Will’s Notebook: The Art of Learning from Experience and Listening

by

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Will’s Notebook: The Art of Learning from Experience and Listening

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in    Curriculum Studies

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Abstract

This dissertation is an inquiry into how experience and listening can be used in creative production to improve teaching and learning. I use an arts-based research approach to develop two creative productions. The first is a story book (*Will’s Notebook*) that tells a tale of my journey, the second is a suite of soundscape compositions (*The Cotter Suite*) that represents this journey musically. Through hermeneutic reflection of experience, acceptance of complexity and uncertainty, and self-care, a theoretical framework is developed to consider how artistic practice and creative production can be sources of educational research and development. The conceptualization of artistic practice and creative production as part of my own *currere* connects curriculum studies and educational research to arts-based practice for the improvement of teaching and learning.
Lay Summary

This research makes connections between art (stories and music) and teaching. The connections are developed through both the practice of making art and thinking about how we learn from experience. This is done by taking careful personal notes and revising them into a story that can teach us about learning. The practice of making music is also explored as a way to describe experiences and places. The creative production of art is explored as a way to better understand education and experience.
Preface

This dissertation uses original artistic compositions (story and soundscapes) by the author as part of arts-based educational research. All compositions (Will’s Notebook and The Cotter Suite) were created specifically for this research. The analysis of the compositions explores how creative production can extend our understanding of experience, self-care, and study to improve our teaching and learning. No ethics approval was required for this research. Will’s Notebook is contained within this text and The Cotter Suite can be heard as supplementary material or at: http://www.sfu.ca/media-lab/cotter/
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iii

Lay Summary .......................................................................................................................... iv

Preface ..................................................................................................................................... v

Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. vi

List of Figures ......................................................................................................................... ix

List of Supplementary Material .......................................................................................... x

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ xi

Dedication ............................................................................................................................... xii

**Chapter 1: The Initiation** ................................................................................................. 1

1.1 Prelude ............................................................................................................................... 1

1.2 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 2

1.3 The Soundscape ................................................................................................................ 4

1.4 Pedagogy of Listening ...................................................................................................... 5

1.5 Attunement ....................................................................................................................... 8

1.6 Purpose and Organization of the Inquiry ....................................................................... 9

**Chapter 2: Theoretical Frames** .................................................................................... 14

2.1 A Basis for Knowledge ................................................................................................... 14

2.2 Worth ............................................................................................................................... 28

**Chapter 3: John Dewey and The Practice of Experience** ............................................. 31

3.1 On Reading Dewey ......................................................................................................... 31

3.2 The Experience of Dewey ............................................................................................. 33
Chapter 6: Will’s Notebook and The Cotter Suite ......................................................... 110

Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion ................................................................................. 179
  7.1 Elements of Will’s Notebook .................................................................................. 179
    7.1.1 The Characters ................................................................................................. 179
    7.1.2 The Locations ................................................................................................. 183
  7.2 The Cotter Suite (2019) ....................................................................................... 187
  7.3 Stories of Experience ............................................................................................. 190
  7.4 Background and context ......................................................................................... 191
  7.5 Bildungsroman ........................................................................................................ 194
  7.6 The Primacy of the Subjective ............................................................................... 195
  7.7 Materials and Ideas ............................................................................................... 197
  7.8 Subject and Society ............................................................................................... 197
  7.9 Self-care Revisited ............................................................................................... 199
  7.10 Return to Teaching ............................................................................................... 200

Bibliography ...................................................................................................................... 205

Appendix ............................................................................................................................. 229
List of Figures

Figures in Chapter 6 are recreated from the story book *Will’s Notebook*. They are original collaborations between Lyra Murphy, Sheila Karrow, and David Murphy. These images were created between 2014 and 2016.

Figure 7-1 Spectrogram showing a Sheppard Tone from The Eternal Spring………………… 191
List of Supplementary Material

(Located in the supplementary materials and errata collection)

The Cotter Suite consists of the following soundscape compositions:

1) The Eternal Spring (10:11)
2) Parliament of Owls (3:43)
3) Plains of Reason (4:42)
4) Forest of Dispersion (7:40)
5) Tree of Life (14:24)
6) Wild Rover Trap (Bonus track, 4:25)
Acknowledgements

This dissertation is a collaboration of many people and ideas who have helped me. My daughter, Lyra Murphy, who constantly told stories and drew “OC’s” (original characters). My mother, Joyce Cotter Murphy, who’s wisdom and moral guidance shaped the direction of my journey. My supervisor, Dr. Peter Gouzouasis, gave me endless guidance, suggestions, and ideas for my entire time at UBC. My committee members, Dr. Rita Irwin & Dr. Dónal O’Donoghue, who have been so generous with their wisdom and knowledge. Dr. Donna Trueit, who taught me how to become a scholar, at least on paper.

The spirits of Dr. Bill Doll & Dr. Carl Leggo are infused in this work and in my life. Bill’s care and attention everything his students say taught me to listen as learning. Our conversations about complexity and imagination gave me inspiration and opened vast realms of ideas. Experiencing the joy of teaching and learning with Bill (“What a JOY!”) taught me to have faith in what we should to do as teachers. Carl showed me how to “live poetically.” His delight for the particular in people, things, places (like the many things from many places in his office) taught me to appreciate more the details of life. I will miss these wonderful teachers but their teachings carry on in everything I do.
For Joyce and Lyra.
Chapter 1: The Initiation

1.1 Prelude

Instead of teaching, I told stories. They thought I was teaching. I was learning.

Frank McCourt (2005, p. 19)

Frank McCourt was 75 when he wrote his memoir, *Teacher Man* (2005), about his life as a teacher. This quote by Frank McCourt (2005, p. 19) summarizes an ideal for me: To look back on a career of teaching from an overall positive perspective. As a mid-career teacher, this seems to me a noble pursuit. Like McCourt, I did not think of teaching as my “calling.” It was something for which I had to develop a taste and certainly the requisite skills. During my first decade or so of teaching, I was generally making things up as I went along, with mixed results (also similar to McCourt, although his aptitude for teaching may well exceed mine). At one point, I felt such a need for help, advice, wisdom, direction, that I reached a crisis—I should either gain the insight into this project of education that worked for me personally and professionally or pursue another vocation. This crisis led me to enrolling in a PhD program in education as the first step in a quest to find the knowledge that would save my career. McCourt makes a link between stories, teaching, and learning with the reflection of one who has benefited from all three. Perhaps this is part of the insight I was seeking…

This dissertation attempts to link experience and the cultivation of knowledge through a creative practice—a practice of writing, composition, reflection, and care. It draws from the traditions of arts-based educational research, hermeneutics, autobiography, and study. The

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1 I am using the concept of study as defined by Pinar (2006, pp. 109–120).

Experiences are a fundamental part of the human condition, but they can be so immediate, so visceral, and so involved that it is often impossible to understand all their complexities. Intrigued by this, I wanted to understand how learning experiences can become more meaningful. Through a combination of the creative production of an autobiographical story of experience, continual hermeneutic reflection, and an appreciation of self-care, an approach to teaching and learning emerged. The story book I developed provided (and continues to provide) opportunities to reflect, examine, refer, contemplate, analyze, theorize, and study my experiences. The accompanying soundscape composition builds on these opportunities through creative expression and aesthetic exploration. The philosophy of teaching and learning that emerged from this process is what I attempt to describe in this dissertation.

1.2 Introduction

“But how did it all begin?” Roberto Calasso (1988) asks this question over and over as he tells of the origin of myths. What came first, this dissertation or the story? Which came first is impossible to tell. I began this dissertation before I wrote *Will’s Notebook*, but somehow, the story was always there in fragments. The examination of experiences through autobiographical stories also informs future stories and experiences. A hermeneutic cycle of interpretation and writing (reflection and action) helps develop a method that benefits both. The intention is that through cyclical iteration, form and meaning are refined. The writing of *Will’s Notebook* provided an interpretive text for examining the relationship between experience, teaching, and learning. The story is a temporal and mnemonic record of my educational reflections and
experiences. *Will’s Notebook* and *The Cotter Suite* are experiments using personal experience and reflection to structure theoretical understanding. These forms of creative production provided a method of hermeneutically cycling between articulation of and reflection upon experience.

I am particularly interested in the generative nature of experience as demonstrated in creative production (Aoki, 2012; Eisner, 2017; Gouzouasis, 2015; Greene, 2001; Jardine, 2006) and how this experience can inform my practice of teaching and learning. As a musician, I have noticed how my experiences in musical practices (i.e., in routine, practice, study, tradition, repertoire, interaction, and improvisation) help to structure how I learn and understand. This observation leads me to a question: How might the experience of creative production inform and improve teaching and learning?

*Will’s Notebook* is a fictionally stylized narrative story based on my educational experience and written for my elementary school-aged daughter. It is an exploration, through interpretive interaction, of my experiences studying curriculum and pedagogy. This is an inquiry into the capacity of autobiographical narrative, creative production, academic study, and self-care as a way to understand and improve educational experiences. *The Cotter Suite* extends that capacity into soundscape composition. The intention was to develop a sustainable practice that connects knowledge and experience.

However, this all began with my interest in and involvement with sound studies, specifically with the experience of listening. Sound is the grounding that supports my educational philosophy. My background in music and sound studies emphasizes listening as the foundation that connects all my experiences. Listening is the calling to which I am most attuned.
1.3 The Soundscape

The inspiration for the present inquiry began with a book, *A Sound Education*, by R. Murray Schafer (1992). The book contains 100 short exercises designed to help people listen better. It is filled with ideas on how to create experiences that attune our ears to our soundscape. Revisiting this book inspired me to study education. Schafer develops his lessons with creativity, play, intelligence, and a keen sensibility for the ecology of experiences that the exercises can create. The list of exercises in the book together show how to use imagination and our environment to generate ways of teaching. The complexity and abundance in the environment and our contexts can be revealed through careful listening. Schafer gives 100 examples, but when teachers learn to listen to the environment, they can generate countless more. In this sense, listening can become the source of abundant resources for teachers and learners. Developing an appreciation for our soundscape, or our acoustic ecology, is a process of understanding that both listening and sound making are part of a complex ongoing interaction with our environment, our culture, and ourselves.

The way we learn to improve the world’s soundscape begins simply by listening (Schafer, 1977/1994, p. 11). Schafer’s connection to his creative practice informs all aspects of his education. To listen and make sounds together becomes a form of conversation. Specifically, as a musician and composer, he uses his knowledge of music to organize sound making, and as an ecologist he meaningfully situates that activity in the environment or soundscape. In his

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2 Attunement is a concept that Ted Aoki uses to describe the essence of teaching. “what it means to be attuned to the call of care that is present in every authentic pedagogic situation” (2005, p. 193).

3 The *soundscape* is a concept developed by R. Murray Schafer (1977/1994) to engage people in our sonic environment or ecology. The idea is that we are encouraged, through critical listening, to preserve and make more beautiful the essential characters of our environments.
pedagogical translation, Schafer conducts his students through activities that create experiences, memories, points of reflection. This harmonization of music and education has resonated with me since I first read the book many years ago. It suggests that the knowledge accumulated through a creative practice can inform ways of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the philosophical foundation of the musician transcends to the project of education and can make suggestions for the curriculum. For Schafer, it is acoustic ecology—the soundscape. Schafer’s teaching practice and philosophical ideas inform each other in a dialogic, reciprocal manner. In large segments of his monographs, he uses story—in the form of autoethnographies and ethnodrama (Schafer, 1965, 1986)—using scripted narratives to elaborate upon pedagogical ideas and learning opportunities. Schafer also uses illustrations and calligraphy in his musical scores, combining alternative forms of artistic representation with musical notation in inspirational and educational ways. Musicians interpreting his scores are presented with multiple interpretive points of reference. Schafer used his arts-based practices to inform and express his philosophical ideas. This notion of generative sources of imagination and creativity (e.g., music making, storytelling) informing educational practice is a powerful and resonant concept for me, and Schafer was able to demonstrate this pedagogically and artistically.

1.4 Pedagogy of Listening

R. Murray Schafer’s advice for tuning the world is to listen. Listening can provide the opportunity to discover the interdependent relationships between ourselves and our broader context or ecology. Listening for the complete context, for the broadest environmental, historical, social, and subjective resonances. This is a skill that can be developed through a practice of
mindful listening. Precise practices such as auscultation,⁴ sound engineering, telegraphy,⁵ or piano tuning, have created a practical or instrumental orientation toward sound and listening (Sterne, 2003). This creates a perception of listening as a system of technical skills (audile techniques). Although an instrumental approach to listening is very helpful and essential to developing skills, it limits listening from reaching the potential that R. Murray Schafer describes—the tuning of the world. Listening is an active process of connecting what we hear (a physical and physiological process, a translation of a range of vibrations into perceptible sound) to our culture, knowledge, experiences, and contexts. To develop a pedagogy of listening, audile techniques should be developed but there needs to also be an openness for unexpected and unfamiliar sounds to be regarded and appreciated for their pedagogical value.

Hildegard Westerkamp (1974) suggests our abilities to listen are developed by paying close attention to the sounds of our bodies within our environment.

Start by listening to the sounds of your body while moving. They are closest to you and establish the first dialogue between you and the environment. If you can hear even the quietest of these sounds you are moving through an environment which is scaled on human proportions. In other words, with your voice or your footsteps for instance, you are "talking" to your environment which then in turn responds by giving your sounds a specific acoustic quality. (n.p.)

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⁴ Auscultation (from the Latin verb auscultare "to listen") is listening to the internal sounds of the body, often using a stethoscope, for the purposes of examining the circulatory and respiratory systems. For more on auscultation see: Sterne (2003), pp. 100-136.

⁵ Telegraphy is the long-distance transmission of messages, most often associated with the Morse code system, which requires the listening skills of differentiating two different signal durations (dots and dashes).
This reminds us that listening is always a subjective interaction with our environment, our history, and our culture. Listening is active in this sense because as our attention is drawn and refocused we invariably influence our perception of, and our contribution to the soundscape. This requires an understanding of our reciprocal relationship to any soundscape. In a classroom the soundscape is in negotiation and our presence is always part of that, even if we are “being quiet and listening.” A pedagogy of listening suggests a cooperative approach to understanding our collective participation in the soundscape, through our experiences. John Dewey said “vision is a spectator, hearing is a participator” (LW 2, [1927], p. 371). Listening influences the sounds we make, or as Max van Manen (1990) puts it, “an authentic speaker must be a true listener, able to attune to the deep tonalities of language that normally fall out of our accustomed range of hearing, able to listen to the way the things of the world speak to us” (pp. 111-112).

A pedagogy of listening requires a level of aural literacy that includes a deliberate understanding of the environment as well as the audile techniques required to listen for that understanding. Listening is a cognitive, socially constructed, and habitually acquired process of discrimination and perception. Listening requires what Zhang Hua (2012) describes as an “open-mindedness” to “seek the meaning of life presenting and narrating itself; only by being a listener, either a teacher or a student can really experience his or her meaning of life” (p. 66). Listening is a collection of ‘awarenesses’ that combine and reinforce practiced skills (e.g., auscultation, audio engineering) with mindful cognition (i.e., audiation)—and the combinations are endless.

Opening your mind and ears is what R. Murray Schafer (1965; 1992) calls for with his “ear cleaning” exercises. These exercises attempt to reset our hearing to be more attuned to our environment and ourselves. Schafer’s (1992) suggestion is to “sensitize the ear to the miraculous world of sound around us” (p. 11), by developing critical acumen, aural perception, and
imagination. The practice of ear cleaning exercises is designed to develop skills that work toward social and environmental sensitivities that can influence actions and others. This approach and legacy (R. Murray Schafer’s writings and collections of exercises) has had a profound effect on my approach to education and my inspiration to work with a pedagogy of listening.

1.5 Attunement

Following from Schafer’s connection between ideas and practice in *Tuning of the World* (1977/1994), the concept of tuning has become foundational to my approach to education research. Conventional, positivist, music education research has created a “suffocating orthodoxy” (Gouzouasis et. al., 2014, p. 4) that can reduce the complexity and relativity that make teaching and learning so compelling. The idea of tuning describes the relative and relational aspects of teaching and learning and is related to a pedagogy of listening (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015; Hua, 2012). Tuning is always relative, as no guitar string stays in tune for long enough to not require a breadth of relativity, or what we call “intonation”; in teaching, this refers to flexibility, an openness to adjusting themes, approaches, and assignment deliverables as needed through a practice of active “listening” to students and situations. Tuning can be a useful concept for both teachers and learners because it refers to the depth and relativity afforded by any act of composition. More than merely a metaphor, it evokes a procedure or method for articulating relative differences between individual perceptions (Ahern, 2013). It is also part of the historical tradition R. Murray Schafer (1977/1994) began in the 1970s—to understand tuning as not just an adjustment of sound but also an adjustment of our own perceptions to include historical, political, economic, social, and ecological factors that influence our perceptions. As with two vocalists who attempt to sing in harmony, there is more involved than merely hitting the correct pitches. It is a negotiation between two autonomous voices. Ted Aoki (2005) takes
this idea of tuning further to define it on an ontological level. From Aoki’s perspective, *attunement* is understood as a state of becoming that incorporates the relativity and complexity of each unique situation while staying connected to the histories and legacies that accumulate collectively. Aoki describes the process of becoming attuned as developing a reciprocal conversation between our learning and our subjective lived experience (p. 360).

Pinar (2019) describes attunement as a way to “traverse the gap between our world and what is outside it, from particularity to universality” (p. 261). This notion connects listening with an understanding of how subjective experience (particularity) can resonate in a collective whole (universality). Attunement is a connection between our knowledge and our perception, between what we want and what the situation requires. Pinar’s understanding of attunement takes the concept into an ethical, moral, and spiritual level by relating our particular experiences with our knowledge and appreciation for “that which is good” (Aoki, as quoted in Pinar, 2019, p. 263). With this understanding, attunement can have transformational possibilities that go beyond individual understandings to a comprehension of the whole. With conviction, openness, and belonging, attunement has the potential to inform our actions.

Starting with a pedagogy of listening that develops attunement as sources of my curiosity, I began an intellectual journey to discover more about teaching and learning. Using my experiences as a learner, I embarked on a quest to inform my practice as a teacher, parent, and musician.

1.6 Purpose and Organization of the Inquiry

Based on the concepts and considerations presented thus far, the purpose of this dissertation is to find the connections and points of resonance between my philosophical development and my actions as a teacher and learner—to make my study of curriculum
commensurate with my practice. My inquiry uses traditions of narrative and arts-based educational research to articulate an autobiographical story of my intellectual journey in the study of education. The process began with my notes taken in my classes as a PhD student (*hypomnémata*), developed into a book for elementary school-aged children (*Will’s Notebook*), and was completed as a collection of soundscape compositions (*The Cotter Suite*). Iterative cycles of reflection and interpretation drawn from hermeneutic traditions were used to refine this autobiographical story of my experiences. I used the story as material for reflective analysis and interpretation; these, in turn, informed my knowledge, which informed the next iteration of the story, and became the inspiration for composition. The result is an iterative hermeneutic cycle, or a “holistic dialectic” (Gouzouasis, 2013, p. 12), wherein creative representation and rational elucidation inspire each other.

My theoretical framework is structured in the relationship between experience and knowledge. I am interested in an educational methodology that is based on individual assimilation of experience (Doll, 2012, p. 54) as a way to improve teaching and learning. This is grounded on an epistemological shift from a prescribed educational methodology based on predefined outcomes supported by a modernist, behavioral, positivist perspective, toward a relational, complex, at times unpredictable approach that cultivates an individual’s agency and control so as to develop their own educational experiences in social contexts. This epistemological shift is noted in science (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984), philosophy (Gadamer, 1960/2004; Morin, 2008; Rorty, 1979), psychology (Overton, 2013), and curriculum studies

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6 See section 5.5.1 in this dissertation for a description of *hypomnémata.*

The theoretical framework that I detail herein is based on an assimilation of my experiences. Beginning with my experience as an undergraduate in the 1980s during the height of the “paradigm wars,” I started to develop a perspective on the importance and difficulties of an epistemological shift from positivist certainty to interpretive understanding. Recognizing historical scientific knowledge as only one way of knowing, for example, seems reasonable today, but in 1984 it was almost heretical in some university departments. Although the wars over paradigms are not as prevalent today, we still have traditions and legacies in our society, particularly in education, that bias values in research, methods, and decision-making processes toward positivist, scientific ways of knowing. Although I argue for an epistemological shift to include relational, complex, expressive, and creative experiences, this is not to suggest that scientific knowledge should be undervalued. It is through the incorporation of multiple ways of knowing, including scientific and artistic ideas, that we can attune to a complex and relational epistemology (Overton, 2003) more suited to contemporary educational research. This shift includes an acceptance of knowledge as always incomplete, constantly shifting, contextual, and interrelational.

The concept of conversation⁷ emerges as an important way we may act upon this epistemological shift. A discursive practice could be a response to the cumulative complexity of our current milieu because it has a human quality that is very informative, especially given our

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⁷ The term “conversation” comes from the Latin convertere, meaning to transform (Alford, 2002, p. 60).
global technological emphasis. Conversation (with myself, with the materials of creative production, and with others) can help refine thoughts and define the course of action. This dissertation is compiled as a dialogic engagement with self, society, and history. The conversation works to refine basic ideas (*hypomnémata*) through iterative reflection and dialog toward a form of creative production (story, music). It is an attempt to discern worth in knowledge and practice. The conversation between my story and my theoretical framework continues beyond the completion of this dissertation and infuses my practice as a teacher and learner.

My experience as a musician runs through my inquiry as grounding, foundation, and a constant source of inspiration and insight. It was my interest in how we understand and organize sound that brought me to Schafer’s work, both his pedagogical methods and his forms of philosophical representation. I turn to traditions of arts-based educational research for my methodological approach to try to interpret, understand, and refine my experiences. *Will’s Notebook* and *The Cotter Suite* were developed to provided me with the analogy of a quest that creates a reflective source for the complexity and interrelational nature of my experiences in teaching and learning.

I consider John Dewey’s philosophy of educational experience foundational to my epistemological position and key to my inquiry. Dewey introduced to me the notion of using experience as the basis for education, an idea I had intuitively started to develop in my own teaching (Murphy, 2003). The emphasis upon experience in my practice is a continual impetus for recording and re-examining; it is a part of my conversations, and it helps me discern worth. Reading and spending time with Dewey’s oeuvre and having conversations with Bill Doll about
Dewey, encouraged me to establish parameters that are limitless not only for education but for how I now live.

The combination of a philosophy of experience with a hermeneutic approach to understanding is the theoretical framework that informs the methodology of this inquiry. The cycle of experience (represented by hypomnémata refined into story and music) and reflection (informed by study) creates a hermeneutic understanding of practice. My interpretation of Gadamer’s hermeneutic understanding is a form of self-understanding. The interpretation of subjective experience informed by historical and cultural knowledge leads to a greater understanding of the self and, if Dewey is correct, can lead to improvements in future educational experiences. Ultimately, a true understanding of the context of any inquiry requires an understanding of the self—obtained through a dialogic journey of experiencing.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Frames

2.1 A Basis for Knowledge

William Pinar suggests the question fundamental to curriculum studies is: “What knowledge is of the most worth?” (2012, p. xv). I have been consistently intrigued by this question. Its simplicity belies the complex challenge it presents to educators. It can be asked constantly, and the answers continually vary. In the classroom or in preparing for a class, this same question can have complicated and evolving answers. This ongoing query forms the foundation to my theoretical approach and drives my inquiry into education. It is Will’s quest.

I did my undergraduate degree (B.F.A. in Music, 1992) during the late 20th century, when critiques of modernist epistemologies challenged almost every aspect of our ways of knowing. I remember thinking—nearer to the end of my degree—that the only certainty we know is that we do not know. There was trouble brewing in academia, and conflicting ideologies between my classes created an uneasy experience for me as a student. By the end of the 20th century, the hegemony of positivism (i.e., knowledge is exclusively derived from sensory input and interpreted through reason) had been so reconceptualised that the task of academia became defining and debating knowledge creation, not necessarily the creation of knowledge itself. In our society, this elusiveness of meaning and uncertainty of knowledge translated into suspicion and eventual distrust for the relevance of academic work. All the while, power structures that

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8 Herbert Spencer (1884) first posed this question but Pinar’s (2012) interpretation is my inspiration.
9 The Habermas–Gadamer debate is an example of this elusiveness (Mendelson, 1979; Teigas, 1995). Academic debates, especially this pitting of critical theory against hermeneutics, developed esoteric theories of communication that risk becoming irrelevant to political praxis (Mendelson, 1979, p. 44). These debates became so nuanced and lengthy that the understanding of knowledge and truth became even more elusive, despite the intentions of the instigators (Fuchs, 1986; Rorty, 1979). The ideological debates that emerged in academia leading up to the mid-20th century set the framework for the paradigm wars to follow.
were the focus of critical derision (e.g., finance, politics, the military, education, health) seem to have altered very little despite all that was written about them (Giroux, 1981).

If Richard Rorty (1979) is correct in asserting that the discourses of knowledge oscillate between routine problem-solving and intellectual crises (i.e., “normal” and “abnormal” discourses, p. 320), then the late 20th century was definitely a time of intellectual crises. Although the current intellectual context is not as acrimonious as it was in the 1980s, this is still a very complex time for contemporary researchers and certainly not a time of routine problem-solving. The implications of the resulting proliferation of sources and methods for ways of knowing that came out of the interpretive turn of the 20th century are with us today. As any graduate student will attest, methodology is not just about what method you will use to conduct an inquiry—it has become a study unto itself. It is through this complex context of academic debate and dispersion of ideas that Rorty suggests a hermeneutically informed approach to continuing the conversation as a coping strategy, a way to proceed with uncertainty.

Hermeneutics sees the relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites the speakers, but where the hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts. (Rorty, 1979, p. 318)

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10 The interpretive turn refers to a reflexive understanding that our experience of reality, meaning making, and knowledge claims are shaped by our particular context (social, cultural, historical, temporal, physical, ecological). The interpretive turn can be traced back to Immanuel Kant’s (1911/1790) descriptions of mental categories or ontological predicates that he held to be stable and that we experience reality shaped by these mental categories. The concept took on its contemporary critical meaning that there are no external grounding truths (i.e., no stable ones) and later, with Nietzsche, that reality is experienced by the perceiver (Jacobs, 1981) and other Continental philosophers (see Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014). Language, as our medium of interpretation, becomes the battle ground for truth, as evidenced by the proliferation of turns in the 20th century.
Ultimately, as we find our way through these accumulated academic discourses, or what I called the *forest of dispersion*, our interaction has to benefit the practical realities of teaching and learning. More than just a coping strategy, conversation is both a necessity and a source of hope. Perhaps engagement in conversation can help us choose a path. Conversation can transform thought into an experience, for ourselves and those with whom we engage.

Rorty’s critique of foundationalist epistemology (1979) resonates, because it reminds me that the purpose of our research is to improve the educational experience. The dominant model of positivist inquiry continued to evolve during the 20th century, and education researchers attempted to measure and prove findings using standardized testing, even when in many circumstances this model turned out to be insufficient (Eisenhart, & Towne, 2003; Erickson, & Gutierrez, 2002; Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002; Maxwell, 2004; NRC, 2002). Looking for a foundational, self-justifying way of knowing in education research can certainly advance research careers, but the dialogic function of teaching and learning is underdeveloped within that model.

Music education research can provide interesting examples of a positivist approach to education with the measurement of musical aptitude, which developed over the 20th century. The ability to measure and predict aptitude or potential for achievement in music was a focus for many music education researchers. The specific, standardized approach of Carl Seashore

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11 Regelski (2007) articulates this situation of research and the dissemination of research becoming “products” to build careers in research and construct professional identities, rather than being ways to try to understand how and why music is experienced by real people (students and teachers) under everyday conditions. This form of university-framed epistemology offers very little of relevance to teachers and learners outside a highly confined and specific definition of music practice (i.e., classical repertoire studied and performed with the goal of virtuosic performance).

12 This is an example of a positivist orientation in music education research and is not necessarily indicative of the entire field.
Measures of Musical Talent, 1919, 1939) and James Mursell (1937, 1943, 1951) became a source of ongoing research and debate (Grashel, 2008). Driven by the goals of efficiency and standardization, music education researchers developed tests and debated the philosophical and/or psychological foundations of aptitude and talent, applying rigorous testing principles to establish reliability and validity. Kwalwasser and Dykema (1930) included actual instrumental music recordings (as opposed to electronically generated tones), which added dimensions of preference and achievement, assuming a recognition of traditional Occidental tonality (Gordon, 1971, p. 16). Wing (1941) used composed music in his tests to include the psychological constructs of perception and a priori musical understanding—again with an assumption of Western musical sensibilities. The introduction of preference and achievement further divided the debate over musical aptitude testing into “atomistic” (testing with non-music tones) and “omnibus” approaches (testing with music recordings—implying cultural awareness; Grashel, 2008). Rainbow (1965) applied multiple regression methods to include extra-musical variables (e.g., socioeconomic status, interest, and other environmental and social factors), complexifying the model and further broadening the debate over measurement. Eventually, the concept of audiation (i.e., the active, cognitive comprehension and realization of music) as a holistic, measurable parameter of music aptitude was developed by Edwin Gordon (1965a, 1965b, 1969,

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13 Using music examples based on culturally familiar music is considered a major flaw in Wing’s test because aptitude implies innate ability, whereas the use of familiar British music implies that music examples have been learned through experience. To determine qualities of various performances of familiar music (e.g., the comparison of poorly performed and a well performed version of “God Save The Queen”) requires prior knowledge (i.e., learned) of correct and incorrect melodic and harmonic content which render’s Wing’s test as an achievement, not aptitude, test. Edwin Gordon’s tests all use newly composed music examples.
and has a high correlation with musical achievement (i.e., learning to play a musical instrument).

