a variety of ways, not least by Elvin Wyly who said his writings simply gathered a posie of other men’s flowers. I echo this sentiment here, cognisant of the fact that it is only the string that binds these thoughts together that is my own. For this, I am indebted to many and would like to thank *all* those who have given me immeasurable help beyond that which I could have asked for or imagined. Primarily, I owe particular thanks to my supervisor, Dr. David Ley, for his intrepid appraisals. I have benefited immensely, as many others too can confess, from our ongoing dialogue and it has been a rightful privilege to study under his direction. The Canadian Rhodes Scholars Foundation has been exceedingly generous in funding both my studies at The University of British Columbia and my time in Vancouver; thank you all. My second reader, Dr. Elvin Wyly, was both a teacher and conversation partner throughout this exhilarating process. We enjoyed innumerable lengthy repartees together. Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to the many who have been great companions along the way: JP, Michael Scott, Justin Lenny, Nellie Salter, Kelsey Martin, Jamie Rigby, Warren Hanvold, Roger Revell, Paul Chambers, Justin Vaughan, Don Lewis, Craig Gay, Gordon and Ute Carkner, Sam Walker, Julianne Collard, Duncan Ranslem, Paige Patchin, and our entire cohort in Geography. The twenty anonymous respondents from Vancouver should also be thanked for their time and generosity of spirit. Last but not least, I would like to thank my family, near and far, for their unwavering support.

To Mike, a fellow pioneer and intrepid explorer of the New World.

Chapter :1 Introduction

*'Mountains are the beginning and
end of all natural scenery'
(John Ruskin, 1856:20)*

Modernity is surely a mountainous endeavour. Indeed, our modern age can be equated to a mountain, as we inhabit an epoch in history of numerous pinnacles: summits of achievement in science, technology, innovation, and the like. This putative sophistication should place us firmly at the peak of the most advanced society that has ever been. Atop this apex, the views are surely spectacular. Yet notes of scepticism are not hard to hear. This pyramid of progress continues to be beset by problems of old, demanding a fresh look. Certainly, we need to recognize that many of our realities today are extremely nuanced¹. Of one thing we can be certain, though, that is that modern people yearn for perspective. We long for the time and space to register the magnitude of our surroundings. These instances of immensity are so easily eclipsed that our appetite for them seems never to be satiated. For some, this is enough to eclipse the appetite all-together – hence widespread apathy and ignorance. For others, these rare glimpses of remote jewels in time, space, and scale open the stable door to other worlds, novel ways of thinking, and the boundless terrain of imaginative possibilities.

Mountains stand tall and proud, with a vast temporal richness and spatial extent. Few would debate this point. The view from atop them can be mystifying and bewildering, with a passionate mix of both fearful awe and youthful exhilaration. Yet there is also more to mountains than this mere material side. The mountain itself embodies success, achievement, and attainment. The summit is but the icing on the cake, in view of the arduous climb that preceded it, the years of preparation to attempt it, and the life-long formation for such a moment. Indeed, to look upon a mountain is to gaze upon stature, renown, and significance. The mountain is a momentous metaphor. As such, the image of mountains has become rife in our times as a signifier of status and success, with its attendant material and metaphorical meanings. Yet this begs a simple question. What is this all about? What is it this mountain that we are climbing?

¹ Indeed, 'the nature of modern culture is more subtle and complex' (Taylor, 1991:11) than we often recognize.

The Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor (1991), speaks of the *Malaise of Modernity* as a defining feature of our times. According to Taylor (p.1), this 'malaise' is manifest in 'features of our contemporary culture and society that people experience as a loss or a decline, even as our civilization “develops”'. These experiences of loss and decline come to colour our sense of hope, posing demanding questions of the onward march of modernity. Growth, progress, innovation, research and development, science and technology, profit and gain all seem to be under scrutiny. In part, it seems this march continues relatively undisturbed, surviving shocks, tremors and even crises. Yet increasingly, the ends are questioned and thrown into relativizing dissent. Taylor suggests that pervasive logics of fragmentation and social atomism further this cause. Specifically, he cites individualism, instrumental reason, and a resultant loss of freedom as the three prongs of the 'malaise of modernity'.

This thesis takes these musings to the mountains themselves, notably the Coast Mountains of British Columbia. Taylor's thesis is interrogated at the local scale through a case study of the leisure lifestyles, attitudes and habits of young professionals working in the downtown core of Vancouver. It seems that leisure in getaway locations provides a crucial antidote to Taylor's (1991) thesis regarding the maelstrom of our times. Specifically, the mountain emerges as a site of escape and retrieval: in a locale both *above* and *away* from the city, as well as in a liminal space of sociability, natural wonder, appreciation and engagement. Evidently the mountain is a site of powerful meanings, in both material and metaphorical terms. It affords its visitors perspective and poise, embodying itself the very characteristics of permanence, stature, and durability. This translates into metaphysical resonances that have long been celebrated. Yet under closer scrutiny, few of these attributes stand the test. It seems rather, that ulterior logics can be perceived and a riddle observed.

Throughout this examination, the analytical purchase of the mountain-scape is employed in at least three ways. In the physical realm, the Coast Mountains of British Columbia frame the engagement with the mountain-scape. Located in so-called 'Beautiful British Columbia' – nothing short of the (self-acclaimed) 'Best Place on Earth' – the splendour of the Coast Range provides a natural case study. On the metaphysical plane, however, the mountainous peak, or pinnacle, has two more meanings. Firstly, it is captured in the demographic standing of the

sample set: an urban elite of young professionals including some who are the social and career climbers of the corporate world, aspiring to the status of the 1% and forming a peak cohort. Secondly, the peak also embodies Robert Bateman's claims concerning our particular standing in world history, with the 'spectacular views' afforded by the informational mountain of the present. He writes (2000:121): 'At the beginning of a new millennium, we all stand at the top of a mountain that offers us spectacular views in all directions. We have more knowledge of nature than any other civilization in history...we who live in the 21st Century know more, own more and exert more power over our environment than any who have come before us'.

In all of these applications, Charles Taylor's (1991) 'malaise' is investigated, noting both its insidious reach and pervasive mechanics. Necessarily, this poses questions of the meaning and metric of modernity's 'progress'. In this case, the relationship between mountain and metropolis frames the questions being asked, employing juxtaposition for good measure, since contrast is the mother of all clarity. Taylor (1991:58) argues that an element of the modern frame is its narrow focus on the individual, fostering a form of 'radical anthropocentrism'. In terms of fulfilment, this emphasis can negate 'history, tradition, society, nature, or God' (ibid.) from the frame of reference. Such an assertion poses fundamental questions of the hubris of human perception. In terms of the natural world, the American ecologist, Aldo Leopold (1949:295), is instructive, reminding us of the value of nature, not least the mountain, in 'building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind'. I shall argue that the need for recognition, appreciation, engagement, and a growth in perception are pressing indeed. These frame a central tenet of this thesis, re-energizing Taylor's (1991:72) call for a 'work of retrieval'.

The thesis is composed of four main chapters, each of which are connected yet deal with a distinct theme. Chapter 2 introduces the case study of Vancouver, explicating the concepts and methods of approach employed in this study. Specifically, the history of this city and its surrounding area are noted, prior to emphasizing the peak cohort of young urban professionals interviewed. Three specific mountains are identified: in the demographic profile of these interviewees, in their affinities and practices of frequenting the Coast Mountains of British Columbia, and in their standing upon an informational mountain, unique to our present moment in both time and space. Debates surrounding 'Vancouverism' (Kataoka, 2009) frame some of the

contentions already voiced about this population segment, noting in particular the boon and the bust of lifestyles espoused in this liveable city.

Chapter 3 plunges into the mass of qualitative data collected, noting the refusals to Taylor's (1991) 'malaise of modernity' enacted by these leisure enthusiasts. Specifically, three retorts are perceived and analysed; escapism and the search for heroism; returns to nature and the quest for awe and wonder; and the pursuits of vitality in life and meaning. Taylor's thesis seems to experience push back from these (often self-professed) 'weekend warriors', escaping the metropolis and returning to the mountains in particular. Chapter 4, however, takes a critical line of enquiry on these refusals of the malaise. In particular, a number of riddles are noted in these retorts. Indeed, the logics, technologies, and terrains of escapes and returns seem to be undermined. The analysis even reveals a degree of intensification of the malaise, rather than dissipation, atop the mountain. This irony is explicated and documented from the data, revealing the compromised nature of the various escapes.

Finally, in view of this fraught terrain, Chapter 5 considers a 'work of retrieval' by examining the hubris of mountain-top claims. It seems the lifestyles of this urban elite are laced with intimations of denial and deception, both of which demand honesty. Instances of evasion, ignorance, and illusion are investigated in the hope and pursuit of richer sources feeding the culture under examination. Yet administering such honesty can have wider implications, beyond the purview of this small lifestyle enclave. Clearly Taylor's (1991) own work on the 'malaise of modernity' extends not only to the mountain, but also to a critique of modernity, or perhaps *hypomodernity*, writ large. This work is commenced under the banner of *transmodernity*, redirecting our view of both material and metaphysical mountains. In view of all these interpretations, the mountain itself emerges as compromised in both image and practice, yet retains a degree of nobility throughout.

Chapter :2 Concepts, methods, and introduction to Vancouver

'As a newcomer to the city I spent a lot of time that summer walking and cycling around the city, in the double role of both tourist and geographer trying to get a feel for the city. On a tour of Granville Island and False Creek, I remember saying to David Ley that I thought Vancouver was 'unreal, too perfect, a chocolate box city'. I thought it resembled a 'city on Prozac'. It was the image of Vancouver that struck me initially, but I had much more to learn.'
(Loretta Lees, 2001:57)

The city of Vancouver was given its European name in 1792 when the British naval officer, Captain George Vancouver, sailed in to the Strait of Georgia. His voyage enacted a story of settler colonialism that has intrigued scholars (and troubled many others) for decades. The progression of the furs and fish trade in the region, alongside a growing lumber industry, was paralleled by a sadder, darker story. The shocking regression of the First Nations population in British Columbia was triggered by unforeseen outbreaks of smallpox epidemics late in the 18th Century, overwhelming native tribes and almost exterminating the population. The continued contestation of this story through the decades – with differing accounts from different sources – as well as the ensuing political debates it evoked, has been the topic of study for one of Canada's most pre-eminent geographers, Cole Harris. He reminds us that 'non-Native British Columbians need to understand, as now they hardly do, how non-Native power took root in this province' (1997:67). This clarion call, whilst specific in Harris' case and different in this thesis, forms the basis for a work of retrieval that informs the whole of this study.

Unlike passengers aboard the Canadian Pacific 374, riding the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) train on May 23rd, 1887 to be the first arrivals in this blooming settlement, passengers today are far more likely to arrive by airplane. YVR, Vancouver's International Airport, welcomes its travellers with the luxurious sounds of flowing water in mock rivers and waterfalls. These sounds tickle the imaginations of new arrivals, establishing easy connections with the natural heritage of this city and securing the 'West Coast, Best Coast' mantra in the ideologies of both residents and tourists. No wonder YVR is a gateway to nearly 250,000 new immigrants to Canada every year (IWC, 2013). Yet the somewhat kitsch setup of flowing water, sculpted salmon, and temperate vegetation which line the walkways of arrivals, speak volumes of the interplay between meaning and metaphor in the city of Vancouver. Indeed, as the British geographer Loretta Lees (2001:57) remarked on a tour of Vancouver, for many a visitor this

place is 'unreal, too perfect, a chocolate box city'. This 'city of glass' (Coupland, 2000) boasts views aplenty, built and designed in such a way as to secure sightlines from the downtown to the local mountains of Cypress, Grouse, and Seymour. In this sense, Vancouver is unique, ranking not only very high on liveability scores, but also offering unparalleled access to 'Beautiful British Columbia', supposedly the 'Best Place On Earth', to those who can afford it. It comes as no surprise then to hear urban commentators such as Lance Berelowitz (2005) heralding Vancouver as 'a dream': the dream city in a dream-like location, with seductive surroundings².

However, it is all too easy to get carried away in such exultation. Considering how Captain Vancouver's maiden voyage in 1792 catalysed a bitter-sweet tale with a dark underbelly, not least in the devastating wake of settler colonialism, so too does this present-day story quickly disclose darker undertones. An astute Lees is quick to note the 'patina of glamour' (Bloom, 1987:84) that she is initially responding to in Vancouver. Her investigative eyes discern between the 'image' of the city, and the lessons to be learned behind these superficial readings. In describing the dream-like Vancouver as a 'city on Prozac' (Lees, 2001:57), she reminds us all that dreams are dreams insofar as they can be broken, they can be shattered. The anti-depressant Prozac, widely administered in the 1970s and 80s, provided relief from depression, only all too often to engage its users in a cycle of peak and trough, relief and return.

So it seems with Vancouver, a city that has gained fame for its contrasts. These contrasts begin in the physical realm with the juxtaposition of sea and sky, city and coast, mountain and marina. Yet they are also reflected in the more sordid territory of socio-economic disjunctures, between rich and poor, affluent and ignored, downtown elite and Downtown Eastside. Such parallelism³ can be artificially reified, but it can also serve as a productive conceptual tool, elucidating some of the hidden nooks and crannies of Vancouver. For the focus of this thesis, such nooks and crannies acquire great significance. In a city like Vancouver, 'with condo buildings rubbing up against green linkages, [such that] there are few in-between spaces (such as

2 It should be noted that such assessments were almost certainly established on blue sky, clear, sunny days in Vancouver. The city, whilst being a 'dream', also endures over 161 days of rain a year, inducing widespread S.A.D (Seasonal Affective Disorder) among its residents. Such is part of the darker side of this dialectic.

3 Indeed, this theme is noted in David Ley's (2010) 'Millionaire Migrants', investigating the personal and professional lives of the super-rich in Vancouver, who immigrate or commute (or both) from across the Pacific in Asia, notably Hong Kong, to enjoy the best of both worlds. 'Hongcouver' is their hometown, where Hong Kong serves as a money-making grounds, and Vancouver offers all the amenities for a world-class quality of life.

front lawns)' (Kataoka, 2009:46), a call to investigate the private and personal arenas of life seems to gain great significance. The private is certainly political, and this 'private' realm takes on a number of vagrant forms, from private space to private time.

Another local geographer, Graeme Wynn, provides similarly valuable insights into this city of dreams. Wynn writes (1992:xiii):

Vancouver, like the province in which it is located, is no easy place to understand... [Many] have despaired of grasping the essence of the contemporary city. 'There is no real centre to Vancouver', concluded one recent commentator...it is a place of 'pockets, strips, [and] urban moments', each of which is but a fragment of the intricate urban kaleidoscope. Because most people are familiar with only a few pieces of this fabric, most views of the city elevate one or two facets of its character above others.

Wynn does well to note the 'intricate urban kaleidoscope' (ibid.) of Vancouver, a city that seems to elude so many⁴. Singular accounts of this city all too often fail to take note of this reality, ignoring differing aspects and different perspectives. In attempting to cut through some of the obfuscation, this thesis charts a very specific 'pocket, strip, [and] urban moment' akin to Vancouver. To be precise, this study examines the mountain leisure culture of this city. Following Yin's (2003:13) case-study approach, encouraging the study of 'contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context', this focus looks neither to reify preconceived notions nor concretize stereotypes, but rather to aid conceptual clarity through an ideal-type of sorts.

Vancouver's leisure culture is certainly a mixed bag. According to Kataoka (2009:42): 'Vancouverism has actualized the liveable city paradox – one part rural romance of living close to nature, and one part urban romance of diversity and complexity'. These may be romantic musings after all, yet their material outcomes are blatantly evident in the leisure craze of this fit-city: early morning joggers, biking commuters, midday mum-and pram walks, group runs, and sunset cyclists. Kataoka (2009:45) continues: 'since Vancouverism only claims to put “living first”, it does not impose a particular definition of living: it suggests a lifestyle that balances

4 The famous American urbanist Jane Jacobs ([1961] 1992:16) writes that 'to try to understand towns in terms of big cities will only compound confusion'. So it is, some may argue, with Vancouver. Perhaps some of the confusion surrounding ongoing debates in this city is fueled by its call to be considered as a global city, yet its arguable delivery on only the standards of a regional capital, far from a global city.

living with work and play'. Such is the prevalence of this lifestyle culture that 'the possibility of unimpeded leisure' (Roy and Ong, 2011:198) is realized by many of these enthusiasts. Leaving the financial barriers aside for the moment, this offer poses as open to all and becomes a reality for many.

This bespoke form of 'Vancouverism' (Kataoka, 2009), boasting best-practice in urban planning, mixed-use, and sustainable transport to the world over, mutates with mongrel-like qualities to spill over into other realms of life too. The uniqueness in planning extends further than simply the built environment, becoming also a value-laden term with cultural connotations. Indeed, for many, 'Vancouverism' speaks of another bespoke form of style: that of Lululemon sweat pants, yoga mats, commuter bikes, and MEC (Mountain Equipment Co-op) outdoor products. This city boasts its very own lifestyle culture; a delicate blend of wilderness equipment and urban fashion. Whilst this is but one 'pocket' of a multifarious city, the mountain leisure culture of Vancouver certainly provides valuable insights into one of its connotations. Given the mountainous location of Vancouver, and its relatively recent rise to global fame, it seems that this city serves as a particularly good case-study of leisure culture. This thesis therefore examines the idea of the 'mountain' in three distinct, yet interconnected, ways (Table 1):

<i>The mountain</i>	The aspiring 'peak' population: young urban professionals
<i>On the mountain</i>	In the clouds: the 21 st Century Information Age
<i>At the mountain</i>	Accessing mountain peaks and summits: the Coast Mountains

Table 1. Three mountains

At this stage, a note on methodology is warranted. As Gregory (2004:133) writes, social scientists must be reminded that 'the world does not exist in order to provide illustrations of our theories'. Along such lines, research often provides examples so as to convey certain points, rather than communicate certain truth⁵. A degree of incompleteness must be recognized in all

5 Interestingly, for Paul Virilio (cited in Armitage, 2001:90) examining the optics of modern day technologies, 'war serves to illustrate the situation because this is where it is most obvious: it is my laboratory, nothing else'. Whilst the mountain leisure culture, in this case, is certainly not simply a laboratory, it does aid in a similar way to make things obvious, through an ideal-type of sorts.

argumentation. The hope, therefore, is to in no way further Gregory's claim. Rather, the use of the mountain as a metaphor serves to elucidate clarity, rather than inscribe answers. In this sense, I agree with Levi-Strauss (1966:248): 'scientific explanation consists not in moving from the complex to the simple but in the replacement of a less intelligible complexity by one which is more so'. Intelligibility is therefore the goal in this endeavour. This may even come at the expense of academic theorization, in some cases. For David Brooks' (2000:12) investigation into the 'Bobo' (Bourgeois Bohemian) lifestyle this evoked a sort of 'cosmic sociology': 'the idea is to get at the essence of cultural patterns, getting the flavour of the times without trying to pin it down with meticulous exactitude'. Perhaps a similar sentiment can be echoed here.

2.1 Three mountains

If, as Livingstone (1992:7) writes, 'geography has meant different things to different people at different times and in different places', then so too has modernity. The modern project, catalysed by Enlightenment thinking, has bred our contemporary age of reason. So it is that Pevsner (1981:7) details the 20th Century as 'the century of the masses...[of] science, technology, mass locomotion, mass production and consumption, mass communication'. Yi-Fu Tuan (1998:179) is also helpful in this regard, reminding us that 'the one word to characterize all the changes, interlocking and overlapping with one another, is modernity'⁶.

These 'interlocking and overlapping' (Tuan, 1998:179) changes have been actualized over time, with their attendant ramifications. In many ways, geography seeks to uncover and understand these ramifications, noting particularly the effects on, and between, people and place⁷. For the material consequences of modernity, concerted effort has been expended in providing a voice to the voiceless, through 'sub-altern' geographies (cf. Spivak, 1988), for those excluded from networks of power, wealth, and prestige. The last, the lost, and the least are continually trampled upon and often flushed out of the bottom of many of our social systems.

6 Mike Hulme (2009) in 'Why we disagree about climate change' provides another valuable insight at this stage. He details the 'wickedness' and 'plasticity' of global issues, such as climate change. Wicked in the sense of mind bending complexity and plastic in regard to their differing meanings between different people. Perhaps these two images aid us in understanding the nebulous and contentious debates surrounding modernity as well.

7 The cultural geographer Peter Adey (2009) provides an apt metaphor of this, comparing geography to a window: its frame and aperture are fixed yet gaze limitless, once the plane of glass (or geographical lens) is in place.

Academic focus and intrigue in this realm is therefore utterly invaluable, so long as it results in action and intervention, beyond mere rhetoric and debate⁸.

This thesis, however, charts a different course. Whilst modernity can be seen to reproduce and replicate injustices for many groups in society, its often more subtle ramifications can easily be ignored. So it is that only until recently, few geographers took interest not in the 'down and outs' of society, but the anti-polar 'up and outs': the super-rich, the elites, the powerful. Surely such a focus demands equal attention, particularly in view of the 'radical flattening of perspective and shrinkage of imaginative range' (Berman, 1982:24) associated with the onward march of purportedly 'modern' thinking (and perhaps research)⁹. I echo Berman's sentiment (p.13) in that 'I [too] have been fascinated by the meanings of modernity'. The contradictions, juxtapositions, contrasts, ironies, paradoxes, dualisms, and dialectics tend my thinking toward both fear and fascination. Surely incisive critique is, by very essence, work which 'illuminate[s] the contradictory forces and needs that inspire and torment us' (p.35). Such is the hope of this incision into the leisure culture of the mountain and its dialectical other in the office towers of downtown Vancouver.

2.1.1 The mountain: an aspiring peak population

This study takes an interest in the meaning(s) of the mountain. As such, the mountain-
scape is employed to convey a set of analytical tools. The first of three metaphorical mountains forming this analysis is a demographic one, a population segment, an aspiring 'peak' population no less. Pierre Bourdieu (1990:132) alerts us that 'nothing classifies somebody more than the

8 Indeed, perhaps the caution of Doty (2004:377) in 'Maladies of our souls' is worth considering for a moment: do we 'write in sanitized, anonymous voices, in the proud but calcified language of the academy?'. If so, we reproduce Max Weber's (1904:181) fear that academics are 'specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart: and this nullity is caught in the delusion that it has achieved a level of development never before attained by mankind'. This is part of a critique of academics at altitude, aloof in their Ivory Tower.

9 It is interesting to see Berman (1982:24) go on with even bolder strokes: 'If we listen closely to twentieth-century writers and thinkers about modernity and compare them to those a century ago, we will find a radical flattening of perspective and shrinkage of the imaginative range. Our nineteenth-century thinkers were simultaneously enthusiasts and enemies of modern life, wrestling inexhaustibly with its ambiguities and contradictions: their self-ironies and inner tensions were a primary source of their creative power. Their twentieth-century successors have lurched far more toward rigid polarities and flat totalizations. Modernity is either embraced with a blind and uncritical enthusiasm, or else condemned with a neo-Olympian remoteness and contempt: in either case, it is conceived as a closed monolith, incapable of being shaped or changed by modern men. Open visions of modern life have been supplanted by closed one, Both/And by Either/Or'.

way he or she classifies'. Whilst this given peak population is but a 'pocket' (Wynn, 1992:xiii) of the totality, their signification is certainly significant, just as they are passionately classified. Indeed, 'the yuppie is the imago of the mainstream' (Lloyd, 2006:119). As one interviewee responded in Richard Lloyd's (p.120) analysis of Chicago's Wicker Park:

[A] yuppie would be like...the upper middle class, materialistic, out for themselves, not very into community, not very into the arts. Into making themselves secure futures and that's what's most important.

So it is said that the young urban professional or “yuppie” 'emphasizes security while neglecting community and creativity' (ibid.). Yet far more is also at stake. The radical individualism, as encountered in this childless, individualised group, of our present-moment is so engrained and entrenched, that few pause to question it. It is certainly worth zooming out for even just a moment to appreciate this. Chantal Delsol, for instance, regards this transformation in society with great indignation¹⁰, writing (2006:06):

The emergence of the individual, supposedly free from the culture that weighed on him [sic], reflects a false sense of sufficiency: the individual believes himself to be the source of both the questions and the answers, to contain within himself the alpha and the omega, and to provide himself with his own points of reference. He wishes to bind himself to others only through a voluntary contract, a contract he can nullify if he no longer wishes to be a party to it. In other words, he rejects the bonds that preceded him and any debt to which he has not agreed.

Indeed, other figures such as Alexis de Tocqueville, the great French political thinker, made sure to bring attention to the significance and weight of individualism. His 'habits of the heart' ([1831] 1969:287) became a popular linguistic turn to capture the mix of traits essential to the American, and thus Western, character. 'American cultural traditions define personality, achievement, and the purpose of human life in ways that leave the individual suspended in glorious, but terrifying, isolation', wrote Robert Bellah et al. (1985:6), in their 20th Century rendition of Tocqueville's sentiments.

10 As one magazine, *Details* (1997:53), put it, the 21st Century individual is almost a new species: 'Congratulations. You're wary of any and all organisations, you rely on no group, government, or organized religion...you let expedience guide your lifestyle choices, you are able to think on your feet and sanguinely shift jobs, friends, lovers, and residences at the drop of a virtual hat. In other words, you're ready for the twenty-first century'.

Returning to the aspiring 'peak' population of sorts, it therefore comes as no surprise that 'apart from age, upward mobility, and an urban domicile, yuppies are supposed to be distinguished by a lifestyle of inveterate consumption' (Smith, 1996:92). Materialism seemingly becomes not only the mainstay of this segment, but also the major source of security and self-actualization. This trait is chastised by the (bourgeois) bohemians, who 'don't think [yuppies] have any creative gumption...[since] they're too insecure without their credit cards' (Lloyd, 2006:121). This analysis takes stock of such observations, whilst also noting the different biases, so as to connect the lifestyles of the young urban elite with the onward march of modernity, writ large. After all, they are those aspiring to be at the peak: those in tip-top shape, the peak performers, the movers and shakers if you will¹¹.

'Yuppie' not only connotes young urban professional, but also a degree of upward mobility. As Suttles (1990:97) writes: 'the term "yuppie" most obviously applies to young singles, who are heavily preoccupied with their nightlife, exploring the new reaches of consumerism, and staying abreast of the trends'. Whilst numerous other avenues of enquiry could have been chosen¹², the hope here is that specificity will be a precursor to lucidity, since, after all, contrast is the mother of clarity¹³. Indeed, the contrasts and connections in this case are evident. In particular, a clear link is noted and established between the meaning of the mountain and this young urban elite, aspiring to success, pursuing status, and climbing the standings in all sorts of social and professional registers.

The methodology involved interviewing¹⁴ twenty young urban professionals working in downtown Vancouver. Since 'both the materialism of yuppies and their antipathy toward community have become articles of faith' (Lloyd, 2006:121), semi-structured interviews focussed particularly on these themes of lifestyle and relational context. A snowball sample approach through personal networks was employed from the starting point of one known contact.

11 It should be stressed, however, that these are the young elite of urban professionals, not the 1% peak per se. Peak earnings are far from realised in this group, though they embody social and professional climbing *par excellence*.

12 Certainly, numerous other analytical routes may have been equally salient: from insights in performativity (Butler, 1993) to the creative class (Florida, 2002), cognitive capitalists (Scott, 2006), and the like. More broadly, alternative approaches could have been adopted, investigating biopower, class, gender, etc.

13 Given the different uses of time between week and weekend, not least in a city of great contrasts, it goes without saying that contrast is rife in this analysis. The hope here is to note how 'creative insight often arises from juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical evidence' (Eisenhardt, 1989:546).

14 All interviews were conducted in English. Appendix A lists the interview questions and B the consent form.

Interviewee selection was based on the criteria of a profession based in the downtown core, predominantly in advanced producer service firms (Scott, 2006), as well as engagement in leisure pursuits and awareness of the general lifestyle culture of Vancouver. This recruitment was performed over email, with interview times organized in various coffee shops downtown and conversations recorded by dictaphone. These in-depth interviews, lasting between 30 and 120 minutes, were fully transcribed manually with the aid of Express Scribe transcription software, a foot pedal, and well-worn fingers. Table 2 below details the profiles of the 20 respondents:

#	Initials	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Status	Profession	Title
1	PC	Peter	M	32	Single	Finance	Manager
2	SG	Shaun	M	29	Dating	Chartered Accountant	C.A.
3	MM	Mark	M	28	Single	Lawyer	Lawyer
4	JV	Julian	M	28	Single	Accountant	N/A
5	SM	Stewart	M	29	Single	Finance	VP
6	SK	Sidney	M	41	Married	Consultant	Assets
7	LH	Leanne	F	27	Partner	Tax Accountancy	Manager
8	MB	Milena	F	30	Dating	Occupational Therapist	Manager
9	JM	Jasmine	F	35	Single	Chiropractor	N/A
10	TH	Thomas	M	27	Partner	Surveyor	Chartered
11	CP	Charlie	M	28	Partner	Chartered Accountant	C.A.
12	JI	Janet	F	25	Single	Finance	Assistant
13	NJ	Natalie	F	25	Single	Marketing	Specialist
14	JH	Jonathan	M	25	Dating	Travel Writer	N/A
15	AH	Alistair	M	23	Single	Real estate	Acquisitions
16	KR	Kerriane	F	24	Single	Recruiting	N/A
17	MC	Miles	M	25	Single	Commodities	Trader
18	CO	Charlotte	F	26	Single	Chartered Accountant	C.A.
19	SA	Sebastian	M	29	Engaged	Mergers and Acquisitions Tax	Manager
20	PP	Payne	M	29	Single	Audit Accountancy	Manager

Table 2. Interview respondents

Before turning to the physical mountain itself, it is worth pondering the metaphysical meanings of mountains more broadly. For young professionals, the search for status is not exactly inconspicuous, given the often ostentatious pursuits of power, pleasure, prestige, and

possessions, amongst other things. It is as a result of this pursuit that such a methodological focus (hopefully) gains credibility¹⁵.

2.1.2 On the mountain: in the clouds

The second of the metaphorical mountains is that of being *on* the mountain. If young professionals are an aspiring 'peak' population of sorts, pursuing the pinnacles of status and success, then they already stand atop the mountain in other ways. Examining the leisure culture through the lens of yuppie lifestyles in downtown Vancouver discloses notions of 'elitism and indulgence' (Ley, 1987:48). The ability to be *on* the mountain swiftly becomes a powerful metaphor for the opportunities afforded to those of this class: the young urban elite.

First of all, there is evidence of 'spatial affiliation as a sign of membership' (Lloyd, 2006:120) to this class, favouring 'gentrified lakefront communities' (ibid.). In downtown Vancouver, there is no shortage of such desirable neighbourhoods, including the ostentatious West End, historic Gastown¹⁶, and the allure of a suave Yaletown. For these young professionals, metropolitan living is a merit-based affair, founded on signifiers of status. As Lloyd (2006:122) explains:

The omnivorous cultural preferences of the new urban class of postindustrial professionals sit behind the development of 'the city as an entertainment machine' generating a range of cultural amenities.

Elitism and indulgence are hard to ignore in the provision and consumption of such cultural amenities: from fashion and style to fine dining, theatre, and music. The 'staid existence of buttoned-down professionals' (Lloyd, 2006:121) encourages, if not demands, bursts of 'inveterate consumption' (Smith, 1996:92). Certainly the denial of humanity at work, if nothing else, builds pressure in a cooker that is most readily released at the weekends.

15 This is founded on the desire for conceptual clarity in analysis. As such, an 'ideal type' of sorts has been selected, lingering in the footsteps of Max Weber's (1904) 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', by emphasizing the value of sampling on a dependent variable so as to best display keen moments and traits. This sample group fosters such a view, whilst also noting the limitations of a case study approach for generalisations.

16 As one respondent, Shaun, described, these neighbourhoods offer something unique: 'I find peace in going through these recently gentrified neighbourhoods and these cool little gastro pubs, [with a] really neat vibe and people there. I feed off that kind of thing too. I love that...[we'd] go for a walk, all the way down through Gastown and see what the city is doing that day. And I love doing that. Just walking, stopping, talking'.

There is no lack of comment surrounding Richard Florida's (2002) espousal of the 'creative class', with their attendant (and widely marketed) tolerance, technology, and talent. Jamie Peck (2005) for one provides an incisive critique of this segment. He is quick to note that Florida's faux-funky thesis of harnessing creativity should have our alarm bells ringing. Peck (2005:740) writes that the 'grain of extant "neoliberal" development agendas, framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption and place-marketing' form the basis for Florida's hyperbolic sales pitch. There is quite some clout to this argument. Yet the mountain in question, here, differs a little. As one respondent, Payne, made clear:

If you want to use it [yuppie] in the sort of outdoor sense, I would define yuppie as the person – which there's a tonne of people in Vancouver – that say they're into something, do it once or twice a year maybe, and get all the nicest gear that you've been saving up for the last ten years. In a city sense, it's a different personality than me right. I wouldn't get caught in Yaletown dressing in my pair of designer jeans and a jacket, to try to impress a girl. Though I do know a lot of guys that would. I'm not going to spend a hundred dollars on some appetizers and a couple of glasses of wine. It's different than me.

This difference is noteworthy, and frames the approach of this project to a distinct and aspiring 'peak' population of sorts. Whilst many young professionals are content with the avenues of conspicuous consumption on offer in the city, the respondents in question here have slightly different goals in mind. Their consumption is geared towards leisure, specifically sport or fitness based activities. In part, this sample set reflects a large group of equally 'precocious individualists' (Peck, 2005:758), who come to Vancouver for the unparalleled access it affords to its surroundings. Evidently, the mountains in particular inspire and attract this breed of young professional (sometimes in denial¹⁷) for a unique set of reasons.

Yet the mountain also conveys an idiosyncratic meaning in this particular time and space. Robert Bateman (2000:121) assesses the 21st Century informational mountain in this way:

At the beginning of a new millennium, we all stand at the top of a mountain that offers us spectacular views in all directions. We have more knowledge of nature than any other civilization in history. We can look beyond the sky and beneath the sea...we can look back

¹⁷ Instances of denial here are significant. For some, an association with the term 'yuppie' was far from desirable. Rather, a pursuit of authenticity in the mountains seems to be the pre-eminent driver. As one (blatant) female yuppie explained: 'One time someone called me a yuppie in the train station in a derogatory tone and I was like "oh, up yours"'.

into distant history, to the origins of our behaviours and our beliefs, all the way to the birth of the human species itself. We who live in the 21st Century know more, own more and exert more power over our environment than any who have come before us. Our knowledge and our technology present us with a multitude of possibilities and choices. Why do we hesitate to decide? Does the sheer multitude of options overwhelm us? This may be so, but if we wait too long, our shift toward a more responsible ideology could happen too late.

Whilst there is much to pay attention to and question in his sentiments, one evident claim is that downtown young professionals do well to represent Bateman's sample of those with power and possessions, knowledge and technology, possibilities and choices¹⁸. For many, the fundamental problems of life were these two things: 'time and money, time and money', as one respondent said. It seems that for this select group at least, access itself to be *on* the mountain (in a variety of ways) is not the problem. Rather, *what* to do upon arrival at the summit is the challenge.

Bateman continues (2000:78): 'there are always choices, an infinite number of possibilities'. He is right. The blessing of modernity is bitter-sweet. The endless possibilities and choices are in fact a product of the cultural tornado of modern forces, with their potentially disorienting effects. Peter Berger (1997:202) understands modernity itself as a 'multiplicity of incongruencies', whereby 'destiny is transformed into decision' (Berger, 1976:16). For some, this results in the 'travail of permanent reflection' (Schutz, 1964:120), for others an unending 'penchant for change' (Simmel, [1904] 1978:462). For the group in question both apply, in the sense of ceaseless self-reflection, with the ever-present fate of perpetual suspicion (particularly that the grass is greener on the other side¹⁹), and the constant desire for satisfaction, often manifest in the pursuit of novelty.

Much more could be said on this topic, yet to do so here ignores a more pressing trend. Bateman's (2000) millennial mountain also gains great saliency in view of the recent developments in information and communication technology. Paul Virilio (1986), the French

18 Indeed, this very thought struck one respondent, in a very local way, as he commented: 'I mean it's really a problem to me that I'll never get to explore enough of it [British Columbia]. It's massive. Even Garibaldi Park, I thought within the first few years I'd have Garibaldi Park more or less down, and I've only been maybe an hour into Garibaldi Park and it would take like 3 days to cross Garibaldi Park, maybe more. It's vast'.

19 This was voiced by one respondent, who said of locals living at the mountain: 'I think with my friends who do the seasonal work, we always have these battles of [the] 'grass is greener on the other side'. They're like well you have money to play, and we don't have money to play. But they have the time'.

scholar of speed, is renowned for introducing a new term into the lexicon: 'dromology' or the 'science of speed', derived from the Greek 'dromas' meaning running or fast. Commenting on this field of study, Jacob Thommesen (2003:149) writes:

A central argument in Virilio's thinking is that due to the acceleration of technology, and the culmination of this acceleration in absolute speed, time has conquered space. Space no longer "matters", because we can receive information from everywhere on the globe in real-time, delivered by communication technologies at the speed of light, and because we can, in principle, travel anywhere, if not quite at absolute speed, then at least in a very short time.

In view of these, Bateman's 'mountain' suddenly acquires deeper meanings. If 'geographic distance is no longer an obstacle' (ibid.), as speed has annihilated time²⁰ and time has conquered space, then our analyses must shift gears in order to take account of this new register. For the rise of virtual worlds, being *on* the mountain also means being in the cloud(s). Indeed, Rainie and Wellman (2012:ix) have their fingers on the pulse, commenting on the emergence of the virtual (computing) cloud and its intersections with everyday life²¹:

The internet and mobile phones have facilitated the reshaping of people's social networks, enabling them to be larger and more diverse. And they have reconfigured the way people use their networks to learn, solve problems, make decisions, and provide support to each other.

Whilst not a preconfigured question in the semi-structured interviews, the ubiquitous presence of smartphones and other devices on coffee tables throughout the research process seems to confirm this world of connectivity espoused by Rainie and Wellman (2012), even in this small sample set. Indeed, the 21st Century has ushered in a new age: the 'Information Age' (Castells, 1996), pregnant with possibilities, yet also troubled by birth pangs. The unanswered

20 Here, Virilio (1986) nods to Marx's fear that places will be subsumed by the tornado of modern technology. Marx and Engels (1848:4) wrote: 'All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new formed ones becomes antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind'.

21 Interestingly, they also write in the preface to their book 'The New Social Operating System': 'we dearly hope that the next edition will have hyperlinks to all the articles we cite and the movies we discuss' (Rainie and Wellman, 2012:x) whilst at the same time significantly backtracking as they continue: 'But there is still a place for a good read' (ibid.). It seems that they are caught, just as much as we are, in the maelstrom of a new limitless (virtual) world born into a (physical) world of limits. The digital versus paper argument here attests to this.

questions²² surrounding the digital world linger heavily in this weightless world, demanding a burden of proof from virtual technologies. Continuing with the smartphone example, the desire, even need, for constant connectivity²³ is not reserved only to young professionals.

The premium placed on 'connections' (Bauman, 2000) rather than relations, connectivity rather than engagement, does, in this world of social climbing, however, give much away. Yuppie communities are renowned for this approach, coined by Richard Florida (2002:304) himself as 'plug and play communities'²⁴. Yet Peck (2005:745) is troubled by these 'crass celebrations of hipster embourgeoisement', where the real 'challenge is to persuade this group of precocious individualists that they should become less self-absorbed and self-oriented' (p.758). Being *on* the mountain is therefore one of the key affordances for the young urban elite. Access provides opportunity, possibility, choice, and connectivity, with no doubt truly spectacular views.

2.1.3 At the mountain: the Coast Range

Lloyd (2006:121) provides another nuance to the yuppie archetype, emphasizing the nature of 'young professionals in the neighbourhood, who dabble on the weekends'. This dabbling cannot slip by unnoticed, without mention or meaning. Rather, such dabbling demarcates the code of conduct of this young urban elite. At once it insinuates an attitude and a reality: an attitude of the 'romantic rationale behind all this fast living: *le dérèglement de tous les sens*. Deregulate the senses' (Brooks, 2000:195). This is matched by the (seemingly paradoxical) logic that 'if you are going to spend any leisure time with members of the educated class, you have to prove you are serious about whatever it is you are doing' (p.212). So it is that not only non-working hours, particularly the weekend, gain great importance, but also performances at these times are pivotal²⁵. Brooks (2000:194) writes: 'Everything in the Bobo [Bourgeois Bohemian] life is purposeful'. Something similar could surely be uttered for the yuppie life.

22 For instance from Elizabeth Grossman (2006:4) noting the vast disjuncture between 'clean and lean' images of the computing industry, versus some of the back-end realities of high-tech trash, waste and pollution.

23 As research is increasingly showing with Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD) and the like.

24 Florida (2002:304) details these as communities where 'social entry barriers are low, where heterogeneity is actively embraced, where loose ties prevail, where there are lots of other creatives to mingle with, where they can validate their identities'.

25 Perhaps for this young urban elite, performativity (Butler, 1993) cannot be escaped; week and weekend there is a performance to be played, either as workhorse or sportsperson. This is note-worthy, given their social sway.

It is no coincidence that for this sample set the liveable city of Vancouver is firmly emplaced in 'Beautiful British Columbia'. The sheer elevation of the Coast Mountain Range contributes to the tag line of being the so-called 'Best Place On Earth'. The city therefore boasts a strong mountain leisure culture, encouraging residents to explore the great outdoors, to get outside, get active, experience nature, taste wilderness. Wynn (1992:xiii) warned us that 'most views of the city [Vancouver] elevate one or two facets of its character above others'. The aim here is to avoid such reification; however, the constructive connections between yuppies and mountains are too pressing to be ignored. The upwardly mobile young urban elite seem to foster a peculiar interest in elevation: both socially and spatially. This is noteworthy. Climbing the status ladder, whether as a social butterfly or a professional workhorse, seems to lend favour to similar weekend pursuits of climbing and altitude. Indeed, the tendency of yuppies to seek out high places is striking.

Perhaps this is part and parcel with the attitude of these 'high-status strenuous nature types' (Brooks, 2000:214). Brooks continues: 'at the tippy top of the leisure status system are those vacations that involve endless amounts of agony and pain' (p.208). Thus stores like REI (Recreational Equipment Inc.) in Seattle and MEC (Mountain Equipment Co-op) in Vancouver sell 'leisure stuff to people who spend their leisure hours strenuously, or at least would like to look like they do' (p.211). One female respondent, Milena, said the mountain locals had a term for this: 'They call the city folk who come up on the weekend the 'Meccies' because they go to MEC [Mountain Equipment Co-op] and buy all their gear and it's all MEC gear and they show up on the weekends'. For yuppies in Vancouver, such outlets of leisure are all too accessible. A financial manager, Sebastian, put it this way:

I think a lot of people in Vancouver are young urban professionals...Generally at the weekends time is spent skiing, or at least one day a week or at the weekend will be spent doing something fairly active. I imagine that a large proportion of people's income is spent on ski passes and getting new skis and things like that.²⁶

26 Sebastian continued: 'I think a lot of people are active. My fiancée for example, she goes to yoga every day. She was born in Vancouver so it makes sense'. Even Kataoka (2009:45) noted this link between Vancouver and yoga, taking stock of how "zen" and "karma" are common advertising by-words' in this city.

In order to gain credibility in this realm, disposable income is easily spent acquiring the 'high-tech mumbo jumbo' (Brooks, 2000:214) of gear, kit, and equipment. Part of this code of conduct demands a code of gear connoisseurship. Indeed, MEC in Vancouver boasts this slogan: there is 'no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear'. Evidently, the serious weekend athletes must engage at least some of their intense attitudes in the materiality of high-tech equipment²⁷ and complex kit.

Being *at* the mountain for these yuppies involves evening getaways or weekend trips to an endless list of destinations surrounding Vancouver. In a way, this city is as much a 'gateway to nature' as it is a 'terminal city' or 'port for the east'. Charlie, a chartered accountant, noted: 'the size and the degree to which this place is undeveloped...I love the fact that there's very few places you can drive from Vancouver. You've got choices of North on the 99 to Whistler, or East on the 1 to Hope, or you're down to the States. Those are your three choices'. Not forgetting the fourth dial of the compass, West, leisure aplenty is also boasted around Vancouver Island²⁸. As another put it, 'there's so many things to do, there's a lot of options'. The physical geography of Vancouver nestled in the Coast Mountains of the Pacific Coast Ranges, offer and even encourage regular reconnaissance with the mountain. From the local mountains of Cypress, Grouse, and Seymour, to nearby Whistler-Blackcomb or Mount Baker, access is simply unparalleled. For those interviewed, trips were not rigorously quantified, although popular destinations were noted. The maps below (Figures 1 and 2) show the getaway destinations of the 20 respondents (with proportional circles), comparing Winter (November-April) and Summer (May – October):

27 Herbert Marcuse (1964:9) goes so far as to say that these materialistic people: 'recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobiles, hi-fi sets, split-level homes, kitchen equipment'.

28 This respondent said: 'I think recently I've left a lot on the weekends. Like two weekends ago I went to Vancouver Island...so on Friday after work I just hopped on a bus and went to the ferry, took the ferry over, and hung out all weekend on Vancouver Island. Then I came back on Sunday. And so, that's pretty common'.



