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Department of Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 8/29/86
ABSTRACT

As an open pedagogical invitation, my dissertation is a contribution as critical interpretive ontology with the promise of hope based upon my father's Dao Li, or principled living as a quest for the good. An embodied sense of narrative as unity of life interweaves within my exploratory work bringing together virtue, praxis and narrative. Arising out of an existential angst in the passing of my father and in my attempts to grapple with the questions he posed, I wrote autopoietically "from the middle" out of life within the space between life, topic, theory and method. I was motivated by my deep concern that, as educators, we are caught within a cycle of the reification of life making us complicit in the ecological crisis of modernity.

Situated within the conceptual genre of educational research, my work interprets modern conceptions of nature as deeply flawed, wherein the loss of nature from the discourse of modernity is implicated in the general loss of meaning and sense of loss of the sacred. Within this context, I interpret reification in an expanded Lukácsian sense, to be the supreme danger to life, even over capital, when modern discourse looms large, threatening to preclude all other ways of being.
To recover a language and meaning in nature, I draw from the hermeneutical-phenomenological tradition, casting my work as *onto-linguistic in immediacy* within what I call *quotidian pedagogy*. My exegesis is located in the dialectical flux between reification and immediacy. Within this flux, I postulate three interventionist movements that I have labelled appropriately as *deconstructive*, *topographic*, and *immediate*, around a *circuit of nature* model. This heuristic traces the pathway from construction to waste and sedimentation, through three movements that collectively: 1) recover nature through tracing the loss of nature from the discourse; 2) remap modern discourse to include nature; 3) experience and deconstruct the present in immediacy over abstraction.

Pedagogically, I feature interpretations of the everyday and lived curriculum over the planned curriculum. I cast my contribution to immediacy within these lessons of the immediate. Moreover, I argue that it is in these spaces of the immediate as they are occurring before us that we find the possibility for hope and escape from the circularity of reification.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 SHARING, SUSTENANCE AND SIGNS

Sharing and Sustenance. As I cut the vegetables and Mother stirs the pot, we prepare for our dinner. We need only share in the simplest of foods. As we share food, we gather in celebration of Life. We share in the miracle that confers meaning to our lives. We share with those whose company we find love and comfort, and to whom we in turn love and make mutually comfortable with our presence. With pure love we are fortunate to share our limited time in space with those who grace our tables with presence. These days we might indeed need to be reminded that to share of a single bowl is no ordinary feat (Figure 1).

Figure 1. To share from a single bowl
To share requires presence of heart. To partake in commonality is symbolic of our priorities and attitudes toward one another and the Earth. When we do not partake of the same bowl we might forget the celebration of being with Other and community.

As we gather to sup, we need to be troubled that those who were part of us no longer partake of the same bowl. We learn presence from their absence in our midst. We ask: How is it possible that those persons with whom we shared the most poignant of times, leave us by choice or necessity? Their absence is not only a missing presence, it is a sign.

We are known by the marks we leave behind. Whether we tread the Earth lightly or hard, in faith or in doubt, in pain or pleasure, with dread or ecstasy, in despair or hope, these marks are the legacy of mere mortals. Or, whether arrogant or humble, in our inscriptions, from the print at the bottom of our soles, ink from our pens, or in how we live life, no one is spared. We are all identified by marks we leave...

These were the thoughts inside my heart when the spoon broke (Figure 2). Was this a sign to represent my inquiry? It occurred to me that the broken spoon was perfect. I could not only discard it as it reminded me of family,
sharing, sustenance and Mother, and a dear sibling far away, it reminded me all at once that although broken — all is nonetheless whole.

Figure 2. Breakdown and disclosure

As an open pedagogical invitation, I begin with this enigma and weave a narrative that sheds meaning onto the integration of absence and presence, broken and whole, past and present. In the telling, I invite you to walk and learn with me along many paths before we begin to grasp the significance of the spoon and its narrative. The journey unfolds with background questions that frame and situate my pedagogical inquiry within an existential discourse emphasizing living interpretation of the lifeworld.

1.1a Background questions

These, then, are the three malaises about modernity ... [t]he first fear is about what we might call a loss of meaning, the fading of moral horizons. The second concerns the eclipse of ends, in face of rampant instrumental reason. And the third is about a loss of freedom. (Taylor, 1991, p.10)
One cannot approach questions like these... from a neutral standpoint. Every questioning grows out of a tradition — a pre-understanding that opens the space of possible answers. We use the word ‘tradition’ in the broadest sense... as a more pervasive, fundamental phenomenon that might be called a ‘way of being.’ In trying to understand tradition, the first thing we must become aware of is how it is concealed by its obviousness. It is not a set of rules or sayings, or something we find catalogued in an encyclopaedia. It is a way of understanding, a background, within which we interpret and act,... because it emphasizes the historicity of our way of thinking— the fact that we always exist within a pre-understanding determined by the history of our interactions with others who share the tradition. (Winograd & Flores, 1986, p.7)

Is it possible we no longer see beauty, even though it might be right before us? Is it possible we are truly disenchanted (Weber, Gerth, & Mills, 1958), \(^2\) no longer capable of experiencing awe? Is it possible that our hearts close little by little when we are faced with the sheer magnitude and depth of suffering? Is it possible when we speak of value that all value can ultimately be reduced to the economic? Is the law of nature that of the survival of the fittest on which grounds socio-biology is justified — where might is right and uneven distribution of material is warranted?

Broadly speaking, is it possible that we have fragmented our world and discourse into nature, culture and technology (Feng, 2001b; Latour, 1993)? \(^3\) Is it possible we are alone on this mute earth, which speaks not (Arato & Breines, 1979; Colletti, 1973; Feenberg, 1981; Lukács, 1971a; Schmidt, 1971; Vogel, 1996)?\(^4\) Is it only we who are capable of speech? Is it possible we are caught like rats in a celestial maze, on a deterministic planet, which cares not for us, which we have no agency over (Latour, 1993; Nietzsche, 1974)? Is it possible
our gods have abandoned us (Poggeler, 1966)? Do we believe our gods to be mere figments — the untenable thesis of our collective secular imagination? Are we, as in Dante, condemned past all hope (Dante & Musa, 1996)? Is it possible that, even if hope exists, we might be precluded from disclosure (Heidegger, 1977)? Are we living our lives at too fast a pace to notice — blinded by representations of our own making (Tester, 1995)? Is it possible that death is the finite end to our mortal story?

1.1b On the other hand

Or, is it possible that we can still celebrate the colours that abound all around us (Berry, 1988; Dillard, 1999)? Might it be that we were never disenchanted (Latour, 1993), that we still stand in awe of the majesty around us? Might it be possible that, precisely because of the scale of suffering, our hearts resurge where once they had been numbed? Can it still be true that there are some things that cannot be evaluated under the sign of money? Is perhaps the law of nature not that of the survival of the fittest, but the survival of all (Bateson, 1972)? Can flawed arguments that uphold power and uneven distribution of material be summarily refuted (Shiva, 1994)?

Broadly speaking, is it possible that we have not fragmented our world and discourse; and nature, culture, and technology are still as one (Feng, 2001b)? Is it possible our Earth is not mute but very much alive and all speech does not pass through anthropomorphic form (Abram, 1996)? Is it possible we
dwell within liminal spaces of possibility in our Earth-home, of which we are an intrinsic part and wherein our fate is inextricably connected to the fate of all things (Bateson, 1972; Maturana & Varela, 1980; Merchant, 1994)?

Is it possible, despite the profane, that the sacred survives (Caputo & Scanlon, 1999; Latour, 1993; Taylor, 1991)? In our hearts, and all around us, is it the case that hope exists and possibility remains for disclosure (Heidegger, 1977)? Might we feel an imperative to deconstruct our representations (Tester, 1995)? Is it possible that death is a quickening of new beginnings that remind us of human temporality, fragility and mortality as part of the perpetuating circle of Life?

1.2 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Most of us feel the need to describe how we came to be what we are. We want to make our stories known, and we want to believe those stories carry value. To discover we have no story is to acknowledge that our existence is meaningless which we may find unbearable... (Fulford, 1999, p.14)

Not to have a framework is to fall into a life which is spiritually senseless... The form of danger here is utterly different from that which threatens the modern seeker, which is something close to the opposite: the world loses altogether its spiritual contour, nothing is worth doing, the fear is of a terrifying emptiness, a kind of vertigo, or even a fracturing of our world, and body-space.... [T]he existential predicament in which one fears condemnation is quite different from the one fears, above all, meaninglessness. The dominance of the latter perhaps defines our age. (Taylor, 1989, p. 18)
1.2a Loss of meaning and crisis of modernity

The juxtaposition of Taylor’s quote above against his quote that introduces the previous section sketches the problematic. The two quotes connect Taylor’s felt worries of a fragmented and detached self in society around the loss of meaning, eclipse of ends, and loss of freedom. He emphasizes the need for frameworks related to morality, spirituality, and quest for meaning.

I argue that Taylor’s philosophical worries find significant meaning in other extant literature. The crisis of modernity that Taylor speaks of has been argued, theorized, and brought to practice in the following topics: Crisis of modernity (Laszlo, 1994; Rogers, 1994); Globalization (Beck, 2000; Mander & Goldsmith, 1996; Sassen, 1998); Risk (Beck, 1992, 1995, 1999; Cotgrove, 1982; Giddens, 1990, 1999; Meadows, Meadows, & Randers, 1992; Meadows & Rome, 1972); Poverty (Latouche, 1993); War (Bruce, Milne, & Rotblat, 1999; Rotblat, 1991, 1998; Schell, 1982, 1998); Environment (Carson, 1962/1994; Makofske & Karlin, 1995; Myers & Simon, 1994; Szasz, 1994; Wackernagel & Rees, 1996; Yearley, 1992); Health (Perrow, 1984); Population (Bolch & Lyons, 1993; Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 1990); and Education (Jardine, 1992, 1998; Smith, 1999).
Before I move forward, the formulation of the problem requires me to back up and address the enigmatic nature of the questions I pose above, and couch them within the context of this inquiry. To be sure, the above groups of questions and counter-questions are merely heuristic groupings, since the issues are far more complex, nuanced, overlapping, and contingent.

I group those questions by design as an advance organizer to lead into this initial discussion. I want to contrast the two sets of questions and their implied answers. That is, the first group takes the form of something like a hermeneutics of despair and the second forms a hermeneutics of hope.

My first intent is to reveal the implicit dimension of hope within the first group of seemingly disparate questions about despair. In so doing, I illustrate a pedagogical point; that is, pedagogy includes the understanding of these questions in a nuanced, overlapping and contingent manner. Nevertheless, we are guided by our sense of caring (Noddings, 1992) in embracing the implied optimism of the second group to cultivate the pedagogical imperatives of hope, while rejecting the pessimism of the first. However, as inherent in both sets of questions, despair and hope are dialectically related. Within one we find the other.
1.2c Hermeneutics of Despair

Having noted the pedagogical impulse towards the optimistic, I turn to draw out connections between my questions above and the felt loss of horizons of purpose and meaning found within a hermeneutics of despair. By juxtaposing the first quote from Fulford (1999) with Taylor (1989) I was struck by the remarkable similarity across their works. For Fulford, a meaningless existence is one that is without a story, while for Taylor, meaninglessness has to do with the loss of horizons and framework. Juxtaposed, one senses what is not said in the in-between space. The effect of both Fulford and Taylor is the unbearable lived quality of life — the wake of banality, emptiness, and fracturing that ensues.

Within hope’s flipside, found in an alternate vocabulary of despair, I interpret emotions that hint at a terrifying existence that issues from a loss of meaning. This phenomenon, that arguably has complex roots, is intimately related to possible uncertainty and anxiety around the kinds of questions I pose above. There appears to be no definitive answers or consensual framework (Taylor, 1991). It is significant that a child might face despair in search of causal explanations, definitive answers, or consensual frameworks with respect to the state of the world.
1.2d Quotidian lessons

Perhaps an imperative exists in our dual role, as teachers and researchers, to emphasize hope and transformation, while at the same time, to pay attention to an attendant hermeneutics of despair. From an existential position, I believe it is imperative for us as teachers to give students hope, while at the same time, to relate to their legitimate fears — living in a world that they did not make themselves, finding neither definitive answers, consensual framework, nor appeal to a final authority and external arbiter to the human. But how might we do this? Perhaps precisely because the world in which students find themselves is contingently made, herein lies the possibility of critique through acts of praxis to help students move toward their own transformation.

I am guided by two fundamental axioms here. By fundamental, I mean starting from the ground of existence. The first revolves around my conviction (like Taylor’s albeit with a pedagogical turn) that the acts of posing and attempting to answer questions like these are able to translate into real difference and carry profound pedagogical significance (Taylor, 1991). The second axiom is this: because that which is concealed through artefacts that make our world remains right before us, lessons of the everyday — or what I call quotidian lessons — are also always there before us. Thus the possibility
exists for emancipation if we only open our hearts, minds and hands to the questions that spring from with the existential in the everyday. This possibility is the challenge to connect lived experience with theory.

1.2e Loss of meaning, loss of Nature

It might be helpful to alleviate some of these fears and to clear an opening for transformation by locating these disparate questions within a common root source. The literature on the loss of nature in discourse is helpful here. Specifically, I propose to do this by merging Taylor's (1991) first malaise, around "loss of meaning, the fading of moral horizons" (p. 10), with his second malaise on the "eclipse of ends in face of rampant instrumental reason" and focus on the loss of meaning and the closing of horizons around the loss of nature (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1998; Leiss, 1972/1994; Marcuse, 1964/1991; Merchant, 1980).

I argue that Taylor's two malaises of modernity are intertwined with and related to the loss of nature from the discourse. Whereas Taylor touches on the subjugation of nature with the loss of moral horizons as his main critique, my work focuses on the notion of loss of moral horizons as it relates to the loss of nature. I locate our modern crisis within flawed conceptions of nature and root these losses in the problem of nature in technological culture.
1.3 HERMENEUTICALLY FOCUSING THE PROBLEM

In order to become aware of the effects that computers have on society we must reveal the implicit understanding of human language, thought, and work that serves as background for developments in computer technology. In this endeavour we are doubly concerned with language. First, we are studying a technology that operates in the domain of language. The computer is a device for creating, manipulating, and transmitting symbolic (hence linguistic) objects. Second, in looking at the impact of the computer, we find ourselves thrown back into questions of language - how practice shapes our language and language in turn generates the space of possibilities for action... in asking what computers can do, we are drawn into asking what people do with them, and in the end into addressing the fundamental question of what it means to be human. (Winograd & Flores, 1986, p. 7)

If our primordial experience is inherently animalistic, if our “immediate” awareness discloses a field of phenomenon that are all potentially animate and expressive, how can we ever account for the loss of such an animateness from the world around us? How can we account for our culture’s experience of other animals as senseless automata, or of trees as purely passive fodder for lumber mills? If perception, in its depth, is wholly participatory, how could we ever have broken out of our depths into the inert and determinate world we now commonly perceive? We may suspect at first, that the apparent loss of participation has something to do with our language. For language, although it is rooted in perception, nevertheless has a profound capacity to turn back upon, and influence, our sensorial experience. While the reciprocity of perception engenders the more explicit reciprocity of speech and language, perception remains vulnerable to the decisive influence of language... (Abram, 1996: 90-91)

1.3a Concerns with language

I believe that, when we think about technology, we tend to think in terms of practices, artefacts, materials, as well as critique associated with implications that issue from the non-neutrality of technological change. When we think of culture, we tend to switch our thinking to norms, representation, regulation, production, consumption, representation, identity, symbols,
language, beliefs, structures, and agency. When we think of nature, we tend to
switch once again, this time to interconnectedness, interdependence,
organisms, habitat, environments, patterns, and reverence.

While the citation from Winograd and Flores locates the work of
interpreting technology under the rubric of language, Abram locates the
problem of modern estrangement from nature through changes in language. My
dissertation finds validity in both of these claims. Between the words of
Winograd and Flores, and Abram lies differently articulated arguments around
representations of technology and nature respectively that share common
concern with language. This commonality in language becomes the focus of my
inquiry on the problematic that I call the problem of nature in technological
culture. It finds its tendencies located within a dialectical flux at the
interstices of these apparently disparate arguments — tendencies to fracture
and to coalesce discourse related to nature, technology, and culture.

I am also arguing that the bracketing of nature from the discourse
suggests that schisms tend to divide our world discursively — posing questions,
and making claims and heuristic distinctions along the nature-culture-
technology divide. Yet, it is also significant that (Winograd and Flores, and
Abram notwithstanding), these claims in heuristic distinctions do not stop at
the discursive, but are enacted in practice. For instance, typically in
technology research, it is issues of equity, implementation and assessment
that are dealt with. Cultural research arises out of socio-cultural issues and
deals with consumption, language, identity, representation, and symbols. 

Ecological research explores our relationships in the interconnectedness of the natural realm, species, habitats, organisms and reproduction.

Although there is an imperative to remap the discourse (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997; Soulé & Lease, 1995; White, 1998), it is rare to find research that crosses epistemological divides that connect technology (e.g. machine ontology, networks, scientific constructivism) with culture (e.g. beliefs, symbols, language, identity, re/production, representation, regulation), and environmental discourse (e.g. patterns, reverence, interconnectedness). The fracturing tendencies literally cut off theorists and demarcate them within discursive borders. My work seeks to bridge these divides.

1.3b Rise of the technological dimension as third Nature

From a historical standpoint, we are experiencing a phenomenon similar to my interpretation of Rousseau's critique of civilization as the separation of culture from nature (1984; 1992). Furthermore, work by a range of theorists from Baudrillard (1990); Heidegger (1977); Latour (1993); McLuhan (1965); and Postman (1992) suggests that we are experiencing what might be termed as a rise of a third dimension of technology finding its ascendant in the dimensions of nature and culture (see Figure 3). In the figure, the horizontal axis represents bifurcation of culture from nature as represented in Rousseau, while
the vertical axis represents a second order fracture that was first understood by Heidegger (1977).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.** Rise of technological dimension

I am reminded of Latour when he argues, "the ontology of mediators thus has a geometry... with a unique signature in the space deployed" (p. 86).\textsuperscript{10} Latour’s non-human objects as mediators, such as his example of the vacuum pump, now parallel their geometrical ontology in the discourse of technological culture. If the historical first-order shift of culture from nature, postulated as “second nature” has validity (Lukács, 1971a, 1971b),\textsuperscript{11} the concomitant rise of technology from culture suggests a second-order shift to “third nature”. The validity of this postulate is borne out when inter-ballistic missiles, predator robots, servers and security sensors that have little in common as far as their purposes are concerned, share significant commonality as mute objects with machine ontology; they have been conferred agency and autonomous power to act upon our world through complex networks (Latour, 1993).
1.3c Initial theorizing of disclosure in the quotidian

While my research is concerned with these "trifurcations" around the ascendancy of technology (as third nature), I am also interested in the countering impulse that interprets nature, culture and technology as whole. For example, nature-as-found is the mud from the riverbed baked into pottery, shaped into a spoon and transformed into the cultural artefact as seen in Figure 4. By the same token, it is also symmetrically true that the same artefact, when fabricated or made into a utensil, emerges with the functionality of a tool — technology-as-found — with the ability to shape and alter our experiences, understandings, lives, and destinies. The problem, I submit, goes beyond an optical illusion: when we no longer see the spoon as nature, and when we fail to recognize the spoon as technology.

Figure 4. Nature as culture as technology
Fundamentally, it is critical to see the problem in terms of social construction of categories; the power of the constructive turn in cognition in exposing the *arbitrariness* of the divisive move separating nature into natural, cultural, and technological. When fabrication becomes reified, when "made" appears as "found", what was once immediate becomes reified with the appearance of the cultural or the technological as natural and given. This is the same problematic reversed, when we fail to see an ordinary ceramic spoon as technology. While the first moment masks the natural, the second masks its second order, the tool. This is the kind of closure that makes problematic the ordinary in lessons of the quotidian (see axiom 2 on page 10).

The flux between these dialectical disclosures around social constructions suggests that the process of transformation may inherently open a space of/for possibility for bringing back the remote in nature, to the immediate. But this *hidden* possibility might or might not disclose itself. The process of reification, it must be noted, hides the Earth, even as the spoon as artefact obscures technology.

Thus it is pivotal to come to terms with this obscuring. While in this particular instance our socially situated tool allows us to share food, the negative transformative potential of re/production becomes clear when one substitutes the mode of technology with gunpowder. Within contemporary culture, such obscuring is critical. We may not understand the full force when told of an animal that has been cloned, or when we assent to eating food that
appears natural but has been genetically modified. It is when we see through these external phenomena that we begin the difficult task of unmasking the potential of treating all change as progress.

1.3d Broadening the critique of language

More broadly, the problem extends beyond the discursive challenges and the material constitution of objects and their transformation from nature to artefact to tool. I argue that in a fundamental sense the transformations alter our way of being in the world and within nature — in how we know and how we act. I need to pause here in order to draw out an important distinction. My concern is with this broader critique. Thus, while this inquiry does not directly address typical topics around equity in technological implementation, consumption patterns in consumer culture, or how the despoliation of nature endangers all life on Earth, it is implicitly deeply concerned with all of these topics. My inquiry attempts to understand the discursive nature of language, lived interactions, historical separation of the discourses, and the loss of nature from the discourse.

And, while the inquiry seeks to forward an activist pedagogical imperative for recovering green moments within the discourse, our practices, and lived interactions — it also conceives of itself as a piece of work that is never fully natural, cultural, and technological. It argues for a language that can permit us to step back from what might be called surface concerns with
material manifestations, concentrating instead, on interpretation of phenomena of the everyday. Within this broader phenomenal investigation lies my deeper concern of exploitative conceptions of our relationships and actions with nature. The problem of loss of meaning and the fading of moral horizons is rooted in the loss of nature from the discourse.

1.3e Application of pedagogical critique

In the previous section I mention that, in the dialectical flux between disclosure and reconstruction, there appears to be an inherent hidden possibility to act — to bring the immediate into focus. In this section, I wish to illustrate the potential for such enacting. Take for instance, the situation when environmentalists appear where loggers are about to cut down the tree. Here we have opposition as resistance at the site, which Greenpeace calls, "direct action", or what I call the immediate.

While it has proven to be an effective strategy to be directly at the site of resistance and give the site representation in the world, a longer-term strategy might revolve around asking ourselves: why is it that we find ourselves struggling around a tree in the first place? Or phenomenologically speaking, what is strange here— that there are people protecting trees? Or is it strange that we have people who are employed to cut down trees indiscriminately?
If we begin by recognizing that the situation is more complex, that there are multiple stakeholders, some not present, and that all parties have legitimacy to be there, we can then begin to ask: by what legitimacy do we stand around the tree? This last question puts nature itself as a stakeholder. We can demonstrate the connection between changes in the historical representation of nature and its connection to social reality through education via historical social deconstruction. The strange phenomena we behold today are all rooted in history. This is the deconstructive move I propose. As suggested above, I ask what alternative representations are possible that can extend such a complementary move? Here is where we enact the topographic move, when we remap the discourse accounting for the absence of nature.