These examples demonstrate some of the amazing history of the measurement of musical talent and aptitude and are indicative of how positivist answers to complex social constructs like music education are in many ways insufficient. Gordon (1993), one of the people who shifted the approach to evaluating music aptitude by comparing tonal and rhythm patterns and entire, unfamiliar, newly composed melodic motives rather than the atomistic comparison of individual pitches, asserts that music audiation testing enables individual differences to be recognized and used to improve instruction. This is clearly a contribution to music education, but within this form of instrumentalization are assumptions—the foremost being Western culture and repertoire define achievement—that limit the possibilities and complexities music has to offer. How meaningful the experience of music is in our daily lives and how we might develop and expand that facet of music learning experiences are less emphasized. Standardized systems of testing and measurement, especially in regard to creative production, lack the practical moral virtue needed to contribute to new teaching and learning experiences (Gouzouasis, 2013). Music education research becomes detached from the lived experience of music. Scholars in this area focus more on the artifacts of music (e.g., scores, performances, recordings) or measurable abilities (Korsyn, 2003, p. 6) than on the experiences of music.

Music as a social phenomenon has inherent complexity, unpredictability, instability, and generative capacities. An assumption of measurement is that the object measured remains stable or consistent; but music is not stable. Questlove (Thompson, 2013, p. 24) details his experience of listening to “Rapper’s Delight” by the Sugarhill Gang on the radio one evening in 1979 in West Philadelphia, saying that after hearing that song, “the world was different forever” for him.
The confluence of a spoken word game, the Dozens—patterns of interactive spoken word insults between two “players,” often in rhymes and in front of an audience (see Jordan, 1983)—and the availability of affordable sampling technology (e.g., Casio SK-1; Akai S900) spawned an entirely new genre of music. Hip hop emerged out of this confluence and has become an undeniable musical influence and dominant style in pop music (Eastman & Pettijohn, 2017). Street cred or rhymin’ could be developed as part of a music aptitude test battery. The point here is that measurement may only tell us so much if what is being measured keeps changing—features of music (e.g., melody, rhythm, harmony, tone colors) have changed radically since the Musical Aptitude Profile was first published (1965).

Rorty suggests that knowledge is not a matter of mirroring an external reality, but is a level of success in a specific cultural context or community that is always in flux. There are agreed upon set of rules to play by, but these rules are in constant motion. As the context shifts, so does the persuasiveness of the commensurate knowledge. New knowledge replaces old, not in an objective progression leading to contemporary enlightenment but rather as a better way to cope with the present context (Goldman, 1988, p. 105; Rorty, 1979, p. 269). As we come to know more, we do not move toward an ultimate understanding, but we pursue what it is to be human—with the fallibilities, inconsistencies, and ultimately temporal (mortal) finitude all humans encounter. Knowledge and truth are culturally defined and accepted by specific communities, but all propositions may eventually give way to new ways of thinking.

How does one find agency in response to that notion? Is a coping mechanism the best tool we have? Coping may have in it the agency for what we are seeking, if we do not think of this as merely a consolation for failing to find an answer. “I think, therefore I am” seemed a good
answer, an opportunity to let go of certainty, but for another time and place. Letting go of the pursuit to finally figure out how it all works is freedom from the mental slavery of the modernist ideal of revealing a universal truth. Acceptance of the chaotic, unpredictable, wonderfully abundant, infinitely mysterious, complex order/disorder of being is indeed an emancipation. If we stop thinking of this pursuit of knowledge as part of a linear journey that accumulates wisdom toward an ultimate understanding, and we instead think of the wonder and beauty that can exist in a continuing cycle—an ongoing conversation, one that never runs out of new ideas—we free ourselves from the arbitrary human constructs of finding a final answer or reaching an ending. For me, this is not a consolation but an epiphany.

The concept of embracing uncertainty and complexity has been an underlying tone building in volume throughout the 20th century. Challenges to the foundations of our understanding of science have resulted in a reassessment of how and what we know. Concepts such as uncertainty (Heisenberg, 1927), relativity (Einstein, 1916/1920), and nonlinear thermodynamics (Prigogine, 1984) have compelled scientists to re-examine the goals and methods of inquiry. Indeed, the entire world view of science has been transformed from Laplacian determinism15 to relative interactions not isolated but contextualized within social, ecological, and complex contexts (Toffler, 1984, p. xii). Ilya Prigogine16 insightfully declares a “new dialog with nature” (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, p. xxvii) as a new horizon or point of

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14 *Je pense, donc je suis* is the French proposition made by René Descartes (1596–1650), translated into English as *I think, therefore I am* (Descartes, 1637/2007, p. 33). *Cogito ergo sum* is the phrase in Latin.

15 Pierre-Simone Laplace (1749–1827) published the first articulation of scientific determinism in 1814. It is known as *Laplace’s demon* and states that given enough facts, we can determine both the future and the past using classical or Newtonian mechanics (Laplace, 1814/1951).

16 Ilya Prigogine (1917–2003) was a Russian-Belgian physical chemist who won the Nobel prize in chemistry in 1977.
view that is inconceivable using the tools of determinism. As Abraham Kaplan (1964, p. 28) proclaimed, “Give a small boy a hammer and he will find that everything he encounters needs pounding.” We know the tools work, so we look for ways to use the tools. When we attempt to measure expression and experiences using linear measurement tools (e.g., aptitude or creativity tests), the complexities that are revealed become overwhelming. We need a change in perspective that allows for—and indeed celebrates—complexity as a generative source of knowledge and new ways of thinking.

The idea of complexity in education has been suggested by Davis and Sumara (2006) in a very prescriptive way. Using terms such as mutually reciprocal conditions of emergence (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 129) to describe diversity and redundancy, interactions and decentralized control, coherence and randomness, is a metaphorical application of terminology borrowed from complexity studies with the intention of critiquing our linear language systems. Their point is that our language in and of itself constrains us to a linear, non-complex way of communicating (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 42). However, the idea that we are trapped in a linear way of perceiving the complex world lacks the agency that teachers and learners need to truly transform how we teach and learn. It is a transformative possibility for which Edgar Morin (2008) argues when he describes an “epistemological opening” (p. 28) that complex thinking can provide. For Morin, complex thinking is a way to unify concepts that have been isolated and compartmentalized from hundreds of years of academic thought guided by a paradigm of simplification, separation, and reduction (p. 81). He describes that paradigm as a “blind intelligence.”

We are dominated by the principles of disjunction, reduction, and abstraction.

Together, they constitute what I call the “paradigm of simplification.” Descartes
formulated this master paradigm of Western civilization by disjoining the thinking subject (ego cogitans) and the thing being thought of (res extensa)—in other words, philosophy and science—and by positing “clear and distinct” ideas as principles of reality—in other words, disjunctive thought itself. (Morin, 2008, p. 3)

The disjoining of the subject and the object of thought is at the centre of a debate that has continued in Western society for centuries. The blindness that Morin refers to is our inability to understand the whole and the parts as always containing both, the paradox of the one and the many (2008, p. 5). The ability to distinguish order and eliminate ambiguity is at the cost of understanding the interconnected relational complexity of reality. This form of blindness has led to the atrocities we perpetuate on our planet and ourselves (environmental, economic, social) by not understanding the interrelated nature of all ideas and things we pursue (Morin, 1999). This results in advancements in science, technology, and the production of knowledge without an understanding of the social and ecological consequences. We see the manifestation of this disjunction in thought throughout our curriculum in the division of subjects—for example, the isolation of math or social studies or physics from music and visual art. Complex thinking can provide an abundance of relations and ideas, but it requires an epistemological shift within an established system and legacy that seems to resist such a shift.

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17 René Descartes’ dualism of the subject (the knower) and the eternal world or object (what is known) becomes problematic with modern philosophy. Heidegger’s concept of Dasein, or being-in-the-world, suggests that the subject (the knowing being) is inseparable from the object (the world the subject finds itself in). This is related to epistemology in that “knowing has the phenomenal character of a Being which is in and towards the world” (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 87). Morin argues that complex thinking unifies dualities and allows ways to conceive the simultaneity of either/or propositions (2008, p. 80).
The educational implications of thinking complexly is an invitation to make an epistemological shift, toward what William Doll calls, a new discursive practice; one which focuses not on the nodes (things in themselves) existent in this world but on their relations to the world we live in, and the world which is yet to come . . . to begin to move beyond the telescopic, objective seeing of modernism. We begin to see differently working with this interrelated constellation of features, focusing on relations and interactions, being recursive, playing with and exploring differences, attending to intuition and abiding with mystery and ambiguity, happily relinquishing certainty. (2010, p. 176)

This way of percieving differently, by thinking complexly, offers us an approach to curriculum not as a collection of things to learn but as a starting point of a journey we take in relation with others. From that perspective, every name, object, skill, work, technique, and text is not merely a thing to learn but an opening to the abundance of relations they can suggest. Historical, social, political, technical, aesthetic, and emotional dimensions can be explored with any subject matter of study, and they all relate back to the people doing the teaching and learning. This epistemological shift moves curriculum from complicated (it can be taken apart, the whole equals the sum of its parts, the underlying epistemology of modernist determinism) to complex

\[18\] The recognition of the discursive and relational in the practice of education moves the focus from instruction and learning to the concept of study as defined by Pinar (2006, pp. 109–120), as a way to resist instrumental rationality. Dwayne Huebner (1999, p. 403) describes learning as a need to be transcended beyond the expected, the known, the ego, and the self. This opens up a new discursive practice of education as a journey with others rather than a means to an end.
(the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, in fact it is likely irreducible to parts) and allows for unpredictable outcomes (Doll, 2008, p. 174).

During the late 20th century there seemed to be unflagging support for the progress of science and technology in producing knowledge, a stance we retain today. As Pinar (2013) reminds us, we revere the potential for salvation through technology—its promise of progress. Indeed, it is the link between political liberalism and technology, the idea that our freedom is linked to progress in science, that may be seen as the root cause of our increasingly homogenized society (p. 3). Within our schools, this “technological ethos permeates everyday existence and orders the agenda of daily life” (Aoki, 2005, p. 236). At the same time, academics have retreated further into linguistic philosophy and away from developing active, relevant solutions for education. As we continue to revere technology in that way, we seem to be submitting education to corporate interests (Giroux, 2009; Molinar, 1996). Moreover, that sets up a paradox between a thorough critique of modernist methods and ideology in the academy, and a lived environment that is homogenized by the relentless progress of technological manifestations of that ideology.

That paradox adds to the confusion and intellectual crisis19 that I sense in academia. It is important to note that Rorty does not consider intellectual crises arising from abnormal discourses to be necessarily a bad thing. They can produce anxiety and frustration, but there is also an opportunity to continue the conversation about how and where knowledge is created. Although the paradigm wars of the 1980s claimed many casualties, they can be viewed now as a necessary disruption of a system (i.e., positivist, modernist, reductionist ideologies) that allowed

19 Rorty (1979, p. 320) uses the terms normal discourse (a collectively agreed upon set of conventions for problem-solving) and abnormal discourse (disagreements about conventions), the discourse is joined by someone who sets the conventions aside, resulting in what appears to be intellectual crises—e.g., feminist discourse in late 20th-century academia challenging the epistemological foundations of science (see Harding, 1987).
for a much more complex and relational perspective about how we come “to know” and experience the world around us. Rorty challenges the basic assumption of a positivist ideology by suggesting that there may not be “translations” between these abnormal discourses. The discourses may well be *incommensurable* (Rorty, 1979, p. 347), but accepting this perspective is very difficult. It becomes a matter of familiarity. Positivist methods work very well when attempting to measure familiar, agreed upon phenomena, such as the motion of a sound wave or the tensile strength of a guitar string. However, when things become “something squishier and more dubious” (p. 321), the need arises for approaches that can accommodate the incommensurable, the unpredictable complexity of lived realities. The critique that the interpretive turn of the late 20th century brought forward is that if we only inquire into areas of agreed upon (i.e., normal, commensurable) discourses, then we are greatly limiting our ability to discover new knowledge (perpetuating atrocities—see Morin, 1999). This is a much bigger proposition than what is explained by a Kuhnian *paradigm shift*. Rorty suggests that our acceptance of scientific revolutions (e.g., Nicolaus Copernicus’ heliocentric system versus Claudius Ptolemaeus’ more geocentric model of planetary motion) represents all that stands between us and a sense of total “irrationalism” (1979, p. 269). We hold on to this vision of a scientific revolution as one that progressively moves us toward enlightenment, a perspective that is very selective with its examples—for instance, the Copernican Revolution has become a metaphor for reason, enlightenment, and scientific laws (Luban, 1997, p. 18). Even though it represents a triumph of rationality over a commonly supported narrative, it has become a

20 Thomas Kuhn (1970) describes a paradigm shift as fundamental changes in the ideas and practices of a discipline, which characterize a scientific revolution (e.g., Aristotelian physics versus Newtonian physics versus quantum physics). It is this concept of a paradigm shift that Rorty (1979, p. 11, *passim*) expands to be part of a continual movement between normal (commensurable) and abnormal (incommensurable) discourses.
heuristic narrative in itself. The idea that Earth orbits the sun or that the world is not flat are such strong narratives that we invest our belief in rationality in them. These beliefs are not wrong, but they are only vectors of knowledge, slices of truth, in a complex sphere of reality. They are only part of the story—our planet orbits the sun, but our sun is one of billions of stars in an ever-shifting galaxy that is among billions of galaxies in the expanding universe.

The paradigm wars fought in academia throughout the last decades of the 20th century were heated and sometimes “sanguinary” debates (Gage, 1989, p. 4). The general divide was between knowledge-generating methodologies using quantitative, positivist paradigms (historically accepted) and those using quantitative, interpretive paradigms (representing new ways of knowing). Today, the epistemological debates persist, and many of the foundations developed based on quantitative, positivist and post-positivist perspectives from the 20th century remain with us today. Doll (2012) traces this modernist tradition to define a rational method in educational research back to Protestant ideals of the mid-1500s, with the structuring and definition of curriculum as seen in the hierarchical structure of Petrus Ramus’ curriculum design. The hard-line polemic arguments for and against modernist positivism seem to

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21 For further reference to the paradigm wars, see: Gage, 1989; Stanovich, 1990; Anderson & Herr, 1999; Krauss, 2005; Lather, 2006; Morgan, 2007; Wood and Welch, 2010.

22 Pinar (2008, p. 491) notes that the “Tyler Rationale,” which comes out of Ralph W. Tyler’s (1902–1994) book Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (1949), continues to be entrenched in our educational policy and has had an enormous influence on our understanding of curriculum. The “Tyler Rationale” includes (1) goals chosen, (2) experiences expressing the goals, (3) organization of the experiences, and (4) assessment. This rationale has been analyzed and critiqued for its personal and arbitrary nature; the goals, for example, are not questioned. For further comments and analysis of the Tyler Rationale, see Kliebard (1995) and Doll and Gough (2002).

23 Petrus Ramus (1515–1572) used the term curriculum to refer to the regular course of study leading to a certification, the definition we commonly use today (OED online, 2017). Etymologically, curriculum derives from the Latin word currere, meaning chariot, which in turn comes from the verb currere, meaning to run. Pinar defined currere as a framework or method of autobiographical reflection on educational experiences (see Chapter 4 of Pinar, 1975).
overshadow the task at hand, which is the accumulation of knowledge through inquiry in the service of improving educational experience. These critical debates may have been necessary, but they came at a cost. For many years, “punitively devastating attacks” (Gage, 1989, p. 4) from both sides redirected attention away from the task of education research and toward the vociferous justification of particular methods and the denunciation of others. The outcomes of such conflicts were “inadequate to tell us anything secure and important about how teachers should proceed in the classroom” (Barrow, 1984, p. 213). Joseph Schwab (1969) famously declared the field of curriculum as *moribund*,24 noting the recursive discourse about the discourse and not about curriculum, a state of affairs that Rorty suggests is created by its ideal:

But the dangers to abnormal discourse do not come from science or naturalistic philosophy. They come from the scarcity of food and from the secret police. Given leisure and libraries, the conversation which Plato began will not end in self-objectivation—not because aspects of the world, or of human beings, escape being objects of scientific inquiry, but simply because free and leisured conversation generates abnormal discourse as the sparks fly upward. (1979, p. 389).

This cycle of normal/abnormal can be considered a feedback loop that generates new knowledge, but only when the focus of intention is on the goal of improving educational experience rather than discrediting differing ideas.

Incommensurable discourses have had impacts that can lead to what Donmoyer (1985) describes as a “solipsistic morass” in the field of education research, where bad scholarship passes as knowledge by claiming a “paradigm difference” (p. 14). The fragmentation of a field of study such as education research risks total abnormality, where every researcher has their own language and method. That creates intellectual crises that are very disturbing to researchers looking for solutions to problems. How does a researcher know whether their method is sound, and whether their own abnormal discourse is leading to new and constructive knowledge? The question remains: How do we recognize the knowledge that is of greatest worth?

2.2 Worth

A way to establish worth as related to knowledge is to see knowledge manifest in the improvement of contextualized situations. The notion that knowledge is related to experience necessarily requires a contextualized perspective. That perspective sees the purpose of knowledge as governing action (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 312). To understand is thus to apply meaning to subjective experience in particular situations (Grondin, 2002, p. 38). This suggests that if our theories of education cannot relate directly to the realities of teaching and learning practices as experienced by the teachers and learners themselves, then the quest for what knowledge is of the most worth is vanquished. Pinar’s curriculum question requires a judgement of the worth of knowledge made in practical situations. Ultimately, this becomes a moral25 question. No instrumental rationality can make the concept of worth universal, but the educational experience must be improved for us to recognize worth in knowledge. Ultimately, if

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25 I use the term “moral” to define personal character choices, as opposed to “ethics,” which refers more to a social system or group expectation that applies moral codes. Both are relevant here, but I emphasize the personal nature of morals as required in the daily experience of teaching and learning.
we accept the uncertainty and cyclical nature of knowledge—between normal and abnormal discourses—our ability to judge worth may be considered from individual, relative, and contextual perspectives. Understanding the changing nature of knowledge helps reframe the moral significance of individual choice within the practical context of teaching.

Curriculum is presented to us as having moral certainty, an accumulated wisdom that it is right and good. Yet this certainty is exactly what critical theorists have been questioning. Our fear of uncertainty creates a moral distinction between good (i.e., certain, traditional, historically inherited) and bad (i.e., uncertain, unknown, unpredictable). Letting go of certainty frightens us (Aronowitz, 2015, p. 3). An epistemological shift toward complex thinking and the acceptance of uncertainty can help allay these fears. Our belief in certainty became synonymous with our pursuit of knowledge. As Doll (2012) describes, “the moral righteousness of religion enveloped the probability assertions of scientific experimentalism. The activities of science took on a new aura, that of religious certainty” (p. 234). As teachers and learners, it is our moral duty to cultivate our ability to discern knowledge of worth; this is part of the daily practice of teaching and learning.

An example of our belief in certainty continues by allowing technological development to continue without questioning its worth. We place the moral responsibility for the evaluation of knowledge in technological development, making the assumption that new developments are good. By doing this, we give up our ability to discern worth. This may be the most grievous error of our time. Our collective inability to discern good or bad technological developments leads to

26 Doll (2012) describes discernment as being not for “the purpose of creating either/or distinctions but to understand a situation in greater depth, nuance, richness, and therefore to be able to think about future possibilities and implications/ramifications of one’s choices and actions” (p. 240).
blindly accepting and integrating “new” technologies into our practice.\textsuperscript{27} This belief in certainty as manifest in our technological faith has created contradictions that I believe have become the moral responsibility of the individual teacher and learner to reconcile. The economic motivation behind most technological innovation should be recognized and factored into our moral assessment of its worth to education.

Evaluation and re-evaluation of worth is a constant part of teaching and learning. The assessment of worth can be applied to knowledge innate in curriculum, technology, and contexts but what roots it in education is experience. Attuning to the experience of education—with all the complexity and uncertainty this brings—is the foundation of this educational inquiry, and by extension, our ability to reflect upon and improve our experiences becomes a framework for teaching and learning. The evaluation of worth needs to be dynamic and responsive to experience, an assessment that translates to the classroom through a process of identifying knowledge that contributes to improving experiences. Educational experiences should then have built into them the possibility of reflection that allows the cultivation of future improved experiences. John Dewey provides a more detailed framework for understanding how a practice of cultivating educational experience can benefit teaching and learning.

\textsuperscript{27} An example of this was the wide adoption of SMART Boards in many schools (Braham, 2012). This expensive and complicated technology can be demonstrated to have potential for education, but its actual use in schools is questionable (Korkmaz & Cakil, 2013). As this technology moves into obsolescence, the allocation of educational resources it required and the benefits it afforded should be questioned, but the desire for innovation seems to take precedence.
Chapter 3: John Dewey and The Practice of Experience

Unless experience is so conceived that the result is a plan for deciding upon subject matter, upon methods of instruction and discipline, and upon material equipment and social organization of the school, it is wholly in the air. (Dewey, LW 13, [1938], p. 13)

3.1 On Reading Dewey

No serious student of twentieth-century American intellectual, social, or political history can get along without The Collected Works of John Dewey.

Richard Rorty

Reading Dewey today can be a very different experience than in the 1990s, when I first came upon Experience and Education (Dewey, 1938/1997). It was a small book with large print (six to ten words per line), small enough to take with you on a walk in the woods or in your briefcase to work. Today, we can access the entire oeuvre of Dewey in a searchable database from the device of our choice, including out-of-print books as well as articles from journals and newspapers that are otherwise difficult to obtain. The Collected Works of John Dewey, online edition, changes the way Dewey is experienced, but the benefits of having access to almost every word Dewey published is too enticing to forgo. The size of a book bag needed to carry physical copies of this collection would crush any student and is not conducive to philosophic wonderings in nature. The online database allows for searches, cross-referencing, and historical tracing that would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to do with printed material. On the other hand,

the speed and efficiency of the database does not encourage the slow pondering, wonderings, and marginalia afforded by the little printed book.

I make note of this because there was something special about that little book. I don’t think I could feel as deeply attached to a database. The medium changes the experience, of understanding the message. Although Dewey has many “messages” in his work, the message that I feel is of the most worth—and can be followed in the translation of Dewey’s work from print to database—is that we should constantly be moving toward a common good. That is, understanding the common good is more than merely an interpretation or production of text, regardless of medium; it is an invitation to act. Doing philosophy, as Maxine Greene suggests (1973, p. 3), is daring to think about what it is that you do. Understanding a text in isolation is insufficient; the text derives meaning when it is understood in the context of specific experiences. Ultimately, the common good Dewey suggests is manifest in how one’s philosophizing informs and refines one’s actions. It is a continual commensurate relation between ideas and actions. The philosophizing text is refined and developed over time based on ongoing field tests or, more specifically, manifestations of the messages in experiences—the practice of teaching and learning.

Reflection on how the text can be interpreted into specific actions requires time and space, regardless if ideas come from a little book, or from a computer database, or from an autobiographical story. So long as creating meaning continues to be the message of philosophizing, the medium is of less importance. This is not to dismiss the sentimentality of favouring books, with their size and marginalia, but to recognize the inevitable obsolescence of any medium (Zielinski, 2006, pp. 13–38) and adjust to the transition in a way that honours the historical contribution of the original text. Reading Dewey, for me, is a call to resist the “quest
for certainty” (LW 4, [1929], passim) and to participate actively in the contexts of our inquiries—to develop knowledge through interaction, socially, and intellectually. Dewey inspires the concept of knowledge arising from our involvement with (and personal attachment to) our inquiries, and this concept infuses his whole philosophy of experience.

3.2 The Experience of Dewey

One of the key elements in Dewey’s philosophy is how experience is related to learning in context. Dewey’s philosophy, augmented by many years of subsequent scholarship and analysis (e.g., Boydston, 1977; Garrison, 1995, 2012; Johnston, 2009; Rockefeller, 1996; Toulmin, 1990, 2001), has led to the development of a theoretical framework for understanding experience in relation to the practice of teaching and learning. According to Dewey, learning environments and practices affect experiences, which have a significant and direct impact on the quality and breadth of learning.

Throughout his career, Dewey strived to develop a philosophy of experience that would inform education and provide a way to avoid the divisive dualisms that can be so pervasive in curriculum and education theories. For Dewey, a purely epistemological notion of experience was inadequate to explain the interconnections between a knowing subject and the objects they encountered in the world (Jay, 2005, p. 288). Further to that notion, Dewey insisted that experience “recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality” (LW 1, [1929], p. 18). That position, echoed by Morin (2008), makes the interpretation of experience from the measurement of

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29 The Greek word for various objects, or things, is “pragmata” (πράγματα), which forms the root for the term pragmatist.
perceptual data (i.e., acquired through the senses) insufficient and, in essence, renders empirical philosophy and behavioural psychology inadequate to explain experience and its importance to education (Jay, 2005, p. 287). It also presents a challenge for us to analyze the totality of experience, the actions of real people in real situations, and to create a framework from which actions and interactions can form a source of meaning and knowledge.

Dewey’s philosophy is a framework that positions experience as a primary agent in the imaginative act of the creation of meaning. Experience provides an immediate or primary quality that is felt and possessed, but its relationship to the development of thought or knowledge requires reflection on how this experience can help the development of future experiential possibilities. The analysis and reflection of the experience is a natural and important by-product of human activity (Doll, 2012, p. 61). The position that our natural tendency for reflection, inquiry, and organization evolves out of our primary experiences has profound implications for educational experiences. The emphasis moves from teaching specific knowledge or creating specific experiences more toward the development of patterns of inquiry, reflection, and organization that can be applied to any activity. The experiences themselves are unique and unrepeatable; as Doll (p. 98) points out, we cannot “give an experience” to our students. Teachers can, however, promote activities and environments that cultivate the possibilities for productive or transformative experiences.\(^{30}\) We can develop and organize ways of reviewing, interpreting, and reflecting on active experience. Bloom’s taxonomy (1956) is an example of an

\(^{30}\) Transformative learning emphasizes the transformation of a learner’s frame of reference (thoughts, feelings, and actions) based on critical reflections upon experiences (O’Sullivan, 1999). See also the Transformative Learning Centre at: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/tlc/
attempt to organize experience, but it constrains and controls the assessment of experience rather than providing the Deweyan goal of a comprehensive curriculum that allows for experience to open into a complexity of possibilities. That and other experience-based learning traditions, tends to reduce experience into a practice disconnected from the larger social, historical, economic, and psychological implications that Dewey suggests.

Seaman and Nelsen (2011) identify omissions from many interpretations of Dewey’s notion of experience (e.g., Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004). The omissions reflect how experience can be reduced to an apolitical pedagogy of learning by doing, or an insufficiently critical approach, or one that is unsystematic (p. 6). For example, experience-based learning (EBL) is an approach to teaching and learning that identifies learning as founded upon experience, as holistic, as influenced by the socio-emotional context, and as individually constructed (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993, pp. 8-12). However, EBL only tangentially identifies learning as socially and culturally constructed; it does not connect the larger political and critical objective that underlies Dewey’s educational philosophy—his larger efforts to create a comprehensive, systematic, political, and critically reflective curriculum that works to control the corrosive elements of industrial capitalism are missing from the EBL tradition (Seaman and Nelsen, 2011, p. 6). Dewey conceptualizes the individual experience as historically constructed (continuity) and socially constituted (interaction) and asserts that these concepts necessarily include political, economic, historical, and social factors as they change over time.

Dewey himself recognized the difficulty of the term experience to convey the magnitude of his ideas about it. In what Dewey’s editor Joseph Ratner describes as an “unfinished re-introduction” (p. xx; written in January 1951) to Experience and Nature (originally published in 1925) this recognition is explicit:
I would abandon the term “experience” because of my growing realization that the historical obstacles which prevented understanding of my use of “experience” are, for all practical purposes, insurmountable. I would substitute the term “culture” because with its meanings as now firmly established it can fully and freely carry my philosophy of experience. (LW 1, [1925], p. 361)

This is a significant insight into Dewey’s notion of experience because it conveys how culture includes both the “material and the ideal in their reciprocal interrelationships” (LW 1, [1925], p. 363). It also suggests the importance of context to understanding experience.

Dewey’s alignment with pragmatism created associations with materialism and physical or “real” world epistemologies, which have in turn been associated with behaviourism (see Barone, Maddux, & Snyder 1997, pp. 3-26; Morris, 1996). It is significant to this inquiry, and my philosophical orientation, to understand the emphasis and importance Dewey placed on the ideal—the conceptual realm (mind)—coexisting with pragmatic, observable actions (environment) in reciprocal interrelationships (LW 1, [1925], p. 363). For Dewey, the pragmatic role of thought is as a factor in the transformation and modification of the environment.

Furthermore, Dewey recognizes a deeper form of causal relationship between thought and the environment, namely, the idea that potentialities (LW 1, [1925], passim) for action can be created that change relations (LW 12, [1938], p. xvii) to our inquiries and ultimately our environment. Dewey was an advocate for these relations as having as important a role as actions that result in intrinsic change. Dewey felt the mind’s capacity for transforming relationships and developing potentialities is important because it leads to directing action. Intrinsic changes to environmental conditions are not more important to relational conceptions but are part of a total
network of causal relationships. That subtle, but important, distinction is in part what
distinguishes Dewey from materialist or behaviourist labels.