Figure 1. Map of leisure destinations from Vancouver in Winter

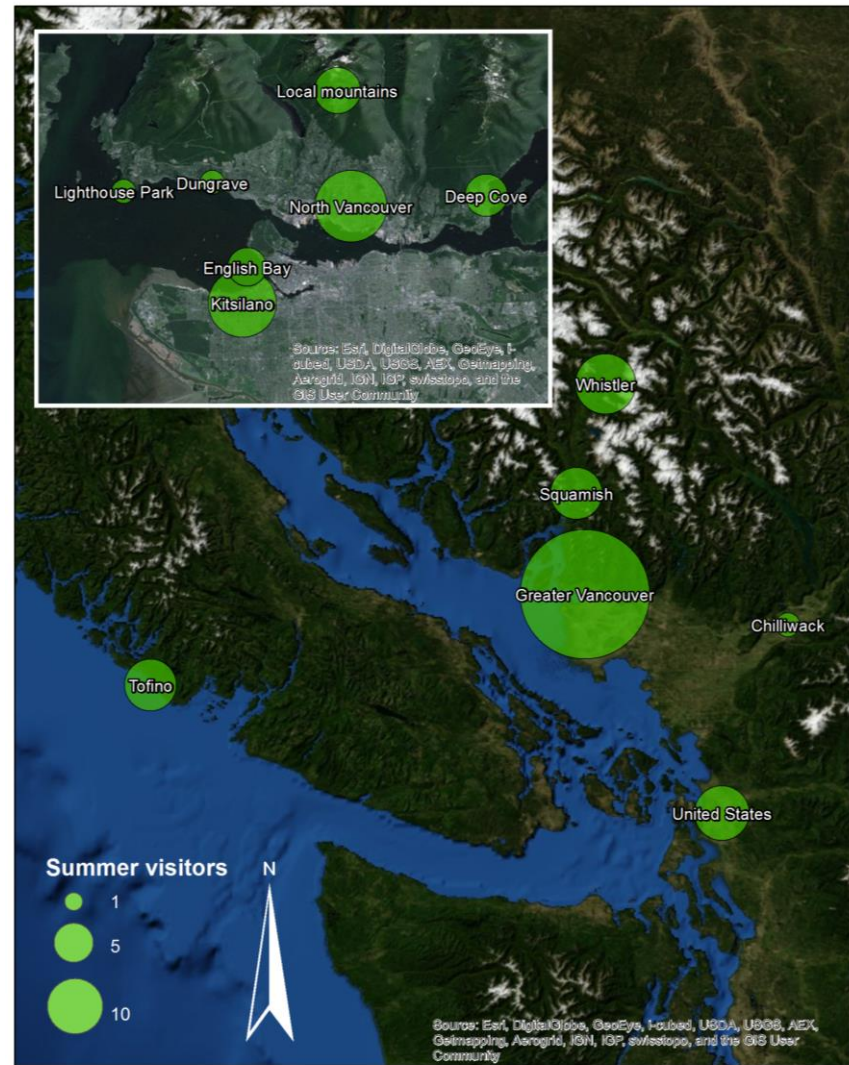


Figure 2. Map of leisure destinations from Vancouver in Summer

2.2 Vancouverism

So why Vancouver? Returning to the case-study site and ignoring, for now, the aforementioned attractions of Vancouver, it seems this city boasts a number of other salient characteristics. Indeed, Vancouverism is a value-laden term. Its baggage and cultural connotations are noteworthy, though at the same time we should remind ourselves that this is indeed 'no easy place to understand' (Wynn, 1992:xiii). Beginning with the outside observer, Vancouver – and Vancouverism in particular – has attracted much attention in recent years. Aside from the colloquial names for British Columbia (contemptuously nicknamed 'Beneath Cloud' and 'Bring Cash') the urban allure of this dream-like city has caught the eye of many a planner.

In short, Vancouverism can be understood to have 'actualized the liveable city paradox – one part rural romance of living close to nature, and one part urban romance of diversity and complexity' (Kataoka, 2009:42)²⁹. In this tone, “liveability” has been defined in suburban terms – as close to nature, healthy, child-friendly, and community oriented' (Kataoka, 2009:42). Vancouver's ocean views and mountain sightlines, alongside 'open spaces and green linkages are the downtown fix for suburban cravings for being “close to nature”' (p.44).

Seemingly, Vancouver has hit the proverbial (and paradoxical) nail on the head. Indeed, the recent co-director of planning, Larry Beasley, 'articulated a version of the liveable city that is “romance all the way down”' (Kataoka, 2009:43). The omnipresent condo, which is the *pièce de résistance* of this 'city of glass' (Coupland, 2000), attests to this. These tower and podium models are 'spindly Le Corbusian towers hovering above green spaces (that together maximize access to light and air)' (Kataoka, 2009:43). It is no wonder that with such architectural sophistication, the Economist deemed Vancouver the 'best city to live' in the world (EIU, 2005). Kataoka (2009:43) continues: 'so-called Vancouverism describes a style of urban planning, and its associated architectural form, that is fast becoming a global model for central city revitalization'.

29 Certainly, some of the inspiration for such a melding is down to famous urbanists. Credit is due to Ebenezer Howard ([1848] 1965:45), for instance, who pioneered the Garden City: '[A]ll the advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination: and the certainty of being able to live this life will be the magnet which will produce the effect for which we are all striving – the spontaneous movement of the people from our crowded cities to the bosom of our kindly mother earth, at once the source of life, of happiness, of wealth, and of power'.

In view of such grandeur, the praise continues to roll in. We have already noted Loretta Lees' stunned surprise at this city, observing also her shade of scepticism regarding this 'unreal, too perfect...chocolate box city' (Lees, 2001:57). Yet what of other views? The planning policy of zoning and design, encouraging downtown densification alongside sustainability and 'natural' features, has led some to recognize Vancouverism as 'an achievement' (Punter, 2004). For others, such city making in 'paradise' (Harcourt, 2007) makes this liveable city an international urban poster child³⁰. Indeed, even residents respond to this exotic romanticism, viewing Vancouver more as a resort than a city. An expat from the UK, Thomas, said: 'it just feels like a holiday. You just don't get that with anything in the UK...because I think also it helps because we're not from here, like I still feel that ever since I got here I'm still on holiday, even though I'm working'. In both cases, Charles Demers (2010) is correct to reflect this praise into Vancouver being 'a special' place: a lotusland of sorts, with a vibrant surface and savvy urban centre. Yet is this the full story?

Turning again to the respondents views on Vancouver's liveability, the uniqueness of British Columbia and this city never failed to be mentioned. In exultant terms, one chartered accountant exclaimed: 'I'm pretty much in the best place on Earth. So I'm living the dream...I love the fact that I can go skiing after work. I can go trekking up a mountain after work. I can go driving up a mountain after work. I can go windsurfing after work...I'm in a place I love doing the things I love...so yeah I'm living the dream'. Indeed, the philosophical musings of thinkers such as Gilles Lipovetsky (1983), declaring '*L'ère du vide*', that 'modernity is emptiness', fall on deaf ears in this city. These words seem to ring hollow in the ears of many consuming Westerners; content with a comfortable culture, satisfied in conspicuous consumption, and living lives full of leisure and pleasure. Lipovetsky's void seemed by and large absent in the lives of those interviewed, who complained rather of a lack of time or sheer fullness and busyness (not emptiness) of life. From the twenty in-depth interviews conducted, and 100,000 words or so of

30 One respondent, Alistair, working in Real Estate, shared this on Vancouverism: 'What's really world class, just beautiful, fairly untouched natural elements, so close, in such close proximity to all the benefits and amenities that come with the city. I really think that that is, without over thinking it, that is the defining aspect of Vancouver, which is convenience. When you think of the whole West Side from a development and planning perspective, to me it's absolutely insane, you look at all the single family homes, and people are complaining about home prices, but I think for goodness sakes you have, what is really the suburban dream, which is a 3000 sq.ft house on your own yard, in the middle of the f*cking city. You're 5 minutes to the beach, like 5 minutes to a world class airport, you're 10 minutes to downtown, you're 25 minutes to the North Shore. Like, it's insane. You wonder why those homes go for a \$1 million or \$3'.

such a balanced lifestyle that Vancouver became known as the “No-Fun City”³². Given that Vancouver boasts a mountain culture of adventure and excitement, of awe and wonder, Kataoka's statement does seem peculiar. Yet she may still have a point, and hints of such a flavour will be closely examined throughout this thesis.

The options available to these Vancouverites, however, seem endless such that boredom is impossible: the sky is the limit. A chartered accountant boldly declared: 'the city's not great but escaping the city is what makes it great. The city can never be great, cos it's got too many rules'. Indeed, many of the 'local assets' of the region, as one financial manager put it, are beyond the confines of the city itself. From mountains to lakes to ocean, the choices are endless, the possibilities limitless, drawing quite a crowd. For many in the city, these options are the allure in and of themselves. Interestingly, the desire to turn them from possibility to actuality is even non-existent for certain people. Rather, for some there is a sense of vicarious living, fuelled by the energy and endorphins of other leisure enthusiasts:

People always say that we have a beautiful city because there's city, there's mountains and there's the ocean, but that's mostly physical right and not really what the options are. And those people that say that, they're not really that involved in all these options that we have. So I think people are drawn to the idea of it, but they don't really partake. I dunno, either they weren't that interested, or not willing to. Maybe they just like the idea that maybe other people are doing it so it's great for them, and they just like to be around them and around people who have interests. Yeah I think they kinda just soak it in...it's interesting to hear about other people's interests and what they're doing and being energised by that. You get this nice feeling that oh there are options here, there are things to do even though I'm not interested enough to actually join in.

Evidently, the form of Vancouverism – in the planning sense – also has other vagrant varieties. Much like Richard Florida's (2002) 'creative class' thesis, it mutates with mongrel-like qualities, permeating spatially and percolating into other realms of life. The urban liveability connoted by Vancouverism therefore has at least one other clear side to it: that of the cultural chic and style of Vancouverism, offering a delicate blend of outdoor wilderness equipment and metropolitan fashion:

32 Brooks' (2000:215) definition of balanced yuppies resonates with this: 'healthy people, educated-class naturalists who seemed to work out regularly, eat carefully, and party moderately'. Perhaps this moderation, nearing an obsession with balance, can ferment Kataoka's (2009) sense of no-fun or non-spontaneity.

I think Vancouver is a very health conscious city. Whether they are as active as they say they are, or whether they just wear all the gear? Walking downtown everyone wears a lot of exercise-type clothing, there is a lot of Lulu Lemon going around, and a lot of walking boots and things like that, MEC too. I think there is a culture of being outdoorsy and being active and being in the outdoors.

So it is that many move here for its West Coast allure. Another UK expat put it brilliantly:

People are here, especially from overseas, for one reason, and it's the same reason that we're all the similar sort of people. We want to go outside. You don't come to Vancouver and you don't go skiing. You know what I mean. You're into sports if you come to Vancouver. You don't come to Vancouver and go for the nightlife...The one thing that's scaring me is how the hell can I compare any other city to be doing something like this at the weekends.

As previously asserted, the proximity of surrounding getaway locations provides ample room for manoeuvre. The hinterland seems to bear a mystique – so close, yet so far:

I really enjoy it [nature]. I think I appreciate you know the beauty of this province more, even though it has terrible weather, it's like just the scenery kinda almost makes up for it. It's really nice to get away from the city sometimes. Just to have a quiet peace...I dunno it just feels a lot farther than we really are, and you don't have to go that far. It feels like a big trip, even though it's not very far. Yeah, it feels like a mini holiday. It's really nice to have those options, I guess.

Yet a little further investigation into this culture immediately leads us into some significant roadblocks. Who has access to this? What is gained? Who benefits? Even a little probing discloses a dark secret about Vancouver; no, not the ambivalence of the weather³³ but rather the inherent double-edged sword which comes with all that it offers. Just as the sun shines one day, and the rain buckets the next, so too do views of Vancouver fluctuate; one day paradise, the next hell; a dream, a nightmare; a special, then suicidal; an achievement, a disaster. Perhaps in the very act of offering so much, the amplitude of this existence in Vancouver is enlarged, with higher peaks and deeper troughs. Either way, this darker side of the dialectic will be the primary focus of the remainder of this thesis, tracking its twists and turns, paradoxes and contradictions. For now though, it suffices to intimate at a few of these, peculiar to the three (metaphorical) mountains mentioned: the aspiring 'peak' population, the informational mountain, and British Columbia's beautiful mountains.

33 Whereby 'Rain-couver' endures a shocking 1155mm of rain annually, with over 161 rain days a year.

At the outset, it seems that there is a sense of shame or resentment, however small, in the attitudes of some of the metropolitan adventurers. As Milena put it:

Something I thought about this weekend is I sometimes find being the Vancouver city girl, they call us 'Meccies'. So you go up and end up in the backcountry hut, and basically there's a community that does this all the time and they're guides and they're teaching the courses and they're the ones out there every day. And they call the city folk who come up on the weekend the 'Meccies' because they go to MEC [Mountain Equipment Co-op] and buy all their gear and it's all MEC gear and they show up on the weekends and kinda fill the huts and take up their space. So you know, I was thinking about it a lot this last week. It also makes me feel separated from that community, and slightly judged for being from the city. Cos I'll sit in a group of guides and everyone's connected. Like oh who do you work for, and who do you guide for, and where are you from – Squamish. And the minute I say I'm from Vancouver I feel like oh, you're one of them. And I think I do struggle cos I kind of idolize those people, I guess. If there's anyone I could be, or I'd give up my life for, it might be somebody like that. And so it's sometimes a tough place to be in that grey zone of the weekend warrior, and not be as accomplished as them. You have the desire but you don't always fit into that group.

For another avid female 'weekend warrior', Jasmine, a similar nerve seemed to be easily touched on. Her nickname was 'cidiot', an idiot from the city, trying to do the double act. Yet in the words of Powder magazine (2012:153) who did a special profile on her, in many others ways she has 'the metropolitan adventure program dialled'.

Beneath the 'patina of glamour' (Bloom, 1987:84) of Vancouverism in both the dream city sense and the liveable lifestyle, notes of insecurity can be heard. The title 'livable city' (Harcourt, 2007) or the status of 'an achievement' (Punter, 2004) always leaves work to be done. Perhaps something is not quite satisfied. So just as Charles Demers (2010) called Vancouver 'a special' place, he also noted that the flipside to its vibrant surface was its violent undercoat³⁴. Sticking with the aspiring 'peak' population for the moment, a young entrepreneur shared an apt metaphor:

I mean I don't want to be a cynic, but I definitely [laughs] am a shade pessimistic when people are like the overly happy friendly. Like I hate to say it but like the Lulu Lemon ideal: over-loving, over-sharing, over-caring. It rubs me the wrong way.

34 It goes without saying that the Downtown Eastside (DTES) community in Vancouver has been the subject of numerous studies of this undercoat, as an obvious 'other' to the dream-like projections (cf. Robertson, 2007).

Is there a sense in which all the excess of Vancouver becomes a deficiency, the ecstasy becomes the agony? In either case, this tension contributes to the need for the city – and its residents by implication (even if not all of them) – to prove themselves. There is certainly work to be done (even in leisure). Again, Alistair, this same entrepreneur, showed insight:

Well I think there's definitely a huge aspect of the fitness-leisure combination, right. So everyone does sport, it seems...I'd say the young urban professionals where I live have a tendency to do yoga. Then I'd say the other aspect is that every weekend or at least within reason, there's definitely an expectation of going somewhere, whether it's a mountain, whether it's to the interior, there's definitely a real, people almost define their time by where they spend it, purely. Like it's funny, just thinking about it now, when you ask people what they did, and let's say they had a quiet weekend, the euphemism people always share is oh like it was nothing, just quiet, stayed home. Like stayed home, its rubbish. Ah f*cking city, just stayed here, what a terrible place.

Some troubling ironies arise to the surface. Kataoka (2009:45) is quick to note this:

[S]ince Vancouverism only claims to put “living first”, it does not impose a particular definition of living: it suggests a lifestyle that balances living with work and play. Leaving all the terms somewhat open means that almost anyone (with access to at least a cool three-quarters of a million dollars) can become a member of the 'live/work/play' community. [This] leads to questions such as “How do people back east/East survive the rat race?”.

Yet in her analysis, she charts how 'with the rise of “progressive” planning (in public) there is an attendant rise of “regressive” politics (in private)' (p.53). This paradox has pernicious implications³⁵. In this regard, many of the respondents were not caught unaware. As one accountant declared:

Generally it's [Vancouver] a great place. But most people, a long time would they last here? Probably not, I don't think so. But the rain gets to most people. It gets to me each year more. The cost of living too. Sh*t if you ever want a family here, you better hope that your spouse went to university too and has a damn good job, because it's not going to happen otherwise. So that's tough too. But other than that, it's a good place.

35 Kataoka (2009:46) demonstrates this in that 'the domestic emphasis of Vancouverism gestures towards the other function of Jacobs' civic culture: to secure privacy...[such that] the conventional affluent family can move about and dwell, without giving up their culture of isolation'. Progressive regression is perhaps shocking in this regard.

In very real terms, however, such 'regression' (sometimes masking in the rhetoric of 'progression') results in a 'social sorting [of sorts...which] contributes to the concretization of a dual city, and abdicates residents of responsibility for respecting one another' (Kataoka, 2009:46-47). The irony here is that 'civic culture's respect for privacy is actually part of producing the problems of social segregation and violence, to which it poses as a solution' (p.47). Is something similar going on in the leisure culture too?

As Kataoka (2009:47) writes: 'one of the unintended effects of Vancouverism is instructive in this regard'. Similar unintended effects are noted here, pertaining to leisure and lifestyle rather than architecture and planning. Yet these are no less instructive. The Janus-faced problem that the respondents recognized is the 'subtle and complex' (Taylor, 1991:11) nature of both modern society, but also its reflections and refractions in this quintessentially (post)modern city. What is for certain is the existence of ironies amidst this complexity. The allure and attraction of Vancouverism is both a boon and a bane, both the ecstasy and the agony of its residents. Alistair, for example, showed insight in this regard. He said: 'there is dissatisfaction with the day to day and because there's so much around to do, there's like an over-amplification of like you've gotta do it'. Perhaps this group are offered so much to satiate their appetites, desires, and senses in this city, that a sense of insatiation can simply run deeper. The overtures and overtones, as evidenced in this city of dreams, demand concerted effort and critique to fully uncover. For this reason, the remainder of this thesis will be geared toward such work.

Chapter :3 Retorts to a malaise

'Escapism, I will argue, is human – and inescapable'
(Yi-Fu Tuan, 1998:xvi)

Tuan writes that escapism is a foundational part of what it means to be human. He continues: 'there is nothing wrong with escapism as such. What makes it suspect is the goal, which can be quite unreal' (p.xvi). For the leisure enthusiasts in question, the mountain is this material goal, and its (un)reality the subject of this chapter. Primarily, it should be noted that such escapism is materialized in peculiar forms for these respondents. As the Canadian journalist Ian Brown (2013:2) recently wrote in the Globe and Mail:

Why are we so drawn to the mountains, so transfixed by their magnitude and beauty? Proximity to the peaks isn't so much an escape from the modern world and its endless diet of news and views...as a sure-fire way of putting everything into perspective.

Does this contradict Tuan's notion of escapism? I argue not at all. Rather, an avid pursuit of perspective is realized in sophisticated forms of escapism. As one respondent exclaimed, going to the mountain is: 'refreshing to be honest. You've gone above the level, that banal existence and you get to enjoy the world and you're above that rush and it's quiet and peaceful'.

So what is escapism? Tuan (1998:xi) poses the rhetorical question: 'surely everyone has had the urge to be elsewhere in moments of stress and uncertainty'. This desire, indeed this deep restlessness, seems to be a profound part of the human condition. He continues (p.8): 'Human beings have been and continue to be profoundly restless. For one reason or another, they are not content with being where they are...[there is] a discontent with the status quo, a desire to escape'. So it is that escapism is often framed in negative ways (Tuan, 1998:5):

“Escapism” has a somewhat negative meaning in our society and perhaps in all societies. It suggests an inability to face facts – the real world. We speak of escapist literature, for instance, and we tend to judge as escapist places such as mega-shopping malls, fancy resorts, theme parks...They all lack – in a single word – weight.

Upon closer inspection, however, its complexities are not hard to miss. Tuan (p.xii) reminds us that 'the city is escapist *par excellence*, for a city is a city – a real city! – to the degree that it has

distanced itself (escaped) from nature and its rhythms'. So if the city is escapism from nature, and nature escapism from the city, or culture at large, then the enigmatic question 'what is real?' swiftly arises. These issues will frame the first part of this analysis section, examining escapism in particular, before noting the returns and pursuits of the leisure enthusiasts in question.

Charles Taylor's (1991) *Malaise of Modernity* provides a nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the state of Western civilization at large. As a philosopher, Taylor charts the course of different values and ideals driving our society. He arrives upon self-fulfilment, and questions the sources of this modern ethic. Taylor defines our malaise as 'features of our contemporary culture and society that people experience as a loss or a decline, even as our civilization develops' (p.1). In doing so, he nods to innumerable theorists of modernity who have sought to understand the paradoxical nature of its development³⁶. Take for instance the great French *philosophe*, Blaise Pascal (cited in Taylor, 1991), who passionately stated that modernity cannot be understood without a recognition of both its *grandeur* and its *misère*. This is a powerful reminder of the spectrum of modernity: the peaks of its progress and the troughs of its troubles, both its boons and busts. Indeed, a long lineage of critical scholarship over the centuries has interrogated these views³⁷, though these do not form the primary focus of this thesis.

Just as Pascal notes the wide spectrum of modernity, encompassing both grandeur and misery, Taylor is equally eager to pursue such a spectrum, or what he calls the 'horizons of significance' (1995:38), warning against the eclipse of the ends of possibilities wrought in modern culture. This reminds us of the broad-based spectrum of impacts, effects, and affects that modernity has rendered in the lives of different societies, classes, and peoples over time. It is important to note that the malaise is experienced in different ways by each of these different segments. Exploitation, disenchantment, alienation, fragmentation, and the like are not peculiar to any one group. For the respondents in question, however, it seems that the denial of humanity at work is of particular significance.

36 A plethora of views confirm this sentiment, even in recent human geography, noting modern forces as those in 'paradoxical unity' (Roy, 2003) which can create a 'double bind' (Bell, 1976).

37 Strong critiques are provided by the famous critics, such as Karl Marx (1848), Max Weber (1904) and Emile Durkheim (1951), amongst others. These views have been well developed by recent critics as well, including David Harvey (2007), Adorno and Horkheimer (1997), and Daniel Bell (1976).

It is noteworthy then that Charles Taylor (1991:2) writes that 'the changes defining modernity are both well-known and very perplexing, and that is why it's worth talking still more about them'. This sentiment is echoed here. Taylor is wary that our 'great familiarity hides bewilderment' (p.2). He is keen to restate the sources of modernity, particularly the modern ethic of self-fulfilment, in terms that remind us of the subtleties and complexities of our times. Taylor (p.3) writes of modernity as the: 'disenchantment of the world [such that] things lost some of their magic...[with] consequences for human life and meaning'. In particular, Taylor notes the rampant atomism and fragmentation associated with the onward march of modernity. Yet in doing so, he stridently declares that 'strong theories of fatality are abstract and wrong' (p.8). Such atomism is *both* totalizing *and* insidious, engrained in innumerable mechanisms of modern life.

As a strong example of this, Taylor notes the 'prestige and aura that surround technology' (p.6), that can often mask the implicit yardstick of 'instrumental reason' (p.5) concealed behind the interface. This favours maximum efficiency, high cost-output ratios, and other quantifiable measures of success in a means-ends sort of decision-making. Taylor's analysis, unlike many others however, frames these issues as 'full of tension' (p.56) and 'not fully comprehended' (ibid.). He convincingly argues that such techniques and technologies form an incline, encouraging a cultural slide or slippage (similar to Zygmunt Bauman's [2000] 'seductive slide' regarding technology). This incline fosters certain attitudes and rewards certain patterns of behaviour, at the same time as negating others. Yet this slide is not without friction. Rather, it is full of contestation and so Taylor asserts that '*La Lotta Continua*' (p.78), the struggle goes on.

Taylor's malaise is eloquently framed in three ways. He notes individualism, instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom or agency as the three prongs of the malaise. Undergirding these is a warning against the danger of the 'atomism of the self-absorbed individual' (Taylor, 1991:9). Yet Taylor's (p.72) incision is unique, guarding against common stances that 'easily lead to blanket condemnation'. Debates all too often become polarized, such that in the act of condemnation the richer sources and higher ideals feeding these different values are lost, or at least side-lined. So it is that the modern ethic of self-fulfilment, for instance, is seen to be without struggle, contestation, or disagreement. Taylor (p.56) could not disagree more strongly:

[Our culture] paint[s] the culture of narcissism as quite at peace with itself, because on any reading it is exactly in theory what it is in practice. It meets its own aspirations and is thus impervious to argument. By contrast my view shows it to be full of tension, to be living an ideal that is not fully comprehended, and which properly understood would challenge many of its practices. Those who live it, sharing as they do our human condition, can be reminded of those features of our condition that show these practices to be questionable.

For clarity's sake, before embarking on the journey of investigation into these subtleties and complexities, it is worth staking out the terrain. It seems definitions are a good starting point in this work. Individualism is well defined by Hamilton (1992:21) as:

The concept that the individual is the starting point for all knowledge and action, and that individual reason cannot be subjected to a higher authority. Society is thus the sum or product of the thought and action of a large number of individuals.

Taylor (1991:55) notes this focus as a pre-eminent driver of the modern ethic of self-fulfilment, detailing how this outlook 'seems to recognize few external moral demands or serious commitments to others'. For individualism specifically, Taylor (p.59) goes on to show how:

[I]t is not hard to see how both of these stances come to be entrenched in modern industrial societies. From its very inception, this kind of society has involved mobility...mobility is in a sense forced on us. Old ties are broken down.³⁸

A similar line of argument is used to describe instrumental reason, defined as the domination of technological society and modern rationality (Taylor, 1991). This breeds a means-ends approach to (all) decision-making, favouring efficiency and utility over morality or ethics. Taylor writes (p.97-8):

Instrumental rationality seems to be able to lay its demands on us coming and going, in the public or the private spheres, in the economy and the state, in the complementary ways that those two great analysts of modernity, Marx and Weber, have explained...I think that there is a great deal of truth in these 'iron cage' pictures. Modern society does tend to push us in the direction of atomism and instrumentalism.

38 Robert Putnam (2000:11) echoes this sentiment with his 'repotting hypothesis' - 'mobility, like frequent re-potting of plants, tends to disrupt root systems, and it takes time for an uprooted individual to put down new roots'.

Once again, however, Taylor (p.95) is quick to show how 'an analogously polarized debate is easy to find here'. He (p.96-99) concedes that: 'the sacrifices that runaway instrumental reason imposes on us are obvious enough'. Yet he also argues that 'we can't see the development of technological society just in the light of an imperative of domination...I believe that the view of technological society as a kind of iron fate cannot be sustained. It simplifies too much and forgets the essential' (ibid.). And so, whilst Taylor (p.97) agrees that 'we are forced to operate to some degree according to the demands of modern rationality, whether or not it suits our own moral outlook', he also wants to bring attention to how (p.96): 'both sides of the polarized debate are in an unwitting conspiracy to keep something essential from view, to accredit the lowest view of the thing they do battle over – in this case, instrumental reason'.

In response to the concatenation of individualism and instrumental reason, Taylor cites his third prong of the malaise; a loss of freedom or agency. He writes (1991:8): 'the industrial-technological society severely restricts our choices', though carefully notes: 'we don't want to exaggerate our degrees of freedom. But they are not zero' (p.100-1). So for instance, Taylor (p.107) concedes that: 'there is a bent or slide towards the stance of dominance, for all the reasons mentioned above, [but] nothing says that we *have* to live our technology this way'. Nonetheless, he is uncompromising in noting the potential emergence of a 'vicious circle' (p.118), as 'a sense of helplessness breeds alienation' (ibid.). This is important for the demographic group in question, specifically in view of the mechanics of alienation that are propagated and perpetuated in the modern-day metropolis. Taylor (p.96) reminds us that 'the sacrifices that runaway instrumental reason imposes on us are obvious enough, in the hardening of an atomistic outlook, in our imperviousness to nature'.

This hardening and imperviousness frame an understanding of the leisure enthusiasts in question. As one avid metropolitan adventurer put it, partly as self-identification³⁹:

I think a weekend warrior is someone who works hard and then plays hard. Someone who works hard during the week in the city or doing whatever their job is and then plays hard on the weekend. That's sort of what I would define it as.

39 Interestingly, the Urban Dictionary (colloquially) defines a weekend warrior as a 'high-pressure visitor who brings intense urban attitudes and behaviours to their weekend getaway'.

Intensity is at the heart of this mix: work hard, play hard(er). Intense weeks and intense weekends frame this lifestyle. Payne, another respondent, affirmed this: 'in my life I am either a hundred percent or I'm not'. Yet corporate jobs, demanding '12, 14, 16 hour days', according to one accountant, and working weeks of '70, 80, 90 hours', according to another, seem to foster such attitudes. The weekend becomes the natural, even necessary, locus for letting off steam. It is therefore unsurprising that many of these respondents, such as Leanne, proudly proclaim that 'we do live for the weekends a lot. We're big weekend advocates'. In view of this, the weekend can be viewed as a sort of response, or even a retort, to the malaise of modernity that Taylor identifies. The onward march of modernity, with its attendant experiences of 'loss and decline, even as our civilization develops' (Taylor, 1991:1), leads to push back from these weekend warriors. In a simple, visual sense, this may look like (Figure 4):

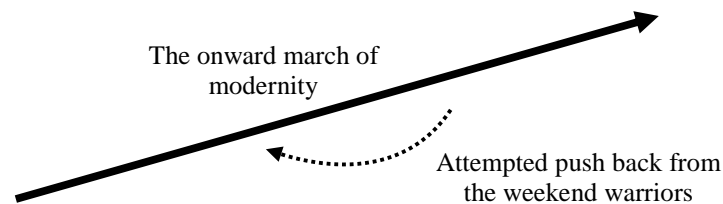


Figure 4. The onward march of modernity and push back

This archetype of 'weekend warrior' is not exclusive to Vancouver, though it is certainly prevalent in this liveable city. Three strong elements are particularly striking (Table 3):

	WEEK	WEEKEND	EXAMPLE
1. WAR	Office space (fight)	Open space (flight)	Miles: '[We] snowboard on Saturday and Sunday. Then come home on Sunday. By that time everybody's usually dead'
2. HERO	Loss of heroic dimension	Intensity, heroism, athleticism	Shaun: 'skiing, I love it...that sort of endorphin, adrenaline-junkie feel to it'
3. HARDENED	Fatalism and atomistic outlook	Pressure release, let off steam	Jonathan: 'We escape crowds, people, buildings. Just wanting to feel nature. It's just that sense isn't it'

Table 3. A profile of weekend warriors

This chapter will disentangle the retorts and refusals of Taylor's (1991) malaise, as these weekend warriors head to the mountain; escaping the malaise, returning to nature, and pursuing

vitality. Before plunging into this work, however, it is worth reminding ourselves once again of Taylor's approach. First, he recognizes the tight grip of the malaise, realized through its three prongs: individualism, instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom. These are *both* totalizing *and* pervasive; obvious at times, insidious at others; explicit in some places, implicit in others. Pushing back against fatalistic theories and polarized debates, Taylor (1991:11) also notes how 'the nature of modern culture is more subtle and complex than this'. These subtleties and complexities are significant, since oftentimes sophisticated modes of escapism were realized.

3.1 Escape: the search for heroism

'The lack of something definite at the centre of the soul impels us to search for momentary satisfaction in ever-new stimulations, sensations, and external activities. Thus it is that we become entangled in the instability and helplessness that manifests itself as the tumult of the metropolis, as the mania for travelling, as the wild pursuit of competition, and as the typically modern disloyalty with regard to taste, style, opinions and personal relationships.'

Georg Simmel (1904:484)

One of the prongs of Taylor's (1991:109) malaise is the 'loss of freedom', associated with the onward march of modernity. He writes (p.8) how the domination of 'the industrial-technological society severely restricts our choices'. The resultant limitation of choices inspires, if not demands, a desire to regain agency. For the weekend warriors in question, such agency is often sought in body-based freedom, (re)engaging kinaesthetic sensibilities and corporeal experiences. One such example of this is the rekindling of heroism. For some respondents, this was materialized in stark ways, with blatant schisms between week and weekend. For others, it was more subtle and complex. In both cases, however, escapism enabled a retrieval of agency, to some degree, and therefore formed the backbone of the search for heroism.

In short, Taylor (1991:4) associates modernity with the malaise of the 'loss of a heroic dimension to life'. This was evident in the response of Charlie, a chartered accountant: 'I've always hated work. I dislike work, with a passion. So I have a passion for disliking work. You know I think I just fell into accounting, it's pretty boring, and I don't want my job. Well that said it pays me to do all this other sh*t'. He went on, however, beyond passionate plea, to the reverie he was enjoying in this 'dream' city (Berelowitz, 2005). Charlie said:

I'm where I want to be. Yeah like so if you love mountains then you love skiing and snow. I'm pretty much in the best place on Earth. So I'm living the dream. I went heli-skiing in Alaska last year, which was like a 2 hour flight away, to Whitehorse, and then a few hours' drive. I go skiing in Whistler most weekends. If I can't go skiing in Whistler maybe I go ski touring in the wilderness. I love the wilderness aspect of the local mountains, that if I want to go away for a weekend and not see a single human being I can do it. I love the fact that I can go skiing after work. I can go trekking up a mountain after work. I can go driving up a mountain after work. I can go windsurfing after work. Like all these things are escapism from the drudgery of my accounting life and so yeah I'm living the dream. Every time I'm not in work, which is as often as possible, I'm living the dream.

This 'escapism from the drudgery of [his] accounting life' was a common theme among the respondents. Not all, however, were quite so broad-brushed in their strokes. What is worthy of note, though, is the sense indeed the need, even the deep existential longing, for *more* in life: more heroism, more adventure, more excitement.

Taylor (1991:109) associates modernity's attendant 'loss of freedom' with the industrial-technological society we have created. He writes (ibid.): 'the institutions of a technological society don't ineluctably impose on us an ever-deepening hegemony of instrumental reason. But it is clear that left to themselves they have a tendency to push us in that direction'. This slide, incline, or bent, in favour of a 'stance of domination' (p.107) and of 'technological mastery' (p.105), became exceedingly obvious as the respondents spoke of their work lives. Payne said:

Historically, my week day attitude has been pessimistic and I want to get the hell out of there. And my weekend attitude is optimistic, in the fact that I think that only good things are going to happen on the weekend. If it looks like it's going to be cloudy, I'll convince everyone that it'll be sunny. In the week days I'm just like "get me the hell out of here, you know, I can't wait till this week is over".

For others, the loss of freedom associated with work was down to the sheer number of hours being demanded. Julian, a junior accountant at a small firm, spoke in a repugnant tone of 'the other guys in the Big Four accounting firms [Deloitte, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Ernst & Young, KPMG], who are working 12, 14, 16 hour days'. One such chartered accountant shared the insider sentiment on this experience:

I wouldn't say it's the work that gets a lot of people down; it's sort of the unpredictability and hours. You can't really forecast what you're going to be working. If you even have to tell yourself that you're going to have to be working 50-60 hours a week for a month, that's okay. But it's just that one or two things that come out of nowhere where you're working 70, 80, 90 hours a week, that's kinda what really gets you down I think. In general you work with a lot of good people, a lot of young people which is nice, a lot of really smart people, and yeah it's stimulating work, it's good work, it's just a lot of times it's just too much of it.

This intensity, in the working week for now, raised a number of different themes associated with Taylor's (1991) observation of an erosion in freedom. Firstly, the repetition of work had the potential of becoming burdensome⁴⁰. Naturally, this became a limit to personal freedom in the office-space, demanding an almost Fordist-style of labour production, perfected by repetition, particularly in the busy tax season of January to April. Secondly, demands on time could therefore become extremely pressured, as Mark, a lawyer, shared: 'If something particular is up I'd put in 60-70 hours a week, seven days a week, kinda thing, without a second look'. This ushered in a sense of 'selling out to the man', as one chartered accountant put it, 'you know, the man'. Reinforcing 'the staid existence of [these] buttoned-down professionals' (Lloyd, 2006:121), Peter, a financial manager, stated quite simply: 'the deadline is there so you've got to get it done'. Such statements convey the degree of exploitation and lack of freedom in these advanced producer service firms (Scott, 2006). As an example, Shaun, an accountant, shared this story:

Your Partner doesn't care what you do outside of work, as long as your work is done! I mean they're like, "this is the file, I need it done by this time". You know if you get it done a week early and you've got time to spare, go for it. But it never happens. If during the day you're like no I've gotta play at my practice. Well, no. If you want a job then you stay here and you finish this cos that's what I'm paying you for. Your partner doesn't care, not in the slightest. At the end of the day, you're working on their terms.

Taylor (1991:58) relates these sentiments to Weber's (1904) 'iron cage', noting how 'this kind of entrenchment process can help explain the slide in the culture of authenticity'. By the 'entrenchment process' (ibid.), Taylor is referring to logics of instrumentality, rationality, and domination, which by nature limit human agency. These contribute to an erosion freedom, to

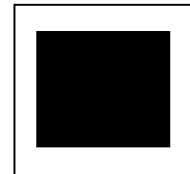
40 For instance, Julian said: 'so [if] you work in a public [accounting] firm, essentially you're doing the same thing over and over and over again. For what I do anyway, which is audit and tax, essentially. So it becomes somewhat tiresome or somewhat boring because you are just doing the same thing over and over...so working for them I can see it in the future getting a little tiresome. Meh, I'd kinda rather begin something else'.

some extent. One example of this 'entrenchment' was revealed in the encroachment of work into personal time, noted by a number of respondents. Sidney, a manager in asset valuations, also juggling a family life, tried to draw the line:

I try not to do any work on the weekends, just to keep them separate...I try not to think about the office when I'm up in Whistler. I try to keep it separate, that's for sure. And I get pretty annoyed if I'm up in Whistler having to do some work, cos I've got better things to do than do work. Probably once a month or so I'll be contacted up there. And it's not exactly a lot of work that I'll have to do, it's just the fact that they're encroaching on your time kind of thing. Some people don't mind it, but I don't like it too much...I mean if work started to encroach too much on the family life I'd just leave, do something else.

In order to protect personal time, particularly leisure time for these weekend enthusiasts, a weekday attitude of maximum efficiency has to be perfected. Kerriane, a campus recruiter for one of the Big Four firms downtown, said: 'Yeah, well I mean during the week you're at work right, so I'm on, like go go go, ready to think, process things, you know analyse, problem solve'. In her mind it was very clear 'that weekdays are workdays'. This notion was developed by a chartered accountant, Charlotte, into a 'black box' analogy. She put it this way:

The way I think about my week is like work is like this black box and then everything else is free time and then I plan. It's just like I don't even think about that time, it's just taken away, and then I plan around everything else. Like okay when is my next non-black box time.



Picturing this time, 9-5 daily (and frequently more), that is 'just taken away', leaves precious little time particularly during the week for personal leisure and pleasure. Oftentimes, deadlines also demand weekend work, as Payne made clear:

The busy season is January to April. Right now. I try to get away at least one day a week. It's a professional job right, you get your sh*t done, then take off. If you don't then you're working – it all depends on the deadline and the client and what you're trying to do. Generally don't have to work on the weekend but if you have a deadline to meet, you just have to do it.

This limited agency was commonplace, largely accepted. Miles, a commodities trader, said: 'On the weekends you get to dictate what you do yourself. Cos when you're at work, you have very

limited control over that. It's good to make plans but if someone asks you to do something, you gotta do it'. As Taylor (p.100-1) reminds us: 'we don't want to exaggerate our degrees of freedom. But they are not zero'. Sometimes, you simply 'just have to do it'.

Interestingly, a mountain metaphor, that of visibility, was even used by some respondents to describe the limitations in this realm. Stewart, a financial advisor downtown, clarified this image, explaining the nature of project-driven work:

So my busy periods are just depending on the projects I'm working on. And you can't say these months are going to be particularly busier than other months. I mean the variability is a part of the role, there's no getting around it, if a project demands that you're in on the weekend and you know you had ski plans [laughs], it doesn't really matter, there's no excuse. I mean typically I have some visibility as to what the next kinda three to four or five weeks of work look like for myself, so I can gauge whether I've got deliverables and gotta get something in and if it's early in the week and I'm deciding on my weekend plans, and I've got something deliverable that's on Monday of the following week, I know, before I make those ski plans, I've gotta make sure I'm going to be able to finish that right. It's just a requirement within the job. It's not the type of work where you can just kinda clock out at the end of the day and put out of your mind. You try to do that to a certain extent, just from a personal healthy living sanity point of view, but there is an obligation to be available and you know just to get your work done. And you know if you have to put in late nights through the week to save your weekend you do it.

However, often a lack of visibility materialized itself in different ways in different professions. The desire for work-life balance, if at all attainable, had to be sought in different ways depending upon the sector. Shaun, a chartered accountant, was brutally honest:

Come tax time, [which is] generally beginning of January to the end of April or mid-May, you're putting in maybe 70 or 80 hours...I remember when I was doing my recruiting, all firms kinda tout the whole 'work-life balance' as one of their huge things that they're pushing on you. But at the end of the day, it's more like balancing your life around your work, rather than balancing the two.

In this case, the 'black box' of work truly becomes an iron cage, specifically during tax season. Shaun explained: 'they don't let us take vacation till June onwards, cos they just know it's not feasible'. Yet in different sectors, this case differed. For instance, Alistair, an aspiring entrepreneur in real estate development, said:

[T]he one thing I'd overtone, I think a lot of people [in our firm] would, and it's a pretty strong culture at [our firm]...I mean there's no real work-life balance, and I don't say that in a negative way. I just mean there is a huge encouragement on reading, everything you do outside of work you're still thinking about how it relates to your work. Because our work is so all-encompassing, like development is about urban planning, it is thinking about communities, it is thinking about, you know my favourite topic is behavioural sociology and trends.

It seemed that the denial of humanity at work for these respondents encouraged if not demanded a retrieval of freedom and agency. These weekend warriors were truly battling against the malaise of a 'loss of freedom' (Taylor, 1991:109). For many, the weekend provided this⁴¹. Louis Wirth (1938:22), the great American urbanist, foresaw such demands for urban recreation:

[W]hat the communal services do not furnish, the urbanite must purchase, and there is virtually no human need which has remained unexploited by commercialism. Catering to thrills and furnishing means of escape from drudgery, monotony, and routine thus become one of the major functions of urban recreation, which at its best furnishes means for creative self-exploration and spontaneous group association, but which more typically in the urban world results in passive spectatorism on the one hand, or sensational record-smashing feats on the other.

Naturally, for Vancouver, urban recreation is often taken to the mountains, not least because of their proximity. This does not, however, make Wirth's point redundant. Rather, both a 'passive spectatorism' and 'sensational record-smashing feats' (ibid.) are evident in the leisure culture in question, whether through vicarious living or active participation. This section of this chapter, focussing on escapism in search of heroism, emphasizes Wirth's latter point in particular.

One means of regaining agency was displayed through body-based freedom, adding athleticism into the mix of pursuing heroism. As Julian said, wearing a Backcountry t-shirt at the time branded with the slogan 'Wake Up. Kick Ass. Repeat':

[The] physical side is just that I'm a human being, I have two legs that want to go forward and forward and forward and get me up a mountain and then get down it as fast as I possibly can, whether it be on skis or on a bike. Either way is pretty awesome [laughs]! And then when you're on skis, there's something to it, cos it's like you're floating the whole time if you're in powder. It's pretty surreal. It's pretty sick. The adrenaline kicks in and it's so enjoyable. It's its own little drug, isn't it?

41 Indeed, the weekend became significant as a cathartic time and space, a theme developed later in this thesis.

This 'little drug' was defined as 'that sort of endorphin, adrenaline-junkie feel' by Shaun, another chartered accountant. It became a strong motivation in the leisure pursuits of these young athletes, predominantly males, eager to test their bodies, prove themselves, and push the limits. This is by no means anything new. For some it was something to boast about, though, as Payne declared: 'I'd say I can probably out-run, out-run or whatever you want to call it 99% of Vancouver, and I do everything that I do for fun'. He continued: 'I do mainly outdoor stuff: I ski, I bike, I surf, I go hike...anything that basically has somewhat of an adrenaline rush but also visual stimulation too I guess'. These desires demonstrate a direct retort to the 'pitiable comfort' (Taylor, 1991:4) wrought by modernity's malaise. In particular, the 'loss of freedom' (p.109) with its resultant lack of agency, stirred up in many respondents a longing and need for greater aspirations in life. The tendency toward the banal and deviation to the trivial, foretold by Nietzsche (1882) amongst others, inspired a reinvention of an athletic dimension⁴². The extreme mountain pursuits of these weekend warriors testify to such aspirations.

Perhaps the most blatant retort noted is that of the direct search for heroism. Taylor (1991:4) writes of the 'loss of a heroic dimension to life'. Commercialism has been quick to note this, encouraging a retrieval of heroism (mostly to sell products). As Wirth (1938:22) predicted, marketing is geared at 'catering to thrills and furnishing means of escape from drudgery, monotony and routine'. It is easy to spot instances of this, including advertisements on every chairlift at Whistler, such as this one for a sports camera: 'GoPro: Be a Hero'. For hard working professionals, this created a conundrum: where does my true identity lie?⁴³ Shaun, a chartered accountant, seemed to have figured out his response: 'I'd say my week defines who I am whereas my weekend sort of fosters who I want to be [laughs]'. This desire, longing, even alter-ego, was sustained and nourished by heroic adventures. In mentioning a time he and a 'buddy' went paddle-boarding 'on a crazy trip to Cheakamus Lake' near Whistler, Shaun said: 'it was pretty epic man. Yeah epic. It was pretty cool'.

42 Alistair brought attention to another trend in this yuppie leisure culture; that of endurance events. He said: 'I know that without a doubt, [with] what we call professional males, there's definitely been this trend to the endurance sports, like triathlons are big now...like all these sports that are about mental toughness, I think there's a huge correlation. Cos cycling is a grind. Triathlon is a grind'. The Grouse *Grind* itself was raised by others, as a hotspot destination of leisure and fitness. This is further examined in subsequent chapters.

43 Indeed, when asked a similar question, a large majority of the respondents were stumped. One such response was this: 'Hmmm, huh. Nope, I think...that's a pretty deep question you're getting to. I don't really have an answer'.