Returning to the immediate, it is also important to be at the site for yet another reason. As Abram reminds us, we need to constantly immerse ourselves in nature, or reification might set in as social construction that imitates the given and the real, even as it defiles our language and mocks our connectedness. It might be instructive to ask ourselves if the decisive turn was made in history (Eisler, 1987; Merchant, 1980) and if disclosure was possible back then. Disclosure or concealment today might or might not result in the legacy of the strange tomorrow.
1.3f The Problem of education and complicity

For education, the significance of the problem of loss is broad and deep. When we grapple with questions of this fundamental nature, we are effectively grappling with the ends and purposes of education. If schooling, as it is currently practiced, contributes to the problem of the loss of nature discussed above, we are obliged to take up the question of complicity. It is here the problem fits what Orr (1994) calls the problem of education. Conflicts that threaten the modern world, rooted within detached and flawed conceptions of nature (Leclerc, 1986; Merchant, 1980) are reinforced (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) by the institutions of modernity (Giddens, 1990), of which our schools are one of the key sites of social reproduction (Carnoy, 1974).

Without trivializing the problem, it might be helpful to re-pose the problem of complicity as one of pedagogical possibility. Eco-educators argue that the problem of loss lies within flawed representation of nature and their reproduction in school curricula (Bowers, 1997; Jardine, 1993; Orr, 1994; O'Sullivan, 1999). This suggests the problem might be amenable to correction. In what follows, I turn towards the subjective, expanding upon these pedagogical possibilities insofar as they relate to the issue of narrating the self.
1.3g Autonarrative, dialectics of pedagogical possibility

While clearly the problem of the loss of nature is exceedingly complex, with competing and complimentary explanations, I posit that within the space of hope and despair we might find pedagogical possibilities for transformation. In what follows, I focus on the interrelations between hope and despair in terms of my own narrative.

I begin with some aphoristic\textsuperscript{14} statements. I am convinced we have to simultaneously address both of these moments within the space where Hope lingers as possibility within despair. In this respect, my work seeks not only to speak to the difficult problems the modern world faces, but also to somehow find a way to re-infuse it with meaning.

This sense of meaning, although admittedly elusive, is nevertheless attainable. As it turns out, I am convinced that speaking to these problems is also intimately related to recovering that meaning. After Taylor (1989), I propose a program of the recovery of nature that roots the problems within one source, which Taylor refers to as the "naturalist confusion"(p. 24) under the "great epistemological cloud"(p. 5) of modern scientific epistemology.\textsuperscript{15}

Approaches that validate the personal are important here, especially in terms of existential questioning. Here it is significant that my work has a measure of empirical validity within my own subjective questioning, wherein, I
can relate "first-hand" to many of these questions as they are a variant of the existential questions I have myself posed as a child and adult.

Of significance, with respect to concealment, disclosure, and hope, are critical moments in life when meaning can become magnified. It was against a similar backdrop of searching and questioning, aggravated by personal tragedy that I locate my own awakening (Feng, 2001a). It was the quickening in the twilight of my father's untimely passing that provided the impetus for my dissertation. My awakening was one which arises when "we face our dearest's deaths or are threatened by hopeless illness or meet with great misfortunes..." (Morawski, 1994, p.181).

I find a certain resonance here within Tester's (1995) words, when he sees events as "combination of critical opportunity with what amounts to an existential curse" (p. 128). I have felt that potential translate into real difference when my father's passing stimulated the recall of some of my earliest pedagogical experiences. The ceaseless existential query of a child has translated into this undertaking with my dissertation.

Thus, within the subjective is the profoundly personal. Given that I grew up in an age where I found myself searching for answers and terrified by the prospect of my worst fears, I am led to wonder if questions which mattered greatly to me, might similarly concern our children today. It is probable that the worries of today's children have likely compounded exponentially. While in
my struggles with despair I had been concerned with the "bomb" and social injustice, I cannot imagine what our children must feel today in the sense of an overall loss of meaning.

I believe children face the kind of loss of meaning that I interpret Taylor to mean: within escalating violence in the grim but incomprehensible reality of death in classrooms, random acts of brutality in the streets, and perhaps, the impending demise of the planet in their own lifetimes. Since we can draw connections among what we believe, how we act, and ultimately, how, what, why and who we are, it is perhaps here we need to begin.

1.3h Problematizing between theory and the lived

At the intersection between lived experience and theorizing lies rich opportunity to examine the moment between reification and immediacy, the made and found (Tester, 1995). Herein lies an opportunity to critique reification, remap discourse, and experience immediacy in nature.

Such a project is given poignancy and relevance when it is undertaken through narrative. Specifically, I draw distinctions between narrative as theory (Cobley, 2001) and as narratology (Onega Jaén & García Landa, 1996); the former draws from Aristotelian conceptions of narrative as unity of plot, purpose, telos, quest, virtue, and moral account (Aristotle, 1968; MacIntyre,
1981; Taylor, 1989), against the latter which strives for technical interpretation of narrative as analysis (Riessman, 1993).

1.3i Need for reflexivity within narrative

Reflexivity as a turn towards one's consciousness is core to narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997) and expresses itself through narrative as a self-critique of praxis. It does this by questioning our various plots and emplotments in relation to the stories we inherit or co-author. Self-critique also attempts to understand one's narrative within an historically-situated ethical purpose. An implicit aspect of this ethic is how we are temporally responsible and account/able to our practices in the world. Core to the ethos of the times, we need to critique our complicity in our consumptive ways of being. In this respect we not only need to be aware of our roles within privilege and oppression, but also of the attendant social responsibility.

Furthermore, self-critique needs to extend out of one's private sphere and into public intuitions we work and teach in. Critical educators point out that the question of complicity does not stop with the self, but must also include formal institutions of modernity, of which, the school is one. Such a stance requires educators to rethink education in order to be less complicit in contributing to the worsening global problems, whether in terms of warfare, social injustice, ecological destruction, economic disparities, or hegemonic
patriarchy, or racism. The ecopedagogical work of David Jardine also comes to mind here, when he urges an "ek-statis" — going beyond one’s senses — in the way curriculum is conceptualized. The self-critique he argues for is one of an "ecological and spiritual matter, involving images of our place and the place of our children on this precious Earth" (Jardine, 1998, p. 73).

As a discursive process, the self-critique is also about responding to the problem of the loss of nature and connecting its consequential material effects (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997) to the malaise of modernity. I do this by resisting reification (Tester, 1995), fetishization (Haug, 1986), and scientistic reading of nature (Taylor, 1989, 1991), through remapping the field (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997) while emphasizing the importance of immediacy in nature (Abram, 1996). A significant piece of my critique of reification that involves tracing the bracketing of nature from the discourse is a response to Jagtenberg and McKie’s call. My response comes as a remapping of the discourses of nature, culture and technology.

1.3j Sampling the role of theorists and theory in general

In what follows, I run through an instance whereby important work from disparate fields converges within my dissertation. From this, I narrow down both the general problem I have been sketching thus far and key theorists on which I base my work.
To approach the question of the loss of meaning and attendant problems around reification, fetishization, and scientistic reading of culture, I amalgamate the work of disparate theorists writing in fields representing nature, culture, and technology respectfully. These are: environmental studies (e.g. Bookchin, 1996), cultural studies (e.g. Baudrillard, 1994), and science and technology studies (Feenberg, 1995).


More specifically, it is through Abram (1996) that I forward my arguments around problematic shifts in culture in terms of technology, and how we understand interactions between ecology, language, culture, and cognition. I draw from Latour’s (1993) critique where he refutes the passing of modernity.
and forward my refutation of the thesis of disenchantment. It is through my interpretation of Jagtenberg and Mckie's topographical work that I realized the critique I was shaping required both material and ideological dimensions. Hayles' (1995) formulation of nature as continuum is critical in synthesizing conceptions of nature and shedding light on the materialist-idealist debate.

Polanyi's (2001) work is important in underscoring the fallacy of faulty assumptions within economic theory and its consequential implications on the poor and less developed nations of the world. Here Merchant's (1980) sustained and systematic critique of the Scientific Revolution also proves invaluable as an anthropological discourse underscoring the power of representation in tracing cyclical relationship between changing conceptions of nature, construction of the social, reification, and sedimentation.

As teacher-researcher, I bring in Taylor's (1991) framework and focus his critique on the need to answer the questions of technoscientific, social, and economic nature that are underscored by the background questions and counter-questions I posed earlier. I remain cognizant of the need for imparting hope to students for a better world, and grappling with students' questions from an existential standpoint. Tester's critique of reification and its relationship to fetishization and contemplation give me the courage to deal with reification and render it central in my research. Here, I propose to examine the questions that Tester and Taylor raise, through simultaneous acts
of deconstruction in unthinking a world, remapping the discourse, and recovering immediacy in remembering the Earth.

It is through Vogel's (1996) systematic critique of the problem of nature in critical theory that I realized the critical importance of the flux between reification and immediacy. One of the most important ways in which he helped was the formulation of my problem as “the problem of nature in technological culture”.18

Winograd and Flores' (1986) work (located within technology, but connecting work from biology, hermeneutics and phenomenology) recognizes the need to understand language in a broader sense. This work was pivotal in helping me to recognize my work as one of/in/about language. Their refutation of the ability of software to grasp the complexity of language confirms Cantwell’s (1985) fears and coincides with my experience designing microprocessors.

1.4 PHENOMENOLOGY OF MOURNING IN EXISTENTIAL INQUIRY

1.4a Amorphous questions, ambiguities, and the problem of fit

Research is normally a linear process with the topic question defined a priori through focusing on a burning problem that interests us and relates to our own lives and practices. Moreover, when researching environmental issues, the problem of focus between the micro and the macro — the parts as they
relate to the whole — is necessarily an important concern. My first concern here is with reductionism, where we risk losing sight of the big picture when focusing on the particular. But the problem also has its inverse — when by shifting to the larger picture, the details are also obscured.

What if the very act of reducing the complexity or broadening the lens runs the chance of distorting our research? I believe that we simultaneously need both these optics to address our inquiry by retaining a double-lens on the complexity of the world itself, even as we focus on the micro. Consistent with complexity theory, the topic question is dynamic rather than static, and likely to be recursive rather than linear (Capra, 1996; Prigogine & Stengers, 1997).

In this alternate schema of research, through oscillation between parts and whole, I acknowledge my embeddedness and interconnectedness, even as I problematize my inquiry as being part of/within living systems. I can follow the breach through a qualitative endeavour by taking the argument to its logical end while embracing the connectedness between my life and my topic of inquiry. Here my ideas, rather than being laid out in advance, evolved as I wrote, read, and engaged with the living world. They arose out of my emergent experience of living, being, and en/acting within a context where the world and researcher are intimately co-implicated and interconnected (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991).
When we speak of the empirical, what can be more empirical than our own life experiences? In other words, the qualitative endeavour I speak of above is not limited to logic becoming animated through transformative experiences in life itself, when research and life meet contemporaneously within the larger living context. For me, the empirical is also a profoundly discursive project implicit of my narrative — when Life seeks to understand itself as story, and research unfolds out of the middle of life through existential angst and grief, in the loss of a loved one.

*When our worlds become void of presence that cannot be replaced, when they become shorn of meaning, when one is plunged into the depths of despair, when nothing takes the pain away. When we are past all emotion, when we cannot cry. Not because our tears have run dry, but because back when we could cry, we still could feel. It is the moment when we become detached, numb. When all is too vivid. Too real. Surreal. When our worlds crash.*

When my father passed way, in accordance with Chinese tradition, we mourned for the seven weeks without respite in isolation with patches on our arms to remind us of our great loss and with only pain in our hearts as comfort. It was a phenomenologically heightened experience very difficult to convey. I do not speak for the rest of my family. For myself, I am not certain I regained
the connection I severed with the world. I might argue that my research
questions emerged from out of that in-between grieving space. But then that
would be to acknowledge that it might have only been possible to pin-point the
origin of my inquiry post-hoc, when I could not have realized the centrality of
this shattering life-event as the events unfolded. If so, it also compounds the
previous problem of focus with the location of the site, in locating the original
site of my inquiry at the site of grieving, rather than its post-hoc
reconceptualization.

Questions like these hint at the kind of conundrum one might be faced
with when one’s life collapses, in a research question born of existential angst
and the contingencies of life, post-hoc. Yet, how might we even say “post-hoc”
when the pain lingers? In such moments, within the realization that although
we learn through pain, we might be in need of new language, since we cannot
neatly put pain on a chronological continuum. That is, we realize that we are
at the limits of language in describing emotional pain. These typed letters on
the printed page cannot possibly capture the depth of void I felt and continue
to feel.

The same argument applies to our commonly unproblematic notion of
rationale. Here I did not have a rationale per se, other than a vague need to
understand the world in order to teach it alternatively (without entering into
complicity with forces involved in the collective loss of meaning). The closest I
come to a rationale is with the originary impulse. Yet I cannot even claim my rationale began my work, as that impulse was only retroactively understood.

In this respect, my dissertation forces a reconsideration of all categories, whether in terms of pain, language, topic, or rationale. It emerges out of the void of existential angst, and demonstrates not only irregularities in the writing process, but perhaps the kinds of questioning and ambiguity when research emerges "from the middle", out of life.

1.4b Originary impulse as ecological consciousness

In the literature, there are varying testimonials with vastly different accounts of how influential environmentalists kindled their ecological consciousness. I believe it was significant that some were able to recall the exact moment. For instance, Rachel Carson (1962/1994) whom some attribute as the founder of the environmental movement, attributed her own awakening to the exceptional silence of spring. With Aldo Leopold (1989), it was in the moment of watching the fire go out of the eyes of a wolf he had killed.

For myself, it was within a special, caring hospital ward. My ecological consciousness was abruptly re-awoken when confronted with the terrifying existential question posed by my father when he asked me why he was dying. Appropriately, it was while reading Carolyn Merchant, Rachel Carson and Morris Berman next to my father's deathbed that I suddenly awoke to the realization
that my father, who was dying of cancer, had been poisoned by the same industrial corporate that released the toxins, which foul our air, water and earth. That was how my grieving transformed into ecological consciousness, extending to the larger society, and the death of nature until a green sensitivity began to infuse my entire being.

1.4c Existential pedagogical questions, emergent autopoietic inquiry

In those nascent, poignant moments, within moments of existential angst, I was faced with a profoundly pedagogical quest/ion that mirrored my father's seemingly irrational question. *What does one do when one senses something is terribly amiss, yet one cannot name what is wrong, nor does one know what to do?* With that amorphous existential question, that was to later become my retroactive origin of inquiry, I began my search for the answer to my father's riddle, realizing full well I might not find an answer in a whole lifetime.

Thus, rather than beginning with a linear framework, in contrast to conventional research, my work began with a confounding pedagogical and research problem likened to the hermeneutic circle (Bontekoe, 1996). I had no idea where to start (except with the vague feeling that I needed to respond to the larger problematic within which my father's illness was located), or how to begin, with no books available to guide me in my unique quandary. Nor did I know at the time, that the poignant moment was to be the point of origin of
my inquiry. My inquiry emerged out of lived experience, where the nature of the existential angst in endless questioning of seemingly irrational questions my father posed coincided with tenets of autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1992; Varela et al., 1991) and ethnographic emergence (Marcus, 1995). Merging life with work (Aoki, 1996), topic with method (Oberg, 2002), through a doubled turn within an autopoietic reading, my inquiry disclosed as a four-way isomorphism between theory, life, topic, and method.

1.5 CONCEPTUALIZING AND MODELLING THE PROBLEM

1.5a Thesis and epistemological connections

In what follows, I approach the above problem through diagrammatic modelling. In order to ground this model in terms of its epistemological connections with my argument, however, I pause to briefly re-state my guiding hypothesis along Taylorian lines. That is to say, my dissertation is guided by my central thesis which parallels Taylors' argument that loss of meaning and horizons (Taylor, 1989, 1991), and crisis of the modern world (Heidegger, 1977; Husserl, 1970; Nietzsche, 1974) are intertwined. Both are arguably the end-results of flawed and detached conceptions of nature.

Husserl (1970) laments that reification is constantly being sedimented. Marx and Engels (1967), and later Lukács (1971a) posit that nature is converted materially, and then socially constructed as natural resource, and into commodities. Marcuse (1964/1991) envisions a virtually inescapable one-
dimensional capitalistic discourse. If these postulates are true then how might we produce an effective critique of this force? What critique will be required to escape from the cycle of reification? How do we begin to conceptualize such a critique within what I call "the problem of nature in technological culture"?

What are the key concepts and processes we might need to theorize as constituent postulates in the unfolding model of the argument? As an advance organizer, although the Abramic discourse appears to be the answer, it is not adequate to be open in immediacy. In order to escape from the reification of Life, we are also required to critique discursive forces that reify and sediment through cultural construction, to reverse the loss of nature and to reinsert nature back into the discourse.

1.5b Theorizing the abstract and immediate

It is critical to model the problem, theorizing the flux in terms of both its ideological and material counterparts, and to pay attention to both abstract construction and lived effects (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997). Such a model would need to show how it affects the kind of symmetrical critique called for in demonstrating the process through which it is possible to deconstruct abstract discourse, without re-reifying our lived experience into abstract categories alongside a parallel concrete component.

Here I found "the circuit of culture" model by du Gay et al. (1997) instructive and pivotal to my theorizing in critiquing their work and re-
diagramming their cultural process. Formatively in my earlier models, I grafted onto their "circuit of culture" model a sixth movement of "waste", symbolic of the absence of green critique. My "waste" rounded out their circuit of cultural processes of regulation, identity, representation, production, and consumption. In my view this addition augmented cultural discourses ironically celebrating consumption with emancipatory alternatives to deterministic Marxism (Mackay, 1997; Storey, 1999). This new six-process circuit of culture model has made transitory appearance within the literature (Feng, 2001; Feng & Chan, 2001; Petrina, 2000).

However, I now believe the problem extends beyond the inclusion of waste in the circuit of culture. There were more serious problems in lack of: (1) representation of nature as the ontologically prior state before culture; (2) processes of social construction; and (3) critique of this circulation as progress. Collectively, these omissions call for radical re-problematization that locates nature as primary over culture, where cultural processes are embedded within nature (Polanyi, 2001). It was through reading Tester (1995) that I realized any revisions would need to reflect the process through which nature is converted into culture, when the made becomes experienced as the found. That was how I derived my "circuit of nature" model around the processes of immediacy, representation, reification and waste in Figure 5. This circuit of nature model highlights the problem of social construction and its material resultant as waste, while critiquing change as progress. Figure 5. introduces these four processes of immediacy, representation, reification and waste, insofar as they
relate to intervention movements of deconstruction, topography, and immediacy shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Circuit of nature model

Figure 5. illustrates the cyclical cultural processes through which nature is constantly being socially constructed and consumed as resource, and in the process reified into object. Schematically, in this figure, the term immediacy refers to the site ontologically prior to social construction, while reification depicts the epistemologically post-constructed site, and waste the ontologically post-constructed site, with the last two terms corresponding to the ideological and material counterparts to the idea of progress.
In Figure 5., this exposé of reification incubates a deconstructive moment that exposes the myth of progress as linear and cumulative. It replaces the problematic mythic view with an alternate one that reveals progress as spiralling and parasitic. In this view, progress is disclosed as cyclical through cultural processes represented in the flux from immediacy, representation, and reification to waste — in the process exponentially devouring the immediate while producing artefacts and tools. *In actuality, "progress" silently and effectively consumes the Earth.*

As Figure 5. and Figure 6. are integrated in understanding the logic and development of my argument, they must read together. Scaffolding the processes in Figure 5. where I locate my critique within all four quadrants of the circuit of nature model, I build the conceptual bridge to my intervention in Figure 6. around three interventionist movements.

Although the deconstructive move in Figure 5. is compelling, it is not enough to reveal what is problematic in deconstructing the continuous effects of reification, or to disclose how progress actually operates. What is required is a second order deconstruction in the opposite direction\textsuperscript{23} to correct and undo effects of reification. In this second-order deconstruction in Figure 6., I have diagrammatically depicted this process as a counter flux with the arrow labelled deconstructive. This runs in the reversed direction from reification to
immediacy to reverse the flow, deconstructing the symbolic representations through which nature is represented to affect the dominant discourse.

Yet, even this single deconstructive moment is inadequate because we are obliged to provide a reconstruction to that which we deconstruct. Taking Figures 5 and 6 together, to counter the cyclic flow of “progress” in Figure 5 from immediacy, through representation, reification and waste, I theorize the need for three movements: deconstructive and immediate towards immediacy, and topographic towards reification.
According to the original plan of the book, which Heidegger discloses in the eighth section, *Sein und Zeit* was to consist of an introduction and six divisions divided into two parts of three divisions each. Heidegger published merely one-third of the work: the introduction and the first two divisions of part 1. One might say part 1 is predominantly systematic or constructive, and that part 2 was meant to be historical and destructive.... according to Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* had to consist of a constructive and destructive component. In the unpublished part 2 Heidegger wanted to deconstruct the history of ontology, taking the problem of temporality as a guiding principle. (Philipse, 1998, p.16)

In all three of these moments, the direction of the arrows is significant. The logic for the direction of these arrows is the following. Even as *deconstructive* unthinks reification of the world (suggested with the reverse arrow), similar to the Heideggerian plan for *Being and Time* above, the *topographic* corrects the loss of nature through a counter constructive move by remapping discourse to breach the omissions (suggested by the forward arrow). The *immediate* (in the reversed arrow towards original immediacy) is strategically situated within the presumed site of production and consumption where "waste" originates to counter the problem of re-reifying within deconstruction. This "immediate" movement reminds us of the need for experience of immediacy with the Earth. Having diagrammed the problem, in what follows I link this model to the structure of my dissertation around which it is correspondingly organized.
1.6 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

I have structured my dissertation around Figure 6. and the three interventionist movements:

- **Deconstructive** - Unthinking an arbitrary socially constructed world
- **Topographic** - Remapping and bringing nature back to the discourse
- **Immediate** - Experiencing immediacy in nature.

Note how the first two are *conceptual* while the third is *experiential*. This will in turn extend into an organizing heuristic for the chapters. I wrote my dissertation in six chapters designed around these interventionist movements and concluded with a CODA.

CHAPTER TWO and CHAPTER THREE make up the *conceptual* movement, while CHAPTER FIVE and CHAPTER SIX comprise the *concrete* experiential movements. CHAPTER FOUR serves as a transition. With overlaps, the conceptual movement generally focuses *hermeneutically* on the discursive in interpretive readings of nature. The concrete-experiential-immediate movement focuses on the *phenomenological* in lived experiences such as within hospice, street, remote island, and the funeral home.
Beginning with the *deconstructive-historical*, in CHAPTER TWO, *The Deconstructive Movement*, I take up the deconstructive movement and trace the genesis of how nature came to be represented in its current flawed form. Here, I locate my work within a discussion around why the issue of representation is crucial and the imperative for us to pay attention to what appears at first to be a contradiction in terms — the social construction of nature (Evernden, 1992).

The *topographic* movement follows in CHAPTER THREE. In *The Topographic Movement*, I examine the problem of the loss of nature through three sub-moments: in everyday material loss of nature around Orr’s problem of education and complicity (1994); the discursive loss of nature through exegesis (Wilson, 1990); and an instance in Lukács of how nature was lost from the discourse (Lukács, 1971a; Vogel, 1996). The remapping of nature works in dialectical relationship with the recovery of nature, where one leads to the other, and vice versa. After pointing out gaps in the literature in Chapter Three, I draw from these to synthesize my findings on multiple, related reasons through which nature has become bracketed from the discourse through labelling, debates, bifurcations, and spokespersons.