3.2.1 Dewey’s Notion of Conversation

Conversation suggests the emergence of community and the possibilities for action based
on interaction. Dewey emphasizes that goals and purpose arise in and from action (Doll, 2012, p.
149) and that action as “the fruit of reflection upon actual experience, reveals new and as yet
unrealized possibilities” (LW 13, [1938], p. 257). Conversation can be understood to be a form
of action if it enables possibilities and encourages participation. This concept of conversation (as
also developed by Rorty, 1999, and Pinar, 1995, 2000, 2002) requires two essential and
performative characteristics, praxis and inquiry (Trueit, 2003, pp. xii–xiii). For Dewey, praxis,
fundamentally conceived as doing, is about engagement or coherence between the speaker and
their environment, an active presence in the conversation, consistency of thought and action.
Inquiry, in a Deweyan sense, requires more than a method;\(^31\) it entails a feeling for the situation
or context in which it takes place. What Dewey advocates is not just a set procedure (i.e., of five
steps) “but rather a way of experimenting, of looking at and for alternatives to any problem”
(Doll, 2002, p. 127). That suggests an aesthetic, moral choice that has a direct effect on, and is
summarizes, the Deweyan notion of inquiry contains three attributes. First, it is context bound,
centered on the understanding, ordering, and controlling of individual experience within a

\(^{31}\) Dewey is often referred to as an advocate of the scientific method when in fact his five steps of inquiry are
described as “important historical roots of the legend in science education of a single, universal scientific
method” (Anderson, & Hepburn, 2016). These steps are: (i) a felt difficulty, (ii) its location and definition, (iii)
suggestion of a possible solution, (iv) development by reasoning on the bearing of the suggestions, and (v)
further observation and experiment, leading to its acceptance or rejection. (MW 6, [1910], p. 236).
specific environment. Second, it is a “self-correcting” (LW 12, [1938], p. 483) process cycling through choosing, acting, reacting, and choosing again (Doll, 2012, p. 241). Third, it is problem specific, driven by the interests and efforts of the inquirer, not by external forces. With those notions of praxis and inquiry in mind, conversation can be a tool to make connections and cultivate possibilities for experience.

3.2.2 Reflective Experience

Dewey considers the difference between the primary active experience and the secondary reflective experience as a way to understand the many relationships between an experience and the construction of understanding (LW 1, [1925], pp. 15–16). Active experience comes with minimal reflection on processes of understanding; in fact, many experiences are diminished by reflective thought. As an example, we may consider the cinematic experience when we are brought out of a suspension of disbelief to reflect on the spilt popcorn that covers one’s lap, seat, and floor. The cinematic experience is suspended by the reflection upon the mess. The secondary reflective experience requires continued and regulated inquiry to explain and understand the primary experience (p. 16). This consideration situates the primary experience as providing information for the systematic analytic thought process that enables the development of knowledge and encourages progressive experiences. Dewey associates that view of experience with his conception of the empirical method of experimentation,32 followed by a systematic analysis of the experience. Dewey has been criticized for his overemphasis on a systematic method and for his experimentalism (Berkson, 1958), and for not emphasizing societal and

32 Dewey’s conception of empirical method is not clearly defined and changes over the course of his career. He refers to a denotative method that is intended to lead back to the primary experience. Although Dewey’s definition of empirical method remains somewhat ambiguous, there is consistency with his intention to judge the value of an inquiry by its impact on practical experience.
institutional forces (i.e., over-emphasizing the individual; see Miller, 1958). However, these critiques do not diminish Dewey’s sustained and evolving inquiry, over the course of his career, into the educational experience. Dewey did not quite achieve his goal of creating a practical method for educational experience, as noted by the many critiques, but his intention and progress are still inspirational and continue to stimulate the conversation in this regard.

Almost 60 years after Dewey, Donald Schön imagined these two levels—the primary active experience and the secondary reflective experience—as reflective, historical, academic thought on high, hard ground overlooking a swampy, messy, confusing landscape of practice and experience (1983, p. 3). Schön referred to a division between the academic world of theory and the actual practice in real-world situations. That divide is what Dewey suggested should be bridged with a more universal understanding of experience and reflection. The idea was taken up by John Holder (1995, p. 176), who describes Dewey’s approach as a naturalist epistemology that understands thinking and the creation of knowledge as involving cognitive structures (i.e., reflection, information processing, formal logic) emergent from and pervaded by non-cognitive experience.

Dewey maintained, following from William James (1890/2007), that thinking is a process emergent from, and continuously engaged by, certain “non-cognitive” levels of experience that he identified as emotion, inspiration, intuition, imagination, and habit. This is a key element in a pragmatist theory of thinking about experience and thought. The idea that highly structured, logical, and rational modes of thought emerge from, and are fundamentally and dynamically related to, less structured experiences (Holder, 1995, p. 180) can be used as a pragmatist
framework\textsuperscript{33} to connect experience and thought. This particular pragmatist perspective puts non-cognitive involvements (actions) and structured rational thought on a continuum of experience. Dewey’s position suggests that we think of this as foreground (i.e., rational, logical attentive thought, consciousness) and background (i.e., emotion, intuition, nature, habit), where “experience is much more than consciousness and reaches down into the background as that reaches up into experience” (LW 3, [1927], p. 78). This suggests a non-linear, dynamic, dialogic conception of experience where nature and consciousness interact with and inform each other.

Refocusing on a more general pattern of experience, one that includes the entire system of interaction between visceral and logical, allows a more inclusive, naturalistic account of thinking and of the development of learning. This account recognizes that experience and reflection are part of a system of self-organization that allows for continual recursive recreation, or what Maturana and Varela (1987/1992) describe as autopoiesis.\textsuperscript{34} A cognitivist perspective that understands experience as separate from the structure of cognitive thought (Holder, 1995, p. 182) misses the point of autopoiesis. The logic of cognitive thought that defines structure is insufficient to apply directly to the affective organization of experience. This presents an inherent contradiction in the process of defining an experiential structure—a contradiction that has been a source of criticism about Dewey (Berkson, 1958). Understanding experience as part of a system (complex, interactive, relational) rather than a linear continuum (from action to

\textsuperscript{33} For the purposes of this inquiry, a framework that originates as pragmatist is expanded to include relational theories (Morin, 2012; Overton, 2003, 2013) or what Latour calls amodernism (1993). This is a way of conceiving reconciliation between science and society while retaining a historical awareness. This approach differs from post-modernism by rejecting the abstract reductions found in modernism (i.e., subject/object dualities, historical annulments, decontextualized measurement, etc.) which post-modernism maintains in its critique.

\textsuperscript{34} Autopoiesis derives from the Greek meaning of self-creation or self-production. Maturana and Varela (1980) use the term to represent the “dynamics of the autonomy proper to living systems” (p. 16).
thought) allows for an approach to cultivating educational experiences. This approach positions experience as an essential part of learning but not in a definitive, prescriptive way. The conception of educational experience as a complex system full of unpredictable outcomes is antithetical to the “maelstrom of methodization” (Doll, 2012, p. 98) so prevalent in educational research. Dewey suggests this by saying, “To suppose that students…can be supplied with the models of method to be followed…is to fall into a self-deception that has lamentable consequences” (MW 9, [1916], p. 179).

Dewey uses the term *situation* to include events or objects within a context or an environment as experienced in the world. A *situation* can only be perceived or experienced within a *field* (the total complex environment presented) in reference to active and adaptive responses or *courses of behavior* (LW 12, [1938], pp. 72–73). In other words, experience is understood situationally, within an environment, including the sociocultural context and the course of life-behaviour. To do otherwise, or to isolate the act and/or object of perception from its context and subjectively related behaviour, renders it exclusively cognitive and separates it from its experiential potential. For Dewey, the environmental context is essential to understanding experience. “Life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it” (LW 10, [1934], p. 19). An important aspect for Dewey is that experience functions, within an environment, to promote and direct successful courses of actions and behaviours that lead to the development of certain kinds of knowledge and to further particular types of experiences.

**3.2.3 Inquiry**

Inquiry is the way we move from experience to representation. Reflective thought is a derived procedure that one acquires through the experience of activity (MW 2, [1903], p. 298).
For Dewey, this derived procedure is the actual process of inquiry. Its success and validity is assessed by “the degree in which the thinking actually disposes the difficulty and allows us to proceed with more direct modes of experiencing, that are forthwith possessed of more assured and deepened value” (p. 300). Inquiry is the procedure for developing thought from experience, but it also is a way to develop future experiences. Dewey understands inquiry as a natural resource that is unique to every individual.

He addresses the idea of thought and inquiry as a “natural resource” in his book *How We Think* (MW 6, [1910]), which he subsequently rewrote to clarify and refine some of the concepts and make it more specific to teaching youths (LW 8, [1933]). The concept of inquiry as a way we reflect on past experience with an intention to improve future experience relates to education if we understand our abilities for inquiry as natural tendencies. We cannot be “taught to think, only to think well” (MW 6 [1911], p. 204, emphasis in original). A Deweyan purpose for education is concerned with the proper direction of these natural tendencies, not with creating them. This emphasizes the need for a teacher to understand an individual’s existing natural resources, past experiences, habits, beliefs, hopes, desires, chief interests, and tendencies, “to understand the forces at work that need to be directed and utilized for the formation of reflective habits” (LW 8, [1933], p. 141) and to assist in the development of accepting suggestions of value. Although Dewey admits to the impossibility of detailing the number and quality of these factors, he suggests three main tendencies a learner may naturally possess that should be considered to foster learning: curiosity, suggestion, and orderliness. To look at these tendencies contextually, within a subject matter (i.e., a situation, occupation, skill set, or area of topical concentration), provides a way to begin collecting insights into how instruction could guide the learner toward more reflective habits—for example, a student’s fondness for a piece of music as
a starting point for inquiry into a vast array of ideas (e.g., historical references, composition, social context, lyrical content, emotions). Keeping in mind the need to address individual perspectives and that any subject may be intellectual (LW 8, [1933], p. 149), the promotion of these tendencies emerges from the interests of the learner in a particular subject matter or situation.

### 3.2.4 Curiosity

Take, for example, the situation of wanting to compose a popular song. The curiosity that instigates such an inquiry can come from enjoying the experience of a pop song. The organically presented impressions and stimuli of the initial aesthetic experience can stimulate a person’s curiosity to explore or inquire into the situation. Education may assist the inquiry in evolving from an unstructured, indeterminate situation (i.e., not knowing what to expect) to a well-defined, intellectual, unified, logical structure of the subject matter (i.e., gaining knowledge of the skills, history, and thoughts surrounding the subject) that helps promote continued and enhanced future experiences with composing songs. Without the initial indeterminate situation (e.g., the experiences of hearing other pop songs), the intellectual activity of developing knowledge could lack the individual motivations and references required to identify and relate to the subject matter. The curiosity to initiate experience and subsequently understand more about it comes from the individual learner in a particular context, and this is a significant factor in supplying inquiry with its primary material (MW 2, [1903], p. 205).

The influence of social interaction is an important stage of curiosity as it becomes a way to assess its quality as well as inspire the development of knowledge to ensure the quality of future experiences (MW 6, [1910], p. 206). The relation of experiences to others not only provides an inherent appeal but also can become the source of further knowledge by inviting the
answers to questions that provide material for further inquiry and future experiences. A learning environment (recognizing that learning environments exist in a cultural context) that allows individuals to relate personal experiences to others and to cultivate the questioning and exploration that naturally evolve from those experiences encourages this type of curiosity. The social level of curiosity develops a feeling that there is more behind, and more to come from, related experiences than just information or disconnected ideas. The reflective process enables an understanding of an experience, which is unique in space and time, to be connected with past and future experiences and ideas. Establishing this relative connection can provide a richness of intellectual potential in an experience.

The observation of experience and the social stimulation of questioning and describing can be transformed into intellectual curiosity when organic and social curiosity focus upon a unified goal. That focus presents an opportunity for a teacher “to utilize for intellectual purposes the organic curiosity of physical exploration and linguistic interrogation…by attaching them to ends that are more remote, that require finding and inserting intermediate acts, objects, and ideas” (LW 8, [1933], p. 143). It creates the possibility for an approach to teaching and learning concerned not with the preparation and presentation of preconceived material, but with the focusing and directing of natural tendencies toward the cultivation of intellectual ideas that enliven and enrich the initial experience and promote future experiences. The role of the teacher in this approach is to promote a sequence of inquiries and observation, and to bind together a past experience (e.g., the enjoyment of a song) with a distant goal (e.g., becoming a musician or producer). The unifying effect of a distant goal provides the opportunity for curiosity to become intellectual. However, it is possible for curiosity to degenerate or evaporate into indifference or dogmatism, which can kill the spirit of imagination and wonder that is so important to this
process. If the distant goal is set too high or is presented in too structured a way, the unifying intention can be lost. If the impression is that everything is already known about a subject matter, then the spirit of inquiry, of finding things out, is diminished. From that perspective, Dewey suggests that the teacher has usually more to learn than to teach. The teacher in this process cannot increase curiosity but rather should provide the materials and the conditions by which organic curiosity will be directed into investigations that increase knowledge (LW 8, [1933], p. 144).

3.2.5 Suggestions

Dewey defines suggestions as ideas that arise in a primitive and spontaneous way out of the subject matter of experience. We are mainly unable to stop suggestions, so “[p]rimarily, naturally, it is not we who think, in any actively responsible sense; thinking is rather something that happens to us” (MW 2, [1903], p. 208). Suggestions can be made better or worse by learning conditions, but they can be neither taught nor eliminated. This is a challenge of teaching and learning—to discover the subject matter that matters most. The ease, variety, and depth of suggestions that arise in a learner are based on their relative connection to the subject matter within the situation. This is not to say that the specific subject matter derived from experience is the narrowly defined area of study; it serves as the source and inspiration of suggestion but can open up into vast possibilities. Any subject may be intellectual in its function to start and direct significant inquiry and reflection. Dewey illustrates this with reference to Darwin’s interest in
barnacles\textsuperscript{35} (as well as beetles, snakes, and frogs), which led to a unifying theory of life sciences that explains the diversity of life.

\textbf{3.2.6 Orderliness}

The transformation from curiosity and ideas into reflective thinking requires the consecutiveness, continuity, and ordering of suggestions. This “orderliness” constitutes reflection only when the “succession (association of ideas) is so controlled that it is an orderly sequence leading up to a conclusion that contains the intellectual force of the preceding ideas” (LW 8, [1933], p. 150). It requires a balance of modes of curiosity and suggestions guided with the goal of concentrating on moving toward a unified conclusion. The ordering of suggestions is the task of the teacher. Education can be thought of as a system of assisting and focusing this ordering toward a unified goal. However, this goal is best achieved through the indirect but concomitant ordering of action. The development of reflective thought is best achieved when the goal is action orientated rather than thought based. The goal of composing a song motivates and inspires ideas not for the sake of becoming knowledgeable in area of sound or music studies, but because the learner wants to make a song. The orderliness of thinking is a means to an end, not the objective for the learner. This is a fundamental aspect of experience in learning—the information and knowledge amassed in the pursuit of a unified goal is ordered to be available to achieve that goal. Inferences and orderly arrangements of ideas and observations serve a unified and

\textsuperscript{35} In January 1835, after more than three years on board the \textit{HMS Beagle} charting the coastline of South America, the 25-year-old Darwin picked up a conch shell from a beach in the Chonos Archipelago, near Chile. He was interested in some unusual boreholes drilled into its surface; with closer inspection under a microscope, he was convinced the creature responsible for the boreholes looked like a barnacle but did not fit any existing classification. Darwin was to spend eight years studying barnacles from around the world, which led to his classification of this group of organisms according to the principle of “common descent.” This became the central idea in Darwin’s theory of evolution.
personalized purpose, which gives them specific orientation (i.e., not arbitrary or speculative) and efficiency. A teacher then is tasked with helping individuals practice and improve their skills to order ideas that emerge from reflective thinking on specific experiences. These abilities should be developed and accumulated to allow individual students to cultivate knowledge through personal experiences.

Educational practices are full of experiences, but these are often of the wrong kind. A teacher can methodically apply a fixed curriculum (e.g., methods developed by Suzuki, Bastien, Alfred, Faber and Faber) to the practice of learning a musical instrument, but the actual experience of sitting at a piano or holding a guitar influences how the individual developed the learning a musical instrument. If experiences lack continuity, they do not foster the control and promotion of future experiences. Curricular authority can limit the ability to relate an individual’s learning to circumstances outside the learning environment. This is the situation that education based on a philosophy of experience tries to address. Situating learning in personal experiences that foster the emergence of subject matter, and in inquiry that connects historical knowledge with progressively productive future experiences, is the central goal of this approach to education. With this goal in mind, Dewey suggests the two dimensions of continuity and interaction as ways to evaluate and order experience in the service of education.

3.2.7 Continuity and Interaction

The question of discrimination between experiences that have educational value and ones that do not is crucial, and Dewey examines it in the two dimensions of continuity and interaction. The category of continuity, or the experiential continuum, examines and evaluates how “every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences” (LW 13,
This describes the conception of *habit* as the formation of attitudes that are both emotional and intellectual. The principle of continuity means that every experience is affected by previous experiences and modifies all future experiences. This implies a direction of growth that is important for the evaluation of experiences. The growth arising from experience must promote development in new directions; when growth is limited to a very specific direction, it can constrain learning in general. If an experience encourages curiosity and initiative, it can motivate a learner to pursue future experiences, and the continuity can be evaluated as positive.

The evaluation of continuity challenges the educator to recognize the attitudes and habitual tendencies created in the learner undergoing an experience. The general assumption that there is an organic connection between education and personal experience in and of itself solves no problems for the cultivation of learning. To evaluate and promote the quality of experiences requires judgment on the part of the educator, which can be an elusive and imprecise endeavour. To be able to recognize the direction in which an experience is heading and how previous experiences influence that direction requires insight and maturity. There is also the tendency for this insight to be presented as an external imposition, which disrupts the intention of this approach and takes on characteristics of more traditional forms of education. The educator must, on an individual basis, identify and encourage habits that are conducive to continued growth. This presents complications for teaching that are challenging compared to the externally enforced methods of traditional educational approaches.

A further dimension is that for Dewey, all human experience is ultimately social in that it involves contact and communication (LW 13, [1939], p. 21). Even when a situation is experienced individually, the effect of that experience, and the subsequent objective conditions that arise, must be considered in a social and even ecological context. The recognition of the
external conditions and contexts that surround any experience is a further dimension of understanding required to guide and contribute to worthwhile experiences. This dimension contextualizes educational experience and provides potential for a continually relevant and self-regulating way of learning. Dewey’s term for this dimension of experience is *interaction*.

Interaction allows for the interpretation of experience to include both the objective (i.e., external, social, ecological, learned) and subjective (i.e., internal, personal, felt, innate) conditions. The interaction between external objective and internal subjective conditions creates the connection between individual and social that is necessary to develop relevant knowledge centered on an experience. This connection provides a relationship (i.e., a *tuning*) between historical knowledge, societal contexts, ecological contexts, and individual experience. In other words, interaction is how an individual experiences context (e.g., socially, ecologically, temporally, emotionally).

The educator’s recognition of a learner’s continuity of experience is important to guide experiences. Knowledge of past experiences can help an educator to emphasize some experiences over others and to be sensitive to experiences that may disrupt the process. The educator has more direct control over the interaction dimension of learning through experience. The ability of the educator to introduce and suggest areas of inquiry that link experiences to intellectual knowledge (e.g., historical references, fields of study, related creative productions, personal experiences) can have a very direct impact on how a student learns from a specific experience. This implies a dynamic situation that contrasts with traditional forms of education because no specific method or materials can be consistently effective. A dynamic collaboration with the continuity and interaction of an experience for every individual learner sounds like a daunting task for educators when viewed from a traditional perspective on education. I agree
with Dewey that a reframing of the task of education, away from preconceived curriculum and
toward a less predictable, more dynamic, more relational approach based on personal experience
has the capacity to reduce apprehension and make teaching and learning more enjoyable and
relevant.

3.3 Post-modernism

Dewey’s quest for a unifying theory of experience has great potential, but it was
developed in an era of high modernism.\textsuperscript{36} There is an underlying foundation to his ideas that if
given enough thought, observation, and interpretation, we can become more certain of how
experience constructs knowledge and from that understand its role in education. Dewey
understood knowledge as something acquired from experience, and although his ideas can be
inspiring and insightful, they are imbedded in a modernist philosophical tradition. It is important
to understand the social and environmental factors that influenced and co-opted modernist ideals.
As Fredric Jameson (1991, p. 34) points out, the social forces of market capitalism in the 18\textsuperscript{th}
century, which led to the Industrial Revolution and monopoly capitalism in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century,
produced technological determinism and influenced how scientific methods were applied. The
results have been more about power and domination than about the intellectual certainty that
Dewey sought. One interpretation is that progress and innovation are more at the service of
developing products to promote capital than of improving the human condition through
knowledge.

\textsuperscript{36} The term high modernism (Scott, 1999, p. 87) is used here to characterize confidence in scientific and
technological progress, the mastery of nature to meet human needs, and an objective perspective on material
reality. This era takes up roughly the first 70 years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and is contrasted with post-modernism
(late 20\textsuperscript{th} century) and the critique and deconstruction of high modernism’s underlying values and assumptions.
Stephen Pepper (1972/1942) also contributed to an understanding of this era.
Bill Doll (2012, pp. 152–153) insists on using a hyphen in the term “post-modern” to convey the notion that the modern and the post-modern are connected. As Lyotard (1987) points out, the post-modern is the “re-writing of modernity” rather than a break with modernity (cited in Doll, 2012, p. 153). Post-modernity critiques and deconstructs the meanings and power structures hidden in the modern. Although these critiques and deconstructions have led to many new discoveries, they have often been sidelined, and dominant structures of power continue to define the learning outcomes in many institutions of education. The problem is that the post-modern critique is still embedded in, and entwined with, the modern. To break away from this, Doll (p. 155) articulates Dewey’s assertion for an education based in experience that has “initial conditions rich in problematics and incorporating sufficient time and space for interactions, as reflective recursions . . . those encouraging creativity, inquiry, innovation, and social responsibility.” Post-modernism in a way trades one form of foundationalism (i.e., objective rationalism) for another (i.e., subjective interpretation). Willis Overton (1998, p. 124) suggests that a new “metanarrative” that goes beyond modern and post-modern ideas requires inquiry into the dialogic complexity of relations and how these are embodied in the processes and operations of meaning-producing agents as a response to foundationalism. This implies a hermeneutic understanding rather than a mechanical explanation (Ricoeur, 1991, pp. 132–133). The concepts of embodiment and relational complexity can help theorize conditions to provide the kind of educational experience Dewey had envisioned.

3.4 Embodiment and Complexity: New Ideas on Experience

The term *embodiment* has been used in many different ways; perspectives including gender, cybernetics, cognitive science, and others have contributed to the multiple definitions of this term (e.g., Clarke & Hansen, 2009; Ingold, 2011; Overton, 2002; Pink, 2011; Rosch,
Thompson, & Varela, 1992). Although many authors have made significant contributions to how we can understand embodiment, it is using the spirit of Dewey with the intention of relating experience to knowledge that focuses my inquiry. Overton (2003, p. 36) identifies experience with contextualized and relational action, using the idea of embodiment as the representation of the “interpenetrating relations between person, biology, and culture” (2012, p. 103). Experience, from that perspective, includes the physical form of an individual (i.e., the biology), the lived experience (i.e., the psychological), and how we as individuals actively engage with our environment (i.e., the socio-cultural-ecological). Overton uses embodiment as a synthesis that unites multiple perspectives into a unified whole. Understanding embodiment as a “biology-person-sociocultural relational matrix” (Overton, 2003, p. 34) allows us to break away from the Cartesian separation of the mind and body and to envision the complexity of the interrelations of physical, cognitive, and social/environmental factors. Overton argues that this understanding of embodied experience forms a new kind of background upon which theories and methods of inquiry can emerge. He describes this as relational metatheory (2003, p. 22).

Relational metatheory differs from the worldviews or bedrock belief systems to which much of the Enlightenment project subcribed. As Stephen Toulmin (1992) details, modernity itself is defined by a quest for absolute certainty, or what he calls the standard account or received view (p. 13), which generally formed a consensus for a foundational worldview that to this day influences theories and methods of inquiry built upon it. The power of rationality and

37 Beginning around the 1650s in Europe, cultural and intellectual emphasis shifted to individual reason and analysis rather than traditional sources of authority (i.e., the church). Intellectuals such as Francis Bacon (1562–1626), Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), René Descartes (1596–1650), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Locke (1632–1704), Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), Voltaire (1694–1778), David Hume (1711–1776), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), and Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) contributed to developments that led to the idealism of Georg Hegel (1770–1831) and modernism that continues today.
the denunciation of superstition and tradition that came from the modernist standard account created a scientific revolution and new theories of knowledge and philosophy, but it also created a bedrock foundation (i.e., a metatheory) based on foundationalism, materialism, empiricism, and objectivism. That led to a universally accepted scientific method (i.e., a metamethod) that was characterized as mechanical explanation and that included subsequent labeling as neopositivism, instrumentalism, conventionalism, and functionalism (Overton, 1998, p. 57).

During the latter half of the 20th century, many of the assumptions of the modernist worldview became a source of great debate. New paradigms and methods emerged and created what are now known as the paradigm wars (e.g., Anderson & Herr, 1999; Gage, 1989; Stanovich, 1990), which pitted qualitative against quantitative approaches to knowing and inquiry in ever-escalating and scathing opposition. Although many pluralistic and mixed methods were developed in an attempt to create a rapprochement between qualitative and quantitative approaches, the underlying metatheory upon which these methods were developed was still grounded in the language and intentions of the reductionist mechanical explanations found in modernism. Post-modern critiques may have had the intention of shifting our paradigms of knowledge and inquiry, but by using the methods of modernism (i.e., foundationalism, empiricism, objectivism) even merely as points of departure, they held back the revolution and created a war.38 The aftermath of the paradigm wars is still evident in the curriculum design of Western universities that offer separate courses for qualitative and quantitative methods (see, for

38 For example, the term qualitative now carries with it the implication of “not quantitative,” which reinforces the split-foundationalist metatheory it was developed to oppose.
example, Simon Fraser University’s course offerings:

www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2015/spring/courses.html).

Overton’s relational metatheory offers a perspective that combines synthesis, conditions, and abduction\(^{39}\) to reconstruct a foundation for knowledge and inquiry. Synthesis, according to Overton (2003, p. 29), maintains the importance of analysis and analytic tools of mechanical explanation with the proviso that they always occur in the context of a synthesized (i.e., integrated) whole. Synthesis maintains the context within which analysis takes place and does not allow it to be reduced or atomized outside of that context. Conditions are a way to understand a phenomenon under investigation as happening within a particular context. Rather than trying to understand the causes of a phenomenon, which implies an interpretation-free observation and a direct relationship between the cause and the observation, conditions allow for synthesis, interpretation, and a relational connection between a phenomenon and the conditions that allow it to happen. Abduction coordinates induction and deduction by asking what must necessarily be assumed in order to have a particular observation, and what background ideas influence its justification (Overton, 2003, p. 31). The process of abduction builds background ideas, which inform further iterations of abduction. This type of hermeneutic iteration integrated with observational explanation is the foundation of the metamethod Overton suggests. His theoretical contribution is really one of hybridity. Relational metatheory incorporates a more observational, inductive approach into a hermeneutic interpretation through iterations where understandings

\[^{39}\text{The term } abduction \text{ was coined by Charles Sanders Peirce. According to Peirce, “[a]bduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis” (1934, CP 5.171). He also defines abduction as “all the operations by which theories and conceptions are engendered” (CP 5.590).} \]
inform future observations. The call for hybrid, or mixed, methods is not new and does not originate with Overton (e.g., Green, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Johnson & Onwueguzie, 2004), but his nuanced articulation of this perspective merits attention.

One of the important factors of the relation metatheory is that it suggests a form of inclusive paradigmatic shift. It is apparent from the aftermath of the paradigm wars that methods of inquiry require a new paradigm, but the amazing success of empirical reasoning in conjunction with the fear of absolute relativism create a situation that requires an alternative to a Kuhnian revolution (Kuhn, 1996/1962). Relational metatheory tries to retain effective elements of the mechanical explanation in a new paradigm; as the term implies, it combines ideal and mechanical explanations. Kuhn suggests that in a scientific paradigm shift, the foundational assumptions are unrecognizable between paradigms. This concept has been accurate for many historical examples (e.g., flat earth versus global earth; heliocentric versus geocentric), but the specific paradigm shift at hand is one of relative-relativism (Overton, 2013, p. 100) and ever-increasing complexity, and the hope is to not merely include multiple perspectives but incorporate and accumulate them.

The call for a unifying, new metatheory that creates a rapprochement with historical scientific empiricism and more contemporary interpretive approaches that include uncertainty, complexity, creativity, and hermeneutic understanding has been growing since the mid 19th century, when scientific discovery began to challenge traditional mechanical explanations. The Second Law of Thermodynamics, followed by the uncertainty of particle physics, relativity, chaos, and complexity—discoveries that could not be explained by the established paradigm of Western science (or, for that matter, Western metaphysics)—were creating doubt in science and challenges to how we understood reality. These discoveries suggested a new way of conceiving
reality that included the immeasurable and undeterminable aspects of complexity. The very possibility of the progress of knowledge was challenged by micro and macro observations that could not be reduced or simplified into classical modes of understanding. As discoveries that demonstrated increasing movement toward uncertainty, ambiguity, and contradictory notions accumulated, the metatheoretical foundations of reality began to show flaws and became vulnerable to attacks. These attacks became particularly venomous in the late 20th century but lacked the constructive development of functional alternatives. Regardless, the system is still holding because of its potential for monopoly capitalism that dominated the 20th century (Jameson, 1991, p. 157). As Edgar Morin states, “the bankruptcy of this system of understanding was masked by its corresponding success as a system of manipulation” (2008, p. 33). Morin’s suggestion is to conceptualize the possibilities of inquiry through thinking complexly.