This ethic of exploration undergirded innumerable comments and stories shared by the respondents. For newcomers to Vancouver, this was evident in urban exploration: 'I'm totally enamoured [with the city] and in an exploratory phase kinda thing...it's super fresh and exciting' said one young professional. Weekend trips to other cities provided such opportunities as well, as Mark shared in 'going to explore Portland...I was really just exploring the city. Walking. Sight-seeing a little bit. Exploring the city'. Once again, this is reflected in brand advertising, such as with 'The North Face: Never Stop Exploring'. The pinnacle of this exploration, however, certainly seemed to be amidst the mountains. For instance, Charlie was adamant of his identity: 'the mountains totally define me, and that's why I'm here'. His exploration was boundless, enthusing him to the very core:

If I go ski touring I can drive up to Lions Bay, half an hour away, I can trek up behind the back of the Lions and within two hours of trekking I'm in absolute, pristine, untouched wilderness. Like where I know that if I chose to trek for a week I wouldn't see a single person. So that wilderness element of nature, I get a huge high from...I think it has this draw for me.

This somewhat transcendent quality seemed ethereal, mysterious. Julian toyed with this idea:

Squamish is sick, it's got some good hikes. Vancouver has got lots of good hikes too. But I'm just continuing to explore more and more of just different places around...I dunno the allure of the mountains always gets me, whether it be winter or summer. There's something about going up into the mountains and getting to the top of them. And then what's so great about skiing is you get to ski down it.

In view of the aforementioned 'white collar woes' (Phillips, 1996:531), where intangible post-industrial work, producing paper, ideas, and services, can swiftly become perplexing, the premium was placed on real, material tangibility. Jonathan, a climber, expressed this vividly:

[I]t's a much more holistic sense of achievement. You climb a mountain and you feel that through your own, it almost goes back to manual labour. I've always found that compared to sitting in front of a computer and completing a word document, if I'm working with my hands I get a much greater sense of gratification from completing something, because you can see what you've achieved, like it's very obvious to you. And it's the same with climbing a mountain. It's very obvious, you see, I've done this, I'm looking down on where I came from. I've achieved this. So it's much more tangible what you've achieved. I think that's very important, to be able to tangibly see I've done this, as opposed to it being in a few bytes of information which are hidden away inside a computer that you don't see.

This sense of visible achievement was evident at all spatial scales for the different respondents. Kerriane said: 'I do these one day runs but more for myself...it's like a challenge. There's something to accomplish, I like that'. Equally, the famous Grouse Grind⁴⁴, or 'nature's stair master', drew attention in interviews. Sebastian said: '[you] do it as fast as you can without dying, and then get the skyride back down...it's a good work out and I think it's quite a good sense of achievement when you get to the top'. This desire for tangible achievement and accomplishment was strong. Intangible work seemed only to foster such a desire. Regardless of spatial scale, this rekindled heroism, as agency was exerted, and specifically physical summits were spoken of as the peaks of such attainments.

For the more audacious adventurers, the seductions of the trivial and pitiable comforts of metropolitan living inspired some to conjure up grand alternatives. As Milena, an Occupational Therapist put it: 'I dunno, I've tried to stay in the city [at the weekend] and do what normal people do in the city, but I can't handle my next work week. It gets a little claustrophobic'. She prefers 'multi-day trips' away, in the winter 'either in the backcountry [staying] like in a hut or a snow cave or a tent'. She said:

I like living out of a bag, because I can see myself sometimes spiralling into the city life: the fashion, and concerts, and spending \$30 in going out for drinks and dinner. And I like to try to pull back out of that. And I think the weekend can do that for me. Where we eat oatmeal and it tastes amazing and you know we have a granola bar and we don't have to go for the fanciest dinner. I think that's another value that I like getting back to and it kinda reminds me of how simple you can live, as opposed to what you see in the city.

She reaffirmed this: 'Yeah, I love [living out of a bag]. When I go on week long trips, with the least amount of stuff...the better it is. I love simplifying life'. This became a value in all of life, whether in 'being successful or being able to see improvements or working towards things in your personal life, and feel, yeah accomplish things'. For Milena, trips were foundational to this:

I mean if you're camping, you're up with the sun, you're down with the sun. I go to bed way earlier and I get up way earlier. It's a nice way to live...you're just so happy that you're up doing crazy things at a crazy hour while everyone else is sleeping, and I think it just gives you that sense of accomplishment and self-worth, yeah.

44 The Grouse Grind is a 2.9km hike with 853m of elevation gain on the North Shore of Vancouver, and attracts countless leisure enthusiasts, particularly at the weekends. It is discussed at length in subsequent chapters.

Unsurprisingly, Vancouver emerged as the ideal launching pad for these 'epic trips' and 'awesome adventures', as Shaun put it. Another spoke of all the options: 'I dunno [going away] just feels a lot farther than we are, and you don't have to go that far. It feels like a big trip, even though it's not very far. Yeah it feels like a mini holiday'. These big trips fuelled the enthusiasm of many, including Charlie:

Me and the girlfriend [sic] literally say it's like a mini-holiday every weekend...We'll jump in the van on a Friday night, we'll drive a few hours, get somewhere, we'll ski the next morning or surf the next morning, and spend a couple of days away from home. And it feels like a mini-holiday, especially if we've got three days. It will feel like we've been somewhere ridiculous, you know.

He said he had 'done a few canoe trips', including: 'the Squamish River, the Mamquam River, the Cheakamus River, the Chilliwack River, all good white water rivers...oh and the Lillooet River up in Pemberton is quite nice'. No wonder Vancouver has international renown for its unparalleled access to nature's playground! An Australian expat, Sidney, restated the context for this. He said: 'So I mean for us in Canada it's either Vancouver or nowhere', adding that 'if you're not skiing here, then you're just living in a cold, rainy city [laughs]'.

Naturally, the degrees of this escapism to 'nature' varied widely. Some were blatant, others more subtle. Regardless of the motivation, however, an escapist logic still seems to be evident in all cases. If nothing else, the 'loss of freedom' (Taylor, 1991:109) associated with modernity is pushed back against as agency is regained. On the blatant end of the spectrum, weekend pursuits enabled an escape from the intensity of the city. Precious time to 'let off steam', to 'let your hair down' and 'get away from it all' (Taylor and Cohen, 1967:114). For Peter, a financial manager, this was evident: 'you finish a day of skiing and you feel great because you've worked out hard and you've been in the fresh air and the mountains and it's just a great feeling'. Kerriane stated it simply: '[leisure is] like a relief you know'. Though not representative of the whole sample, Charlie's views were the most strident:

The city's not great but escaping the city is what makes it great...I love the fact that I can go skiing after work. I can go trekking up a mountain after work. I can go driving up a mountain after work. I can go windsurfing after work. Like all these things are escapism from the drudgery of my accounting life and so yeah I'm living the dream. Every time I'm not in work, which is as often as possible, I'm living the dream.

It was in this escape that he came alive. He said bluntly: 'I've moved out here for mountains. I love the mountains. I'll spend all my life here, that's why I came. I love the mountains. The mountains totally define me, and that's why I'm here'. Here is a case of deep dedication.

It should be noted that leisure in the city was another option. Natalie, an avid socialite, said: 'I think it's because I'm working full time that I feel the need to go out every weekend. Just to celebrate the end of the week, relieve stress, meet up with friends, cos I haven't been able to hang out with them all week'. Yet the majority of these mountain types preferred leaving the city. Jonathan said: 'If I'm stuck in a city, I'm seeing concrete, I'm seeing you know things which I could see in any city almost'. This is not the first indication of claustrophobia, of being 'stuck in the city'. He continued: 'you know there are some things which only nature can give you and so that's a big reason why I go to the mountains. I want that experience. I want to feel like I've lived'. It was this pursuit of agency, of life, of heroism, that framed the responses of many others too. For Thomas, this was found in the fact that 'you can go out into the environment and escape and feel free'. Indeed, Julian said the 'sheer enjoyment' animated the whole experience for him:

So part of that skiing is just ridiculously fun [laughs]. It's just so fun. You're like floating down a mountain at crazy speeds, like going through trees and jumping off little jumps and it doesn't even hurt at all. I mean how can that not be awesome? [laughs] I guess it's just part of the kid in you.

For others, however, the escape was more subtle and complex. For some, the sense of fulfilment derived from work⁴⁵ did not demand the same degree of escape outside of it. Perhaps escapism is too strong a label in these cases. Regardless, the activities that these enthusiasts engage in, at the weekends in particular, still seemed undergirded by logics of an escapist nature. This is two-fold. Firstly the subtlety of some is noteworthy, as for Julian working in a small firm:

Let's put it this way; if I wasn't working this job, I would still be doing that [skiing] all the time. So I'm not doing it because my mind is going nuts and I need an escape from this city, from my job, from being stuck in a little office. It's not that at all. I would be doing this either way. So it's more of an enjoyment. That's what I really kinda, not to get enjoyment out of life, but part of that certainly comes from being physical, doing something that is hard on my body, it struggles to do, and then enjoys something.

45 For example, Natalie working for a Big Four firm downtown said: '[I] love it, I love my work, it's great, I really enjoy what I do'. Whilst only being 1 year into the working world, she clearly revelled in this workspace.

Despite denying an escape⁴⁶, the desire for something physical, bodily, and enjoyable in these cases still denotes a push-back on modernity's erosion of personal freedom (Taylor, 1991). Agency is (somewhat) retrieved. Secondly, as the next section will make clear, a change of landscape can change a lot. Jasmine said: 'I come back on Sunday and I feel relaxed, I feel refreshed, I feel like I had a great weekend of sports and stuff and being outside'.

This introduces the idea that a regaining of agency may (ironically) involve a loss of control. As Milena shared, mountains possess a unique quality, specifically in light of heroism:

I think I like the aspect of lack of control. Like you're in its playground, its environment. I think we like to control most things in our lives and we've facilitated or found ways to do that and I think out there you're at its mercy. But I think it's something we crave, too. Something bigger than us. Yeah, I think it makes you come to think of like things bigger than you. I hope I'm not getting too religious but yeah. I'll stick with bigness, I like that. Bigness. And I think it puts everything else into perspective in our small worlds.

In extreme circumstances, Jonathan, a mountaineer, said he was 'caught praying, because I was so out of control and you know there was nothing I could do to control my environment. So I'd pray, you know I'd be like "God, please look after me, I'm out of my depth"'. This lack of control, however, is very different to Taylor's (1991:109) 'loss of freedom'. In this sense, it *must* be viewed as both 'subtle and complex' (p.11). It seems to engender freedom itself, rather than limiting it in an iron cage of sorts. Jonathan put this eloquently, sharing his motivation for heading to the mountains:

I climb mountains because I enjoy it; I enjoy the experience of being out there. I love looking at the views. I love that feeling like I'm alone, I'm here, I'm in this world.

46 Payne made a similar claim, stating: 'I'm not escaping from anything I just think I'm doing what I want to do. I think if you're doing what you want to do all the time, you're pretty happy. I mean you might piss a lot of other people off or you might not be as compromising as other people. But I can do what I want to do. So I don't think it's a form of escape at all, it's just you know – I work, and then when I'm not at work, I'm doing what I want to do'. I argue here, that regardless of these denials, an escapist logic is still at play, no matter how subtle and/or complex it is. Further, Payne's comments reveal a lot about the ethic of self-fulfilment and individualism.

3.2 Return: the quest for awe and wonder

'Wonder is the first of all the passions [of the soul]'
René Descartes (1645)

Weekend warriors also pursue awe and wonder, in a return to nature that is animated in Romantic ways. This return serves to push back against the calculating rationality of modernity, a trend particularly visible and explicit in the metropolis. Taylor (1991:94) notes 'instrumental reason' as another prong in the malaise of modernity. This is certainly connected and contributes to the aforementioned erosion of freedom, whilst also being somewhat distinct and separate. Instrumental reason is evident in the domination of technological society and modern rationality in our times, placing an insurmountable premium upon means-ends decision-making, efficiency, and utility. While these mechanics can serve to limit agency, more often than not they also breed a deep calculative stance. This can foster attitudes of relentless 'matter-of-factness' (Simmel, [1904] 1994:4). Part of the retort of the weekend warriors in question was against this stance. The immaterial goods of awe and wonder animated some of this return, renewing mystery and rediscovering a Romantic view of a thoroughly (re)enchanted nature.

The onward march of modernity is typified in part by the rampant domination of technological society and modern rationality. Instrumental reason is here, at the fore. Taylor (1991:6) associates this with a 'loss of resonance, depth, or richness in our human surroundings'. This loss is foundational to the malaise. It helps demonstrate the 'eclipse of the ends' (p.6) that troubles Taylor. This fading of horizons, engendering 'loss and decline, even as our civilization develops' (p.1) is noticeable across a number of registers. Taylor brings our attention to the erosion of 'resonance, depth, [and] richness' (p.6) in particular, yet his critique is unique. He writes (p.94):

Something analogous holds for instrumental reason, my second main area of concern. Here, too, there are extreme positions. There are people who look on the coming of technological civilization as a kind of unmitigated decline. We have lost the contact with the earth and its rhythm that our ancestors had. We have lost contact with ourselves, and our own natural being, and are driven by an imperative of domination that condemns us to ceaseless battle against nature both within and around us. This complaint against the 'disenchantment' of the world has been articulated again and again since the Romantic period, with its sharp sense that human beings had been triply divided by modern reason – within themselves, between themselves, and from the natural world.

In view of the partisan views, Taylor (p.95) notes how 'an analogously polarized debate is easy to find here'. This ushers in his 'work of retrieval, in order to get a fruitful struggle going in our culture and society' (p.96). Yet this work is founded on the premise that there is 'a slope, an incline in things that it is all too easy to slide down' (p.101). In order to accept this premise, and embark on a work of retrieval, this slope needs to be identified. One example came from the workplace. As a corollary of instrumental reason, Payne, the chartered accountant, struggled to relate to his colleagues:

Most the people I work with are freaking miserable, so I don't really know. A lot of people are lost outside of what they do for work, it's almost as if that defines them. I think a lot of people don't have an interest that really stimulates them to want to see different things, do different things. They're almost like robots or something. They go to work. They go to the gym because they want to stay fit, but not really because they enjoy it. They go on a diet because they want to stay fit, not because it's necessarily good for you. I can't relate to most people at work. I still can't.

These 'robot'-like attitudes seemed part and parcel of high-utilization corporate work. Efficiency was the gold standard. In the professions investigated, the quantitative nature of work seemed central to this. Leanne, an accountant, said her work is 'really analytical, looking at the numbers and going deeply into them and working out what they mean'. This numerical emphasis was reinforced by Shaun, another accountant: '[We use] Excel and some software called Caseware. Yeah lots and lots of sitting down and staring at a computer *all* day long [sighs]. Yeah, oh for sure [it's very numerical]...it's kind of the concept behind the numbers'. In finance, Peter said:

Cos I'm in financial advisory I'm always looking at companies' financial forecasts and statements and stuff. So the forecasts are always in Excel. So it's a lot of Excel work. And then obviously we spend some time actually out on the site with the business talking to management and stuff. But yeah most of it is behind my computer, in my office. So we had to assess the latest performance of the company, understand what it's done well, what its challenges are, what the viability looks like going forwards, review the forecast from our management, critically assess them and then write a 60 page report.

Interestingly, this theme of quantification recurred. In the medical services, Milena, working as an occupational therapist in a rehabilitation hospital for spinal cord injuries, described her role as: 'sort of [on] the management side, making new pathways and protocols for the program and for program development'. A similar ethic of goal-setting and target-beating was clarified by Jasmine, a chiropractor:

I think that my job is very structured, like I'm on a timeframe, it's very time sensitive. I have appointments, I'm booked solid, like it goes every 15, 30, or 45 minutes I have a new patient, depending upon what kind of appointment they've booked. So I'm always you know, I'm pacing, so everything has to be organized, everything has to be pretty structured. You know I go into work at least a half an hour to an hour before my patients get there so I can be prepped and ready and have everything organized. And then you know I have lunch, this break to this break. And then you get back and you go, so.

This instrumentality and relentless rationality coloured the experiences of many of the workers. The demands of such work were often inexhaustible. Charlotte, a chartered accountant, said plainly: 'I think about quitting fairly frequently, ever since I started...cos the hours suck'. Some aspects of the job seemed mind-numbing. Charlotte confessed: '[Sarbanes-Oxley] testing...[is] the most boring job in the world, so I hate doing that'. The sheer quantity of hours was a gripe for many, if not all. Particularly in busy seasons, whether for project deadlines or come tax time, there was no hesitation that 'you could have to work all week and all weekend...max maybe 90 hours', according to Leanne. Shaun, another tax accountant, said that often:

There's a specific date when the company will have to file their financial statements with the regulating body, so there's very little flexibility on that. Like if those aren't in at that date then companies will get in a whole load of trouble and it's your fault...so they're working no joke around the clock, sleeping at the office, to get them done. It doesn't happen a lot but it definitely happens. I think they just crash at their desks, head down, give her [sic].

In this intense culture, easily tending toward workaholism, there were notes almost of sadomasochism. Alistair, an aspiring entrepreneur, provided a scathing critique of this tendency:

[T]he new badge of honour among urban professionals...is like how many hours do you work. You know people do take a huge amount of pleasure, they pretend like they love it, like yeah I put in 80 hours this week...[it] is such a perverse [metric], that shouldn't be an important metric. Cos again hours worked are not an indicator of quality or importance or significance or anything...I just don't like the whole thing. I almost find [it] devalues what you do. This whole like, oh how many hours did you work? Like quantifying the torture, on weekends are you so relieved you escaped to the mountains to get away from the dreadful work. No f*ck that. It shouldn't be the point of this whole thing. We shouldn't live 5/7s of our week to escape from it. Do you know what I mean?

Not in all cases, however, were contrasts so stark, so black and white. For instance, Peter the financial manager, said: 'I enjoy the work but you're always on somebody else's timetable...I

hate having to work too long though...I've become increasingly not willing to accept it anymore'. This subtle sense of resentment was complex. In part it stemmed from a lack of agency, yet even this sprung from the structural nature of the work; so often abstractly reasoned out and deeply quantitative. Regardless, Sebastian said: 'at the end of the day, we're measured on utilization and that's driven by client-committed work time that you're able to bill to the client'. Naturally, this emphasis on job utilization and 'chargeable time' demanded a peak work performance. Shaun said: 'the reality is corporate culture and public practice – there's not a lot of fun about it...for my time, it's also \$150 an hour for someone to have me on their site, which is insane for what it is, but the reality is that I have to provide for that to give them \$150 an hour worth of service. So there's pressure there'. This pressure became engrained in a weekday, workday attitude.

Natalie, working for a prolific firm downtown, said: 'My approach to the week, okay it's a lot more structured. Obviously things are in a calendar for a reason. Get things done. Check things off the list'. This calculating attitude reflected the numerical demands of much work. Kerriane, working for the same firm, agreed: 'Well I mean during the week you're at work right so I'm on, like go go go, ready to think, process things, you know analyse, problem solve'. Milena, in a widely different profession, echoed this attitude:

In terms of work, like it's very much get it done, by the minute, this is checklist, this has to happen before I go home. I mean your day-to-day tasks, like deadlines and discharges at work. You're under the wire for. You've got certain pressures. But it's actually a job that I love to do, so, it's just when you break it down to your day to day it doesn't feel like a job that you love to do. Does that make sense?

For many, this ruthless ethic came to ferment stress. Milena said the intensity of work had her '[brain] firing like at milliseconds...I need an hour off [after work], before making, even communicating with people'. Janet, a young professional herself, disclosed this: 'My week is very work focussed. It can be very stressed. Make sure things are done. It's about responsibility. I've got a career, it's not just a job, it's a life'. Evidently, these are fascinating sentiments.

Yet, arguably, the most interesting parts were the retorts to this ruthless 'instrumental rationality' (Taylor, 1991:97). Miles, a commodities trader, shared this insight and image:

There is definitely a break in attitude when it comes to work time and weekend time. Work is just something you have to get done. I mean it's not especially painful, it's not especially pleasure inducing. It's just sort of like you've got a list of things and you get it done so you can do other things you plan to do on the weekend. It's sort of like a stack I guess if you want to talk...it's sort of like a programming thing. In programming there's stacks, basically you put something on top of the stack and you've got to make sure the stuff below it is done first. And then the stack is just. So your weekend is at the top of the stack, work is here [motions beneath] and you just whittle your way down and then off you go. Then usually Sunday nights I start thinking about work again. And the stack reloads [laughs].

He concluded that 'work is a way to sustain your weekend activities, among other things'. It is hard to conceive of a more instrumental view. The means-ends rationale here is striking, reflected in both attitudes *at* work and *toward* work, and this was no isolated case. Julian was upbeat about this: 'Life's not a bad thing. I work and I'm working for a reason: pay bills, pay off gear so I can do other things...work enables me to do other things, I would say'.

Before diving into the responses to this reality of instrumentality, it is worth first considering the connections between the two. For many, week and weekend, work and play, were connected in an almost rhythmical pattern. Whilst some spoke of the 'peak and troughs' of project-driven work, of 'cycles' and 'phases' in work, others drew attention to the rhythms of leisure; the on-season, the off-season, the shoulder-season, hump days, and the like. An image of peaks and troughs seemed to underlie all of these allusions. Indeed, the idea of fluctuations had many sides. On the work front, Peter spoke of his 'very project driven environment' with time spent "“on the bench”, where you're kind of in between jobs'. Leanne echoed this view, detailing the nature of her work in tax accounting:

I work in M&A [Mergers and Acquisitions] and I've done 3 specific projects with different clients. The first was quite steady, 50 hours a week. On another project I was kinda working like 13 hour days and weekends for like four weeks straight. But it's really, really up and down. With any M&A work, sometimes you have lots, other times you have nothing to do. I'm still there 9-6 pretty much...it's really peaks and troughs.

For most downtown professionals working in project driven environments, these (unpredictable) fluctuations were commonplace. Another financier, Stewart, said: 'For me it ebbs and flows. It kinda goes in cycles'. This fluidity provides a natural segue into the rhythmical nature of leisure

pursuits. In a similar, yet distinct way, such patterning was equally evident. The irony, however, was that its translation into the leisure realm was viewed in liberating, free-floating ways, whereas this dynamism at work was seen as constrictive, irregular, and stressful.

On the largest spatio-temporal scale, the whole seasonality of the mountain was viewed in rhythmical terms. Between the on-season and the off-season, of both skiing and biking, winter and summer, lay no-man's-land; the shoulder season. As Peter said: 'maybe it's because it's shoulder season so there's not a lot you can really do in the shoulder season, I can't go out on my bike, I can't go skiing'. The impinging limitations on leisure were daunting. For some, this patterning had been engrained since a young age, as for Jasmine:

I mean I think having grown up in a big city, I grew up in Toronto, and part of my family's routine was every weekend, Friday afternoon, leave the city, for at least the summers and the winters, and go somewhere on the weekends. Get out of the city, get into nature, get into sports, get into summer. You know. Then the shoulder seasons maybe hang out more in the city. That was certainly that pattern that I was exposed to growing up.

This mirroring showed uncanny similarities to the 'seasons' of tax, project-work, and deadlines dealt with at work. The rhythm of the work-play lifestyle was truly in the balance, as Shaun said:

Well ideally you get enough of it [leisure] done on the weekend that you don't hate your life when Monday is coming, so that you know it's a reality but it's one of those things where you're...well the way I try to operate in the summer, and you can take that and apply it to the weekends, is that by the time it's over, by the time winter comes, or by the time Monday comes, you've got enough out of your system that you're not like "oh crap I can't go back to work I hate this".

This sense of 'topping up' on leisure, or getting 'enough out of your system' animated the approach to the week, as well, for many. The five-day work week became a mountain to climb⁴⁷, Wednesday, the hump day, the pinnacle (of pain), before the slide down the other side to the thrills and spills of the weekend (Figure 5):

47 This image also carries further, into the mountain itself. Milena said: 'I think the rhythmic nature of endless hours of climbing a mountain is peaceful. You know, and being able to cry is peaceful. And I think being able to be alone up there is peaceful. And being able to share it is peaceful...those are the moments that really bring you together, sharing the highs and the lows'. The peaks and troughs animate not only time during the week and weekend, as well as space in terms of mountains and valleys, but also the highs and lows of emotion. The jubilant triumph and celebration of summiting a peak is contrasted with the lows of injury, depression, even loss.

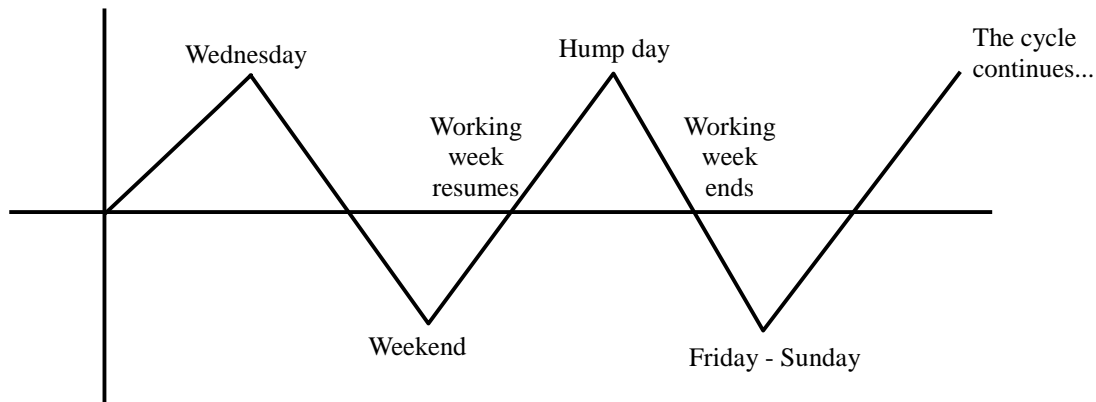


Figure 5. A rhythmical view of the week

In view of this pattern, it came without shock when Leanne declared: 'we do live for the weekends a lot. We're big weekend advocates'.

The retort to much of this instrumental rationality came in a return to nature, a pursuit of freedom and flow, of awe and wonder. The terms of these returns were unique for each respondent, though commonalities were noted in both their means and their ends. Milena, for example, spoke openly about the antecedent factors contributing to her need for a return:

It's been my experience growing up; this has been my lifestyle for the last 10 years. I'm from Chilliwack, so it's an hour and a half east. And that's where I grew up like very outdoorsy, I grew up on a farm, which contributed to my lifestyle now. So everything we did was camping for weeks on end or skiing or that kind of thing. And I mean the other thing I think growing up in a small town, I don't actually love the big city all the time, and so my weekend, part of it is an escape to the small town and to the outdoors. And I actually feel more revived if I'm in the mountains for 3 days and come back to work on Monday morning than if I sit in the city for 3 days.

For most, the weekend, in a greater way than evenings, was the locus for such a return. Often, it was initiated by a mental return, a change in the frame of mind. So, for instance, in contrast to her week of 'go, go, go', Kerriane said 'on the weekends I kinda just want to not think [laughs] and just go with the flow and not really have too much of an agenda I guess, cos I feel like my week is just a huge agenda'. For an equally ambitious Leanne, the weekend served the same

As Jonathan, a mountaineer, made clear: 'a lot of athletes suffer from depression'. The psychological impacts of dizzying heights and terrifying lows seem only to be exacerbated by the physical extremes in attitude between mountainous peak and lowly valley. Though, as with all metaphors, I'm sure this image too starts to break down if pushed too far.

function: 'so our typical weekend would start on Friday, for one...just chill out and you know just unwind, we'd probably have some work chat, just how it's been, get that off our chest, with the thought process that then it's kinda like the weekend comes and you just forget about it'. This hinted at an ability to snap out of it; snap out of week mode into weekend mode, in a fairly sharp, binary way. Jasmine put it like this⁴⁸: 'I mean yeah my job, it works way better if I'm super organized and super alert but on the weekends it's nice just to be able to flow and go, with not much of a plan, just see what happens'.

Naturally, a mental change of mind was often tallied to a physical change of scenery. The very act of returning to nature encouraged, perhaps even initiated, this sense of freedom and flow, though it is hard to discern the chicken from the egg in this case. The Coast Mountains were the most common choice of destination, so the Sea-to-Sky highway (#99), either late on a Friday or jarringly early on a Saturday, was the first node in this network of returning to nature. Shaun said:

I never get sick of driving that [the Sea to Sky highway]. You're going through Howe Sound, looking over the water. You get to see the cascades on your left and forest on your right. Yeah, I love it. It gets you excited right, when you're driving up and you know you're going somewhere really cool. You're kinda hyped up on that and you get to look around and just see again this amazing nature. You're looking over these huge bodies of water, the Pacific, with these floating green islands and mountains to the right. It's just mind blowing. I've never seen anything like that. It's really really incredible.

Even from the comfort of a car, the adrenaline starts pumping. Shaun said: 'it's just getting out and sort of being in awe of nature and the whole experience I think [that makes me happy]'. It is to be expected, then, that the immensity of the mountains humbled many of the respondents in all the clichéd ways. Shaun went on to detail: 'the sheer magnitude of beauty that surrounds you, whether it be mountains or lakes or greenery or whatever'. Strikingly, this (imprecision) was a common theme. Thomas said: 'the sheer quantity of everything, the sheer quantity of the rivers and the mountains, that's what blows me away. Just the sheer quantity of like the landscape and then the nature that goes with it, is just incomprehensible'.

48 She also said that as a chiropractor: 'a lot of the times I'm dealing with people's pain, so you're dealing with a host of...you know sometimes we're laughing or just joking around, but sometimes it can be pretty heavy. You're listening to people's stories and you're trying to figure out what stresses them. So it's pretty serious, you know. Whereas on the weekends I try not to be very serious'. This reinforced this shift of mindset.

Indeed, this served only to reaffirm Vancouver's status. Charlie was in awe of the 'abundance of [nature] here that you don't have in other cities'. Evidently, the 'beauty and serenity' of the surroundings in BC, as one lawyer put it, greatly facilitate these physical returns to nature⁴⁹. Freedom trumps instrumentality, and flow transcends rationality. The results were energizing, even addictive. Jasmine shared this story:

I mean I find that, a couple of years ago I started doing these Friday afternoon rides with one of my friends after work. We'd go at like 3 o'clock to the North Shore and always like I can remember, right before we go I'd be like "oh my god I'm so tired, I don't feel like going biking right now, I'm exhausted, I feel like just going home to nap or whatever". But then I was like come on we're meeting at 3, I brought all my stuff to work, you know I was like okay you just gotta go. And I would be so energised when I got home at 7 or 8, and I'd be like full of energy, feeling great, ready for the weekend, totally forgotten about how drained I was from work or whatever. And it was like I just had to keep pushing myself to do that, you know. And I notice that as soon as I get out there, as soon as we started, as soon as we headed into the woods, you can smell the trees, you smell the earth, you feel your body moving, and it's just like boom. Right into it. Like an immediate switch.

This 'boom' moment, of an 'immediate switch', a snapping out, was confirmed by a number of others. It emerged often as the primary goal of such returns. When mind and body coalesced in a return to nature, the rewards reaped were something to be shouted about. As Charlie shared:

I think some people find it in different places, like in forest, or in mountains, or whatever. So for me it's about switching my mind. I think about all the kind of daily things, whether it's work, whether it's life, whether it's family, whether it's cooking or shopping, you know all those daily things, and going and just living life with really no thoughts running through the brain. So that's what I consider escapism for me to be. And again for the things that I can relate to or the places where I find escapism, Vancouver is the best place.

A specific example emerged in the type of leisure activities most engaged in. These encouraged a deep engagement with the natural world, often through outdoor stimulation, resulting in the paradoxical effect of being 'in the moment' and 'out of the mind'. Jasmine stated:

49 Vancouver's 'rural romance of living close to nature' (Kataoka, 2009:42) offers a sense of these returns within the city too. Many spoke of the beaches around English Bay, including Alistair: 'I like the juxtaposition of city and nature...some of my favourite spots for "perspective", are [around] Locarno beach. I like hanging out there...you have a great view of the city and yet you've got the flood of the water, the calming ocean on the way in'.

I like to do things like sports where you're in the moment. Where you can't be in your head. You know. Whereas if I go and I'm on the treadmill or something I can be like thinking about something. Whereas at least when I'm running outside, if I'm running on the trails or running on the seawall or whatever, at least you're being stimulated by the outdoors and so it's distracting your mind. Whereas like I find that if I'm in the gym I can be thinking about what's been going on all week or whatever. Whereas when you're skiing or mountain biking or surfing or something then if you're not in the moment you're on your ass or worse [laughs].

This statement is intriguing. Firstly, it demonstrates the value of outdoor stimulation, distracting your mind with 'soft fascination' (Reynolds, 2013:1) as a recent New York Times article documented, encouraging brain-ease. Secondly, activities like skiing or biking or surfing place demands on you to be 'in the moment', as Jasmine put it. The need for skill, control, and synchronicity drives these demands. Such sports have attracted much attention from social scientists of late. Their widespread appeal amongst users is (apparently) down to the sense of 'optimal experience – the experience of flow – an integration and harmony of the body, mind and emotions' (Winter, 2002:121). Once again, often these are two-fold. As Charlie said, location is first of all significant: 'these are places where I don't think about daily life and daily tasks, I just shut off'. No wonder then, with mountains, ocean, and lakes aplenty, he continued: 'Vancouver is the best place on Earth'. Secondly, the activities being engaged in are central to sensations of flow. Csikszentmihalyi (1990:121), who wrote a book on 'Flow', gives this example:

[D]ownhill skiing requires much concentration and the goal is to negotiate the slope and all its built-in obstacles with as much grace as possible and without falling...[with the] added advantage that [it] usually takes place in an environment of great natural beauty.

With sports such as skiing, the 'demands [of] intense concentration, clear goals and immediate feedback' make it 'impossible to be aware of the normal frustrations and worries of life' (p.122)⁵⁰. Csikszentmihalyi (1990:123) continues: 'the key is being actively involved and using highly developed abilities'. There was no shortage of mentions of these experiences of 'flow'. Julian was perhaps the most creative. He shared, with enthusiasm:

50 This very freedom inspired a number of the respondents. Charlie said the 'mountains when I'm ski touring...are places where I don't think about daily life and daily tasks, I just shut off...You shut off from all of that and you just think wow, this is a really beautiful place to be. And that's where I find escapism'. Likewise, Milena said: 'I think being able to be alone up there is peaceful. And being able to share it is peaceful. Away from the things that normally bog us down and focus on our bodies, distract us from living out our life'. It seemed *true* life or reality was informed, at least for both these respondents, by such experiences of freedom and flow.

So part of that skiing is just ridiculously fun [laughs]. It's just so fun. You're like floating down a mountain at crazy speeds, like going through trees and jumping off little jumps and it doesn't even hurt at all. I mean how can that not be awesome [laughs]? I guess it's just part of the kid in you...And that's why I ski it. And that's the way I enjoy it, and if I wanted to express it I would write a poem I guess, but I guess I'm not that, I don't have that in me, quite yet. So I ski it instead of write about it [laughs]. I write my lines, my verse on the mountain. Yeah. So yeah there's definitely, most certainly, that aspect to it.

This poetry in the powder was Julian's way of expressing 'creative poiesis' (Taylor, 1991:63). It reminds us that 'movement is life' (Tuan, 1998:167), with its energy, gestural elegance, kinaesthetic perfection, and sheer grace. Tuan (p.168) brings our attention to 'the beauty of movement, [in] its power to transform – enchant – space'. The respondents would not disagree with this sentiment. Payne was adamant of the 'relaxing' and 'peaceful' benefits of sports such as skiing, which force you to be 'in the moment'. He said:

I think I relate it back to being complete in the moment, forgetting about everything, and not wanting to be anywhere else...I think it's really relaxing and it's very peaceful, I think whatever is sort of on your mind disappears and you're sort of in the moment. The reason why a lot of people like sports that are in the outdoors is that no matter what you are doing if you're in a beautiful place you're in awe, if you're in a challenging environment your brain turns off and you just focus on that moment, I think that's what it is for me. Mountain biking is a different thing, there is so much sh*t coming at my face, literally, that for those ten minutes that you're doing it you're going downhill your brain completely turns off and you have that peace...It's all that stuff that you're taking in that it is so beautiful and so amazing, it's kind of hard to describe.

The benefits were also deeply psychological. That 'peace' that Payne and many others had spoken of, was important for health and well-being. Leanne said: 'I feel like it's really good mentally as a kind of like release [of] all that stress and to have that regularly, like mental health wise, is really really good for me'. By all means, these peak experiences were not only reserved to skiing, as countless other examples were provided with great fervour⁵¹.

51 Some other examples included surfing from Julian, biking from Sebastian, and climbing from Jonathan. The climbing example was interesting: 'I think if you're doing a technical mountain that has different attractions. That allows you to completely zone out. You're only focussed on the climbing, because when you're climbing things which are technically difficult, it takes all of your concentration. And that's a different kind of relief. That allows you to not think about anything in your life'. The unconsciousness of flow was the primary experience stressed.

Returns to nature are nothing new, as the struggle to find freedom and flow have (re)enchanted the natural world in different ways over history (Agena, 1983). Yet the recent commercialisation of such experiences provides a new and somewhat surprising area of intrigue. Whistler-Blackcomb, 125km north of Vancouver on the Sea-to-Sky highway in the Coast Mountains, is well acquainted with such opportunism. Whistler has long been ranked as North America's #1 ski resort, attracting over 2 million visitors per year and generating a staggering turnover of approximately \$245 million annually (Whistler, 2013). In the 2012-13 winter season, Whistler-Blackcomb was marketed as a 'place where wonder has struck' (ibid.). The resort posed some surprisingly philosophical questions: 'is wonder a physical space or a kind of grace? A place or a state of mind?'⁵². In this tone, it came to be known as a 'Wonderground'; a natural playground of awe and wonder, amidst powder pillows and steep glades (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Whistler's Wonderground (reproduced with permission)

Surely this is the epitome of a re-enchanted world: filled with mystery, intrigue, and surprise – just the perfect antidote to a calculating city, no less. Jasmine certainly agreed:

Yeah that was an interesting campaign that they did [at Whistler]. Cos that is part of it, you get up there and you're just like wow, this place is amazing. And you know, there is that sense of like I wonder what it's like over there and I wonder what it'd be like to be on that side. I mean look out. You see something like Black Tusk and you think look at that thing. How did that happen? It's crazy. It's such a landmark.

⁵² These questions seem to draw some hard and fast Cartesian dualisms between mind and body, space and place. Though this would be the topic of another chapter, or even a different dissertation, these are fascinating statements to probe at, perhaps even more so for a philosopher than for a geographer.

Interesting, Shaun referenced just the same landmark, the Black Tusk in Garibaldi National Park. He was blown away by awe in this landscape⁵³. The confluence of intense emotions, from happiness to amazement, with a depth of experience and engagement, engendered some (quasi)transcendental senses. Shaun continued (Figure 7):

Part of it is the location where you're doing it. I've been up to Whistler well over 100 times now, it's nothing new to me. But there are always those days where you get off the top of Seventh Heaven or something and you're like holy crap! And I still break out my camera. Wow! I need a shot of this. Even though I've got a 100 photos of that and every time I go up...There is something just so peaceful about being, I mean I don't really know what my equivalent is because I don't practice meditation or anything like that, but there is a certain Zen to it where it centres you and brings you back down to your more core basics where you can sit there and stare at the mountains or stare at the greenery for half an hour. You know, you'd never do that in a city, you'd be like wow that's a really nice building [laughs]! It kinda lets you tune off your weekly radio and let the world talk to you for a little bit.



Figure 7. The view from Seventh Heaven, Blackcomb Mountain (author's own)

53 Part of this awe was grounded in historicity. Shaun said: 'it just blows my mind that over millions of years, I mean the landscape was flat and it keeps changing, then all of a sudden there's just mountain of rock that just blows out of the ground and is shaped over lifetimes and lifetimes and lifetimes and stuff that we can't even comprehend. It just has this ancient feel to it. And I guess when you're out there you kind of feel like I guess a bit more isolated and you're, I don't want to say at the mercy of nature because you don't really feel in danger, but you're in this position where you know ten thousand years ago it probably looked absolutely identical. It's just one of those things that stays constant while you know people and our lives kind of come and go and we get busy and we die and you know that's always going to be there. So there's kind of this, I wouldn't say overwhelming, but it puts you in awe a little bit for sure'.

In positing their philosophical questions, Whistler-Blackcomb mountain – the purported 'Wonderground' – prime their visitors with thoughts of awe and wonder. This bias became clear in numerous interviews. Leanne, for example, was quick to attribute such terms: '[at Whistler I would] take a few seconds and be like wow! It is gorgeous. I guess [I am] in awe. Awe is more what it would be. And I'd just think it was really, really beautiful and it would make me feel really happy'. For others, this sense of awe and wonder was beyond words. Not only did it make them speechless, but their lack of vocabulary was expressed in other forms, as for Julian:

It [that fulfilment] comes out in some hoots and hollas all the time, definitely. When you're riding a good line it definitely does. Just sheer enjoyment where you don't know what else to do but give a little hooting and hollaring. Sure that comes out here and there. Lots of times, it'll come out when I'm lining something up, I'm looking at it, I'm looking at my surrounding, I'm looking at the line I'm about to hit, I'm just like looking at it, just taking a quick glance around. I'm like damn! This is amazing. Look what I'm doing. Look where I am. Look who I am with. This is just pure awesome...Those are the moments where there is a sense of awe. Where it's just, like you look back and you're like, wow! Like it is awe-inspiring. Like you just sit there and take a couple of moments in and you just look around and you can't even really describe it can you. I don't quite have the vocabulary to be able to express myself [laughs].

This contributed to a genuine sense of appreciation for many. A deep engagement with the natural surroundings seemed only to further this appreciation. Peter, for instance, said: 'Ah I love it [nature]. Well, I guess it's just the amazement, the beauty of it, and the awesomeness of it...in one word, if I were to describe my relationship with nature, it'd be thankfulness'. Whether mysterious or not, it was certainly wondrous. Jonathan spoke in similar terms:

I would often say that when I'm climbing a mountain or when I'm on top of a mountain, I get that sense of realization, like I get that emotional sense where you kinda realize like wow I'm a part of this planet. Not so much in a tree hugging kind of way, but just in a kind of I don't know like I'm so lucky to have this opportunity, I'm so lucky to be here. Like I have this amazing experience and you know I have the opportunity to breathe air through my nostrils, I have the opportunity to see these things, and you know I suppose realizing the beauty of life.

Indeed, this theme recurred. Shaun said: 'I think I engage [with the natural world] by taking time to acknowledge how lucky I am to live where I do and be able to see the things I'm doing and be able to do them in the place I'm doing them. It's pretty frequent'.

This Romantic view of a re-enchanting nature came in all shapes and sizes. For many, the concatenation of location, company, and activity generated 'sheer enjoyment', often accompanied by jubilant shouts and cries of exhilaration. The mystique surrounding Whistler's 'Wonderground' often primed such responses, saturating the landscape in the vocabulary of awe and wonder. Yet such a renewal of mystery in the natural world was not reserved only to Whistler-Blackcomb. For Janet, the local mountains overlooking Vancouver provided 'endless possibilities':

It's cleaner. It's escape. It has endless possibilities. It's just fresh. It's free of pollutant air and cars and anything else. It's just...yeah. I would definitely like to spend more time up in nature and get away from work and the hustle and bustle of the city.

Charlotte echoed these romantic views of escape, only even closer to home. Living in Kitsilano neighbourhood, on Vancouver's West side, she enjoyed the stress-relief of the proximate beach:

If I'm going somewhere for a like a weekend or something, it's like you're taking a step back from being in the city and being in another world. It's very much like instantly stress is gone, and you're like oh there are birds chirping and waves crashing and just like. I dunno it's very peaceful. The world is bigger than whatever was going on in my week or whatever issues I was dealing with. If I go when I am alone it's usually cos I am stressed, say to the beach or something, and then it's very relaxing.

In all these cases, the 'encroachment of the instrumental rationalism of modernism into every realm of the cultural life-world' (Ley, 1987:43) was actively refused, even if only at the weekend, through returns to nature. The calculating, quantitative nature of rampant 'instrumental rationality' (Taylor, 1991:97), most prevalent in the metropolis and work-life, was reacted to with an avid quest in favour of freedom and flow. Nature, re-enchanting with awe and wonder, as in the case of Whistler's 'Wonderground', provided such a means. The returns were revitalizing, refreshing, and relaxing. 'Pillows fluffed daily', as they say for ski resorts in British Columbia.

3.3 Pursuit: the vitality of life and meaning

*'No man is an island entire of itself: every man
is a piece of a continent, a part of the main:
if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe
is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as
well as any manner of thy friends or of thine
own were: any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore never send to know for whom
the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.
(John Donne, 1624)*

Taylor's (1991) slide or incline provides a commentary on the widespread trends of fragmentation and atomism. He is particularly concerned with social atomism and the rise of rampant individualism. The intensity of the metropolis can ferment these tendencies, under the auspices of modernity. Taylor's slide is of great analytical purchase here. The slope he demarcates encourages certain attitudes and rewards certain patterns of behaviour. Weekend warriors note some of these trends towards fragmentation, despite often being complicit in their reproduction. They look to push back against them, at least to some extent, in the pursuit of vitality, life, and meaning. Sociability is a particularly strong force in resisting the slide toward relentless individualism. It is also pursued so as to regain some of the humanity that can be denied at work. In view of these trends, the mountain emerges as the pinnacle of interest; peaks offer much-needed perspective and poise, and are thus pursued with great enthusiasm.

Straight off the bat, Taylor (1991:1) cites 'individualism' as the first prong in the malaise. He associates it with a potential loss of meaning and fading of moral horizons (p.55):

[T]he "culture of narcissism" [is] the spread of an outlook that makes self-fulfilment the major value in life and that seems to recognize few external moral demands or commitments to others. The notion of self-fulfilment appears in these two respects very self-centred, hence the term "narcissism".

This individualistic culture has been commented on by many, of late. These include the classics of Alan Bloom (1987) in 'The Closing of the American Mind', Daniel Bell (1976) in 'The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism', and Christopher Lasch (1988) in 'The Culture of Narcissism'. However, Taylor (1991:72) notes how:

One common stance today, especially among such critics as Bloom, Bell, and Lasch, is to look askance at the goal of self-fulfilment as somehow tainted with egoism. This can easily lead to blanket condemnation of the culture of authenticity...[I] suggest that we undertake a work of retrieval, that we identify and articulate the higher ideal behind the more or less debased practices, and then criticize these practices from the standpoint of their own motivating ideal...this means engaging in a work of persuasion.