Following this, in CHAPTER FOUR, I transition from conceptual to concrete with the *deconstructive-present*, with quotidian lessons in immediacy turning to address the problem of design in reification of representation. I address the supreme danger of reification I have only alluded to thus far as
contradictions. My deconstruction shifts here from hermeneutic-historic to the phenomenological, adopting a Heideggerian turn. I study various exemplars of deconstructive immediacy from the literature (Arendt, 1958; Heidegger, 1977; Tester, 1995), and culminate with my own immediacy in deconstruction where the broken spoon resurfaces to tell stories as found objects.

Having culminated with immediacy in a found object, in CHAPTER FIVE, I turn towards immediacy in the concrete and experiential. Here the narrative strand that weaves throughout my work resurfaces as a case study from my lived-felt-experience, where I detail the phenomenological immediacy of my existential angst in the Palliative Care Unit of Vancouver General Hospital when my father passed away. Here is where I also share how the unseen becomes the seen, how the seen becomes the unseen, and how the quotidian becomes the extraordinary; when trauma opens to the experience of fracturing and disclosure. I explore the autopoiesis exemplified in my work when narrative intertwines with theorizing in how life and work merge in my research. I continue with another case study of lived immediacy, with the themes of the possibility of the quotidian in the everyday. In this case, I describe the experience of being overwhelmed by images of the homeless as I strolled down a street in Toronto. These images suddenly appeared as if they came right out of a Dickens novel. I felt like an improbable Baudelairean (1972) flâneur seized with Heideggerian angst.
In CHAPTER SIX, I open with another study of transformative immediacy in nature in describing the healing experience I felt within “wild nature,” while I was on a writing retreat with my colleagues. Here, I describe the feeling that gradually enveloped me as I was awoken out of what began as a self-imposed withdrawal when I could neither write nor conceive of tomorrow after the mass tragedy of September two years past. In sharing my own felt-transformative experience, and emphasizing the importance for immediacy in nature, I argue how, contrary to what I read, nature remains enchanted, almost undefiled in localities. I take up the question of whether nature can speak.

From there I shift to quotidian lessons in immediacy with the Infinite when my mother and I visit my father. Again, I dwell on the phenomenological as my narrative returns this time to an earlier time when Father was still alive and when I first experienced snowfall and the presence of a green sun. Father’s Dao Li returns to remind me of its significance. Again, I dwell on care — this time on the departed, in lessons of the heart that abound within the collective memory of our lost loved ones. Here even the flowers began to speak. Even fake flowers profess truths, when the fake imitates the sign of the real with more lessons of the quotidian. As the existential returns in full fury, we are reminded of the interconnections among hermeneutics, curriculum and ecology (Jardine, 1998).

I close my work with CODA where I address the difficulty of lived interpretation. As I turn to examine the centrality of story again, my work
shifts once more to the temporal and spiritual flux between existential and the Infinite. I return as I began, with the imperative to reclaim the existential in our pedagogy and praxis. I summarize traces where nature was marginalized from the discourse, advocating a hermeneutical phenomenology reading of the discourse that I found was obligatory to unravel the webs of meaning around discursive bifurcations. I also address the autopoietic turn within my work in how my method emerged from the inquiry itself, reflecting the autopoietic nature of my work in which I theorize an isomorphism between life, theory, method and topic.

1.7 DELIMITATIONS

The generalist has a special office, that of bringing together widely separated fields, presently fenced by the specialists, into a larger common area, visible only from the air. Only by forfeiting the detail can the over-all pattern be seen... (Mumford, 1967, p. 16)

What is sought is pattern, not detail, similarities rather than disjunctions. And speculation, anathema to the careful scholar, is the adhesive that binds the pieces together. (Evernden, 1993, p. ix).

I intended to trace connections between the retailing of one kind of fresh tropical fruit... sold by... British supermarket chains... and the people... growing it on two Jamaican farms.... think through, connections between overdeveloped and underdeveloped worlds, between rich and poor, between production and consumption, and between the everyday lives of people working throughout a commodity system... [where] a research project might be... not set out beforehand, but emerge through the process of following "emergent objects of study" and seeing what networks can be traced out in the process. These objects... could be people, metaphors, conflicts and/or things... I had set out to follow a fruit thing and then found out... locales connected through this process extended beyond the "thing system" I had intended to trace... the worlds... that blurred into each other... all had a bearing on what I was able to study... Looking back
on... my "emergent object of study" — the only thing that connected the multiple locales of my research— was me... (Cook, 2001, p. 100-104)\textsuperscript{25}

Together the above quotes help to guide my work and remind me of the limited scope of my work. After Evernden, I too am a generalist. The philosophical thrust of my arguments are anchored within my father's daily reminder to live a principled life of *Dao Li*, and my tutelage in the philosophical, literary and debating tradition of the Jesuits.

I need to clarify at the outset that I find the task fallen to me most daunting, and my claims are qualified and limited. My work is selective rather than comprehensive\textsuperscript{26} and seeks to gather the pieces without dwelling on details, and to put together a compendium of sorts. Many of the works I cite are exemplars.

What I can claim is more modest. Like Ian Cook (2001), I apologize for seeming to be all over the place, finding myself in an "expanded field" (p. 102) with an emergent piece of work that is perhaps more accidental than designed. When my work unfolded to disclose my narrative as its axis, I followed threads of existential angst. From the first, I had set my heart to the task of exegesis, whereby I read for meaning over merely assimilating fact. I can claim I have attempted to stay true to the discourse in diligently pursuing lost threads that were disclosed to me. In my attempt to capture the thrust of key arguments, my strategy has been to cite lengthier citations rather than fragments in the
hopes they can speak for themselves. Whenever possible, I have read key texts in their entirety, often tracing my way to their sources.

Mine is a project tinged with a sense of urgency to document the ethos we are in, for ourselves, and perhaps for posterity, because we are caught within a massive social experiment with no equivalent. My claims are hopefully perceived as modest writings culled from a heart that pains of a world lost in object. It appears our priorities have turned away from those meaningful to us and from life. The case studies that I share here, precisely because they are ordinary, whether with artefacts, or venues like hospices, streets, wild nature, or funeral homes, offer hope in their hidden quotidian immediacy.
CHAPTER TWO: THE DECONSTRUCTIVE MOVEMENT

In this chapter I take up the difficult quest/ion of the deconstructive-historical in an attempt to bring nature back to the discourse. I approach this quest/ion through establishing the links between virtues, praxis, and narrative, as implicit of my story and my inquiry — as embedded through the works of Latour (1993), Merchant (1980), Leclerc (1986), and Marx and Engels (Engels, Dutt, & Haldane, 1976; Marx & Engels, 1967). Beginning from my assumption that life is a quest in search of a narrative unity, I ground the storied nature of my work with the age-old question — "what does it mean to lead the good life?" Here, the narrative unity of life connects virtue, practice, and narrative (Maclntyre, 1981). From there I begin my narrative weave in how nature, culture, and technology appeared in undifferentiated form to me as a child. I narrate how the works that I cite above relate to my existential angst around the passing of my father, and how these initial readings were eventually to seed the development of my dissertation.
2.1 NARRATIVE UNITY OF LIFE

According to Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), it is not possible to speak of virtues without also speaking of practice and narrative as a three-fold unity of life. Thus I cannot speak of needing to understand without speaking about why that understanding is important to my storied life, or practicing that understanding within my existence. Critically, in this view, narrative can never be incidental to my writing, as my life is guided by the same ethics that drive my narrative being.

Narrative weaves as a "green" thread in making whole my dissertation by always grounding my knowledge claims within ethics and being. Narrative also points towards the poetics of being, to colour our lives and to give them meaning. For here, against hard facts, the narrative function is about meaning, life, and action — profoundly existential in the quest for the good. That quest for the good is what Father's Dao Li is about and which inspires my own quest to understand his existential questions and their meaning. Narrative as such is not just about storying but also about sharing, interpreting, understanding, remembering, hoping, teaching, and healing. It is with this multiplicity of senses, within this triple unity of virtues, practice, and narrative that one makes sense of what follows.
2.1a Memories of a child

At the end of each playful day, I laid my head on my pillow. My weary eyelids were heavy with thoughts that mingled in the twilight between wakefulness and dreams. I reflected on the strange way in which this genteel man taught us about the meaning of love. From those very beginning days, I learned by example how to love, and how love had a sacrificial quality. I remember grasping to understand what cause would steal Father away from his warm bed and the warmth of our company to brave the restless dank night air. I remember Father telling us that his absence during the night ensured that we were going to be all right — fed, warm, and safe, with a roof over our heads. While I did not understand why, I think my aversion to economics and a life of the material began there and then. I recall being puzzled at why other fathers did not have to get up in the middle of the night, and why the other families always had more. Although I could not understand the nature of Father’s urgency, I sensed that was Father’s excuse, to make him feel better because he really longed to retire when we retired. He left his warm bed with only half his will.

I also recall as well, just beyond the steel frames of our windows, the sounds of the restless tropical night air, the cacophony of a million birds, amphibians, insects, the incessant barking of neighbourhood dogs baying at the
moon and the human commotion around them. Against the colourless walls, I recall seeing the shadow play emanating from the lights of the kerosene lamps that filtered in through our half-opened window. I would often hear the bells of hawkers and their yells as they pedalled by on their nocturnal bicycles specially outfitted with add-on technical contraptions to ply their wares. I heard sounds from potential buyers, curious onlookers, and indistinct parties whose shrill sounds pierced the still, warm, tropical night air.

I recall how these sounds of the night were constantly changing. Other times the wind howled outside my window, disturbing all nocturnal activity and replacing all with a furor that made the trees kneel at their mighty trunks. Although I could not see the downpour, the telltale force of the pitter-patter of the tropical monsoon upon our flimsy roof suggested to me that the torrential downpour more resembled long watery needles than tiny beaded droplets of moisture.

There was however, always one constant in the night air — the absence and presence of our father. Absence in presence, because father would nightly steal away from our warm bed just as we were falling asleep. Yet he was always nearby, coming instantly to our rescue whenever we beckoned. I always wondered how he could be there so fast when, mere moments ago, he had seemed so far away. Through organic activity or tropical climatic changes outside, I always counted on hearing his characteristic clicking. Nightly, underlying the cacophony outside in the streets, I could detect the faint
mechanical clicking of keys from Father’s typewriter as he typed through the night in accompaniment to muted strains of Beethoven or Mozart. It was this mechanical sound of love that would eventually lull me to sleep above the dissonance of incessant activity or din and rage of the elements. As we slept, and as Father typed, we were quite unaware of the nature of the urgency, of how we struggled in poverty, and how Father’s nightly sacrifice helped to put food on our tables, clothes on our backs, and provided shelter from the storms that raged outside.

One fateful night however, our slumber was disturbed by sounds of the howling tropical winds that had somehow intruded into our home and the wetness that soaked our warm sanctuary. We were terrified. All around us, we saw the level of the water rapidly rising without measure. Drenched and cold, I remember Father calming our fears as he gently lowered first my little brother and then me, followed by Mother, onto the tables that were in turn piled on top of bigger furniture. As the rushing waters threatened to engulf our little family, I distinctly remember watching Father bend solid bars that framed the window, through which he gently lowered us outside beyond the spent frames to the safety of helping compassionate hands. Thanks to Father’s strength that grew out of threat of impending peril and humanity of our neighbours, we all survived the deluge.

Our adventures did not stop there. The following day, the characteristic dank odour of a scholar’s library exposed to damaging effects of water greeted
our nostrils. Father struggled to salvage his precious books and his writings, separating each page patiently in a desperate attempt to dry them under the intense heat of the Asian sun. As I observed Father's intense dismay, I suddenly realized his writing and the way he spoke to us about books and the world, as well as his reading of this world, were deeply connected in a meaningful way to our place in, and relationship with, this mysterious world.

I needed to begin here, at this site of family. It is the root story that connects my love and respect for my father's sacrifice, and his scholarship. It is also the story of my introduction to the world through sounds that were part of a symphony, where the chirping of nocturnal insects could not be separated from the hawker's bell and the mechanical typewriter. Perhaps that is why I have never been able to separate nature, culture and technology. From this story in which meaning first emerged for me, I turn next to share with you the intertwining between the narrative unity of my life and my reading of the literature through the portal of existential angst.

2.2 FROM OUT OF ANGST

There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example - where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh. (Carson, 1962/1994, p. 2)
I am not my experiences, and thus not really a part of the world around me. The logical end point of this world view is a feeling of total *reification*: *everything is an object, alien, not-me; and I am ultimately an object too,* an alienated "thing" in a world of other, equally meaningless things. This world is not of my own making; the cosmos cares nothing for me, and I do not really feel a sense of belonging to it. What I feel, in fact, is a sickness in the soul. (Berman, 1981, p. 17)

Haven't we shed enough tears over the disenchantment of the world? Haven't we frightened ourselves enough ... thrust into a cold, soulless cosmos, wandering on an inert planet in a world devoid of meanings... (Latour, 1993, p. 115)

Sometimes our words abandon us. Or they leave us void. Unsure. Lost. We feel numb. I need to begin here by locating these three works in the space of existential angst that I experienced subsequent to the passing of my father. The commonality within the cold breath of words from Carson's *Silent Spring*, Berman's *Reenchantment of the World*, and Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern*, profoundly shaped my exegesis in the loss of the spiritual attendant upon the shift from organism to mechanism. The anthropologist of science, Bruno Latour likely did not mean for his work to be interpreted existentially. Given the existential import that I gleamed from the work of Latour, in its elegant capture of the epistemological struggle that foreshadows and shapes the modern world, it is fitting that I begin here:

No one is truly modern who does not agree to keep God from interfering with Natural Law as well as the laws of the Republic. God becomes the crossed-out God of metaphysics, as different from the premodern God of the Christians as the Nature constructed in the laboratory is from the ancient *physis* or the Society invented by sociologists from the old anthropological collective and its crowds of nonhumans... The moderns could now be both secular and pious at the same time... not by a supreme God but by an absent God... bracketed twice, once in metaphysics and again
in spirituality... no longer interfer[ing] in any way with the development of the moderns, but... effective and helpful with the spirit of humans alone. (Latour, 1993, p.33-34)

While deep in existential angst, it can be numbing to read Latour as he unravels the modern weave, naming the source of the complex sickness at root in feelings of insignificance. At root, are we godless, soulless beings upon a random rock, whirling in depths of cold space indifferent to our existence and caring for no one? Reading Latour alongside Merchant and Berman made me realize that, although I had been deeply affected ecologically, loss of the sacred was nevertheless central to my critique.

It is also within these words we find the telltale traces of my quest to recover nature. Here too, when Latour speaks about the God that is crossed out, after being twice bracketed, are the unformed seeds of what was later to become my claim of symmetrical marginality. Nature too, is twice bracketed, once by science, and once by culture through the economic. Both borrow her name as “natural science” and “natural resource”. I also remember there was something intriguing with the capitalization of the “N” in Natural Law and the “R” in Republic. I could not understand what it meant at the time.

Something fatal in Latour’s words attracted me. His words related to the fatalistic questions that I remember my ailing Father had posed to me. I think it had something to do with how the symbolic violence of Latour’s words threw me into an existential predicament when referenced to Father’s plight. I recall
when my father asked me why he was dying — he had also asked me a series of questions for which I did not have any answers. Had he not been a good person? Had he not adhered to the social law of humans? Had he not obeyed the law of nature, conscious of his health, food intake, and regular exercises? And his other deep doubt: was his untimely demise due to his inability to believe in divinity? Had he not struggled hard to be a believer, knocking at doors? Latour was significant in that he spoke to all of Father’s enigmatic questions. While I had no answers, I sensed that mired within the soft violence of Latour’s text was a dialogue on a cosmic order beginning.

I remember how the palliative nurses told us we all grieve differently. Perhaps that is why my sense of sorrow was inexplicably tinged with the sense of nervous absurdity in this internal dialogue as my father probed the cosmos in vain, in quiet anguish and resignation. Within the seemingly irrational questions posed by a resolutely modern being at the fateful hour of his passing was the height of the poetics of humility of dying in a secular modern world that thinks itself transcendental. It was most telling for me, that when it came to the hour of truth — questions of divinity returned to haunt a dying modern man in an otherwise secular world.

Although I did not know it then, the rest of Latour’s text also spoke to my existential angst in confirming the elements that were to become core to my discourse, when Nature is renamed as ecology, Science as technology and Society as culture. It was also in Latour that I, who had been trained in design
technology and science, finally began to understand the concept of socially constructing the natural world when I realized that I had been taught to think through the scientific method.

Yet, it was somewhere in reading the next fragment which flows from the former, in how I came to understand social construction as phenomenon writ large, rather than mere constructivism of the mind, that the depth of its fatality struck me. Latour’s words somehow made sense through their avowed absurdity. I began to understand the import of his words when I realized while reading his text that I could never be sure whether Latour was a deeply religious being or its antithesis:

A threefold transcendence and threefold immanence in a crisscross schema that locks in all the possibilities: this is where I locate the power of the moderns. They have not made Nature; they make Society; they make Nature; they have not made Society; they have not made either, God has made everything; God has made nothing, they have made everything... by playing three times in a row on the same alternation between transcendence and immanence, the moderns mobilize Nature, objectify the social, and feel the spiritual presence of God, even while firmly maintaining that Nature escapes us, that Society is our own work, and that God no longer intervenes. Who could resist such a construction? Truly exceptional; events must have weakened this powerful mechanism for me to be able to describe it today with an ethnologist’s detachment for a world that is in the process of disappearing... (Latour, 1993, p.34-35)

I remember sitting beside my father’s bed in the palliative care unit, watching people dying almost daily from terminal illnesses without the presence of their loved ones by their side. I recall as I wondered that, aside from the wonderful ethos of care that permeated the ward, how could we, as a
society, allow our loved ones to die in our midst, passively accepting dictates of "fate"? How had we, as a society, veered so far away from families, those we care for, relations, priorities and values in life to devalue them so in the colonization of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1984)?

It led me to posit that surely this attitudinal change could not have happened overnight. There must have been safeguards that once protected social values and which must have slowly eroded away. Here again, Latour's words took on poignant meaning — in speaking to this question about social change. Having foreshadowed the background issues in general, I locate the foregoing within Latour's thesis as I expound on one of the multiple pathways in my exegesis on reclaiming nature.

2.3 ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE MODERN WORLD

Once she has been sent into the filed, even the most rationalist ethnographer is capable of bringing together in... a single narrative that weaves together the way people regard the heavens and their ancestors, the way they build their houses and the way they grow yams or manioc or rice, the way they construct their government and their cosmology [as] simultaneously real, social and narrated... We too are afraid the sky is falling. We too associate the tiny gesture of releasing an aerosol spray with taboos pertaining to the heavens. We too take the laws, power and morality into account in order to understand what our sciences are telling us about the chemistry of the upper atmosphere. Yes, but we are not savages; no anthropologist studies us this way, and it is impossible to do with our own culture... what can be done elsewhere, with others. Why? Because we are modern. Our fabric is no longer seamless. Analytical continuity has become impossible. For traditional anthropologists, there is not — there cannot be anthropology of the modern world... [Yet] either it is impossible to do an anthropology of the modern world... or it is possible to do [so]... but then the ... definition of the modern world has to be altered. We pass from a limited problem — why do the networks remain elusive?
Why are science studies ignored? — to a broader and more classical problem: what does it mean to be modern? (Latour, 1993, p. 7-8)

With this citation, we come to the crux of Latour’s thesis interpreted through an anthropological lens, which for myself issues an impetus for an exegesis of the loss of nature from the discourse. This single passage is effective since it sums up the other key elements of Latour’s anthropology of the modern world that I have introduced thus far: 1) loss of the spiritual 2) epistemological struggle between the three forms of authority in modernity between divine, natural and social authority and 3) hypothesis of modernity in construction as social thesis writ large, and personally, in “making” me, through my Jesuit education and socialization in the formation of conjoint epistemologies of theology, culture, and science.

Accepting Latour’s extraordinary thesis that posits modernity as social construction writ large, suggests no great epistemological divides between cultures in either time or space, between the moderns and premoderns, the occidental and Other. Latour was liberating in another sense. While wanting to take up my existential query in the name of Father’s Dao Li, I had been struck with a deep sense of alienation, as I am virtually illiterate in my own mother culture, and I am trained in thinking totally alien to those of my ancestors. Yet inversely, from Latour’s thesis that demanded an historical vector, it is precisely the flux between this ambiguity and my training under the Jesuit
tradition that has prepared me for an existential exegesis of the loss of nature from the discourse in Western history and philosophy.

Put differently, I realized that, if Latour's thesis is tenable, if modernity has never arrived, we might well be within the cusp of change and it might not be too late to reverse some of the damage. Yet, if I was to undertake a general anthropology of the "modern" world as per Latour’s thesis, the question still remained on how far back I needed to go to trace how we have arrived at our current questionable values around nature. Here, Merchant's and Berman's poetic text pointed a way towards a premodern world of meaning, belonging and immersion, approximately four centuries ago, prior to the birth of modern science and the mechanistic view that had remade the world and myself, in its reified image.

2.4 RECLAIMING NATURE FROM MACHINE

By examining the transition from the organism to the machine as the dominant metaphor binding together... cosmos, society, and the self into a single cultural reality — a world view — I place less emphasis on the development of the internal content of science than on the social and intellectual factors involved in the transformation... [E]xternal factors do not cause intellectuals to invent a science or a metaphysics [for] a social context. Rather, an array of ideas ... available to a given age... unarticulated or... unconscious ... seem plausible to individuals or social groups [while] others do not. Some... spread; others temporarily die out. But the direction and accumulation of social changes begin to differentiate among the spectrum of possibilities... [S]ome ideas assume a... central role... while others move to the periphery. Out of this differential appeal... under particular social conditions, cultural transformations develop. Nor is the specific content of science determined by external factors. Instead social concerns serve consciously or unconsciously to justify a given
research program and to set problems for a developing science to pursue. Cultural norms and social ideologies, along with religious and philosophical assumptions, form a less visible but... important component of the conceptual framework... Through dialectical interaction science and culture develop as an organic whole, fragmenting and reintegrating out of ... social and intellectual tensions and tendencies. Between 1500 and 1700, the Western world began to take on features that, in the dominant opinions of today, would make it modern and progressive. Now ecology and the women's movement have begun to challenge the values on which that opinion is based. By critically re-examining history from these perspectives, we may be able to discover values associated with the premodern world that may be worthy of transformation and reintegration into today and tomorrow's society. (Merchant, 1980, p. xxii)

The abbreviated paragraph above from Carolyn Merchant's classic, The Death of Nature, offers an ideal point in pointing to centrality of the critical shift in the metaphor of nature. It allows for readers' historical appreciation of the background underpinning her ecofeminist thesis situated within critical theory. Merchant's links between the interpretations of the book of nature with the consequential exploitation of women and the environment stem from the cultural transformation associated with this fateful shift of the metaphor of nature of organism to machine.