This disruption of the established classical system of scientific progress has become impossible to dismiss as an anomaly or a special case. The challenges that we are tasked with today have become so complex (e.g., climate change, the global economy, security, social inequality) that without a new paradigm of theory and inquiry, we risk making the problems worse. As a global society, we have imagined ourselves so dependent on the existing system that any alternative seems impossible. Morin suggests an approach that requires an opening up of ideas to include and accept ambiguity and to allow for expression and creativity (2008, p. 21). This shift in perspective is radical because it challenges so many of the attributes that we generally consider essential to the development and progress of knowledge. Certainty, control,

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determination, and precision become mere slices of a complex reality that defies our ability to measure and pushes us beyond our capacity of comprehension. Rather than this being a situation that we try to eliminate through the progress of knowledge, Morin proposes that we accept and encourage increasing levels of complexity (i.e., hyper-complexity) that recognize the human functions of autonomy, individuality, relations with the environment, aptitudes, inventiveness, and creativity (2008, p. 21). This is not a critique of existing theories and methods; rather, it is an expansion that includes infinite possibilities. Scientific theories and methods have been used to create amazing understandings of phenomena, but science’s ultimate goal of complete understanding is unachievable and misleading, the latter because it shifts the focus away from the unpredictable. This simple premise, to change reasoning’s point of departure, shatters the enormous superstructure of ideas and begins the radical and enormous task of paradigmatic reform (Morin, 2008, p. 35).

3.5 Dewey’s Spirit

Although Dewey’s perspectives on experience and learning are not reducible to a method or set of materials that can be universally applied to teaching, there is an underlying spirit and understanding that I find continually helpful and consistent within a teaching practice. Teaching and learning are complex processes and require constant re-evaluation. The attempt to locate a single method that simplifies and reduces teaching to a system misunderstands the project of education altogether. Certainly, we can become better teachers and concentrate our efforts with more productive results as we accumulate experience and knowledge, but the basic condition of an individual learner’s contextualized situation and how that is experienced can never be reduced to generalized methods or systems of efficiency. The complexity of experience in any given learning situation is immeasurable. Each individual has historical and continuing relations that
are socially and environmentally contextualized with every experience. This is the antithesis of so-called “efficient systems of teaching,” which are measured to demonstrate consistent and predictable outcomes, because it provides too many variables, making measurement more arbitrary. However, the underlying systems of ethics and spirit provide direction into an inquiry about teaching. Relating teaching and learning to environmental, social, and individual improvement through experience is a way to work with the complexity of educational inquiry.

Dewey gained inspiration from the personal and emotional experiences he had with nature, art, poetry, intuitions, compassion, and social interaction. His deep commitment to the lived experience throughout his life inspired him “to integrate the emotional with the intellectual by connecting both with a life of practical action in devotion to the ideal” (Rockefeller, 1996, p. 24). This suggests a complex understanding of experience that includes the individual within an environmental, social, and temporal context. Dewey’s theories of experience offer access to a source of knowledge that is perhaps immeasurable but potentially allows the navigation through the dispersed and complex task of educational inquiry toward improvement.

The spirit that Dewey establishes in his work seeks to find a humanistic naturalism that harmonizes scientific methods with faithful idealism (Shook & Good, 2010, p. 5). This to me is the spirit of commensuration, to make science and faith compatible with human welfare. By focusing on the criterion of practical significance for improving human life, Dewey was able to allow for the productive coexistence of both science and faith. For Dewey, faith enables the vision and commitment of morals that only really work when scientific knowledge is translated into practice in the world today. As a teacher (and a parent), I feel that the underlying spirit that demonstrates commitment and faith has to correspond with one’s teaching practice. Without this
correspondence of spirit, our ability to teach and learn is compromised. Reinforcing our ideas with our actions is the boon for teaching and learning that forms the spirit of this inquiry.
Chapter 4: Hermeneutic Understanding

Hermes, the ancient Greek messenger of the gods, had the task of interpreting how gods thought and translating those messages for humans (Gouzouasis, 2013, p. 12). The messages would often get misinterpreted or be fake altogether, and it is unclear whether that was intentional or not. Hermes had a mixed history as an Olympian; he was considered the bringer of insights, ideas, and inspirations, but also a robber and a trickster (he outright lied about stealing Apollo’s cows, for instance). As Hermes went from the gods to humans and back, he would learn more and more. Perhaps the iterative nature of his task, back and forth between godly and mortal realms, promoted Hermes’ education. He was very proficient at making things, such as the first lyre,\(^{41}\) the sound of which subdued Apollo’s anger about the stolen cows. Apollo and Hermes went on to become good friends. Apollo became quite famous for his mastery of the lyre and taught Hermes how to prophesize using dice (probability). Hermes became the god of skill and of eloquence in all forms of social interaction. His sagacity and astuteness led to him being the inventor of not only musical instruments but also music more generally, the alphabet, numbers, astronomy, gymnastics, the cultivation of plants and animals, measurement, commerce, and other knowledge and technologies. Although the connection between Hermes and the term hermeneutic is somewhat tenuous, he certainly could make a fine god of hermeneutics (Hoy, 1982, p. 131).

The etymology of hermeneutics points back to the Greek word for translation, interpretation, or explanation. Aristotle’s work *Peri Hermeneias* (c. 360 BCE) is translated as *On

\[^{41}\] The lyre is a small stringed harp found in Greece from the seventh century BCE (Sachs, 1940/2006). Hermes is also credited with the invention of the syrinx or pan flute (Gouzouasis, 2013, p. 12).
Interpretation and serves as a starting point for the hermeneutic philosophy that has evolved in the Western tradition and informs the inquiry of this dissertation. Hermeneutics began as a method of reading texts, specifically interpretations of the Bible. The messenger task of Hermes is taken on by hermeneutic interpretation of the words of God (or gods). This assumption of the omnipotent or divine origin of the text (i.e., the word of God in the Bible or other sacred texts) influences the task of hermeneutic interpretation and understanding as the reconstruction of the intentions of the author. The resulting problem, as Habermas points out, is that the “unity of reason disintegrates into the multiplicity of its historical voices” (2004, p. 16). That negative perspective considered, he interpretation of historical texts is a situation to be understood in a relational and dialogic way if we are to not be subsumed by tradition.

Hans-Georg Gadamer details hermeneutics in the Western philosophic tradition from a historical perspective and argues that the role of interpretation, however marginalized by dominant methods, is essential to any inquiry into truth (1960/2004). Gadamer demonstrates how our traditions have aligned truth with our canonized empirical scientific method, the “cognitive ideal familiar to us from the knowledge of nature, where we understand a process only when we are able to reproduce it artificially” (1960/2004, p. 366). This way of knowing, a process that David Jardine describes as “the methodological severances requisite of empirical work” (2006, p.

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42 An example of hermeneutic analysis that demonstrates the entanglement of history and our very human connection with it is the text known as the Donation of Constantine (Halsall, 2017). Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) analyzed in 1440 the fourth-century (315 or 317) Roman imperial decree by Emperor Constantine the Great that transferred authority over Rome and the western part of the Roman Empire to the Pope, in gratitude for his salvation. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the text was used to support the Pope’s claim to land and power that led to the investiture conflicts and ultimately to the East–West Schism (the division into Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches). Valla was able to demonstrate that the document was a fake. Created in the eighth century, with no possible connection to Constantine, this document was the basis for actual claims for at least 300 years (Henderson, 1903, p. 269). In our current age of “fake news,” this historical example provides perspective.
156), separates the *knowing subject* from the object of study. This empirically derived way of knowing is, of course, very powerful and has led to countless developments. Gadamer asserts that truth cannot be adequately explained by scientific method and suggests that hermeneutics transcends our commonly held notion of method. Instead, hermeneutics is an interpretive investigation into the nature of understanding. Gadamer states in his introduction to *Truth and Method*:

The following investigations start with the resistance in modern science itself to the universal claim of scientific method. They are concerned to seek the experience of truth that transcends the domain of scientific method wherever that experience is to be found, and to inquire into its legitimacy. Hence the human sciences are connected to modes of experience that lie outside science: with the experiences of philosophy, of art, and of history itself. These are all modes of experience in which a truth is communicated that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science. (1960/2004, p. xxi)

The hermeneutic nature of understanding for Gadamer becomes a much larger phenomenon than the ideals of validity and certainty derived from the methods of the natural sciences. The interpretation and the interpreter cannot be separated, and understanding is a mode of being that is connected to the entirety of human life. History and experience are inseparable from our understanding of the truth. The reductionist methods of isolation and segmentation to obtain the objectivity that is foundational to the natural sciences are incomplete. Experiences of

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43 We can generally agree that the objective predictability of bridge building or aeronautics is generally a good thing. However, its claim to universal truth is questionable. Our recognition of medical, transportation, production, and other developments based on empirical knowledge should be included in hermeneutic understanding along with many other ways of knowing (artistic, expressive, emotive, intuitive, etc.).
life contain truths that cannot be explained by scientific methods. Past experiences as well as the historical and situational context within which we situate our inquiry all create what Gadamer describes as multiple “horizons” or ranges of vision based on particular vantage points (e.g., historical, cultural, individual, experiential, social, environmental). Gadamer suggests not only that we must recognize and accept situational horizons, but that “understanding is always the fusion of these horizons” (1960/2004, p. 305).

Gadamer refers to Aristotle’s notion of phrônēsis (i.e., practical wisdom) as a way to understand our existential situation in a tangible, situated, specific way. Phrônēsis is practical reason (as opposed to scientific reason or religious wisdom, soôa) based on concrete action and experience in the world, rooted in situated empirical reflection. This is more than just the application of philosophical thinking to real-world situations; it constitutes a mode of self-knowledge. For Gadamer, understanding and interpretation are always conditioned and mediated by the contextual situation and thus impossible without an understanding of the self. To interpret and ultimately understand a real-world situation, we must engage in a dialogic relationship with a situation that takes into account its uniqueness, history, and context. Interpreting a situation without consideration of subjective experience and situated context does not lead to understanding. Gadamer’s combination of Platonic dialogue and Aristotelian phrônēsis is the foundation of his concept of hermeneutics and defines this mode of insight as situated, particular, and irreducible to a set of rules (Malpas, 2016).

Gadamer states that hermeneutic philosophy “does not understand itself as an ‘absolute’ position, but as a path of experiencing. There is no higher principle than this: holding oneself open to the conversation” (1997, p. 3). In this sense, Gadamer’s hermeneutic approach to understanding takes real-world subjective experience and engages with it in a dialogue or
conversation that recognizes (laying bare, Heidegger, 1962, p. 36) the complex prior history of understanding (i.e., a hermeneutical situatedness). This approach does not dismiss the use of specific methods (i.e., scientific or others) but situates methods, and in fact all other prior understandings, within the specific context of the inquiry (i.e., one of many horizons or vantage points mentioned above). This interpretive approach to inquiry is built on a different way of knowing than the objective positivism indicative of the time period in which Gadamer lived (1900–2002) and when Gadamer first published his magnum opus, *Truth and Method*, in 1960 (at the age of 60).

For Gadamer, the elements of the hermeneutic problem consist of interpretation, understanding, and application; these three elements are part of one unified process (1960/2004, p. 306). The interpretation of an object of study has to be “understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way” (p. 308) for it to be understood properly. In other words, the application of understanding is essential to hermeneutic interpretation. Separating theory (i.e., understanding truth) from application (i.e., action in the world) does not lead to understanding. The hermeneutic approach detailed in *Truth and Method* accepts scientific understanding of the natural world but places that knowledge into a continuous cycle of history, subjective situation, and cultural context. This idea is similar to Overton’s (2013) relational approach, in which he acknowledges Gadamer as providing “the basic scaffolding for the construction of this new methodology” (p. 12). The hermeneutic cycle requires ongoing reflection between individual and collective ways of knowing—historically and culturally situated.

Hermeneutic situatedness enables one to understand subjective prior experience and knowledge, individually experienced, and formed through collective cultural influence, as the
range of understanding from a particular contextual situation. Gadamer defines this as the starting point of understanding; our values and assumptions form our prejudice, which has to be understood to involve self-examination and evaluation to arrive at a positive form of pre-judgement (1960/2004, p. 273). Rather than uphold the positivist ideal of objectivity, the concept of prejudice requires that we recognize and evaluate our subjective “historically effected consciousness” (p. 335) as essential to finding the truth through understanding. In the first part of Truth and Method (pp. 3–36), Gadamer outlines four notions that can be used to conceptualize and evaluate our pre-understandings (or prejudices): cultural formation (Bildung), common sense (sensus communis), judgement, and taste. We evaluate our pre-understandings because they form anticipatory meanings that are projected onto our subject of inquiry. They are an initial source of understanding but require the cyclical and relative corrections of a larger perspective—or, as Gadamer states, “the circle is constantly expanding, since the concept of the whole is relative, and being integrated in ever larger contexts always affects the understanding of the individual part” (2004/1960, p. 189). Reflection on experience informed by these notions improves our self-understanding and begins the process of inquiry.

4.1 Bildung

Bildung is notoriously difficult to translate into English, but terms such as self-cultivation, edification, self-realization, and self-formation are used to describe this German term. Rebekka Horlacher’s (2016) genealogy of bildung gives some scope to the wide range of adaptations and uses of the term but always with intent “to impart significance and urgency to education” (p. 6). The term Bildung carries with it an ideal of character formation through the identification and cultivation of one’s natural talents and interests as a contribution to the culture one lives in. It is a harmonization of the individual with society in a way that is unquantifiable
but of great value to both. This ideal allows for the culture or society and the broad prospect of individual improvement to develop in a mutually beneficial way. It can describe the process by which individuals learn and grow to be productive members of society, with an implied sacrifice of particularity for the sake of the universal (Gadamer, 2004/1960, p. 11). Bildung is more than personal sacrifice for the greater societal good, however; it implies an understanding of this contribution as having a return to oneself. In this there is an element of maturity, of openly and willingly accepting a more universal point of view. Bildung suggests progress toward freedom due to a higher degree of self-reflection and the continual expansion and growth of personal and social skills. An openness to alterity, a willingness to self-correct, an awareness of what is appropriate, common sense, good judgement and taste are all cultivated in one’s bildung. It is a form of personal and cultural development and commensuration.

4.2 Common Sense

Gadamer uses the Latin phrase for common sense, sensus communis, to evoke the Roman meaning of the human sensitivity for other humans and the community. He points out the relationship to the humanistic ideal of eloquentia (eloquence) or "talking well" (p. 17), which has two meanings: 1) the art of speaking, as in rhetorical skill, and 2) saying the right thing, as in the truth. However, the distinction Gadamer is careful to emphasize is that sensus communis is the sense that founds community (p. 19). It is a sense of how community and cultural constructs are a necessary and contributive component to individual progress—a sense that if we all took more than we contribute, our society would fail. The concept of sensus communis has for Gadamer a hermeneutical application that goes beyond rational thinking and includes, for example, the care a parent has for their child (p. 25). The efforts required to parent or teach are not always justified rationally, but our sensus communis can prevail to make these efforts beneficial to all.
Common sense forms a base to which even empirical science is beholden. As Ernst Nagel states, “all scientific inquiry takes its departure from commonsense beliefs and distinctions, and eventually supports its findings by falling back on common sense” (1967, p. 6). This base is what Gadamer (2004/1960, p. 270) describes as “anticipatory meanings” or “fore-meanings” of pre-understanding that, in part, initiate the hermeneutic cycle.

4.3 Judgement

Judgement is a notion closely related to our sensus communis, and good judgement is often the application of common sense. Judgement is the ability to subsume correctly or to apply correctly what one has learnt (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 27). Judgement is an internal coherence, one that cannot be determined only by a set of rules. As we see in our legal system, judgements are made on precedents and examples but require individual assessment. The process of forming individual judgements is required of us in situations that pull us out of the spectator role and demand our response. Judgements require a human element of consideration; they are made in the interests of the community but are formed independently. In educational settings, judgments often are made by teachers and administrative authority. However, Gadamer suggests that to be part of the conversation of our society, we must exercise our judgement and take the risk of voicing our opinions even if they are contrary to received opinion (Nixon, 2017, p. 25).

Encouraging individual expressions of judgment is counterintuitive to controlling classroom behavior, so this notion requires an understanding of education that transcends its institutions and practices. Students who are encouraged to think independently and to gain agency in their own intellectual lives (i.e., to exercise their judgement) will often turn against the

44 Stephen Pepper (1942/ 1972) also articulates common sense as the origin of all inquiry (pp. 39-71).
very institution and teachers who provided this opportunity. This requires conviction, courage, and trust from all participants. Demonstrating as teachers our ability to engage with and respond to critical judgments made against us ultimately provides students with an understanding of how the individual assessment and application of knowledge are foundational for collective institutions. “Judgement cannot be taught in the abstract but only practiced from case to case” (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 27), so it is an extracurricular component of self-cultivation.

4.4 Taste

Gadamer identifies taste as striking a balance between sensory instinct and intellectual freedom (1960/2004, p. 31). It is a mode of knowing that is decidedly internal, yet it exists only as a social phenomenon. Taste has to involve others; there is no point in talking of taste without comparison to universal intentions and representations. Taste is not a rationally derived verdict, yet we are always drawn to good taste. It is an intellectual faculty of differentiation, but rather than depending on rationality or the application of knowledge, it emerges as a sense. Gadamer points out that the sense of taste in its definitive, unequivocal, immediate manifestation is ultimately linked to moral philosophy (p. 35). The ideal normative elements inherent in good taste are known but virtually impossible to rationally define.

Each of these notions—bildung, common sense, judgment, taste—provides insights into the self-examination and self-awareness required to cultivate questions essential for understanding. What is important about these four notions is that they represent experiences of truth that are different than scientific knowing. As such, they have significant educational implications because it makes the “priority of the question” (p. 356) a subjective necessity for understanding. In a school system where questions are almost always posed by teachers, often in standardized form, and answered by learners sitting in orderly rows and raising their hands, this
is quite a radical idea. This is to suggest that teachers may cultivate questions and emulate being good questioners, but for learners to reach understanding, they must ask their own questions. Gadamer sees our natural tendency to question what is “not immediately intelligible” (1977, p. 98) as fundamental to what makes us human and as essential to developing understanding. A hermeneutic approach tries to refine and prioritize what we encounter in the world. This links our engagements and actions to questions and ultimately to understanding. As Gadamer states, “we cannot have experiences without asking questions” (1960/2004, p. 356). The questions open us to meaningful experience.

4.5 **Hermeneutic Inquiry in Creative Production**

Creative production can provide a relational, dialogic, expressive, and iterative environment for inquiry. This environment can provide a methodological practice that is well suited for the interpretive approach of hermeneutic inquiry (see Gouzouasis, 2007, 2013). The process of creative production that informs and is informed by continued reflective thought and analysis does not simply allow the continuation of the dialogic process (reminiscent of Rorty’s idea that the continuation of the conversation is the purpose of philosophy [1979, p. 318]), but also provides a way of being that brings together imagination, intuition, expression, and creativity with the intellectual, historical, rational thought that emerges from study. When this process is autobiographical or autoethnographical, based on experience, the opportunity to bring together multiple ways of knowing (e.g., reason, senses, emotion, imagination, formal learning, intuition, belief, memory) is made commensurate, and structurally corroborated (Pepper, 1942/1972, p. 49). Creative production can promote the expression of multiple ways of knowing—in fact, it is the juxtaposition of ways of knowing that is often recognized as “creative.” This
approach allows for the ambiguity, fecundity, and uncertainty of meaning that can be found (perhaps emphasized) in the outcomes of creative production to contribute as a form of inquiry. The interpretive approach of hermeneutic inquiry does not emphasize certainty as an outcome. The uncertainty, such as it exists in creative production, is embraced—an approach that can inform and expand traditions of empirical research and knowledge. This approach does not preclude empirical ways of knowing but increases the horizons of understanding, allowing multiple understandings to occur simultaneously. This is important, especially in education, because of the complexity of real-life situations, such as the inability to isolate independent variables in the constant flow of humanity that exists in any classroom at any time. Histories, emotions, feelings, imaginations, and so forth all intersect to create complex interrelated conditions. These are the situations where creative production can provide insights. Elliot Eisner (2017, p. 38) describes the “aesthetic features of the case” as having the potential to add “flavor” to the understanding of such situations. Creative production provides the “fine-grained distinctions” of situations that cannot be measured or quantified specifically without being lost in abstraction. Creative production allows for the possibility of multiple understandings to exist simultaneously, a condition with which artists seem comfortable, which allows what Gadamer (1960/2004) calls a “fusion of horizons” (p. 302)—an essential component of hermeneutic understanding.
Chapter 5: Arts-Based Educational Research

The theoretical perspective that was outlined in the previous chapters includes multiple contexts and perspectives (horizons), as well as experiences, reflection, complexity, relationality, and uncertainty. This framework requires systems that can go beyond a single, standardized way of knowing and representing. From that perspective, arts-based research has the potential to contribute to new ways of meaning making and understandings. Art can provide ways of knowing, an intelligence per se, that is unique. Historically we have systematically separated our aesthetic intelligence as something other than our scientific intelligence, believing that, the latter is true and the former is its own form of subjective experience and subjective form of meaning making. Arts-based research tries to ameliorate those distinctions.

Artistic expressions provide pathways to better understand and represent our experiences, however, the products, processes, and materials created are rarely preconceived. Because of that uncertainty, standardization is difficult. In the practice of artistic or creative production, it is not unusual to have unpredictable and unexpected outcomes, and the process itself requires an openness to existing knowledge as well as discoveries of new forms of knowledge that reply upon intuition and inspiration (O’Donoghue, 2014, p. 176). With those perspectives in mind, there may not be a single definition of arts-based educational research (Barone & Eisner, 1997; 2012), but it is clear that the bifurcation of epistemologies that resulted from the paradigm wars and post-modern critiques in the late 20th century created a need for methodologies that could be flexible and inclusive. Arts-based educational research and related forms (e.g., arts based research, arts informed research, arts related research, a/r/tography) emerged from that need. As Barone points out, the critiques of modernist positivism allowed for “an epistemology of
ambiguity...meanings that are partial, tentative, incomplete, and sometimes even contradictory and originating from multiple vantage points” (2001, p. 152).

Arts-based educational research, as defined by Barone and Eisner (1997), has seven features or design elements. Their list suggests some of the complexities that arise when thinking of art in term of research. It reminds us of multiple horizons by which we have to evaluate our choices. Form, individuality, care, language, imagination, and reality are all part of the complex inter- and intra-relational possibilities that emerge when engaging in arts-based educational research.

The seven features of arts-based educational inquiry (Barone and Eisner, 1997) are (1) the creation of a virtual reality, (2) the presence of ambiguity, (3) the use of expressive language, (4) the use of contextualized and vernacular language, (5) the promotion of empathy, (6) personal signature of the researcher/writer, and (7) the presence of aesthetic form. Those criteria are useful for elaborating the discussion in the present chapter, but some background on the development of arts-based educational inquiry will also help form my position.

Art can inform us or help us bridge gaps where scientific reason has not yet succeeded, such as in our understanding of beauty, experience, love, and emotions (e.g., Goethe and Schiller’s approach to humanism circa the 1790s). John Dewey, in his 1934 book *Art As Experience* (LW 10, [1934], p. 9), made the explicit connection between the impulse toward learning and an experience. It may be considered as the germination of arts-based research in education. Elliot Eisner is widely recognized as a pioneer in the development of arts-based research, and in his “intellectual self-portrait,” he explicitly (2009, p. 67) refers to Dewey’s *Art as Experience* (1934) as a great influence. As a painter and art educator, Eisner developed ideas about how to improve education and to expand inquiry opportunities for educational researchers
through arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Eisner recognized that his artistic practice contained intelligence, knowledge, history, insight, inspiration, motivation, reflection, interpretation and other attributes, and that art criticism could inform his teaching. Artistic practice—including both the production and the reception of artistic creation—can infuse and improve education by emphasizing the aesthetic modes of knowing (Eisner, 1998, p. 32) and developing a form of connoisseurship or appreciation that leads to a re-education of perception (Eisner, 2005, p. 41). Drawing from Dewey (1934), Eisner developed the concept of criticism as the public form of connoisseurship that had been advanced through the history of art criticism (see, for example, John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* [1972]) to propose a precursor to arts-based research methodology that he called *educational criticism* (Eisner, 1991/2017).

That Eisner’s suggestions on aesthetic connoisseurship in education research seem reasonable today belies the resistance that arts-based research faced in our institutions. The idea that arts can contribute to academic knowledge has been hotly contested, and although there is much more acceptance of multiple modes of knowledge creation today, scientific research still takes precedence. The United States National Research Council published a report (Shavelson & Towne, 2002) defining the guiding principles of scientific research in education and specifically stated that Eisner’s grounds for knowledge claims are not within those principles (p. 74). The resistance of established institutions to acknowledge arts-based research as legitimate has been a challenge for adherents and the cause of continued self-justification that detracts from the task at hand, which is to improve education. However, many early adopters of arts-based educational research stayed the course with their convictions, expanded applications across the visual and performing arts, and encouraged their students to take risks and explore the role of art in knowledge creation (see Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006). Eisner emphasizes
that the aspiration of educational research is ultimately to make a positive difference in the lives of students, and this “is not only realized by sharing conclusions about matters of fact, but by changing perspectives on how we see and interpret the world” (2008, p. 26).

Another pioneer in the development of arts-based research, Shaun McNiff, is an artist but comes from the field of psychology. His investigations into the artistic process and methods of psychology laid the groundwork for an intellectual basis for arts-based research. McNiff emphasizes the cognitive dimensions of artistic processes to access the creative intelligence and communications that feel “more accurate, original, and intelligent than more conventional descriptions” (2007, p. 30). As a psychologist and art therapist, McNiff describes the fundamental gestures in the artistic process as unique and authentic expressions of individuals. Our deeply rooted history of art criticism emphasizes interpreting the meaning of an artwork, but often, interpretations tell more about the projections of the interpreter. To access the potential of arts-based research, we should withhold our inclination as interpreters to define linear narratives of meaning (including assessments of skills) and recognize the “otherness” of the artistic process with compassion and without judgement (McNiff, 2015, p. 10). That perspective enables the communicative potential of artistic production to speak for itself rather than trying for a scientific ideal of replication and consistency of results, leading to the expansion and amplification of personal experience. McNiff reminds us that scientific methods and arts-based methods are complementary within the total complex of knowing, and that doing research includes “systematically examining and passionately imagining phenomena in whatever ways address the needs of the particular situation” (2007, p. 35).

The historically established epistemological authority of positivist, field-based experimentation in educational research (see Shavelson & Towne, 2002) feeds into a master
narrative\textsuperscript{45} that reinforces convictions about verification, generalization, reliability, and replicability as essential to research.\textsuperscript{46} This perspective implies knowledge that is fixed and true. Although many aspects of education research benefit from this approach (e.g., demographics, economic status, transportation, enrolments, tuition), it is a broadening of this master narrative that arts-based research seeks to achieve. That requires us to be open to many different forms and representations of ideas; thus, the language of inquiry changes. Tom Barone describes \textit{conspiratorial conversations} as a “communion of agents engaged in exploratory discussions about possible and desirable worlds” (2000, p. 150) as an outcome of arts-based research.

Gouzouasis (2008) argues that terminology used by positivist and post-positivist researchers has profoundly influenced our understandings of validity in research and that we should change musical keys to a new tonality (i.e., a language, in the metaphorical sense, of inquiry) to open up possibilities for new understandings of criticism, as well as the structure and function of arts-based research. That suggests a broad approach to the sources we use to gain knowledge as well as expanding our dialog in relation to these materials. That suggests a broad approach to material we use to gain knowledge as well as expanding our dialog in relation to these materials. Our ability to discuss or critique art is enhanced with participation, and as Dewey (1934) notes, the experience of art is key. Music, and music making, becomes more than

\textsuperscript{45} Jean-Francois Lyotard (1979/1984) suggests a master narrative (also Grand Narrative or meta-narrative) as a way that institutional and ideological forms of knowledge are explained and legitimated through a form of storytelling. Master narratives such as Christian redemptionism or Marxist utopianism serve to legitimate and make sense of complex ideological orders for the masses, or \textit{universal truths}. Lyotard uses this concept to critique power structures and suggests that master narratives are no longer viable in postmodernity due its fragmentation by the proliferation of individual singular (subjective) events (Aylesworth, 2015).

\textsuperscript{46} For alternatives to this established epistemology see Gouzouasis 2008, pp. ix – xvi.
a metaphor, it becomes a source of knowledge. The practice of music can help structure, articulate, and represent ideas in a very different way than an academic paper, for example.

The potential for artistic work to engage both researchers and their audiences (i.e., teachers, learners, other researchers) in conversations is a significant shift in the expected outcomes of educational research. The subjective aesthetic experience that enlivens arts-based educational research has the potential to access empathy, connections, perceptions, and emotions that may be revealed in the inquiry process. Barone (2008, p. 39) argues for an *epistemologically humble* approach in arts-based research, which does not make absolute claims about truth but contributes alluring, diverse, complex, and nuanced work that inspires conspiratorial conversations about human growth and possibility. That form of engagement uses the experience of art (listening, seeing), conversations (critique, dialog), and representation (creative production) as interrelated factors of arts-based educational research.

5.1 Aesthetic Experience

Martin Jay describes the relationship between the certainty of empirical rationality and the subjective relativity of the experience of art as distinctly modern (2005, p. 131). The normal discourse of the Enlightenment developed a unique modality to explain the *aesthetic experience*. The experience of art presents a problem to the scientific measurement of sensory phenomena—using common sense we know there is truth and meaning in painting or music but the measurement of truth is impossible (Eisner, 1971). A modernist, subjective, aesthetic experience became understood as autonomous from other, measurable experiences. The appreciation of art
was developed as a disinterested\textsuperscript{47} separation from common pleasures and desires. That created an aesthetic experience that seemed distant and external to a human’s theoretical reason (knowledge) and practical reason (morality), at least within the normal discourse of our Western culture.\textsuperscript{48} Since the modernist ideal of seeking objective knowledge that follows universal rules of reason does not coincide with our experience of art, the aesthetic experience became a separate endeavour from the enlightened rational pursuit of truth. This specifically modernist concept of aesthetics creates some of the difficulties of claims to truth within arts-based research. The truth that is claimed in arts-based research is not separate from scientific truth—it complicates the conversation, but also gives life and beauty to it. Gouzouasis and Lee (2002) suggest that truth is in the art (music) in and of itself. It is not a language that requires translation, rather the coherence of truth is embodied in the coherence of music. We can experience this coherence but its articulation transcends language, which is perhaps why we create music in the first place. That idea parallels one that is echoed by Ted Aoki through his question to jazz trumpeter Bobby Shew: When does an instrument cease to be an instrument? (2005, p. 367). Music and curriculum must transcend instrumental constraints to find truth about human nature and understanding.