Taylor's concern, on a rather different ground to these critics, is primarily with the 'radical anthropocentrism' (p.58) of the modern ethic of self-fulfilment. He notes firstly how 'social atomism' (ibid.) pushes us in a certain direction, tending not only towards seeing 'fulfilment as just of the self' (ibid.) but also foreclosing other opportunities and demands that have, historically, been extremely instructive. As a result, there is a tendency for modern individuals to turn inwards, becoming trapped in a 'travail of permanent reflection' (Schutz, 1964:120). Not only can the self become both glorified and isolated in this instant, but the focus is also likely reduced purely to the material, to the *hic et nunc*, the here and now. Taylor (2007) warns of the limitations of this purely 'immanent frame'. He writes (1991:58):

This kind of entrenchment process can help explain the slide in the culture of authenticity. The self-centred forms are deviant, as we saw, in two respects. They tend to centre fulfilment on the individual, making his or her affiliations purely instrumental; they push, in other words, to a social atomism. And they tend to see fulfilment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimizing the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God; they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism.

Just as there are boosters of technology (cf. the techno-evangelists of Silicon Valley), there are also proponents of the endless possibilities and limitless opportunities of individualism. Many argue that individualism opens up a whole new world, perhaps a brave new world. Jonathan, a respondent, certainly sympathized with this viewpoint: 'I like that I'm fully responsible for me, and if I have a problem, I have to solve it, no one else is going to solve it for me, I have to solve it'⁵⁴. He did go on to say, however: 'as an individual, you know my options

54 Jonathan, continued, contemplating the transcendental implications of his rugged individualism: 'What I've lost in terms of peace and feeling safe in the knowledge that someone is looking over me, I've gained in the sense that I can change this world through my actions and through being responsible for myself. I do lament the loss of the idea of Heaven and what happens after I die, of course it's scary. I've put myself in a position where when I cease to exist there's nothing, and yeah that's scary. But on the other hand I've come to terms with that by thinking, well then it's all the more important that while I'm here on this planet I do everything I can to have an impact, to be positive, to you know make the world a better place'.

are limited, but I can still do what I can'. Yet the fact that he conceded this point is incredibly significant. The perceptiveness of another interviewee, Mark, is noteworthy here. He said: 'if you live your life as a radical individual it's a pretty finite luck and a pretty narrow hallway that you're walking. You're not really acknowledging everything that's around you'. This image of a 'narrow hallway' is brilliant. It resonates with Taylor's (2007) 'immanent frame': fearing the eclipse of the ends of possibilities, the fading of horizons of significance, and the potential loss of meaning. No wonder then that the more ardent critics write with such verve. Lasch (1988:85) fears the 'loss of historical continuity' in the amnesia of modern man. He writes (1988:5): 'to live for the moment is the prevailing passion – to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity'⁵⁵. For Lasch (p.10), this is the essence of the 'culture of narcissism':

Narcissism represents the psychological dimensions of this dependence. Notwithstanding his occasional illusions of omnipotence, the narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. He cannot live without an admiring audience. His apparent freedom from family ties, and institutional constraints...contributes to his insecurity, which he can overcome only by seeing his "grandiose self" reflected in the attention of others, or by attaching himself to those who radiate celebrity, power, and charisma. For the narcissist, the world is a mirror.

Yet Taylor tempers these views with great tact. He consistently argues (1991:11) that 'the nature of modern culture is more subtle and complex than this'. In contrast, he writes (p.91):

[I]n blocking out this kind of exploration beyond the self, they are also depriving us of one of our main weapons in the continuing struggle against the flattened and trivialized forms of modern culture. They are closing off the kind of exploration that could make certain demands from beyond the self more palpable and real for us – for instance, those that underlie a more-than-anthropocentric ecological policy. We can see again how the perspective of the polarized debate between boosters and knockers, between cultural optimism and pessimism, can be crippling when it comes to engaging in the real, never-completed battle to realize the highest potentialities of our modern culture...if authenticity is being true to ourselves, is recovering our own 'sentiment de l'existence', then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize that this sentiment connects us to a wider whole.

Taylor explicates the movement away from a 'wider whole' (ibid.) as the predominant slide of our culture. Shaun, a chartered accountant, inadvertently demonstrated this in a story:

55 This viewpoint was at times alarmingly clear in the answers of the respondents. One accountant said: 'So my identity...I just try to have a good time with whatever I'm doing I guess'.

It [leisure] starts off team - everyone has kinda got their stuff they were doing before, like I was doing rugby, I've got a few friends who were playing basketball, one of the guys was even in a football program. But the reality is the hours you have to put in during the week and the fact that it's not even just the hours, it's the unpredictability of it a lot of the time. One week I'm working in Surrey, one week I'm you know just doing crazy hours on tax returns or something, it doesn't provide you that consistency that you need to play a team sport and be able to commit to something. It's almost impossible [to commit], unless you're really vigilant in making sure that you know like work knows you're not available during these times or something like that, which a lot of the times you know. Your Partner doesn't care what you do outside of work, as long as your work is done.

The combination of long hours and unpredictability, in Shaun's case, undermined commitment to a sports team. At a very small scale, this demonstrates Taylor's (p.101) 'slide, or incline in things that it is all too easy to slide down'. He details the predominant ethic as one of fragmentation: 'a lot, both institutionally and ideologically, is going for atomism and instrumentalism' (p.103). In part, this is founded on a very modern ethic: 'from its very inception, this kind of society has involved mobility...mobility is in a sense forced on us. Old ties are broken' (p.59). This bias or preferential weighting in favour of atomism forms the slide of the malaise. Interestingly, numerous other comments from respondents confirmed this reality, even in subtle ways⁵⁶.

Just as Taylor (1991:11) notes the 'subtle and complex' nature of these trends, so subtlety and complexity were pre-eminent in interview responses. The realities of the modern day ethic of self-fulfilment seemed buried deep, even denied. Perhaps some of this was cultural, as Charlie remarked: 'the thing is in Vancouver...everyone is very reserved and afraid to offend others. And so it means people are very polite'. Yet equally a sense of widespread apathy, even indifference, was noted. Philosophically-speaking, Taylor (p.98) proposes why⁵⁷:

Atomism in particular tends to be generated by the scientific outlook that goes along with instrumental efficiency, and so these attitudes acquire almost the status of norms and seem backed by unchallengeable social reality...I think there is a great deal of truth in these 'iron cage' pictures. Modern society does tend to push us in the direction of atomism and instrumentalism, both by making it hard to restrict their sway in certain circumstances and by generating an outlook that takes them for granted as standards.

56 Other stories included physical mobility, leaving family far behind, as in Jasmine's case ('Well you know my family is on the other side of the country, you know I wish they were closer. So that's the biggest thing, just living that far away from your family'), or capital flight undermining community, as Milena described with her local gym closing down in a favour of a bigger, better one (further away).

57 Taylor (1991:112) warns of the danger of 'fragmentation – that is, a people increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out. Fragmentation arises when people come to see themselves more and more atomistically, otherwise put, as less and less bound to their fellow citizens in common projects and allegiances'.

Yet we should heed the famous geographer David Harvey's (2007:1) remark: 'the status is nothing to quo about'. Either way, it seems the individualist bent is strong for these young professionals. They are the aspiring peak population climbing, or even atop, the mountain of 21st Century trends after all. Deep-seated individualism seemed engrained in numerous comments, even if implicitly⁵⁸. Naturally, work often fostered individualist attitudes. Miles, a commodity trader, remarked that after trading, the majority of the day was spent 'basically doing your own research, your own trades, your own looking up companies, looking up their positions, seeing what happened over the day'. Work was often 'your own', alone. Shockingly, even virtues such as integrity furthered this bent. Kerriane said: '[there are] so many sports teams within the company, but I don't do them...I'd like to join them I think but my schedule is really kinda all over the place so I don't like to commit to something if I know I'm going to be missing like half of it'. These attitudes easily become concretized into a certain way of life. For work, Milena said: 'I went into my profession and I worked hard to get to the job that I am in right now'. This seemed to epitomize '[North] American cultural traditions [that] define personality, achievement, and the purpose of human life' (Bellah, et al., 1985:6) in decidedly individualistic terms.

It is noteworthy that this slide, this individualist bent, trickled into leisure attitudes as well. Kerriane bemoaned this fact:

I have friends in the running and hiking community but I don't identify with them or partake in their group activities. I do those one day runs but more just for myself, and they're not like a social thing. It's like a challenge. There's something to accomplish, I like that. And they're easy to accomplish because they're one day. Of course there is training involved but then I can do that on my own. I just don't like depending on other people and I don't want other people depending on me...I do a lot of things alone, I just thought of that recently.

The cultural slippage toward individual pursuit is perhaps stronger than we often notice. Many of the respondents were shocked, after a moment of self-reflection, at simply quite how much time they did spend alone, both inside and outside of leisure. For some this was accepted for what it was: 'I'm more of a lone ranger when it comes to being physically active', announced Natalie. Yet for others, there were deeper notes of loss. Stewart, for instance, told the story of losing friends

58 For instance, when asked the (fairly simple) question, 'what shapes your identity?' the responses returned were almost risible: 'that's a deep question...yeah you might need to come back to me' said one young professional, 'uhhhh [pause] hmmm. That is far too introspective for my own liking', said another. Shockingly this question tripped up many: 'Hmmm. I've never had to answer that question before' said a financier in his third decade.

to travel and work, such as a squash buddy: 'now that's a big void in my life. I've got to figure out where, now I gotta join a club or something...it's something I find a lot funner when you're doing it with a group of friends'. In both cases, the reach of individualism furthered these scenarios. Payne summed up the attitude: 'you know – I work, and then when I'm not at work, I'm doing what I want to do'. This statement seems to epitomize the 'iWorld' (Kuehne, 2009).

The attendant malaise associated with individualism is a conundrum. On the one hand, as we climb the mountain of self-construction, we are offered the dizzying prospects of better opportunities and more possibilities. On the other, as the incline steepens, the precipice of a 'looming state of personal meaninglessness' (Vitz and Felch, 2006:157), or anomie (cf. Durkheim, 1951), becomes more and more of a danger. Vitz and Felch (2006:158) state:

The freedom afforded individuals in self-construction, therefore, comes at a price. Instead of living a life confined within a conferred self, life becomes a process of self-construction and self-maintenance. In other words, *instead of a life imprisoned within a difficult-to-change conferred self with the freedom to operate within that self, life has become trapped in the self-construction process in which the only freedom is the pursuance of the self.* [author's emphasis]

This is the essence of the bitter-sweet taste of many aspects of modernity: the boom can be bust, the boon a bane, the peak met by a trough. The double-edged sword sharpens as the opportunity-cost grows. Perhaps the mountain highs and valley lows of individual respondents reflect this.

One retort to the 'loss and decline' (Taylor, 1991:1) associated with fragmentation and social atomism was displayed by the respondents in the avid pursuit of vitality, life, and meaning. Sociability was foundational in restoring such humanity. If work denied humanity to some extent, then evenings and weekends retrieved it⁵⁹. Indeed, come Friday night, denial was in action: confessing to being 'an accountant' (or even worse in 'audit tax') was a first-degree offence to these weekend warriors, a straight up 'conversation killer'⁶⁰ as one put it. Rather, the

59 One interesting subtlety, nonetheless, was the draw of project work for some. Sebastian, for instance, said: 'The main reason I went into M&A is because I like the unpredictability of it [the project-based work], and the fact that every day would be different...[it is] a lot more unpredictable, and you rely a lot more on team members.

60 Charlotte said: 'I hate telling people I'm an accountant, it's like a conversation killer. Either they talk about their taxes or they get a glazed look in their eyes and I dunno don't say anything [laughs]'. Payne agreed: 'I don't think anyone that meets anybody says they're an accountant. Cos you always get into really f***ing boring

weekend fostered time and space for sociability. Mark said: 'it's a good opportunity often just to spend time with a significant other or just to spend time with family or friends'. At one end of the spectrum there was a perceived need for stress release. Natalie said: 'I think it's because I'm working full time that I feel the need to go out every weekend'⁶¹. For her, leisure, as opposed to recreation, implied 'relaxing, being social, hanging out with friends'. Guards were lowered and a sense of fun and informality restored. Janet said: 'the weekend is when I do what I want and be who I am. I don't have to dot any i's or cross any t's for anyone, you know, just me'⁶². Indeed, it was seen as a time to 'really just let loose'. In this sense, being sociable and relational was fundamental to regaining a sense of genuine humanity. Many respondents stressed the value of sharing the weekend with others. For Milena, this was also possible during the week in the evening, combining sport and sociability:

I would say, especially in the summer time, my evenings and community and social activities mostly are based around activities. So whether that's going to the beach and playing ultimate, beach volleyball, or you know doing a beer crawl on your bike. So generally my social will be the same as my leisure and recreational pursuits.

Alistair agreed: 'I mean the majority of my social interactions are sport related, so I play squash with buddies, I play volleyball with buddies, last night I played dodgeball with some buddies, so like it's fairly active'. Countless other examples were provided, from lawn bowling⁶³ in the summer to hiking, biking, and skiing too⁶⁴.

conversations right away, it's a conversation killer'. As did Miles: 'I think introducing yourself as saying oh I'm a lawyer, or I'm a banker, or something, is kinda boring and dull. So I usually say I kill people'.

61 Natalie added: 'I think I'm a little bit different cos I don't pay for cover and I don't pay for drinks. I know the people'. In this case, social status ensures much.

62 She also appeared more introverted than most, suggesting that a retrieval of humanity involved precious time to oneself: '[My weekend attitude is] relaxed. Um I wanna get out more, I don't wanna just sit around. I exercise, whether it be a run, get out in nature, be alone with my thoughts, and yeah. When you're concentrating on work you're constantly thinking about work and what you need to do, but when you concentrate on your thoughts you actually self-contemplate your life and where you are and what you need for yourself and where you are...I suppose [my identity] it's where I can be true and really just let loose, just be who I am without having to worry about how I'm going to look or how I'm going to be perceived. That's the weekend I guess'.

63 Shaun said: 'So my summer this year usually consists of going over to lawn bowling right after work on a thursday...with 3 or 4 of my friends on a team...that would usually end at around 3 or 4 in the morning, I'd have friday off, typically. Yeah it was awesome, it was out of control'.

64 It should be added that the relatively small size of Vancouver allowed for such sociability. Sebastian added: 'It's a lot easier to have a social life here, I guess because Vancouver is smaller, you don't have as far to travel to see friends. I think it's a big benefit'.

These attitudes raise a conflict. On the one hand, arguments surrounding individualism further the 'praxis-oriented self' (Schrag, 1997:9) of self-structuring and self-construction. This search for selfhood is espoused by deconstructionists such as Martin Heidegger and post-structuralists such as Michel Foucault, amongst others. On the other hand, a communal self is offered in opposition to the individualistic self. This language of community is employed by Charles Taylor (1989:36):

[T]here is a sense in which one cannot be a self on one's own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who are essential in my achieving self-definition: in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of language of self-understanding...the self exists only within...“webs of interlocation”.

This locus of interlocation, or web of relationships, is very different to the free-floating atomism of the individualistic self⁶⁵. Yet the respondents mapped the whole terrain of different shapes of selfhood. Some were dogmatic: 'I do what I want to do'. Others (self-confessed) 'lone-rangers'. Still others were rooted and grounded. Jasmine said, in regard to her friendship circle:

We all moved here for the same reason. We all gave up the comforts of being close to your family, of being connected, probably an easier time work-wise cos you know more people and have more connections. But we all chose to come here because of a common desire to create a different life. A life that is 'living the dream' so to speak...I feel like initially I probably had to put more work into it, than say if I stayed in Toronto. But it's been so long that I've been here that my roots are pretty deep here now, so I feel like I know lots of people, probably have more friends than back home. I know lots of people.

Regardless of the wide spectrum of opinions, relationships were still foundational, whether with one 'biking friend', some 'squash buddies', a 'significant other' or extended relationships with 'friends and family'⁶⁶. Sidney even placed the role of leisure into this mix:

Ah yeah it's just good fun [skiing]. It's a good family activity, like if we went skiing every year, it's a holiday where your kids don't mind coming skiing with you even if your kids are like 15, 16 or 20 years old. They still like skiing with their parents. And we see it as a good future potential holiday with the family and keeping the family all together and all that kind of thing. So that's the benefits we've seen skiing.

65 Indeed, the poet John Donne (1624) reminds us so: 'No man is an island, entire of itself'.

66 Stewart elaborated on this theme: 'I think [my identity] it's a combination of everything: it's those social interactions, the dinners, the food, the music, the concerts you're going to, your work, it's what you do on the weekend, you know, family, friends, all of those things'.

This sense of relational glue and keeping everyone 'all together' was not only reserved to families. Skiing, in particular, held this notable quality of sociability. For many it was not only a group-based activity, best enjoyed together, but also a group-bonding activity; forming memories, enjoying particular experiences, and even depending on one another. Stewart, a financial advisor, said: 'it's something I find a lot funner when you're doing it with a group of friends, a small group of friends'⁶⁷. He went on to say:

Yeah so again these activities are as much social and you know I'm not one to just go up to Grouse Mountain on my own or go up to Cypress and just ski on my own. You know I'll probably not go at all if I don't have any companions going out with me.

Peter, another financier, spoke along similar lines. He said: 'yeah you finish a day of skiing and you feel great...it's the combination of being in this beautiful environment with friends and doing the whole fitness thing as well'⁶⁸. Surely this is the best of both worlds – beautiful scenery and friends abreast, or 'fun in the sun' as they say.

In the pursuit of vitality, the mountain emerged as a particularly salient location for sociability. Besides the activities practised on the mountainside, the very nature of the environment often instilled a communal ethic, vastly different to the individualistic drive of the metropolis. Milena, recounting stories from the backcountry, said:

I think that trust doesn't just come from doing activities. Yeah you don't just meet somebody and want to spend 8 hours climbing with them. You know, last year, we had the same 4 consistent people we did everything with...you know we became a group and we learned how we skied together and you learn to trust each other...The conversation is that kinda safe place where you share everything. There's not only a physical connection. Like one girl's crying cos she doesn't think she's going to make it. It's a place where you support each other, you work as a team, and you provide that support to be able to do things together. I think that we miss that in a lot of our personal life outside of work, you know, or even in work. You're pretty vulnerable out there. Yeah, but you also share the highs together. You know you get to the top of the peak and none of you can stop smiling.

67 Julian shared his recent change in mindset with regard to this tension: '[I am] shifting focus a little bit more onto, like I start to look at like, if I did this alone would it be as fun? If I did it alone would it be as fun or is it more fun with other people? So is it more about me just doing it alone and getting a thrill or do I enjoy it actually more when I'm with other people? So is it more about them or is it more about me hitting this line? Is it more about doing it with them? So I've started to maybe shift my focus a little bit more onto that. And I think that has helped me walk away from doing some more potentially stupid things'.

68 Sidney said: 'Our valuations team [of about 15 people] have a ski day once a year when the partners will pay'.

You know how hard each one of you has worked to be there. For me, those are the moments that really bring you together, sharing the highs and the lows. And I would say that's probably why it's hard to connect with people who aren't doing those activities, because I mean its shared experience right. You can see me in my day to day life here but it's not the most meaningful parts of my life.

This vulnerability breeding dependency and co-operation was prevalent for backcountry skiers. Payne said: 'if you're ski touring with your buddies for 8 hours, it's all about the conversation and the camaraderie that you're developing. It's all that stuff that you're taking in that is so beautiful and so amazing, it's kind of hard to describe'⁶⁹. Though the mountain was often viewed as an inherently social place, to 'drink a bunch of beer, have a good time, you know hang out' as one respondent said, or just 'snowboard all day and...end up in the hot tub' according to another, it was often more than this. It fostered somewhat transcendent characteristics, demanding camaraderie, trust, and co-operation. For many, these were vital in retrieving not only sociability, but also a sense of their humanity. The mountain was unique in this regard, as both a place of vulnerability and even danger, but also a space of relational security and trust as a result. As such the mountain was ascribed with a mystical power to evoke significance in the psyche. With regard to climbing, Jonathan said: 'you get a whole sense of wow like I've done something for my life today...you have an opportunity to achieve other things which you don't usually get the chance to do'. This is a direct antidote, even riposte, to Taylor's (1991) malaise.

The weekend, for some, was anointed with pseudo-religious qualities. Perhaps in the meeting of the immanent and transcendent at the mountain, spiritual proclivities were (re)awakened. This likely grew out of the sovereign-like significance placed on 'holy' weekend holidays. As Miles, a young commodities trader, admitted: 'you sort of live for the weekend now when you're at work'. For Julian, this followed a fairly structured pattern:

I'll see friends on Sundays. It depends on what's going on. I guess that might be more of a communal day [on Sunday], a community day, hanging out with friends more intentionally on a Sunday. [The way] it usually tends to play out [is that] Saturday is called 'Julian Day' [laughs], I dunno, Saturday is maybe 'kickass day'.

69 This certainly wasn't reserved only to skiing. Jonathan said: If you've climbed [a mountain] with friends, you've had a good time to socialize and to talk'.

Leanne reinforced this view. She said: 'I always see the weekend as Saturday you do stuff, and Sunday is a bit more chilled'. Perhaps this was the new Sabbath layout for the leisure class. Certainly for some, the bipolarity of Saturday versus Sunday was fascinating, relieving stress through sport one day, and recovering and recuperating the next. Yet for the vast majority, this bipolarity was between week and weekend, rather than Saturday and Sunday. Work and play, city and mountain, office-space and open-space were the defining categories of distinction for most⁷⁰. This differentiation informed a split-screen of sorts. Indeed, many used this illustration to compare week and weekend, granting it great saliency.

The idea of a split-screen was first introduced by Peter, a financial manager. He compared his week and weekend, noting the stark contrasts. The week was filled with 'a lot of Excel work...behind my computer, in my office' whereas weekends were often spent 'in the fresh air and the mountains'. This generated a schism of one view during the week, another at the weekend. Yet the image grew more complex as more respondents chimed in. Indeed, the split-screen was not reserved only for the weekend. At work, Miles, a commodity trader, said: 'You've got a bunch of monitors in front of you...it's just sort of what you see in the movies: 3 to 6 monitors in front of you...And I basically sit in front of six monitors'. The week view was often saturated by screen-time. Whilst trading demanded the most monitors, other professions often were not much different. In financial advising, Stewart said:

Yeah, you can imagine our culture and you know our office bodies and the people like myself. We're sitting at our computer, you know 80% of the work day and the time, that's just a guesstimate for my own sakes. I've got two screens and I mean email is always up. I'm kinda looking at it every half hour, sort of thing. Some people would probably look at it every minute of every hour of every day, but I try to not do that.

The same was true for tax accounting. Leanne said: 'As an accountant, you are at your computer the whole time'. Shaun, another accountant, echoed this. He said: '[We use] Excel and some software called Caseware. Yeah lots and lots of sitting down and staring at a computer *all* day long [sighs]'. The backlash of this was very real and deeply embodied. As Shaun explicated: 'Yeah it sucks [being transfixed on the screen]. It's destroying my eyes'.

⁷⁰ Indeed, distinction is noteworthy here. As Milena said: 'I know that I went into my profession and I worked hard to get to the job that I am in right now. I worked really hard. I think if I wasn't working in that position the weekend wouldn't be so meaningful'. It seems that contrast truly is the mother of clarity.

The weekend offered a natural retort to this screen-time. If work involved a lot of time online, then often play was offline for this group. Just as sociability was pursued to ward off the grip of individualism, so too were machines avoided and humanity retrieved in spending time with people. Yet for many this split had deeper metaphysical meanings. Jasmine said:

It's something about being outside, in the environments, the beauty of being in the mountains, the feeling of being disconnected. And I think that my draw to the mountains is that feeling of feeling small in the world, you know you feel like you look out and you see all these huge mountains around you and you're in this amazing and beautiful environment and you just feel like you're just this little thing in there, and not you know. Whereas sometimes when you're in the city or whatever you can feel just like you don't see, you know everything is right here [motions in front of face], whereas when you're looking out over the mountains it's like you can see so much further.

So whilst (multiple) screens animated the work-week, a singular gaze on a far larger, deeper, and more intricate canvas was often the chosen view for the weekend. Jasmine elaborated on this:

I have pictures of mountains and how big they are. That whole scope of like you look out and see all of them across, you see that big cluster of them...Cos in the city it's so easy to get wrapped into what's going on in your own world, you know. Whereas when you're in the mountains it's like the bigger vision. It's like what's going on for you is just so small.

Surely this duality⁷¹ of vision is significant. Not merely bigness at the mountain and nearness in the city, but also its effects on the psyches of the respondents. The shift of vision⁷², change of gaze, certainly seemed to disclose deeper truths about their experiences of modernity, particularly its malaise, comparing the metropolis and the mountain.

71 This argument could be further teased out, comparing work and play through the lens of 'mere perception' versus 'beingness' and actual engagement, to use Heidegger's (1929) terms. This theme resonated with respondents, comparing office-space to open-space, city-scape to mountain-scape: one cramped, small, and hectic, the other open, big, and awe-inspiring.

72 Paul Virilio, the scholar of speed, is concerned with the different 'scopic regimes' bred by information communication technologies. In particular, mediation and transmission inform his critiques of information communication technology 'operating at absolute speed' (Thommesen, 2003:151). As a commentator writes (ibid.): 'Virilio argues that image has gained priority over reality'. One example that Virilio employs is war. He writes (cited in Armitage, 2001:90): 'war serves to illustrate the situation because this is where it is most obvious'. In his book, 'Desert Screen', Virilio (2002:54) argues that: "postmodern" war requires a split observation, an immediate perception (with one's own eyes) and a mediated perception (video or radar). Perhaps this question of vision, notably perception and perspective, can also shed some light on the leisure case at hand. It was interesting to hear the weekend warrior Stewart, a financial manager, speak of leisure in militaristic language. Given the number of options touted by Vancouver, choice can be overwhelming. He said: 'you've kinda got to pick your battles and certainly, my summers, I've picked golf and that's the most pressing thing for me'. The arduous 'battle' of leisure decisions was a significant lifestyle choice for Stewart. He continued: 'So I'd say I have picked my sports – it's kinda golf in the summer, skiing in the winter'.

Chapter :4 Riddles at the mountain

*'But certainly for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified,
the copy to the original, representation to reality, the appearance to
the essence...illusion only is sacred, truth profane'
(Feuerbach, 1843)*

The mountain clearly offers a healthy retort to many of the ills of modern society. For the weekend warriors in question, it is a space of liminality, of putative freedom if not escape. The malaise of modernity (Taylor, 1991), given momentum by individualism, instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom, is somewhat reacted against and somewhat rejected in this space. The responses of heroism, awe and wonder, and vitality serve as a push back against the insidious auspices of modernity pressing in on everyday life. In particular, metropolitan intensity is controlled and kept at bay through such weekend pursuits. Yet to be so certain of such an argument is to disregard Taylor's (1991) sophisticated analysis of modernity. Once again, he writes that 'the nature of modern culture is more subtle and complex than this' (p.11). Such subtlety and complexity reminds us of two fundamental tenets in this thesis: firstly, that the malaise of modernity has a tighter grip than is often accredited – it is *both* totalizing *and* insidious, with a pervasive and penetrating force. This is not to be ignored. Secondly, Taylor's analyses account for both the boosters and the critics, referencing historical narratives, philosophical touchstones, and richer sources as a result. This attention to detail and remarkable sophistication serves us well in this fraught territory.

This chapter outlines the riddles of Vancouver's malaise. Indeed, the responses of weekend warriors – outlined in three categories in the previous chapter – seem somewhat undermined under close scrutiny. Taylor's (1991:11) insight is invaluable at this juncture. While their retorts *are*, to some extent, 'subtle and complex', in escaping the malaise, returning to nature, and pursuing wonder, they also appear to be compromised. Evaluation of the statements made by respondents seem, further still, to be riddled with contradictions. Their motivations for heading to the mountains are often authentic and intact, yet their means are more often than not flawed. Pushed to an extreme, it could be argued that the means of escape, return, and pursuit (ironically) reinforce and reproduce that which is being refused. Are we left only with unresolved

riddles? Our philosophical guide, Taylor, is a wise attendant in this challenging terrain. The riddles compromising the means of escape, return, and pursuit enacted by these leisure enthusiasts, fall into three categories. At least to some extent their efforts to refuse and resist the malaise of modernity are compromised. Contradictions are particularly evident in the logics, technologies, and terrain of refusal. These three sub-categories inform this chapter's analysis.

4.1 Logics: the ultimate riddle

'Man measures time and time measures man'
(Italian Proverb, cited in Honoré, 2004:21)

Linder (1970:143) warned us of the 'increasingly hectic tempo of life' in the second-half of the 20th Century, writing that 'time is a route into which we can try to press so much that traffic is jammed even to chaos' (p.25). Interestingly, Peter, a financial manager downtown, echoed this very sentiment: 'the busyness of Whistler does annoy me. Cos you're going there to escape and you end up in lines and stuff. That's annoying'. This was the first intimation of a riddle in the retort, revealing the escape to be less straightforward than desired or imagined. Yet where Linder (1970:24) used this as a platform to launch his argument 'In Praise of Idleness', many of the respondents in question simply reacted with greater intensity. The irony in this logic, however, was blatant. The metropolis was left behind, the malaise (somewhat) escaped, only to encounter traffic jams, lift lines, and queues at the mountain. This was but the start of the riddle.

In 'Bobos in Paradise', David Brooks (2000:194) writes that 'everything in the Bobo life is purposeful'. Whilst young urban professionals (yuppies) and bourgeois bohemians (bobos) are not one and the same, a parallel can nonetheless be noted. It seems that for young urban professionals too, everything is purposeful. They are driven, ambitious, upwardly mobile, zealous in youth, and more often than not self-professed Type A personalities. Brooks (2000:216) continues in his analysis to affirm how '[they] are driven to excel, even in [their] leisure time'. So whilst nature at large provides a liminal space, and the mountain more specifically an arena of escape, *above* and/or *away* from the metropolis, the means and logics of escape or return to these spaces seem contentious. Brooks (2000:214) does well to diagnose the rationale of these 'high-status strenuous nature types', as typified in this response: '[we] left at four in the morning, got there at six, started hiking in the dark and up at the top by twelve...[to] ski the objective'. These

are those 'at the tippy top of the leisure status system...[whose] vacations involved endless amounts of agony and pain' (Brooks, 2000:208). Luckily for Vancouverites, vacations are mere hours away given the proximate Coast Mountains. Pain and exertion are always within reach.

Countless examples of this purposeful logic were noted during interviews. For instance Leanne, a newly arrived expat, confirmed this: 'having just got here in September, we were kinda like right, so we went and climbed Grouse, climbed the Chief, you know, ticked all the tourist boxes'. This ticking of 'all the tourist boxes' is far from innocuous. Rather, it confirms a certain logic and approach to nature. Brooks (2000:200) writes that this is 'the bourgeois imperative to strive and succeed...married to the impulse to experience new sensations'. It seems the young urban leisure class not only 'live passionately, and for the moment' (p.195) but also purposefully, 'driven to excel' (p.216), taking 'a utilitarian view of pleasure' (p.199). Alistair, the entrepreneur, relayed this sentiment in his approach to running. He said: 'you can only improve things that are measured' such that his 'definite goal was always a quantitative increase' whether in fitness, running, or working out. These were all a 'huge deal' to him. He continued:

It's funny, in second year [at] UBC I lived in Vanier, it was my worst year...It was just kinda a sh*t time. Grades were bad, everything was bad. And particularly for me, like I gained a bit of weight. I probably weighed the same as I do now but it was of a different composition [fat not muscle]. And it was to me a huge deal. So for me running was the best idea I had at the time for how to get fit, and it was like if you could go for a run every day at least you could say okay I made progress today. And it's funny cos I remember completely, it's seared into my memory, I did a 6.6km route, and I would track my time. For me everything was about time. Like it's not good enough just to go for a run, it has to be like a tangible increase. I dunno why. I think that's just the mentality of getting ahead, like if it's not measured you can't, you can only improve things that are measured. It doesn't mean that you didn't make progress if your time was worse, but to me, the definite goal was always a quantitative increase.

A helpful way of understanding this logic in fitness was expressed by another accountant outside of the sample set. A young urban professional himself, he said: 'I'm number crunching during the week and powder crushing at the weekend' (pers. comm.). This statement captures the essence of intensity and the intent of this logic: a full-bore attitude throughout. Despite the rhetoric of escaping, returning, or pursuing, as outlined in the retorts to the malaise, an undergirding principle of intensity unites the totality of time in one single bind. Intensity is the

defining feature of this package. Seemingly, Linder's (1970:143) premonition has become a reality – he foresaw the 'increasingly hectic tempo of life, marked by careful attempts to economize on increasingly scarce time'. The irony here is that the logic is the same for both week and weekend, both work and play. So whilst the respondents like 'many people, feel a Rousseauesque longing for the more tranquil past' (Linder, 1970:25), their means of escape or return betray this fact⁷³. Hence, escapism can be compromised, if not contradicted, by this as their means and logics undermine them.

Peter, a financial manager, identified this conundrum in his own life. He observed: 'I find that when I have really intense weeks at work, I can't actually face intense activity sometimes'. It seems that occasionally the intensity overwhelms him: 'I just need some down time', elaborating:

So there is this interesting dynamic in the Winter where you have a full on week, you wake up at 5.45am on a Saturday, you have a full on day of skiing, you come back, you go to church Sunday morning, and then the weekend goes so fast and it's all intense times. And then you're like *bam* you're straight back into the next week. So I actually struggle with that. Although I love skiing the intensity of the weekend and the week just gradually grows kind of thing, so you find yourself wishing for 3 day weekends where you could be intense for 2 days then have a day off.

It seems part of this logic is unique to Vancouver. Peter expressed how: 'I find it hard to be in the house reading when I could be out in the sunshine, in the mountains, riding a bike, or whatever it is. There's so much stuff going on'. The allure of Vancouverism was culpable here, 'because of the massive variety of leisure stuff you can do here', according to Peter. For many, this only served to foster intensity, even fermenting an addiction to the outdoors for some. Leanne said 'we'd go up say 75% of the weekends' in the ski season. The same was true for Sidney: 'in winter we'd go up to Whistler most weekends'. As a man with a family of four, and also a senior manager in a Big Four firm, skiing 26 days in the season is testament to this commitment.

Some respondents noted the difficulties of this lifestyle. Natalie, for instance, spoke of the difficulty of being active in the week. She said: 'Yeah, I try to squeeze it [leisure] in after work'. Leanne on the other hand said: 'I will go the gym or go for a swim, a cycle, or a run at

73 Another instance of such Romantic longings that the weekend warriors related to would be William Cowper's poetry: 'The tide of life, swift always in its course, / May run in cities with a brisker force, / But nowhere with a current so serene, / Or half so clear, as in the rural scene' (cited in Honoré, 2004:85).

least four mornings out of the five...I like to stay fit...you always try to do that in the mornings, cos you have control over it'. This active lifestyle engenders a pattern of consecutive early starts. This seemed to be the norm across the board. In accounting, Shaun wrestled with this intensity:

If I had a convenient way of doing it [yoga] I would want to get into it, but the reality is like I'm training at muay-thai three days a week, I'm in the gym two days a week, you know come winter time I'm skiing hopefully a couple of days a week too. It's tough to fit in but you know I like to go out and party with my friends and stuff too, so it's kinda hard to fit it all in and I guess yoga is the one that never makes the cut. It's a timing thing I guess. You know in one day I have time for one fitness activity.

It goes without saying that Linder's (1970:25) premonition is incisive in this regard: 'time is a route into which we can try to press so much that traffic is jammed even to chaos'⁷⁴. Thorstein Veblen (cited in Linder, 1970:62) provides a strong critique of this logic of intensity. Indeed, his concern is a full frontal attack on the hedonism of 'economic man' [sic]:

The hedonistic conception of man is that of a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogenous globule of desire of happiness under the impulse of stimuli that shift him about the area, but leave him intact. He has neither antecedent nor consequent.

This hedonism seems not too far from the critiques of narcissism⁷⁵. Christopher Lasch (1988:5) is the central proponent in the critique of hedonistic egoism, where 'to live for the moment is the prevailing passion – to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity'. This bent became evident in interviews too. Ironically, the freedom of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) facilitated escapism – being 'in the moment' and 'out of the mind' – yet sometimes to the detriment of appreciation. Miles, a commodities trader, noted this disjuncture: 'same thing with hiking, same thing with snowboarding. It's just trying to get down as fast as you can and trying to get up as

74 Funnily enough, Sebastian gave a real-life example of this, sharing the bottle neck for leisure traffic jammed to chaos at the weekends. He said: 'we'll probably ski Saturday, Sunday...then if it's a normal weekend, we'll try to leave early afternoon on the Sunday...just to beat the traffic back. Because the Lions Gate Bridge junction generally is a terrible place on a Sunday evening...I mean if the bridge isn't with you then it can add another hour to two hours. We've spent hours stuck. So we'd much rather get back downtown before that builds up'.

75 A case can certainly be made for the 'central regimen of self-improvement and self-expansion' (Brooks, 2000:193) that typifies the reflexive life of the young urban professional. As one respondent articulated, such ambition is both professional and personal: 'my goal is to be successful within myself. To improve, to better, to learn, to further myself'. The weekend was 'when you concentrate on your thoughts, you actually self-contemplate your life and where you are and what you need for yourself'. Does this constitute the utmost form of 'languid introspection' (Ley, 1996:183)?

fast as you can. I guess I sort of pass over all the nice things around'. Perhaps this logic expounded by such extreme sports as skiing and snowboarding demands engagement at the expense of appreciation. Enjoying the freedom of flow can do little to encourage reflection and contemplation of nature and the surrounding environment.

Yet beyond the ironies of the logics and means of escape, with their tendencies to compromise or even contradict their purpose, it seems there is something deeper at stake. In certain cases, the retorts or means of refusal were outright paradoxical. As a result, they tended to reinforce or reproduce that which was being escaped. This trend seems to be tied to a broader notion of 'the decline of pleasure' (Kerr, cited in Linder, 1970:91) in view of the 'cult of efficiency' (Russell, 1935:18) bound to the onward march of modernity. No doubt, the relation between the two is complex and not simply causal, yet nonetheless there does seem to be a relationship. William Kerr writes in 'The Decline of Pleasure' (cited in Linder, 1970:91) that 'the present requirement that time should be used to give a high yield prevents relaxed enjoyment'. This deeply economic language of 'yield' was reflected in the responses of some of the interviewees. For instance, Stewart, a financial manager, observed:

[I]f you get a season's pass or an edge card to Whistler, you've kinda made a commitment, you've shelled out some money, so you want to make sure you're getting the most for that dollar. So you kinda have to make sure you're maxing out your investment in Whistler.

Leisure became an 'investment' to be maximized: enjoyed to the full, wrung dry, put to work. In view of the pressures of work, this is somewhat expected. Yet Stewart continued: 'I just think making good use of those hours outside of the office is exciting'. Does this engender 'relaxed enjoyment' (Kerr, cited in Linder, 1970:91) or the endless pursuit of high yield?

Either way, this paradoxical logic was equally evident at the mountain. Milena said openly: 'my weekend is fairly organized before Friday comes around. In terms of what I want to happen Friday, Saturday, Sunday. This is my plan. And I actually like that. So it's just checking off what I want to do, I guess'. Seemingly, the weekly check-list of tasks was easily imported into the weekend, at least in mentality if not in materiality. Milena continued:

I think it's just another aspect I probably haven't touched on but I think I mentioned at one point being successful or being able to see improvements or working towards things in your personal life, and feel, yeah accomplish things...I think being accomplished is having as many stories to talk about as how many mountains you've climbed, or how many feet you've climbed in a day.

If yield is pre-eminent, then achievements and attainments even in the mountains served only to further this logic. Yet for Linder (1970:92) this logic is flawed: it leads us to lose our 'ability to appreciate the moment'. The conditions of modernity, however, jibe against this. As Linder (p.92) continues: 'for modern man [sic] patience is as difficult to practice as discipline and concentration. Our whole industrial system fosters exactly the opposite: quickness'. In view of this paradox, it was interesting to hear Jonathan, an experienced climber, critique the relentless progress both in the metropolis and at the mountain. He said: 'I think it's very destructive when we're taught that we always want more, we always want more'. The restless insatiability of success, whether in the city or in achievements in nature, can be crippling. He added: 'a lot of athletes suffer from depression'.

In his essay 'In Praise of Idleness', Bertrand Russell (1935:18) asserted that:

There was formerly a capacity for light-heartedness and play which has been to some extent inhibited by the cult of efficiency. The modern man [sic] thinks that everything ought to be done for the sake of something else, and never for its own sake.

As these respondents attest, a sense of 'play' is restored and retrieved at the mountain, in refusing the malaise of modernity in the metropolis. Yet the retort is not quite so simple. The very same 'cult of efficiency' (ibid.) can plague enjoyment in nature. The example raised on numerous counts by the respondents in Vancouver was that of the Grouse Grind on the North Shore. Peter, for instance, clarified the 'difference between a hike and an "I'm going to push myself" hike, like the Grouse Grind...it's a workout'. A 2.9km hiking trail in the forest leading up to Grouse Mountain at 1127m, the Grind is famous not only for its 853m elevation gain and 2830 stairs (Grouse Grind, 2013) but also its electronic timing tags, measuring your speed from base to peak, with a screen of scores at the summit. In this sense, the Grouse Grind is a grind indeed: measured, quantified, calculated. Miles noted: '[at] the Grouse Grind everyone is just very gung-

ho...everyone has a Grouse Grind time⁷⁶ and everybody really wants to beat it'. Kerriane called it 'nature's stair master', a (somewhat) natural challenge in secluded BC forest with breath-taking views of the city of Vancouver. Yet the emphasis on yield and efficiency⁷⁷, scores and times, does seem to militate against relaxed enjoyment. Hikers are encouraged to really *hike*: to go fast, test themselves, push the limits. The natural surroundings are merely an arena for endurance⁷⁸.

The insidiousness of intensity testifies to the tight grip of Taylor's (1991) malaise. He writes that the concatenation of individualism, instrumental reason, and a resultant loss of freedom, coalesce to form strong tendencies of instrumentality. For instance, Taylor (p.96) is certain that 'the sacrifices that runaway instrumental reason imposes on us are obvious enough, in the hardening of an atomistic outlook, in our imperviousness to nature'. Part of the outflow of this is a 'loss of resonance, depth, or richness in our human surroundings' (p.6), and likely our natural surroundings too. Is this escapable? Jürgen Habermas (cited in Ley, 1987:43) identified the 'more general practical problem of the encroachment of instrumental rationalism into every realm of the cultural life-world'. This insight is particularly salient. The pervasiveness of 'instrumental rationalism' (ibid.) seems almost as apparent at the mountain as in the metropolis. Hence it is unsurprising to hear of weekend warriors such as Stewart speaking of leisure in rationalistic, even militaristic, terms. He said: 'you've kinda got to pick your battles', continuing: 'I have picked my sports, its kinda golf in the summer, skiing in the winter'. This statement testifies to some of the utilitarian approaches to pleasure diagnosed by Russell's (1935:18) 'cult of efficiency'. So much so, in fact that the weekend warrior may say to him or herself: 'I have exactly 48 hours to forget about time'⁷⁹.

76 For instance, Sebastian said: 'my best time is only 57 minutes, with the tag, the timer...it's a good work out'.

77 In view of Taylor's (1991:58) call to *not* negate 'nature', it is interesting to consider alternative approaches to the natural world. Lewis Mumford (cited in Valovic, 2000:177), for example, asserts that 'spiritual nourishment is more important than mere industrial productivity'. I wonder how this reflects on productivity in leisure.

78 Sebastian elaborated in an interesting way on this setting. He said: 'I like the quiet of it as well. There is almost an unwritten code of silence, that no-one speaks on the Grouse Grind. It has certain Grouse Grind rules of etiquette'. This 'unwritten code of silence' is central to constructing the wilderness atmosphere of the space, despite its 1.2 million visitors every year and proximity to the city. In many ways, all the hikers are in on this secret, preserving the sanctity of the surroundings in silence, even as they are aware of the throngs of people trudging up the steps beside them (Grouse Grind, 2013).

79 Linder seems to suggest that an intense mode of life is not conducive to the cultivation of appreciation and concentration, or other ways in which pleasure is deeply experienced. He writes (1970:101): 'the mental energy and internal concentration required to cultivate the mind and spirit adequately are not easily mobilized after a hectic day'. The result is *acedia*, a sort of restless boredom and listlessness, rather than any deep spiritual uplift.

The image of a treadmill seemed to capture much of this sentiment. Whether at work or in play, a treadmill was running at all times, ensuring those keen to comply kept with the pace⁸⁰. Payne was blatant in his evocation of this attitude: 'in my life I am either a hundred percent or I'm not'. For some this sense carried directly into the weekend. Milena said proudly that at the weekend: '[I like] going big or not going at all'. This all or nothing attitude became the stereotype for the respondents, most of whom were self-professed Type A personalities: driven, ambitious, active. The irony of course is that the treadmill continues to run, such that escapes can demand double the effort, double the intensity, in order to get away and gain perspective⁸¹.

Linder (1970:91) writes that 'activities crowded onto the belt unrolled by time can encroach upon each other'. Such 'encroachment' is not too far removed from the premonitions of Habermas (cited in Ley, 1987:43) regarding 'instrumental rationalism'. In this case, it goes to show that even activities pursued under the guise of leisure and pleasure are privy to such encroachment. Utilitarian efficiency is rife. Understandably, weekday work for the respondents involved attitudes of efficiency: 'go, go, go', 'check[ing] things off the list', and 'get[ting] things done'. Yet their unscrupulous appearance outside of work surely demands some degree of shock. It seems efficient attitudes trump across the board. As Natalie declared, an avid young professional herself: 'I still have a check list [at the weekend]'. She went on: 'I guess [I am Type A]'. Many espoused this Type A categorization. Leanne said:

My personality in a way is that it's right that I'm an accountant in many ways: I'm measured, I like things to be right, you know, I think things should be done well. It's just my personality so if I'm going to do something I want to make the most of it.