Furthermore, Merchant's paragraph speaks to the historical context in emphasizing the play of contingency. This historical context of change comes into view in terms of contingency in relationship between ideas and the ethos of the age; the variability of these ideas, and their acceptance or rejection; and connections between these ideas and social change. Here the relevance of Merchant's oeuvre lies in how it highlights social and historical embeddedness
of spirituality and science, connections between science and culture within scientific claims, and the problem of scientism.

Merchant's citation concerns itself with the relationship between ideas and world, construction and deconstruction, mind and material, reification and immediacy, and obliquely, agency and determinism. Merchant's rooted critique of the Scientific Revolution not only locates my research within a specific period (in speaking to deconstructing the past in terms of unearthing the history of change), it also allows for examining gaps between underlying assumptions and the material consequences that we experience today that issue from those assumptions. Symmetrically, dialogically and dialectically, Merchant's critique speaks to my exploratory work. My contribution replies to Merchant's concerns, albeit expressed within a very different framing.

Yet another reason Merchant makes an ideal entry point for exegetical work lies in epistemological pluralism that she offers in her subsequent wider interpretation of ecofeminism. As I discuss later, it was through reading this particular piece of work that I began to understand the interdisciplinary imperative that was to become so central to the unfolding of my research. Not only do I celebrate and believe in Merchant's thesis, but her work has also laid the ground for re-interpreting her thesis within my work. The problem of nature as machine distinct from humans, against nature as an organism — as the totality of which we are all a part — becomes re-interpreted for myself as the problem of reification.
The taking of these two contributions together (Merchant, 1980, 1994) links my re-interpretation of Merchant’s problematic as the flux between reification and immediacy, with its corollary hermeneutics in the loss of nature and attendant loss of meaning. Phenomenologically, Merchant’s *The death of nature* is fitting when read alongside Latour’s *We have never been modern*. Merchant’s powerful injunction to reclaim nature and disparaged values spoke to my grief and existential angst of so many years ago, as I read her words beside my ailing father’s bedside (Feng, 2001a).

2.5 IMAGES OF NATURE

The work of both Carolyn Merchant and Morris Berman merged with Rachel Carson (1962/1994) to speak to the period between the Scientific Revolution and consequential effects of today. Here, I found it poignant to juxtapose Merchant’s three historical organic conceptions of nature that I describe prior to the turn of the Scientific Revolution next to Berman’s lament at the loss of enchantment, and Carson’s foreword reflecting her shock at the silence of spring:

The primary view of nature was the idea that a designed hierarchical order existed in the cosmos and society corresponding to the organic integration of the parts of the body— a projection of the human being onto the cosmos. The term nature comprehended both the innate character and disposition of people and animals and the inherent creative power operating within material objects and phenomena. A second image was based on nature as an active unity of opposites in dialectical tension. A third was the Arcadian image of nature as benevolent, peaceful, and rustic,
deriving from Arcadia, the pastoral interior of the Greek Peloponnesus. Each of these interpretations had different social implications: the first image could be used as a justification for maintaining the existing social order, the second for changing society toward a new ideal, the third for escaping from the emerging problems of urban life.
(Merchant, 1980, p. 6)

The view of nature which predominated in the West down to the eve of the Scientific Revolution was that of an enchanted world. Rocks, trees, rivers, and clouds were all seen as wondrous, alive, and human beings felt at home in this environment. The cosmos... was a place of belonging. A member of this cosmos was not an alienated observer of it but a direct participant in its drama. His [sic] personal destiny was bound up with its destiny, and this relationship gave meaning to his [sic] life.... The story of the modern epoch... is one of progressive disenchantment. From the sixteenth century on, mind has been progressively expunged from the phenomenal world. ... the reference points for all scientific explanation are matter and motion... [in] the "mechanical philosophy." ...[a] dominant mode of thinking... best be described as disenchantment, nonparticipation, for it insists on a rigid distinction between observer and observed. Scientific consciousness is alienated consciousness: there is no ecstatic merger with nature, but rather total separation from it. Subject and object are always seen in opposition to each other... (Berman, 1981, p.16-17).

On the farms the hens brooded, but no chicks hatched. The farmers complained that they were unable to raise any pigs — the litters were small and the young survived only a few days. The apple trees were coming to bloom but no bees droned among the blossoms, so there was no pollination and there would be no fruit... roadsides once attractive, were now lined with browned and withered vegetation as though swept by fire. These, too, were silent, deserted by all living things. Even the streams are now lifeless. Anglers no longer visit them, for all the fish had died. In the gutters under the eves and between the shingles of the roof, a white granular powder still showed a few patches; some weeks before it had fallen like snow upon the roofs and the lawns, the fields and streams. No witchcraft, no enemy action has silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves... this town does not actually exist, but it might easily have counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of no community that has experienced all of the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters have actually happened somewhere... many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them. A grim spectre has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know. What has already silenced the
voices of spring in countless towns in America? This book is an attempt to explain. (Carson, 1962/1994, p.2-3)

2.6 CONTINGENCY, LATENT TENDENCIES, IMMANENT CRITIQUE

Within Merchant's premodern organic images of nature as hierarchical, dialectical, and pastoral, I find seeds of what might be called an "immanent critique", where seeds of contingency and latent tendencies towards change were already present. As Merchant points out, within the first image of nature is found a semblance of order in human beings as integral parts of the whole, as hierarchical, which "symbolized the medieval-Renaissance cosmos whose pattern must not be violated" (p. 7). Within the second, is found a "dialectical image of nature, here symbolized by a woman representing the impetus to move society forward toward a new ideal" (p. 7). In the third image, nature was represented as female in the "pastoral poetry and art prevalent in the Renaissance." (p. 7) Berman's imagery also complements Merchant's depiction of the premodern conceptions of the place of humans within nature before the advent of the Scientific Revolution.

Two of three images that Merchant presents are of nature as female, reflecting the hierarchical sense of immersion but nevertheless integral, ideal, and pastoral. Here the task that has befallen me is demarcated, located between transitional images of nature. Merchant argues that the problem lies within the mercurial ambiguity of these premodern images. She recognizes them to carry latent tendencies that are vulnerable to being subverted and
inverted to turn into their antithesis. This is a theme that re-emerges, as we will find, within Lukács.

For me, Merchant's three-fold interpretation of nature links the second image of Hegel's, and Marx and Engel's later dialectic. And her third image links to Rousseau's Romantic reaction. The contingency of the potential of change and social moments associated with the ascendancy of science is thus *prefigured* in these premodern images of nature. These latent dimensions also contain the patriarchal and anthropocentric tendencies that underscore Merchant's main thesis: clues to the loss of nature from the discourse lie within how and why these versions of premodern nature transformed through contingency into instrumental versions of the third found in modern science, technology and capitalism.

But while the pastoral tradition symbolized nature as a benevolent female, it contained the implication that nature when ploughed and cultivated could be used as a commodity and manipulated as resource. Nature, tamed and subdued, could be transformed into a garden to provide both material and spiritual food to enhance the comfort and soothe the anxieties of men distraught by the demands of the urban world and the stresses of the marketplace. It depended on masculine perception of nature as mother and bride whose primary function was to comfort, nurture, and provide for the well-being of the male. In pastoral imagery, both nature and women are subordinate and essentially passive... The pastoral mode, although it viewed nature as benevolent, was a model created as an antidote to the pressures of urbanization and mechanization. It represented a fulfillment of human needs for nurture, but by conceiving of nature as passive, it nevertheless allowed for the possibility of its use and manipulation. Unlike the dialectical image of nature as the active unity of opposites in tension, the Arcadian image rendered nature passive and manageable. (Merchant, 1980, p. 9)
Here then, is a trend that ripples throughout Merchant’s text that traces in great detail how contingencies turn into something other than expected. Yet these tendencies are balanced as well, by immanent claims of another kind which hold that “not only did the image of nature as nurturing mother contain ethical implications ... the organic framework itself, as a conceptual system... carried with it an associated value system” (p. 5).

Merchant interplays contradictions and internal tensions at heart in changing conceptions of nature that attest to the propensity towards both deeper morality on the one hand, and oppression and subversion on the other. As Merchant argues, it is significant that the shift towards mechanism was simultaneous with the rise of capitalism, a powerful conjunction that was responsible for eroding the once sacrosanct restraints against the exploitation of nature (Agricola, Hoover, & Hoover, 1950).

2.7 REMOVING AND REINSTATING RESTRAINTS

The mention of restraints and their removal through history opens to the apparently contradictory suggestion that contingency might not entirely be independent of agency. Removal of restraints might be thought of as preconditions for contingent shifts in cultural perceptions of nature. If so, then at least three implications come to mind.
First, if restraint might prevent propensities towards problematic interpretations of nature, then there is an imperative for us to be phenomenologically open and awake in intentions. For example, restraints against the spoliation of nature are constantly being removed in the name of progress and economic imperatives. Second, it suggests that the removal of restraints might not be as permanent as they might appear or as irreversible. If restraints have been historically removed through faulty reasoning, and we become aware of links between removal and contingency through acts of reflexive self-knowing, it might be possible to reactivate these restraints. Third, given that these restraints were once in place, their reactivation might also be less problematic because a historical record exists, attesting to its operation in limiting problematic tendencies.

Let me illustrate what I mean with examples. According to Merchant’s account, although restraints had been in place to act as frameworks to guide human interaction with nature, whether it was against mining, cutting trees, or privatizing the commons, these restraints were gradually overturned with modern advents of capitalism and mechanism. For instance, although we might be inclined to associate environmental awareness with a form of reaction against modernism, we might be surprised to find there existed premodern environmental sensibility not unlike those of our times.

Take for example the following premodern injunctions in the two passages below cited by Merchant. What is extraordinary is not merely the
sensibility, but the origin of this form of sensibility, according to Merchant, in
the first within the writings of Pliny, and in the second, reminiscent of Seneca
and Agrippa, both found within the refutation of Agricola:

The earth does not conceal and remove from our eyes those things which
are useful and necessary to mankind [sic], but on the contrary, like a
beneficent and kindly mother she yields in large abundance from her
bounty and brings into the light of day the herbs, vegetables, grains, and
fruits, and trees. The minerals, on the other hand, she buries far beneath
in the depth of the ground, there they should not be sought. (Pliny as cited
by Agricola in Merchant, 1980, p. 34)

But, besides this, the strongest argument of the detractor [of mining] is
that the fields are devastated by mining operations, for which reason ... no
one should dig the earth for metals and so injure their very fertile fields,
their vineyards, and their olive groves. Also they argue that the woods and
groves are cut down, for there is need of wood for timbers, machines, and
the smelting of metals. And when the woods and groves are felled, then are
exterminated the beasts and birds, many of which furnish a pleasant and
agreeable food for man. Further, when the ores are washed, the water
which has been used poisons the brooks and streams, and either destroys
the fish or drives them away. Therefore the inhabitants of these regions,
on account of the devastation of their fields, woods, groves, brooks, and
rivers, find great difficulty in procuring the necessaries of life, and by
reason of the destruction of the timber they are forced to greater expense
in erecting buildings. Thus it is said, it is clear to all that there is greater
detriment from mining than the value of the metals which the mining
produces. (Merchant, 1980, p. 36)

Even as Merchant reminds us that the first imagery she cites from Pliny
"reveals the normative force of the image of the earth as nurturing mother"
(p. 34), the wording in Pliny at once also seems to conceal another latent
tendency that bids its time. This is how the third pastoral image of nature is
transformed into one for exploitation, anticipating Adam Smith's (1776/1957)
utopian conceptions of a bountiful earth providing for the Wealth of Nations,
with the fundamental assumption of nature as capital and endless resource. Thus, here we have thesis and antithesis as immanent dialectical force within their nascent forms that date back to antiquity.

The second citation of Merchant also from Agricola, pays keen attention to injury to the ground, harvest of vines, felling of trees, extinction of animals, poisoning of streams, and the loss of fish, all suggesting an economic impact, and an awareness of interconnectivity of the parts within the whole. At first glance, given the depth of this "ecological" awareness, it appears violators would have to be quite persuasive to overturn what appears as an irrefutable rational argument for restraint.

And, persuasive they were. What appears as a rational argument for restraint in the previous quote can be inverted. Merchant's interpretation of Agricola's counter-logic as shown in the quote below presents as a form of a technological imperative, sanctioned by no less than Providence:

To the argument that the woods were cut down and the price of timber therefore raised, Agricola responded that most mines occurred in unproductive, gloomy areas. Where the trees were removed from more productive sites, fertile fields could be created, the profits from which would reimburse the local inhabitants for their losses in timber supplies. Where the birds and animals had been destroyed by mining operations, the profits could be used to purchase "birds without number" and "edible beasts and fish elsewhere" and refurbish the area. The vices associated with the metals-anger, cruelty, discord, passion for power, avarice, and lust-should be attributed instead to human conduct: "It is not the metals which are to be blamed, but the evil passions of men which become inflamed and ignited; or it is due to the blind and impious desires of their minds." Agricola's arguments are a conscious attempt to
separate the older normative constraints from the image of the metals themselves so that new values can then surround them.

(Merchant, 1980, p. 38).

Since no authors have written of this art in its entirety... I have written these twelve books De Re Metallica. Of these, the first book contains the arguments which may be used against this art, and against metals and the mines, and what can be said in their favour. The second book describes the miner... discourse on the finding of veins. The third book deals with veins and stringers... The fourth book explains the method of delimiting veins.... The fifth book describes the digging of ore and the surveyor's art. The sixth book describes the miners' tools and machines. The seventh book is on the assaying of ore. The eighth book lays down the rules for the work .... The ninth book explains the methods of smelting ores. The tenth book instructs ... in the work of separating silver from gold, and lead from gold and silver. The eleventh book shows the way of separating silver from copper. The twelfth book gives us rules for manufacturing salt, soda, alum, vitriol, sulphur, bitumen, and glass. (Agricola et al., 1950, p. xxix-xxx)

... those who speak ill of the metals and refuse to make use of them, do not see that they accuse and condemn as wicked the Creator Himself, when they assert that He [sic] fashioned some things vainly and without good cause, and thus they regard Him [sic] as the Author of evils, which opinion is certainly not worthy of pious and sensible men... the earth does not conceal metals in her depths because she does not wish that men should dig them out, but because provident and sagacious Nature has appointed for each thing its place. She generates them in the veins, stringers, and seams in the rocks, as though in special vessels and receptacles for such material...(Agricola et al., 1950, p. 12)

If we remove metals from the service of man, all methods of protecting and sustaining health and more carefully preserving the course of life are done away with. If there were no metals, men would pass a horrible and wretched existence in the midst of wild beasts; they would return to the acorns and fruits and berries of the forest. They would feed upon the herbs and roots which they plucked up with their nails. They would dig out caves in which to lie down at night, and by day they would rove in the woods and plains at random like beasts, and inasmuch as this condition is utterly unworthy of humanity, with its splendid and glorious natural endowment, will anyone be so foolish or obstinate as not to allow that metals are necessary for food and clothing and that they tend to preserve life? ... as the miners dig almost exclusively in mountains otherwise unproductive, and in valleys invested in gloom, they do either slight damage to the fields or none at all. Lastly, where
woods and glades are cut down, they may be sown with grain after they have been cleared from the roots of shrubs and trees. These new fields soon produce rich crops, so that they repair the losses which the inhabitants suffer from increased cost of timber. Moreover, with the metals which are melted from the ore, birds without number, edible beasts and fish can be purchased elsewhere and brought to these mountainous regions. (Agricola et al., 1950, p. 14)

It is instructive to place Agricola’s text alongside Merchant’s analysis of his work. Here, Agricola casts his arguments as the gift of Providence, where it is humanity’s lot and mandate to toil, cultivate and mine minerals, without which there can be no further cultivation, hunting, domestication and cooking. For without tools that metals provide, humans would have to dig up the earth with their nails, and without homes made of wood and fashioned with tools, they would have to sleep in caves at night.

Figure 7. Turning constraints into sanctions
Here is an example of how the inverse might lie dormant and immanent within history, when restraints were converted into sanctions through inverting their arguments. Agricola’s work was a precedent. With its sophisticated refutations that take a priori the restraints into consideration in Book One of an overall plan spanning twenty years, Agricola’s challenge was formidable. His influence as an authority on mining and metallurgy for over 180 years can perhaps best be summarized in the words of his translators, “until Schluter’s work on metallurgy in 1738 it had no equal” (p. ii-iii). Merchant’s thesis is well supported – in this exemplar of the potential of overturning of restraints, with attendant implications of my exegesis on the loss of nature from the discourse.

2.7a Bacon and the domination of women and nature

Given the significance of nature conceptualized as resource in capitalism and nature’s other face in the rise of science, we need to make an obligatory stop at the historical juncture of the Scientific Revolution – the advent of the mechanical philosophy and nascent industrial capitalism. Bearing in mind the connection of shift in imagery and the associate problem of the loss of nature, here as well, we begin to see more hints of loss. Given that Francis Bacon, the English philosopher, is one of the key figures at this critical intersection, it is fitting to begin with him.

Whereas it was Descartes (Descartes & Veitch, 1637/1989) in his Discourse on Method, who issued the injunction for human beings to be masters
and possessors of nature, it was Bacon (1660/1941) in *Novum Organon* (The New Method) who forged the language, metaphor, imagery, and program as a way to interpret nature. Bacon drew parallels between the subjugation of women and nature with the new injunction to enslave and torture nature as female. Note below the language of Merchant in her continuing reference to tendencies that are in turn related to images of nature as disorderly. Here it becomes the lot of science to bring order to nature.

Another piece of the puzzle also falls into place when Merchant, in exposing Bacon's class and gender bias, clarifies the historical interconnectedness between science and society by tracing the origins of the Baconian conception of science to its unlikely source in medieval magic. Notice also, the oblique reference to Agricola's counter-argument justifying mining, as well as Bacon's founding role in the origins of the Royal society, both being coterminous with the birth of the new ethics that will henceforth underpin scientific inquiry:

Disorderly, active nature was soon forced to submit to the questions and experimental techniques of the new science. Francis Bacon ... transformed tendencies already extant in his own society into a total program advocating the control of nature for human benefit. Melding together a new philosophy based on natural magic as a technique for manipulating nature, the technologies of mining and metallurgy, the emerging concept of progress and a patriarchal structure of family and state, Bacon fashioned a new ethic sanctioning the exploitation of nature. [He] has been eulogized as the originator of the concept of the modern research institute... philosopher of industrial science, the inspiration behind the Royal Society (1660), and as the founder of the inductive method by which all people can verify for themselves the truths of science by the reading of nature's book. But from the perspective of nature, women, and the lower
orders of society emerges a less favorable image of Bacon and a critique of his program as ultimately benefiting the middle-class male entrepreneur. Bacon, of course, was not responsible for subsequent use of his philosophy. But because he was in an extremely influential social position and in touch with the important developments of his time, his language, style, nuance, and metaphor become a mirror reflecting his class perspective. Sensitive to the same transformations that had already begun to reduce women to psychic and reproductive resources, Bacon developed the power of language as a political instrument in reducing female nature to a resource for economic production. Female imagery became a tool in adapting scientific knowledge and method as a new form of human power over nature. (Merchant, 1980, p. 164-165)

It is a strange mix within Bacon that draws at once from the magic of the medieval magus and transforms it into science — a kind of repudiation of the occult, and by extension, of nature itself. Here too, I see the close connection between the courtroom trials and the laboratory trials: the same mechanism employed in the oppression of the social by exorcising and torturing witches, is symmetrically cast through the critique of an influential philosopher, as torture in the liberation of the natural. As Bacon says: "Human knowledge and human power meet in one; for where the cause is not known, the effect cannot be produced. Nature to be commanded must be obeyed" (Cottingham, 1996, p. 304). What is interesting is the commonality, the first set of trials as confession, and the second set of trials as extraction from Nature. And once again the latent tendency to remove constraints is revealed:

Bacon was also well aware of the witch trials taking place all over Europe and in particular in England during the seventeenth century... the 1612 trials of Lancashire witches ... influenced Bacon's philosophy and literary style. Much of the imagery he used in delineating his new scientific objectives and methods derives from the courtroom, and because it treats
nature as a female to be tortured through mechanical investigations, strongly suggests the interrogation of the witch trials and the mechanical devices used to torture witches. He compared the interrogations of courtroom witnesses to the inquisition of nature... The new man [sic] of science must not think that the "inquisition of nature is in any part interdicted or forbidden." Nature must be "bound into service" and made a "slave", put "in constraint" and molded by the mechanical arts. The "searchers and the spies of nature" are to discover her plots and secrets. This method so readily applicable when nature is denoted by the female gender, degraded and made possible the exploitation of the natural environment... Bacon transformed the magical tradition by calling on the need to dominate nature not for sole benefit of the individual magician but for the good of the entire human race. Through vivid metaphor, he transformed the magus from nature's servant to its exploiter and nature from a teacher to a slave... (Merchant, 1980, p. 168-169)

2.7b Alternate pathways to utopia

Merchant reveals yet another significant implication of Bacon's utopia, as one of the paths to three possible utopias. For alongside Bacon's model of utopia, there had been two others proposed by Campanella and Andrea. It is worthwhile to follow Merchant's citation below as it illustrates my point about the nuanced nature of social change at the juncture of the Scientific Revolution. It is likely these alternate pathways allowing for egalitarian distribution and also organic harmony between people and nature were antecedents in Rousseau, and subsequently, Marx. And of significance as well, appear signs of an earlier emancipation of women, although these utopian alternatives were not without their downside. With the choice of Bacon's third technological utopia over the other two possibilities, immanent tendencies in plays of contingencies between knowledge and societal change ushered in the
instrumental age of competitive class-based, patriarchal, hierarchical, and possessive modernity:

In the early seventeenth century, two utopian plans, Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1602) and Johann Valentin Andrea’s *Christianopolis* (1619), articulated a philosophy of communal sharing that responded to the interests of artisans and the poor for more egalitarian distribution of wealth based upon an organic harmony between people and nature. They contrast markedly, with a third utopia, *The New Atlantis* of Francis Bacon (1627), which undermined and transformed the concept of an organic utopian community. Yet historians have largely emphasized the similarity of these works for the emergence of modern science and educational theory... Bacon’s ideas were rooted in an emerging market economy that tended to widen the gap between upper and lower social classes by concentrating... wealth in the hands of merchants, clothiers, entrepreneurial adventurers, and yeomen farmers through the exploitation and alteration of nature for the sake of progress. Andrea’s and Campanella’s utopian communities postulated a more egalitarian view of women and man, artisan and master, than Bacons’ hierarchical and patriarchal community. But Bacon’s inductive methodology, which helped to establish a precedent by which all persons could verify the truth for themselves, was also fundamental to the growth of egalitarianism. From the perspective of today, there are both positive and negative aspects to Campanella’s and Andrea’s utopias. Some of their ideas are basic to subsequent “back to the land” utopian movements that have rejected the division of labour and the alienation of people from productive work brought about by capitalist modes of economic organization. Yet Campanella advocated a program of eugenics considered repressive... while Andrea’s ideal society was based on a rigid Calvinist moralism (Merchant, 1980, p. 79-80).