\textsuperscript{47} Jay (2005, p. 142) argues that Immanuel Kant’s aesthetic theory, developed in his Critique of Judgment (1790/1971, pp. 37–45), became the most influential articulation of aesthetic experience and continued into the 20th century. The autonomy of art allows for the separation of the subject and the object, which creates a disinterestedness that allows for the civic or moral virtue to be maintained—for example, while viewing a nude image, because it is not an object of our desire but an aesthetic experience. Jay also notes the concept of aesthetic experience originating from Alexander Baumgarten’s 1735 dissertation (2005, p. 133).

\textsuperscript{48} Our misinterpretation of art from other cultures challenges the Western normative view of art. For example, European musicologists were unable to recognize or understand the history and culture inherent in the music of indigenous peoples of North America (Browner, 2009), which contributed to the potlatch ceremony being banned in Canada from 1885 to 1951, resulting in extensive cultural demise. See also the controversy around Chris Ofili’s The Holy Virgin Mary (1996) for an example of an artistic statement of cultural normative values.
Beardsley (1958) states that aesthetics can be considered as the “philosophy of criticism” (p. 4). In that sense, the aesthetic consciousness is a distinctive form of philosophical inquiry concerned with the articulation of an aesthetic experience’s causes and effects (psychological aesthetics) or its meaning and truth (philosophical aesthetics). According to Beardsley (1958), the purpose of criticism is to enhance the role of art in human life. That begins with the inevitable conversation that follows an experience with art. In other words, we can’t not discuss art. Creative production (e.g., making art, poetry, drama, music) is constantly evolving, and art making challenges preconceived ideas in new ways. Often the challenges provoke a critique. Understanding values in a work of art such as its truth, beauty, or meaning, becomes as important as the art itself. That points to the complexity and indeterminacy of the relationship between a work of art and its epistemological functions. However, it is precisely because of the complexities of interpretation, values, and conversation that position the experience of art as fertile ground for educational inquiry.

Gadamer (1960/2004) argues vehemently that the construction of an aesthetic consciousness has deterred us from recognizing the truth in aesthetic experiences. This is a very important argument for arts-based research if the latter’s goal is to inquire into truth through art. For Gadamer, the experience of art is an experience of truth; art can show us truth that might be independent of method (Grondin, 1998, p. 271). He believed that art already reveals truth, but in relational, contextual ways that are always individual and collective, as well as personal and universal (Gadamer, 1960/2004, pp. 70-75). That makes the experience of art so difficult to measure and contain, and led to the modernist notion of an aesthetic consciousness. The hegemonic claim of modernity is that truth is a matter of methodological scientific study. If there
is truth in art, then it should be scientifically verifiable; if it is not, then art is relegated to the realm of aesthetics.

The modernist notion that universal, rational, generalized explanations of phenomena can eventually be developed to explain the immediacy and particularity of subjective aesthetic experience creates what Gadamer describes as a distortion of the idea of art, but also a distortion of scientific and moral knowledge by the separation of the subject from the object (1960/2004, p. 130). The construction of the aesthetic consciousness not only prevents us from recognizing truth in subjective, aesthetic experiences—it limits the extent of scientific and moral knowledge by limiting the validity of subjective ways of knowing. Positivists fear the multiplicity of subjective knowing because without objectivity, reality can slip into an arbitrary abyss where only uncertainty reigns. Thus, the fear of uncertainty replaced faith in religion with a faith in rational thought. Modernism emerged from the decline of theology, with its traditions and rituals that coordinated social order (including much of the production of art), and provided divine meaning. Without theological authority, we were faced with having to explain our reality, and the “quantifying forms of rationality as the increasingly exclusive principle of modern life” (Bowie, 2003, p. 4) began to dominate. However, art and the multiplicity of subjective aesthetic experience creates suspicion of this dominant rationality, ultimately taking form as the crisis of meaning in modernity.49

49 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1995) describe the crisis of meaning in modernity as coming from its pluralist orientation. The multiplicity of value systems and stocks of meaning that arise from individualism and pluralism create instability within the agreed upon societal knowledge. The result is a tendency toward more and smaller social communities that rely on intermediary institutions and mediated communication to interact. The rise of social media and its effect on political structures underscores this crisis of meaning.
The historical divisions between the rational scientific and the sensate, emotional, aesthetic individual experience present significant problems for our collective understanding of knowledge creation. The scientific method is responsible for many innovations and much of the technological development of our society (as well as our crisis of meaning), but scientific method is insufficient to address the human condition when it comes to the existential meanings found in aesthetic experiences. The problem comes from the questions we ask and our tools of inquiry. When trying to improve our understanding of education—which often requires the understanding of individual emotions such as empathy, trust, compassion, and frustration—we can face the insufficiency of our language to articulate understandings, or use our tools of measurement (e.g., testing) to find ‘accurate’ evidence. As Jacob Bronowski (1973) points out, knowledge requires all the tools and ideas we have, and the notion that any one method allows access to perfect knowledge is dogmatic and dangerous.\(^50\) Bronowski asserts that the bringing together of the experience of art with the explanations of science is necessary to obtain self-knowledge (1973, p. 92)—a concept of knowledge that is perhaps less certain but more aware of the human reality in which knowledge manifests itself. From that perspective, arts-based research has the potential to bring together multiple ways of knowing and to expand the horizons of how we come to know.

From a historical perspective, the notion of including self-knowledge in any inquiry had been developing in fields such as anthropology (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1973; Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Pinar, 1975) in the late 20th century with the recognition that individual

\(^{50}\) Bronowski (1973, p. 81) uses the example of the crematorium at Auschwitz to demonstrate the tragically false assumption of believing in absolute knowledge. The authority and incontrovertibility of dogma is, in Bronowski’s view, responsible for the atrocities committed during the Second World War.
interpretations and social contexts are essential to the construction of knowledge. Geertz’s concept of thick description was an effort to explain and interpret with as much detail as possible the reasons behind our actions in the world. Geertz recognized that “the drive to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order, is evidently as real and pressing as the more familiar biological needs” (1973, p. 140). Although still working with descriptive and interpretive prose, the idea of interpretation and representation being as important as scientific experimentation opened the door to understanding the construction of knowledge as arising from individuals within a particular social and environmental context. That is a radical critique of the established, dominant ideology of academic knowledge. As Carolyn Ellis elaborates, “genres of writing were situated within historical and linguistic practices that hide ideological interests and largely determine what will count as legitimate knowledge” (2004, p. 18). That mode of thinking also prompted new forms of expression of lived experience (e.g., poetry, fiction, novels, scripts, journals, performances, music, film) with an emphasis on how the individual interprets their social, cultural, and historical contexts.

This separation between objective scientific and moral knowledge, and the subjective experience of art that Gadamer attempted to unite is part of the epistemological history that has challenged so many arts-based researchers in the second half of the 20th century. Arts-based research had the task of achieving legitimacy in an academic setting based on scientific criteria that had two hundred years of epistemological authority. Kant recognized the relationship between art and epistemology with the phenomenal character of aesthetic experience (Jay, 2005, p. 131). Kant (1911) acknowledged the impossibility (indeed absurdity) of a general test of truth (p. 82) outside of the coherence of knowledge and its object—this coherence in art can be recognized but not easily formulated. However, as Gadamer has pointed out, this did not give art
legitimacy in the construction of truth; it only served to obscure aesthetics as an autonomous
realm of study. As Andrew Bowie states, “modernity both creates space for the proliferation of
individual meaning and tends to destroy the sense that such meaning really matters in the face of
the dominant goals of society” (2003, p. 12).

Susanne Langer (1948) suggested a reorientation toward art as a symbolic transformation
(p. 20) that is generative and transcends the constraints of language, but war and economy, two
dogmatically motivated sectors of society, still dominated reality. The academic community was
not ready to understand how feelings and vital experiences (Langer, 1957, p. 91) could expand
our knowledge through and beyond artistic expression. In the 1950s, art criticism and art history
began to introduce concepts of psychology and sociology into its research (e.g., Arnheim,
1966/2010), but the idea that art in its creation and perception could contribute to new
knowledge was a horizon yet to be envisioned. That led many practitioners to embrace the notion
that art creation could access a creative intelligence and provide information that was somehow
truer in certain circumstances than scientific method (McNiff, 1998), but for arts-based research
to become a normal discourse, considerably more radical forms of discourse would have to be
developed. The task of convincing the academic community of the viability of arts-based
research would continue throughout the last two decades of the 20th century. The paradigm wars
of the 1980s and 1990’s demonstrated the necessary but disruptive effect of abnormal discourse,
but to suggest that knowledge and truth could come from artistic expression was more than a
minor paradigm shift. Eliot Eisner (2008) describes the situation in the following manner.

Such knowledge is not expressible in ordinary discourse. The reason for this
ineffability is not that the ideas to be expressed are too high, too spiritual or too
anything else, but that the forms of feeling and the forms of discursive expression are logically incommensurate. (p. 7)

Although this situation has evolved—certainly since Eisner (1971) first posed the question, “How can you measure a rainbow (p. 36)?”—arts-based research is still not commensurate with the traditionalist discourses of academic inquiry, partly because the traditional ways artists learn their skills are still very different from how other forms of inquiry are taught (Gouzouasis, 2013b). It is not only scientists who are steeped in the normal discourse of tradition (positivism); artists as well have to reconceptualize their work and break away from historical convention (e.g., the conservatory method of learning music) to realize the knowledge-generating potential of their art in research.

Eisner (2008a, p. 11) points out the contributions that art can make toward creating knowledge. First, art makes possible an awareness of the nuances of situations; our ability to sense the subtle, but significant, is enhanced through our appreciation of art. Second, art allows empathy; our personal feelings are moved by art, and our understanding of others can lead to compassion. Third, art challenges and redirects our perspective; art engages the imagination and provides the possibility of new ways of understanding. Finally, art involves our emotions and becoming aware of how we feel; our subjective humanity is discovered though our engagement with art. That list, although not exhaustive, demonstrates how different the contributions of arts-based research are from the normal discourse of academic knowledge generation, which is still concerned with generic principles, predictive outcomes, universal categories, and laws of nature. This difference is part of why arts-based researcher have had to spend so much effort in self-justification.
Eisner reminds us that the purpose of educational research—whether it is based in art or in randomized control trials—is to genuinely communicate better answers to complex educational questions (2008b, p. 23). Thus, the more ethereal and impressionistic results that emerge from arts-based research are seemingly obliged to extend the particular to the general, to contribute to knowledge that is somehow transferable to educational situations. Critiques can be made about statistical studies over-generalizing or making claims that are beyond their limits (i.e., higher test scores equal better teaching or learning), but that does not give arts-based research a carte blanche to pursue aesthetic considerations at the cost of epistemological questions (Eisner, 2008b, p. 25). As Maxine Greene (2001) reminds us, arts-based research has the potential to incorporate “perception, cognition, affect, and the imagination as ways of knowing” (p. 3), but these perspectives have to be translated and communicated in meaningful ways to make a contribution to education.

5.2 Autobiographical Experience

To move toward understanding the meaning and significance that arts-based research can have for education, Carl Leggo (2008) suggests we examine the confluence of the personal and the professional that arises in autobiography. In describing and representing personal experience, we can locate ourselves in the social community and join an inheritance of collective wisdom. Our stories, however uniquely they manifest, reflect our history, culture, and desire to be part of a community. The separation of the personal and the professional is an illusion, and our job as teachers is to learn to appreciate the significance of our personal experiences in order to appreciate the experiences of others. To appreciate the “extraordinary in the ordinary” (p. 92) is part of this process. Through autobiographical creative work, we can build reference points of our own development that contribute to our ability to recognize and cultivate development in
others. Leggo (2005) metaphorically uses a story of his childhood backyard as inseparable from who he is as a professional in a classroom. This can be represented in autobiographical poetry and discussed in academic texts, but how this insight creates a re-visioning for teachers is its meaningful translation. Becoming a teacher does not necessarily happen by taking twenty courses in teacher education; it happens when we recognize particularity—first in ourselves, then in our students. This is a very different proposition to a list of best practices or a teaching plan. It suggests a much more diverse and complex re-visioning of our lived experience as teachers, and a source for generating ideas.

The autobiographical poetry that Leggo creates does not get translated into meaningful research results on its own. A dialogic, reciprocal effort is required from both the particular author and the reader (teacher). This reciprocal effort is sustained and stimulated from the dynamic energy (2008, p. 93) produced by the art itself. The reciprocity implied here is inescapable; not only are arts-based researchers asked to put themselves into the research, but the reader (or teacher) is also invited to interpret arts-based research outcomes by knowing themselves, and to “live creatively” (Leggo, 2005, p. 177). This is of particular importance to teaching because it is impossible to be certain of all that is needed to be successful. Wanting to be certain of our task is the source of considerable stress for most teachers yet is largely a futile desire. Artistic practice can inform teaching, and teaching can inform artistic practice by recognizing the performative and creative aspects in both. Emphasizing the dynamic generative energy that can arise from multiple, creative interpretations of our stories “opens up possibilities for understanding our lives and experiences and relations” (Leggo, 2005, p. 178). It is a collaborative construction of meaning. In other words, arts-based research informs arts-based teaching—not necessarily the teaching of poetry or music, but the recognition that collaborative,
reciprocal creativity is involved in the construction of meaning. This adds to the diversity and complexity of meaning in education research as demonstrated by Gouzouasis, Irwin, Miles, and Gordon (2013).

Autobiography is a way of interpreting one’s experience, insofar as “The person you are and will become derive from our reconstructions of lived experience in the world” (Pinar, 2009b, p. vii). The process and product of autobiographical work are ways for educational researchers and teachers to organize, reconstruct, and reflect upon our academic knowledge, our societal context, and our subjectivity (Pinar, 2012, p. 11). Pinar defines the method of currere as a form of study that allows the integration of the personal (i.e., subjective) experience with society in a historical context. This notion is a reframing of curriculum as a dynamic, lived, continuous project that is inseparable from one’s subjectivity. It is a very different notion of curriculum than what has commonly been defined as the “planned sequence of instruction…or learning goals” (Wikipedia, 2017). The subjective reflexivity suggested by the method of currere recognizes that the lived experience of teaching and learning is integral to the project of education. That recognition—that the vibrant source of knowledge exists within all teachers and learners if accessed through personal narratives, study, and reflection—is a reconceptualization of curriculum (Pinar, 1978). Rather than being a plan for instruction, curriculum is conceived as a continuous course of action that is a way of being. Our subjective experiences, historical knowledge, and societal contexts are all intertwined in an active, ongoing effort, which includes

51 Pinar cites Nussbaum (1997, p. 85), referring to her concept of cultivating humanity by developing three capacities: 1) critical self-examination, 2) engagement with the world, and 3) narrative imagination.
both teachers and learners. This reflective subjective approach informs our actions as teachers and learners.

The reflective telling of personal experience through autobiographical expression affords a course of action in education. Instead of comprising a finite recipe or list of actions, this approach is dynamic and continuous. As educational situations arise, the course of action is informed by our agency, which is developed through the process of reflective subjectivity. This agency of subjectivity that Pinar (2012, p. 43) recognizes in autobiography is akin to the dynamic energy that Leggo (2008, p. 93) attributes to his process of living poetically. What Pinar and Leggo are describing is the process of honestly, respectfully, and passionately giving one’s subjective perspective to the public service of teaching. By revealing our selves through reflective autobiography, we create the energy and agency for an informed compassion—an ability to appreciate and understand both ourselves, and those we teach. It is a way of being that comes out of the process of autobiography, and it allows the generative inspiration of recognizing our subjective human condition in societal and historical contexts. As Pinar articulates, the individual educator accesses the agency of subjectivity through autobiography by the cultivation of subjectively situated, historically attuned intellectual judgment informed by academic knowledge, processional ethics, technical know-how, and a passionate sense of public service (2012, p. 43). If this process could be put in a finite list, it would look like something as follows.

*Pinar suggests autobiography should include:*

1. *Story about me*
2. *Historical references*
3. *Judgement*
4. *Knowledge*
5. *Ethics*
The method of currere includes four moments (Pinar, 1975, 2012):

1. Regressive – reflecting on past experience
2. Progressive – imagining future experiences
3. Analytical – critical reflection on the present subjectivity in a societal context
4. Synthetic – integration of reflective knowledge from previous three moments

That structure provides a framework of sufficient rigour to be commensurate with institutional requirements while allowing a creative expression of subjective experience, an affordance that is essential to arts-based educational research. Pinar (2012, p. 45) suggests the subjective reconstruction of academic knowledge and lived experience is a form of cultural criticism. Our autobiographical inquiries can help us to develop understandings culture at large (including temporal and spatial dimensions) by recognizing culture’s effect on our own subjectivity.

Understanding currere as the subjective and infinitive form of curriculum means that my own currere, although unique, is always related to collective and historical contexts.

Pinar stops short of recommending the method of currere within the school curriculum, and refers to it as a sensibility (2012, p. 45). Although currere can be detailed as a method or a sensibility, it is clear that Pinar is aware of the pitfalls of following a prescriptive deterministic approach when it comes to the complexities of educational research (see Doll, 2005, 2006).

Currere is a method of study—a method of self-understanding that includes societal and temporal dimensions. Currere is a tool, an implement or instrument that affords the forming of disparate ideas into a cohesive whole. As Dewey declared over a hundred years ago, “imposing

52 For an expansion of how this framework can be imagined see Gouzouasis & Wiebe (2018)
an alleged uniform general method upon everybody breeds mediocrity” (as cited in Doll, 2006, p. 85), but a tool like currere can be wielded individually.

5.3 Artistic Methods

The methods characteristic of the arts can often take on a uniform authority. Consider, for example, the historical traditions within music: learning to play an instrument, harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, notation, form, voicing, tuning, and ensemble organization. All are inheritances of great value. As Dewey points out, a very important part of learning is mastering the general methods that “the experience of others has shown to be more efficient in the cases of getting knowledge” (1916/1966, p. 171). However, this does not address the specific situations that require individual and original approaches. Every individual develops “native tendencies” and “acquired habits” (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 173) that should be in “reflective conversation” (Doll, 2008, p. 88) with the specific situations and environments in which they are embedded. The general methods can structure and facilitate specific inquiries, but they will never replace the individual creativity that leads to new solutions. When method becomes dogmatic, the reflective subjectivity that allows the process of recursive iteration and emergent creativity is foregone for expected outcomes. Rather than dogmatic adherence to a method with preconceived goals and values, a context-specific, individual approach can provide solutions that were not conceivable prior to the inquiry. Somewhat like how improvisation emerges from musical form, the structure allows freedom when it is played with, within, and upon.

The real value in the methodological inheritances from music practice is not just their ability to assist in producing better musicians (although this is a great outcome) but also the intelligence that reveals itself in the process. The forms, structures, and intelligence in musical traditions provide an agency that is immediate and contributive; they also offer comfort,
familiarity, trust, community. They offer almost endless assistance to the generation of subjective creativity while simultaneously being part of the collective (including the historical collective, the immediate collective, a projected synthesis, and content for analysis). A piece of music, for example, can convey its history (e.g., subject matter, compositional context, author’s history), an immediate experience (e.g., as the song is played or listened to), a projection (e.g., how it continues to accumulate experiences into the future), and an amazing source of analytic material (e.g., sound studies, musicology, reflection). Although, theoretically, there are a finite number of examples of human contribution to musical tradition, every new instance can reinvent its product. This approach—seeing historical inheritances of methods in dialog with subjective experience within specific contexts—is particularly suited to education research because it is ultimately the path all who endeavour to learn must navigate on their own.

The creative expression of subjective experience requires more than merely a method. Each expression is unique. Measurement and comparison are difficult because each iteration is subjectively and temporally exclusive, a singularity. The situation requires continuous readjustments based on relative content. Creative content is produced as an expression of the uniqueness in which it was created. As we have seen, many of the originators of arts-based research are practicing artists themselves. The subjective expression in artistic form is recognized not only as a source of intelligence (Dewey, 1934, p. 34; Eisner, 1991/2017, p. 16) but also as a personal need (Leavy, 2015, p. 291). A/r/tography is an example of arts-based

53 The term singularity is used in reference to James Clerk Maxwell’s (1873) argument against determinism and certainty. The concept that a small change can cause a large effect (metaphorically termed the butterfly effect—the idea that the flapping of a butterfly’s wings could cause a tornado) is relevant to an argument against determinism, which posits that given identical initial conditions, consistent and predictable outcomes will result; however, especially in the practice of teaching or parenting, the same initial conditions are never repeated.
research that works toward a commiseration between the active and emerging practices of teaching, researching, and artistic production (Bakan, 2014; Gouzouasis, 2008, 2018; Gouzouasis & Leggo, 2016; Springgay et al., 2006).

5.4 A/r/tography

_Currere_ figured prominently in early a/r/tographic work because it allows the intersection of artistic practice, research, and teaching to inform and reinforce each other (Irwin, 2004; Irwin & de Cosson, 2004; Wilson et al., 2002; Springgay et al., 2005; Springgay et al. 2008). Learning, creating, and teaching can provide disparate lived subjective experiences that can be woven together to create a stronger and more informed position, promoting future experiences in each area. _Currere_ provides the perspective that one’s subjective position weaves through aspects of one’s life—as artist, researcher, teacher, and learner.⁵⁴ This idea provides a foundation for a/r/tography that cultivates an interrelational approach—inviting us to reflexively compliment different forms of inquiry (writing, artistic production, teaching and learning). Rita Irwin (2006) suggests the range of insights evoked using a/r/tographic methods is a way of uniting space, time, and our experiences in reflexive inquiry. A/r/tographic creative production therefore is not just an artifact that represents an experience, it becomes part of an ongoing reflexive process of interpretation and transformation. The processes and products of creative production in this sense create a continual transformation of the self within a social and historical context. A/r/tography creates a reflexive continuum by being both a method of transformation and a representation of transformational phenomena (Irwin, 2006, p.79). This perspective of making a concrete representation (creative product) of the ethereal and abstract ideas and experiences of our lives

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⁵⁴ For a primary example of implementing currere in music education research see Bakan (2014).
can create a hermeneutic cycle of understanding. This cycle incorporates the process and the product—reflection on creative production informing future production in an iterative process. Enlivening creative production with historical academic knowledge for education allows us to appreciate and revisit the complex interrelationships between ourselves, our social interactions, our individual and collective histories, and our hopes and visions for the future. The artistic product, as well as the process and reflection of creative production which is inherently iterative, provides a concrete way to re-engage with particular experiences and the ideas that they can evoke.

The a/r/tographic approach emphasizes the interrelational and collective nature of learning through and with art. A/r/tography encourages us to use experience, knowledge, skills, and relationships together simultaneously, creating a multi-layered and complex process of learning and creating. Irwin and O’Donoghue (2012) describe this as a position of “being with” or of “having certain knowledge, not always recognised as such perhaps in contexts outside of its place of emergence, but intelligible, to a large extent, by and through its encounter with other knowledge and knowledge formation” (p. 226). This is an emergent process of becoming because as we engage with the multiple layers, knowledge is continually reformed in relation to other knowledge and knowledge formations (hermeneutic understanding). This is an invitation to allow the complex interrelations between academic knowledge and creative expression to not only coexist but to inform and reinforce each other. A/r/tography is a community of artists/researchers/teachers who celebrate and extend the interrelational complexities of creative production, experience, knowledge, and learning. A/r/tography cultivates the potential for new and emergent forms of knowledge by being with the complex and the uncertain in creative and
expressive ways. This spirit informs and encourages my inquiry into arts-based educational research.

## 5.5 Books of Life

It is now, however, perfectly clear that neither the future nor the past are in existence, and that it is incorrect to say that there are three times—past, present, and future. Though one might perhaps say: “There are three times—a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future. For these three do exist in the mind, and I do not see them anywhere else: The present time of things past is memory; the present time of things present is sight [perception]; the present time of things future is expectation.

— Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, Book 11, Ch. 20, c. 399 AD

Creating meaning from our memories, perceptions, and expectations requires a way to keep these temporally diametric dimensions commensurate. The hermeneutic approach to inquiry is inherently multidimensional and iterative. Self, culture, history, and context all cycle and interact, accumulating with the intention of gaining a greater understanding of truth. This approach transcends any one method due to its inclusionary and re-referential nature. The hermeneutic approach is more a way of being-in-the-world\(^{55}\) that continuously accumulates, analyzes, reflects, and applies ways of knowing toward truth, rather than a prescribed set of procedures. It is an approach that tries to combine our inheritances (e.g., history, culture, past

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\(^{55}\) This Heideggarian (1927/1962) concept of *being-in-the-world* differentiates the existential human (Dasein) from what can be characterized as objects spatially and temporally located with respect to other objects. This is a refusal to understand human conditions as isolated, determinate, categorized objects. For an extensive analysis of this concept, see Dreyfus (1991).
experience) with our expectations for the future (e.g., the motivation of interpretive inquiry is to improve or benefit the future through the application of greater understanding), manifest in present action (e.g., applying understanding by writing, teaching, production, etc.). Hermeneutic traditions evolved out of acting, writing, reading, rereading, rewriting, and reacting repeatedly. This approach to methodology is concerned with the interpretation of meaning that arises from human actions and their products (i.e., traditionally, texts, but all forms of production can be interpreted). The complex and self-referential nature of hermeneutic inquiry means it defies a prescriptive list of instructions, and this approach can be applied in countless ways. This lack of prescriptive methods can be perceived as frustrating and even unmanageable for specific applied tasks such as can sometimes be required in educational research (e.g., the improvement of a test). One may question if this approach becomes useful to the daily ongoing practice of teaching. For me, the answer to this is through the practice of making notes. My notebooks.

5.5.1 Hypomnémata

Foucault helps to identify an ancient tradition of note taking that was known as hypomnémata (1997, p. 209). Through the examination of historical texts from Plato (423–347 BC), Seneca (54 BC – 39 AD), Plutarch (46–120 AD), Epictetus (55–135 AD), Marcus Aurelius (121–180 AD), and others, Foucault develops the concept of the hypomnémata as a form of self-writing and ultimately one of self-care and good citizenship that was in common use in ancient Greece and Rome. Beginning with its etymological relationship with anamnesis, the Platonic concept that learning consists of accessing past incarnations of knowledge and that writing is a device of artificial memory, Foucault states:

The hypomnémata constituted a material memory of things read, heard, or thought, thus offering these as an accumulated treasure for rereading and later meditation. They also
formed a raw material for the writing of more systematic treatises in which were given arguments and means by which to struggle against some defect (such as anger, envy, gossip, flattery) or to overcome some difficult circumstance (a mourning, an exile, downfall, disgrace). (1997, p. 273)

Hypomnémata constitute a form of life-writing that is more than just a memory aid; they function as guides for conduct, for reflection on cultivating the self and one’s role in society. The forms of hypomnémata are not specified and can take on the form used in any individual practice; what is important is that access be consistent and convenient (“near at hand”). There is also an implication of a deep and truthful relationship between the hypomnémata and their author; they are “deeply lodged in the soul,” and “the soul must make them not merely its own but itself” (Seneca, quoted in Foucault, 1997, p. 210). The hypomnémata become a personal collection of reflections, quotes, readings, extracts, examples, actions interpreted, reasonings, things read or heard, observations, etc., all accumulated to be reread and meditated on as needed. The act of rereading and meditating on the notes also serves to inform better note taking in the future.

The intensification of subjectivity in the personal life-writing of the hypomnémata implies an ēthos (Foucault, 1997, p. 239), or a moral character that emerges due to the individual assessment and distillation of ideas. The way one reflects upon and modifies one’s behaviour and thoughts through this process is cumulative and has the intention of constant improvement. The ethical work, consisting of critical examination of one’s experiences in the “attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behavior” (Foucault, 1992/1984, p. x), is an ongoing process that is the prime objective of the hypomnémata. Over time, deeper understanding of previous ideas builds toward consistent principles of action that have recognizable and
accumulated benefits (for ourselves and for our participation in society). The continued process of writing, reflection, and action ideally focuses our expectations for the future by connecting it with the past.

The hypomnémata can be thought of as what lies under more refined and considered forms of thought, memory, and production (hypo- means beneath or below, supporting; mné- means mind, memory, remembering; mata- indicates the result of an action). It is a form of recording that allows the freedom to review, discard, revive, postulate, invent, test, etc. with minimal risk, due to its personal and private nature. The re-actualization of contents in the hypomnémata emphasizes the importance of habitual self-reflection as a tool to link truth and the subject or self (Foucault, 1997, p. 101). A record of ideas over time reveals habits, styles, doodles, patterns, and other marginalia. Patterns in thought and reaction can also be recognized.