Transplanting this attitude into an approach to nature bore few problems for many. A dominating stance, desire to control, and unwieldy analysis and evaluation along the way framed this encounter for most of the respondents. This was in part a result of the working culture. As Miles clarified, many of the downtown professions are populated by 'the stereotypical Type A

80 This image seems akin to that of Lewis Carroll's (1871:345) in 'Through the Looking-Glass'. In this strange country, the Red Queen says to Alice: 'Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!'.

81 Consider for instance Tofino, a surfing town on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, which attracts visitors with the tagline: 'half the pace, double the pleasure'. It boasts a laid-back beach culture as an antidote to the frenzied intensity of the metropolis. Yet for these weekend warriors, trips would involve short bursts in this getaway location, with long car and ferry trips to garner access to such 'pleasure'.

personalities who are very highly stressed and they sort of just let it go'. In view of this Miles had learnt 'to be very accepting of people who swear a lot'.

The treadmill of leisure itself emerged in the sample set as a two-sided phenomenon. On the one hand, the location of Vancouver encouraged ceaseless activity. As Charlie confessed, regarding Garibaldi National Park: 'I mean it's really a problem to me that I'll never get to explore enough of it'. The options seemed limitless: beside the mountain activities of skiing, touring, hiking, camping, and mountaineering, were the infinite leisure pursuits closer to home, be they on land or at sea, with a plenitude of water sports such as sailing, kayaking, windsurfing, and kiteboarding around English Bay and Howe Sound. No wonder the weekend became the locus of a battle to make a decision. As Berger (1976) explicates, the plurality of possibility can lead to the poverty of certainty. Peter admitted this: 'I am aware that the whole leisure thing, in many respects, it might be as intense as the week'. The shape of this lifestyle certainly tended towards intensity, with intense work weeks bookended by active weekends. Jasmine lived this:

[I am] Type A. Cos I think I've always been. I can definitely get worked up. And I'd say I'm someone who is goal oriented and you know I definitely I'm a go personality, not very good at sitting around. I don't have a television, I had one friend who lived with me for a couple of months...he's like, yeah I know, you never sit on your couch, you never sit in your apartment, you never just chill out. Cos I'm always like I want to do this and this and this and this, let's get this done, let's get that done. And then I go until I'm exhausted and then I just go and fall over on my bed, basically. Which I think is more of a Type A personality and I can be like time sensitive and you know conscious of that. Sometimes I wish I was more of a Type B personality, but I think actually I'm Type A.

She did, however, confess that: 'I've been pretty successful at burning the candle at both ends for a long time, but I think eventually it does catch up with you'. The question is not so much whether or not such a lifestyle is enjoyable and profitable to the individual, as surely it is to many, but rather whether it lasts – is it sustainable, durable? If not, is there an alternative or even a remedy to such intensity? Likely, pursuing the best of both worlds – in both the city and on the mountain – was destined to limits⁸².

82 Leanne for one was keen to usurp these limits: 'I don't want a job to rule my life at all. So I see it that I'm really ambitious and I want to be really successful, but I want to be someone who has, you know, silly things, like have something to say about what they've done all weekend, or what they've done in the evening and not just kind of work and not do anything else with your life'. This was ambitious pursuit: career success *and* plentiful leisure.

It seems the image of the treadmill has much purchase. The trappings of careers and treadmill of leisure lifestyles intersect in the never-ending pursuit of never-ending incentives. As Pollay (1986:25) writes: '[advertising induces us] to keep working in order to keep spending, keeping us on a treadmill, chasing new and improved carrots with no less vigour, even though our basic needs may be well met'. Even the mountain provided an apt metaphor for Pollay's (ibid.) 'treadmill', with a rhythmical image. As Shaun said: 'I kinda like the fact that I can cycle through these lift lines'. This image imitated the rhythm of the treadmill: patterned with cycles of ascending and descending, of runs and lifts, doing laps on the mountain. For Shaun, a fervent young urban professional, this treadmill was attractive, keeping him moving. Yet Ralph Waldo Emerson (cited in Bauman, 2000) warns that speed is often salvation for the skater on thin ice. Should this be heeded? Jasmine, another young professional, articulated a similar sentiment:

So mostly if we're skiing Blackcomb we'll ski Spankey's or you know usually do a little tour in the backcountry, depending on, or just some slackcountry laps. Or ski like Chainsaw. I mean obviously it always depends on the conditions. All those little lines, all down through there. And then you know if we're on Whistler we just do Khybers laps or you know Peak laps. It depends on what's going on with the snow, it depends on whose skiing and what's happening.

The 'high-tech mumbo jumbo' (Brooks, 2000:244) that becomes essential equipment for these 'high-status strenuous nature types' (ibid.) can also become a treadmill of constant change. As Vitz and Felch (2006:153) diagnose, 'status pandemonium' is defined as 'the need to replace products at an increasingly fast speed to adapt to the changes in meaning'. Given the constant cycle of new product features marketed by outdoor retailers, this sense of pandemonium can be acute. Indeed, one respondent spoke not of the need for Patagonia equipment but rather of the symbolic status signifier of 'Patagucci' gear. This reminds us of the deep consumer culture of even these outdoor types⁸³, often ensnared in the 'avenue of symbolism' with its attendant 'aura of symbolic meanings and values' (Vitz and Felch, 2006:152). With some, the hypocrisy in this realm of consumption was stark⁸⁴. For instance, Milena was proud on the one hand to 'love

83 Julian spoke of the aura of consumerism specific to outdoor sports: 'you're going to want, you need the quality gear essentially, you need those pieces in order to complete and make the fun happen'.

84 Another instance of irony came from Alistair, who said: 'I'm all about philosophy and I've actually been reading a lot of Stoicism lately and stuff, and thinking about sort of fundamental, natural causes of happiness. So I'm all about simple living, all this stuff. It's great, it's great'. He then later confessed: 'I have my own car [a BMW]...it's

simplifying life'. She said: 'I've never had stuff, I don't own anything in a house, somebody else furnishes it'. Yet mere minutes later she confessed: 'my money goes into gear to do my activities'. No stuff, but loads of gear⁸⁵. In many ways, this irony serves to remind us of Max Weber's (2001:181) cautionary words: 'the care for external goods should lie only on the shoulder of the saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an "iron cage"'. I wonder whether Weber's 'iron cage' is not too distant an image from the treadmill of young professional leisure. Alistair, the entrepreneur, shared this image:

Like if I wanted to improve my 10km time, which was the race that I like to run, just the local ones...training the shorter distance, like the 6.6km route, and running it as fast as I f*cking could, and actually really pushing, turned out to be a great way to improve my 10km time. Versus just running 10kms and like. Of course any longer distance, it's going to be a little more exhausting to push all out, like you shorten your load but you push harder is the theory behind high intensity interval training as well. So I dunno...it was very good and positive reinforcement to be like ok yeah, I can actually change things.

This insight is fascinating on at least two counts. Firstly, the concluding statement synthesizes the young professional ethic: 'I can actually change things'. As Brooks (2000:217) details, these types often 'value [their] autonomy too much' such that they become a meritocratic class 'rich with the spirit of self-criticism' (p.55). Agency is limitless, impossible is nothing. Secondly, Alistair eloquently captured the 'theory behind high intensity interval training' that 'you shorten your load but you push harder'. This is now the touchstone of contemporary fitness. Yet 'high intensity interval training' seems to also have real-life parallels. Beyond the realm of pure fitness, 'high intensity interval training' became a mantra for a lifestyle ethic. As Milena clarified, after leisure time: 'I actually feel refreshed, I feel re-energized and re-focused'. For her, sport and leisure acted as a catalyst of vitalization, to 'get off the couch' and 'have the energy to go out and do the things that I want to do'. Yet as with all fitness mantras, there is push back, there exist costs. 'High intensity interval training' in particular is extremely strenuous on muscle fibres, often leading to the build-up of lactic acid from anaerobic respiration, and even delayed onset muscle

something I love, but urban planning is against single person commutes, yet I also love driving. So I'm a bit of a [laughs]. I want everyone else to be able to ride transit but I'm still going to drive my car'.

85 Kotler (1999:62) suggests that 'the final consequence of materialism is the loss of the essential self. Because of the emphasis on external symbols of status and identity, on projecting an image that is defined by what is owned, there is less opportunity for people to face who they are, stripped of trappings. Problems are addressed not by examining underlying issues but by choosing materialistic self-medication'. Milena lamented this in part, seeing the weekend as an opportunity to escape the 'trappings' of materialism, yet the deep materiality of gear and equipment for the mountain-scape negated this in large part.

soreness (DOMS), which can be crippling for days afterwards. Jasmine shed light on these similar feedbacks in the broader lifestyle ethic of high intensity:

I like to be busy doing things...[but] I think it just catches up with you. You know, like I'd love to do that, and I've been doing that and I've been pretty successful at burning the candle at both ends for a long time, but I think eventually it does catch up with you. And I certainly in my practice wouldn't recommend that to my patients. You know, because you see the wear and tear. We all know now that chronic stress plays a role in our health, right. So if you're constantly stressed which happens when you're burning the candle at both ends, then eventually it's going to burn you out, you're going to have some repercussions of that. And just being exhausted can lead to a lot of things, negative feelings and...depression, you know, and even just lack of energy.

The danger of 'burning the candle at both ends', appealing as it is, was alluded to by many in the risks of negativity, injury, illness, and general 'wear and tear'. Indeed, Jonathan was acutely aware that 'a lot of athletes suffer from depression'.

The rhythmical highs and lows of the on- and off-season, week and weekend, work and leisure, did serve to refresh many. However, their amplitude vacillated and the resultant volatility exposed respondents to mountain highs and valley lows: physically, emotionally, and psychologically. The logic of intensity undergirding these images began as an irony, compromising or even contradicting the pursuits of leisure and pleasure, as the means of escape and return scarcely differed from that being refused. At the extreme, this logic is paradoxical, even reinforcing or reproducing the logic of the malaise, whether in efficiency, yield, or utility. As Habermas (cited in Ley, 1987:43) warns, this is the 'more general practical problem of the encroachment of instrumental rationalism'. The treadmill of intensity can aid such encroachment. For the young urban professionals in question, both the week and weekend, work and play are 'purposeful' (Brooks, 2000:194). Even in leisure there is a 'utilitarian view of pleasure' (p.199). This replication rapidly becomes a riddle, perpetuating the malaise. Yet some critiqued this:

I definitely think that when you look at Vancouver, it's such a funny thing, cos 100% of me agrees, and I think this isn't unique to Vancouver it's just amplified in Vancouver. People are not able to find that happiness in their day-to-day existence, people don't live consciously, there is a deep dissatisfaction with a lot of the basics. Which translates into this need to escape, and even more so, because Vancouver has such a plentiful array of choices to escape to in such a short and easy way, which then reinforces well if you didn't escape, f*ck, you don't ski Whistler? What, are you an idiot?

The question is therefore one of (social) sustainability. Given the 'wear and tear' of this lifestyle, how is it to be approached, let alone condemned or condoned, in light of the possibility for attendant negativity? If 'high intensity interval training' is the mantra not only for fitness but also for a broader lifestyle ethic, engendering great gains but also the perils of loss and cost, should it truly be espoused with unabashed enthusiasm?

4.2 Technologies: the trap of tools

*'The new value placed on the transitory, the elusive, the ephemeral,
the very celebration of dynamism, discloses a longing for an
undefined, immaculate and stable present'
(Habermas, 1980:5)*

The humanist geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan (1998:189), tactfully reminds us that 'another affront to good sense is that numbers don't always count'. He is pressing the point that there is more to life than mere quantification⁸⁶. Yet this reality is all too often quashed. Taylor's (1991:101) 'slope' is recognizable in this terrain, as he reminds us that 'there is a slope, an incline in things that it is all too easy to slide down' (ibid.). One of the slopes of modernity is quantification: relentless assessment, numeracy, and ratings. This slope certainly contributed to one of the contours of mountain leisure culture. One of the riddles identified through the answers of respondents was that of technologies: tools, techniques, and technologies that in whatever way compromise or inhibit successful escapes, returns, and pursuits in or to nature. The conflict of quantification, for instance, poses a simple question: is there more to life than mere numbers? Taylor (1991:97) suggests that the rampant 'instrumental rationality [of modernity] seems to be able to lay its demands on us coming and going, in the public or the private spheres, in the economy and the state'. Indeed, the spectre of instrumentality is broad, and its effects are often insidious. Taylor (p.98) continues: 'atomism in particular tends to be generated by the scientific outlook that goes along with instrumental efficiency'. One of his primary concerns is therefore 'the hardening of an atomistic outlook, [manifest] in our imperviousness to nature' (p.96).

86 As noted earlier, Alistair's comments are instructive. He said: 'you can only improve things that are measured'. The need for 'quantitative increase' informed both fitness and life writ large, where 'everything was about time'.

Technology can play a significant role in the hardening of this outlook. As Taylor (1991:105) writes: 'instrumental reason comes to us with its own rich moral background. It has by no means simply been powered by an overdeveloped *libido dominandi*. And yet it all too often seems to serve the ends of greater control, of technological mastery'. The result of these concomitant forces is 'a bent or slide towards the stance of dominance' (p.107): an instrumentalised way of making decisions, an increasingly atomistic sense of self, and a fragmented view of the cosmos⁸⁷. Within this broth, technology can serve as a catalyst of change, an agent actualizing such outlooks. Yet Taylor's critique is unique in this regard, for: 'the institutions of a technological society don't ineluctably impose on us an ever-deepening hegemony of instrumental reason. But it is clear that left to themselves they have a tendency to push us in that direction' (p.109). This tendency is my focus here.

Taylor's (1991:107) 'bent or slide towards the stance of dominance' is a concern voiced by other social critics as well. For instance, in the mid-20th Century the French radical Guy Debord cautioned of the soporific effects of the spectacle. He argued that we are all, in the Western world at least, ensnared in a system not of engagement, but of entertainment. This spectacle drugs us, anesthetizing our sense with both the spectacular and the sinister⁸⁸. In Debord's ([1967] 1994:9) conception we are but 'homo spectator', as a result of 'the decline of *being* into *having*, and *having* into merely *appearing*' (p.16). The result is that 'all that was once directly lived has become mere representation' (p.12). The spectacle, as typified by entertainment, shapes a unique sort of individual⁸⁹. According to Debord (p.23):

87 There is, however, contestation in this regard. Taylor (1991:107) continues: 'Although there is a bent or slide towards the stance of dominance, for all the reasons mentioned above, nothing says that we *have* to live our technology this way. The other modes are open. The prospect we face here is a struggle, in which these different modes of enframing contend...I am proposing that instead of seeing our predicament as fated to generate a drive for ever-increasing technological control, which we will then either rejoice at or bemoan depending on our outlook, we understand it as open to contestation, as a locus of probably unending struggle...That's why a work of retrieval here is worthwhile. There is a battle for hearts and minds, in which it has a role to play'.

88 Recent critics have developed this theme. Winter (2002:12) for instance warns of the 'paradoxical boredom boom' of being 'entertained to excess', 'advertised to apathy' and 'negated to numbness', to quote but a few of his exciting alliterative ventures.

89 It is interesting to note the parallels between Debord and Taylor here: two very different and distinct thinkers, yet related nonetheless. Debord (1994:10) says the spectacle is the 'affirmation of all human life, namely social life, as mere appearance' such that 'all community and all critical sense are dissolved' (p.20). This resonates deeply with Taylor's (1991:112) concerns over atomism and fragmentation, whereby 'people [are] increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out'. The fear here is that 'fragmentation abets atomism'

The spectator's alienation from and submission to the contemplated object (which is the outcome of his unthinking activity) works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives: the more readily he recognizes his own needs in the images of need proposed by the dominant system, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires. The spectator feels at home nowhere, for the spectacle is everywhere.

Debord's (1994) 'spectacle' is evident in the critiques of Zygmunt Bauman. In 'Liquid Modernity', Bauman (2000) brings our attention to the seductive slippage in favour of technological mindsets. This is an apt description, detailing not only the seductive technologies employed in advertising and marketing, but also the sheer allure of these technologies: sleek and sexy, 'clean and lean' (Grossman, 2006:4).

The French scholar of speed, Paul Virilio, is also virulently critical of this slippage. He remarks that 'speed [is] the coitus of the future' (Armitage, 2000:143) and within this framework, views technology as 'catastroph-ic, not catastroph-ist' (p.26), in other words, tragic but not terminal. His particular concern is with the tyranny of real-time⁹⁰, stridently asserting that 'no politics is possible at the scale of the speed of light' (Virilio, 2002:43). This juncture warns of the danger of overstimulation. Georg Simmel ([1904] 1994:4) cautioned, at the turn of the last century, of the 'relentless matter-of-factness' of the urban attitude in a world of 'homogenous, flat and grey colours'. For Simmel, this is the epitome of metropolitan indifference (p.6):

[T]here is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook...it stimulates the nerves to their utmost reactivity until they finally can no longer produce any reaction at all...the essence of the blasé attitude is indifference toward the distinctions between things.

If overstimulation normalizes apathy, impassiveness, and bystander effects, then information overexposure can do likewise. Virilio is concerned that as we are shown more and see more, our sight may increase at the expense of our vision: we end up with less perceptiveness, limited insight, and little clarity. A paradox is in play: the more we see, the less is visible. Virilio calls this being 'blinded by the light' (Armitage, 2000:143), as depicted by Figure 8 below:

(p.117) in a self-perpetuating cycle of decline, negating alternatives and reinforcing its own logic, such that 'fragmentation in fact disables us from resisting this drift' (ibid.).

90 Specifically, Virilio (1998:129) provides a vehement critique against technologies that 'cause a detachment from our body, other people, and our habitual experiences of time, space, and the lived environment...[that] exile us from ourselves and make us lose the ultimate physiological reference: the ponderous mass of the locomotive body, axis, or more exactly the seat of comportmental motility and of identity'.

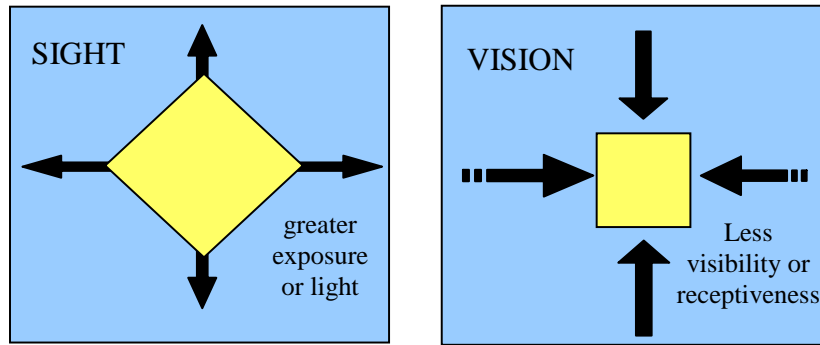


Figure 8. Blinded by the light

At the mountain, seedlings of these sentiments can be noted. Brenner and Schmid (2011) write that 'Planetary Urbanism' is actualized in four vagrant forms: through new scales of urbanism, the blurring of urban-rural divides, the disintegration of hinterlands, and the end of 'wilderness'. In the case of Vancouver's leisure culture, all four are apt, although the fourth category is particularly noteworthy. The end of wilderness is realized as 'planetary urbanism' becomes pervasive urbanism: insidious and invasive in even remote locations. Consider this map of connectivity in the 'wilderness' mountain-scape of Whistler-Blackcomb (Figure 9):

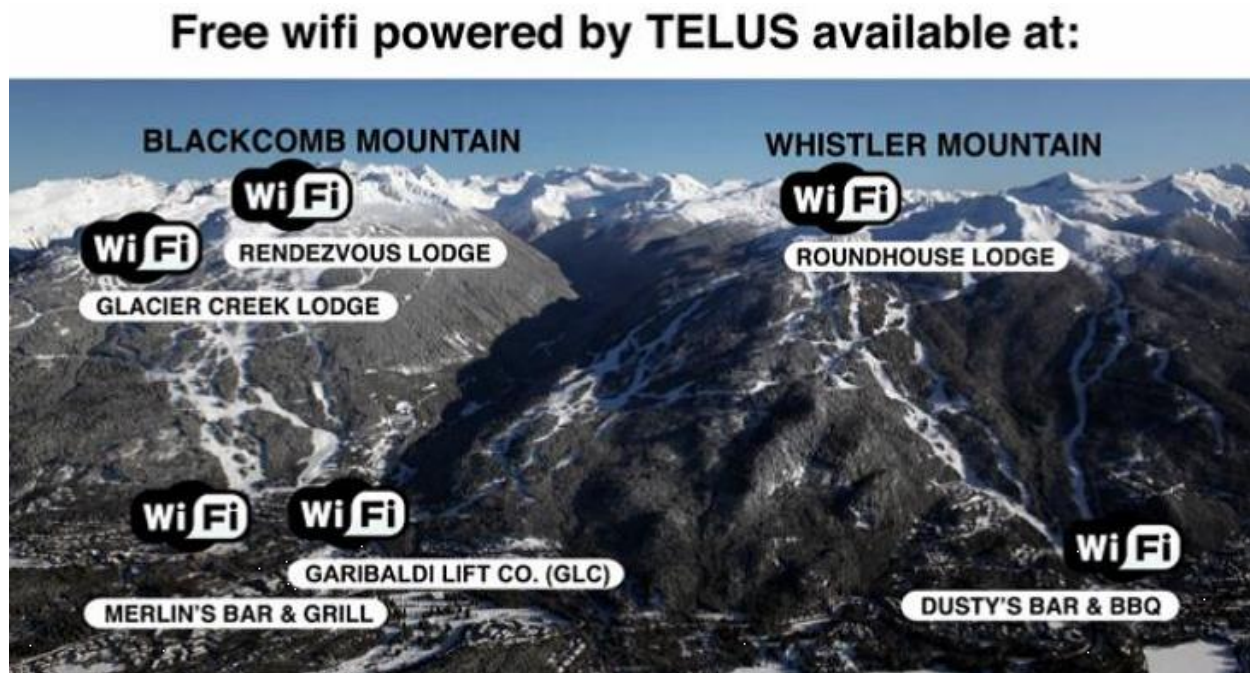


Figure 9. Wi-Fi in the 'wilderness' space of Whistler-Blackcomb (reproduced with permission)

In a similar vein to the contradictory logics of yield, utility, and efficiency in escaping the malaise and returning to nature, technology at the mountain discloses paradoxical trends. This is the trappings of tools. For Jasmine, the logic of speed still reigned supreme (emphasis added):

Yep [I use Whistler App], to check the forecast. I tend to use PowDay more often. I can't say I've ever used, I don't have any alarms set on that, but *I just find it's faster*. The Whistler App is slow to load and slow to use. I use Snow Forecast, I think it's more accurate for looking at the weather pattern coming in. But I use the Whistler App. I use that to check the avalanche site...I'll check them all to see if there's variations.

The irony of escape yet connection is stark. Whilst the mountain offers a space of liminality, above or away from the intensities of the metropolis, it is only partial at best. She continued:

No, I don't [disconnect from my technology]. No, but it's good to do that. But I do try...and you know I think we live more and more now...I think you're expected to be able to respond. I'll definitely filter, I'll read my emails if something comes in from work, but unless it's an emergency, I won't answer it until Monday, unless you know if someone is having an emergency then obviously I'll respond, but I try not to. Cos otherwise you're on call 24/7 and that's, you need to break.

For those in die-hard search of true disconnection, the backcountry served as the ultimate space of liminality. Getting lost 'out back' became the epitome of true adventure, as Milena observed:

[O]n my week long trips I just turn it [my iPhone] off. And I know there's this new research going into the phenomenon of actually leaving your technology behind and your Facebook fasts and whatnot. I think it really allows you to focus on what you're doing and gives you more time to focus on what you're doing. There's a sense of relief I think of not having to be connected. And that's partly why we go backcountry, you want a community but sometimes you don't want that 24/7 connection I think.

Yet ironically even the boon of 'relief in relief' was partial. As Milena went on to disclose: '[my iPhone] has my music, so [if] we're in a hut [in the backcountry] that has a little docking station we can listen to it in the hut in the evening, something to do'. It appears that the auspices of technology are far-reaching indeed. Even 'out back' the Romantic ideals of listening to the glacier creak, the snow crunch, and the wind whistle are easily drowned out by the possibility of plugging an iPhone into a docking station. Surprisingly, even the 'sense of relief' of disconnection in the backcountry knows limits.

Alan Borgmann (1984:39), the great American critic of technology, is not far from condemning such 'procurement of frivolous comfort'. Whilst there is certainly a 'prestige and aura that surround technology' (Taylor, 1991:6), oftentimes it does little for our 'manifold engagement' (p.7) with a complex, three-dimensional environment. Rather, it can easily propagate a slide in favour of 'pitiable comfort' (p.4), which naturally has 'consequences for human life and meaning' (p.3). Borgmann (1984:246) convincingly argues that 'to be human is to recognize and appropriate one's world'⁹¹. Yet more often than not technology 'frees us from the genuine limits of our endurance, fortitude and fidelity' (Borgmann, 1984:248) only to furnish joys that 'seem to have a parasitic and voracious character' (p.247). Borgmann concludes that technology has 'progressively divided and decomposed the fabric of our lives' (p.124) and 'the resulting emptiness is to be filled with consumption'.

One of the many forms of 'inveterate consumption' (Smith, 1996:92) actualized at Whistler-Blackcomb mountain as a result of Borgmann's perceived emptiness, is the consumption of numbers. The 'Whistler app' (Figure 10) boasts a numerical feast to satiate every taste and appetite. The interface itself is sophisticated, tracking data for total distance skied, runs tallied, maximum speed attained, average speed and even cumulative altitude loss⁹². In this high-performance, high-intensity environment, numerical statistics certainly often serve as a badge of honour for attainment. As Alistair reminded: 'you can only improve things that are measured':



Figure 10. The Whistler app (reproduced with permission)

91 This has deep resonances with Heidegger's (1929) 'dasein' or 'beingness' rather than 'mere perception'. He reminds us himself that 'of all beings, only the human being...experiences the *wonder* of wonder: *that things are*'. Valovic (2000:53) goes on to critique technologies which may undermine this sense: 'A downside to having the whole world at our fingertips is the crushing weight that this represents and the fact that this huge amount of information must be funnelled through a single, narrow access pipeline: the computer [or smartphone] screen'.

92 Here, it seems Yi-Fu Tuan (1998:189) is almost estranged in asserting 'that numbers don't always count'.

At Whistler, the app and wi-fi on the mountain serve as pre-eminent examples of 'planetary urbanism' (Brenner and Schmid, 2011), specifically the end of 'wilderness'. As Leanne said, smartphones like the 'iPhone are so convenient', and indeed convenience is rated highly:

For me, it's simple things. Like I have a rubbish phone...I hate it, it drives me mad! I'll rarely reply...iPhones are so convenient. If you don't reply to something it's like why? Everyone knows you got the email or the message or whatever. In the day it's got its pros, cos it is really convenient, and it means you kind of keep up to date on the weather, it's got updates, and really good apps and so on. I just don't bother, cos I've got a rubbish phone, and I don't miss it either. It is quite antisocial I find...If I'm with people and they're on their phones I do get quite annoyed, cos I'll be like the only one.

Yet at the same time, she affirmed her relationship with nature as 'the kind of back to basics. I personally generally speaking like it and enjoy the challenge that you get [in nature] of not having your mod-cons'. It seems that challenge is fast vanishing. The paradoxical logic here is evident: a pristine view of nature in all its simplicity and serenity is reified, providing an attractive and ideal mountain getaway location, paralleled with a metropolitan desire to 'stay connected', to 'be in touch', and monitor progress throughout⁹³.

The iPhone is a particularly interesting case. Perhaps in a small sense it serves to fuel Nietzsche's (1882) Enlightenment assertion that 'God is dead' in the face of technological mastery and scientific triumph. One could perhaps even argue that the iPhone, in our generation, has come to replace any intimation of a traditional God (Table 4). The all-consuming power, knowledge, and presence of the hallowed iPhone know no limits:

Omniscience – all knowing	The world is observable	e.g. hyperlinked web
Omnipotence – all powerful	The world is calculable	e.g. Google algorithm
Omnipresence – always present	The world is accessible	e.g. ubiquitous smartphone

Table 4. Supernatural smartphones

Milena certainly espoused these omni- traits:

⁹³ Milena revealed this very fact, with a mountain-esque twist, given her safety concerns: 'I usually have my iPhone connected...you can hear about the avalanches that have happened, and avalanche risk, and what kind of conditions you're expecting. Which I also do every single morning and nights. It's this newfound addiction on the phone here. I use Snow Forecast and North Face has one and Mammut has an avalanche guide in the Whistler-Blackcomb area, course it has the conditions for the mountains'.

Everything is on my iPhone. Anything that I want to know in terms of like avalanche control or incidents or avalanche reports if I'm going backcountry, or weather conditions coming up...Not everywhere has cell reception once you get back there but I think sometimes it's nice to have a connection and people can locate you.

Surely this demands some critique. Whilst the principal stated use in this case is safety and danger-mitigation, the unencumbered enthusiasm and almost naïve uptake of such technologies is still scarcely questioned, regardless of their rampant and widespread effects. Indeed, the 'bent or slide towards the stance of dominance' (Taylor, 1991:107), as easily espoused by such instrumental technologies, encourages certain attitudes and rewards specific patterns of behaviour. This embarks the 'technological mindset' (Borgmann, 1984) that is so prevalent today. Yet perhaps we should heed this with caution. Two-thousand years ago the Stoic philosopher, Seneca, warned that 'to be everywhere is to be nowhere' (cited in Carr, 2010:141). Our technology enables us to be everywhere. Even at Whistler, wi-fi allows smartphone users to be connected to the ends of the earth, in touch via social media, and active or at least present in constant communication. What does this unparalleled connectivity result in – in being everywhere are these respondents also nowhere?

One baffling example of such a disjuncture is evident in Whistler-Blackcomb's 'Wonderground'. Marketed as 'a place where wonder has struck', this campaign for the 2012-13 season was designed to elicit responses of awe and wonder. Whistler village was animated with awe-some photography, including the following (Whistler, 2012. Figure 11):

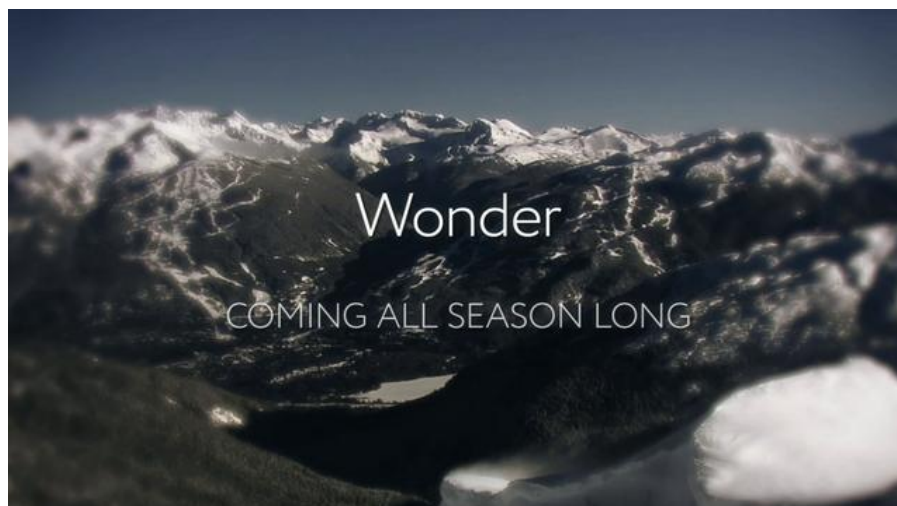


Figure 11. Wonder in Whistler (reproduced with permission)

The ski resort posited the following questions: is wonder 'a place or a state of mind? A physical space or a kind of grace?'. Each caption was accompanied by wonder-struck images of powder, pillows, and ecstatic pleasure. This framing of the mountain resonated well with some of the respondents, including Jasmine: 'that is part of it, you get up there and you're just like wow, this place is amazing...there is that sense of like I wonder what it's like over there'. Kathleen Agena (1983:4) describes this 'Return of Enchantment' in the growing push back against the 'plague of abstraction' in our society – a society that is 'cheating modern man [sic] out of authentic experience', 'threatening the loss of his physical senses', and 'endangering his relationship to nature'. Certainly, Whistler's 'Wonderground' seems to be a small illustration of such push back.

Yet even these retorts to a disenchanted view of nature appeared to be riddled with contradictions. Part of the riddle enacted by the respondents is epitomized by an age-old Romantic ideal. As Turkle (1984:307) has written: 'the Romantics wanted to escape rationalist egoism by becoming one with nature', pursuing 'perfect love...[as] an alternative to the mechanism and competition of society'. Turkle alludes here to the 'new and troubling form' of this same 'desire for fusion' (ibid.), echoed today in the fusion of mind and machine. She writes: 'the question of mind in relation to machine is becoming a central cultural preoccupation. It is becoming for us what sex was to the Victorians – threat and obsession, taboo and fascination' (p.313). Certainly, a parallel exists in 'Wonderground' with the fusion of mind and machine, body and technology, physical space and virtual space. As the photograph (Figure 12) below shows, skiers at Whistler-Blackcomb are encouraged to scan QR codes so as to access the 'Wonder-trails' and 'Wonder-reels': online virtual maps and media forums referencing the physical mountain:



Figure 12. QR codes and the quest for wonder (author's own)

It is in the analysis of such trends that the riddle becomes clear. On the one hand, Whistler markets awe and wonder as the defining categories of the mountain. In 1645 René Descartes reminded us that wonder is 'one of the six passions of the soul'. These philosophical roots are not to be forgotten⁹⁴. Awe and wonder connote 'intense intellectual interest' (Winter, 2002:118) in the face of vast mystery and irreducible complexity. The essence of wonder is therefore mystery – being overwhelmed by the magnitude, magnificence, and sheer immensity of the unknown. Yet just as Taylor (1991:1) defined the 'malaise of modernity', similarly in regard to awe and wonder there are 'features of our contemporary culture and society that people experience as a loss or a decline, even as our civilization “develops”'. Quinn (2002:10) gives a banal example to illustrate this point:

To say 'I just read a wonderful book' means little more than 'I just read a book I like'. But when words decay, the things they signify may decay with them, for the decay of a word is a symptom of the decadence of a thing.

Quinn's concern with 'decadence' is noteworthy. Just as the misapplication of words can betray their meaning, so can the misapplication of concepts decay their very essence. It seems that this may very well be the case in Whistler's 'Wonderground'.

So whilst positing awe and wonder on the one hand, the marketers at Whistler seem to betray these concepts on the other. If wonder is primarily defined by mystery, then the prevalence of quantification, statistics, and numerical assessments in Whistler's purported 'Wonderground' sits awkwardly. Even with regard to content and online media, Winter (2002:117) argues that we are 'so constantly bombarded...with the stimulating and spectacular that our sense of wonder in the life and the world...has atrophied'. One explanation for this was provided by the African theologian St. Augustine (397) in the 4th Century:

People travel to wonder at the height of the mountains, at the huge waves of the seas, at the long course of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars, and yet they pass by themselves without wondering.

94 Indeed, Socrates was one of the first to draw attention to this. Speaking of an illiterate slave boy to whom Socrates is teaching maths, he says: when 'the boy finally realizes that he does not know the answer...the boy is now much better off because he knows he is ignorant. He is now in a state of wonder and consequently ready to learn – or rather to remember – the truth' (Quinn, 2002:84). This state of mystery is central to authentic wonder.

Our relentless pursuit of wonder in the world seems to have been atrophied in at least two ways: historically, our inattentiveness to internal wonder and complexity, and more recently in the sensationalization of external wonders, which may numb our very sense of wonder itself⁹⁵.

In Whistler specifically, this contrast is particularly stark. A pursuit of the sublime, of sheer majesty and magnitude in a return to awe and wonder, is not only encouraged as wanderlust but actively marketed in its 'Wonderground'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, wonder becomes a commodity: a category for profit-making. Yet if wonder is in part experiencing 'the shock of realizing [one's] ignorance' (Quinn, 2002:84) then the calculative approach to wonder at this mountain is nothing shy of sheer contradiction. Rather than marvel in wonder at the awesomeness of the mountain, QR codes, smartphone apps, and wi-fi access instead further contribute to and 'serve the ends of greater control, of technological mastery' (Taylor, 1991:105). This is a point-blank irony. At Whistler, wonder has become a category of *both* potential (or perhaps desired) mystery and aura, matched by actualized precision and mastery. If anything, this steepens the 'slide towards the stance of dominance' (Taylor, 1991:107). If this engagement is to be taken, then Taylor's malaise seems equally prevalent at the mountain as in the metropolis. Both can serve to further the ends of 'runaway instrumental reason...[evident] in the hardening of an atomistic outlook, in our imperviousness to nature' (p.96).

No wonder, then, that Tuan (1998:166) writes that 'technology is reductionist in regard to the human habitat: that is, it tends to thin and spread out its inchoate richness, flushing out nooks and corners in which mystery can flourish'⁹⁶. A parallel seems to exist at the mountain. In any case, technology at Whistler may well flush out these nooks and crannies of mystery, of true awe and wonder. It is in view of this potential that many, including Virilio (cited in Armitage, 2000:113), are unabashed in their scathing critiques of both "technological fundamentalism" and "information monotheism"...worldview[s] that replace previous humanist and religious

95 Linder (1970:96) speaks, for example, of vanishing pleasures: 'no one has time to take pleasure in the autumn leaf, but many take time to admire the message of an expensive television set'.

96 This is true particularly for the richness of one's imagination. Tuan (1998:154) writes: 'imagination, after all, is not only a source of illusion and error, it is also the uniquely human path to knowledge'. Yet the respondents epitomized the reductionist view in this regard. Shaun, for instance, capitalized on a brief bathroom break by the interviewer to check up on admin. Upon return he said: 'no no no, it's fine – I just got all of my stuff taken care of'. This is ruthless efficiency in action.

worldviews, displacing man and god in favour of technology'. The famous figure and critic of Silicon Valley, Jaron Lanier (2010:ix), for instance, says his recent 'book is not anti-technology in any sense. It is pro-human'. This allows him to go on to provide a vehement rebuke to the 'flatness...blandness and meaninglessness' (p.120) of unmitigated technological proliferation.

Lanier (p.x) is particularly concerned with technology's ability to de-emphasize 'personhood, and the intrinsic value of an individual's unique internal experience and creativity, [which if negated can] lead to all sorts of maladies'. In the words of another critic, this potential holds the power to settle on an extremely 'pinched conception of the human mind' (Carr, 2010:176). This flat, narrow, clean, and lean rendering also applies to nature. Where is wonder, where is mystery in the context of a rigorously quantified and calculated natural habitat? Can awe flourish in such a setting? Perhaps the cautionary words of Sir Herbert Read (cited in Linder, 1970:103) should be heeded if such a trajectory continues: 'there will be lights everywhere except in the mind of man, and the fall of the last civilization will not be heard above the incessant din'⁹⁷.

97 Nicholas Carr (2010:224) takes this argument to a logical extreme: 'as we come to rely on computers to mediate our understanding of the world, it is our own intelligence that flattens into artificial intelligence'.

4.3 Terrain: a paradoxical encounter

'The trouble with wilderness is that it quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject'
(Cronon, 1995:11)

The tools and technologies in play at the mountain make the case for a form of 'planetary urbanism' (Brenner and Schmid, 2011), even in the purported 'wilderness' spaces of nature. Arguably, this insidious form of pervasive urbanism demonstrates itself in other ways too. Beyond the riddles of ironies in escape and compromises in returning to nature, one can argue that a number of paradoxes are at play, reproducing and replicating the auspices of urban intensity in the different terrains of the mountain-scape: physical, social, and cultural. One of the defining categories of attraction in heading to the mountain is the sure-fire pursuit of perspective. As Jonathan said, in regard to going to the mountains:

I think it's refreshing to be honest. You've gone above the level, that banal existence and you get to enjoy the world and you're above that rush and it's quiet and peaceful...[I often feel] humbled in the sense that usually when I'm on top of a mountain it helps you realize the vastness of nature. Like obviously from a high vantage point, you have a much better or a much wider perspective of the world. In the sense that you can see, so you get a greater sense of scale, as opposed to being in a valley. And so standing on a summit can make you realize how big the world is.

This theme resonated across the interviews. Numerous respondents agreed that part of the draw of the peaks was not only *their* poise, but also the poise they engendered *in* their visitors. Yet as conversations continued and investigation deepened, cracks appeared in this logic. Both the offer and the acquisition of poise came at a cost. The very fact of being at the mountain, either above or away from the metropolis (or both) introduced categories of distinction. For instance, who can go? How do they go? Why do they go? A banal example of this terrain of differentiation slipped by unnoticed in the interview with Leanne. She said, in reference to going skiing: 'as long as you've got a car, it's dead easy'. Without going into the specific debates that such a statement raises (specifically those surrounding accessibility⁹⁸), it is worth noting one of Taylor's insights. He (1991:58) writes that our culture of authenticity is founded on:

98 Cronon (1995:11) is clear here. He says: 'the central paradox [is that] wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural'. So, for instance, 'we drive its [civilization's] cars (not least to reach the wilderness)...all the while pretending that these things are not an essential part of who we are'. The motor vehicle is a clear example of the folly of this logic.

[F]ulfillment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimizing the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God: they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism.

In the mountains, the same logic is at play. Perspective and poise are guaranteed by these weekend warriors by these very same mechanics of 'radical anthropocentrism' (ibid.). In other words, a narrow lens is operationalized, a limited gaze utilized. As with the 'decadence' of wonder (Quinn, 2002:10), immediate negation of history, tradition, society, and even nature or God can decay the terrain of the mountain-scape. For Taylor (1991:6), this epitomizes the 'loss of resonance, depth, or richness in our human surroundings'. His diagnosis discloses the radically narrow way of viewing things operationalized in this culture. As such a terrain of replication emerges, whereby mountainous logics can mirror metropolitan ones, propagating the same 'malaise of modernity' (Taylor, 1991).

Taylor offers another insight at this juncture. Just as Alexis de Tocqueville (1969:385) warned of the '*petits et vulgaires plaisirs*' of a comfortable democracy, Taylor (1991:4) cautions against the 'pitiable comfort' in a culture of authenticity untrammelled by aspirations in life. As previously stated, the mountain-scape is a space to retrieve heroism and athleticism for many of the respondents. Yet even one weekend warrior herself critiqued this. Milena said: 'I think what we do is very selfish on the weekends and I think we always have that conversation'. One aspect of 'pitiable comfort' (Taylor, 1991:4) is simply selfishness. As Milena confessed, spending inordinate amounts of time away from home, at the mountain, enjoying leisure and pleasure, can with relative ease breed attitudes and behaviours of atomistic 'egoism' (Taylor, 1991:72). Milena continued with significant insight as well as a healthy degree of self-criticism:

I mean being a part of that [weekend warrior] community sets you apart from other communities, and I think the biggest feedback that friends from the city would give me is that I'm never around. And people have the perception that I'm always on vacation somewhere else. When in fact I've just been gone for the weekend, but I leave Friday after work, my car is packed, so Sunday evening or Monday morning, when I come back. So I think if you're talking about some of the different levels of community, and in some ways it separates you from your local community, but then you engage the people that are part of that select group. And that's where you meet people by word of mouth, it's cos we kinda find each other, and do that adventure together and come back. But I definitely do find it's harder to maintain relationships with people outside of that active community. And I get blamed for it, you know to some degree.

This is fraught terrain – nothing short of 'subtle and complex' (Taylor, 1991:11) – that demands cautious critique. As Milena continued, however, this theme of blinkered selfishness acquired clarity. She said: 'I think being in the mountains is me, it's what I can do, what I am kinda giving back to myself, and friendships that give back to me, and that sort of thing'. Taylor's (1991:4) caution regarding the narcissistic 'me generation' and 'permissive society' – termed the 'iWorld' (Kuehne, 2009) elsewhere – seems partially warranted here.

The broader critique Taylor is making here is that of a deviation to superficial lifestyle living. The culture of authenticity normalizes, even promotes, such an attitude. The environmental scholar William Cronon (1995) brings our attention to the manifestation of these pursuits in the great outdoors. Whilst stores such as Comor Sports in Vancouver target the outdoor leisure market with branding such as 'Go Play Outside', Cronon does not espouse such unabashed enthusiasm for 'nature'. He warns of the evasion of responsibility that leisure and pleasure in nature can entail, fermenting irresponsibility even under the guise of heroism. Specifically, 'wilderness offers us the illusion that we can escape the cares and troubles of the world in which our past has ensnared us' (Cronon, 1995:10). Alistair made this very critique himself, saying:

It's almost as if people are afraid to look deep into their lives that they have in the city, so they use the nature as like an escape. There's this great quote by Socrates which is like "why do you wonder that globe-trotting does not help you, seeing that you always take yourself with you?". It's like if you can't find the simple pleasures in your day to day existence, changing the scenery doesn't really change the fundamental problem.

His concern was with the 'New Age quest of being more adventurous'. He said: 'some people are using it as a crutch, saying like "oh I'm an adventurer, I define the elements"'. Yet in reality, perhaps there is an element of hypocrisy in such escapism – it is far easier to flee to the mountains than perhaps face on-going realities of hardship, friction or even relational demands. Charlie, for one, was enthused by this prospect of escapism:

For me it's about switching my mind. I think about all the kind of daily things, whether it's work, whether it's life, whether it's family, whether it's cooking or shopping, you know all those daily things, and going and just living life with really no thoughts running through the brain. So that's what I consider escapism for me to be. And again for the

things that I can relate to or the places where I find escapism, Vancouver is the best place on Earth, because it's got places like Lynn Canyon just on the North Shore of Vancouver, where it's free to go, and you're just in this beautiful rainforest over like a bridge crossing just an incredibly beautiful canyon. Or whether it's in mountains when I'm ski touring. These are places where I don't think about daily life and daily tasks, I just shut off.

Another respondent, Thomas, echoed this sentiment: 'You've got no family commitments at the weekend, no one-year old birthday parties, do you know what I mean?' Perhaps the mountain itself, after all, is complicit in constructing the riddle of escapism, certainly from responsibility.