The obligatory stop at Bacon and the various articulations of utopias is relevant to the question of the loss of nature from the discourse. As suggested above, it will also help me transition to modernity. In what follows I turn from this engagement with the social to draw back the lens, and address the links between philosophy of nature and mechanical philosophy.
The following section links Bacon with developments of the scientific philosophy he had expounded. It helps us grasp the consequences of shifting from the prior organismic conception of nature to the alternate imagery of the nature as a mechanical clock. When Nature was interpreted through the eyes of physics it held profound implications for the theological and the social. When all life is reduced to substance and mechanical motion, and alienated by atomism, there can be no place for divinity – the path is set for individualism, towards the corresponding fragmentation of the social.

2.7c Mechanical philosophy of nature and structural homologies

The idea of scientific progress has been associated with the rise of technology and “the requirements of the early capitalistic economy” by scholars who have argued the idea of cooperation and the sharing of knowledge for both the construction of theory and the public good stemmed from the intellectual attitudes of sixteenth-century master craftsmen, mechanical engineers and a few academic scholars and humanists. (Merchant, 1980, p. 179)

The Baconian program, so important to the rise of Western science, contained within it a set of attitudes about nature and the scientist that reinforced the tendencies towards growth and progress inherent in early capitalism... [Here] Bacon’s mechanistic utopia was fully compatible with the mechanical philosophy of nature that developed during the seventeenth century. Mechanism divided nature into atomic particles, which like the civil citizens of Bensalem, were passive and inert. Motion and change were externally caused: the nature, the ultimate source was God, the seventeenth century’s divine father, clockmaker, and engineer; in Bensalem, it was the patriarchal scientific administration of Salomon’s House. The atomic parts of the mechanical universe were ordered in a causal nexus such that by contact the motion of one part caused the motion of the next. The linear hierarchy of apprentices, novices, and scientists who passed along the observations, experimental results, and generalizations made the scientific method as mechanical as the operation of the universe itself.... The model of nature and society in this utopia was consistent with the possibilities for increased technological and
administrative growth. In the, *New Atlantis* lay the intellectual origins of the modern planned environments initiated by the technocratic movements of the late 1920s and 1930s, which envisioned totally artificial environments created by and for humans... (Merchant, 1980, p. 185-186)

I have argued that changing conceptions of nature are inextricably interconnected to the social transformations that gave rise to them. I have touched upon the relational links between science, technology, capitalism and the domination of nature and women. Merchant’s passage above summarizes this close relationship with special attention to epistemology.

With regards to this epistemological situation within this nexus of arguments, Merchant’s second passage begins by signalling that attitudes about nature are closely related to the mechanical description that ensues. With respect to this mechanical description, what caught my attention were the words “philosophy of nature” and the qualifying adjective, “mechanical”, symptomatic of hermeneutic differentiation. Seeing the word “mechanical” within the same breath as the words “philosophy of nature” portends of the eventual shift of the qualifier into the noun. That is to say, this presence of the adjective suggests that the next shift in meaning would likely displace nature altogether, as when the philosophy of science speaks in the name of nature.
2.7d Philosophy of Nature?

Earlier, and until about two centuries ago, there had been a main field of inquiry known as *philosophia naturalis*, the philosophy of nature. Then this field of inquiry fairly abruptly ceased being pursued. It is interesting, and ... important to us today to determine how and why this happened. It is indeed not difficult to do so, and the main features of this history can be fairly quickly sketched. (Leclerc, 1986, p. 3)

Here is that paradoxical term "philosophy of nature" again. As it turns out, Leclerc's book, *The Philosophy of Nature* and the manner in which he formulates his argument was an important find for my arguments, providing yet another window to enter the hermeneutics into the loss of nature from the discourse. What I found curious was that Leclerc's text, despite its title, was offering a philosophy of science, published by the Catholic University.

What is Leclerc's lament referring to when he speaks about a philosophy of nature that is no more? When I read these words, I had originally thought that I had found yet more proof of the loss of nature from the discourse. To my surprise, as the next citation from Leclerc suggests, the philosophy of nature that he offers, appears to be not about nature in the sense of its premodern conceptions, but the philosophy of science that has *already subsumed* nature. Consider the implications of this next fragment:

In the sixteenth century there occurred a considerable expansion of interest, especially among medical men who were leading scientists and thinkers of the day, in the philosophy of nature, which led to the momentous developments of the seventeenth century. Of particular importance in this process were the steps taken in the first quarter of the seventeenth century,
for these had the consequence of the introduction, of a new conception of nature, which appeared in a number of books about the year 1620, by...Sennert ... van Goorle ... Galileo ...Bacon .. and ... Basso in his Philo-


lossophia Naturalis, 1621. This new conception of nature was elaborated and fully explored in the course of the seventeenth century by .... Descartes, Gassendi,...Hobbes... Boyle, Leibniz and Newton, ... Descartes' Principles of Philosophy (1644) was largely devoted to the philosophy of nature. Gassendi ...worked out the theory of material atomism. Hobbes explored an alternative in his De Corpore. Leibniz... examined the theories of his predecessors and developed his own alternative philosophy of nature ...Newton's Philosophie Naturalis Principia Mathematica was published in 1686. Although the work was mainly concerned with the “mathematical principles” of the philosophy of nature, it contained some highly significant philosophical sections... These writings on the philosophy of nature by these thinkers and others are among the most important works of the seventeenth century. (Leclerc, 1986, p. 3)

While we are aware of contributions to the sixteenth and seventeenth century by thinkers like Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and so on, it is interesting to see these names next to the name of the “philosophy of nature” contrasted against the Merchant’s premodern conceptions of nature. As indicative perhaps of the flux of change, there appears to be multiple senses of the “philosophy of nature”: “medicine” and “cosmology” in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, “mathematics” and Newton in the late seventeenth century, and the implied one of “science”, which is what it is now. Moreover, Leclerc’s philosophical argument published by a theological source appears to reflect the shift of nature from divine to scientific, and spiritual to secular.

The potential of consulting Leclerc as source allows me to see the discourse from its own vantage point — one of science looking to understand
changes of conceptions of nature through scientific eyes. This is a point that I
cannot overstress as I have found it critical in my broad-based exegesis. And
while I have already analyzed Merchant’s view of the rise in mechanism at some
length, unexpected gems can be found by asking the same question, from
Leclerc’s perspective.

Consider the following citation, also from Leclerc:

... Sebastian Basso has seen very clearly that basic to the new conception of
nature was a new conception of matter. In this view matter had come to be
conceived as itself substance, in contrast to the previous conception in
which matter was only the correlative form in a substance. The
consequences of the conception of matter as itself substance was an
ineluctable metaphysical dualism which had been explicitly accepted by
Basso and Galileo and then systematically developed by Descartes. After
Newton the success of the natural science had become so overwhelming that
the acceptance of this dualism was no longer to be withstood, despite
Leibniz’s vigorous struggle against it, and in the eighteenth century and
onward it reigned completely. The outcome was that the universe was
divided into two, one part consisting of matter, constituting nature, and the
other part consisting of mind or spirit. The fields of inquiry were divided
accordingly: natural science ruled in the realm of nature, and philosophy in
the realm of mind. Thenceforth these two, science and philosophy, each
went its own way, in separation from the other. In this division there was no
place for the philosophy of nature. Its object had been nature, and this was
now assigned to natural science. What remained to philosophy was only the
epistemological and logical inquiry, which has natural science, but not
nature, as its object— today usually called the philosophy of science.
Philosophy of nature as a field of inquiry ceased to exist. (Leclerc, 1986, p.
4)

My focus here is the vantage point of Leclerc’s text and what it laments.
I have become alerted to the language it brings and its significance. What I
mean here is that in the course of reading the literature, both broadly and
closely, I have become very interested in manifestations of debates and bifurcations that relate to nature. And, while I have read from multiple sources of this fracturing and how it has affected various thinkers, I have not seen the divide expressed in this manner (i.e. nature = science + philosophy).

This implies interesting links between my interpretations of Merchant and Leclerc. Whereas in the former nature was divided between science and materialism, in the latter nature was lost when divided between philosophy and science. When we speak of divides between science and philosophy, it becomes relevant that philosophy itself is dominated by analytical philosophy after the postulates of scientific logical atomism that reduces all language and life to prepositional arguments around truth and negation. Furthermore, while Merchant does not analyze the shift towards analytical philosophy, Leclerc’s argument does not concern itself with economics. Merging these arguments in Latour’s anthropology, Merchant’s natural history, and Leclerc’s philosophical science, we begin to grasp through multiple lenses, the changing hermeneutics of nature and its consequence on the world.

As suggested by my intermediate summary, having surveyed Merchant’s work, studied the implications of mechanism, and pondered over its impact on the changing philosophy of nature, there is one other aspect that I am obliged to undertake. If I do not do so, I risk that my exegesis on the loss of nature from discourse might be incomplete. For it was through transformed notion of
nature as material base and natural resource, that the transformation of the world and the inauguration of the modern world materialised (Polanyi, 2001).

While we are obliged to discuss the implications of nature as capital through the dominant discourse, we will defer that treatment until its critical reappearance in our next chapter on remapping the discourse. For now, consistent with our exegetical inquiry thus far within the critical theory thread, we begin with the other face of modernism found within Marxism, albeit with a twist.

2.7e Hypothesis: Green sensitivity within Marxism?

Very early on, I had stumbled upon the intriguing possibility that Marx might have been sensitive to the excesses of capitalism in the form of natural exploitation that exploits both humans and nature. I had been introduced to this possibility in the thesis offered by Parsons (1994), one of the contributors to Merchant’s (1994) interdisciplinary exposition on critical theory. Like Merchant’s own, Parsons’ work was also on the theme of the domination of nature. His thesis posits a green thread within Marxism, a hypothesis I believe holds plausibility through my own hermeneutic reading of Marx. Parsons’ thesis of green sensibility within Marxism is perhaps best understood with a picture of early capitalism as argued by Karl Marx:

In the sphere of agriculture, modern industry has a more revolutionary effect than elsewhere, for this reason, that it annihilates the peasant, that
bulwark of the old society, and replaces him [sic] by the wage-labourer. Thus the desire for social changes, and the class antagonisms are brought to the same level in the country and in the towns. The irrational, old-fashioned methods of agriculture are replaced by scientific ones. Capitalist production completely tears asunder the old bond of union which held together agriculture and manufacture in their infancy... By collecting the population in great centres, and causing an ever-increasing preponderance on the town population, [production] on the one hand concentrates the historical motive power of society; on the other hand it disturbs the circulation of matter between man [sic] and the soil, i.e. prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man [sic] in the form of food and clothing; it therefore violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil ... Moreover all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility ... Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combination together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth - the soil and the labourer. (Marx & Engels, 1967, 505-507)

Marx’s attention is focussed on the magnitude of change as it relates to the "sphere of agriculture", where modern industry deprives the "soil" even as it obliterates the peasant and replaces her with wage-labourers. Of significance to my exegesis, I am persuaded that perhaps the best way for the reader to grasp this passage is to phenomenologically experience the words of Marx. It is how I experience the hermeneutics of nature in Marx. In this phenomenological description, Marx paints a compelling picture of the magnitude of the shift in which relationships handed down through the centuries are ripped apart. The industrialist as capitalist, in shifting the axis to urban centres, also effectively destroys the ecology of the rural areas.
Note especially the words that Marx draws upon to paint the imagery, in terms of how the Industrial Revolution disturbs biological cycles. In violating the preconditions for the continued fecundity of the earth, it robs not only from the human victims of industrialization and urbanization, but the "soil" itself. Thus Parsons' thesis appears tenable, when Marx unequivocally exposes how capital and technology subvert both the peasant and the land, in disrupting its ecology. Elsewhere I have interpreted the work at length (Feng, 1997), where I have theorized that contrary to orthodoxy, both Marx and Engels qualify as proto-ecologists in their own right.

The same kind of sensitivity to nature also appears to exist in Engels. The revenge of nature that critical theory expounded in Adorno and Marcuse, often dismissed as vague appeals through naturalism, appears to have sound rational origins in Engels! Consider for instance, the following citation from Engels:

Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human conquest over nature. For each such conquest takes its revenge on us. Each of them, it is true, has in the first place the consequences on which we counted, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel out the first... And in fact, with every day that passes we are learning to understand these laws more correctly, and getting to know both the more immediate and the more remote consequences of our interference with the traditional course of nature. In particular, after the mighty advances of natural science in the present century, we are more and more getting to know, and hence to control, even the more remote natural consequences at least of our more ordinary productive activities. But the more this happens, the more men [sic] not only feel, but also know, their unity with nature, and thus the more impossible will become the senseless and anti-natural idea of a contradiction between mind and matter, man [sic] and nature, soul and
body... But of it has already required the labour of thousands of years for us to learn to some extent to calculate the remote natural consequences of our actions aiming at production, it has been still more difficult in regard to the more remote social consequences of these actions... In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only with the first tangible success; and then surprise is expressed that the more remote effects of actions directed to this end turn out to be of quite a different, mainly even of quite an opposite, character...

(Engels et al., 1976, p. 291-296)

This citation from Engels appears to reflect Merchant’s finding that a long history has existed since antiquity warning of unintended natural consequences of human intervention in nature. Engels’ analysis is keenly aware from unanticipated natural consequences shifts to its concomitant social consequences. Significantly, the focus on this often cited section on the transition from ape to humans has been on the difference between humans and animals. Significantly as well, the editor’s footnotes inform us Engel’s manuscript breaks off abruptly—leaving us to speculate regarding the depth of Engels’ understanding of unintended consequences and the revenge of nature.

2.7f Hermeneutic reading of green hypothesis

Through another turn, I take up the above citation of Marx again, this time hermeneutically, to explain the thinking behind my interpretation. While I am conscious my interpretation may appear to be anachronistic to Marx’s vocabulary, that is precisely my point. To illustrate the hermeneutics I am referring to, I have italicized within the citation to draw attention to certain
words that appear to reflect key concepts from current ecological discourses. When Marx writes: "disturbs the circulation", "prevents the return", "violates the condition" and "ruining the lasting sources of that fertility" these words also have parallel in contemporary ecological currency. They conjure an ecological picture of injustice, disaster, displacement, dysfunction, waste, and consumption, in terms of the complicity of technology in the transgressions of capital.\(^3\)

We identify these proxies by applying hermeneutical principles and paying attention to the whole sense of the meaning of the text from its parts. For instance, if the green hypothesis is true, without the benefit of current ecological terms, but nevertheless having ecological sensibility, Marx would likely have drawn upon words like nature or "soil" as proxy for ecology. In hermeneutically reading Parsons' hypothesis, stirring within Marx's treatise on capital we identify what appears to be the presence of a green theme. We note that the word, "soil" permeates the entire text. And with the substitution of the words, "soil" with "nature" or "the Earth", Marx's words appear to reflect our contemporary ecological sensitivity, perhaps without the benefit of these constructs.\(^3\)

Before concluding this chapter, there is one further point worth mentioning. Not only were contemporary ecological terms not likely in public consciousness during the time of Marx and Engels, other enabling terminology or constructs were also absent. For instance, although the phenomenological
description that opened this section might have been helped through drawing upon constructs like "paradigm", by allowing Marx to express his point with fewer words, we might have also lost the impact of Marx’s phenomenological description in the bargain. In the absence of such a construct, Marx did his best to describe with passion what he saw and felt – the terrible sense of chaos that permeated the air when the traditional close association between agriculture and manufacturing became severed. It is this emphasis on phenomenon and passion that makes Marx’s writing phenomenological. Within the fury of his passion, Marx painted a lasting picture of the transformation in the dissolution of traditional bonds. This passage helps us immensely to grasp the dimensions to come, as capital matures and its internal logic follows its secret telos of reification. One can almost sense Marx’s despair as he attempts to comprehend in a holistic way what was happening to the society and the world around him. Retaining that phenomenological sense of displacement will be a key factor in helping us understand developments that unfold ahead.

Lukács’ critique of reification, as we will see in the next chapter, was a systematic attempt to speak to the enormity of the shift, the full dimensions of which had not shown themselves, and have still not shown their full extent. I continue my work in recovering nature in the next chapter, by remapping the discourse. I do this by taking Lukacs’ particular problem of nature as an exemplar of an exegetical approach to topography. The gaps revealed in recovering the loss of nature go toward the remapping of the discourse.
CHAPTER THREE: THE TOPOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT

3.1 DIMENSIONING THE AMBIT

My intent in this chapter is to offer three topographic moments to recover nature: with respect to: 1) inquiry into the loss of nature in our roles as teachers and the problem of complicity, 2) developing an exegesis of researching loss, and 3) examining an exemplary operation of exegesis in Lukács' critique of reification. I have sectioned my chapter on topography into three corresponding parts.

The first moment revisits the material loss of nature and couches that loss as a problem of complicity with regards to the perspectives of critical educators. Given the delimitations as discussed in CHAPTER ONE, my discussion is cursory. It strives to touch upon salient issues critical to my topographic movement. I locate the school as an institution of modernity (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Carnoy, 1974; Maclntyre, 1999) that operates primarily under the dominant ethos that implicates students in cycles of conspicuous consumption and waste. The fundamentals of education proposed by Orr (1994) described earlier inform this section.

In the second part, I unravel threads of a hermeneutic "cobweb" that connect theorists, ideas, lineage, etymologies, overlaps, and slippages. I
discuss the suitability of this cobweb metaphor to attend to the nature of the hermeneutical task within the flux between interpreter, world, and text (Wilson, 1990). I draw from and merge the works of Vogel (1996), Wilson (1990), and Varela et al. (1991) to arrive at this metaphor. I show an exemplar of the difficulties and the unfolding nature of my query when I examine the problems with labels and discursive bifurcations.

In the third part, I illustrate my theorizing and process of gathering Lukács’ work in continuity with my work in recovering nature. I discuss the kinds of difficulties we face in exegesis. I demonstrate how reviewing the status of nature that gives rise to the picture of contradiction in part one, offers concrete ideas towards remapping the discourse.

3.1a A picture of contradictions

By all accounts, humanity is facing a crisis, and this is widely acknowledged by the public. Yet, what is most disturbing is our inability to act on this knowledge... the translation of knowledge into action is what education is for and what pedagogy is about. Thus, our inability to take appropriate action for the crisis we face calls our practice of education into question. The starting point of this discussion is the following question: What factors in our education contribute to the problem? (Bai, 2001, p. 87)

Education is not widely regarded as the problem, although the lack of it is. The conventional wisdom holds that all education is good, and the more one has, the better... [but we need] to challenge this view from an ecological perspective. The truth is without significant precautions, education can equip people merely to become more effective vandals of the earth... the essays accordingly, address the problem of education, rather than problems in education... not [as] a call to tinker with minutiae, but a call to deeper change. (Orr, 1994, p. 5)
Education is concerned with the "bringing forth" (educare) of human life. It is essentially a "generative" discipline, concerned with the emergence of new life in our midst, and what it is we might hope for this new life, what we might wish to engender. Ideally, each child embodies the possibility that things can become other than what they have already become. What could be called a "conservative" reading of this ideal would be one that finds this ideal precisely the problem of education: How do we educe new life in a way that conserves what already is? (Jardine, 1992, p. 116)

We awake to find ourselves living in an age of irony and profound contradiction (Brown, 1989). For, alas, it is under the professed banner of equality that we find unfairness in uneven distribution. It is within the hollow promises of prosperity that we find extreme need and poverty (Latouche, 1993). It is under the notion of robust health that we find incurable diseases and epidemics. It is amidst proclamations of joy and hubris that we are humbled in our greatest hour of sorrow (Ehrenfeld, 1978). It is within cries of justice that injustice lurks. It is under the rubric of reason that we find collusive madness (Roszak, 1992). And instead of promises of industry, we find waste (Szasz, 1994; Wackernagel & Rees, 1996). It is ironic that through promises of gain we experience our greatest losses. Where civility and civilization is championed, we find barbarity instead (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1998; Polanyi, 2001; Szasz, 1994; Wackernagel & Rees, 1996). It is under the banner of utopian dream and order that we find dystopia and chaos. Perhaps the greatest irony, amidst the proclamations of freedom underscoring all our greatest hopes, we find ourselves trapped. Our future is underwritten,
born free, but in chains everywhere (Rousseau & Cranston, 1984) trapped within the mirror of re/production (Baudrillard et al., 1990) and unable to escape from the circularity of its madness.

Given these contradictions, there are educators who are deeply concerned about the state of the world, and who see the need for education to be self-reflexive to address complicity in contributing to the ecological problem. Any topographic movement must begin by addressing both the intersection of this macro context of contradiction and the concerns of teachers. Put differently, there is an imperative to think through this macro-micro intersection wherein the loss of nature from the discourse is implicated within the contradictions our students face today.

Clearly, educators such as Bai and Jardine are of special interest to my dissertation. But what do we know of these educators? Can we find a way of addressing their disparate concerns collectively under a single rubric that speaks to the complexity? I believe we can. Before I approach this issue, I need to address the larger ambit in which schooling is immersed. As I review the background, I am simultaneously laying down aspects of history that speak to the loss of nature from the discourse.
3.1b Modernity, rights and change

Before I embark on any critique, I begin by acknowledging the innovations that have improved our lot. In this respect, there have been significant strides with the advent of modernity. We are: treated as free and unique individuals, recognized as equal beings deserving of dignity and respect; championed by, and protected under the banner of inalienable rights; and enfranchised through democratic self-determination and governance. These rights are inclusive, distributed to, of, by, and for all. They replace the former system of exclusive rights once reserved for royalty, church, nobility, priests, and lords, based upon birthright, divine or otherwise, and other forms of hierarchical authority.

Our rights are recognized within a framework of meritocracy that rewards diligence and work ethic and provides opportunity for all individuals, societies and nations to thrive. Here, it is significant that our rights are conceived as natural rights guaranteed by, and regulated under, a bureaucratic system of natural laws and modern institutions. These institutions not only organize local governance, but connect to international bodies through a regulatory structure that allows for social cohesions and order, mediated by global counterparts. Furthermore, there are encouraging movements that attend to securing global needs, regardless of nationality, found within the
mobilization of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and Amnesty International.

Moreover, in briefly shifting our discussion on rights toward the historical context from which these rights emerged, the signing of the Magna Carta eventually opened the way for expansion of rights to embrace those who had once been disenfranchised: women, infirmed, minorities, animals and nature. Corresponding to those rights, we now live in societies that generally tolerate difference and celebrate diversity.

These rights, enacted through social change, are located within larger structural forces that interact with social and economic revolutions. Examples include the eighteenth century French and American Revolutions, and their counterparts in the Scientific Revolutions of the sixteenth century and Industrial Revolutions of the nineteenth century. Moreover, it was these interactions between natural, social and technological forces that wrought change. Without the concomitant rise of science and technology with capitalism, and the shift towards the secular, it is probable that these rights might not have come to pass (Merchant, 1980). It is problematic to speak of technology without mention of capitalism. The reverse holds true. Change as progress also wears a techno-scientific face with a dollar-sign, where these dominant forces operate through structural homologies at the deeper level (Lukács, 1971a; Weber et al., 1958).
Where once people feared that population growth might outstrip the supply of food, advances in science and technology have increased the yield of production. Through modern medicine, once feared age-old scourges like typhoid, cholera, dysentery, smallpox, and bubonic plague are controlled. Our technologically advanced society converts raw material from reserve into power for the grids located within our cities. Satellites overhead, circle the globe and feed the consumer demands of our everyday work and leisure. It is, after all, this technological framework that renders possible affordable housing, public transportation, socialized medicine, unemployment insurance, welfare payments, and old-age security benefits.