According to Seneca and Epictetus, the philosophical development of the self is acquired through the exercise and practice of writing and reflecting (Foucault, 1997, p. 209). Through this practice one prepares oneself for life’s events, good and bad. This form of life-writing is different from the Christian adaptation found later that looks to record confessions of spiritual experience (sins, temptations, weaknesses, failures), with the intention of purification (p. 210). The life-writing of the hypomnémata is intended to collect and manage events, thoughts, ideas, etc. that have occurred in the “real world,” not to expose or confess hidden personal conflicts (even if this is an outcome of the hypomnémata, it is not the intention). The Christian interpretation of life-writing changed it to something like a confessional journal, a

\[56\] In practice, some of the most insignificant and off-hand entries have resulted in significant actions. For example, the idea to write the narrative Will’s Notebook came from a tiny marginalia about bildungsroman.
perception that has endured and is perhaps why life-writing is not always considered a serious element of inquiry. The debate over objectivity that was central to the paradigm wars of the late 20th century would position life-writing as subjective and therefore not scientifically significant (Schiff et al., 2017; White, 1973). However, reconsidering the concept of autopoiesis (i.e., dynamic systems, self-organizing, regenerative, relative) and the complex interaction that subjective knowledge shares with the ever-changing perspectives of reality, life-writing can serve as a way to find a reference point necessary to determine improvement (or at least movement in that direction). This form of reflexive evaluation can form the basis of improvement for poets and mathematicians alike, but it is especially contributive to teaching and learning.

Life-writing can serve as a practice to organize our perception in a complex network of ever-changing boundaries. The practice of creating hypomnémata is a form of dialog with the past, society, and the self. This complex interaction can be likened to a conversation, and this links it to experience and our episteme. Varela says this by claiming that a conversation’s role “as an exemplary case of autonomous interaction comes from the fact that a conversation is direct experience, human experience par excellence—we live and breathe in dialogue and language” (Varela, 1979, p. 268).” Hypomnémata might be conceived as a system to organize our conversations with ourselves, accessing the past and projecting into the future. Remembering that the intention of hypomnémata is to improve actions in the world, our conversations are preparations for further and improved conversations. This system is also self-generating; it becomes the source of ideas for itself. The way you record and converse with the notes changes as you discover new methods, groupings, patterns—plans that worked and ones that didn’t.
Foucault identifies three reasons that hypomnémata can contribute to the formation of the self (1997, pp. 211–214).

1. The cycle of **reading and writing**. This basic idea of cycling between learning and doing. Reflection and action.

2. Demonstrates the making of **choices**. Heterogeneous elements that have to be chosen. The “art of disparate truth” (p. 212) combining traditional authority with the singularity of the present.

3. **Embodied** evidence, thought in action. Appropriation of the reading and writing into the self.

The commonplace book, scrapbooks with recipes, quotes, letters, poems, tables of weights and measures, proverbs, prayers, legal formulae, etc. were common in early modern Europe (circa 16th and 17th centuries). The Zibaldone di pensieri by Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837) was described as a “heap of things” or a “salad of many herbs,” a hodgepodge book. Charles Darwin’s field notes in a memorandum book evolved into *The Origins of Species*. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were taught to keep commonplace books at Harvard University. Leonardo Da Vinci’s notebooks inspired countless discoveries.

The transformation of the hypomnémata into more refined forms of writing is part of their intention. This refinement is how the hypomnémata relate to society and history. Rewriting them as correspondence or conversation requires a transformation. They become a manifestation of action that gives them relevance and significance. Hypomnémata recall past systems of communication (e.g., salutations, dates, loci, signatures, structures, forms, emplotments, tropes,
arguments, ideologies)\textsuperscript{57} as inheritances, each with abundant histories. The formality of tradition affects one’s voice, and subjects are treated differently depending on the nature of the correspondence. *Hypomnémata* can be free flowing, but once we engage the conversation in correspondence, our ideas are necessarily refined based on the context and the traditions. Making this refinement of our private *hypomnémata* to create text meant for others provides the “help of others in the soul’s labor upon itself” (Seneca, quoted in Foucault, 1997, p. 215). The dialogic process of continual reading and writing, making choices, and embodying the text by relating it to situations and experiences makes a form of writing that “shows oneself.” It creates a level of autobiographical truth that is so important to realizing the individual within the collective (Pinar, 2012, p. 92).

The relationship between the individual and the collective is foundational to Pinar’s notion of autobiography in his *currere* approach (2012, p. 43). For Pinar, the subjectivity that arises through autobiography conveys and constructs language, culture, and ideology (2009, p. 33). Our individual negotiation between subjectivity and society creates an “ineffable agency” (Jonsson, 2000, p. 17) that can animate action. This agency has great potential but requires constant re-evaluation and recalibration through study and reflection on experience. Without this constant reflective evaluation, such as is implied by the hermeneutic cycle, our agency can be influenced by the symbolic relations and social networks of power (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 2). This demands ongoing re-evaluation of one’s refinement of autobiographic source material as well as the constant assessment of how the collective identity is manifest and its influence over us.

\textsuperscript{57} Hayden White (1973) details these literary inheritances and describes them as part of the “narrative prose discourse” (p. 3) of history present in writing.
Without this, the functional expression of lived experience that autobiographic writing affords, we can be limited by the dominant collective experience (Jay, 2005, p. 241). This point is illustrated continually in the experience of working teachers. Making commensurate institutional (collective, societal, historical) requirements with the lived (subjective, relational) realities of learning and teaching is an ongoing challenge of the profession.

That is the challenge that Aoki addresses in his notion of curriculum as plan and curriculum as lived (Aoki, 2005, p. 413). Aoki suggests that attunement, or a negotiated way of being that allows the inheritances, traditions, and institutional requirements to work in harmony with the relational subjectivity of each teacher and learner, has to work in balance with our day-to-day activity of teaching. The development and refinement of hypomnémata, which maintain the autobiographical approach of currere, serves as ongoing material for hermeneutic interpretation that is attuned to the harmony of the curriculum as lived and as plan. This approach to self-writing is based on a notion that ultimately, collective improvement (to a class, a school, a curriculum, a city, a society, etc.) comes from the improvement and cultivation of the self.

5.6 Self-Care

The purpose of the hypomnémata was based on a concept of self-care. It is an example (circa 300 BC to 300 AD) of a technology of the self that was developed and cultured as a method of self-improvement with the intent of self-transformation. The transformational dimension refers not only to actions and skills but also to attitudes and ways of being. It was a system of self-care considered in classical Greco-Roman culture as a principle for social and personal conduct and for the “art of life” (Foucault, 1997, p. 226). It is within the context of this tradition that I wish to consider self-care as a way to cultivate and improve one’s contribution to
the collective project of education. Through self-care, collective societal improvements can be actualized. Furthermore, understanding the hypomnémata as a practice of self-care, in the sense that self-writing has the intention of improving the self in a societal context, underlines the intention of Pinar’s currere as a method of study and self-improvement.

Foucault states that “we inherit the tradition of Christian morality which makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation” (1997, p. 228). This idea that self-care is aligned with selfishness or self-interest and that care for others or for society only comes from self-sacrifice is an inheritance that continues today and leads to suspicion at the mention of self-care. This is evident in how curriculum is framed almost exclusively as something we direct to others. If it is considered at all, self-care in contemporary school curriculum is considered something taught to others so that they can manage themselves. It is a process of controlling behaviour and emotions but not a system of self-care in the classical sense, and certainly not directed to the self-care of teachers. There is an assumption that teachers have the self-care needed to facilitate and implement the curriculum, but the classical idea that self-care is inherently pedagogical does not appear. Self-care is often used today in the context of health care, which does not capture the classical notion.

Self-care in the classical sense is concerned with a form of individual freedom—from over-indulgence in desires, wants, ego, pleasure, etc., but also the freedom to interpret societal norms and rules. This form of self-care appreciates that personal freedom comes through

\footnote{This statement is a generalization about school curriculum, derived from the province of British Columbia’s school curriculum available at https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca. The website contains references to personalized healthy living, success in life and society, development as well-rounded citizens, etc., but all relate to skills that cannot be considered “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1997, p. 223).}
understanding one’s contribution to society and recognizing the inherent pleasure in this contribution. The concepts of self-absorption or self-indulgence are not part of self-care because ultimately, our role in society is reflected in who we are. Indulgence and absorption reflect a lack of self-care. In the classical sense, self-care is a progress toward the self as a work of art, recognized individually and collectively. *Hypomnémata* were developed as a technology of the self with the purpose of cultivating self-care. Through writing, reading, rewriting, rereading, and refining ideas and themes that can be put into correspondence, *hypomnémata* allow the individual to exercise a form of self-care that leads ultimately to an improvement of society.

In that sense, *hypomnémata* constitute a technology, or method, of self-care that supports the development of a subjectivity articulated by Pinar (2012, p. 10) as essential to education understood as self-formation through academic study, the basis for his method of *currere*. *Hypomnémata* can be a generative practice to provide material for the method of *currere*, which then situates the practice in academic knowledge and subjective development with the goal of improving education. *Hypomnémata* can be thought of as under (or supporting) autobiography.

### 5.7 Narrative

Telling stories is a foundation of human communication and how we understand the world. Even the most “simple” of stories can reveal social and worldly networks of relations that have astonishing complexity (Cobley, 2001, p. 2). All cultures have developed narratives independently, and yet striking similarities emerge (Campbell, 1949/2008; Rank, 1990), which suggests a basic human universality to the process of telling stories. The origins of human story telling are difficult to specifically locate; we know the oldest written narrative (*The Epic of Gilgamesh*) dates back 5,000 years, but cave paintings depict narratives that are more than
30,000 years old. Michelle Scalise Sugiyama (2001, 2008, 2012) uses phylogenesis, an evolutionary development approach, to argue that narratives are much older and in fact are directly related to how humans evolved. Individuals who were better able to tell and process stories (i.e., communicate information and ideas enabling the affordance of better environmental adaptation) enjoyed a reproductive advantage (Sugiyama, 2001, p. 235). That perspective suggests that we are genetically predisposed to use narratives as a way of understanding the world.

One specific formal structure or schematic template (Wertsch, 2002, p. 60) of narrative that reoccurs throughout history and location is of the “hero’s journey.” This narrative form is of particular interest in this work because it can be related to the *bildungsroman* as the life journey of development. Joseph Campbell (1949) describes this form or pattern as a monomyth (a term borrowed from James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, 1939). Campbell (1949) summarizes the monomyth as follows.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellows. (p. 23)

Narrative schematic templates (e.g., the initiation, quest, and return of the “hero’s journey”) operate on an abstract level that, according to Wertsch, influences collective remembering (2002, p. 176) as well as the construction and organization of meaning associated with experience and events. This suggests a mnemonic function inherent to the schematic organization of narrative that could provide practical benefits for teachers and learners. These templates contain collective understandings and expectations that suggest historical and universal potential. Although Dewey
expanded on the idea that all experience exists in temporal relation to both past and future experience, he did not claim there to be a relationship between personal experience and a collective, historical understanding of experience as represented in universal narrative templates (MW 2, [1903], p. 205). One may posit that a relationship to a collective, historical, even evolutionary construction of meaning may be inherent in the structures and expectations of narratives. If that is even partly true, then narratives could provide the key to understanding the educational potential of experience. Through narrative, ideas and experiences can be structured, represented, elaborated, and communicated. The inclusion of academic study with the reflexive practice of reconstructing experience through narrative is what Pinar (2009b) suggests to be the ongoing project of self-cultivation by the “juxtaposing autobiographical and academic study, situated socially and attuned historically” (p. 62). The narrative form is a way of organizing experience with academic study through the act of writing about teaching and learning.

Narratives provide the form and method for the reflexive practice of understanding experience. The contemplation and construction of stories of our experience allows for the complexity of these experiences to be maintained and even celebrated. Leggo (2004, p. 108) points out the malleable and tentative nature of understanding through narrative as something to be honoured. Echoing Doll (2012, p. 172) and Morin (2008, p. 51), this is more than an acceptance of complexity and uncertainty—it is a celebration of recognizing the human condition within a narrative interpretation. The plurality and possibilities of narrative defy measurement but can provide a relational context (temporally, spatially, collectively). As Jardine (1992, p. 51) states, narratives of experience “can have a generative and re-enlivening effect on the interweaving texts and textures of human life in which we are all embedded.”
The objective of the narrative is multiple. It is a representation of an experience (mnemonic, historical, interpretable), but it also allows the study and context of the experience to be generative of new interpretations and experiences. Narratives have the potential to combine historical knowledge with lived experience and provide a rich, abundant (Jardin, 2006, *passim*), or fecund (Gadamer, 1960, p. 34) source of material for interpretation and inquiry. Narrative becomes the form, content, and source of inquiry that affords connections to collective knowledge and personal experience, while maintaining a celebration of the mystery of the human condition.

### 5.8 Soundscape Composition

Soundscape composition has evolved in part by R. Murray Schafer’s attempt to make coherent artistic expression with environmental and ecological issues. The philosophy that Schafer develops in *The New Soundscape* (1969), *The Music of the Environment* (1973), and *The Tuning of the World* (1977/1994), is to suggest that we are all composers of a collective soundscape, and by attuning to our environment through listening we can develop an understanding of ourselves as part of an ecological whole. This is to say that we as composers have a responsibility to create better sonic environments and conversely that we learn from listening to existing environments. Schafer’s ideas created the basis for soundscape composition and acoustic ecology and lead to the foundation of the World Soundscape Project and the World Forum of Acoustic Ecology.59

59 The World Soundscape Project (WSP) is an international research project founded in the late 1960’s at Simon Fraser University. The goal of the WSP is to “find solutions for an ecologically balanced soundscape where the relationship between the human community and the sonic environment is in harmony.” (Truax, Westerkamp, Woog, & Kallmann, 2006). [https://www.sfu.ca/~truax/wsp.html](https://www.sfu.ca/~truax/wsp.html)

The World Forum of Acoustic Ecology (WFAE) founded in 1993 is an international association engaged in the study of social, aesthetic, cultural, and ecological aspects of the sonic environment. The WFAE promotes
Following from Schafer’s work, Barry Truax expanded soundscape composition to include acoustic communication (Truax, 2001) by incorporating scientific models of energy, signal, and information transfer with subjective, listener-centered approaches. This communication methodology understands information and meaning arise though listening to the inner structures and patterns of specific sounds as well as the listener’s knowledge, history, and experience with the context from which a sound originates. This creates a dialogic relationship between listeners and their environment. The inner (sound itself) and outer (context—including history, space, culture, ecology) complexities inform our understanding of sound (Truax, 2012). As a soundscape composer this introduces a continuum that on one side is the faithful representation of an acoustic environment and at the other is the sonic interpretation based on aesthetic inspiration. Although, as any field recordist will attest, there is no objective recording of an acoustic environment. Microphone placement, recording, editing, all have subjective influences on how a sound is represented. To help navigate this continuum Truax offers the following principles for soundscape composition.\footnote{research and education of acoustic ecology and publishes \textit{Soundscapes: The Journal of Acoustic Ecology.} \url{https://www.wfae.net/}}\footnote{https://www.sfu.ca/~truax/scomp.html}

- The listener’s recognizability of the source material is maintained.
- The listener's knowledge of the environmental and psychological context is invoked.
- The composer's knowledge of the environmental and psychological context influences the shape of the composition at every level.
- The work enhances our understanding of the world and its influence carries over into everyday perceptual habits.
Hildegard Westerkamp (2002) emphasizes the idea that soundscape composition is a practice based on environmental listening and active engagement with our soundscapes—with acoustic ecology or study of the inter-relationships between sound, nature, and society. This perspective encourages the responsibility for soundscape composers to be concerned with the health and well-being of our entire ecological system. Soundscape composition, therefore, tries to develop the conscious awareness and understanding of relationships between our selves and the soundscape. This is what defines soundscape composition, the attunement of listening perception to our environment.

Soundscape composition begins with a specific time and place. A recording necessarily is contextual, in location, culture, history, spirit, and environment. This context defines the soundscape composition, rather than a pre-determined musical structure. The unique context of any recording gives what Westerkamp calls the “life” of a soundscape composition. Furthermore, the unique perspective of the composer intersects with the unique context of a recording to produce soundscape compositions with the intention of deepening the listener’s perception of their environment, can locate a soundscape composition to a specific research inquiry. Any location (e.g., mountain spring, forest, open plain, classroom) becomes an abundant source of sonic inquiry. The internal and external complexities of every sound can be explored and created with.

This ecological approach to composition provides opportunities to reflect on the complex interrelations between time, ideas, and place. The approach is ecological in that it promotes the listening and thinking about all aspects of a sound. The history, taxonomy, resonance, and context of every sound can be followed as another line in a complex web of co-interdependence. Navigating this complex web of relationships is facilitated by what Chet Bowers (2018)
describes as ecological intelligence. Bowers (2018, p. 123) argues that ecological intelligence is a life-sustaining form of consciousness that has the potential to revitalize culture and environment. He follows that ecological intelligence should be foundational to our educational reform (p. 124). Ecological intelligence promotes an awareness of context and interrelations. This is similar to ideas of thinking complexly (Morin, 2008; Doll, 2012) in making connections between our environment, our history, and how we think. Soundscape composition invites the contemplation and development of interrelations through the process of listening (experience), thinking (study, reflection), and representing (composition, story).

Returning to Roberto Calasso’s question on where it all begins—the story or the experience. Materials and ideas inform each other as we represent our experiences. The stories we tell originate with Apollonian intentions but invariably are pulled toward Dionysian outcomes (Calasso, 1988, p. 59). This is the truth of human nature that arts-based research can reveal. The fidelity of the Apollonian ideal is only in experience. With soundscape composition the materials we collect and create tell acoustic stories about ourselves as well as the contexts we recreate. This is aligned with the a/r/tographic position that Irwin et al. (2001) articulate: “As I create, I am created.”

5.9 Creative Production

Arts-based educational research is concerned with arts practices, which includes the process and the product of creative production. However, the art product, the artistic work, or artifact, is a representation that exists in time and context. It affords us some degree of concreteness or a reference point for further navigation. Creative production is the iterative development of aesthetic artifacts, it is a continuing process but at some point (usually external, logistical factors intervene) a work is produced. As introduced earlier in the present chapter,
Barone and Eisner’s (1997) list of seven elements of arts-based educational research describe what is special about the outcomes. The list demonstrates areas where imagination is encouraged and where there is complex abundance of being human. These creative products are to me a way of collecting and refining ideas and form new horizons of understanding that I can look back on and reconsider. Although arts-based educational research (and specifically a/r/tography) recognizes the inquiry-based process as a significant part of research, the artifact remains as a foothold in time. It is like a piton—something to fall back on as we climb in time and space.

The following chapter is Will’s Notebook, one of the products of my creative production as a form of arts-based educational research in the present dissertation. Will’s Notebook uses autobiography as a source to imagine possible futures, and collect histories. The accompanying soundscape composition, The Cotter Suite, resonates this story. Themes and locations in the story are developed into sonic environments and expressions. Will’s Notebook, and The Cotter Suite are creative expressions of the complicated conversation of my currere in this inquiry. They depict a journey through landscapes of ideas and experiences. Although this journey is never complete these expressions provide a source of reflection.
Chapter 6: Will’s Notebook and The Cotter Suite

All images and music presented in Will’s Notebook are original collaborative works made by Lyra Murphy, Sheila Karrow, and David Murphy.

The Cotter Suite is a collection of soundscape compositions that can be listened to as Supplementary Material or at:

http://www.sfu.ca/media-lab/cotter/
List of Characters

Will Cotter: Hero? Possibly. On a quest for knowledge of worth...


Moderna Ramus: Principal of UKC (United Knowledge Confederate).

Old Norse: Donor of parental wisdom.

Rupert: Companion and helper (sometimes).


Wise Owls: Devout Masters of knowledge. Aoki, Djin, Dewey

Statica Major: Wanderer of the Northern Liam Service.

Wabi Sabi
Will’s notebook, September 4:

**Labour Day**

The noise was overwhelming. Will was in a panic to get everyone organized. There were so many Players all making unrelated sounds that is was a cacophony! Every year the orchestration of events became more and more complicated. There were so many requests and systems to implement, lists to check, and it was Will's job to make sure Labour Day sounded great. Labour Day was the biggest celebration of the year, it marked the beginning of Newterm, and it was only three days away!

Will was a teacher, he and many other teachers prepared and orchestrated groups of Players, who were younger and unfamiliar with Newterm festivities. Will enjoyed the challenge of helping Players learn but the scale of the events had become more frightening every year.
It was a strange feeling, like he was participating in destroying the thing he loved. It felt like a Ferris Wheel that is accelerating and no one can get off. Like that little pin... if it falls out of a machine a catastrophe of epic proportions would occur. What was it called...?
The Cotter Pin... how could he forget? The Ol'Norse used to give advice about such things, an interesting device that is in-itself not significant, but if one shears the whole operation could go down. Ol'Norse liked Will, he liked to give him advice, especially about knowledge and worth. Will knew that Ol'Norse lived in a world very separate from the daily running of the Clan and especially the task of preparing and conducting courses for Newterm, but he always liked talking with him and somehow it always made the preparations easier and more enjoyable.
Labour Day’s Eve is a quiet, somber time of reflection and meditation that precedes the first day of Newterm. Normally, Will would be quite relaxed, all his preparations done, a quiet moment of excitement and satisfaction, but this term there was a particular feeling that something was going to change. It was his conversation with Ol’Norse about the Cotter Pin.

Ol’Norse came by, as he often did, to see Will at his dwelling on Labour Day’s Eve with the news that he had received a letter from the highest level saying that all Newterm activities would fall under the supervision of Statica Major the new leader of the Northern Clan Service. From now on all activities and events must adhere to a Rubric from Stangard. This meant that Conductors would be responsible for making sure every Player does the same course, plays the same, and is tested the same way.
This would spell disaster for Will, he was never able to get any two Players to do anything the same let alone follow a Standard. In all the years he had been a Conductor, Will had never even been able to orchestrate a course the same way twice. If following the Standard is to be enforced by the Clan Service, Will would be in BIG trouble.

Will knew Statica very well, they had grown up together in T’sian. At one time many years ago they were neighbors and would Play in concerts together. However, over the years Statica had become a powerful leader in the Clan Service, his rigor and ability to follow rules were without rival. Unfortunately, Statica knows that Will can’t seem to follow the Standard rules.

Ol’Norse startled Will by bursting in and saying...
“Will, you must put down what you are doing and take heed in what I say.”

After a pause, Will sat down next to Ol’Norse and listened.

“As you know I am a devout member of the ancient followers of wisdom, who over the years have vowed to protect the people of T’sian. We are the Teachers of Teachers, who protect knowledge and judge worth. There has been a call for a conference of the followers. I must attend and I must leave immediately!”

Will was having trouble controlling his jaw. It kept dropping open. Everyone called Sir William Norse, Ol’Norse because he was so old! As far as anyone could remember he was always old. How could an old man attempt to go into a forest as complicated and disorientating as where this group of followers met? Even the name gave Will the shivers: The Forest of Dispersion, a forest whose trails are so full of
bifurcations one could get lost in minutes and spend the rest of their lives without finding a clear path. The dangers of losing your mind trying to find a path was terrifying to Will, he had to shake his head to stop thinking about them.

Ol’Norse continued. “There is more... I need you to come with me.”

Will remembered a muffled ringing sound just before the room spun around and he ended up on the floor. This was an odd felling for Will looking up from the floor with Ol’Norse looking down at him saying something but it was too distant to understand.

Once Will was sitting in a chair with a glass of water, Ol’Norse began the conversation about the Cotter Pin. Ol’Norse found it quite amusing that Will’s second name was Cotter. Will was less amused. He found it difficult to follow everything that was said, but before he
knew it he was putting some extra clothes and food in a bag and writing a note to his colleagues explaining his absence, which was difficult because Will didn’t know why or how long he would be gone.

It came down to this. Somehow Ol’Norse convinced Will that his role in this meeting was so important that the whole mechanism of the Tshian culture would fail if he didn’t put down everything he was doing and leave on some crazy journey to a scary forest with an old man in the dark. Immediately!
On Our Way

They had been walking for quite a while. It was still very dark but the calm and the stars made it nice to be outside, half-asleep, following someone you trust. Suddenly there was a loud crash in the bushes just to the side. Ol’Norse reached in and pulled out of a bush a small creature that they both immediately recognized.

It was Rupert. He was small compared to Will and very small compared to Ol’Norse but he was such a nice little fella no one could not stay mad at him.

“Hey Guys!” Said Rupert with a bit more enthusiasm then the situation called for.

“Rupert! What are you doing here?” Demanded Ol’Norse.

“Well, ha, that’s kinda funny. You see, I was stopping by to see Will when I saw
you two heading for the Valley. I just kinda tagged along.”

You could see Ol’Norse was considering the situation deeply.

Finally, Ol’Norse said. “You will never find your way back so you must continue on with us.” With that he turned and continued down the path.

Will and Rupert were best buddies who had worked together on Newterm events for many years. Although this changes things Will was happy to have a friend with him.

Later that night when they stopped to nap for a bit...

Will asked Rupert. “What is it you think we are doing on this quest?”

Rupert replied quietly. “I don’t know but I heard the word ‘moribund’ again and I know that means our situation is about to change.”
Ol’Norse sat by the fire in deep thought, staring at the embers...
The next morning Rupert and Will had a great time talking about the pleasures of teaching the Players. They had conducted courses together for many years. There was a lot to remember and laugh about. The way the groups sounded was what Will and Rupert always loved. The sound was always different, always beautiful with unexpected combinations and relationships. Rupert and Will loved to listen.

Will was trying to remember what Rupert called their job. Something about an illusion...

The Illusio. That was it. Making it look good. For Rupert this was the purpose of teaching. Luckily, there were always new devices and technology to help, so it wasn’t hard, and more importantly it gave time off when it wasn’t working, or a new device was on order. You could always blame the technology.
Rupert was a big supporter of the Illusio. It was a game to him and everyone played it. It was part of The System.

This made Will think. Could what Rupert said be true? Was this all some illusion of success? Cotter Pin, Illusio, moribund, Will was starting to get that strange feeling again. As they approached the Forest of Dispersion, the feeling only grew stronger. Entering into the forest was easy, only one path in. Maybe this would not be so bad. But after a time, as Will looked around, the trails would go off in dozens of directions... How could they ever be sure which was the right way back, or forward? The forest felt like it was closing-in behind them...
The Great Walled City

Perhaps it is time to explain the situation that Will, Ol’Norse, and Rupert find themselves. They were part of an era that had witnessed a great change in how the world was run. The T’sian at one time exchanged ideas freely with other Clans. Ideas were shared and everyone prospered. There was a period of great development, a Renaissance. However, over time ideas became more and more valuable and fighting started to break out between Clans over whose ideas were right. This created divisions between Clans and many of the battles were vicious and shattering.

The strongest and largest Clan belonged to the United Knowledge Confederate (UKC) and they started to dominate all other clans. Eventually the administration of UKC brought together a vast majority of people centralized in the Southern Metropolis of Polis, a land so large it is said that you could walk for a week and still be within its walls. The Great Wall of Acura surrounded and protected Polis. It was constructed using a formula so
sophisticated and elegant that no wall as big or as impossible to penetrate had ever been constructed. The formula, so they say, is so powerful people themselves have been taken under its spell and turned into part of the wall! Will never took that old story very seriously but he had seen people who worked their whole lives on the wall and they certainly had become set in their ways.

At the center of Polis is the City of Stangard, the seat of power. From this great institution administrators extend their power to every corner of the world. At first the programs were just suggestions that came with free stuff. They seemed like good and practical ideas that everyone agreed to. It was a boon of resources. Why say no? But over time the programs became more and more standardized and there started to be stronger discipline for anyone who went off course.
Will, Ol’Norse, and Rupert were from the T’sian Clan. It was one of the most remote and Northern Clans in the world. As a result, they were somewhat cut off from the great changes that were happening behind the Wall of Acura. When Will and Ol’Norse found out about the Standard it was a shock because they never thought anyone cared what they did in T’sian. Thinking about this, Will was starting to feel they were in an impossible situation. How could a few teachers from the North have any impact on orders from The Chief who controlled all of Polis.

Will felt very small and scared.
The Forest of Dispersion

It felt like nighttime but they had been walking only a few hours since breakfast. The forest grew darker the further they went. Will’s feeling of strangeness was becoming overwhelming. All trails had disappeared, he could see nothing but impenetrable forest. There was a disorientation that felt like all your thoughts were being spoken at once. A cacophony of though. No wonder people talk of the Forest of Dispersion as a place where you get lost. You can’t think without some focus on an idea. When all thoughts call out at once you lose direction.

Then suddenly Ol’Norse said. “Stop! We are here.”

“Great!” Thought Will, “here is a dark scary forest where I’m losing my direction and my mind.” Ol’Norse continued. “Quiet. We have come to a secret and very precious spot. Listen...” In the quiet that followed Will was slowly aware of a faint sound of water. It gained interest the more he listened.
It was more than just the sound of running water, it sounded composed. Like it was saying something, everything...

Ol’Norse proceeded to part the vines to reveal a wonderfully inviting pool of water in an opening that was bright and spacious.

“This,” he said with obvious excitement, “is the Eternal Spring!”

Ol’Norse explained that the Eternal Spring was a perpetual forest spring that brought forth fresh clean water. The water contained pure imagination and it flowed from a waterfall to the large reflective pool they were standing by. When Will looked at his reflection in the pool it felt like he could see every idea he had ever had and the waterfall sparkled with every new idea to come. Will looked at both Rupert and Ol’Norse and could tell by their expressions they felt the same way.
“This is unbelievable!” Yelled Rupert. “We never have to come up with an idea again. All’s we have to do is hang around this pool.”

As Rupert danced around happily, Will began to have the feeling they were not alone. Will froze but it took Rupert a few more choruses of the song he was dancing to before he realized that there were many eyes watching him...

Before them stood three very imposing figures. It was The Three Owls, the keepers of knowledge, the judges of worth, and the guardians of the Eternal Spring. These three were legends to Will and Rupert, so seeing them in real life was intimidating to say the least. The oldest Owl named Aoki stepped forward and spoke with authority.
“Master Norse, you are welcome. We have been expecting you. I see you have brought…”

He paused to clear his throat, “…some friends” He was still looking at Rupert, who had stopped dancing and turned an interesting shade of red.

Conference with the Owls

Aoki wasted no time and called to order a conference to address the matters at hand.