Numerous respondents referred to an implicit image to explicate this tendency. It was the paradox of hiding above cloud level, as is often demonstrated by the summits of local mountains protruding above a bed of clouds. British Columbia (or simply BC) is often affectionately nicknamed 'Beneath Cloud'. On average, the Province receives over 161 days of rainfall annually, a staggeringly high number. What is beneath the clouds, however, is often not the same as what is above them. Rain below may be sun above. For instance, Jasmine lamented this:

I don't think I could live in Vancouver if I didn't access the mountains in the winter, because of the seasonal affective disorder [SAD]. It's so dark here. Like even on a day like today where we have this inversion right now, I mean it's sunny up in the mountains right now. Go up to the mountains, if you're up on Whistler right now, it's sunny. Probably up on the local mountains it's sunny too, at the top. I checked the Whistler webcams this morning and it was sunny up there but I haven't looked at Cypress, Grouse or Seymour.

In a similar way, the mountain culture presents the pressure to climb, to reach elevation. Oftentimes this is an honest desire, although at other times it can become a coercive obligation. As Peter said:

It does sometimes feel like an obligation. It's beautiful outside, the mountains are just calling your name, and you want to be on your bike or you want to be just out there, right. You would rather do anything than sitting inside reading...which might be more profitable. Or spending time with other people. Or giving, serving, in another context. Which I would be more likely to do I guess elsewhere.

Peter raises an important issue here. He recognizes that the relief wrought in relief is often only partial – sometimes sheer escapism, other times mere egotism. Particularly on a clear blue sky

day, the draw to get away, to get outside, is intensely seductive. Notwithstanding the blue sky days, it is safe to say that in BC fog and cloud dominate. Aside from getting *away*, the mountain also offers an invaluable opportunity to get *above*: whether above cloud, as in Jasmine's case, or more broadly above the intensities of the metropolis. Jonathan related strongly to the latter:

[Going to the mountain] allows you to get away. I think if you live in a big urban area, then there is now the element of getting out of the city. We escape crowds, people, buildings. Just wanting to feel nature. It's just that sense isn't it. Feeling the breeze, seeing the sun, breathing fresh air...you have a chance to reflect, think about your life in the city, but you're out of it, you're away. You can kinda relax but also get a breath of fresh air, and feel above the stresses that you feel beneath...I think that often if you're in a city, like the opportunity to get out and about and above the city is almost like a vertical relief.

Yet one can mount the argument that being 'above the city' in this way offers but a partial gaze. Imagine gaining altitude on a cloudy day, suddenly piercing through the fog, and arriving above the layer of cloud into glorious sunshine at elevation. Imagine this again, only in the form of escaping 'hustle and bustle', rising above 'the streets' and 'pollution'. As Janet said, such elevation is 'cleaner, it's escape, it's just fresh'. Certainly, the benefits of invigoration and refreshment are real. But just as Cronon (1995:9) is weary that wilderness can emerge 'as the landscape of choice for elite tourists...an activity mainly for well-to-do city folks', so too should we question the rarified access to these elevated places. One could argue that altitude is but an agent to get *away*, namely by being *above*. Kerriane relayed a similar sentiment:

The Grouse Grind is nice, it's a good work out, it's beautiful to be there, it's kinda secluded if it's not busy, although it does get busy so I try to avoid the times where it's very busy cos I like it to be quieter. So it's kinda like a place close to the city to get away. I like to reflect, be with my thoughts I guess, to unwind in general. Just everything I guess.

As Kerriane disclosed, there is a sense in which a partial gaze is enacted⁹⁹. The irony of the mountain is that it offers new, exciting views with their attendant rewards, at the same time as it negates other views, blinding certain aspects through a partial gaze. This new-found gaze is both *above* and *away* from the city. On a foggy day this is clear: above the cloud base the view changes drastically, a new gaze is opened as another is foreclosed.

99 In Sidney's case, travel for work enacted a partial gaze, by making his job bearable: '[travel] makes it a bit more interesting, cos I'd hate to just do office work and not travel at all. Like that would get so boring in my opinion'.

The riddle in the terrain of these weekend warriors may be the seeming intensification, rather than dissipation, of various metropolitan features at the mountain. Certain terrains are reified, even reproduced at the mountain. This logic animated a number of paradoxes noted during the interviews, including the lack of context or ahistoricity. For instance, Charlie said:

If I go ski touring I can drive up to Lions Bay, half an hour away, I can trek up behind the back of the Lions and within two hours of trekking I'm in absolute, pristine, untouched wilderness. Like where I know that if I chose to trek for a week I wouldn't see a single person. So that wilderness element of nature, I get a huge high from. And I don't even see it that much, I don't even get to experience it that much. But I think it has this draw for me.

Environmental historians may be alarmed by such a statement. Charlie calls Garibaldi National Park 'absolute, pristine, untouched wilderness'. Yet in reality it is relative not absolute, somewhat polluted rather than pristine, and cordoned-off for conservation and recreation in a highly social manner. The environment is touched by society in numerous ways, not least with the traces left behind by those ski touring. Such an exhortation is reminiscent of other ahistorical vantage points¹⁰⁰, blurted out by others over time. Cole Harris (1997:67), Canada's indefatigable historical geographer, writes in 'The Resettlement of British Columbia' that 'non-Native British Columbians need to understand, as now they hardly do, how non-Native power took root in this province'. Harris reminds us of the *deep* history and culture of Canada: yes, vast forests, peaks and plains, but also populous tribes and settlements quite unlike those in Europe, from the indigenous Inuit in the North to First Nation Aboriginals on the West Coast.

Taylor (1991:58) writes that the 'radical anthropocentrism' of our culture of authenticity often negates 'history, tradition, society, nature, or God' from our frame of reference. The malaise in the metropolis can greatly intensify this trend. Yet surprisingly even at the mountain, such 'radical anthropocentrism' is prevalent. Very rarely did respondents note any form of history, tradition, or society that fed into the lifestyles they enjoy today. Rather, the evisceration of history in the metropolis, for instance, was often mirrored in the ahistorical attitudes towards

100Another would be the equally ahistorical views shared by Alistair: 'We don't have the rich history of a European country, hardly. I mean we really have no culture. I think that's the biggest thing. Well, we do have a culture, don't get me wrong, but we don't have an historical culture'.

nature and culture at the mountain¹⁰¹. Such a view reveals much. The insistency on speed, on intensification and acceleration, serves to breed a culture of immediacy: of 'arrival without departure' and 'speed without progress' (Tomlinson, 2007:89). This resonates with Paul Virilio's concerns regarding our speed-obsessed society: 'the logic of ever increasing speed lies at the heart of the organization and transformation of the contemporary world' (Armitage, 2000:1). We have been and continue to be radically shaped and (re)formulated by transformations in technology. Virilio (adapted from 1986) suggests at least three revolutions in speed (Table 5):

Transportation	Speed inventions	e.g. steam/electrical/jet engine
Transmission	Electronic distribution	e.g. radio/television/internet
Transplant	Assimilable technology	e.g. inserts/implants/chemicals

Table 5. Three revolutions in speed

Yet as Tomlinson (2007) is quick to add, the real concern is with the ramifications of these transformations on the fabric of society. Does such acceleration and intensification strengthen or weaken Taylor's (1991:58) 'radical anthropocentrism'? Tomlinson (2007) suggests at least three perils twinned with Virilio's revolutions in speed; notably the development of immediacy, convenience and ease of access that can breed indefatigable desires for instantaneity, and even insatiability.

Another paradox in the realm of terrain is a different, yet connected one: that of gender. William Cronon (1995:74) writes with regard to gender, that: 'men are participating in the same cultural tradition and contributing to the same myth – the mountain as cathedral' such that wilderness has become 'the last bastion of rugged individualism' for 'the passing of...heroic men' (p.76). The deeply gendered nature of many of the comments by respondents in this regard deserves some attention, though this does open an entirely new field of analysis. For instance, Jonathan said: 'I climb mountains because I enjoy it, I enjoy the experience of being out there. I love looking at the views. I love that feeling like I'm alone, I'm here, I'm in this world'. This

101Another example was the passing comment made by Jasmine, taking Highway #99 for granted: 'I think we skied Sunday, same thing, skied all day...and drove back to the city Sunday night...I think I didn't end up leaving until 6.30 or something like that, and then I flew down [the Sea to Sky highway], it was no problem'.

reminds us of the great lineage of critical scholarship interrogating not just the (masculine) penetration of nature, but also the (masculine) drive for tangible attainment, success, even domination (Rose, 1993). Julian put it this way: 'there were a couple of times this summer where we were climbing a mountain and we didn't summit, and I don't like that at all. Cos I want to get to the flipping top of it'. This epitomizes, in many senses, the masculine ego of adrenaline¹⁰² and achievement – a ruthless pursuit of the win, a drive to conquer. Though ironically, other female weekend warriors self-identified with this Type A, alpha male mentality. Listen to Leanne:

My personality in a way is that it's right that I'm an accountant in many ways: I'm measured, I like things to be right, you know, I think things should be done well. It's just my personality so if I'm going to do something I want to make the most of it...At the moment I always ski purely with guys, pretty much, because there's just not as many girls...you just have to have the confidence to look at something and be like if he's done it then I can do it, which is generally my attitude.

For some, this sentiment came to be the defining feature of leisure hotspots such as Whistler. The irony here being that the 'radical anthropocentrism' (Taylor, 1991:58) that plagued the immanent frame in the city, continues to be operationalized in nature. Oftentimes, at the mountain just as much as in the metropolis, the lens used is one of instrumentality, and the stance a dominating, conquering, masculine one. Alistair was astute in noting the salient features of his lifestyle enclave, centred on leisure, sport, and fitness:

[I]t's heavily male dominated. Which is so funny cos everyone goes there so excited to kinda drink and party with their peers, but yet like, it's all guys [laughs]. It's the same culture where everyone is a top cyclist, and it's pretty A Type male, so there's a lot of money, obviously.

In this 'male-dominated culture', the greatest irony is identified by Cronon (1995:77): 'the very men who most benefited from urban-industrial capitalism [both historically and today] were among those who believed they must escape its debilitating effects'. An obvious parallel exists here between work and play. The stereotype is not too far removed from Benjamin Ehrenreich's

¹⁰²Julian put flesh to this idea, adamantly stating: 'I want to do the most dangerous things without hurting myself. I want to do the craziest, hardest, stupidest thing without hurting myself, that's what I want to do, and without hurting other people. That is my, lots of times, that's my goal. And as you've said, I tend to be a leader of the pack lots of times too, because it's just a personality thing. If you're a go-getter people tend to follow. If you're the one that's going balls to the wall, others are kinda like. Yeah cos we want to get as close to danger without dying as possible'.

(1983) 'play-boy': men who are boys at heart, eager to flee responsibility and commitment in favour of fun and play. In the working sphere, Miles, a commodities trader, painted this picture:

The money [keeps me in the job]. And for me I find it quite rewarding, mainly because I'm a very simple guy. At the end of the day there's a big number called profit and loss, PL. If it's a positive number you can sort of give yourself a pat on the back, cos oh you did a good job today...So for me I get a little kick out of seeing at the end of every day if I've done a good job or not. It sounds very shallow but, you know.

Max Weber (1978:144) reminds us that: 'He who does not pass the heroic trials of the warrior's training remains a "woman"'. This seems to shed light on the ruthless pursuit of heroic masculinity enacted by many of the weekend warriors interviewed. Indeed, if 'the whole quest for masculinity is a life-long set of high-risk behaviours' (Kimmel and Kaufmann, 1995:26), then the extreme sports and leisure pursuits of the respondents at the mountain attest to this 'quest' for a heroic status. The disconnect between work and play, week and weekend, is perhaps more banal than first conceived. Kimmel and Kaufmann (1995:26) continue: 'our hegemonic definitions of masculinity are based on independence, aggression, competition, and the capacity to control and dominate'. This illuminates much, not least the domineering stance often actualized over nature. Consider the marketing campaign for the most popular extreme sports video-camera: 'Go Pro: Be a Hero'.

For the respondents in question – majority male, upwardly-mobile, affluent, the aspiring 1% – the parallels are obvious. On the one hand is the siege: a 'concern that modern culture feminizes men, turning the heroic warrior into a desk-bound nerd' (Kimmel and Kaufmann, 1995:32) such that 'masculinity has been increasingly seen as in "crisis"' (p.16). This has engendered widespread confusion over the meaning of manhood. On the other hand, for those 'who have the resources with which to combat that siege' (p.18), a retort is in play: 'hundreds of thousands of men have heeded the call of the wildman, embraced this new masculinity, and become weekend warriors' (p.15). Yet an irony is apparent:

As a result, many middle-class, white, middle-aged heterosexual men – among the most privileged groups in the history of the world – do not experience themselves as powerful. Ironically, although these men are everywhere in power, that aggregate power of that group does not translate into an individual sense of feeling empowered. In fact, this group

feels quite powerless. Entitled to partake in the traditional power of masculinity, these men feel besieged by new forces outside of their control, and somewhat at a loss at they observe the women in their lives changing dramatically while they feel increasingly helpless. (Kimmel and Kaufmann, 1995:18)

Part of the paradox of this terrain, beyond the realm of gender, is that of exclusivity. This malaise experienced by men is released in a cry of anguish and realized in heroic activities, as with these weekend warriors, yet is often 'open only to the economically privileged' (p.19).

The theme of privilege and power opens up space for discussion around issues of exclusivity and elitism. Though the malaise in the metropolis is refused with retorts at the mountain, the overwhelmingly white mountain – in both senses – can rapidly intensify, rather than dissipate, metropolitan privilege in numerous ways. This is Cronon's (1995:79) conundrum: 'the trouble with wilderness is that it quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject'. One such specific way is elitism. Bellah et al. (1985:335) demarcate such groups as 'lifestyle enclaves', composed of 'people who share some feature of private life', whether a good, service, or skill. Yet in leisure, as in other realms, the political manifestations and social expressions of such enclaves are limited:

[M]oments of intense awareness, what are sometimes called “peak experiences”, occur in the midst of such [recreational] activities. At such moments a profound sense of well-being eclipses the usual utilitarian preoccupations of everyday life. But the capacity of such experiences to provide more than a momentary counterweight to pressures of everyday life is minimal. Where these activities find social expression at all, it is apt to be in the form of what we have called the lifestyle enclave. (Bellah et al., 1985:291-2)

Certainly, this is reminiscent of critiques of the social and political potential of the 'creative class' (Florida, 2002): flaunted with such talent and tolerance, yet arguably following through with so little¹⁰³. Yet for the purpose of this analysis, elitism is even more specific. The mountain is

103For example, Florida (2002:304) writes triumphantly of the 'plug and play communities' of the creative class, with low barriers to entry and exit (for the correct profiles). Respondents intimated at this, such as Alistair who said, with regard to CrossFit leisure: 'I mean obviously it's fitness in the sense that it produces great results, it's what I do to stay in shape, but it's incredibly socially pleasurable as well. You have good relationships with these people. I've been going to the same gym for two years. You know them. Even if it's a bit of a shallow friendship, which, same like with work, some relationships are – would I see this person outside of work or crossfit, maybe not – but in the gym it's great. You look forward to going. People hold each other accountable'. Peck (2005:745), however, provides a scathing critique of this, suggesting that 'the challenge is to persuade this group of precocious individualists that they should become less self-absorbed and self-oriented' (p.758).

exclusive: limited, relatively inaccessible, and reserved for a privileged few. The rarified air at altitude serves to illustrate the privileged access to this landscape. Such considerations were rare in dialogue during the interviews. At most, Milena said:

I mean it speaks into other values of just being with people, in the evenings, that you can go for dinner with. You know people who don't always fit into your active lifestyle, maintaining friendships with them cos I think that's one of the biggest faults of I guess the so-called 'weekend warrior', it's the ability to maintain relationships with people who don't fit into that category.

She did go on to confess that 'what we do [as weekend warriors] is very selfish on the weekends'. Yet a recognition of the explicit exclusion of others was typically left wanting.

Nonetheless, elitism was intimated at in more implicit ways. In regard to conditions, Charlie was a self-confessed snow snob: 'I like to wait for the good snow conditions to head up there, so Cypress, I might ski three nights in one week if the conditions are good, and if they're not good, I won't head up'. If nothing else, this freedom of choice and accessibility confirms Bellah et al.'s (1987:276) suspicions regarding 'ontological individualism, the idea that the individual is the only firm reality'. They write that this is manifest, as in Charlie's case, in 'a primary emphasis on self-reliance [that] has led to the notion of pure, undetermined choice, free of tradition, obligation, or commitment, as the essence of the self' (p.152). In another realm¹⁰⁴, that of consumption, Julian confessed this very attitude. For the time being, he said:

[W]hen I say responsibility, I guess it's responsibility to that. Even though I essentially don't have that responsibility yet [a family]. But that is something I assume would happen in the future. And if it doesn't I can be selfish my whole life long, just buy a ton of gear, but whatever...you need the quality gear essentially, you need those pieces in order to complete and make the fun happen.

The paradox of terrain was particularly stark in relation to consumption. Many articulated romantic ideals of the simple life – Milena said: 'I love simplifying life' and Alistair was a stoic; 'all about philosophy' and into the 'fundamental, natural causes of happiness'. Yet both were open

¹⁰⁴The career realm also disclosed this, as in Natalie's case. She said: 'I really make sure that my career is in check, in line, and that I'm aligning myself with the right people and people are aware of kinda what I'm doing like in terms of my career, where I'm heading kind of thing. [I'm headed] to glory. To the top. Straight to the top. Whatever that may look like.' This reveals another mountainous pursuit, in the social climbing of career success.

about owning 'loads of gear', and even driving a BMW in the case of Alistair's simple, natural life¹⁰⁵.

Part of the reproduction of metropolitan interest at the mountain was commercially fuelled. Outdoor brands such as REM and MEC, alongside sporting retailers including Comor Sports and Pacific Boarder in Vancouver, litter the city with advertisements for gear. In the case of MEC, there is 'no such thing as bad weather, just bad gear'. This seems in line with winter sports such as skiing as a quintessentially 'white' sport. Lander (2008:37) writes in 'Stuff White People Like' that: '[the Winter Olympics] feature sports that require cold weather and lots of money...[such as snowboarding which demands] the purchase of a lot of very expensive equipment'. Alistair, in a moment of great insight, critiqued this subtle form of exclusivity:

[It] is so ironic, because in some ways it's supposed to be the opposite. Like MEC [Mountain Equipment Co-op] is supposed to be super, in my mind, grassroots. It's about nature, it's about simple pleasures in life. But it can quickly become a perverse status symbol for perverse culture. Like I'm not a MEC guy at all.

Whilst being quick to absolve himself of any complicity, Alistair aptly noted the contradiction here: nature for one, nature for all, yet gear for some, not for all. Just as Ley (1987:48) critiqued architecture in Vancouver, so his concern carries to the lifestyle culture of this city:

[T]here are tendencies towards both elitism and indulgence in this landscape and the lifestyles it both reflects and reinforces. As with all styles and lifestyles there is a narrow line dividing statement from overstatement, authenticity from ersatz and even parody.

The specific parallel here would be the resort of Whistler-Blackcomb, a managed franchise and constructed leisure space. The respondents, by and large, were not unaware of this. Sebastian said: 'Whistler Village [is] designed almost exclusively for people to be relaxed and to have a good time. So you go skiing or when you finish skiing and fancy a rest you can go to one of many bars. There is always stuff to do'. Here is a meticulous realm of 'inveterate consumption' (Smith, 1996:92), often in highly conspicuous forms¹⁰⁶. Leanne shared a variation on this theme:

105Alistair was untrammelled by this hypocrisy. He said quite openly: 'I have my own car and they do pay a stipend toward it. It's something I love, but urban planning is against single person commutes, yet I also love driving. So I'm a bit of a [laughs]. I want everyone else to be able to ride transit but I'm still going to drive my car'.

106In Whistler, specific spots were designated, almost set aside, for young professional consumption. For example, the bar the GLC (Garibaldi Lift Company) was mentioned by Jasmine, Milena, and Peter in interviews.

It is really bizarre. I'm still getting used to just how separate it [Whistler] is. And it is just not about location or what you're doing, it is about the mindset. When you get up there everyone is so chilled and in such a good mood, like you're walking around the village and everyone just seems so happy. It makes me really happy when you get on the slopes. It sounds really stupid but my mum suffers from stress sometimes, and I feel like it's really good mentally as a kind of like release all that stress and to have that regularly like mental health wise is really really good for me.

It seems the metropolitan terrain of prejudice and privilege, even of injustice and exclusion, is not too far removed from an equally elitist mountainous terrain. Jonathan captured these preferential biases in a simple image that can be developed – that of verticality:

I think that often if you're in a city, like the opportunity to get out and about and above the city is almost like a vertical relief from the city...look at Vancouver, you know, you're in the city but you have mountains right next to it. So it's very easy to like get up the mountains and then be above the city. And the city is beneath you, all of the stress, and whatever happens in cities, below you. And so it's kinda not in your perspective anymore.

He stressed the 'vertical relief from the city' afforded by escapes and returns to the mountain. Yet in doing so, his image gained great saliency as a metaphor for stratification – just as altitude rarifies access, so are class distinctions reified at the mountain. The mountain therefore becomes more than a mere peak, acquiring rather the symbolic status of a pinnacle, manifesting power and privilege, as well as possessions and pleasure. In this sense, the mountain can be edifying for elites. The irony here is that in the very escape of metropolitan logics, the terrain of privilege and elitism in the city is reproduced in stratification at the mountain (Figure 13):

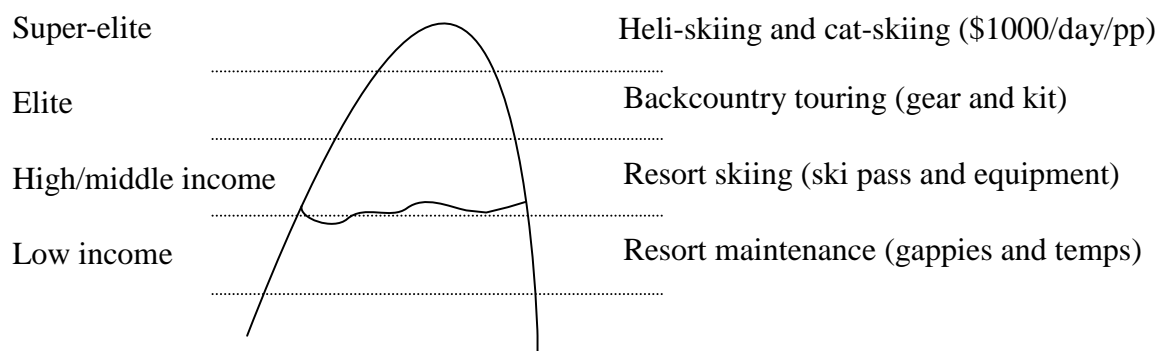


Figure 13. A stratified mountain-scape

The mountain therefore is far from a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*. Rather, its prestige is replicated in privileged (in)access through social stratification, which results in a deeply classed environment. The respondents intimated at this, including Milena who detailed the backcountry scene: 'you're in a place where nobody else is. I think it's worth getting off the mountain and being in the snow, but not everybody can do it'. The limited access she was referring to was primarily athletic, that of endurance and fitness for long, arduous climbs, but also materialistic, in the pre-requisites of specialized gear: not least a touring set-up, winter camping equipment, and a shovel, probe, and transceiver for avalanche safety. Interestingly, for Milena, there was a distinction between being on 'the mountain' and 'in the snow', the former being shaped, constructed, and populous, the latter being pure, undefiled, and wild. In many ways the limited access to this backcountry terrain of pure snow – secured by elitism in various measures – guaranteed its very attractiveness. This does, however, create a conundrum. Stores such as MEC in Vancouver or Comor Sports, with the tagline 'Go Play Outside', both rely on the exclusivity of nature – with its wilderness aspects, remote qualities, and 'pure' associations. They also seek to secure this image, through the plethora of equipment, both for safety and comfort, required to access such terrains. Milena put it this way:

Something I thought about this weekend is I sometimes find being the Vancouver city girl, they call us 'Meccies'. So you go up and end up in the backcountry hut, and basically there's a community that does this all the time and they're guides and they're teaching the courses and they're the ones out there every day. And they call the city folk who come up on the weekend the 'Meccies' because they go to MEC [Mountain Equipment Co-op] and buy all their gear and it's all MEC gear and they show up on the weekends and kinda fill the huts and take up their space.

Yet other weekend warriors were critical, even cynical, of this trend. For instance, Alistair said MEC gear 'can quickly become a perverse status symbol for a perverse culture', arguing that 'some people are using it as a crutch, saying like "oh I'm an adventurer, I define the elements"'.

Such stratification was evident in other realms as well¹⁰⁷. Oftentimes, the implicit connotations of language disclosed an elitist stance of judging, classing, classifying. Charlie said he 'just fell into accounting' and 'it's pretty boring', but 'that said it pays me to do all this other sh*t so would I rather be a chef in Whistler at a bar getting paid f*ck all? Probably not'. Charlie is referring, here, to the low-income status of chefs and other service workers at resorts such as Whistler. It is no wonder it is nicknamed 'Little Australia' given the thousands of Aussies who flock to the resort annually, filling low-wage jobs as lifties, hotel staff, chefs, and in resort maintenance, mostly for the pleasure of unbridled access to the mountain and its culture. Yet Charlie's prejudice concerning this low-income status was telling. In a similar, yet unconnected move, Sebastian said:

I almost certainly would say that I work at Deloitte [when I introduce myself]. It's a good starter question. I normally try to wrestle with how best to try to explain what I do, so that I avoid accountant and tax. I say I work in transactions or something like that. If not people generally say 'okay', once you say you're a tax accountant, and that'd be it. Whereas if you say you work in transactions or help companies buy other companies [then...].

As an introductory line, Sebastian's comments remind us that the self is a 'subject-in-process' (Schrage, 1997:40): 'a dynamic speaking and acting subject in the throes of a creative becoming' (ibid.). To quote a famous philosopher, this 'creative becoming' is founded on the fact that 'self-identity is an achievement that is won through the hard struggle of making choices' (Kierkegaard, cited in Schrage, 1997:63). For Sebastian, many of these decisions and choices were animated by status symbols such as a career title, a partner firm, a weekend getaway location. These served to reinforce and solidify his status, significance, and sway. Vitz and Felch (2006:150) write:

[C]onsumer culture, characterized by a substantive degree of attention to consumer activities, products, and the idea of materialism, is indicative of postmodern society and is also particularly conducive to self-construction.

107On this point, one should be aware of the endless doctrines of deconstruction that could ensue here, without conceivable end. This serves as a methodological signpost. If peeling back the layers of the onion leaves us with nothing but tears, then perhaps both our analogy and method should differ. Schrage (1997) for example suggests the image of an artichoke, in place of the onion: removing layers leads us to the heart of the issue, rather than to an empty, tear-filled core. This challenges the postmodern assertion that 'all starting points are contingent' (p.2), since 'perplexity becomes intensified when one realizes that there are no necessary starting points' (ibid.).

This is a central tenet of both our society, and particularly this lifestyle group. Slater (1997:84) writes likewise, suggesting that 'individuals must, by force of circumstances, choose, construct, maintain, interpret, negotiate, display who they are to be or be seen as, using a bewildering variety of material and symbolic resources'. Yet should this be left unquestioned?¹⁰⁸

This terrain is certainly fraught – or rather, 'subtle and complex' (Taylor, 1991:11) to employ another's terms. The ironies of metropolitan logics being escaped, only to be all too easily reproduced and replicated at the mountain, undergird this fraught terrain. Indeed, this adds a cautionary note to the mountain-scape: whilst it offers vertical relief, both *above* and *away* from the city, its very verticality can also solidify hierarchy through exclusive access, elitism, and privilege. The question that follows is what does this have to say more broadly about the metaphorical meaning of the mountain?

¹⁰⁸Sennett (2006), for instance, calls this the 'gold-plating ethic' of mere presentation. Presentation, however, 'is a personal choice through which one's chosen self can be established through displaying it to oneself and to others' (Vitz and Felch, 2006:150). Such malleability returns us to the debates over self-construction and the primary role of consumerism therein.

Chapter :5 A work of retrieval

'O the mind, mind has mountains...'
(Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1880)

The analysis of retorts and riddles poses some interesting questions of the mountain-scape. What does the mountain stand for, in the eyes of the respondents? What can we learn from this, and what does this mean more broadly? Evidently, the perception of the mountain differs from its reality. On the one hand, it is perceived as an arena beyond the purview of Taylor's (1991) malaise of modernity, frequented so as to shun individualism, instrumental reason, and the erosion of freedom. Hence, escapism, or simply returns to the mountain, foster heroism, awe and wonder, and a depth of vitality unknown in the metropolis. Yet on the other hand, the story is far from this simple. Indeed, Taylor (1991:11) reminds us that 'the nature of modern society is more subtle and complex than this'. The contradictions and ironies, indeed riddles, evident at the mountain reinforce Taylor's malaise, oftentimes intensifying its effects rather than dissipating them. The mountain must therefore be viewed in a sophisticated way, so as to account for these complex conclusions.

At this juncture, we can turn to the American ecologist, Aldo Leopold (1949), for his lucid thoughts regarding the mountain. In the middle of the 20th Century, he urged the American public, and society at large, to begin 'Thinking like a Mountain'. His rich metaphor has deep resonances for our present-moment, in both time and space. Leopold (p.137-141) tells this story:

A deep chesty bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades into the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world. Every living thing (and perhaps many a dead one as well) pays heed to that call. To the deer it is a reminder of the way of all flesh, to the pine a forecast of midnight scuffles and of blood upon the snow, to the coyote a promise of gleanings to come, to the cowman a threat of red ink at the bank, to the hunter a challenge of fang against bullet. Yet behind these obvious and immediate hopes and fears there lies a deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself. Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf...I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die [in the eyes of the wolf], I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view...The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range.

He has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea...Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men.

His point is simple. We must learn to 'Think like a Mountain' (ibid.), since 'only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of the wolf' (ibid.). Yet, in reality, this is far from simple. Interconnected ecosystems, according to Leopold, demand interconnected thinking, not merely in interdisciplinarity but for the totality of life; physical (biological), emotional, and spiritual. Yet how are we to live up to this call? Indeed, can we live up to it? In reflecting upon the responses of the different interviewees, tentative answers can be given to these questions. Specifically, Leopold's view of the mountain seems to intersect with that of the respondents in at least two ways.

Primarily, the mountain is a unique location. As Ian Brown (2013:2) writes: 'Why are we so drawn to the mountains, so transfixed by their magnitude and beauty? Proximity to the peaks...[is] a sure-fire way of putting everything into perspective'. This pursuit of poise and perspective inspired many of the respondents. Just as Leopold (1949) remarked, the mountains embody longevity, permanence, objectivity, and durability¹⁰⁹. For the intense lifestyles of those interviewed, this stature had an intense attraction, in and of itself. The escape to something bigger, both *above* and *away* from the metropolis, was full of relief – for the body, the mind, even the soul. For many, this relief was re-enchanting in quasi-spiritual if not religious terms, returning to the wonder-filled, awe-some environments of nature. However, this was seen to be fraught. This challenging terrain demands further investigation, enacting Taylor's (1991:72) 'work of retrieval' so as to better grasp the praiseworthy aspects of these returns, and cautiously criticize the more suspect areas.

¹⁰⁹Indeed, Shaun said: 'it just blows my mind that over millions of years, I mean the landscape was flat and it keeps changing, then all of a sudden there's just mountain of rock that just blows out of the ground and is shaped over lifetimes and lifetimes and lifetimes and stuff that we can't even comprehend. It just has this ancient feel to it... It's just one of those things that stays constant while you know people and our lives kind of come and go and we get busy and we die and you know that's always going to be there. So there's kind of this, I wouldn't say overwhelming, but it puts you in awe a little bit for sure'.

Secondly, the mountain is simply *other*. Just as 'Thinking like a Mountain' (Leopold, 1949) demands a shift of gaze, so did going to the mountains for these respondents¹¹⁰. The opportunity to go beyond the self, to be transcended, even eclipsed by the immensity of a landscape, was not only a source of perspective, but also of great regeneration and vitality for those questioned. Indeed, Leopold's image demands a radical shift of gaze. To 'Think like a Mountain' is to think with objectivity, stature, and composure. In a world which can militate against these ideals, favouring immediacy and instant gratification, such a call could be well heeded. Interestingly, a familiar face in British Columbia, that of the artist and naturalist from Saltspring Island, Robert Bateman, wrote his own reflections on 'Thinking like a Mountain' at the turn of the century. To him, the metaphor was also processual (p.117): 'the story of the creation of this mountain [Mount Maxwell] evokes permanence, patience, adaptability and nobility – characteristics worth emulating'.

Yet if these ideals are going to be adopted and these characteristics seriously considered, Taylor's (1991:72) 'work of retrieval' is all the more pressing. I argue that a utilitarian view of the mountain is deeply flawed. Rather, our view of it must be redeemed so as to embark on the journey of even considering to think like a mountain. If the riddles of logics, technologies, and terrain, which seem to be as evident on the mountain as they are in the metropolis, are to be understood and even partially tackled, then a right view of the mountain must be established. Firstly, this demands recognition of the potential for hubris, before considering how a 'work of retrieval' (Taylor, 1991:72) can restore our perspective at the mountainside. This work engages a clear call for honesty, refuting the perils of *hypomodernity* in favour of *transmodernism*¹¹¹.

110For Nathalie, this was evident even in the act of gazing upon the mountains. She said: 'I know it sounds silly, but I like the juxtaposition between nature and the city...You'll know that from the 28th Floor at [our office] the view is amazing. So sometimes even during the day at the office, I'll have to step out of my office and take a walk around, go to one of the boardrooms and just kinda look out into the mountains and stuff. I know it's not really getting out there, but yeah. It gets my head away from the computer, cos one thing is that it kinda hurts after looking at the computer for so long. Like it actually physically hurts. And also some inspiration. Kinda look at something beyond my checklist [laughs]'.

111This term will be fully unpacked in the analysis to follow. For now, it suffices to employ Vitz's (1998:113-4) definition of *transmodernism* as '[a] spirit of hopefulness; a desire for wisdom; a concern with religions and transcendent spiritual themes; a rediscovery of the importance of truth, beauty, goodness and harmony; a concern with simplicity and the quest for a mature and balanced understanding of experience. It is not so much a spirit of *new* theories or ideologies, but an *integration* of existing valid intellectual approaches'.

5.1 Hubris

'Homo semper tiro: Man is always a beginner'
(Ernst Bloch, cited in Giddens, 1990:70)

Robert Bateman (2000:117) writes in 'Thinking like a Mountain' that: 'the story of the creation of this mountain [Mount Maxwell] evokes permanence, patience, adaptability and nobility – characteristics worth emulating'. Yet characteristics of 'permanence, patience, adaptability, and nobility' (ibid.) were often lacking in the attitudes and answers of the respondents. In spite of their avid pursuit of these 'characteristics worth emulating' (ibid.), these features remained by and large elusive. Yet the desire for them was still fervent. So why this disjuncture? I suggest that the mountain – with all of its physical and metaphysical meanings – is but the start of an inquiry into this question.

It is important to begin by clarifying the limitations of the mountain, with all of its varieties. To look purely to the mountain seems flawed. At first glance it is impressive in stature, boasting peaks and pinnacles, majestic in its size and longevity. Yet the investigations of this analysis have started to unveil areas of deception. The 'peak population' of sorts, notably the aspiring young urban professionals, display 'a radical anthropocentrism' (Taylor, 1991:58) often in both outlook and practice. Logics of self-preservation ensure exclusivity, often reifying prejudice at altitude. The metropolitan landscape is rapidly reproduced in the mountain-scape. Lifestyles of 'radical anthropocentrism' (ibid.), which can tend 'towards both elitism and indulgence' (Ley, 1987:48), disclose traits of ambivalence and even apathy. Such outlooks, as were prevalent among these urban professionals, can severely limit frames of vision by being rooted purely in the immanent frame, in the material, the *hic et nunc*.

The mountain itself – the Coast Mountains in this case – also seemed to reflect these logics of elitism and indulgence. Conspicuous consumption can be magnified at altitude, as there seems to be a positive correlation between elevation gain and status symbols, increasingly significant in this rarified atmosphere. Such logics can reproduce rather than relieve the exclusivity of metropolitan privileges, often intensifying rather than dissipating this terrain of prejudice at the mountain. Whistler, in particular, was revealed to be a frontrunner for such reproduction. Much of the marketing of the resort demonstrates this, such as the Whistler Heli-skiing advertisement posted on chairlifts: 'you've come this far, let us take you all the way'.

It is dubious as to whether or not this terrain truly does evoke 'nobility' (Bateman, 2000:117) and other such characteristics. Upon investigation, the dark side of the dialectic in this white and shining ski environment may be often very dark indeed: elitist, exclusive, even unjust. Even Bateman's (2000:65) idea of the informational mountain of 'global thinking' in the 21st Century demonstrates such preferential logics. The power of potential at our fingertips places us all 'at the top of a mountain that offers us spectacular views in all directions. We have more knowledge of nature than any other civilization in history' (p.121). In particular, the young professionals who stand at the pinnacle of this peak – interconnected, up-to-date, networked – with 'spectacular views in all directions' (ibid.) even showed hesitation and ambivalence. The fact of being *on* or atop this informational mountain says nothing of its good use or implementation. Indeed, these tools, techniques, and technologies are remarkable feats of engineering, amongst other things. Yet even this fact is easily overlooked, or at least taken for granted. In spite of the vast aid we are gifted in climbing this particular peak, the true test lies in the realization of these 'spectacular views' (ibid.). The offer is there, it is our response that counts. So whilst this mountain is tall indeed – vast in size, scope, and scale – these features of immensity say nothing of our ability to put them to good use. Its efficacy is in our hands.

I suggest that these different limitations of the mountain-scape – of the peak population, physical mountain, and informational mountain – suggest hubris in the image of 'Thinking like a Mountain' (Leopold, 1949). Certainly, the image is invaluable – we *are* to pursue 'permanence, patience, adaptability and nobility' (Bateman, 2000:117) – yet the question we must ask ourselves is can it happen? Is it realistic? A fallacy seems to lie therein. To pursue such noble ends seems to be unobtainable. If the experience of *the* mountain, *at* the mountain, *on* the mountain is anything to go by, then the limitations are profound indeed. It is here that we are confronted by an impasse. I suggest that two issues are at stake in view of this hubris. Firstly, a *denial* of the true size and scope of the problems at hand is evident, which demands a healthy dose of honesty. Secondly, logics of *deception* seem to be in play, glibly furthering false illusions¹¹². A 'work of retrieval' (Taylor, 1991:72) must be undertaken in order to unveil this deceit.

¹¹²In an academic context, it is shocking to consider Max Weber's (1904:181) words in this regard. At the peak of his academic career, he viewed his contemporaries as: 'specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; and this nullity is caught in the delusion that it has achieved a level of development never before attained by mankind'. Could a similar critique be made today, or more specifically for the 'peak populace' examined here?

5.1.1 Denial: evasion and ignorance

This 'work of retrieval' (Taylor, 1991:72) can embark by uncovering potential denial in the realm of the (metaphysical) mountain. Taylor (p.56-8) writes:

[Our culture] paint[s] the culture of narcissism as quite at peace with itself, because on *any* reading it is exactly in theory what it is in practice. It meets its own aspirations and is thus impervious to argument. By contrast my view shows it to be full of tension, to be living an ideal that is not fully comprehended, and which properly understood would challenge many of its practices. Those who live it, sharing as they do our human condition, can be reminded of those features of our condition that show these practices to be questionable. The culture of narcissism lives an ideal that is systematically falling below...[these] self-centred forms are deviant, as we saw, in two respects. They tend to centre fulfilment on the individual, making his or her affiliations purely instrumental: they push, in other words, to a social atomism. And they tend to see fulfilment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimizing the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God: they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism.

This incredible statement by Taylor, that 'our culture paint[s] the culture of narcissism as quite at peace with itself' (ibid.), sheds light in a remarkably astute way on the culture of Vancouver's leisure worlds. Indeed, it is portrayed – even lived out – as 'impervious to argument' (ibid.). Yet I argue, as Taylor does, that rather, it is 'full of tension' (ibid.). This disjuncture is a form of denial. If denial is too strong a sentiment, then let us say that this culture betrays some things that are hidden from view. If so, then analysis must uncover 'these practices to be questionable' (ibid.).

One such view can be drawn from the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard. As with Taylor, Kierkegaard is eager to expose fallacies and illusions, revealing rather the full spectrum of human experience. Taylor (2007) warns of the narrowness of a purely 'immanent frame' in life, concerned only with the material, the empirical, the *hic et nunc*. Kierkegaard's concern tallies with this, in pressing the need for maturation through existential stages, in a dialectical manner. 'Kierkegaard's pseudonyms describe humans as living on one or more of three different planes of existence, each of which corresponds to a different lifestyle – “the aesthetic”, followed by “the ethical” and finally “the religious”' (Watts, 2003:189), as depicted (Table 6):

Aesthetic	Ethical	Religious
'existence [based] upon an individual search for personal satisfaction or fulfilment that depends entirely upon <i>external contingencies</i> of the <i>everyday world</i> ' (Watts, 2003:190)	'personal fulfilment is sought through one's <i>inner</i> development, as <i>part of a group</i> – it is based upon devoted commitments to family, friends and the values of social institutions' (Watts, 2003:190)	'only a <i>two</i> -dimensional life – the religious life – which embraces both the finite world <i>and</i> the <i>infinite</i> aspect of our existence, encompasses the full scope of human potential' (Watts, 2003:190)
Rooted in sensuous pleasure, immediacy, and hedonism	Grounded in customary mores and social norms	Driven by faith and transcendental grace

Table 6. Kierkegaard's three existential stages

As the least refined plane, it is striking to note the number of instances aesthetic qualities were remarked upon by respondents. Shaun demonstrated the appeal of these qualities in Vancouver¹¹³:

I think that is partly what keeps me here [in Vancouver]...the fact that I can drive for 15 minutes and be at any number of beaches. And you know I've spent many an afternoon doing exactly that, like Wreck beach, just staring off. Looking at the sunset. Or Third Beach or English Bay. There is so much to kinda let the city do for you.

Firstly, the sunset is significant. As Yi-Fu Tuan (1998:140) writes: 'the aesthetic life is one of discrete vivid moments – a beautiful sunset, a lovely symphony – separated by long stretches of gray. In contrast, the moral life is one of maintaining a continuous charitable relationship – sometimes happy, often frustrating and sad (the sadness of inevitable misunderstanding) – with others'. Secondly, Shaun pronounced: 'there is so much to kinda let the city do for you'. The city exists to serve the interests of the individual and 'do' things for you. Yet the denial here is not only that it appeared as 'quite at peace with itself...[and] impervious to argument' (Taylor 1991:56), as it was pronounced by Shaun, but also suggested to be without struggle – a status quo of sorts. I seek to disagree, as it must be seen as 'full of tension' (ibid.).

¹¹³Charlie too spoke of this, saying: 'in the summer time... what I usually do is knock off work about 4.30, go to the beach, and because it's a small city I'm at the beach at 4.45pm and literally like crack open a beer, which is illegal, so I have to keep it hidden out of view, watch people in bikinis play beach volleyball, drinking a beer watching the sunset over English Bay while someone cooks up a BBQ and says do I want a sausage. Like, that's pretty much most days in the summer'.

Kierkegaard provides one of the most insightful critiques of the human condition at this stage. A commentator, Michael Watts (2003:190) writes:

Kierkegaard sees those living in the aesthetic sphere of life as basing their existence upon an individual search for personal satisfaction or fulfilment that depends entirely upon external contingencies of the everyday world, which means they are confined to one-dimension of existence – the finite world of form...This way of life leads to an experience of despair that stems from a structural dysfunctional relationship within the self.

He goes so far as to say that 'the aesthetical outlook on life does not provide a person with any stable sense of identity or self. Instead it alienates humans from selfhood' (ibid.). Kierkegaard is particularly critical of the 'refined aesthete' (p.192), an ironist or romantic in his context, but equally the aesthetic athletes and leisure hounds of Vancouver's culture, in this context. This argument is particularly salient given some of the emptiness communicated by respondents. It seemed that a form of denial was at work in the various forms of emptiness shared¹¹⁴.

Such a stance confirms Taylor's (1991:56) suspicions regarding 'social atomism' and 'radical anthropocentrism'. Not only is fulfilment centred on the individual, in self-seeking subjective terms, but this also occurs at the expense of other salient demands, 'be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God' (p.58). For these leisure enthusiasts, it is shocking to consider that even 'nature' (ibid.) can be delegitimated. Yet consider Milena's description:

I dunno I wish I could say that it's [my relationship with nature] more harmonious than it is, but I'm not very green. But I definitely you know, what would that relationship look like? I probably take more from it than I give back. I think they call that a parasite [laughs]. I usually think it's first of all that it's unreal that this can exist and kind of feels like yours. I guess a bit of ownership when you work hard for it and nobody else is there.

In some senses, her honesty in this statement discloses the seeds of denial. She is aware of an almost parasitic relationship. Yet many others were not nearly as perceptive. Sidney, for example, was adamant not to be pigeon-holed. He said: 'I mean I'm not a greenie or anything. I mean it's

¹¹⁴Indeed, Georg Simmel (1904:484) writes: 'The lack of something definite at the centre of the soul impels us to search for momentary satisfaction in ever-new stimulations, sensations, and external activities. Thus it is that we become entangled in the instability and helplessness that manifests itself as the tumult of the metropolis, as the mania for travelling, as the wild pursuit of competition, and as the typically modern disloyalty with regard to taste, style, opinions and personal relationships'.

[nature] not that important to me'. As an avid skier, driving to Whistler *every* weekend in the winter months, it is hard to believe that nature is truly 'not that important to me'. It epitomizes the pervasiveness of the malaise – instrumental reason, utilitarian logics, and means-end decision-making are not only reserved to the metropolis. Ironically, in being reproduced at the mountain, the very locus of purported escape (or return) is undermined.