And yet, while it appears on the surface that we are better off as a lot, problems emerge when we push deeper. Here the imagery represents an ideal, while in practice, there are problems associated with the assumptions underlying this model of society. Moreover, there can be virtually no escape out of this system we are born into (Marcuse, 1964/1991). There is no way to "opt out" of the rules that shape society, consumption, identity, and everyday lives under semblance of the natural (Lukács, 1971a).

3.1c Critique of change as progress

All is not what it appears when touted amenities like education, affordable housing, transportation, socialized medicine, unemployment insurance, welfare payments or old-age security benefits (championed by the
West for all under democracy for the globe) are conditional and based upon the priorities of capital. Moreover, rights are economically distributed through a system that allocates funding priorities. The plight of the homeless suggests that rights do not accrue universally to economically disadvantaged groups. Institutionally, it is not at all clear that modern institutions have been able to replace the ancient, theologically based order and cosmology sundered by the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions. The monoculture of globalization contradicts diversity, whether social or biological. It is not even clear that knowledge has been cumulative. For First Nation languages, knowledge and ways of being have been eclipsed by modernity.

And what of progress? It is not at all clear that change is progress. Our technologically advanced commercial societies see the Earth as an endless reserve to exploit for the taking. There are virtually no limits to scientific experimentation. When it comes to science and technology, there is an absence of clear ethical standards. What of the logic that argues whatever we are capable of making, we ought to be able to apply? Acts of mass genocide like Auschwitz, and extinction of species attest to something more akin to a return to barbarism.

While it is true that we, as human beings, have made significant gains within the advent of modernity, we must not lose sights that these are anthropocentric claims. Human industry has had devastating effects on the ecology of which we are all inextricably a part. In short, theories have often
not translated into reality. Questions of equality, freedom, uniqueness, dignity, respect, rights and democracy do not translate in the same way when it comes to the Other. Centuries after the revolution, royalty, aristocracy, and nobility survive with rights that accrue from birthright and title.

Furthermore, the Malthusian (1798/1965) hypothesis remains tenable, even compounded. Consider the problem: Thomas Malthus' (1798/1965) original formulation that modified Adam Smith's (1776/1957) utopia, had limited the problem to exponential rise in population against arithmetic rise in food. Since our contemporary lives revolve around production, consumption and waste, the problem has exponentially exacerbated as we consume, use and secrete toxins compounding the problem of population and food. We have been warned that there are limits to our growth (Meadows & Rome, 1972). Collapse is anonymous and can come without warning as it might take the face of melting snowcaps in the poles, surges in scourges, or virtually any kind of planetary peril. When viewed in this alternate way, we are back to the days of havoc before the modern dream: when old diseases linger, even as we are faced with previously unknown scourges like Severe Acquired Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Ebola, and Mad-cow disease; when the melting snow on top of Kilimanjaro join the ozone hole and warming planet, amidst rumours of war and mass carnage.

As if symbolic of the age, even the mute objects of our fabrication, through processes of social construction and sedimentation, have not only
reified, but have acquired control over us. As in the case of the ozone hole, it is no longer clear, what passes for technological, social, natural, or divine (Latour, 1993). It has also become clear that objects were never neutral; they are invested, negotiated, and born of social expectations (Bowers, 1988; Heidegger, 1977; Marcuse, 1964/1991).

It appears we need to revise our optimistic view, while respecting the benefits, and replace that view with a more tentative picture of contradiction. We are back to where we began with the contradictions. I need to clarify, however, my intentionality here. When I am formulating the problem through counter-arguments, it is not my intention to dwell on pessimism. Quite the opposite. I argue that transformation is possible only through self-awareness. My intent is to grapple with the extent of what we are dealing with when we speak of complicity, and to clarify the ambit of my topographic project while bearing in mind the centrality of bringing nature back to the discourse. And even on the issue of our complicity, as I indicated previously, it can be approached with hope (by virtue of the fact that the problem issues through our agency). In all of this, possibility and hope await disclosure. Having dealt with benefits and refutation in contradictions, I turn to relate these to the role of schooling, the issue of complicity, and the need for green critique in education.
3.1d Role of schooling

The roll-call of those institutions is a familiar one: representative democracy through which potentially autonomous individuals are portrayed as expressing their political preferences; a legal system purporting to safeguard the rights which individuals need, if they are to be treated as autonomous, including rights to freedom and expressions and enquiry; a free-market economy through which individuals are to express their preferences as consumers and investors; an expansion of those technologies which supply the material and organizational means for gratification of preferences; and a system of public education designed to prepare the young for participation in these institutions...

(MacIntyre, 1999, p.246)

I wrote the previous section with four purposes in mind. First, I needed to dimension the ambit of interest to my work in remapping the field. Second, I wanted to draw upon the dimensioning to background this work as the macro context in which I locate our schools within a social-historical matrix. Third, I hoped to relate this background to highlight the attendant responsibility of the social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and socialization thesis.

Fourth, it was critical in this discussion to remind us that our schools are also one of the modern institutions (Carnoy, 1974) and part of the network that feeds into these larger administrative-power grids. Our roles as teachers are critical in terms of the problem of approaching the loss of meaning associated with the loss of nature from the discourse, which I posit at root in these contradictions.
Clearly, as Macintyre (1999) reminds us, schools serve a pivotal role in the functioning of modern societies. However, as Chan (2003) points out, despite emancipatory gains in education, schools also continue to deploy human capital theory in viewing students as human resource. As we shift our discussion from benefits to critique, it is important to self-reflexively raise the problem of complicity.

3.1e The problem of education: What is education for?

I return to the question: Is it possible to group the concerns of a new green genre of educators collectively under a single rubric that speaks to complexity? One possible way lies within the work of David Orr. As Orr (1994) points out, the first pass of reform of the sociology of education exposed not only human capital theory operating in our schools, but also the hidden curriculum and the associated cultural capital correlated with inherent disparities between students. Bearing this in mind, Orr also argues that while it is true we have made strides in equity of opportunity to these same resources, it is also at this site where difficult questions of complicity are located. The critical question now becomes: What if, while preparing our students for equity of opportunity, we fail at the same time to critique the "opportunities" we might be preparing them for? What if we find out those "opportunities" that allow our students to succeed also carry the burden of contributing to ecological devastation?
Orr answers that, if that should happen, we, as teachers and researchers, become part of the problem. Orr’s clarification of the problem as the “problem of education, rather than problem in education” (p. 5), leads us to the threshold of socialization, and to the sociology of education. A case can be made to recognize this new genre of critical educators as a newer wave of reform in continuity with the former in critical pedagogy, and towards the greening of the sociology of education.

3.1f  Greening the third wave sociology of education

The new sociology of education emerged in full strength in England and the United States over a decade ago as a critical response to what can be loosely termed as the discourse of traditional educational theory and practice. The central question, against which it developed its criticism of traditional schooling as well as its own theoretical discourse is typically Freirean: How does one make education meaningful so as to make it critical, and, one hopes, emancipatory? (Giroux, 1988, p. 111)

With respect to Orr’s claims, I am reminded that nearly twenty years ago, in the heyday of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux interpreted the rise of critical theory in education as a new sociology of education. Since then, critical theory has itself been critiqued for the lack of green critique and sensitivity to its own liberal roots (Bowers, 1993). With this shift, the question has been transformed from one of equity, to eco-sensibility. Rather than emphasizing competition for resources, even through equity, the shift has been to advocate for sensitivity to the state of the planet. In this genre, I include in the writings of this new wave of educators (Bai, 2001; Blades, 1999; Bowers, 1988, 1993,
Significantly, Orr's distinction of the educational crisis as the problem of education rather than problems in education, returns us to the question, "what is education for"? Having sketched the problem of education within a broader context, I proceed to the problem of topographical movement and recovering nature.

3.2 EXEGESIS OF THE LOSS OF NATURE

Thus far, I have been assessing the material picture of contradictions which root within disparaged conceptions of nature. Respectively, we shifted from an historical review that traces the loss of nature from the discourse to discussion of its material manifestations within everyday life. With respect to structure and praxis, we resumed the question of complicity deferred earlier by examining our roles in the functioning of schools. Through this dialectical process, my topographic movement flows as an extension of recovering nature, even as the topographic move furthers the recovery of nature. As a second aspect of my topographic movement I move back to the hermeneutic looping. I shift back from world to discourse, this time focusing on the exegetical process through which the strands that I have been discussing are recovered.
3.2a Hermeneutical cobwebs of meaning

Since exegesis places emphasis on meaning over facts, it has a tendency to open up different spaces than one might otherwise encounter with an *a priori* fact-based search. This open-ended nature of the type of inquiry has had its challenges. It was precisely this unpredictability and autopoiesis that opened up new spaces of possibility. In turn these creative spaces encouraged: interplay of interdependent concerns between philological definitions with etymology, philosophical struggles with textual density, historical concerns over context, and curiosity over genealogy and lineage of ideas. Given my concern with the locations where questions of the loss of nature turn, I have focused upon narratives around loss and bifurcations—the debates, key figures, and the shifts.

Intersections and lineages of ideas led me into a rich labyrinth of networks when my search yielded connections between theorists otherwise thought as disparate. As my exegesis evolved, phrasings hinting of origins and frequency of certain words and their reappearance in other contexts, often guided the direction of my readings. Gradually the network of searches expanded to include informal searches with correspondence, where I found ideas exchanged but often not acknowledged (Benjamin, Scholem, & Adorno, 1994; Lukács, Marcus, & Tar, 1986), and often instead, subterranean (Dallmayr, 1991a, 1991b; Vogel, 1996). Out of my struggles emerged an appropriate metaphor for exegesis, that was culled from the juxtaposition of
three readings, to depict the complex relations (Varela et al., 1991; Vogel, 1996; Wilson, 1990):

I want to disentangle the various threads associated with “the problem of nature in Lukács, but also to examine why they got entangled in the first place. The truth is, I will argue, that Lukács position is marked from the start by a series of deep ambivalences about the status of nature and natural science, and it is these that have led to confusion among his critics as to what he really believes. Further it is these ambivalences, as much as the particular thesis he defends, that Lukács bequeaths a difficult and ambiguous inheritance to Western Marxism tradition he inaugurates... (Vogel, 1996, p. 14)

[T]extual interpretation takes place within a “dialectical tension”, that is, that interpretation occurs within a movement back and forth between text, interpreter, text, interpreter and so on, as the interpreter struggles to become clear about its meaning... [T]his dialectical tension in interpretation is a familiar experience to all who have read a text more than once. Another way of saying this is to say that in interpretation the interpreter enters into a “downward interpretive spiral vortex”. Interpretation is a spiral movement between text, interpreter, text, interpreter, and so on, as the interpreter explores the world of the text, moving beyond superficial understanding (at the top of the spiral) to deeper levels of understanding (on the turns beneath). The image of a spiral vortex... suggests that one is drawn into the text, [with] depths to be explored. One becomes charmed and enchanted by the text, the further one explores it. One becomes aware of the world of the text, a world that may be quite different from the interpreter’s own world. One becomes attuned to it... (Wilson, 1990: 10)

In our eyes, cognitive science is not a monolithic field, though it does have, as does any social activity, poles of domination so that some of its participating voices acquire more force than others at various periods in time... nevertheless our bias here will be to emphasize diversity. We propose to look at cognitive science as consisting of three successive stages... we have drawn them in the form of a “polar map with three concentric rings. The three stages correspond to the successive movement from centre to periphery; each ring indicates an important shift in the theoretical framework... moving around the circle, we have placed the major disciplines that constitute the field of cognitive science. We begin... with the centre or core of cognitive science generally known as cognitivism. (Varela et al., 1991, p. 6-7)
At some point, between my readings of Vogel's argument to disentangle threads, Wilson's (1990) hermeneutics as meta-interpretation, and Varela et al.'s conception of the "conceptual chart of the cognitive sciences" (p. 7), it occurred to me that cobwebs would be a fitting metaphor for the labyrinthine and polar like structure of the discourse I was attempting to map to recover the nature lost within its tangled threads.

It appeared to me that unravelling connections between theorists, ideas, lineages, etymologies, and slippages in meanings resembled the density packed patterning of a spider's web with its attendant temporal dimensions that hint of history. The spiralling notion and sense of dialectical tension between threads, meta-interpretation and polar mapping, emerge as organic and historical. The entangling of threads inherent to cobwebs makes for the ideal metaphor.

Like strands of a spider's web, or like those of the web of Life, my exegetical meta-interpretations drew me more deeply into it in dialectical tension, and uncovered an emergent vocabulary and praxis in the quotidian. The web metaphor was also appropriate in another sense that webs of meaning inhere in the technology of the World Wide Web (WWW). I realized most of the literature classics were online, as their copyright had expired. I mention the web component of my exegetical work because I attribute it to directly finding material that other scholars appear to have missed.
In shifting with the flux from discourse, to world, and back again to discourse, this time focusing on the exegesis itself, we have gone around the hermeneutic loop. The intent of this section was to highlight aspects of exegetical work and to background my discussion ahead. It prepares us for an encounter with Lukács, to see how revisiting the status of nature in historical debates offers us clues toward the remapping of nature and critique of reification.

3.2b The problem of labels

[L]abels... might actually be counter-productive if they impede attentive reading and exegesis. In any case, the meaning of the label emerges only from the discussion of the concrete issues arising at the intersection of ontology and critique at the juncture of the Frankfurt and Freiburg schools. (Dallmayr, 1991a, p. viii)

In the process of surveying the literature, I often encountered the problem of positioning the author: What is her standpoint on this issue? What school of thinking does she come from? My exploratory work concurs with the findings of Dallmayr (1991a) cited above, to claim that it might be problematic to label a standpoint and associate theorists with rubrics without clarifying their fundamental values. Specifically put, with respect to my thesis around the loss of nature from the discourse, my findings suggest the practice of labelling and assuming rubrics might contribute towards, if not constitute, the marginalization of nature from the discourse.
For instance, when David Held (1980) reminds us "The main figures of the Frankfurt School sought to learn from and synthesize the work of, among others, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Lukács and Freud" (p. 16), the problem of standpoint of Lukács and rubric implicitly comes to the fore. Importantly, there is an implied relation between where one positions a thinker like Lukács and the inferences one might be able to draw from that positioning.

Here an example might help to illustrate the point. Consider: What are we to think of Lyon (1994), when he writes, in Postmodernism, that "The best-known critic of the postmodern among social theorists is Jurgen Habermas" (p. 78)? Or consider his questions, "Can we still work with modernity as Habermas or Taylor would counsel, or seek to live beyond it, in Vattimo's disorientation or Baudrillard's asocial reality?" (p. 85) Note that Lyon's text on the postmodern elevates as "progenitors" of postmodernity the seminal figures of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Simmel, and the "new luminaries" like Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard.

The problem with an approach like Lyon's based only around the notion of postmodernity comes quickly into view when contrasted against its counter-example in, The Wake of Imagination: towards a postmodern culture (Kearney, 1991b). In the latter case we do not have a situation in which Habermas or Taylor are set up as defenders of modernity, against their recalcitrant postmodern counter-parts in Derrida or Foucault. Instead, in Kearney, we have
a developing critique of the image that traces its trajectory and lineage through premodern, medieval, renaissance and the modern periods. If we then compare the two approaches, the implications suggest not only are there possible problems with typology, depending on the author, but that there exists very different interpretations of the same discourse. Why the difference? This is a crucial question! We might have a clue it has to do with the centrality of the postmodern discourse in Lyon (1994), but for now, in the interest of continuing our argument that answer will have to wait.

For more clues with regards to this difference, consider Kearney and Rainwater's (1996), *The continental philosophy reader*. One finds not only Derrida, Foucault and Habermas within the same text (albeit listed under deconstruction and critical theory as subheadings), but also others like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Lukács. Or consider Critchley and Schroeder's (1998), *A companion to continental philosophy* where the names of Derrida, Foucault, and Habermas appear, along with names like Nietzsche, Heidegger and Kant. What is going on here? Do these disparate thinkers fall within the same rubric when the lens is changed as our analysis suggests?

Moreover, if so, what does it say of these labels? Critchley and Schroeder (1998) affirm our first question in acknowledging that they are faced with this kind of problem when organizing sections of their reader. In reference to Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze, they protest that labels “often prevent rather than enable an appreciation of their work” (p. 2). These apparently disparate
discourses of critical theory, phenomenology and hermeneutics all fall under the continental rubric that suggests rather than merely a changed lens, we have instead an expanded lens which subsumes Frankfurt critique and Freiburg ontology (Dallmayr, 1991a, 1991b).

Postmodern work like Lyon’s (1994) sets up oppositions characterizing those who argue in defence of modernity, like Habermas and Taylor, against those of the poststructural theorists like Lyotard and Derrida. Yet, when this opposition is compared with expanded contexts where they all belong under the same rubric, the differences do not appear as pronounced. Thus, we have a serious problem of distortion with the first instance. Without sufficient attention to their roots within the continental tradition, relegating Habermas and Taylor to a defence of modernity, and Derrida and Lyotard to postmodern critique, carries the implication the writer might not be aware that all of these theorists have common roots within hermeneutic and phenomenology traditions, or that the Frankfurt and Freiburg Schools are related as my exploratory research confirms.

3.2c Forgotten and lost threads

At this point, I pause to revisit the question I deferred earlier, what accounts for the difference between Lyon’s and Kearney’s accounts? The difference likely stems from Kearney’s positionality as a member within a continuing hermeneutic tradition (e.g. Kearney, 1991a, 1995, 2001; Kearney &
Dooley, 1999; Kearney & Rasmussen, 2001) that antedates the poststructural discourse. By contrast, Lyon (1994) positions himself in the postmodern as a debate that negates the internal consistency that underscores the overlaps in the background of theorists.

While it is true, different theorists within the continental tradition have taken different stands, they nevertheless retain that root commonality based upon core tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology tradition from whence they came. That is to say, despite what appears as surface discontents, they nevertheless all speak variations of the same language with its core underlying assumptions that elevate certain aspects over others. To read this positioning without an awareness of this basic commonality would be distorting at best; and reproducing at worse, reflecting less than a complete understanding of the fundamentals that speak to both surface arguments.

The problem stems in part from forgetting the rich phenomenology or hermeneutics backgrounds of key theorists. For instance, writers might not acknowledge Marcuse’s phenomenological ties to Heidegger, because of Heidegger’s problematic status with Nazism. Or perhaps with the popularity of Lyotard’s (1984) The postmodern condition that provides the impetus for Lyon (1994), we might forget that Lyotard also wrote Phenomenology (1991), Lesson of the analytic of the sublime with a systematic examination of Kant (1994); or The confession of Augustine (2000). There are also exceptions, such as Luke’s (1990a) rooting of Marcuse’s Marxism in phenomenology. Other
examples, more relevant to my work, lie in forgotten threads between Lukács and Heidegger (see Goldmann, 1977); Benjamin and Adorno (Benjamin, 1973); Dilthey and Husserl (Makkreel, Scanlon, & Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, 1987); or Husserl and Frege (Haaparanta, 1994).

3.2d Discursive bifurcations

The problem is even more complex. For example, when we move up another "level," with Derrida, Lyotard and Habermas all under the continental tradition, we can contrast this larger group against the discourse of the analytical tradition, associated with names like Russell, Ayer, or Popper. Within these discursive fractures at the "higher level", between the continental and analytical traditions, one finds the Vienna Circle of Carnap, Schlock, Kraft, Kaufman and Feigl, and the philosophy of science we ran into earlier (Bunge, 1998; Newton-Smith, 2000; Wallace, 1996).

Given this, we could pose the question, can we find a yet "higher level commonality" that bridges the two discourses? The answer is yes. We find that: Husserl is associated with continental tradition while Frege, who was Husserl's colleague, was also the founder of the analytical school and modern logic (Haaparanta, 1994; Hill & Rosado Haddock, 2000); or Brentano, who was Husserl's teacher, also taught Freud. If we go still "higher up" a level (bearing in mind that "higher up" means going back historically), we find what might be the roots in Kant. As Critchley (2001) argues, "Immanuel Kant in the late 18th
century... in many ways is the final figure common to both continental and analytical traditions” (p. xi).

We can then consider that after Kant we have a fracturing of the discourse, with the philosophy of science on the one hand and the human sciences on the other. Moreover, when we consider that these differing philosophies are, in turn, associated with different positions on nature, we can see that the very fracturing structure might have had direct implications on the problem of nature in the discourse. With Kant’s position on the unknowability of nature, we also see the source of nature’s ontological status and “inability” to speak in the discourse.

3.2e Hermeneutical phenomenology as corrective lens

One of the implications of these findings suggests that the first problem of labelling might be related to the problem of loss in obscuring relationships and discourses. Thus, given discourses that obfuscate, without a thorough search one might not be able to find root influences. My brief review above alerts us to the possibility of an inadequate grasp of the genealogy and the possible consequences. Consider other questions I believe to be key: What if one is uninformed of hermeneutics or phenomenology and attendant principles, thinkers, and linkages? Can one navigate the discourse? The answer is yes. But can one navigate the discourse indefinitely and not expect problems?
My answer here is no. As I have argued, being uninformed of the background of hermeneutics or phenomenology is extremely problematic, if not distorting. There can be no comparison reading Lyon (1994) against Vogel (1995) or How (1995) since the first is about postmodern discourse in general, and the latter two focus on the Habermas-Marcuse (1995) and Habermas-Gadamer (How, 1995) debates respectively. Within my argument, however, issues in these debates, are key to my ontological questions related to the status of nature.

The implications are serious when one considers the student who is not informed of hermeneutics while reading the Lyon text, and the impression they might form not only of the interlocutors depicted, but salient issues in the discourse. With this claim, I am not conjecturing but speaking from my lived experience. Prior to being conversant about hermeneutics and phenomenology, the incomplete and distorting picture could only be corrected by hermeneutic-phenomenological awareness.

Having examined the problem of the loss of nature with its difficulty in exegesis, I return next to our hermeneutical pursuit of the posited green thread within Marxism, with its legacy in the problem of nature in Lukács. Exemplary of exegetical research, I problematize the status of nature with respect to Lukács' hypothesis of three meanings of nature that has confounded Western Marxism, and extended the discourse, given the footprint of the Frankfurt School. The forgoing prepares us well for Lukács. The problem of Lukács is the
problem of nature. It revolves around the status of nature in terms of laws, science, natural resource, etc. Before we begin, a set of focus questions will highlight the main issues in Lukács.

3.3 HERMENEUTICS OF NATURE IN LUKÁCS

3.3a Questioning Nature

Is nature "real" or merely effects of discourse and social construction? (Eder, 1996; Evernden, 1992; Hannigan, 1995; Snyder, 1999; Soper, 1995) Is determination or responsibility in our destiny as humans? Are we humans part of nature, and is it possible to get past the dualism thesis that argues for the bifurcation of the social/cultural from the natural? If so, does a neo-Kantian view still hold in the argument that the natural is ineffable and unknowable? Or, can it be that we humans can actually be "discursively violent" in aspiring to speak for a "mute" nature (Alcoff, 1991; Soper, 1995) despite the neo-Kantian impasse (Latour, 1993; Vogel, 1996)?