“As the protectors of the Eternal Spring it is our duty to allow it to flow and not be controlled by the UKC. We have fought long and hard to maintain the independence and freedom of our Spring. It has always given energy and ideas to the T’sian Clan and without it we would lose our Calling. The UKC would use our spring as a resource to expand and develop Stangard. As we speak Statica Major, the newly appointed leader of the Northern Clan Service, is
heading across the Accura River. He is on his way to T’sian as we speak!
We have reports about a great army amassing in the Plains of Reason. We call upon all of you to help with this.”

“How can Statica cross the river?” Called out a ruffled old Owl named Djin. “The Serpent of Accura guards it. She has devoured anyone who tries to cross the river since before the time of tales.”

Aoki replied. “It has been said that Modèrna Ramus has seduced the Serpent into believing that the Standard would allow her to devour learners until her heart is content.”

The third Owl, a very large white creature named Dewey, exclaimed. “Mordena Ramus! Is there no end to her ambitions? First she was Chancellor of UKC, then Mayor of Stangard, then Chief of Polis, and now she is sending her army North across the Accura River!”
“We believe” Said Aoki. “that Ramus has sent Statica here with the intension of controlling the Eternal Spring.”
A great disharmony of voices started all at once. Everyone had something to say. The sound was astonishing.

Will sat quietly amazed at the sound.

Will had grown up listening to the Masters talk of the awesome power of the Spring. One drop of its water contained a universe of infinite possibilities. Was it possible that someone could control that? And if the Spring was always flowing shouldn’t there be more than enough for everyone?

Will was so deep in thought that he didn’t realized that everyone had stopped talking and were looking at him. Did he just say what he was thinking out loud?

Will made a very quiet gulping sound.
The Masters looked shocked. The Spring had always been protected by the Masters, no one had ever even suggested to share its power. Until today only a Master had ever been allowed near the spring. Rupert looked as uncomfortable as Will felt. There was an awkward silence.

Then Aoki started to laugh, soon all the Masters were laughing. Sharing the spring was the funniest idea they had heard. It takes years of study and dedication to become a master worthy of the waters from the Eternal Spring! It was decided. More research was required. This matter would have to wait until later.

Will felt very uneasy about how the conference ended but it didn’t seem to matter because tonight they would Play! Will loved to listen to the masters. Ol’Norse and the Owls may be old but when you hear them play music, there is no better energy. They would make up lyrics and change melodies all the time. It is like they are tapping into multi-generational dimensions. Voices from Players who are long gone, but are as alive with the music as they ever were. The
Owls were famous for their three-part harmonies that would include contemporary commentaries and many jokes, puns, rhymes, alliterations, and other rhetorical tricks to expand the music. It was endlessly entertaining to listen to. And could they play... every song would turn into a 20-minute jam that could end up anywhere.

Tonight, they would Play until dawn.

Will had begun his lessons late in life but he had complete confidence that Music would never let you down. No matter how grave a situation in life, Music has a way to refocus energy to what matters. Harmony, balance, tuning, spirit, culture all had a way of coming together and making sense. If it were not for Music, Will could not keep going. It was the part he liked best and he made sure to include it in all his teaching. Music could produce a unique human experience that made everyone in a group feel like they belonged to something worthwhile. Will treasured that feeling.
The Calling was always music for Will. It just sounded so good. Often it is very quiet. Will could barely notice it for many years. His motivations were based on ambitions and status quo. Reacting to what was needed rather than really listening. The Calling comes as a voice known as a Vocation. To actually hear what the voice is saying requires listening very closely. The day-to-day activity of teaching for Will had always been so busy and noisy that listening was not something much time was given to. This seemed funny to Will, making music but not really listening.

Will thought of the Cotter Pin again...

Then the band began to Play. Aoki on drums, Djin singing and percussion, Dewey on keys. Ol’Norse was unstoppable on the guitar. Rupert laying down the bass. Will joined in with his guitar and sang a very old but lively favorite song and it sounded a little something like this...
The Wild Rover

I’ve been a Wild Rover for many a year, 
I’ve spent all my money on Music and Cheer, But 
now I’m returning with gold in great store, And I 
ever Will Play the Wild Rover no more. 
And it’s no, nay, never. No nay never no more, 
Will I Play the Wild Rover, No never no more. 
I’ll come home to my parents with all that I’ve 
done, So happy they’ll be to see their Prodigal 
Son, 
And when we Play together as oft times before 
Sure I never Will Play the Wild Rover no more. 
And it’s no, nay, never. No nay never no more, 
Will I Play the Wild Rover, No never no more.
The sun was coming up as Will drifted off to sleep, singing in his dreams...

**Plan of Action**

The next morning the Owls and Ol’Norse were up early drinking Spring water and talking. By the time Will and Rupert arrived there seemed to be a consensus of talk about The Plan of Action. Will and Rupert are to cross the Plains of Reason by somehow convincing Statica Major and his enormous army to allow them to pass. They then have to convince the notoriously vicious serpent Pythia to kindly take them across the river. Once they enter Polis, they go to UKC campus and convince Mordërna Ramus to call Statica home and stop her plan of The Standard. Simple...
Will often took a while to understand things in the morning. There was a particularly enjoyable Tea made from spring water and a plant fed by it, perhaps another cup of that...

Rupert was way worse. He didn’t have a clue what The Plan of Action was. He was watching the preparation of Tea so intently that he could not have noticed anything else.

After a few cups of Tea, Will realized what was being asked of him.

Will and Rupert were to pass through a very dangerous open plain that is the camp of the entire Northern Clan Service, convince a serpent to take them across a river into Polis, locate a specific office on UKC campus, and convince a notoriously arrogant and powerful leader that the whole plan is wrong. Furthermore, recall Statica Major! Whaaaat?
From what Will could recall in the rush of preparation for the Away Team (The Owls where having a lot of fun coming up with names for things) there was much discussion about methods and theories to solve possible problems. A lot was said about technique and world views but Will was feeling something else...
After the plains and the river Will and Rupert have to convince Ramus that her plan is all wrong. The same Ramus that is gaining power by the current plan. Hmm. Will’s feeling was panic. Will was about to run away...

Suddenly Dewey spoke. “First.” Everyone went quiet. “You must seek advisement from the Spirit of the Spring about how this should be done. You must speak with Joie Paideia…”

Will froze. He had never imagined that Joie Paideia was someone you could talk to. If the Owls were legends, than Paideia was from the heavens. It is said that Paideia’s voice speaks The Calling and there is no question that Paideia cannot answer. Could Will actually speak with Paideia?

Aoki continued. “Take this vial of Eternal Spring water with you Paideia will instruct you” Aoki put the vial on a string around Will’s neck.
This was intriguing to Will, so he inquired quietly. “How does one find Joie Paideia?”

Aoki answered. “At the Trivium in the road to the South, take road closest to the setting sun. Continue to the river bank and you will find Paideia there at the Tree of Life, she is really very nice...”

“No!” Dewey replied. “It is at the Quadrivium further down the road, take the path of the stars. Follow the music, The Tree of Life is at its source.” There was confusion.

“I’m sorry Will...” Aoki spoke with a smooth and deep voice. “The path is unique for every traveler, we are still in the Forest of Dispersion so no matter which path you choose you will still have to decide for yourself if it is the right path.”

“One thing for certain,” Said Ol’Norse, “Any attempt to cross the river would be met with demise. Unless we can use the power of the Serpent to our advantage we will never cross. Will and Rupert are our best bet
to get our message to Ramus. They must be advised by Paideia of the course to be taken...”

“It is agreed then.” Said Aoki with grave tone of authority. “Will and Rupert will leave immediately to the Tree of Life and seek Joie Paideia’s advisement.”

“Why does every course of action have to start immediately?” Thought Will.
Forks in the road

To navigate the Forest of Dispersion one has to choose a path and understand that often it will lead you back to where you started, but you have to keep going. The way the Owls understood this was based on a map that was rigorously detailed and had been honoured by Masters for more than 300 years. The map systematically goes through every path. Aoki gave a copy to Will as they said goodbye. Will asked Ol’Norse to keep it for him. Will decided to travel light.

Ol’Norse and the other Owls gathered to wish the travelers farewell. Their task seemed very unclear and daunting but the opportunity to meet Joie Paideia was exciting and this was evident in Rupert’s mood. He was dancing around and singing again. Will thought it best to get moving before things got awkward...

After walking for some time on the path Will and Rupert sat to take a rest. Things seemed so peaceful and quiet that they both fell sound asleep.
Will awoke slowly to notice a small cat sitting very quietly between him and Rupert. Unsure what to do Will looked over to Rupert who was awake and looked even more unsure. What happened next shocked Will and Rupert into frozen silence.

The cat spoke in a calm and peaceful voice. “My name is Wabi Sabi. I see you are confused so take your time but I can help you find your way.”

~

“If you know where you want to go then any path will take you there...” Said Wabi- Sabi as he slowly and silently walked away.
Will and Rupert looked at each other, shrugged and took the path marked Music.

Further along their path, Rupert remarked to Will. “I was considering taking Astronomy.” “Yea, me too.” Laughed Will. They continued happily singing together...

After a while they came out of the forest to a beautiful and enormous tree that grew on the shore of a great sea. Will and Rupert knew that this must be The Tree of Life, home Joie Paidia, the Spirit of the Spring.

**Spirit of the Spring**

Joie Paidia appeared almost weightless. She seemed to blend into the environment as if there was no clear distinction between her and the surroundings. She was radiant. Her home was in the most enormous tree Will and Rupert had ever seen. The tree seemed to breath with life. Everywhere you looked there were families of squirrels, or birds, or owls, or butterflies.
Paidia spoke, “Will and Rupert, I have been expecting you. Please feel welcome here and tell me of your quest.”

Will and Rupert explained their quest. To convince Ramus to stop the enforcement of the Standard. Will felt a bit foolish explaining how few details were known about this elusive and dangerous plan.

Paidia listened and waited until Will finished. She was silent for a while, then she said. “It will be up to you to decide if you want to know the truth or not.”

Will looked at Rupert, who’s jaw hung open as it often did when he could not believe what was happening, Will was getting used to that look.

“How would we know...” Will mumbled weakly. Paideia stood up. It was like the whole tree behind her stood up at the same time. She spoke with a sound that seemed to come from every branch, very quiet but with a depth that was so inviting. “The
mistake you make is to think you have found the Source.”

Will looked at his vial of Spring Water. He was very confused. The Source had always been from the Spring, was Paideia saying that is not true?

Will asked with hesitation. “What about the water from the Eternal Spring? Is that not The Source?”

Paideia spoke reassuringly. “Keep your vial, you will know what it contains soon enough. You have a long journey ahead please come and rest.”

Paidia welcomed Will and Rupert into her home for the best vegan meal they had ever had. The sense of welcome and hospitality surrounded them like a warm, soft blanket.
The next day Paidia and an entourage of animals gathered to see the travelers off.

With a voice that filled both Will and Rupert with hope and confidence Paidia said. “Please take with you these gifts. For you Rupert I have the Veil of Wisdom. From behind this veil all words you speak will sound wise and true to whoever hears them.

And for you Will, I give you a seed from our tree. It will remind you that the source of great things is already within the tiniest beginnings.”

“Great!” Thought Will. “Rupert gets a nifty cloak what makes him sound smart. I get... what was that exactly? A seed, to remind me that I know The Source but I don’t recognize it?”
Paidia said. “If you follow the path to the river you will come to the Plains of Reason. There you will meet Statica Major who has orders from Ramus to unite all Clans under one Standard. Statica has an army and you can not defeat him any other way than to invite him to a debate. This is something his pride will not allow him to refuse. In order to win this debate and convince Statica to allow you to proceed you must recognize the true Source of Knowledge. It is already within you and all around you. Your stories of experience will help you find it. Be open to uncertainty and have faith in the spirit that guides life itself.”

Will was bewildered and somewhat disappointed as he and Rupert set off. It didn’t help having Rupert hiding behind his Veil constantly saying profoundly wise statements.

After a long day of hiking over mountains Will came to a ridge that looked out over the great Plains of Reason. In the distance they could make out the camp of Statica Major and his army. Tomorrow they would
confront Statica but tonight they rested as Rupert continued his annoying wisdom statements.
Debate with Statica Major

The idea of confronting Statica was making Will feel very worried. Statica and Will went to the same school. Statica was very good at following the rules, Will was not. Statica was in charge of a terrifying army, Will was with Rupert. Statica follows orders from Ramus of the UKC, Will was listening to a parliament of fluffy owls.

In the daylight Will and Rupert realized that Statica’s army was enormous, many rows of UKC service people marching in order. They covered almost the entire Plains of Reason. Will and Rupert walked as confidently as they could right toward the advancing army. As they got closer they could hear Statica give the order to halt. A moment passed in silence. Will and Rupert stood alone facing the large army.

Will could hear a tiny “gulp” sound from Rupert. Statica and a small group of guards advanced toward Will and Rupert.
“Will Cotter, and Rupert?” Yelled Statica with tone of disbelief and fury. “What in the name of Learning Outcomes do you think you are doing?”

Rupert made another “gulp” sound but this time with a distinct tremor, he managed to call out. “We are here to challenge you to a debate!”

“Ha!” exclaimed Statica, in total disbelief. The silence was enormously awkward.

Rupert now trembling visibly and was almost completely hiding under his Veil of Wisdom said in a most convincing manner. “We challenge you to debate the question: What knowledge is of the most worth?”

No one spoke for a length of time that seemed longer than it was.

Rupert continued. “If we win the debate then you will allow us safe passage into the City of Polis and the UKC campus to speak directly with Ramus Modèrna.”
Statica turned to one of his guards and said in a very low voice. “That Rupert guy under the blanket says words that are wise and true... What do you think? The guard nodded. “Very well!” Statica declared. “We will have a debate!”
Statica ordered the army to make camp and a tent was setup to accommodate the debate. Luckily Statica also ordered lunch to be served before the debate so Will and Rupert ate as much as they could.

While sitting eating, Will and Rupert talked quietly.
“So what are you going to do Will?” Asked Rupert.

“I don’t know.” Said Will. “I thought you had the wisdom.” Will thought about what Paidia had said as he looked in his hand at the tiny seed and his little vial of Spring Water. He put the seed deep in his pocket but gave Rupert the vial so Statica would not see it.

“Rupert, put on that Veil of Wisdom and gather us some data!” Yelled Will.
In a flash Rupert disappeared to collect... While Rupert was collecting data he could not help playing with the vial of water from the Eternal Spring. He thought maybe just one little sip would help his task, but as he took the cap off the vial he dropped it and all the water spilled onto the ground.
“Oh!” Cried Rupert. “That is not good.” Rupert quickly filled the vial with some of his drinking water and decided that was a problem for later...

By the time the debate began Rupert had returned and all manner of data to prove their arguments. The details of the debate are quite boring but the outcome was that Statica failed to prove anything and Will won the debate easily. Statica was really mad. However, Statica always followed the rules. So, begrudgingly, he had to grant Rupert and Will safe passage across the river.

They walked away toward the river for a long time before Rupert dared to speak. “I’m too scared to look back. I can’t believe that worked” He was gaining confidence now so he turned to look behind him. “They are not following us! We did it!”

Rupert performed his now familiar happy dance. They could see and hear the Acura river directly in front of them.
The Serpent of Acura

Both Will and Rupert knew the stories of a serpent in the River Acura. Her name was Pythia (Pie-thea, like a Python), she was the head priestess and partner to Apollo, together they had a daughter, Joie Paideia. Anyway, the story goes that one day Apollo got so mad at Pythia that he killed her. But her spirit returned as a serpent, angry and looking for revenge. She lived in the widest part of the River Acura and guarded the entrance to the great city of Polis. There are stories of people trying to sneak across in the dark and disappearing forever. No one could cross the river unless Pythia agreed and right now she was aligned with Ramus and the Standard.

Will had an idea that if he could reunite Paideia with her mother she might treat them kindly. Will remembered that Pythia was once known as Alethia, the oracle. Perhaps if she could remember her name Alethia, the name she used when Joie Paideia was with her.
Before Rupert even knew what was going on, Will was at the bank of the river calling out, “Alethia, wise oracle... I have a message from Joie Paideia... Please grant us an audience.”

A great serpent appeared, it looked more curious than mad, but its voice made a sound that sent Rupert hiding under his blanket. It sounded like a hundred voices all speaking together. When the serpent spoke nothing else could be heard, it masked out all sound from the highest birds to the low rumble of the great city of Polis. It was frightening but compelling at the same time.

“You call me by my true name and speak of my daughter...” spoke Alethia, “What message do you carry?” The reverberation of her voice took a long time to fade away.

Will cleared his throat, and said, “Joie Paideia knows The Source as you once did, you should go to her. You can go down the river to the Sea and follow the coast to the forests, she lives in the great tree.”
“Wow!” thought Rupert. “This can’t possibly work... But the oracle seemed to get smaller as it approached.
When she spoke there was a different sound, more like an orchestra in tune with the birds and the river. As she approached she sang, “I will take you across the river through the gates of the city and then I will return and go to my daughter... “

Will and Rupert climbed on Alethia’s back, Rupert asked Will. “Shouldn’t she tell us the future, or something?”

The Oracle laughed and sang,

“To me you speak not.
If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favors nor your hate.”
The Office of Ramus

Modèrna Ramus has the best office in the entire campus of the UKC. She holds office hours between 10:30 and 11:40 every morning but both Rupert and Will know the stories of waiting for days, even weeks, to get in. Lacking any other plan Will and Rupert showed up at 10:35. The line went down the hall.

People had the look of resignation and defeat. Before you can see Ramus you had to register at the large intimidating desk of Sophia the Administrator.

Rupert and Will looked high above them at Sophia and asked to be allowed to speak with Mordèrna Ramus.

Sophia spoke with a voice that resonated with depth. “Are you certain?”

Rupert and Will looked at each other. What could that mean?
Will, not knowing how to answer but certainly not feeling certain, said hesitantly, “no…”

“Very well, you can go right in…” Said Sophia with voice that was humble and conclusive.

The large door swung open and Will and Rupert walked into the largest office they had ever seen. Rupert whispered into Will’s ear. “Did all those people in the hall say yes?”

As it turns out no one has said no for a very long time. It was considered rude to be uncertain. Ramus and the entire system of the UKC was always considered certain. It was just not right to be uncertain.
Will could only manage a nod as they walked into an amazing room with views of the entire city of Polis.

Will thought he could make out the mountains of the T’sian in the far distance. This moment was terrifying. They had been so focused on getting here he really had no time to think about what he would do once he got here. What was the plan again...?

Oh yea, give Ramus a tiny vial of water from the Eternal Spring and convince her to reverse her plan of attack. Wow, did that plan seem less than impressive now. Where was that spring water anyway? Will whispered to Rupert. “You have the vial of Spring water, right?”

Rupert looked shocked and whispered intensely. “Yea, I have been meaning to tell you something about that...”

“Quit fooling around Rupert and give me the vial.” Will said impatiently.
“Umm.” Hesitated Rupert. “I... um, think... um you... hmmmm... there is something I need to tell you...” Rupert trailed off...

Will was getting nervous.

Rupert blurted, “I lost the spring water and I don’t think our plan will work.”

Just then, Modèrna Ramus entered the room from a rear chamber. Rupert and Will froze.

Ramus sat at her enormous desk and spoke with a tone of authority that made Rupert and Will tremble inside. “Tell me what knowledge you think is worthy of a pass.” Ramus had a way of saying “pass,” slow with an extra emphasis on the “a.” The sound made one feel both judgment and shame.

Will spoke. “Thank you, for hearing us today. It seems that through our quest for knowledge we have stumbled upon its source.”
Both Ramus and Rupert looked shocked. Will was thinking about the seed from Paideia and the water from the Spring. They are The Source, but all life has this.

There was a long silence, then Ramus laughed out loud. “You are telling me that my entire Clan Service is out looking for the source of knowledge and you and your friend have it right here, in my office?”

Just then a great flash and a magical sound rang out:

“FLABAM”

The next thing Will and Rupert knew they were on the back of Alethia with Joie Paideia and Ol’Norse heading up the Acura river toward T’sian…
Week 12: The Return, final submission...

To be home is a wonderful feeling.

Safe, comfortable, quietly happy. Thinking about all the people he met this term, what an adventure! The whole journey to this point started to retrace in his mind. The Eternal Spring, The Wise Owls, Wabi Sabit, Joie Paideia, Statica Major, Alethia, Ramus...

This would take some time to think about.

Alethia, Paideia, Ol'Norse, Rupert, and Will all enjoyed telling stories, signing songs, and drinking Spring water tea.

Will was so happy to be with his friends and as they watched the sunset over the T'sian Campus, he was certain he would set out on another quest soon...
Tree of Life painting by Sheila Karrow
Illustrations by Lyra Kathleen Murphy
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Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion

The creative productions of Will’s Notebook and The Cotter Suite gave form and continuity to my listening and attunement. The ongoing reflection and revision of both these productions afforded the mindful listening and re-listening of material. The approach of developing creative productions as refinements of hypomnémata allowed for reflection and development of ideas but also opened up creative expressions and connections through composition and narrative. This process interwove personal experiences, academic study, self-care, societal and ecological awareness, with iterative processes of creative story writing and composition. This process has led me to an understanding of relational and interconnected nature of our lives and how attuning to this shared experience can help give guidance to “that which is good” (Aoki, 2005, p 351). This process is part of a “living inquiry” (Gouzouasis, 2006, p. 30) that weaves together images, stories, and music into a “cyclical process of practice, research, reflection and performance” (p. 30).

7.1 Elements of Will’s Notebook

The characters and locations in Will’s Notebook were developed through conversations and revisions. They each represent aspects of my journey and my currere. It was my intention that the story should be read (with possible soundscape accompaniment) through prior to reading the descriptions so as to experience the characters in their narrative context. The descriptions that follow help enrich refection on the story and provide further connections between characters, locations, and the narrative.

7.1.1 The Characters

Will Cotter is my autobiographical character, derived from Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship (1795) but also referencing William Shakespeare and the two Williams (Doll and
Pinar) that foundationally shaped my perspective on curriculum studies. Will is the hero on a quest for an understanding of knowledge and its source. He is on a journey to find his quest in order to bestow (educational) boons on his fellows (teachers and learners).

**Joie Paideia** is the oracle and the embodiment of the Spirit of the Eternal Spring or the origins of imagination. She lives in the Tree of Life and is surrounded by joy and vitality. Her character represents the ideal of education, where knowledge is freely shared with everyone for the greater good. Her name is from the ancient Greek term for the educating of ideal members of the polis, or the citizens of a society. She represents both the academic knowledge and the practical knowledge required to become an active and contributive member of society, to be “beautiful and good.” Joie Paideia represents education that is autonomous from the political economy that controls the education system. She is the estranged daughter of Pythia, the reuniting with Aletheia represents a reconciliation between education for the development of unique, as yet unimagined, human experiences with the infrastructural legacy of educational systems.

**Modèrna Ramus** is the Principal of the United Knowledge Confederate (UKC) and the main antagonist for Will. Her plan to make all education standardized and testable (with predictable outcomes) is what initiates Will’s journey. Modèrna is the embodiment of the modernist ideal. She represents control, predictability, and predefined outcomes. Her general, Statica Major, follows her rule and order to standardize all aspects of education. She is the person in charge of Polis and the UKC and she is attempting to spread her influence to all educational settings, including the remote T’sian. This is a disaster for Will and his way of teaching so he tries to show her that the source of knowledge is within all of us and can never be controlled through standardization. Her name is from Petrus Ramus (1515–1572), the
educational reformer who adapted the term “curriculum” to mean the ordering of studies in a sequential manner. This is a modernist approach of methodization that remains with us today (Doll, 2012, p. 92) and can be seen in the precise training devices developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856–1915) and the rigid expectation of educational outcomes articulated by Ralph W. Tyler (1902–1994; see Taylor, 1911/1947, and Tyler, 1950).

**Ol’Norse** is the perennial donner of wisdom. Ol’Norse represents the traditional knowledge accumulation of academia. He is very conventional and conservative but is also very caring and devoted to his students and scholarship. He is opposed to the standardization of education, not because he is progressive but because it limits creativity and imagination and as a result academic freedom. Will’s close relationship with Ol’Norse is a major factor in the initiation of the quest.

**Rupert** is a colleague of Will—his sidekick, comic relief, and loyal friend. Although Rupert’s contributions to the quest are often ambiguous, without his companionship and discourse the quest (and the task of teaching) would be much less enjoyable. Rupert represents the essential contribution that friendship and collegiality provide to the social act of teaching and learning.

**Pythia (Aletheia)** was the name (and serpent form) given to Aletheia by the god Apollo when she did not adhere to his dominant patriarchal demands. Both Will and Rupert grew up hearing stories of the serpent in the River Acura. Pythia’s conversions (*unconcealment*) to her original form and name are brought about by Will calling her Aletheia and reminding her of her daughter, Joie Paideia. Aletheia is the term Martin Heidegger (1971, p. 35) revives to describe how the world is disclosed and made intelligible as part of a complex and holistically structured background of meaning. Using the example of Vincent van Gogh’s painting of a worn-out pair of
peasant’s shoes, Heidegger describes how truth can be “unconcealed” through expressions of art by revealing the background structure and allowing for a “clearing” whereby meaning is revealed. Will and Rupert’s quest to the UKC is facilitated by the transformation of Pythia to Aletheia, this represents moving toward the passive, artistic, caring aspect of knowledge that is often diminished and controlled by power structures like the UKC.

The **Wise Owls (Aoki, Djin, Dewey)** wise owls are an amalgamation of wise thinkers who have influenced my approach to the philosophy of education. Although they have specific names (Ted Aoki, David Jardine, John Dewey), they represent the tradition and history of Western educational philosophy that consists of many contributors. While the owl has been associated with wisdom since antiquity, it was Hegel’s metaphor of the owl of Minerva that inspired these characters. Hegel (1820, p. 12) states, “The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering,” meaning that philosophy comes to understand historical conditions only after they have passed—that is, philosophy understands only in hindsight. This is an ongoing challenge for Will because he is trying to discover a philosophical position that will satisfy his quest and improve his condition as he lives it.

**Wabi-sabi** 侘寂, in traditional Japanese aesthetics, is the approval of transience and imperfection. This concept came to my attention in a seminar on curriculum theory, in the form of a children’s illustrated book about a cat named Wabi-sabi (Reibstein, 2008), which followed the cat’s adventures as he learned about the world. Wabi-sabi is a world view derived from Buddhist teachings that encourage us to find beauty in the imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete. I feel it is important to accept this perspective when teaching and learning. Throughout my education there have been expectations of complete, permanent perfection, but ultimately, this is impossible. Wabi-sabi is the acceptance and celebration of the imperfect,
temporary, and unfinished. This concept is related to Doll’s (2012, p. 172) post-modern perspective of accepting and embracing complexity as an alternative to the impossibility of the modernist ideal of total predictability. This concept is part of how I study and includes the practice of Shirin-yuko (Tsunetsugu et al., 2010), or a forest bath, to cleanse the soul and contemplate ideas in relation to the complexity and beauty of the imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete world in which we live. The concepts of Wabi-sabi and Shirin-yuko influenced me and my study practice. For me Wabi-sabi represents the idea that whatever path you take in life it always leads back to you.

**Statica Major** is the nemesis, and Statica represents the success and power of adhering to a modernist status quo in educational research. When I started this project, I was proposing projects with the statistical analysis of standardized test scores to determine predictable relationships between creativity and academic success. This approach became antithetical to my developing perspective, which includes complexity and an acceptance of unpredictably. Although I am aware that administrative decisions are greatly influenced by quantitative statistics and analysis (e.g., Shavelson & Towne, 2002), it has become my understanding that cultivating a complex, relational connection between the self and those we engage with in the practice of teaching and learning is ultimately how to improve education. This can be a difficult position to maintain in the administration of education, but my intention with Statica Major was to articulate how imperial quantitative data is a very powerful and useful way of knowing the world but will never replace the care for the self and others that defines a true educational experience.

### 7.1.2 The Locations

**Labour Day at T’sian**
I was born in Prince Rupert, Northwest Coast, traditional land of the Tsimshian. I identify with this location as my home. The apostrophe represents the unsaid history, inheritances, legacies, that befall my origins. T’sian is a remote location and its inclusion in the Standard enforced by Modèrna Ramus represents an insidious and now far reaching ideology of standardization in education.

**Polis – The great walled city**

Polis is the city infrastructure that supports the UKC and is both the city and the population that inhabits and benefits from its legacy. For the uninitiated, like Will and Rupert, Polis represents how knowledge looks from the outside. It is walled. Access seems inaccessible. Entering Polis for Will and Rupert is crossing of a threshold. Polis also represents for me Aoki’s (2005) difference between curriculum as plan and curriculum as lived (p. 413). The city of Polis is run by Ramus according to a plan and with the ambition to extend this far beyond the walls. Will and Rupert’s quest requires the crossing of a threshold and to make commensurate the inheritance and legacy of educational systems and infrastructures with their own lived approach to education.

**UKC – United Knowledge Confederate**

UKC represents the institutional structure of education (similarities to UBC are only partially incidental). This is the mechanism of the curriculum as plan. It operates without the embodied (Aoki, 2005, p. 375), human (p. 348), and attuned (p. 192) aspects of education. This is a very efficient way to operate, so Will and Rupert are trepidatious about this institution and its approach. Negotiating the bureaucracy of the UKC is necessary but it should not come at the cost of embodied human attunement. The profession of teaching exists because of the UKC, so recognizing its importance, and (to a degree) the necessity of adherence to its governance, while
cultivating lived attunement is the boon of this quest. This is how I understand Aoki’s concept of lived and planed curriculum. The subject in society. Adherence to institutional direction has to be commensurate with the teaching and learning in the lives of the people involved. The concept of attunement represents this dialog between plan and life as an embodied practice. Resonating in tune only happens for a while, but with practice you can stay there longer.