Another modality of denial was evident in the sense of ignorance in certain responses. Given the premium placed on leisure¹¹⁵, inane obsessions with health and fitness were concretised as the fulcrum of well-being, the central axis of lifestyle. So why ignorance? Stewart intimated at this, mentioning the clash of 'that corporate lifestyle' with nobler, even sustainable pursuits. This suggested an attitude and outworking far beyond merely that of the corporate boardroom. Stewart was adamant that 'we've gotta weigh the profits...versus lifestyle'. In pursuing an answer to the problems of sustainability he raised, this approach seems deeply fallacious. If anything, the deepest irony is that his weekend pastimes are by and large spent escaping, or at least being distracted from, the system he is perpetuating and working to maintain, if not strengthen during the week. Primarily, this confirms Cronon's (1995:77) critique that escapes to 'wilderness' can embody a 'bourgeois form of anti-modernism. The very men [sic] who most benefited from urban-industrial capitalism were among those who believed they must escape its debilitating effects'. Furthermore, this logic also serves to strengthen 'the threatened dominance of instrumental reason' (Taylor, 1991:93) with instrumentality, utility, and means-end decision-making reigning across the board. To provide another specific example of the outworkings of such denial and ignorance, consider the realm of responsibility. Charlie said:

[I]n mountains...it's about switching my mind. I think about all the kind of daily things, whether it's work, whether it's life, whether it's family, whether it's cooking or shopping, you know all those daily things, and going and just living life with really no thoughts running through the brain. So that's what I consider escapism for me to be...These are places where I don't think about daily life and daily tasks, I just shut off...You shut off from all of that and you just think wow, this is a really beautiful place to be.

115Stewart, for example, said: 'You've kinda got to pick your battles and certainly, my summers, I've picked golf and that's the most pressing thing for me is getting golf games in'.

This experience of pure escapism, pure freedom, was confirmed by others as well¹¹⁶. In the conceptions of Kierkegaard, these attitudes are the epitome of the aesthetic identity, living out 'a form of drop-out individualism' (Watts, 2003:27). Yet Kierkegaard critiques this individual, subjective, and creative, even radical identity as a 'state of consciousness [in which] one can exist in a deluded state of ecstasy and grandeur that is only a prelude to disillusionment, boredom and despair' (p.30). Void of moral or ethical moorings, even duties, the aesthete runs the risk of 'alienat[ing] humans from selfhood' (p.190). Indeed, he caricatures this plane of existence as one defined by the immersion in sensuous experience, of egotism, the valorisation of possibility over actuality, the fragmentation of the subject of experience, and the flight from boredom¹¹⁷.

Bearing in mind that this analysis pays credence to 'modern culture...[as] subtle and complex' (Taylor, 1991:11), our evaluation must be candid. These spaces of escape and return, of purported freedom and liberation, serve a deep purpose for the respondents: in revitalization, catharsis, perspective, poise, and refreshment. Yet to what extent are the motives muddled? For example, Leanne said that Whistler is 'really good mentally as a kind of like release [of] all that stress and to have that regularly like mental health wise is really really good for me'¹¹⁸. There is great truth in this, not least in that green nature facilitates a 'soft fascination' (Reynolds, 2013:1) with our surroundings, encouraging recuperation. Yet what is of interest here is the essence of the problem, beneath the oft perceived 'patina of glamour' (Taylor, 1991:16). If the modern-day hedonist is a narcissist of Lasch's (1988:5) order, then their desire 'to live for the moment is the prevailing passion – to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity'. This echoes Kierkegaard's damning critique of the 'aesthetic lifestyle [as] defined by a coarse, instinct-driven

116For the expat Thomas, Vancouver as a whole catered to this. He said: 'I still feel that ever since I got here I'm still on holiday, even though I'm working. You know what I mean. You've got no family commitments at the weekend, no one year old birthday parties...So for me, for an expat to come here, that's escaping. And then again to go like skiing at the weekend, that's escaping again. So that feels like to me I'm on holiday, you know. Completely on holiday. I do not have to go to work. It feels like 7 days holiday just for the weekend'.

117The flight from boredom was likely the most common feature in the answers of respondents. Charlie said: 'I love the fact that I can go skiing after work. I can go trekking up a mountain after work. I can go driving up a mountain after work. I can go windsurfing after work. Like all these things are escapism from the drudgery of my accounting life and so yeah I'm living the dream. Every time I'm not in work...I'm living the dream'.

118Without over-interpreting this statement, a parallel with Lasch's (1988:13) critique of the narcissist should be noted: 'Plagued by anxiety, depression, vague discontents, a sense of inner-emptiness, the "psychological man" [sic]...seeks neither individual self-aggrandizement nor spiritual transcendence but peace of mind, under conditions that militate against it. Therapists, not priests...become his principal allies in the struggle for composure: he turns to them in the hope of achieving the modern equivalent of salvation, "mental health"'.

pursuit of personal pleasure' (Watts, 2003:192). He continues: 'undeveloped aestheticism exists in unrefined immediacy, characterized by a craving for immediate desire – satisfaction through enjoyments that require neither personal cultivation nor effort' (p.194)¹¹⁹.

These critiques elucidate denial in the deep realities of life, negating not only 'history, tradition, society, nature, or God' (Taylor, 1991:58) but also reducing the lens of vision and frame of experience to a highly reductionist outlook. In view of the pervasive mechanics of 'social atomism' and 'radical anthropocentrism' (p.56), numerous other examples of subtle (yet significant) forms of denial emerged in interviews. Rarely were the depths of reality honestly mined. Rather, instances of denial were evoked in the powerful desires of success in work¹²⁰ and the diversion of commitment in philanthropy and charity¹²¹. In numerous cases, different shades of denial seem evident, however coarse or hidden. Regardless, it is noteworthy to take stock of the observations of social critics, including Søren Kierkegaard who's 'insights and advice go to the very core of the dilemmas that haunt the modern mind and spirit' (Watts, 2003:3).

119Lasch (1988:85) suggests that with modern man there is a 'loss of historical continuity'. Chantal Delsol (2006:60) explicates this more fully for the precocious individualist, writing how: 'the emergence of the individual, supposedly free from the culture that weighed on him, reflects a false sense of sufficiency: the individual believes himself to be the source of both the questions and the answers, to contain within himself the alpha and the omega, and to provide himself with his own points of reference. He wishes to bind himself to others only through a voluntary contract, a contract he can nullify if he no longer wishes to be a party to it. In other words, he rejects the bonds that preceded him and any debt to which he has not agreed'.

120Alistair, an entrepreneur, was particularly revealing with regard to the working-world. He described this story: 'I was being courted by a broker, he wanted me to work for him, and I told him, for me, the money, of course it's attractive but I want to know about the business, I have bigger dreams than just doing deals. So he's trying to kinda like, you know he'll be like, yeah I understand that, and yeah it's not just about the deals for me either. It's the lifestyle of being able to, and all the little name drops and stuff. They try and pretend like they're in lane but they're so deep down in rabbit hole sometimes, that. You can make the same argument for us, I suppose, as well'. This is evidence of both a purely profit-driven incentive, and deep complicity too.

121Peter gave an example of the limits of young professional involvement in charity. He said: 'I started to get involved with Mission Possible, which is quite a cool charity downtown, but it got in the way of skiing on Saturdays [laughs]. It would still be pleasurable but...the question is how much leisure time do I spend for myself as opposed to investing in other things, like charities'. A very real tension existed here, with only two weekend days at hand to negotiate some of these demands and desires.

5.1.2 Deception: false illusions

The other side to this coin is that of deception. Leopold's (1949) call to 'Think like a Mountain' is audacious indeed, and claims to have achieved it seem to be undermined by denial and deception. On the second of these fronts, a similar logic seems in play: deception is widespread. Specifically, innocuous lifestyles are easily normalized in the face of the banalization of nature and the trivialization of our complicity in wider social problems, be they environmental stewardship or socio-economic inequality. Among respondents, leisure and pleasure are pursued with unbounded zeal and enthusiasm, just as they also noticed and commented upon deep social problems, often of a structural or systemic nature. Yet the relatively distinct categories of work and play, recognition and action, thought and deed were enough, more often than not, to absolve the respondents of any responsibility to be personally involved or engaged in these deeper issues. The pursuit of pleasure took premium place. Consider the example of Milena, an avid weekend warrior that sheds light directly on the issue of deception:

The early starts annoy me the night before, but like the minute I'm actually up, you know. And in the scheme of life, I enjoy it, I appreciate it more than sleeping till noon. And you're just so happy that you're up doing crazy things at a crazy hour while everyone else is sleeping, and I think it just gives you that sense of accomplishment and self-worth.

Her statement certainly carries some weight: for these types there simply is a sense of excitement, even self-worth, in pursuing audacious leisure activities. Yet this needs to be critically interrogated. Milena was, after all, only waking early to *drive* the Sea to Sky Highway in time to start skiing at 8am. It seems rather over-exaggerated to call this 'doing crazy things at a crazy hour'. In whatever small way, this hints at a form of (self)deception. Her attitude as a heroic adventurer idealizes, even romanticizes, her pursuits, even if mundane and really not that 'crazy'. With a critical cap on, Alistair said:

I think the portrayal is that people are being adventurous, you're fulfilling this New Age quest of being more adventurous and you're not confined to one place. It's almost where the MEC aspect of it gets a bit snobby, right. Hey if you look at them, that's great, but some people are using it as a crutch, saying like "oh I'm an adventurer, I define the elements". Nah, maybe I'm just really cynical.

The deception Alistair went on to detail was that of an 'inferiority complex' he perceived in Vancouver. Being touted as 'The Best Place on Earth' is no easy reputation to live up to. In his eyes, this inferiority was manifest in both an apparent snobbiness in the city's culture, as detailed (ironically) at MEC, and a sense of 'over-compensation', which he said: 'rubs me up the wrong way'. In another interview, Julian asked a pertinent question, raising the topic of deception:

It [leisure] could be the great misconception, or great deception, I guess I should say, of Vancouver...I think at the end of the day, if you can't do that anymore, if that [leisure] is taken away from you, and if you are a completely different person, then you have to question what's going on. I think that's one of those key questions in my opinion. If skiing is taken away from me, am I still Julian? Or do I now have to develop a new persona and a new identity?

The fear here, only occasionally glimpsed at by the respondents, is that there is an act of self-delusion in play. In short, the mountain could be the very locus not only of escape but also of reproduction of that being escaped, reifying these logics and trapping the respondents. The deception would be a denial in this regard, specifically denying the ways in which week-time professions construct and contribute to the logics being escaped at the weekend. Hence, whilst posing as the solution to many metropolitan problems, mountainous leisure may replicate them.

For Julian, this specifically meant the potential of a 'great misconception, or great deception' regarding his identity. Is it possible that the mountain – the locus of escape, putative freedom, and retrieval – owns him and dominates his identity in a sardonic way? If so, how is this irony reconciled? Julian was content in the stability of his sense of self, apart from weekend attitudes, though this security was not a reality for all. Shaun, for instance, said: 'I'd say my week defines who I am whereas my weekend sort of fosters who I want to be'¹²². A part of this deception is intrinsically linked to freedom and the self. As Vitz and Felch (2006:158) write:

The freedom afforded individuals in self-construction, therefore, comes at a price. Instead of living a life confined within a conferred self, life becomes a process of self-

¹²²Kierkegaard would suggest that such an 'aesthetical outlook on life does not provide a person with any stable sense of identity or self. Instead it alienates humans from selfhood' (Watts, 2003:190). In the case of Shaun, clear schisms between the week and weekend seem to foster such bifurcation and instability. Whether or not this will lead to a deep alienation from selfhood is a hard question to answer. In part, even in-depth interviews are limited in their ability to probe at such issues. Also, our society is constructed, in many senses, to distract us from such questions, such that their reality is deeply buried and rarely recognized, save perhaps from the odd crisis in life.

construction and self-maintenance. In other words, *instead of a life imprisoned within a difficult-to-change conferred self with the freedom to operate within that self, life has become trapped in the self-construction process in which the only freedom is the pursuance of the self.* [author's emphasis]

This irony captures perfectly the riddle of Taylor's (1991) 'malaise of modernity'. Its inherent subtlety and complexity can betray even glimpses of clarity. In the case of self-identity, congruency nears an impossible task¹²³. Such dissensus also characterizes the breadth of deception evident in the interviews. As such, it is no easy task to narrow down the specific instances of deception. A few notable examples do, however, stand out. One such example is the self-deception of time and community engagement. Whilst a few wrestled with how best to manage the options¹²⁴, leisure was by and large normalized by this cohort. Mark suggested this:

I would say that there might be a relation between a young urban professional trying to use all of their time toward their career, at that early stage of their career, not leaving much time for philanthropic pursuits. Their free time they would put directly towards say leisure pursuits, versus philanthropic ones. So I think that may be where the typical portrait comes from...[That said] if you live your life as a radical individual it's a pretty finite luck and a pretty narrow hallway that you're walking. You're not really acknowledging everything that's around you.

Yet such insight was rare in the interviews. By and large, the great deception of leisure in Vancouver was the way in which it was normalized: seen as wholly acceptable, an innocuous lifestyle choice, indeed banal and habitual. So it was that respondents such as Stewart seemed deceived by the triviality of their activities, particularly the inherent elitism and entitlement of these activities, reserved for 'well-to-do city folks' (Cronon, 1995:77). For example, he said:

Yes, a number of people did [compete in the Gran Fondo, costing \$250pp]. I know a couple of guys that speak very highly of it. I do intend to do it. I wanted to do it last year but didn't have a bike in place and didn't end up doing it. You have to commit quite in advance. So it is something I plan to do in the future. Yeah, it's just a cool ride to say you rode from Vancouver to Whistler and beautiful highway obviously, beautiful, pretty picturesque the whole time. It interests me.

123This reflects the incongruence of much of modernity. As Schrag (1997:8) identifies: 'heterogeneity, multiplicity, diversity, difference, incommensurability, and dissensus' are the chief categories of the (post)modern mind.

124Clearly Vancouver was a major source of this problem, providing simply too many options for leisure. In the words of Julian: 'there's just too much'. Hence, Peter for instance said: 'My leisure time is generally doing stuff I enjoy. Maybe it should be a little bit more selfless as well. Something I've become aware of is that I'm not really involved in stuff. I started to get involved with Mission Possible, which is quite a cool charity downtown, but it got in the way of skiing on Saturdays [laughs]. It would still be pleasurable but I think that...the question is how much leisure time do I spend for myself as opposed to investing in other things, like charities'.

The reality, however, is a far cry from such banality: 'just a cool ride to say you rode'. Rather, as Cronon (1995:83) writes, it reminds us of how 'recreation [is] best enjoyed by those whose class privileges give them the time and resources to leave their jobs behind and "get away from it all"'. Indeed, such statements only serve to strengthen 'the long affiliation between wilderness and wealth' (ibid.). Instances of such entitlement, as raised by Stewart, were by no means rare in the interviews. Respondents rarely paused to reflect on the privilege of access, equipment, time, resources, finances, and the like. For these 'urban recreationalists' (ibid.) such things were simply taken for granted. I suggest this is sheer delusion, simple self-deception. They should *not* be taken for granted, since *not* all peoples are granted them. It was reassuring, therefore, to hear the few who did voice appreciation, such as Peter: 'in one word, if I were to describe my relationship with nature, it'd be thankfulness...it immediately speaks of deep gratitude'.

Another facet to the Janus-faced appearances of deception in the interviews was that of the eclipse of life as a central paradox in the lives of these young professionals. This can be summarised as a pursuit, in many arenas, of 'the best of both worlds' by the respondents¹²⁵: including work and play, success and satisfaction, city and nature. Such a pursuit was particularly evident in identity, career success, and leisure time specifically. At the practical level, this was manifest in the intensity of work weeks and weekend activities. Yet as Alistair¹²⁶ said:

125A distinction should be made at this juncture between the respondents as young urban professionals – or yuppies – and another prevalent class of social climbers, notably the bourgeois bohemians – or bobos. As Brooks (2000:195) writes, the latter make 'it seem as if raucous hedonism and revolution were the same thing'. The former, however, are more like Kierkegaard's 'Romantics [who] saw it as the unavoidable duty of every individual to create their own personal life-view rather than following the ready-made channels of existence offered by society...[thus they] firmly rejected the straitjacketed, predictable, and superficial bourgeois way of living striving instead to make their lives as interesting and creative as possible' (Watts, 2003:28). It is interesting to note how the young professionals in this study, zealous as they are, are indeed yuppies, yet also crave after the Romantic ideals described here. They pursue *both* bourgeois predictability, in their professions, *and* creative, interesting lives outside of work. Hence, they want the best of both worlds.

126Alistair, as an entrepreneur, was highly critical of straitjacketed professions such as accounting. He said: 'the vast majority, they're doing it, they're going to school directly, no bullsh*t, for their job. So they're doing it for safety. And they chose accounting, and nothing against that, but they chose accounting because it's risk-averse. And it's safe. And it's a totally predictable path and ladder. Cos I mean in this life there's nothing guaranteed, no matter how smart or how hard you work...Cos life is so expensive here [in Vancouver], there's this huge pressure on, you've got to get your education, so you can get your job, so you can make your money, which then perversely puts the pressure on well f*ck what if I'm not good enough to make my money as an entrepreneur or whatever. I need to go into accounting so at least I can get my \$50,000 a year which means at least then I can go to Whistler on the weekends. But now all of a sudden you're living for two days of the week. It's crazy'.

I just don't like the whole thing. I almost find [it] devalues what you do. This whole like, oh how many hours did you work? Like quantifying the torture, on weekends are you so relieved you escaped to the mountains to get away from the dreadful work. No f*ck that. It shouldn't be the point of this whole thing. We shouldn't live 5/7ths of our week to escape from it. Do you know what I mean? Cos otherwise you literally are trading your life, your time, your mind.

Evidently, subservience to career success is the pre-eminent driver in play here. This raises an all-together separate argument regarding work and lifestyle ethic. For the purpose of understanding leisure and the mountain, however, it is invaluable in shedding light on the mechanics of the young professional thought process. Specifically, at work a deep-seated treadmill of endless performance and endless judgement seems to run. This seemed to create an implacable burden, which seeped into patterns of thinking and behaving outside of work. The escape may serve as a brief pressure-release from this intensity, yet even the 'wear and tear' of enthusiastic returns to nature reveals its limits. Ironically, in spite of his critical insight, Alistair seemed equally ensnared in this system of performance, with far-reaching indices, from entrepreneurial performance to peak physical fitness and even philosophical attentiveness:

I'm all about philosophy and I've actually been reading a lot of Stoicism lately and stuff, and thinking about sort of fundamental, natural causes of happiness. So I'm all about simple living, all this stuff. It's great, it's great...If you're looking for the right things I think it's a great tool for say how do you find the simple pleasures here? I think the reading helps a lot, cos it just puts a lot of things in perspective...I definitely try to be an enlightened individual, I try to read a lot.

The perceived deception at play in this scenario involves an eclipsing of life. Just as Taylor (1991:1) warns that the 'malaise of modernity' can 'eclipse the ends of possibilities', it seems the young urban professional treadmill can serve the same function. In spite of all the escapes from and refusals of the malaise, bearing in mind also their replication and reproduction, its insidious grip is present even in the mechanics of refusal. For Alistair this involved reading, for instance, to put 'a lot of things in perspective'. This is a noble endeavour. Yet even reading was subject to the logic of instrumental rationality, enacted through efficient utility and yield¹²⁷.

¹²⁷Indeed, in aspiring to imitate his mentors, he said: 'they're obviously successful business guys, but they're very wise, they read a sh*t load, an unbelievable amount'. His CEO, for example, compiles a 'weekly digest of readings...from the Globe and Mail, New York Times, American Scholar, New Yorker, The Atlantic, Harvard Business Review' to be distributed amongst his employees.

Working 70 hour weeks, plus up to '10 hours per weekend', before factoring in leisure, fitness, and sociability, left 23 year old Alistair untrammelled. Yet how does this treadmill play out in the long run? Søren Kierkegaard offers once again some highly intelligible insights at this juncture:

The aesthetic life-view encompasses the numerous levels of consciousness and sophistication that span society. The most undeveloped aesthetic lifestyle is defined by a coarse, instinct-driven pursuit of personal pleasure. In sharp contrast is refined aestheticism, inhabited by cultured individuals who enjoy sophisticated intellectual and artistic forms of pleasure. (Watts, 2003:192)

Whilst Alistair displayed ardent effort to move beyond 'unrefined immediacy, characterized by a craving for immediate desire' (p.194), his strivings still seemed limited. Perhaps, for him, the onward pursuit and 'individual search for personal satisfaction' (p.190) betrayed his efforts to pierce through young professional deception, given their highly individualistic nature. For many others, however, such effort was minimal. Satisfaction in mere play and pleasure, 'as if it were merely a happening in which one finds oneself' (p.193), provided fulfilment for many. Yet is this deceptive? Does this narrow the frame, and obscure a fuller, truer view? One respondent said:

It's hard to sit down and, you know [write a friend]. Especially if they're back in England. Cos you wanna do it, and you know it's important and you should do it, but yeah, out of sight is out of mind. But from their perspective you know they miss you whereas I feel like I miss them a little bit. When they write to me sometimes they're quite genuine about it being tough not having you around or I miss the time we used to spend together, that sort of stuff, and I'm like well I was skiing last weekend and loving the sunshine.

Notwithstanding the jesting nature of this sentiment, manifest in a touch of sarcastic humour at the end, it reveals a genuine slide or slippage in favour of the aesthetic outlook. Indeed, the moral or even religious planes of identity seem negated by the aesthetic pursuits on offer in this city of leisure and pleasure. Yet is this a form of debasement? Arguably so, given the 'emotional immaturity' (Watts, 2003:193) of 'unrefined immediacy' (p.194), that stunts personal development and interpersonal understanding¹²⁸.

¹²⁸Naturally, this introduces an existential argument which cannot be dealt with in the bounds of this thesis. Suffice to say that the great British critic C.S.Lewis (1960:123) seems to be onto something in saying: 'If you want to make sure of keeping [your heart] intact you must give it to no one...wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries: avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfish-ness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken: it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.' This is a frank diagnosis of the state of rugged individualism.

If the self is to be realized relationally, within 'webs of interlocation' (Taylor, 1989:36), then the pervasive spectre of individualism haunts such development and progression. Aside from the 'finite luck' of individualists, as one respondent put it, aesthetic outlooks seem to stunt human development in another way as well. Indeed, the confines of a 'one-dimensional [view] of existence – the finite world of form' (Watts, 2003:190) places a premium on sensuous pleasure and satisfaction, negating other means of fulfilment, specifically the holistic sense of self-awareness that demands self-expression in order to develop true personhood. In a classic move, Kierkegaard (cited p.76) employed a parable to convey this point:

Unfortunately this is the sorry and ludicrous condition of the majority of men [sic], that in their own house they prefer to live in the cellar. This soulish-bodily synthesis in every man is planned with a view to being spirit, such is the building: but the man prefers to dwell in the cellar, that is, in the determinants of sensuousness.

5.1.3 Honesty: administering realism

I suggest that the hubris that lies behind claims of 'Thinking like a Mountain' (Leopold, 1949) – noble as they are – masks implicit feats of both denial and deceit. These trends are both 'subtle and complex' (Taylor, 1991:11) in the lives of the respondents, though notable nonetheless. In order to further the mountain claims of Leopold (1949) and Bateman (2000) to profitable ends, Taylor's (1991:72) 'work of retrieval' must be undertaken. Continuing from the examination of denial and deception in the leisure lifestyles of the respondents, a call to honesty must be administered. Specifically, honesty demands recognition of the limits required to promote clarity in this fraught and partial terrain. This call responds directly to the deceptive mechanics at work in many responses, whereby baffling answers were sometimes provided to simple questions, with a bizarre mix of both profound critique and sheer naïvety. Such levels of complicity and implication in the very logics and techniques they sought to separate themselves from emerged as paradoxical. Cronon (1995:77) suggests that escapes to wilderness embody a 'bourgeois form of anti-modernism. The very men [sic] who most benefited from urban-industrial capitalism were among those who believed they must escape its debilitating effects'. Rather than fall into this trap, Cronon (p.85) asserts that 'the autonomy of nonhuman nature seems...an indispensable corrective to human arrogance'.

In view of this, even the slightest glimpses of honesty were deeply promising. Reminders of scale, space, and time – in an inherently geographical way – may have been few and far between in the interviews, but their appearances were encouraging. Some were as subtle as Alistair's remark: 'I definitely try to be an enlightened individual, I try to read a lot...it just puts a lot of things in perspective'. At the mountains, this sense of perspective is particularly acute. It also emerged in more obvious ways, as with Jonathan's humble recognition of limits:

I tend to go to a mountain and really my two major feelings which I tend to get on a regular basis are: wow, I'm so lucky to be alive and to have this experience, to have this nature around me, to be able to see these things, I just feel so lucky to be able to do that. You know you can kind of stand there and take in the view and think wow, the scale of the world around me is just remarkable. That's kind of the awe side. But then on the humility side, you're equally like wow they're just so huge. How in my lifetime, I'm not even going to see a tiny fraction of what the world is. And I can see this, but I'm nothing compared to this and I want to make an impact with my life, but in the grand scheme of nature, which has been going for 4 billion years or whatever it is, my impact is going to be fairly limited and basically I have to come to peace with the fact that I can be a part of the bigger picture. My existence is fleeting, but through my life and through my death I can have an impact on the future.

Such insights are particularly salient. If Leopold's (1949) call to 'Think like a Mountain' is to have any purchase, there needs to be, first and foremost, a recognition of limits. At the physical mountain, Julian and Jonathan amongst others appreciated this, revelling in the sheer size, scope, and scale of the mountains. We see but a 'tiny fraction' of them, from the 'tiny little space' we occupy, they said. The juxtaposition should be startling: the landscape is immense – humbling and awe-some in all the clichéd ways – yet we are invited into its arena as mere specks of dust in the vast amphitheatre of nature. What is more, the view is breath-taking: we can see far and wide, high and deep. Yet even this view is but a 'tiny fraction' of the larger landscapes around us, whether mountainous or not. Surely honesty is the starting point here, since we see but a fraction. Julian appreciated the scale, scope, and size of the mountain-scape, in saying:

There's an exaggerated sense of awe when out in the mountains, just because it's so much bigger than anything you can even imagine and to think that we're in this tiny little space, and what we see is just beyond anything we can imagine and to think that this world, this size that it is. I mean I've been to the Andes and the Alps, even in the Himalayas and the Rockies, just about all the big ones. And to think that you're in this little place in like these Coastal Mountains and you think that it's just the craziest place. And then there's so much more going on everywhere else, it's just like. Wow! It's pretty magnificent.

Of significance here is the demand for honesty – manifest in recognition and appreciation – so as to gain some sense of *realistic* perspective in this terrain. As an antidote to the betrayals of denial and deceit, which stoke the fire of hubris in some of these mountainous claims, a healthy dose of honesty can be administered. As such, lifestyles of leisure are less easily normalized and rationalized under the accepted guise of atomistic 'egoism' (Taylor, 1991:72). In many ways, radical honesty – regarding the pitfalls of mountainous claims, our (limited) agency and ability to exercise them, and the mechanics of our self-deception – would serve to expose some of the false illusions that are too easily propagated. Yet is this truly possible? Do denial and deceit run so deep so as to hide their logics from view, masking and preventing any exposition? If honesty is impossible as a result of other mechanics – notably those of guilt, shame, or other burdens – then the mountain serves once again as a powerful metaphor.

Indeed, the old phrase that says 'clouds move, mountains don't' should spark our imaginations at this juncture. In particular, two useful images spring to mind. Firstly, in view of Paul Virilio's fears that we are being 'blinded by the light' (Armitage, 2001:143), the mountain reminds us of clarity. Just as conditions atop the mountain can change in an instant, becoming consumed in fog or shrouded in cloud, so to it seems the intensity of (hyper)modernity can overwhelm us, inhibiting all clarity and perception. Bateman (2000:122) writes: 'our knowledge and our technology present us with a multitude of possibilities and choices. Why do we hesitate to decide? Does the sheer multitude of options overwhelm us?'. Perhaps this is instructive. Peter Berger (1976), for instance, notes how the plurality of choice can result in the poverty of certainty. Unlike its subjects, however, whether blinded or seeing clearly, Aldo Leopold (1949:137) reminds us that 'only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of the wolf'. Part of the call for honesty is a call for clarity, and perhaps this is founded on objectivity and durability. Bateman (2000:117) reminisces on this theme, suggesting that:

If we looked at time and geography from a mountain's perspective, we would have a more profound sense of history, we would be able to see far and wide, and benefit from the experience of people all over the globe...If we thought in the way mountains were formed, we would treat the natural world with more respect.

Secondly, this call for clarity redeems our gaze. Unlike the moving clouds, mountains remain fixed. Yet often our disbelieving eyes lead us to doubt their reality the second they depart from our view; 'out of sight is out of mind' as one respondent said. However, such myopia is deeply flawed. When the clouds part, we are reassured of the presence of the mountains behind them, just as when the mist lingers we must remain convinced that they still exist. Likewise, the conditions of modernity can militate against permanence and stability, often favouring immediacy or instant gratification. Perhaps in the battle against short-termism and myopia, we moderns are to be reminded of the value of perspective, long-sightedness, and permanence.

It seems that to view the mountain purely as a space of leisure and pleasure is folly. So much more is at stake. The mountain-scape, in both the literal and figurative sense, has so much to teach us regarding 'history, tradition, society, nature, or God' (Taylor, 1991:58). It poses as a profound answer and antidote to our 'radical anthropocentrism' (ibid.), though sadly is more often than not exploited to such ends – purely anthropological ends. The same goes for the metaphysical mountain. There is a sense in which our attitude toward information, or rather data, is debased, reductionist, and limited. Indeed, we can limit the power and scope of the 'informational mountain' (Bateman, 2000). How could this be redeemed so as to factor knowledge, even wisdom, into the equation? Julian explicated his own allure to this landscape:

[T]he allure of the mountains always gets me, whether it be winter or summer. There's something about going up into the mountains and getting to the top of them. And then what's so great about skiing, is you get to ski down it...the purpose is sheer enjoyment.

In and of itself, this sentiment is in no way violent. Yet it is deeply limited. If the primary end is 'sheer enjoyment' then it seems that leisure and pleasure are fed by hedonistic egoism, sensuous titillation, and immediate gratification. It goes without saying that these are *pleasurable*: fun, exciting, daring, exhilarating. The speed of skiing down a mountain, as Julian alluded to, conjures up incomparable sensations. Much of this argument carries to the seduction of speed at the informational mountain – sleek and sexy, 'clean and lean' (Grossman, 2006:4) – as the following section will explicate. Yet is there more to a peak than the sheer thrill of descent, the simple pleasure of speed it offers?

I suggest that the mountain is both a deeper metaphor and provides a deeper experience of reality than purely the 'thrill' of descent. Indeed, the ascent is often arduous and risky¹²⁹, such that the pinnacle should be appreciated for what it is: a peak, a summit, a mountaintop – regardless of the view, rain or shine. Immediacy undermines this on at least two counts: in the shallowness of 'undeveloped aestheticism [which] exists in unrefined immediacy' (Watts, 2003:194), through a purely sensuous engagement with the physical mountain, and in the perils of a 'culture of immediacy' (Tomlinson, 2007), which preaches 'arrival without departure' and 'speed without progress'¹³⁰ (p.89) at the metaphysical informational mountain. Deep appreciation and recognition, on the other hand, are to be cultivated through honesty and humility – the appropriate antidotes to a peaking hubris. So as to benefit from more than the 'sheer enjoyment' and pure thrill of the experience, honesty also demands clarity: a recognition of limits, boundedness, and crucially a guide in this fraught terrain.

5.2 Hypomodernity

*'In a world which really is topsy-turvy,
the true is a moment of the false'
(Guy Debord, [1967] 1994:14)*

The argument surrounding hubris, particularly with the concerns of denial and deceit of *the* aspiring peak population, *at* the mountain, *on* the mountain, needs to be en-framed in a larger context. This demands more of a theoretical treatise. In accordance with this, analysis in this subsection will zoom out from the particulars of the Vancouver case study. Whilst we must be reminded that 'the world does not exist in order to provide illustrations of our theories' (Gregory, 2004:133), we must also maintain that generalizations are invaluable. Is there no longer a place for a (meta)narrative? As Brooks (2000:12) articulates, his methodology is a form of 'cosmic sociology', wherein 'the idea is to get at the essence of cultural patterns, getting the flavour of the times without trying to pin it down with meticulous exactitude'. So it seems at this stage in the analysis, a similar approach can be adopted.

¹²⁹This is an important point in view of the 21st Century 'informational mountain' (Bateman, 2000). Our present day complacency with regard to peace, liberty, prosperity, and freedom of all sorts, often negates a rich and profound view of history, with all of its struggles, tensions, and even battles. Freedom comes at a price. Taking so much for granted, as seems often to be the case in our information society (considering the genre of First World problems discussed today: free wi-fi access, hi-speed internet, etc.), can be deeply reductionistic and limited.

¹³⁰This is hypermobility, where: 'everything changes, but nothing really happens' (Bergmann and Sager, 2008:16).

Virilio's (1980) aforementioned argument in the 'aesthetics of disappearance' is salient at this juncture. Virilio is concerned with overstimulation; the potential to be 'blinded by the light' (Armitage, 2001:143). Several generations prior, the German sociologist, Georg Simmel ([1904] 1994:6), was drawn by similar questions, analysing the indifference of the metropolitan type:

[T]here is perhaps no psychic phenomenon which is so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook...it stimulates the nerves to their utmost reactivity until they finally can no longer produce any reaction at all...the essence of the blasé attitude is indifference toward the distinctions between things.¹³¹

For Simmel (p.4), this is the foundation of the 'blasé attitude', where the world is viewed with 'relentless matter-of-factness', reducing its richness and variety to 'homogenous, flat, and grey colours'. This thesis pushes this point even further, in that the metropolis of a by-gone era has been radically enlarged and extended by the many mechanisms propagating 'planetary urbanism' (Brenner and Schmid, 2011) in our times. For instance, the 'end of wilderness' (ibid.) is not only prophesied by the growing auspices of truly *global* technology, but also actualized by the insistent extension of such logics. The concerns of Simmel, tallied with Virilio, are particularly note-worthy for this present moment in history.

Returning to the mountain, it is vital to recognize the centrality of peaks in these debates. As already described at length, this falls into two camps. On the physical plane, *the* aspiring peak population of young urban professionals in Vancouver provides fresh and deep insights into activities *at* the mountain, notably the Coast Mountains of British Columbia. Innumerable examples of pursuits of perspective and poise have been provided. From heroism and athleticism to awe and wonder, vitality, life, and meaning, the mountain-scape is a 'sure-fire place to find perspective' (Brown, 2013:1). Yet it is surprising to note the ironies herein. The riddles in the mechanics of refusal – in terms of logics, technologies, and terrain – explicate the blatant ironies of escapes, returns, and pursuits. Indeed, the weekend warrior who says to him or herself: 'I have exactly 48 hours to forget about time', is limited and constrained in a number of ways. Yet a deeper under-arching irony is also at stake. This needs to be teased out.

131Simmel (1994:2) continues his critique of the plague of overexposure, writing how: 'the psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli'.

The case of Vancouver is particularly helpful in this regard. Just as numerous respondents noted the (super)diversity surrounding this city – notably in leisure activities – we are reminded by the stoic philosopher Seneca that 'to be everywhere is to be nowhere' (cited in Carr, 2010:141). This theme cropped up recurrently. On the leisure front, for instance, Julian said: 'I'm thinking about getting into that too [rafting]. And maybe rock climbing. There's just too much'. Another respondent, Charlie, put it this way: 'I mean it's really a problem to me that I'll never get to explore enough of it [nature surrounding Vancouver]'. He was certainly utterly entranced by 'that wilderness nature...[its] size and degree'. Indeed, he said: 'I just can't even imagine the nature there, the trees there, the blue lakes'. Interestingly, for many, this physical appeal was as fictional as it was real. Again, Charlie said: 'I don't even see it that much, I don't even get to experience it that much. But I think it has this draw for me'. Equally, Kerriane suggested that: 'people are drawn to the idea of it [physical nature], but they don't really partake'. She continued:

People always say that we have a beautiful city because there's city, there's mountains and there's the ocean, but that's mostly physical right and not really what the options are...I dunno, either they weren't that interested, or not willing to. Maybe they just like the idea that maybe other people are doing it so it's great for them, and they just like to be around them and around people who have interests. Yeah I think they kinda just soak it in. I don't do that, I do something. But it's interesting to hear about other people's interests and what they're doing and being energized by that. You get this nice feeling that oh there are options here, there are things to do even though I'm not interested enough to actually join in.

Her intimation of this 'nice feeling' is foundational. For the time being, though, it is worth considering these instances of intensity and immensity in the working-world as well as in leisure. In accountancy, Payne said: 'you're working 70, 80, 90 hours a week...it's stimulating work, it's good work, it's just a lot of times it's just too much of it'. This theme resonated with numerous accountants in the sample set, wrestling with over-intensity, or 'OTT living' (over-the-top) to use another's words. Others also echoed this statement, whether in finance, commodities trading, or even physical health and fitness. It seemed young urban professionals across the board wrestled with the ramifications of over-intensity. It was surprising, then, to hear Peter, a Big Four financial advisor, confess:

I find that when I have really intense weeks at work, I can't actually face intense activity sometimes. Well because, I was thinking what if it was ski season now, I wouldn't be sure to go skiing I think. I just need some down time. So I was thinking that tomorrow, on Saturday, I'm actually going to go to a ski shop to get my skis sorted, I'm going to hang out with Thomas and Julian. I haven't really got anything else planned. And I'm quite pleased about having nothing planned and nothing too intense. I feel like I need the time just to [hmpphhh] breathe again. So there is this interesting dynamic in the Winter where you have a full on week, you wake up at 5.45am on a Saturday, you have a full on day of skiing...the weekend goes so fast and it's all intense times. And then you're like bam you're straight back into the next week. So I actually struggle with that...I am aware that the whole leisure thing, in many respects, it might be as intense as the week, because you're getting up early.¹³²

The 'obligation' to intensity in work and play, in life and leisure, in the metropolis and at the mountain, inevitably had spillovers. Jasmine, a chiropractor, was honest. She said: 'I see the wear and tear', in both herself, an avid weekend warrior, and in many of her clients, living this very same lifestyle – actualizing the 'dream' in Vancouver's 'paradise' (Harcourt, 2007).

So on the physical plane an interesting story emerged. The sheer brilliance of Vancouver, not to mention the endless attractions in its surrounding area, became a burden of sorts¹³³. The treadmill ran faster. Intensity became insatiable. Alistair put it this way:

I mean I don't want to be a cynic, but I definitely [laughs] am a shade pessimistic when people are like the overly happy friendly. Like I hate to say it but like the Lulu Lemon ideal: over-loving, over-sharing, over-caring. It rubs me the wrong way...I mean certainly there is some reinforcement [in Vancouver] in that we keep hearing this constant, and we encourage it, like a constant idea of being the most liveable city in the world, et cetera. And Canada is one of the nicest countries in the world. Which might even be an inferiority complex...I think there might be that feeling of, I dunno, over-compensation.

Alistair provides a clear diagnostic here. A sense of inferiority and resultant over-compensation seem to stoke the furnace of deception. Just as Kerriane noted the 'nice feeling' that having so

¹³²Ironically, Peter suggested that rain provided relief, when the relief of relief itself was unrelenting. He said: 'all of a sudden [in the Fall], you're hit with rain at the weekends and you're like what am I going to do? But, actually, I've found that freeing, because I'm like I didn't have the obligation to get out into the mountains cos it's so beautiful. And you want to be out there as well. So the fact that it's raining and horrible outside is almost nice, you can just not feel like you have to, you can just be in the house, read a book, have a coffee, relax, catch up with emails, life stuff, and not feel like you want to be outside or you're missing out not being outside. That's been really interesting for me.'

¹³³I wonder how this is reminiscent of Leopold's (1949:140) own observations, notably how deer died of their 'own too-much', on a mountainside of uncontrolled wolf extermination and vegetation growth.

many options here engenders, so Charles Taylor's (1991:16) cautionary remarks of the 'patina of glamour' so prevalent in our superficial society should be heeded. A deception of sorts is certainly in play. Whether this is narcissistic (Lasch, 1988), trivial (Bell, 1976), narrow (Bloom, 1983) or simply shallow (Carr, 2010) is contentious and unclear. What does stand, however, is the truth of the fact that there is more to this city than meets the eye¹³⁴. Loretta Lees (2001:57) was correct: Vancouver appears to be like 'a city on Prozac', yet there is so 'much more to learn'.

This observation tallies directly to the mountain. If the physical mountain is the pinnacle of perspective, poise, pleasure and power, then its metaphysical meanings are deep. Peter said:

Oh it's just absolutely stunning. The next day you wouldn't even know that the mountains are there. Like the fog comes in. I get it cos I'm in the 26th floor of this building [downtown] where we've got these amazing views of the mountains. So it's quite interesting.

This is interesting indeed. The spectacular views, which are 'absolutely stunning' are not only ocular, however. They also embody the many options, places, endless getaway locations these weekend warriors desire to visit. Hence Vancouver touts its 'amazing views': as a city of leisure and pleasure, incomparable liveability, and immense surroundings. The lifestyle is certainly one of a kind. Yet Peter is quick to note the 'interesting' paradox. When the 'fog comes in', he says, 'you wouldn't even know that the mountains are there'. They vanish, disappearing entirely from sight. This is true of the physical mountain, which can quickly be shrouded in cloud and surrounded by mist, but also of its metaphysical meanings. How quickly is the view from the mountain of modernity forgotten? Or, its very location in history obfuscated? Another weekend warrior, said:

When the clouds and fog are really heavy and the visibility is bad, I find it difficult to distinguish between the greyish white snow and the greyish white mist surrounding me. With everything blending together it is difficult to understand what is up or down. This disorientation combined with the flow of up and down that comes from gliding down the

134A number of other examples could be cited here. The backlash of intensity is being underwhelmed – oftentimes after the mountain high can come a valley low. Hence Jonathan said 'a lot of athletes suffer from depression', a theme Jasmine also noted. Another instance would be Vancouver's nickname 'No-fun City' (Kataoka, 2009:47). Charlie agreed with this: 'the city's not great but escaping the city is what makes it great. The city can never be great, cos it's got too many rules, you can only cycle one way around Stanley Park, I've never come up against a cycling prohibition before where like...the city's self-imposed licensing regulations are too bad to make it fun'.

mountain causes me to become dizzy¹³⁵. At times, it has been so bad that I have had to stop and sit down as I desperately try to find some sort of marker or reference point that I can use to orient myself.

These comments serve as an apt segue into the second of the two camps, notably the metaphysical mountain on a philosophical plane, with its attendant meanings and metaphors. Robert Bateman (2000:121) writes:

At the beginning of a new millennium, we all stand at the top of a mountain that offers us spectacular views in all directions. We have more knowledge of nature than any other civilization in history. We can look beyond the sky and beneath the sea...we can look back into distant history, to the origins of our behaviours and our beliefs, all the way to the birth of the human species itself. We who live in the 21st Century know more, own more and exert more power over our environment than any who have come before us. Our knowledge and our technology present us with a multitude of possibilities and choices. Why do we hesitate to decide? Does the sheer multitude of options overwhelm us? This may be so, but if we wait too long, our shift toward a more responsible ideology could happen too late.

With regard to the metaphysical mountain, Bateman is referring here to the informational peak – the pinnacle of the 21st Century as the age of information, communication, and technology. There is no greater power under the sun, or so we are told, than that which our generation exerts at present. Yet are we omniscient? No, far from it. Bateman (ibid.) himself questions why 'we hesitate to decide'. Is it that we are overwhelmed, distracted, unaware (or all three)? The weekend warrior case *does* provide us with some salient insights. The use of technology at the mountain, for instance, is one such insight. We can argue that this logic erodes traditional meanings of awe through a decadence of wonder (Quinn, 2002). Hence, technology¹³⁶ can be

135This dizziness – as a result of the combined exertion of blurring mist causing confusion and disorientation, along with the 'flow' or speed of stimuli in our everyday – seems to be at the essence of Berger's (1976:86) 'vertigo'. The former example is a localized case of dizziness, whereas the latter is a macro-scale depiction of modernity's effects on the individual, who has the potential to be plunged into the void of a (purportedly) meaningless maelstrom of modernistic forces and technological tendencies.

136On this topic, Yi-Fu Tuan (1995:239) writes: 'A strongly analytical and critical inclination of mind, sustained over time, can lead to cynicism and despair. In the West this has not yet happened to a pronounced degree, and one reason is ironic: the same hard questioning that has corroded traditional cultural covers has enabled Westerners to build a new one - the dazzling technological world that has its own great powers to shield, entertain, and distract. Still, in the course of the last two centuries, critical thinking has undoubtedly dented the modern person's sense of what it means to lead a moral and rewarding life, the true nature of relationships among human beings and between them and nature. May this not be another reason, perhaps even the deepest reason, for the vehemence with which the West is sometimes attacked? Besides its egregious faults of imperialism, racism, and specieism that are generic to civilization, the West is uniquely destructive of cultural covers and escape routes, not only other people's but its own. I wonder, however, whether the critics, who are themselves

picked up as one shade in this kaleidoscope, just as Taylor's (1991) 'malaise of modernity' implicates instrumentality.

The concerns of perspective and poise are integral in this debate. Just as the weekend warriors pursued these virtues at the physical mountain, so philosophically and existentially our society is putatively pursuing them in large scale at the metaphysical informational mountain. In amassing so much information and data, the hope is that global consciousness will increase, greater awareness ensue, and problems of all natures be tackled (if not solved) as a result. These hopes espouse civility, duty, and responsibility. Indeed, Bateman (2000:117) writes: 'the story of the creation of this mountain [Mount Maxwell] evokes permanence, patience, adaptability and nobility – characteristics worth emulating'. Yet just as the weekend warriors were forgetful – as in Peter's case – and easily deceived – as in the confused orientation with mist at the mountain – so disorientation is a constant threat and danger on the metaphysical mountain. It seems these characteristics are more elusive than first imagined. The physical mountain can be rapidly obscured from view; shrouded in cloud, mist and fog. Perhaps a similar feat is possible atop the metaphysical informational mountain. Is this the essence of overstimulation? Virilio (1980) suggests so in 'aesthetics of disappearance', as we are 'blinded by the light' (Armitage, 2001:143).