If so, through what transcendental authority dare we speak, when the natural science that we attempt to hold as standard is itself exposed as the product of human labour, social construction, and ideological practice (Latour, 1993; Vogel, 1996)? Conversely, can we ascribe to transcendental normative claims that natural science seeks to dominate nature (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1998; Leiss, 1972/1994; Merchant, 1980)? Is our critical labour, arguably immanent and wrought through toil, social construction and discourse, found
within the same crucible as the natural scientific rationality (Vogel, 1996)? And, is it possible to avoid the attendant effects of circularity and aspire towards naturalism beyond the social (Bookchin, 1996; Merchant, 1980; Næss & Rothenberg, 1989)? Can we remain potent to address the political ramifications of the thesis of social construction and discursive effects (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Eder, 1996; Evernden, 1992; Hannigan, 1995)? Collectively these framing questions speak to the problem of the Kantian divide discussed earlier and the question of nature as subject, voice and presence in the discourse.

Elsewhere I have elaborated on these focus questions (Feng, 2001c) that I attribute to my reading of Vogel and earlier to Lukács. In what follows, recall three central related points. First, consider the merits of my claims, insofar as they relate to my thesis question on the loss of nature from the discourse. Second, situate the proximity of Lukács to this question of the bracketing of nature from the discourse and the necessity of a more central place for Lukács in my reformulation of the problem of nature (Vogel, 1995, 1996). Third, consider that these examples have origins within lived experience as well as attention with theorists, debates, and bifurcations of discourses.

It is likely that if I did not have knowledge of Lukács’ hermeneutics background I would have drawn an incomplete or inaccurate impression of his work. I point to extant works I have found that document Lukács’ ties with Husserl and possibly Heidegger (Goldmann, 1977). It appears that Lukacs’
discourse was not only Hegelian, but tempered with lost threads of hermeneutics and phenomenology discussed above:

Thus Western Marxism was marked from its beginnings by a critique of science and scientism. But what remains ambiguous... is just how far the critique is supposed to reach. (Vogel, 1996, p. 2)

In each of these cases the question of the meaning and status of nature produces the difficulty.... The tradition of Western Marxism is bedevilled by a fundamental tension lurking within its epistemological views, one that comes to the surface as soon as the question of nature is posed. (Vogel, 1996, p. 4)

I want not only to disentangle the various threads associated with "the problem of nature in Lukács," but also want to examine why they got tangled in the first place... it is these ambivalences, as much as the particular theses he defends, that Lukács bequeaths as a difficult and ambiguous inheritance to the Western Marxism tradition he inaugurates. (Vogel, 1996, p. 14)

... 'Lukács' fundamental difficulty is with nature," ... most commentators agree that this is so. Yet as soon as they start to describe what that difficulty consists in, disagreement immediately arises. The most common criticism is that Lukács denies the existence of nature as something independent of the social... Lucio Colletti explicitly exerts this, and Alfred Schimdt too writes that Lukács dissolves nature, both in form and content, into the forms of social appropriation. (Vogel, 1996, p. 13)

Having rooted Western Marxism, with the influence of the Frankfurt school on the discourse and his ambiguity around the status of nature, Lukács' shadow is significant, if not core, to my topographic task. The problems around the ambiguity between the critique of science or scientism in the meaning and status of nature are akin to my cobweb metaphor, where nature, as the fundamental issue in Lukács, has never been resolved. Similarly, threads have
become entangled. Lukács has been interpreted in varying positions: casting nature as a social category, furthering the Kantian divide, being uncritical of nature as natural science, and so on. These are charges of denials of nature and of collapsing nature into the social. What is going on in Lukács?

Thus the word ‘nature’ becomes highly ambiguous. We have already drawn attention to the idea, formulated most lucidly by Kant but essentially unchanged since Kepler and Galileo, of nature as the “aggregate of systems of the laws” governing what happens. Parallel to this conception whose development out of the economic structures of capitalism has been shown repeatedly, there is another conception of nature, a value concept, wholly different from the first one and embracing a wholly different cluster of meanings. A glance at the history of natural law shows the extent to which these two conceptions have become inextricably interwoven with each other. For here we can see that ‘nature’ has been heavily marked by the revolutionary struggle of the bourgeoisie: ‘ordered’, calculable, formal and abstract character of the approaching bourgeois society appears natural by the side of the artifice, the caprice and the disorder of feudalism and absolutism. At the same time if one thinks of Rousseau, there are echoes of a quite different meaning wholly incompatible with this one. It concentrates increasingly on the feeling that social institution (reification) strip man [sic] of his [sic] human essence and that the more culture and civilisation (i.e. capitalism and reification) take possession of him [sic], the less able he [sic] is to be a human being. And with a reversal of meanings that never becomes apparent, nature becomes the repository of all these inner tendencies opposing the growth of mechanisation, dehumanisation and reification. Nature thereby acquires the meaning of what has grown organically, what was not created by man [sic], in contrast to the artificial structures of human civilisation. But, at the same time, it can be understood as that aspect of human inwardness which has remained natural, or at least tends or longs to become natural once more. “They are what we once were,” says Schiller of the forms of nature, “they are what we should once more become.” But here, unexpectedly and indissolubly bound up with the other meanings, we discover a third conception of nature, one in which we can clearly discern the ideal and the tendency to overcome the problems of a reified existence. ‘Nature’ here refers to authentic humanity, the true essence of man [sic] liberated from the false, mechanising forms of society: man [sic] as a perfected whole who has inwardly overcome, or is in the process of overcoming, the dichotomies of theory and practice, reason and the senses, form and content; man [sic] whose tendency to create his own forms does not imply an abstract
rationalism which ignores concrete content; man [sic] for whom freedom and necessity are identical... (Lukács, 1971a, p. 136-137)

3.3b The lost third thread in Lukács

In Lukács' own words, buried in about the middle of the book, he clarifies this first interpretation of nature as science through natural law. He notes that parallel to this thread is an economic interpretation of "nature as value" with its own universe of meanings. But then, Lukács brings in Rousseau, in addition to Kant, as another interlocutor that my research confirms (Luke, 1990b). The problem, according to Lukács, is that these two have become conflated through "bourgeoisie, 'ordered', calculable, formal and abstract interpretation of nature" (p. 136). Here it does not help that these words are also articulated through the echoes of Rousseauan authenticity; *inner nature does not fit easily with nature as either scientific laws or material substrate.*

My raw hypothesis of the problem is thus three-fold. One, we are in a binary situation through Kant with the "thing-in-itself", around the status of nature as created or not created, accessible or inaccessible, transcendent or immanent, determined or free. Here is nature as an epistemological problem around knowing nature. Two, we have another set of questions around ontology: in terms of *what is nature?* Three, against the positions attributed to Lukács of holding nature as a social category or not, we find, *in Lukács' own words, not two, but three images of nature,* as natural law (science), as value concept (economy), and as authenticity (inner nature). The third image sits in
uneasy tension with the other two; it confounds the debate because it is hidden. Whereas the first two map relatively well onto epistemological tensions, this third thread appears incommensurable, given its invisibility.

3.3c Where Rousseau and Weber meet in Lukács

The roots of this third image of nature are grounded in Rousseau’s influence on Marx (along with Bentham, Hegel and others). These roots are also found in the Romantic shift of hermeneutics from theology to philosophy. Thus here we have the makings of a confounding problem. Lukács’ third conception of nature does not emerge except through careful reading, or in my case, through conducting my thorough search on his text in digital format.³⁸

In collapsing the ontological dimensions into the first two conceptions of nature as constructed or found, we risk committing a categorical error by confusing epistemology with ontology.³⁹ Here the Rousseauan tendency in Lukács’ “opposing the growth of mechanisation, dehumanisation and reification” may be read as Romanticism, naturalism or hermeneutics: since all three have roots in Rousseau. It is relevant to my work that the feeling of reification also roots within Rousseau. But before I expand on this point, I need to first discuss another source in Lukács that appears to interact with this Rousseauan critique of reification as inauthenticity:

Lukács with much debt to Weber... uncovers a set of striking structural homologies among remarkably diverse groups of areas... [with] his claim
... these all share a deep structure [which] is the bourgeois worldview.... And that ultimately its roots lie in the phenomenon of reification.

(Vogel, 1996, p. 21)

In the approach to science not as laws but as critique of its objectivist attitude, we find Lukács highly suspicious of objectivism and its correlates. This attitude emanates from what I believe to be the hermeneutical dimension of Lukács, which as I pointed out above, has affinities with Romanticism, both with roots with Rousseau. Here Lukács draws from the Weberian worldview as objective, subject to formal laws, reducible by analysis, and ahistorical.

It is in this sense, the Rousseaun and Weberian readings converge when Lukács broadens the concept of reification only to re-read reification as commodity fetishism. Although, it remains unclear to me how it might be possible to broaden the concept without enlarging it to be primary over capital. In this sense I am doing no more than to carry Lukács’ theorizing to its logical conclusion; the credit is still Lukács’. 

I close with one more citation to verify what I had mentioned about the influence from Rousseau. To facilitate this discussion, I have highlighted the critical section. It is significant that Lukács often refers to the Kantian “thing-in-itself” that haunts Marxism, within the same breath that he critiques reification. The citation captures the plausibility that bourgeois thought dominates scientific logic in putting philosophy in the service of capital:
Rousseau's "social man" [sic] living in the "social condition" with "his artificial constitution" is, in fact, bourgeois man. Rousseau's natural and civic man, therefore, can be seen as radical critiques and alternative visions of bourgeois lifeworld that Rousseau saw emerging in the eighteenth century. This point becomes clear in re-examining his notions of Nature, property and the political contract. Beginning with Bacon, and leading through Descartes, Leibnitz, and Newton, the new forms of the "bourgeois" intellect sought a structure of scientific logic and formal reason capable of ensuring "the calculability of the world." In reducing Nature to nothing but a rational design, a calculable mechanism, and a dead object, bourgeois thought gained the power, through the mediation of science and technical arts, to manipulate Nature and society exploitatively for the advantage of the enterprising, wealthy, propertied and the powerful. The "idealized kingdom of the bourgeois" ultimately turns "nature into mere objectivity" robbing both Nature and humanity of subjectivity, which reduces them to different classes of objects suited for different purposes as objective materials. As objective materials, both natural resources and human beings increasingly become trapped in reified definitions as objects, as things, as commodity-forms; in turn the commodity form reinforces the bourgeois form of life based upon the market, the commodity, and rational calculation. Here, men [sic] and Nature fall victims to the phantom objectivity of the commodity form as "it became to the interests of men [sic] to appear what they were not," namely commodity objects and calculating particular wills, as "man, heretofore free and independent, was not in consequence of multitude of new needs brought into subjection" by these reifications of bourgeois commodity fetishism. The bourgeois philosophe armed with Enlightenment rationalism objectified Nature and then naturalized humanity, as La Mettrie's and Helvetius' notion of "man as machine," in fact illustrates. Rousseau on the other hand remained critical of these notions. In contradiction, he sought to subjectify Nature, and by doing so, to rehumanize humanity through the General Will, virtuous legislation, and an active educated conscience. (Luke, 1990b, p.112-113)

3.3d Toward topographic movement in the quotidian

In sum, I began with a vague question of how nature became bracketed from the discourse. But in order to grasp the complexity of the problem, it was necessary to pass through the obligatory hermeneutical-phenomenological turn. It was through that turn that I located the problem within labelling, debates, bifurcations, spokesperson and links. But as seen in Lukács, the problem also
lies within the natural, scientific and economic conflating in the discourse and the categorical error of confusing epistemology with ontology. I find it uncanny that the isomorphism reappears where the natural is ecology, the scientific is technology and the economic the cultural. It suggests no matter how we approach the problem, these dimensions always appear.

Clearly all these ambiguities, lost threads and bifurcations point towards the loss of nature from the discourse. They need our attention. I have argued there are the consequential effects that issue from this confusion and the dominance of distorted conceptions of nature. In this chapter, I have identified three aspects of this loss, in the everyday, in the structure of the discourse itself, and with respect to particular debates and discourses.

Furthermore, my search has disclosed the bracketing of nature twice, once through science in the philosophy of science, once again through culture in nature as capital. These dimensions also suggest locating my topographic movement around these omissions. In place of a singular source, I found systemic tendencies like internal logic, structural homologies, removal of constraints on behaviour and the life, and a webbed structure that has revealed lost threads in twisted and subterranean strands.

With recovery and my topographical project in mind, I found a new metaphor, developed an exegetical method, realized hermeneutics and phenomenology as an obligatory passage point, and located the problem as one
generally around the quixotic status of nature. My contribution to the ambiguity of nature in Lukács was my response to Jagtenberg and Mckie’s (1997) call for a topographical project. Having responded to a call, I also call for revival of Lukács. We need to see that Lukács, like Weber and Benjamin, sits at the doorway between the nineteenth and twentieth century. This was the same doorway through which nature was lost within the ensuing contradictions around its interpretation as science and capital. In all of this, perhaps the most profound finding is the internal verification of the existential question that I had posed which led me to the status of nature in the consequential question inquiring into the foundations of the epistemology and ontology of nature. Even more, while I had no a priori intent towards curriculum theory, my conception of Quotidian Pedagogy and my practice that is self-reflexive of the problem of complicity emerged from my exegesis. Having discussed abstract components, I turn now to the quotidian in concrete immediacy in the second half of my dissertation.
CHAPTER FOUR: TOWARD THE IMMEDIATE MOVEMENT

This chapter deals with the flux between immediacy and reification to address the mode I call the *deconstructive present*. What I find very telling is that each time I tried to write the chapters separately, whether on reification, or immediacy, they appeared to resist the forced separation. It was only when I stopped insisting on separating reification and immediacy, in treating the two as separate chapters, through an imposed *a priori* sequencing, that I overcame the inordinate difficulty I faced. What this phenomenon suggested was a kind of performative (Fels, 1999; Fels & Meyer, 1997) validity internal to the dialectical flux between reification and immediacy attesting to the very dimension I had been struggling with; perhaps its lived-felt-existence. The resistance suggested that it did not make sense to attempt to write chapters in isolation of each other. Thus it is fitting how it all flows smoothly now, where the *deconstructive present as immediacy* flows naturally out of the *deconstructive past*, not at the demarcation of a chapter, but within the chapter itself.

In what follows, I try to work with this tension, wherein the first half is more theoretically based, and covers the obligatory groundwork. The second
half is experiential and transitions to immediacy which makes up the balance of
my dissertation.

4.1 WHEN SUNLIGHT GLISTENS ACROSS THE WATER ON THE PIER

I remember it was one of those days where the sun glistened gently
across the water, when I suddenly felt in gentle rapture. I think it had
something to do with the soft jazz in the background, the warm summer
breeze that caught my face when I stepped outside, deep in thought. Or
maybe it was the sunlight playing on the water... in fact I am sure it
was... or maybe it was... in how the sun played with the water, that was
playing on the soft summer breeze... as the gentle jazz tunes filled the
air... maybe it had to do with the fact that I had been preoccupied only
a moment ago.... Or maybe the magic lies in the interplay between my
inattentiveness being brought back... to Life by the breeze... as the
totality caught me by surprise... the best part of it .. it was all
unexpected.. and I was in the moment... and with the sun high in the
sky... at midday... it was going to be an eternity... the bad part... beauty
is meant to be shared.. it was one of those things which grows when it
was shared with someone meaningful.. as when one shares the fading
embers of the setting sun... in smallness of being... but of course, I had
been unprepared for beauty, too absorbed in my writing, alone by
myself, my reading and my thoughts... still, it would be an eternity
before the sun would set... and it was nice to be caught by rapture
again.. when one is least suspecting it...

I have probably written these words in various ways a dozen times. It
was a piece of memory that somehow lingered in my being. One could
say I might have a certain disposition to these moments. The wonderful
thing is they are not rational, in that they are unplanned, as one
encounters destiny when one is thinking one is merely stepping outside
for air.. I suppose given my intention you could say that my act was
instrumental... but I don’t think it was... and I do think we need to
differentiate between the intentional and the instrumental.. It was
more spontaneous.. the next chapters will enfold similar instances when
the same kind of feeling has suddenly inexplicably unfolded around me..
the feeling is difficult to convey... it may be the insects in the night
air... or the certain shade of light... or in the face of people who are
about to face the Infinite in their appreciation of music.. or along one’s
mundane walk down an inner city street... but it’s always something
that begins to gradually feel different in the air...
Now I confess I do not have a sound rational-theory for this experiential phenomenon... and I am aware of how mythical this all sounds... but it happens to me... and mythos is story by another name... I only know... (which is more important)... that it works... and that it must for others... but the point for me is... when one enters into it... one is unprepared... and perhaps it is because of that unpreparedness amidst an openness to possibility... that a crack opens between the world in the world... that momentarily allows one to see differently... it can be precipitated by happiness or grief... but the other thing about these moments... because they happen in unplanned spontaneity... they are also brief, elusive and finite... and one usually does not know how long will the feeling last... but it seems to me... if the Infinite were to be found... it would be hidden in those moments... that can make a difference... when we mere mortals... glimpse... ever so briefly... at life as if we were not in it... given that it has this profound quality and it has been working for me... I am wondering... theorizing... whether we can make more concrete this opening between the worlds... we cannot cause it happen... but we just might be able to allow it to happen more often... if that is possible... then I believe there is possibility for what I call quotidian pedagogy... it is in dedication to these moments when the familiar becomes unfamiliar... in the breakdown of the everyday... within the everyday... that my writing which follows is dedicated to Hope in immediacy for Life is like a river where one is flooded with the experience of being... that can take on a mundane quality if we let ourselves forget the world... or forget the hearts that pay attention to the world.... rather we can leap into the immediacy of things for therein lies also the possibility of Grace...

4.2 WINDOWS AND OPENNESS TO PHENOMENON

To begin with I need to confess that I took a measure of academic license in writing what appears as solipsistic appeal of phenomenological immediacy for myself. But here I am hoping that through the literary device of intersubjectivity, my readers can identify with the sudden bursts of unplanned, but sometimes also life-transforming insights. They feel like
windows that periodically open and close, ready to disclose that which is *always present*, but often remains concealed in the face of reification. For lack of a better metaphor, these are windows that sometimes appear once in a lifetime, without ever re-opening again. Or at other times appearing periodically, preparing us for our encounter with immediacy and destiny.

The freeplay of words almost takes me back there where I re-attune to my regained experience, even as I share my experience in Husserlian hopes that the intersubjective speaks across context and people. This is how I understand the lifeworld. This is how it periodically discloses to me. I believe these insights avail themselves if one is open to possibility in phenomenological attentiveness. As an educator-researcher, with pedagogy present-at-heart, I am hopeful for the potential of this form of phenomenological experience in my conceptualization of quotidian pedagogy. And, while I believe that it is important to grasp the significance of this kind of experience as it unfolds, the recollection of immediacy can be just as meaningful, if not more meaningful. The phenomenological instances I share in the balance of my dissertation fall into this category. But first, with sunlight on the water as backdrop, here is my experiential take on immediacy...

4.3 IMMEDIACY, HERMENEUTICS, PHENOMENOLOGY, AND TRANSFORMATION

"In its contemporary form... one cannot separate phenomenology and hermeneutics...." (Pinar, 1995, p. 405). Although William Pinar penned these
words eight years ago, I believe his words still hold true. They are both as elusive as that space of immediacy. Thus I confess that I feel this deep urge to *name immediacy as that space of possibility* where hermeneutics and phenomenology converge. Nevertheless I am mindful that immediacy has often been negatively associated with reification, as with Lukács' false immediacy, in Marxist false consciousness. But then again, immediacy has often been cast as that urgent obsession of reaching the elusive substrate. It seems to me the first misses the opportunity for lending itself to the space of transformation, while the second perhaps misses the point, when it hurries for that elusive ground. It might be prudent to slow down, to opt for disclosure over discovery, allowing for transformation to percolate to the top as immediacy. Immediacy here manifests as conceptual and concrete, not necessarily as ideas, although it can, but as the tangible in material form, whether as semblance of Lévinasian face, the sunlight on the water, a child's smile, or traces where the Divine passes.

4.4 QUESTIONING REIFICATION

What happens when the Earth that nourishes Life becomes expunged of divinity and sense of the sacred? What happens when we humans have no external recourse, when we can no longer appeal to external arbiters? What happens, in our post-Kantian world, when the gods have abandoned us, when we humans come to believe that it is we who construct the world? What happens when encouraged by our successes and excesses, we humans become
convinced we can conquer nature, and in our self-congratulatory hubris even believe we make our own world? What happens if between object and sign we come across the problem of representation that suggests a design as valid as its representation, but that the representation is flawed? What if seemingly innocuous substances can merge to become lethal — where the immanent responsibility of design is absent or refuted, under the banner of terror? What if the objects designed to better our lives, end up doing the opposite — with the capability of harming and obliterating Life through construction of the object on a mass scale?

Further, what if a flaw is not found, within particular designs, and becomes a systemic trend, answering to the internal logic of design? What if deeply buried within that logic exists congenital defects that can systematically undo the potential once thought possible in/by/through that very design? What if within the process of ascendancy of Reason as envisioned by the Western Enlightenment, the power to obliterate Life has lost all sense of conscience and directionality, and where extinction is ironically obscured under the name of the laws of nature? What if knowing has been expunged of subjectivity, spirituality, and meaning? What happens if we arrive at an age where we are beholden to the constructs created by those with power, where we can no longer tell the social origins of the material destruction behind such constructs?
In short, I worry and shudder when the object is writ large above us, looming larger than Life — when all is turned into object, when we cannot see the undoing of the world, when we dare to believe we make our world, even as it unravels before us?

4.5 PROBLEM OF DESIGN AS REIFICATION

I begin with a particular interpretation of the problem of reification close to my heart around the problem of representation in design. While now a concerned member of a global community, teacher, or researcher, I once used to play a more questionable role in designing the heart of the microprocessor that powers our technological age. It is from this design vantage point, with a troubled "green" heart, that I speak. Not as alarmist, but to share some of the questions that have been worrying me for several decades. I first became alerted to the problem of modelling, representation, and construct in computer design and began to question the danger that lurks within digital design.

Dwelling as we do, within the house of language, it takes a lifetime to not only name the danger as "reification", but to also reformulate our language to articulate the complexity of that danger. Based upon my design background, I believe we need to prepare ourselves to answer these difficult questions, and face the imperative before us — we humans have arrived at this problematic nexus described above, when all is object. I make this claim with debt to Georg Lukács whom I believe glimpsed the danger, for he too had been struggling for
language to describe the mystery of its fatal embrace. It is appropriate to frame this discussion with more questions, but this time focused on the problem of design.