The practice of teaching, like practicing music, relies on the traditions, histories, inheritances, and infrastructures that accumulate. Understanding a way through the administration of the UKC requires the attunement of what we create with what we rely on. In a way the UKC represents my acceptance of administration as part of teaching and learning. The lived experiences of teaching and learning should not just coexist with the institutional plan but they should resonate with it and become mutually beneficial.

**The Forest of Dispersion**

The Forest of Dispersion is the overwhelming, confusing, and complicated accumulation of historical knowledge. A common experience for new students is to feel defeated by the vast accumulation knowledge, and how little of it they know. Navigating this forest requires an individual path that is necessarily unique and incomplete. Emerging from the Forest of Dispersion represents the importance of movement over comprehensiveness. Progress through the seemingly infinite dispersion of accumulated knowledge toward a better understanding of self is more important than the near impossible goal of complete understanding of a subject matter. This is an acceptance of the incompleteness of any education. This is a liberating recognition for teachers and learners. Ultimately the only consistent thread that allows one to navigate this complex forest is the self. For me The Forest of Dispersion is, in part, represented by my study of the subject matter of experience in education (Chapter Three). The density and
incompleteness of my study of experience ultimately took me back to the self-care of hypomnémata to find a course.

**The Eternal Spring**

The Eternal Spring is the source of imagination. Although it exists as a specific location for Will and Rupert, the realization that the source of imagination is within life itself is the knowledge that is of the most worth. This is the knowledge that creates the magic (FLABAM) that allows Will and Rupert to return home with their friends. The Eternal Spring is protected by the Wise Owls, and their faith in it being the source of imagination is a source of imagination in its self. The unity and community created by this faith creates harmony and resonance that is beneficial to education. The Eternal Spring is a source of imagination but only because of the unity of beliefs and ideas that support it.

**The Tree of Life**

The Tree of Life is home to Joie Paideia and all the nature that live in harmony with her. The image of The Tree of Life begins and ends Will’s Notebook, a tradition borrowed from Indonesian Wayang shadow puppets that present the *kayon* (tree) at the beginning and end of each show. The final image of The Tree of Life is modified from the original, the owls and butterflies are added to show the transformation inherent in the story.

**The Plains of Reason**

The Plains of Reason are a vast landscape where Will and Rupert engage with Statica Major, culminating in a debate. This conflict represents for me one of the greatest challenges to overcome in my recent educational journey. The conflict represents my reconciliation of the historical inheritance of the paradigm wars (see Chapter Two) with my own epistemological and ideological development. This reconciliation for me is a form of acceptance that multiple,
simultaneous ways of knowing can exist, even if they are incommensurate. We can know with numbers and letters (and music, art, poetry, dance, etc) but if an “answer” exists it is always relative and always changing. The acceptance of complexity (relativity and dynamics) provides a glimpse of knowing that accepts multiple ideologies. Statica loses the debate on The Plains of Reason because he is intolerant to multiple ways of knowing and holds too tightly to his beliefs in imperial statistics and a preunderstanding of methods.

**The Office of Ramus**

Ramus’ office is a great library, the image is of the Long Room of the Old Library at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. Upon seeing this library my daughter said to me, “this looks like a scene in your book.” Ramus’ office represents the pinnacle of the accumulation of knowledge. This accumulation is gathered and protected more for the sake of power than for learning.

**The Return – Final Submission**

The return happens suddenly and magically. The “FLABAM” moment is borrowed directly from my daughter’s original stories. It shows the simplicity and power of magic. Magic exists in creative production but it is less accepted in formal educational research. In my opinion teaching and learning benefit greatly by magic. It can be thought of as the acceptance of complexity and unpredictability, but there is magic when imagination is cultivated in individual creative ways. For me this concept of magic exists every time a new idea is created.

**7.2 The Cotter Suite (2019)**

This collection of soundscape compositions uses themes developed from the locations, objects, and people within the story *Will’s Notebook*. The themes are used to inspire location sounds, processing techniques, and guitar performances.
i. The Eternal Spring

The Shepard Tone is a superposition of ascending or descending tones that crossfade in such a way to create the illusion of constant motion. This is an eternal spring of sonic motion.

Figure 7-1 Spectrogram showing the Sheppard Tone of the bass section from The Eternal Spring.

The sound sources come from a recording of the stream at Nitobe Memorial Garden at UBC. My colleagues and I dubbed it Aoki’s Garden. The eternal spring is pure imagination to me, a fountain of ideas always flowing. The ascending and descending scales on the guitar were processed with the stream recording using granular synthesis (Truax, 1990) and convolution (Roads, 1995, pp. 419–432) to produce textures and layers that could be arranged to create the Sheppard Tone effect.
ii. Parliament of Owls

The Owls are when we collect in a classroom. It begins with R. Murray Schafer saying a in an interview\textsuperscript{61} that “if problems are constructed carefully there will be as many solutions as there are people in the class, or as many solutions as there are people with ears…” This quote is used as the source of processing and defines the rhythmic structure of the piece. Ambient recording a of classroom is processed to pull out dominant frequencies that trigger a vocoder version of Schafer’s quote. A recording of a parliament of owls in the distance comes in and out to remind us of voices of the past. The guitar melody was inspired by these voices.

iii. Plains of Reason

The sound of wind in a field is used to trigger algorithms to produce scale tones that eventually resolve to a pattern and a key. This was an experiment to find patterns in a sound that seems to have none (wind in a field). It uses convolution to isolate frequencies that are then converted to midi scale tones. The inspiration for this piece was from my experience in a statistics class.

iv. Forest of Dispersion

The idea of the Forest of Dispersion was how I felt entering my PhD studies. It felt like there were so many paths and they were all so complicated. Choosing a path was difficult but Ted Aoki’s book \textit{Curriculum in a New Key} came at just the right time. Aoki’s voice, so soft but with conviction, guided my journey through this dense forest. At times, where I live the crows seem to take over, and times when song bird’s solo, duet, and chorale with their own soft

conviction. The guitar is processed (convolution) with the song birds to create chordal textures using common frequencies from each sound. This seems to freeze moments where the birds and the guitar resonate.

v. Tree of Life

Another sound that is quite common where I live is the constant drone of rain. It is the source of life in a rain forest. This piece uses the ever-changing drone of rain slowed down (granular synthesis) many times (up to x120) to process (convolution) a guitar chord. This is a micro audition of both rain and my guitar, which I have always thought of as the voice of a tree.

7.3 Stories of Experience

The quote that initiates this dissertation by Frank McCourt (2005), “Instead of teaching, I told stories. They thought I was teaching. I was learning” (p. 19) helps me to understand the importance of our stories in education. This is a statement about the interconnectivity between teaching, learning, and stories of experience. The theoretical frameworks of hermeneutic understanding and the cultivation of experiences scaffold methods of arts-based research but without a story to relate, meaning remains elusive. Stories of experience provide the origins of understanding. The simple statement by McCourt, for example, is a story of a lifetime of accumulation of knowledge and skills in education that can expand indefinitely upon closer (iterative, hermeneutic) inquiry.

My experience in education, as told in Will’s Notebook and The Cotter Suite, has taught me the importance of personal experience in teaching and learning. With attunement and care we can listen to each other’s stories and together create a better future. Bill Pinar describes this as, “reactivate the past, so we can go at it again, more
intact, together.”\(^\text{62}\) This has become fundamental to my approach to teaching and learning. Careful listening to each other’s stories can create the foundation and intactness that allows for hermeneutic understanding, cultivation of experience, and a source for creative production and imagination. The traces of our lives, our narratives, our stories are essential to how we discern meaning. These traces are how we understand the complex, fluid, and relational nature of learning experiences (Prendergast et al., 2008, p. 60).

### 7.4 Background and context

This story began with my first class as a PhD student. I was going back to school after many years—it was a terrifying but exciting time. I remember the feeling in the UBC Bookstore as I was buying new notebooks and supplies; the excitement was everywhere, an amazing energy of anticipation coming from thousands of new students. The feeling was that of unbounded potential, that this term would be the start of something special—something that would change our lives. I felt it as well, as I sat in my first seminar equipped with a new pen and new notebook. Scared out of my mind.


\(^{62}\) This quote is from an audio recording done August 30, 2018 for Canadian Viewpoints: Concealed and Revealed, a creative synthesis of a three-year study entitled, O Canada! Reimagining Canadian Identity: A Cosmopolitan Approach to Teaching and Learning, funded by The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
(2004/1975), and others, the more my initially conceived method of collecting data from standardized test scores and survey questionnaires seemed inadequate to describe the complex and dialogic relationship that appears between experience and the accumulation of knowledge. That collision of epistemologies—between my calculated positivist history and an emergent interpretive and reflexive approach—created a crisis of knowing. It had to be reconciled for me to continue as a teacher and a learner. Thus, my thesis is a story of my journey to understand how these realms could relate in harmony—how they could become commensurate.

According to John Dewey, experience is something that “has affected one”—there is a residual effect (LW 13, [1938], p. 18). We can collect and refer to the residual effects of experiences by telling stories about them, and the stories become the way we learn by making meaning—giving form to and helping us remember our experiences. That is the basic premise I am using for the composition and analysis of my story. A reader may question if the creative production of a story assists learning from experience. The story, Will’s Notebook, and the soundscape, The Cotter Suite are attempts to incorporate the processes of learning I experienced into a form that was developed hermeneutically, through cycles of reflection and revision. They are creative productions that specifically attend to education—my journey into teaching and learning. They are artistic representations of my currere.

I maintain a great affinity for scientific knowledge, but the complex and abundant reality of our experiences, especially experiences we craft in the realm of education, elude measurement in a very special way. The complexity and immeasurability of our storied experiences represent a

63 In 2012, SSHRC awarded my grant application entitled “Understanding the Relationship between Extracurricular Music Making Practices, Academic Achievement, and Pro-social Skills.”
foundation for imagination and provide us direction. The fact that our experiences happened to us makes them unique; if attended to carefully, they provide the specific and personal sources for teaching and learning. Unique subjective experiences provide a fertile place to cultivate innovation, originality, and imagination—attributes that are regularly experienced in creative production but elude measurement. The relationship between experience and knowledge is unpredictable from a traditional scientific measurement perspective; however, examining this relationship is for me the key to improving how we teach and learn. Furthermore, the possibilities that creative imagination may produce are limited if they become predictable or too measured. The creative practice develops through an accumulation of experience, and through iterative reflection and refinement it produces an account of knowledge.

Bill Doll points out that although we can never “give” an experience, we can as teachers and learners assist in the “crafting” of experience (2012, p. 98). It is the invitation to engage in the “esthetic or undergoing phase of experience…that involves surrender” (LW 10, [1934], p. 59). This kind of engagement can be very unpredictable and intense. It suggests a pedagogy that is impossible to fully control or recreate, and for that reason there are inherent risks. However, engaging in artistic production based on experience can provide education’s greatest contribution: the transformation of the individual (Doll, 2012, p. 97). It was my hope to look at the creative production of a story of my experience to discover a truth that can be seen, felt, or heard beyond our ability to measure.

What began as a way of taking notes developed into an approach to learning that promotes self-care. The notebooks I started to fill became the source of dialog with history, culture, context, and my self. As this process developed, I began to see its generative and reflexive advantages. Even though this story can never really be finished, it is about a particular
experience in my personal development. It is in some ways antithetical to the empirical research I set out to learn and use to discover knowledge. Instead of using my experiences as a way toward objective knowledge, I have ended up creating an even more subjective position. I have come to understand the self-care that emerges from artistic practice can provide a foundation for teaching and learning, an understanding I once thought to exist only in empirically based objective knowledge. Through this journey, I have come to realize the primacy of self-care in every aspect of my teaching and learning. To understand and care for others, we must first understand and care for ourselves.

7.5 Bildungsroman

In a graduate seminar (with Bill Doll and Donna Trueit), we spoke about Gadamer and of truth emerging in educational experience through cultural formation (bildung), common sense (sensus communis), and taste or judgement (Gadamer 1960/2004, pp. 1-37). I started thinking about how this might relate to my use of autobiography and creative practice as a research approach.

The bildungsroman is a narrative biographical form that tells of the coming of age of a protagonist. It is a psychological and moral journey that educates and changes a character through experience. I considered that Pinar’s autobiographical approach of currere (1975, 2012), and the bildungsroman seemed to be a form where I could investigate those changes further. One bildungsroman that came to my attention was Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship (Goethe, 1795/1917). It is the story of Wilhelm, who goes on a journey of self-realization—struggling between his artistic aspirations and his cultural responsibilities—that in the end shows Nature as the ultimate educator. Goethe states:
In this sense, his apprenticeship was ended: with the feeling of a father, he had acquired all the virtues of a citizen. He felt this, and nothing could exceed his joy. “O needless strictness of morality,” exclaimed he, “while Nature in her own kindly manner trains us to all that we require to be! O strange demands of civil society, which first perplexes and misleads us, then asks of us more than Nature herself! Woe to every sort of culture which destroys the most effectual means of all true culture, and directs us to the end, instead of rendering us happy on the way!” (1795/1917, p. 499)

Goethe was inspired by William Shakespeare while writing *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, and, coincidentally, I was studying with two Williams (Pinar and Doll). I was also interested in how my notebooks were emerging as a method of study—as *hypomnémata*. Thus, I decided to develop my *bildungsroman* under the name *Will’s Notebook*. That narrative follows my experience from matriculation to dissertation and provides an artifact for study and reflection.

### 7.6 The Primacy of the Subjective

*Will’s Notebook* was written as a refinement of *hypomnémata* told as a subjective biography to navigate the overwhelming complexity of our educational task. My notebooks were overflowing with ideas, and the path through this forest of ideas needed direction. When looking at my collection of notebooks, I wanted to distill the best ideas—my favorite stories, quotes, conversations, concepts, and characters. I didn’t want to lose these precious ideas. Linking them to a narrative was a technique to remember them and keep them present while working on other ideas. It became a method of study and self-care. It is connected to my profession, practice, parenting, and creativity—always a work in progress. In Goethe’s story, Wilhelm finds his calling when a natural balance occurs. I decided that my *bildungsroman* would be in the form of
a children’s novel, one I could read to my daughter. This decision felt like a natural balance and a mindful focus on the primacy of the subjective. I chose a path based on my subjective experience in reference to historical knowledge, and told as an allegory, intended to teach and learn.

Gadamer’s hermeneutical approach of applied, situated self-awareness shares elements with Pinar’s worldliness (2009, p. 19), Aoki’s attunement (2005, p. 398), Jardine’s abundance (2006, p. 6), and Doll’s complexity (2012, p. 169). In each of those topics, the authors conceive the subjective, situated, and contextual within an historical legacy to generate understanding, with the intention of improving future experiences and understandings. Articulating the confluence of those concepts is the intention of Will’s Notebook. Through the notebook, I share the objective that Goethe expressed as, “From the useful, through the true, to the beautiful” (1795/1917, p. 22). It directs our attention to the most noble and pressing task of bringing all the potentials contained within us to full expression. This is what I have come to understand as the purpose of my educational journey and of this dissertation. The hero of my story, Will, navigates a dispersed forest of ideas and paths with the intention of discovering meaning and returning home with a boon of knowledge.

My understanding of the primacy of the subjective in the study of education came as a direct result of my intellectual conflict between an, objective way of knowing (through measurement) and my recognition of the complexity and unpredictability of the human condition (particularly in teaching and learning situations). Regardless of methods or approaches to gaining knowledge, we are still faced with our own self-understanding as the origin and limit of what we know. Pinar’s currere articulates this with the concept of conversation (Pinar, 2012, p. 47)—a conversation with the self and others through an autobiographical approach that weaves together
the study of academic knowledge, past experiences, present contexts, and imagined futures (regressive, analytic, progressive, synthetic). Ultimately the intention of engaging in currere is to increase the capacity to learn from subjective experience. Through a deeper understanding of our own experiences and ourselves, we are more able to understand historical and culturally acquired academic knowledge.

7.7 Materials and Ideas

During the present inquiry, I began to make the distinction between materials, products of creative production (e.g., narrative writing, notes, diagrams, sound recordings, paintings, drawings) and ideas, academic references, and methods (e.g., hermeneutic inquiry, theories of experience, currere, autobiography, self-care). Although this distinction exists, the divisions were not always clear because there was constant movement between materials and ideas. Recording, listening; listening and recording are a continuous hermeneutic cycle. Allowing the two realms (horizons), of a children’s book and an academic dissertation, to coexist, relationally, through my Overtonian lens, was a great challenge of this inquiry. When these two realms coexist constructively there is a great potential for imagination and creation inform and be informed by analytic and historical knowledge and methods. Playfully engaging with academic inquiry provided a great source for imagination. The materials were collected as fragments (sound recordings, process techniques, scenarios, characters, locations, photos, art) that became refined over time reflecting worth.

7.8 Subject and Society

Situating experience in a historical and social context cultivates its worth to education. To be considered through a relational metatheoretical perspective, the concepts of self-care, self-cultivation through autobiographical writing, and self-understanding need to be fundamentally
understood within social and historical contexts. This is the foundation of Pinar’s concept of study (2006, pp. 109–120; 2015, pp. 11-24). Study is the process of making subjective experience meaningful in historical and societal contexts. Self-care is only meaningful if one sees oneself as a contributive part of a society. Study helps make the connections. The development of hypomnémata from personal notes toward a reflective contextualized conversation about education requires this concept of study. Thus, the autobiographical description of an experience is meaningful when it is understood historically and socially.

Throughout Will’s Notebook, I attempt to refer to historical and social settings. The locations and characters in the story refer to contexts and academic knowledge that have been part of my life experiences. They all enter a conversation that tries to make connections and meaning through the autobiographical narrative.

The creative production of Will’s Notebook and The Cotter Suite enabled a complicated conversation to emerge and continue. Arts based research often struggles to academically articulate the multitude of connections that are made in creative production (Eisner, 1971; Barone, & Eisner, 2012). Will’s Notebook and The Cotter Suite are examples of creative production, as they provided a process to develop materials that can respond to ideas and be the source of future reflection and generation of ideas. Cultivating the generative relationship between the academic structure and history of ideas, and the creative, imaginative, expressive production of materials became my working method of inquiry. I use that form of inquiry for this story, but also for my ongoing teaching and learning. In a relational manner, the conversation between ideas and materials cultivate each other.

My use of currere is intentionally non-prescriptive. The practice of creative production can be informed by, and serve as, a source of reflection for academic thought. However, if the
structure of creativity is too constrained by preconceived ideas, imagination is constrained. It is precisely the freedom of imagination and expression that creates and nurtures the potentials of arts based research. I approached the materials produced as sources for hermeneutic study structured by reflection (regressive) and analysis (analytical). That led to imagination (progressive) and creation (synthetical) of new, revised materials, which is not dissimilar from many approaches to iterative design in creative production (Murphy, 2003). However, the structure of currere, interpreted through the practice of hypomnemata, or self-care, made a connection to teaching and learning.

7.9 Self-care Revisited

*Will’s Notebook* is really a journey to the self. As I look back from the present, I can remember the moments when something was written or a picture was drawn—I recall each moment as an experience. Sections were written and reedited so many times that I had to stop myself. My ego, pride, jealousies, inabilities, habits, all reveal themselves (yet again). But also, out of this process, knowledge of worth was discerned. Continual listening to the matters of importance to me and my daughter in the context of our evolving situation (school, work, home, community) as documented and reviewed in my creative productions allowed an attunement as to matters of worth. This attunement enables my own self-care to be understood in the broader context of our ecology.

The process was endlessly reflexive, and as a result, incompleteness is part of the story. Seeds of ideas start and are cultivated through hypomnēmata, correspondence, dialog, narrative as methods of reflexivity and accumulation. This form of autobiographical creative production opened up many new ways of reflecting, articulating, and improving upon my real-life experiences. The journey to the self is always on-going, but using specific creative works (*Will’s*
Notebook and The Cotter Suite) provided structure and form to the incompleteness and gives a sense of direction and purpose.

The journey has shown me how self-care can be the source of societal contribution—to understand self-care as part of the attunement between self and society. This becomes an endless source for new ideas because they spring from our experiences in the world. Developing a practice of self-care that uses reflective iterations of experience that are refined and focused toward improvement (hypomnémata), provides a framework of learning. The framework can be articulated through the limitless traditions, inheritances, and skills of creative practice, and the scope and scale of each articulation can differ enormously—from a pencil note to a book, or from a field recording to a soundscape composition. The articulations of our experiences allow us to reflect on ways to improve experiences through our own actions. The recognition and refinement of the self in societal contexts (such as in teaching and learning situations) provides a source and focus for the articulations and the improvements.

7.10 Return to Teaching

An objective of this inquiry was to improve as a teacher and learner. I realize in going through this journey that although I believe I have improved, my understanding of teaching and learning has also expanded. It is like approaching a finish-line that is constantly moving away from the racers. This is a realization that I have accepted. Incompleteness and uncertainty of outcomes are an inevitable part of my teaching philosophy.

The idea that experience is central to teaching and learning is foundational to my approach. Rather than subjects and topics, the cultivation of possible productive experiences is paramount. The subject matter of study emerges from recognizing individual experience in shared situations. We cultivate productive experiences when imagination is stimulated and given...
priority. There is almost a threshold or critical mass of imagination that, once reached, stimulates
even more imagination. Careful regard given to where imagination is created, the source of
imagination is related to life itself. Individual experience, shared collectively in narratives creates
relational connections between people, history, places, and ideas. Our narratives enable us to
form our imaginations and to pick up where we left off, making further connections in relation to
other narratives. Our own self cultivation and education (self-care) depends on this careful regard
to imagination. The source of imagination (ourselves) and contextual awareness
(society/ecology) are united through a practice of self-care. The inclusion of a creative practice
magnifies and gives form to our imagination. This is something I feel when practicing guitar, for
example—the history, legacy, and inheritance, are in every sound. The development of the
instrument, the tuning system, intonation, music structures, posture, technique, technology, past
experiences, are all embodied in the practice—a source of knowledge, culturally attuned. These
are abundant sources for study. Creative practices, like playing guitar, have built into them these
culturally attuned inheritances but they also provide articulations of personal experience. New
thoughts and ideas emerge and merge with the accumulation of previous thoughts and ideas. The
liminal space between the accumulated cultural knowledge (i.e., scores, genre, tuning, technique,
instrument design) and the subjective (i.e., expression, style, sound, imagination) can be where
the best music comes from—the source of imagination.

As Barone and Eisner (1997) suggest, one of the criteria for arts-based research is the
promotion of empathy. This was a significant outcome of this inquiry. The recognition of the
interconnectedness of all my actions and thoughts with teachers and learners, past, present, and
yet to come, has given me a profound sense of empathy for all teachers and learners. My
recognition of the importance of listening to every voice, from the quietest child to the loudest
academic, evolved from the iterative hermeneutic processes develop in this inquiry. My continued approach toward teaching and learning (and toward the administration of teaching and learning) will incorporate this empathy by listening and re-listening to every voice with the intention of attuning toward an improved future. This approach can take more time and is almost certainly less efficient than many other approaches but it has become for me the way to discern the good and the worthy. It is my hope that the empathy this inquiry has taught me will also promote empathy in others.

The sound of a classroom just before a class starts is an example of a rich listening opportunity. Bill Doll would point out in his seminars how wonderful the sound of multiple animated conversations and allow them to continue as long as the animation lasts. Listening to the multiple conversations can tell you so much about what is important to the people in the room. Spending extra time listening and talking can provide insight into the attunement of the class. Frustrations and desires mix at such a rapid tempo that it is usually considered a chaotic sound. The field recording used in the *Parliament of Owls* of children laughing, shouting, and talking is a representation of this sound. To recognize this cacophony for the composition that it is takes attunement to the lives and cares of every individual in the room. The amount of information resonating in the room about worth and value is overwhelming. The beginning of the class draws this composition to a finale, but if listened to carefully it can inform teaching and learning. Attuning this information requires reflection, not always afforded to the practice of teaching, however making note of interesting moments could provide a reenactment that has

64 In seminars with Bill Doll and Donna Trueit at UBC, 2015-2016. Bill Doll would also said he always wanted to learn three things from his students every class.
resonance. Another moment to make note, class is about 20 min late already and we haven’t started, not to worry because the accumulated insight of attunement from previous classes allows you to teach the curriculum-as-plan in half the time.

I now think of research as the creation of knowledge through being with problems and the exploratory, generative, and emergent ideas and knowledge that are created in the processes of trying to find solutions, rather than a quest for a specific solution. The care taken in constructing problems for a class comes from the consideration and cultivation of multiple possible solutions. Schafer’s statement, “as many solutions are there are people with ears” (n.d. estimated 1972) relates the classroom with the construction of problems and their multiple solutions—it resonates the classroom with research. The intention of my research is to gain knowledge that will improve my teaching and learning. The reality of the classroom is where our degree of care can be continually reassessed. This has led to the development of a classroom pedagogy (for an example of this see the Appendix). It is a pedagogy of listening—the mindful attunement to all the sounds in our educational environment. Especially listening to the sounds of the voices of the people we teach and learn with. The act of listening can be developed to hear the harmonies, resonances, and dissonances that connect us to our environment, our history, each other, and ourselves. This pedagogy combines research methods and conceptual frameworks into a way of being in the classroom that now informs my teaching. The pedagogy is informed through listening to the environment and reflecting on what you hear to improve and cultivate problems and solutions through narratives of experience.

This approach requires a person to constantly look for, and possibly create, new knowledge and develop new understandings through study and hermeneutic reflection. Through study we develop knowledge that can contribute to our shared narratives. It is the basis for
continuing the complicated conversation in our currere. This process requires the understanding of care and self-cultivation as a simultaneous contribution to the self and the collective, and as such our subjective and collective developments are interrelated. Our subjective experiences are vitally important to teaching and learning and sharing these experiences through accumulation and refinement is the methodology I have described. The reflection, refinement, and articulation of personal experience, from hypomnémata to shared narratives, enables us to accumulate knowledge. Our creative practices—in the form of story and music—can help to give form, voice, and meaning to our experiences and lead to knowledge creation. The discernment of worth of knowledge is an ongoing process. One that is developed by listening toward an attunment of the self in context over time. Mindful attunement to every voice can inform creative productions that function as a source and form of hermeneutic understanding, rendering experiences with knowledge to guide our way into the future.
Bibliography

In-text citations of the works of John Dewey are in the following format:

(Collection Volume, [Original date of publication], Page)

e.g. (LW 8, [1933], p. 149)

The Collections are divided into:

*The Early Works 1882–1898.* 5 volumes (EW 1–5)

*The Middle Works 1899–1924.* 15 volumes (MW 1–15)

*The Later Works 1925–1953.* 17 volumes (LW 1–17)

These are cited as:


209


   (Original work published 1940)

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Appendix

Sound Pedagogy

To show how our curriculum can be enlivened by a creative practice and to demonstrate the pancurricular (Morin, 2008) nature of this approach, the Grade 7 BC Curriculum\textsuperscript{65} (my daughter’s class) can be interpreted through the practice of listening. This example shows for each area of the prescribed curriculum there are multiple points of departure, paths of study, sources of abundance, eternal springs of imagination. Each subject matter expands and coheres the artistic practice of listening. The practice provides examples and ideas for pedagogy and further study and imagination.

\textbf{Sonic interpretation of the BC Curriculum (Grade 7, 2018)}

Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies

Sound design

Multiple skills required to listen and produce

Many specialized and common technologies are related to sound

Visual representation of sound

History and evolution of sound compression and distribution

Digital sound production

Media archive and management

Sound recording and manipulation

Arts Education

Sonic communities (sound worlds)

\textsuperscript{65} For British Columbia, Canada. 2017. https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/grade/7
Ear training, cleaning

Sonic communication, expression, relations

Music - beat/pulse, metre, duration, rhythm, tempo, pitch, timbre, dynamics, form, texture, notation, tuning, harmony, resonance

Elements of design in sound - shape, space, texture, colour, form, value, pattern, repetition, balance, contrast, emphasis, rhythm, movement, variety, proportion, unity

Sound installations

Dance

Music history

Career Education

Sonic identity

Careers in sound, engineer, designer, architect, producer, gaming…

Workplace sound regulations

English Language Arts

Recording the human voice, origins, development,

Narrative in sound (song, podcast, radio show, film, game)

Listening as a practice to gain perspective

How sound affects what we hear and understand

Audio media literacy, sonic literacy

Writing to be heard. We tell stories to be heard

Sonic forms, functions, devices to improve communication (sonic rhetoric)

Listening strategies, mindful listening, metacognitive listening

Sonic narrative syntax, fluency, segmentation, conventions, varieties, techniques
Mathematics

- Frequency as ratio, as integer, as fraction in music and nature
- Scientific representation of sound
- Circle graphs used to represent microphone pickup patterns
- Adding two frequencies, convolution
- Volume, space, loudness, reverb time

Physical and Health Education

- Sonic hygiene (Tuning the World)
- Listening practice
- Ear protection
- Respect for our sonic environment
- Keeping an open ear for culture, taste, traditions, unfamiliar
- Dance…
- Sources for information

Science

- The hearing organism
- Evolved over time, binaural, location, htf, hearing loss
- Natural selection for reasons, loud = big
- Sound travels through all substances (air, water, wood)
- Acoustic spectrum
- Electricity, signal strength, volume
- Electromagnetism (radio waves)
Climate change affects the sonic environment (acoustic ecology)

Archive potential to monitor changes over time. WSP

Social Studies

All civilizations have an organized sound practice (music).

Cultural differences affect this practice (world music)

Systems of distribution and governance of music are dynamic, copyright

What is listening?

How do hunters listen differently from farmers? Mobility, culture

Cultural origins and uses of music (ethnomusicology)

Music as mnemonic

Audio Media Analysis. Origins and innovations, scientific, philosophic, technological

Social, political, generational movements

Sound laws and regulations