This concern can be framed within a broader critique of the onward march of modernity, progressing in doubtful directions upon shaky foundations. This is the crux of the argument of *hypomodernity*, founded on a distinction between the concomitant parts of modernity. If *hypermodernity* conveys excess and addiction driven by speed, acceleration, and intensification, then *hypomodernity* implies a loss or deficit. In deriving from the Greek meaning of '*hypo*' as beneath, under, or below, it communicates two key trends, as tabulated below (Table 7):

<i>Hypo</i> as implicit	Invisible costs and hidden consequences
<i>Hypo</i> as deficit	Irretrievable sense of loss and lack

Table 7. *Hypomodernity*

nearly all Westerners or Western trained, know that they derive a personal benefit from their indignation? The benefit lies in the forging of a camaraderie, a warm feeling of being in the right in the company of others also in the right, the creation of a strong sense of Us through the postulation of an implacable and powerful Other, which is among humankind's most time-honored and effective means of repressing the tormenting awareness of personal guilt and anomie, aloneness and vulnerability. In short, the attack hides a deep human fear - one that has always been a part of conscious life - the fear of light in places that best remain in the dark'.

To start with, *hypomodernity* denotes an under-the-table transaction. Most would agree that the 'modernization of modernity' (Beck, 1992) has radically transformed our world creating an opportunity cost of obvious gains and often more subtle losses. The implicit tendencies of these losses are communicated in *hypomodernity* as a hidden cost of the intensification of *hypermodernity*. Speed has long been in the limelight of modernity, as the recent explosion in mobility studies testifies (cf. Adey, 2006; Urry, 2007; Cresswell, 2008), yet this engenders an analysis of the explicit causes of change in society. The implicit consequences of these, however, are far harder to identify and seem to have been left relatively dormant. '*Hypo*' meaning beneath probes at the possibility of such insidious impacts. For instance, Neil Postman's (2000) analysis of the western world as a 'technopoly', defined as a technological 'state of culture', could permeate into a 'state of mind'. The deification of technology and dissolution of traditional beliefs in this 'technopoly' demands concerted critique and understanding.

Secondly, a sense of deficit or deficiency is communicated by *hypomodernity*. The Greek translation of below denotes once again this irretrievable sense of loss, framed this time not as insidious or pervasive, rather blatantly below par. For example, Hervieu-Leger (2011) calls modern people 'amnesiacs', forgetting the past with all of its richness of detail, heritage of history, and belief in tradition. Our myopia is so widespread that today 'the politics of a radiant future have been replaced by consumption as the promise of a euphoric present' (Lipovetsky, 2005:37). Is this modern thinking? Would our ancestors and forefathers regard this as progress, development, gain? The deficient aspect of *hypomodernity* argues that much of our thinking has become sub-modern, in spite of the prideful clarion calls of modernity. As Lipovetsky (1983) previously wrote, '*L'ère du vide*' may be truly empty: drained of meaning, life, and purpose. This irony of 'modernity as emptiness' questions the hyperbolic analyses of excess in *hypermodernism*. In what ways has our progress deceived us, and are we missing anything?

This argument responds directly to the intensification of modernity, through numerous mechanics, into the present-day realities of *hypermodernity*. David Harvey (1989:87) eloquently notes the 'postmodern penchant for fragmentation'. Accordingly, we are led to question whether or not diversity is always the 'spice of life', making the world go round with difference, choice, and decision. Perhaps it can also become the 'sting of death'. Indeed, Harvey (1989:111) notes

how such hyper-diversity is 'conducive to individualism, alienation, fragmentation, ephemerality, innovation, [and] creative destruction'. Social theorists understand this as the multiplicity of choice, which can in fact encourage the evasion of choice, due to apathy, impassiveness, and the poverty of certainty (Berger, 1976). As modern individuals, we experience a sense of 'vertigo' (Berger, 1976:86), manifested often by fear and anxiety. This vertigo may be related to the diluting effects of technological transformations, driven by the logic of speed, which boasts infinite opportunity yet also sows seeds of doubt, suspicion, and cynicism in our minds. As Yves Michaud writes: 'with the excess of opportunity, grow the threats of destruction, fragmentation, and disarticulation' (cited in Bauman, 2000:90). More broadly, the modernist impulse toward pluralism 'undermines both institutional and plausibility structures' (Berger, 1979:17), creating a 'multiplicity of incongruencies' (1997:202). This is the bedrock for fragmentation and alienation.

Lipovetsky (2005) mimics this tendency toward excess in his critique of hyper-capitalism, -individualism, -choice, and -consumption. The resultant excess or hyperbole in *all* spheres of life has 'restructured [society] from top to bottom by the technologies of ephemerality, novelty, and permanent seduction' (p.36). Indeed, as Ralph Waldo Emerson pointed out, when skating on thin ice your salvation is in speed (cited in Bauman, 2000). We must move fast in order to avoid falling far. Mobility has become an obligation. In this world of change, novelty, mobility, and movement have even somewhat eclipsed the 'mythology of continual and inevitable progress...[of] the unstoppable march towards happiness and peace, the utopia of the new man, the redemptive class, a society without division' (Lipovetsky, 2005:42). The result has been an environment of 'complex, contradictory, and disorienting parts...fragmented and fractured [into a] landscape of pastiches, disorder, inauthenticity, and juxtaposition' (Sack cited in Giddens, 1990:117). No wonder, therefore, that cultural critics¹³⁷ such as Steven Marcus suggest that the myths of progress have 'failed to make good on their promises' (cited in Agena, 1983:4). I suggest that the mountain – in both material and metaphysical terms – has a lot to teach us and show us in these on-going debates. Not least, we must consider the stance of our current vantage point, by observing the view and taking note of those factors that blind us, overwhelm us, distort our vision, and limit our perspective.

137Or in an even stronger tenor, the late Neil Smith (cited in Harvey, 1989:325) wrote: 'The Enlightenment is dead, Marxism is dead, the working class movement is dead...and the author does not feel very well either'.

5.3 Transmodernity

*'Till now man has been up against Nature:
from now on he will be up against his own nature'
(Dennis Gabor, 1963:29)*

Crucially, Taylor's (1991:72) 'work of retrieval' does not consist merely in deconstructing faults – though this is significant. Taylor (p.72) does write that we must 'identify and articulate the higher ideal[s] behind the more or less debased practices'. This is the essence of denial and deception, which frame the debasement of *hypermodernity* in favour of *hypomodernity*. Yet retrieval also necessitates reconstruction. Hence the term 'transmodernity', which can be introduced into the lexicon at this juncture. This work demands first some foundations to be laid.

The correct response to denial and deception – or *hypomodernity* more broadly – is surely honesty. Yet how is this materialized? In moments of clarity, certain respondents showed considerable insight. Consider this evaluation from Julian:

I think at the end of the day, if you can't do that anymore, if that [leisure] is taken away from you, and if you are a completely different person, then you have to question what's going on. I think that's one of those key questions in my opinion. If skiing is taken away from me, am I still Julian? Or do I now have to develop a new persona and a new identity?

The essence here is that of recognition. The ability to perceive, recognize, and respond to the 'cultural slide' Taylor (1991:98) brings attention to is surely the first and foremost step. Indeed, this act of recognition responds directly to Leopold's (1949:295) urgent call of 'building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind'. Hence, receptivity and perceptiveness are of crucial importance. Yet the slide is slippery, often seductive (Bauman, 2000) if not soporific (Debord, 1967), such that the incline 'is all too easy to slide down' (Taylor, 1991:101). By and large, these features were enough to captivate the majority of the respondents – sparing a few – in attitudes, habits, and lifestyle patterns of increasing fragmentation. As Taylor (p.103) reminds us: 'a lot, both institutionally and ideologically, is going for atomism and instrumentalism'.

Yet by the very same token, Taylor (p.103) goes on to explicate how: 'we can also struggle against it. One of the ways we can do so is by retrieving some of the richer moral

background from which the modern stress on instrumental reason took its rise'. For atomism, as with agency, this task of retrieving the richer sources is equally prescient. So the second response, alongside recognition, is that of engagement. Primarily this involves an engagement with the 'continual struggle to realize higher and fuller modes of authenticity against the resistance of the flatter and shallower forms' (p.94). One example of such resistance would be in the realm of wonder. As Julian said:

I feel spiritually connected when I kinda sit back and I'm just kinda surveying my surroundings, that kinda just doing a scan, looking at the horizon, looking at what's in front of me. Looking at a line I'm about to take, say. Looking at a mountain I'm climbing. Those are the moments where there is a sense of awe. Where it's just, like you look back and you're like, wow! Like it is awe-inspiring. Like you just sit there and take a couple of moments in and you just look around and you can't even really describe it can you. I don't quite have the vocabulary to be able to express myself with that. But it is what it is.

In this realm, the mountains aid in retrieving a right, correct sense of awe. In response to the banalization of language, specifically where words like 'awe', 'wonder', and 'awesome' are bandied around with little thought, Julian is careful here to engage with a truer 'sense of awe'. The particular recognition and engagement, in this case, is with language. Given that 'when words decay, the things they signify may decay with them, for the decay of a word is a symptom of the decadence of a thing' (Quinn, 2002:10), a right retrieval of language – and thus significance – is no small matter. In Julian's case, the right meaning of 'awe' is the inspiration of great admiration, apprehension, or fear. His reverence for the mountain-scape seems to engender such a retrieval and right response.

Taylor (1991:78) frames this contestation as 'La Lotta Continua', or the struggle goes on. Indeed, for him, contestation or engagement engender friction and productive interfaces, becoming the true locus of debate. He writes (p.96):

We can't see the development of technological society just in the light of an imperative of domination. Richer moral sources have fed it...the relentless description of technological society in terms of domination screens out these other sources all together...both sides in the polarized debate are in an unwitting conspiracy to keep something essential from view, to accredit the lowest view of the thing they do battle over – in this case, instrumental reason. Against them, we need to do a work of retrieval, in order to get a fruitful struggle going in our culture and society.

So rather than reifying flat, shallow notions that appear to be 'impervious to argument' (p.56), there is a dire need to reveal these aspirations and practices as 'full of tension' (ibid.). The 'continual struggle' (p.94) that Taylor identifies is two-fold. Firstly, engagement demands 'contestation, as a locus of probably unending struggle' (p.107). This is daunting, but not paralysing, as it demands concerted effort in resisting a slippery, seductive, and steep slope. Secondly, engagement must entertain 'different modes of enframing' (ibid.). Specifically, 'the effective re-enframing of technology requires common political action to reverse the drift of atomism and instrumentalism'. This is equally fraught, since 'fragmentation abets atomism in another way...[it] disables us from resisting this drift' (p.117). Yet the task is not impossible. Rather, Paul Virilio for instance provides a realist's perspective, viewing technology as tragic but not terminal. To him technology is '*catastrophic* not *catastrophist*' (Armitage, 2001:26). In a similar move to Taylor, such re-enframing guards against blanket condemnation, framing the argument rather in a field of perpetual advance and retreat, of perpetual tension.

Looking to the mountain is of great conceptual aid here. The mountain inspired Leopold's views on permanence and durability, along with Bateman's case for patience. Jonathan said:

Knowing what I know now, I'd say like it's [mountain climbing] about taking it slowly. You don't want to rush...I now enjoy the process of climbing. Even if I'm not on a particularly technical mountain, I do it because I enjoy that process. And now I do it because the mountains offer escape from the city below...just wanting to feel nature. It's just that sense isn't it. Feeling the breeze, seeing the sun, breathing fresh air.

The processual¹³⁸ approach to the mountain is vastly different to that of sheer pleasure, risk, or adrenaline. Indeed, it evokes appreciation for even minor details, recognition of the scale and totality of the landscape, and an engagement with, or rather a resistance to, mainstream currents of success and achievement. A better way can be opened up. Alternatives exist. Jasmine stated:

¹³⁸Indeed, Miles mentioned something similar. He said: 'I think if I ever tried doing something like cross country skiing stuff or snowshoeing I'd enjoy it a bit more, because you sort of take your time, take a look at things. I find you enjoy things more [when you slow down] and you get to see a lot more, as opposed to just looking around and making sure you don't hit anyone...same thing with hiking, same thing with snowboarding. It's just trying to get down as fast as you can and trying to get up as fast as you can. I guess I sort of pass over all the nice things around'.

I think that's a big part of it, being out there in the world. That's the beautiful part. And that's the part where you stop and take a breath of this fresh mountain air, where you're looking out, and it's an unbelievable view and you get that sense of 'wow'! You know. You stop moving for a second and it feels like it's so amazing. How lucky are we to live in a world that's so beautiful. I find that that's the inspiring part. You go and do these things, it's not just about the sport, you know. What changes too is that when you're first doing these sports it's about the adrenaline rush. Maybe it's just cos I'm getting older or something, but now it's more about that experience of being out there and seeing new places, exploring things from another perspective. There's nothing like being on top of a mountain or looking at things from a different viewpoint. It's amazing.

The appreciation of 'different viewpoint[s]' and the desire to explore 'things from another perspective' could not be more significant at this juncture. Here, mountain and metropolis collide with gargantuan force, as 'wilderness' and modernity intersect in fresh and exciting ways. The mountains become not only a locus of resistance and struggle, but also a locus of hope. It is from this vantage point that retrieval can – and must – begin.

At least two direct conclusions flow from these insights of the respondents. Both are concerned with transmodernism – the first with speed, and the second with structure. Primarily, the issue of *process* – notably focus, attention, and appreciation – draws our attention to issues of speed. Valovic (2000:51) is just as adamant as Virilio in warning against the naïvety of our 'information euphoria'. Just as Virilio spoke of over-stimulation, he is also concerned by 'the tyranny of real-time' (Thommesen, 2003:150). Virilio (2002:43) writes:

No politics is possible at the scale of the speed of light. Politics depends upon having time for reflection. Today, we no longer have time to reflect, the things that we see have already happened. And it is necessary to react immediately. Is a real-time democracy possible? An authoritarian politics, yes. But what defines democracy is the sharing of power. When there is no time to share, what will be shared?

This is no minor critique. Indeed, Valovic (2000:177) goes so far as to say it is 'the central argument of our time – the argument between technology and soul'. Valovic shows no restraint in this regard. He continues (p.194): 'let us make no mistake, something is very wrong here: and our society, locked into a dizzying postmodern tailspin with all the controls frozen, has yet to come to terms with the problem'. Valovic (2000:209) explicates this argument in his book, 'Digital Mythologies: The hidden complexities of the internet', writing:

The proponents of digital culture want to do this [new world] without the encumbrances of the past: literature, philosophy, spirituality, and other traditions. They want to strip away the past to create a new vision of humankind, loosely based on the technological imperative. However, without the humanist markers and guideposts afforded by the traditions of the past, it seems all too easy to wind up in a curious no-man's-land of cultural and intellectual relativism – not the positive and creative state of ambiguity afforded by postmodern thought but an elasticity of values that is more characteristic of nihilism.

For Valovic (p.210), therefore, 'virtual reality is at war with consensus reality'. And this war is, at root, founded on speed. If Virilio (cited in Armitage, 2001:1) is correct in asserting that 'the logic of ever increasing speed lies at the heart of the organization and transformation of the contemporary world' then speed must be taken to task. Indeed, as 'the speed of light is the natural speed of globalisation' (Virilio, 1986), more and more collisions between absolute, ultimate speed (e.g. fibre optics operating at the speed of light, 700 million mph) and the relative speeds of life, reflection, and analysis will become evident. Though even this collision is contentious, it is echoed by other scholars. Jaron Lanier (2010:25), for instance, seems even more fearful:

[T]he real danger is that the two value systems, old and new, will fail to collide. A collision might at least foster evaluation, dialogue, change: but the concern is that they might just quietly exchange places in the chaos of a transitional society “distracted from distraction” in the words of T.S.Eliot.

Aside from process and speed, a second insight is particularly valuable – that of structure. Indeed, transmodernism espouses a unique gaze, or structure of viewing, specifically on time but also in space. As Vitz (1998:163) writes: 'transmodernism marks the return of a measure of stability'. Perhaps this is the necessary retort to Valovic's (2000:194) portrayal of our times as a: 'dizzying postmodern tailspin with all the controls frozen'. Yet how is such stability actualized? Vitz (1998:163) continues:

Transmodernism, therefore, does not reject all things premodern, modern, or postmodern. Transmodernism holds that the wholesale rejection of everything associated with premodernism in response to the rise of modernism, and the wholesale rejection of everything associated with modernism in response to the rise of postmodernism was not only unnecessary but destructive...Transmodernism includes the re-establishment of these historical bases.

Vitz is particularly concerned with the self, and the need to re-establish a humane, stable sense of identity within the self. His preference is in favour of the 'cohesive whole' or 'permanent self', supplanting the instability of the 'present consumer-based self'¹³⁹ (p.163). Yet this focus in no way detracts from a broader attention to transmodernism across the board. Indeed, for modernity at large, transmodernity helps us navigate the subtleties and complexities of this fraught terrain, refusing the fatalist accounts of both the naïve boosters and pessimistic knockers¹⁴⁰. Vitz (1998:113-4) continues, regarding transmodernism as:

[A] spirit of hopefulness; a desire for wisdom; a concern with religions and transcendent spiritual themes; a rediscovery of the importance of truth, beauty, goodness and harmony; a concern with simplicity and the quest for a mature and balanced understanding of experience. It is not so much a spirit of *new* theories or ideologies, but an *integration* of existing valid intellectual approaches, including those from a premodern tradition.

The emphasis on integration, rather than novelty, is invaluable¹⁴¹. In order to transform and transcend existing society, riddled with all the conundrums and challenges of (post)modernity as it is, an integration of the different shades and shapes of the ideological kaleidoscope is surely a wise move. Yet this 'work of retrieval' (Taylor, 1991:72) is no easy task. Indeed, it is not to be taken lightly. It must be taken, however, commencing the work, building momentum, and retrieving rather than reifying 'root-and-branch condemnation...[which] is not a way to move us closer to the heights' (ibid.).

Yet how to do this? At least two salient features must be mentioned: politics and poise. On the political front, Julie-Anne Boudreau (2010:62) helpfully reminds us to place: 'unprecedented salience to small acts that can easily be transformed into unexpected political

139Vitz and Felch (2006:153) write how: 'individuals today, therefore, are faced with a heretofore unimaginable amount of freedom to select and construct what they would like their selves to be. Such freedom, however, is not without cost'. They write, for instance, about the commonality of MPD in present times: multiple personality disorder, which is void of any sense of coherency, cohesiveness, or permanence.

140Habermas (1985:14) critiques this pessimistic tendency with guile. He writes: 'The "young conservatives" recapitulate the basic experience of aesthetic modernity. They claim as their own the revelations of a decentred subjectivity, emancipated from the imperatives of work and usefulness, and with this experience they step outside the modern world. On the basis of modernistic attitudes they justify an irreconcilable anti-modernism. They remove into the sphere of the far-away and the archaic the spontaneous powers of imagination, self-experience, and emotion. To instrumental reason they juxtapose in Manichean fashion a principle only accessible through evocation, be it the will to power or sovereignty, Being or the Dionysiac force of the poetical'.

141Indeed, this reminds us of Peter Marcuse's (pers. comm.) famous call to 'expose, propose, and politicize' in all of our geographical enquiries. I would add 'historicize' to that list, as a fourth pillar of analysis, ensuring context.

situations on global and local scales'. This is significant both for the leisure enthusiasts in question and the momentum of transmodernity at large. In the case of one respondent, Stewart, this political thought was striking. Whilst being honest in saying: 'I don't have a good answer for that', in response to future issues of sustainability, Stewart did say: 'Just little things where people are doing the right thing'. According to Boudreau, this is the correct attitude. It retrieves not only truth and order – 'the right thing' – but also a recognition of the salience of 'small acts' (Boudreau, 2010:62). Whilst it may miss a whole other side to the coin – notably that of systemic, structural transformation – such individual, personal acts do create momentum in the right areas, fostering personal responsibility in particular. As Taylor (1991:118) suggests, any 'serious attempt to engage in the cultural struggle of our time requires the promotion of a politics of democratic empowerment'. As such, personal responsibility struggles against the 'sense of helplessness [that] breeds alienation...[and] a potential vicious cycle' (ibid.).

Tallied with this political thought is the necessity for right behaviour, demanding poise. We are reminded here of Robert Bateman's (2000:117) words: 'the story of the creation of this mountain [Mount Maxwell] evokes permanence, patience, adaptability and nobility – characteristics worth emulating'. These characteristics are invaluable to the work of transmodernism. Attention should be drawn specifically to adaptability as a key quality of transmodernity, so long as it works in antagonistic opposition with permanence. Consider the thoughts of Jonathan on different approaches to climbing physical peaks:

I think if you're doing a technical mountain, that has different attractions. That allows you to completely zone out. You're only focussed on the climbing, because when you're climbing things which are technically difficult, it takes all of your concentration. And that's a different kind of relief. That allows you to not think about anything in your life. But just kinda climbing a mountain in terms of hiking, like not a particularly difficult mountain, that has beauty because it allows you to, you have a chance to reflect, think about your life in the city, but you're out of it, you're away. You can kinda relax but also get a breath of fresh air, and feel above the stresses that you feel beneath.

These serve as a powerful metaphor, indeed parallel, to the poise demanded of transmodernism. If attempts at integration are to be in any way successful, a dialectical interplay of adaptability and permanence must be adhered to. This reminds us of the salience of the mountain, as a locus of both perspective and poise, in material and metaphorical terms.

Before turning our attention back to the mountain, it is worth considering once again the terrain of action for this 'work of retrieval' (Taylor, 1991:72) and transmodernism. Taylor (p.11) reminds us that 'the nature of modern culture is more subtle and complex' than our analyses often pay credence. The need for nuance, indeed sophistication, is of utmost importance. With regard to lifestyles of leisure, Peter displayed a glimpse of such sophistication:

Well that's the whole thing about balance though isn't it? Like at what point does it become a false god, at what point does it become an idol, at what point does it take priority over your relationship with God and your relationship with other people? So, that's an individual thing I think, there's no hard and fast answer to those questions.

The recognition that 'there's no hard and fast answer to those questions' is crucial. Certainly, it does place the burden of proof and responsibility on the individual. Yet this should in no way further social atomism or fragmentation. Rather, this responsibility should foster communal dialogue, richer debate and discussion, and a desire for evaluation. This is precisely evocative of Taylor's (1991:11) sentiment: 'culture is...subtle and complex'. Jaron Lanier (2010:211) echoes this very point, suggesting that: 'the new landscape will be far more complex and nuanced'. We must pay credence to this complexity, subtlety, and nuance if this 'work of retrieval' (Taylor, 1991:72) is to have any purchase.

Chapter :6 Conclusion

*'The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness:
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence:
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.'
(T.S.Eliot, 1934)*

Our conclusions must challenge the call to 'Think like a Mountain' (Leopold, 1949) to some extent. Clearly, this demand – noble as it is – is flawed in some regards. The mountain is a fraught terrain, susceptible to both the reproduction of elitism, privilege, and prejudice, as well as to the riddles of denial and deception. Specifically, the hubris of having claimed to think (not to mention live) with 'permanence, patience, adaptability, and nobility' (Bateman, 2000:117) needs to be recognized. This is simply unobtainable. Our gaze must therefore be shifted, beyond both the material and metaphorical mountain. But why?

In short, it seems that all three proverbial mountains are limited. The 'peak population' of sorts of young urban professionals who may be aspiring to the top 1%, may be climbing to the pinnacle of the mountain, yet their attitudes and actions fall short. They display, oftentimes, a 'radical anthropocentrism' (Taylor, 1991:58), which is to be expected given the tenor of our times¹⁴². Yet this frame is quick to negate 'history, tradition, society, nature'¹⁴³, or God' (ibid.). This group tends 'towards both elitism and indulgence' (Ley, 1987:48), focussing their efforts and energies towards material, aesthetic pleasures. Such a view is rooted in the realm of immediacy – the *hic et nunc* – in a purely immanent frame (Taylor, 2007). As such, the ends of possibilities are dangerously eclipsed, and the frame narrowed.

The mountains themselves are the focus of the greatest irony. Viewed as an escape for some, or a return for others, *above* and *away* from the intensities of the 'malaise of modernity'

¹⁴²Indeed, Guy Debord (1994) suggests that: 'Men [sic] resemble their times more so than their fathers'.

¹⁴³Robert Bateman (2012) certainly argues that 'ego-tourism' often supplants 'eco-tourism' in our generation. Surely his critique calls for a redeemed attitude and renewed vision of nature.

(Taylor, 1991) manifest in the city, the mountains ironically replicate – through logics, technologies, and terrain – the very features being refused and escaped in the metropolis. Thus they become sites of reproduction. Metropolitan privilege and paradigms, in all their vagrant forms, are paradoxically intensified, rather than dissipated, in the mountain-scape. As Cronon (1995:77) notes: 'the irony, of course, was that in the process wilderness came to reflect the very civilization its devotees sought to escape'. In this study, such reification at altitude was manifest among the sample not only in individualism, instrumental reason, and a loss of freedom, but also propagated by elitism and exclusivity. Cronon (p.77) continues: 'celebrating wilderness has been an activity mainly for well-to-do city folks'. The romantic ideals of untouched nature and pristine wilderness, offering a 'highly attractive natural alternative to the ugly artificiality of modern civilization' (ibid.), are therefore seen to be riddled with contradictions.

Finally, the mountain of our times demands both metaphysical and philosophical critique. As Bateman (2000:121) writes: 'we all¹⁴⁴ [in the 21st Century] stand at the top of a mountain that offers us spectacular views in all directions. We have more knowledge of nature than any other civilization in history'. This knowledge of both nature and human nature, with all of its sophisticated systems, places us on a top of an immense informational mountain. The horizons are breath taking, yet Bateman continues: 'does the sheer multitude of options [before us] overwhelm us?' (ibid.). It seems that this metaphorical mountain is tall indeed, yet its size and stature, poise and grace say nothing of our ability to put it to good use. Rather, the paradox seems to intensify: just as it grows in size, scope, and scale, so our perceptiveness, vision, and foresight can recede and narrow. Why so? One weekend warrior evoked this sentiment atop the mountain:

When the clouds and fog are really heavy and the visibility is bad, I find it difficult to distinguish between the greyish white snow and the greyish white mist surrounding me. With everything blending together it is difficult to understand what is up or down. This disorientation combined with the flow of up and down that comes from gliding down the mountain causes me to become dizzy. At times, it has been so bad that I have had to stop and sit down as I desperately try to find some sort of marker or reference point that I can use to orient myself.

¹⁴⁴It should be noted that this is a fallacy from the outset. Less than 30% of the global populace profit from regular access to the internet, thus only placing select individuals at the top of the informational peak (Renick, 2011).

It seems the mountain is a unique metaphor, capturing the essence of 'vertigo' (Berger, 1976:86) at a more planetary scale, with horizons being eclipsed and views fading as disorientation sets in. The potential of the individual to be plunged into a dizzying void of 'anomie' (Durkheim, 1951) demonstrates the grip of the three prongs of Taylor's (1991) malaise. Valovic (2000:210) teases this out, suggesting that 'in this new environment, figure and ground are indistinguishable, and meaning has been badly eroded: spirituality can don the guise of materialism, or vice versa, and there is no way to tell the difference. The result is a strange hybrid of spirituality and materialism that entices and confuses: dehumanization with a happy face'¹⁴⁵. With specific reference to the digital era, these statements epitomize Paul Virilio's concern that we are being 'blinded by the light' (Armitage, 2001:143). The maelstrom of modernistic forces and technological tendencies of our times seems to contribute to this. In this very fashion, the informational mountain has the capacity¹⁴⁶ to blind and overwhelm us. Its potential is vast, yet its efficacy is in our hands.

It seems that fog and mist, both at the material mountain and on the metaphysical mountain, can rapidly shroud our vision; we can be blinded, lacking in perspective and appreciation, as well as myopic, riddled by short-sightedness and forgetfulness. So how are we to respond? Surely the mountain retains a degree of nobility, as one respondent was keen to evoke:

I guess [the mountain conveys] a sense of smallness. And I think I like the aspect of lack of control. Like you're in its playground, its environment. I think we like to control most things in our lives and we've facilitated or found ways to do that and I think out there you're at its mercy. But I think it's something we crave, too. Something bigger than us. Yeah, I think it makes you come to think of like things bigger than you. I hope I'm not getting too religious but yeah. I'll stick with bigness, I like that. Bigness. And I think it puts everything else into perspective in our small worlds.

Evidently size and perspective are but two attributes amongst a plethora in the realm of the mountain-scape. Leopold (1949:137) was correct: 'only the mountain has lived long enough to

145 Naturally, this introduces a metaphysical plane into consideration. Whilst spirituality is perhaps beyond the purview of this analysis, which concentrates rather on materialism and the material world, it is still of high consideration, particularly in view of Taylor's (2007) call to go beyond the reductionist 'immanent frame'.

146 Valovic (2000:52) spells out this capacity, comparing the bandwidth of computers for dealing with information with the human bandwidth, or maximum capacity of the brain (estimated at 1 gigabit per second). As such, he perceptively writes that 'human beings represent a bottleneck, a place where the flow of information is constricted...we are the problem and the digital revolution is not the answer' (ibid.).

listen objectively to the howl of the wolf'. So much so, in fact, that Bateman (2000:117) details how to better 'Think like a Mountain'. He says: '[the] mountain evokes permanence, patience, adaptability, and nobility – characteristics worth emulating'. Yet how is this to be emulated? Not only do few have access to the rare and remote mountain-scape, whether geographically or socioeconomically, but it also seems that the predominant logics of our society war against the mountainous attributes of permanence, buffeting them like a cultural windstorm. Naturally, there are many answers to this question. These conclusions hope to provide preliminary suggestions and starters of sorts.

Clarity is a key attribute. The mountain *can* offer spectacular views¹⁴⁷, far and wide, high and deep, but also – particularly in (Beautiful) British Columbia – it can be shrouded in cloud, fog, and mist. In order to perceive well – or build 'receptivity into the still unlovely human mind' as Leopold (1949:295) put it – limits must be adhered to. Clarity is founded on such limits. Indeed, if freedom has a form, as antiquity suggests, then boundaries recognizing the finite and the bounded are essential. As one respondent put it:

I tend to go to a mountain and really my two major feelings which I tend to get on a regular basis are: wow, I'm so lucky to be alive and to have this experience, to have this nature around me, to be able to see these things, I just feel so lucky to be able to do that. You know you can kind of stand there and take in the view and think wow, the scale of the world around me is just remarkable. That's kind of the awe side. But then on the humility side, you're equally like wow they're just so huge. How in my life time, I'm not even going to see a tiny fraction of what the world is. And I can see this, but I'm nothing compared to this and I want to make an impact with my life, but in the grand scheme of nature, which has been going for 4 billion years or whatever it is, my impact is going to be fairly limited and basically I have to come to peace with the fact that I can be a part of the bigger picture. My existence is fleeting, but through my life and through my death I can have an impact on the future.

The clarity of Jonathan's vision, in this case, is founded on the very limits of his vision. He sees well, since he recognizes the limitations of his seeing. Yet how are such glimpses to be savoured? Jonathan suggests at least two ways. Firstly, there is a recognition of limits: we see but a 'tiny

147 This statement should, in and of itself, be enough to remind us of the nobility of the mountain. Indeed, for all its flaws and failings, the mountain retains such nobility in its ability to shift our gaze. 'Thinking like a Mountain' (Leopold, 1949) turns the inward gaze on the self, outward toward the other. To our (narcissistic) generation, often trapped in the 'travail of permanent reflection' (Schutz, 1964:120), this is clearly of enormous purchase.

fraction¹⁴⁸ of the world around us. Perspective is therefore essential. Secondly, such recognition demands remembering. Memory serves as our guide when clarity is not at hand. When we see little, are shrouded in cloud, or indeed dizzy and disoriented, we must *not* become amnesiacs (Hervieu-Leger, 2011), suddenly forgetting all that has been before and simply believing that 'newer is truer' or that the 'latest is greatest'. In the mountains, as in the other landscapes of life and leisure, memory is foundational to our successful navigation and recognition, particularly when the clouds roll in¹⁴⁹.

Arguably, humility is a natural offshoot of both recognition and remembering. We see not only how little we see – in recognition – but also how poorly we see, the few glimpses we get, and the limitations of our frame – in remembering. Such humility is central to our approach to the mountainous challenges of our times. Pure hubris stokes the fire of 'radical anthropocentrism' (Taylor, 1991:58), negating 'history, tradition, society, nature, or God' (ibid.)¹⁵⁰. Humility, on the other hand, pays credence to these diverse features. This encourages an *awareness* of the limitations of our frame, in its individualized, secularized, and subjectivized versions. In regard to the mountain specifically, and wilderness more generally, Cronon (1995:88) suggests:

Learning to honor the wild – learning to remember and acknowledge the autonomy of the other – means striving for critical self-consciousness in all of our actions. It means that deep reflection and respect must accompany each act of use, and means too that we must always consider the possibility of non-use. It means looking at the part of nature we intend to turn toward our own ends and asking whether we can use it again and again and again – sustainably – without its being diminished in the process. It means never imagining that we can flee into a mythical wilderness to escape history and the obligation

148 Julian intimated at similar responses to this 'tiny fraction'. In broadening his perspective, he said: 'There's a huge, exaggerated sense of awe when out in the mountains, just because it's so much bigger than anything you can even imagine and to think that we're in this tiny little space, and what we see is just beyond anything we can imagine and to think that this world, this size that it is. I mean I've been to the Andes and the Alps, even in the Himalayas and the Rockies, just about all the big ones. And to think that you're in this little place in like these Coastal Mountains and you think that it's just the craziest place. And then there's so much more going on everywhere else, it's just like. Wow! It's pretty magnificent'. This demonstrates an honest recognition of scale.

149 In Vancouver, Peter stated: 'Oh [the view] it's just absolutely stunning. The next day you wouldn't even know that the mountains are there. Like the fog comes in. I get it cos I'm in the 26th floor of this building [downtown] where we've got these amazing views of the mountains. So it's quite interesting.' This reminds us of the salience of a landscape which is permanent: clouds move, mountains do not.

150 A larger project would afford the time and space to enquire more deeply into each of these categories. Notably, the roles of history, tradition, society, nature, and God could be discretely considered, investigating not only the parts they play in meaning and fulfillment, but also as agents of change, resisting the slippage in favour of atomism and instrumentalism, and catalysing a 'work of retrieval' (Taylor, 1991:72) in pursuit of richer sources.

to take responsibility for our own actions that history inescapably entails. Most of all, it means practicing remembrance and gratitude, for thanksgiving is the simplest and most basic of ways for us to recollect the nature, the culture, and the history that have come together to make the world as we know it.

Above all, this 'critical self-consciousness' (ibid.) demands a form of Self-ing, rather than Other-ing. Yet what does this look like? C.S. Lewis' (1952) 'New Man' [sic] suggests a fruitful avenue in this direction¹⁵¹. Our self is first and foremost to be redeemed, restoring our vision, sight, and perspective. Cronon (1995) weaves together nature, culture, and history to form the fabric of humanity, deeply enmeshed with value and meaning. The work of transmodernism must therefore go in pursuit of these richer sources. For instance, the artist Robert Bateman (2012) proposes a redeemed response and recognition of nature, in the form of genuine 'eco-tourism' rather than 'ego-tourism'. Front and centre in our minds must be nature itself – appreciated, recognized, remembered, and adhered to – rather than simply our reckless pursuit of pleasure.

Leopold's (1949) call to 'Thinking like a Mountain' can also be responded to directly in three specific ways; by pursuing wildness over wilderness, redeeming our gaze, and restoring perspective. As Cronon (1995:79) writes: 'the trouble with wilderness is that it quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject'. This all too easily leads to a reification of prejudice, strengthening of elitism, and even evasion of responsibility. Rather, wildness should be pursued, supplanting the rare and remote quests for wilderness. As Gary Snyder (cited in Cronon, 1995:87) says: 'a person with a clear heart and open mind can experience the wilderness anywhere on earth. It is a quality of one's own consciousness. The planet is a wild place and always will be'. Our great hubris in wilderness then – manifest in conquering and dominating it – is humbled in recognition of wildness all around us; both out there and in here. Cronon (p.88) writes:

If wildness can stop being (just) out there and start being (also) in here, if it can start being as humane as it is natural, then perhaps we can get on with the unending task of struggling to live rightly in the world – not just in the garden, not just in the wilderness, but in the home that encompasses them both.

151 Alistair nodded towards this: 'there's this great quote by Socrates which is like "why do you wonder that globe-trotting does not help you, seeing that you always take yourself with you?"'. It's like if you can't find the simple pleasures in your day to day existence, changing the scenery doesn't really change the fundamental problem.'

Yet how is this humility enacted? Perhaps if our gaze is redeemed, this will flow naturally. The hubris of claims to have successfully actualized 'Thinking like a Mountain' (Leopold, 1949) seems to be laced with deception and denial. Honesty can cut through this. As our gaze is redeemed, then we can learn to 'honour the wild' (Cronon, 1995:88). Much of this redemptive work demands appreciation, since viewing nature as purely a landscape of leisure is sheer folly. John Fowles (1984:83) writes about:

[T]he deformation, the blindness, brought about by the hobby attitude to nature. It turns nature into a sort of golf-course where you can go to amuse yourself at weekends: into the mirror in which you flaunt your skill at naming. It drains nature of its complexity, of its richness, of its poetries, of its symbolisms and correspondences, of its power to arouse emotion – of all its potential centrality in human existence. And far worse than the damage it does to the misguided natural historian is the damage it does to the vast majority who are neutral or indifferent towards nature. If this is the one avenue of approach, then it is no wonder they shrug and turn away.

No doubt such a stance, such a view, should have deep implications for our regard not just for nature, but for the very en-framing of nature as well, in the context of modernity and modern forces. After all, the mountain stands in both physical space and on a metaphysical plane. Combining wildness and appreciation helps us recognize the astute, forward-thinking views of certain respondents. As Alistair said: 'there's so much you can find everyday that's so amazing already, like if you are willing or able to appreciate it'. This willingness or ability for appreciation is central. In the mountains this is founded on sight. Indeed, Lorimer and Lund (2008:188) write:

In the Old Testament the mountaintop – just like the desert – is a place of revelation and divine intervention. It is a place of dramatic atmospheric extremes that produce before you, perhaps within you, spiritual kinds of vision. But you can also go to summits to take different sorts of measure, and in so doing it seems that sight is...the primary faculty. Seeing “properly” usually means a halt in progress and seeing to a considerable distance.

Yet as we have seen, the mountains are limited: specifically *the* mountain, *at* the mountain, *on* the mountain. Hence, our gaze must be somewhat shifted, indeed redeemed. In many senses we must look beyond the mountain. But before thinking of this, it is important to recognize that location is not all. Rather, willingness counts for far more. Regardless of our stance, location, or

position – in all sorts of standings – it is our gaze that matters most. Yi-Fu Tuan (1998:203) said it best: 'it is not a matter of talent, or even of socioeconomic circumstances, but of a willingness to look in the right direction'.

Yet we must also know *where* to look, even above the mountain¹⁵². In T.S. Eliot's (1934) 'Choruses from The Rock', it is 'The Eagle [who] soars in the summit of Heaven'. Perhaps the Eagle is indeed a noble creature to gaze upon. If Thoreau was right that 'in wildness is the salvation of the world' (cited in Leopold, 1949:141), then salvation – or preservation to employ his original terms – will always involve a recognition and appreciation of wildness. So why not the Eagle? It flies far above the mountain – noble, elegant, and graceful upon the currents of air. Interestingly, a respondent described this very experience:

Just today after work, about 4pm...I went for a walk, like everyone had just gone so I thought well I'll just reflect for a bit. So I walked down Canada Place, all the sails there, well firstly there must have been like a thousand seagulls overhead. I go to the end of Canada Place and sat on the end of a pier was a bald eagle, I was just blown away. He was probably like 40 yards from me. So that adds to my day hugely, like to see this bald eagle sat on the pier. And then yeah he was like there for about half an hour and then took off, caught something in his talons, I couldn't see what it was but that whole experience was incredible. And it wasn't even the weekend. It was 4.30pm once I just left work.

For this weekend warrior, the 'whole experience' with this bald eagle 'was incredible', even on a weekday. It helped him restore perspective, by redeeming his gaze and teaching him to appreciate and recognize wildness, even in downtown Vancouver.

At its essence, the mountain is but the start of the conversation, not the end of it. John Ruskin (1856:20) may have said that 'mountains are the beginning and end of all natural scenery', yet in today's complex, sophisticated world, 'subtle and complex' (Taylor, 1991:11) as it is, the mountain is but the start. In its material and metaphysical forms, it introduces us to complexity, to interconnectedness, to perspective. Robert Bateman (2000:122) asks: 'What is so wonderful about this sphere? It is surely our natural and human heritage in all its complexity'. Even he goes beyond the mountain, though, bringing our attention to the Eagle:

¹⁵²Unlike we moderns, some found this easy, such as the Psalter in Psalm 121: 'I lift my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of Heaven and Earth'. Although, given the different theological interpretations of 'the hills', it is unsurprising that the mountain is a complex metaphor.

A bald eagle tilts its wings below me, then rides the air currents up the face of the mountain until it is a speck above me...[the eagle sees] a place of infinite variety and complexity and remarkable resilience.



Figure 14. Mount Maxwell, painted by Robert Bateman (reproduced with permission)

If the mountain can teach us all this, then we can scarcely imagine the lessons awaiting us if we were to lift our gaze even higher. Bateman (2000:117) is correct: 'If we looked at time and geography from a mountain's perspective, we would have a more profound sense of history, we would be able to see far and wide, and benefit from the experience of people all over the globe'. Yet we cannot. Part of building 'receptivity into the still unlovely human mind' (Leopold, 1949:295) demands a greater sense of awareness and recognition of the limits of the modern frame, in its individualized, secularized, and subjectivized versions. Our perspective, for now, is not fully restored, our gaze not fully redeemed. The mountain is not seen clearly, the mist lingers¹⁵³. As Norman Mailer (cited in Agena, 1983:6) asks:

Is the spiritual air poisoned beyond repair? Is there no saving reaction in it? One sees a collective loss of energy, which is a reflection of factors so huge they are beyond comprehension. The economic index goes up, but human energy recedes...The situation is not entirely without hope. There may be vast potential out there. I don't see the way yet. There is a thinning of the mist, but no light yet.

Perhaps this is why T.S. Eliot (1934) concludes 'The Rock' with these lines: 'Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward / And see the light that fractures through unquiet water. / We see the light but see not whence it comes. / O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!'.

¹⁵³Indeed, Vitz and Felch (2006:217) pose this question: 'Are we at the end of Western civilization's story or at the dawn of its second chapter? All we know with certainty is that we seem to have reached a frontier, beyond which we peer into a thickening – or is it lifting? – fog'.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview questions



Department of Geography
#217 – 1984 West Mall
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-2663 Fax: (604) 822-6150
<http://www.geog.ubc.ca>

Introduction

My research is entitled 'The leisure culture of downtown young urban professionals'. I am fascinated by the lifestyle of Vancouverites, as well as the city's branded liveability. This project looks to investigate this culture through getaway weekend activities – notably with those who spend time in nature, be it the mountains, the hills, the ocean, or the forest. I am interested to see how this helps us define the 'urban', as well as shedding light on the urban condition with all of its intensity, our means of getaway, and crucially our re-orientation too.

One-to-one interview questions (semi-structured)

How many hours do you work in an average week?

Where does leisure fit into your weekly schedule? What about fitness? Is there a difference?

What places do you frequent for leisure purposes?

What do your weekends typically consist of?

Please take the time to talk me through a recent weekend of yours.

When and how often do you go to the places mentioned above?

Could you describe your weekend attitudes, activities, and actions to me?

How do these compare to your weekday attitudes, activities, and actions?

To what extent is your sense of identity shaped by your weekend past times?

Please take the time to share with me your relationship to nature and these getaway spots (open ended discussion time).

Closure

Many thanks for your time and your help with this research. If you would like further details please don't hesitate to contact me by email. Alternatively, my supervisor is also contactable by email. Details of the study and your commitment are on the attached consent forms.

Appendix B: Interview consent form

Department of Geography

#217 – 1984 West Mall

Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1Z2

Tel: (604) 822-2663 Fax: (604) 822-6150

<http://www.geog.ubc.ca>

Consent Form Name: _____

Project Title: The leisure culture of downtown young urban professionals

Principal Investigator: Samuel Gregory Johns, M.A. Candidate; Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2

Supervisor: Dr. David Ley, Canada Research Chair of Geography; Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2

Purpose: This research examines leisure culture in the Vancouver context. Weekend getaways are common amongst young urban professionals. Downtown subjects are interviewed and observed so as to better understand such behaviour. This will contribute to a fuller definition of the 'urban' and better understanding of the forces of our modern times.

Study Procedures: Participants involved in this study will be invited to a semi-structured interview, lasting between 30-90 minutes. Interview questions will be based around themes of leisure; weekend activities versus week working schedules, time spent in the two realms, investments in the city versus elsewhere, and the like.

Potential Risks: This study presents no foreseen risks.

Potential Benefits: Participating in this study will help better understand the lifestyle culture of Vancouver, open up a space for discussion, and fuel future conversations on the topic.

Confidentiality: The content of the interviews will be kept confidential and individuals will never be identified by name in any reports resulting from the study. With the permission of the participants, interviews will be recorded so as to ensure faithful reproduction. Only the researcher listed above will have access to the recordings and written transcripts from the interview. All documentation will be securely stored for five years and then destroyed.

Remuneration/Compensation: No financial compensation will be offered for your participation in this study.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or need more information about this study, you may contact Samuel Gregory Johns by email. You may also contact the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as an interviewee, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the University of British Columbia Office of Research Services.

Consent: Your signature on this form and your participation in this interview imply that you consent to take part in the research and have read and understood the information in this form. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. Furthermore, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Please retain a copy of this consent form for your records.

Signature:_____