4.5a Questioning design

What happens, when we arrive at an age where it is possible to draw from logical symbols in our heads, sketch these symbols, and link them in design, to predict with precision the eventuality of occurrences based upon these abstract linkages? What happens when we cast these designs in the name of general-purpose objects that allow for not only ubiquity of presence, but also anonymity of producers and consumers around the object? What if, within that ubiquity of presence and anonymity of design, objects that have been mass produced can be mass consumed without attendant personal responsibility and ethical imperatives? What if these objects of design are built not to better our lives and to make them more meaningful, but to harm and obliterate life on a mass scale? Finally, is it indeed problematic to mass-produce objects that can do mass harm, and not question the ambiguity of design, and the congenital defects between design and implementation that can obliterate a world? How is it possible that these conjoined problems have come to pass? Moreover, what is it that makes possible continuation of this profound problem, allowing for its proliferation and intensification?
4.5b Modelling between world and computer

Today a typical computer science or engineering student can sketch symbols on a piece of paper, and by following principles of Boolean algebra, translate the symbols into artefacts by hooking together integrated circuits, and with unerring accuracy confirm the design through its operation. The goal here is to make what is known as a general-purpose device that can fit as easily into a microwave as an incendiary device. To have the ability and hence, power, to translate an abstraction into concrete reality with unerring accuracy, presuming one has obeyed the laws of logic, is the height of hubris when the machine will do one's bidding. If the lure of power is not tragic enough, there is worse to follow. We have no way of knowing whether that device will end up in a microwave or in a missile. The engineer has no responsibility except for the functioning that has been promised by the design. The design is only as reliable as its representation.

I know all this because I became aware of this phenomenon years ago when I was designing a general-purpose microprocessor. Between my father's *Dao Li* and the teachings of the Jesuits, I was shaken by potential hubris, and horrified by the implication of the ubiquity, anonymity, irresponsibility, and unreliability that appeared as neutral or even virtuous. That was when I defected. But it has taken me all this time to articulate the situation that I sensed was deeply flawed. Perhaps the most challenging problem to communicate is also the most basic one around which other problems revolved. I identify this as the problem of design, modelling and implementation, which I
now read through social theory as the problem of reification. Let me expand on this.

When Figure 7 adapted from Cantwell is read alongside the citation from Abram (1996), and Cantwell (1985), we get a sense of the depth of the problem of design. The diagram and the citations expose the problem of design as *linguistic*, manifested in the form of the misrepresentation of the lifeworld. There are also those who refute the oversimplification of the problem of design, arguing that software simulation cannot take in the complexity of the lifeworld (Winograd & Flores, 1986).

How did Western civilization become so estranged from non-human nature, so obvious to the presence of other animals and the earth, that our current lifestyles and activities contribute daily to the destruction of whole ecosystems... and to the extinction of countless species? ... How did civilized humankind lose all sense of reciprocity and relationship with the animate natural world...? How did civilization break out of, and leave behind, the animistic and participatory mode of experience known to all native, place-based cultures? ... Animism was never... left behind. The participatory proclivity of the senses were simply transferred from the depths of the surrounding life-world to the visible letters of the alphabet... As the hills and bending grasses once spoke to our tribal ancestors, so these written letters and words now speak to us.... The sense that engaged or participated with this new writing found themselves locked within a discourse that had become exclusively human. Only thus, with the advent and spread of phonetic writing, did the rest of nature begin to lose its voice... [when] the printing press, and the dissemination of uniformly printed texts that it made possible, used in the Enlightenment and the profoundly detached view of nature that was to prevail in the modern period... (Abram, 1996, p. 137-138)

On October 5, 1960, the American Ballistic Missile Early-warning System Station at Thule, Greenland, indicated a large contingent of Soviet missiles headed towards the United States. Fortunately, common sense prevailed ... [since] international tensions weren't particularly high at the time. The system had only recently been installed. Kruschev was in New York, and...
a massive Soviet attack seemed unlikely. As a result no devastating counter attack was launched. What was the problem? The moon had risen, and was reflecting radar signals back to earth. Needless to say, this lunar reflection hadn't been predicted by the system's designers... (Cantwell, 1985, p. 18)

Figure 8. The problem of (mis)representation of the world

Where the model acts as translator between the world and the computer, the implications are immense. We have (mis)representation in the model that translates the world into the computer. The computer is only as reliable as the representation through which the world is filtered. But the problem is even deeper. This relationship is itself posited upon the naïve assumption of reality according to correspondence theory that forgets we are not external to the world but integral — as a being-within-the-more-than-human world. Thus, even without going into layers of cultural construction and
software representation, when groups of microprocessors are networked to become mini-systems, we introduce the problem of layers of construction that could be flawed at its core. But the integrity of the whole system is seriously compromised when something as large as the moon can be missed out of the representation for contingency.

Through this example we can see how the problem of design can be compounded by the anonymity, unreliability, irresponsibility and hubris at the level of reification writ large. The complexity of this problem symbolizes both the ethos of our age, and the depth and extent of reification. Having laid out the problem with design as exemplar template for conveying the magnitude of the problem of reification, systemic immanence of the flaw, and the potential for abuse, I shift next to a more philosophical discussion of the problem of reification.

Rather than believing the gradual unfolding of the events we have been tracing as one of malicious intent, we need to stand back, and question whether the problem might lie within the obscure origins of historical utopian intentions. If we have become thrall to the object, we need to somehow find our way back to re-awakening our sensibilities and to cease our obsession with construction — to turn away from our prolonged infatuation with the object. At the same time, we need to realize that the power of immediacy exists within all of us to break the spell of reification through deconstruction of the social that reifies our world, our hearts, and Life. As we live our everyday lives...
through layers and layers of representation, we need to learn to turn away from our extended gaze, to see past "object" and illusion, and toward the Life that stands, *always already*, long before our hypnotic thrall to the machine.

In CHAPTER TWO, I traced a path, questioning the mechanism through which the lived world has been turned into object. My path turned to remap that fragmentation in CHAPTER THREE. In this chapter, I shift from the abstract to re-immersing myself within the immediacy of the lifeworld, to grasp and wake up to the reification of Life, and the world.

While we need to acknowledge the emancipatory power of the theory of social construction in exposing the socially constituted nature of the material world, in how our lives, learning, teaching, politics, and even our sciences have been constituted through and through by *construction*, we need to also avoid the danger of reifying the theory, to the point where we expunge any traces of the real. We need to begin by reversing *the direction* that we have been proceeding towards thus far, by questioning the elevation of the Kantian theory of the construction of knowledge. This theory tempts us with the possible conceit of believing that we made the world even as we remain blind to the layers and layers of imagery over the ontologically prior lifeworld.

Here is where, precisely *because* of the power of the primacy of ideas in shaping not only the found social world but (due to the dominance of the West) the entire living Earth (in its power to consume all as monoculture), we need to
turn back to the world before idea. We also need to question the wisdom of elevating the power of social construction through exposing its uniqueness as contingency within the conjunction of events that have made the unthinkable possible. With the reign of artifice over life, where discourse negates the living tissue of the world, where theory looms larger than life that gives it utterance, and where we choose to believe in numbers over stories our ancestors tell us, we need to also find our paths back to immediacy.

Thus, while it is clear we need to critique the philosophical arguments that resulted in our being entwined within the operation of "the big machine", we need to also avoid reification, by simultaneously immersing ourselves in immediacy in the ontologically prior lifeworld. We need to deconstruct the past and the everyday to find Life behind reification.

4.6 UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE SUPREME DANGER OF REIFICATION

Since antiquity, humanity has been living under the yoke of the ethos of the age. That much is clear. What remains unclear is whether the yoke that we find ourselves living under today is qualitatively different from the past. While the debate continues, it appears we are living under antecedents without parallels in history. We are reminded of the sheer magnitude and depth of this change by the mark of the human imprint to forever alter the face of the Earth — to terminate the miracle of Life. Some even hold the radical view that the air we breathe and blue skies overhead are no longer as they were in the time
of our ancestors (McKibben, 1999). There are others who tell us that even our stories are at end (see Kearney, 2002).

Thus, even as we balk at the extent of material change, we need to also critique the more insidious aspect of this change that cannot be held in our hands, but which tugs at our hearts. The power of the object has been well documented, extending back to antiquity. But what is so different about its power today? We may perhaps answer by explaining that what is different here is not only to be found in the scale of power of the image, but also in the manner in which it abrogates its responsibility — it professes responsibility while concealing its source in a wholly new way. While the act of social construction carries with it an implied responsibility, that responsibility is vacuous when it stamps its name on designs made for harm, unless referenced to terror. In saying this, it seems we are passing from the professed Age of Discovery and Age of Reason into the Age of the Image, where the Object holds us in thrall as it towers over us, reducing all to things.

Put differently, in debt to Bruno Latour, our difficulty here lies not only within the ambit of its effect, or temporality of its operation, but also in its ontology. And here object ontology works in doubled movement. On the one hand, it is troubling when we reify that which is un-natural, in believing it is natural. On the other hand, perhaps even more troubling, when we deny the natural altogether, when all is cast under sway of the social. If our negation of that which is ontologically prior to human construction is not problematic
enough, that same denial is often assumed under the mode of responsibility of being.\textsuperscript{42} For as some hold, to say that we have created the world is, and ought to be, synonymous to assuming responsibility for our actions in our making. The irony then, is not when we reify that which we construct as given, but when we hold up utopian ideas of this mode of being.

Urgently, not only does construction writ large as reification threaten to entrap us within the circularity of its unceasing re/production, obfuscating all that which gives meaning and purpose to our lives, but we might also be \textit{precluded} from alternate modes of being. Here it is significant that the fetters that restrain us are not attached to our limbs and extremities, \textit{but within the ontological status of being under the shadow of an all-enveloping epistemology}.

The foregoing is commensurate with the challenge we face: We need to conceptualize reification in a wholly different way. In casting the problem of reification through my onto-linguistic lens within the promise of the hermeneutic phenomenology tradition, and based upon an expanded Weberian-Lukácsian view, I propose an \textit{inversion}. Reification is the more fearful phenomenon, over capital. Against the Marxist interpretation of the economic as primary, in which reification is subset as economic fetishization, which might well have begun that way, we have now arrived at the age when the economic, indeed all, is secondary to reification. When all is object there is the danger of eclipsing meaning under its long shadow.
4.6a Returning to the Heart, refuting anthropocentric individualism

The first source of worry is individualism. Of course individualism also names what many people consider the finest achievement of modern civilization. We live in a world where people have a right to choose for themselves their own patterns of life, to decide in conscience what conditions to espouse, to determine the shapes of their lives in a whole host of what their ancestors couldn't control. The worry has been repeatedly expressed that the individual lost something important along with the larger social and cosmic horizons of action.... This loss of purpose was linked to a narrowing. People lost the broader vision because they focused on their individual lives. Democratic equality, says Tocqueville, draws the individual towards himself [sic]... the dark side of individualism is a centring on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, making them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others or society. (Taylor, 1991, p. 2-4)

But all this talk is beginning to sound too theoretical. Consistent with the sensibility throughout my dissertation, we need to be self-critical of reification in abstraction by returning once more to ground our arguments in the concrete. This reflects my appreciation of Taylor, who draws from de Tocqueville (1835) in his critique of individualism. Here, the concrete is the lived-felt everyday sense palpitating within the beating of our hearts. The best way I know how to do this is to remind our hearts through a series of pointed questions, which through their posing already suggest the power and effect of reification to obscure what we value. In this respect, I also found persuasive the critique of individualism echoed in Ted Aoki’s (1997) notion of possessive individualism, and Chet Bowers’ (1995) ecocritique of liberalism. I also remind
the reader that the questioning technique is implicit to the quotidian pedagogy and the two axioms I mentioned in CHAPTER ONE.

What does it mean when our self-esteem is linked to vocations, where work in terms of having a job confers upon us an ontological status equivalent to the value of being? Here, life ironically functions in the most material of ways in exchange of currency, services, and goods, supported by complex abstractions that only elites trained in economics understand. And what does it mean for instance, when the rise and fall of the market is tuned, not to morals but rise and downfall of beings? What does it mean, when we bet our fortunes on the misfortune of others? What happens when we succeed in fooling ourselves into believing that unconditional growth is the key driving force and only index that matters? What happens within this matrix, when education is subordinated to the will of the market as means to an end, reduced to the mere acquisition of skills? What does it mean, when we take what is freely given in nature, and charge for it, denying access to those most in need? What does it mean when the sand flowing in the hourglass towers over us, in regulating our lives, our activities and our hearts, to redefine what we understand as happiness?

What happens when our gods abandon us, when in delirium of hubris we forget ourselves and believe the cultural activity we call “natural” science to be transcendental? What happens when we alter the found world and have no way to return to its prior state? What does it mean when we “harvest” organs
and exchange genetic material between humans, animals, and plants for human self-gain, with no certainty of the outcomes? What happens when we consume genetically modified food without ability to effect the reversal? What happens when we can patent Life and price life-saving medicines out of the reach of those who are most ill of health?

What happens when we take for granted the living Earth that nourishes the world and makes all Life possible? What does it say of our regard for Life, when in our need to feel safe we wantonly slaughter animals by the thousands, when we but suspect they are diseased? What does it mean when it becomes normal for our fingers to hover over the nuclear button? What does it mean when we are encouraged to discard things broken or old? Where are our hearts when we care not whether the waste we leave behind lasts for days or millennia? What happens when we fail to understand the effect of our actions within an enclosed, interconnected, and interdependent context that sustains the fragile web of Life (Capra, 1996)?

Further, what happens when the dominant ethos of the age is repeated in refrain, in the process obliterating traditional ways of the heart, incompatible to the possessive, competitive ways of lived identity? What happens when we travel in enclosed "motorized" isolation daily, to and fro from our work? What stirs in us when we do not know our neighbours? How does it feel, when our hearts are stifled because the neighbour has become a mobile thing as exchangeable and dispensable as our telephone numbers, even as dear
ones spend their time far away from us, knowing Life is fleeting? What do we feel when we feel the steeling of our hearts as we hurry by a being in need? What does it mean when we scorn the weak? What does it tell us of our priorities and practices as a society that forbids beings who once nourished us in infancy to be listed as our dependants?

What does it mean when we know that we can count on Reason to justify our objectives, regardless of the im/morality or content of our actions? Where do we hide, when violence rears its ugliness in the name of Reason? What does it mean when Reason betrays itself? What happens when the present becomes capable of obliterating the past, our history, and our narratives — when even our esteemed elders can be persuaded by subliminal construction of the new ethos to discard the old? What does it mean when we no longer can tell reality from simulacra, when we cannot even tell we are under the spell of "the object" that looms large above us? How is it that we have arrived at a point where we can no longer tell the difference? What have we got ourselves into? How have we arrived here? How do we break the spell?

4.6b The problem of history in immediacy

As we grapple with these questions, the problem of deconstructing construction and image is beginning to sound analogous to the previous phenomenal condition arising when sets of protagonists converge around a single tree. These opposing intents — to harvest or to rescue the tree — may
have equal legitimacy and stories to tell. And as before, although we need to intervene at the site of immediacy, we also need to deconstruct the pathways of "construction" that lead here by rooting the problem phenomenologically and hermeneutically within our lived experiences and interpretations.

Once more, it is with the historical that I begin. Given the isomorphism between the more general problem of history in immediacy with the specific exemplar I foreshadowed in CHAPTER ONE under "Application of Pedagogical Critique", I therefore reference what I am about to argue with the claims I made previously with respect to that phenomenon around the tree. By way of review, I repeat here, the question of historical origins of the loss of nature from the discourse — in order to re-locate it within the larger ambit of the family of contemporary questions above. While the magnitude and duration of the effects arising from this loss could not have been generated overnight, it can be argued that the catastrophes we experience today (e.g. environmental crisis, the spectre of war, economic disparities) often began with different historical origins and assumptions in utopian visions. Hence, the historical connection of contemporary questions I pose cannot be refuted. Yet it is not only historicism I am professing here. Many problematic consequences that have issued today may have been entirely unexpected, at the time of their inception. Yet the fact remains that at the site of the originary impulses and subsequent to them there were sceptical voices. To name a few: Rousseau’s (1984) Romantic Reaction; Mary Wollstonecraft’s (1792/1991) extension of
rights to women; civil disobedience of Thoreau (1854/1960); and the dire warnings of Nietzsche (1974).

4.6c Education and change through interpreting the world

Since we are midway through my dissertation, between reification and immediacy, here is also an excellent opportunity to pause and review what we have been learning on our journey thus far. Let me begin by claiming the predicament informing my work arises from the circularity interlocking our existential conditions. Existentially, it helps to understand that our predicament is profoundly historically-existential, since we exist within dominant systems bequeathed to us through radical historical changes in worldviews. Here the changes felt and manifested at the material level are reinforced in whole — at the psychic and spiritual level.

By circular interlocking I mean what we know of the dominant systems in this existential sense has been institutionally enclosed through grids, mazes, and networks of rational interlocking systems that effectively close off alternatives, thereby constraining further discourse. Moreover, we need to recognize this limitation as paradoxical. While the matrix theoretically professes to celebrate our self-determination by means of its inherent expansive nature, we find that when enacted, our degrees of freedom are effectively constrained to a point where debate is virtually sealed from possibilities (Marcuse, 1964/1991).
Within this interlocking circularity of "the world" that we are born into, which we did not ourselves entirely make, and in which we live, research, teach, study, and work, there are disturbing signs of instability where the state of the planet urgently requires our attention. Here education can become the transformative force towards emancipation (O'Sullivan, 1999), here is one place where Hope resides (Halpin, 2001). Yet even as educators, while cognizant of the state of the planet and global trends, and being aware of the need to intervene praxiologically, we also find ourselves at varying degrees, unsure of what to do. We too, are locked within the interlocking rational gridwork.

What's to be done? And how are we as educators to intervene? Is our task here one of: changing the world, or of interpreting the world? And are these two tasks mutually exclusive? Or can we change the lifeworld through interpreting it? Given the sense-making nature of human beings, it appears change might only be possible through dialectical interpretation of the world. Yet, as soon as we utter these words, other questions come to the heart. Given the insidious and encircling nature of our predicament, how can we attempt to formulate a method to critique our problem, while ensuring that we ourselves do not end up further reifying our alienation? This might happen when the problem is made worse through our own inadvertent actions — when teachers and curricular developers end up being complicit in furthering the problem, even as they are attempting to intervene, and where our schools are part of the institutions that make up the grid. Importantly, whatever we do, as educators, we also need to remind ourselves of the primacy of lived
interpretation. We alienate ourselves if we entrench ourselves within abstraction, in forgetting to pay attention to what is unfolding right before us in the lifeworld of the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1996; Aoki, 1991).

With regard to breaking the spell of reification, not only is it difficult to escape from the circularity, but the continuity and maintenance of the circulatory interlock implies our complicit participation, despite our praxis. Whether we are referring to problems with optics (blind to the problem before us), awareness, (not being sufficiently discerning), ennui (tired of struggling), or worse, the kind of resignation associated with nihilism (we shrug our shoulders unsure what to do, so we do nothing), we are thoroughly implicated in complicit participation. But pointing out the problem also suggests that reversal is possible at precisely the same site. Rather than merely opening our eyes, we need to "open" our full being and immerse ourselves in experience and hope. We need to attune ourselves to learning to see the unfamiliar in the familiar, the absent in the present and the concealed in the revealed.

Pedagogically, as educators, if we become phenomenologically attuned to the changes around us, learning to question the broader implications of changes as they appear, we might collectively prevent their reification. When we begin to question what we are encouraged to take for granted, we question why we cannot list our parents as dependants as they do not qualify; question the anonymity of objects around us; question the proliferation of registered weapons in our communities; or even question why the light simultaneously
turns green for both the pedestrian crossing the street, and the left-turning vehicle.\(^4\)

As educators, the price of not questioning might be to reify the event, wherein reification continues as "second nature" (Lukács, 1971b). It can sediment itself into the depths of language and social constructions and behaviours and the passing of time become lost in history. Here it helps to remind the reader that my work in tracing the loss of nature from the discourse represents an act towards immediacy; a recovery of this advanced reification as sedimentation, what Edmund Husserl (1970) feared could happen if we forget the lifeworld. Perhaps that is why we are now faced with these phenomenological events in the first place; the first changes that came about historically might have slipped by without sufficient and persistent critique.

Take the problem with the green left-turning signal and pedestrian walk sign. For there to be signal lights, first there have to be roads that are paved. But for roads to be paved, the original communities living in the area would have had to be persuaded to approve of changes. I wonder what those communities would say if they saw the gridlocks on the freeways today. On the other hand, consider the consequences of refusal or standing up for one’s rights or sense of justice. Perhaps we should ask Rosa Parks about her steadfast refusal to sit at the rear of the bus, and whether she understood the future implications of her act? We could pose a question to Rousseau: did he foresee that the reactions he helped to originate not only gave Marx a few ideas, but
became connected to genealogies of modern dissent (Luke, 1990b). My work is rooted to this lineage. A concrete example of this kind of critique of reification as sedimentation can be found within a passage in Rousseau’s *A Discourse on Inequality* where he speaks of property:

The first man [sic] who having enclosed a piece of land, thought of saying ‘This is mine and found people... to believe him [sic], was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, how much misery and horror the human race would have been spared if someone had pulled up the stakes and filled the ditch and cried out to his [sic] fellow men[sic]: Beware of listening to this impostor. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to everyone and that the earth itself belongs to no one! (Rousseau & Cranston, 1984, p. 109)

Tester (1995) reminds us that the nature of reification is quixotic. It speaks the same language that is found within *enchantment*. Keith Tester’s thesis of the socially constructed world paradoxically appearing as “found” rather than “made”, finds new interpretation for Lukács’ (1971a) theory of reification as “second nature”. In both what is constructed appears as wonderful and as natural as the blue sky outside, bearing no traces of the labour that has made it (Vogel, 1996), or meaning and communities that are attached to the artefact. Initially, while equating the two has the character of an oxymoron, Tester’s postulate becomes plausible, in explaining the nature of commodification to enthrall — to be gripped under the sign of the object. Here I find Tester’s reformulation convincing, precisely because of the enchantment of artefacts. The world is felt not as disenchanted as Weber had theorized, but as enchanted where the image reigns to mock the life that gave it utterance.
4.6d The shift from epistemology to ontology

*The heart has its reasons which reason does not know...* Blaise Pascal

When we speak of "the object", we are speaking of beings with materials, as well as ontologically prior objects, where there stands a "found" nature before culture and before social construction. Yet, the object before us still bears the traces of our labour. This begs the question: Can the position which argues for ontologically prior nature be reconciled with socially constructed nature? It appears contradictory to posit nature prior to the social, even as the social constructs the world: and, if we are able to compromise here, can we do so without denying ontologically "found" nature? Moreover, by compromising here have we fallen into the trap and limits of Reason?

Furthermore, what of the problem of epistemology in the claim that we interact with the world through "knowing" the world? When we speak of nature, do we need to be reminded that we are speaking, not of nature per se, but of our constructed and represented knowledge of nature? This might sound like I am heading for the Kantian impasse. That is, by speaking of human interaction with nature only in terms of "knowing" nature, am I just steps away from limiting "knowing" and positing that "nature-in-itself" is unknowable and ineffable? That is, of course, the dangerous move I wish to avoid here. Quite the contrary. In fairness to Kant (1929), where I believe he was trying to insulate
that which is ineffable and sacred, I need to elaborate on how and why the Kantian impasse (Vogel, 1996) has become extremely problematic with respect to my thesis around the loss of nature from the discourse.

Given our limited human physiology and attendant characteristics, the sense of schism between the social and the natural becomes implicit within the notion that we cannot possibly hope to grasp the "things-in-themselves" (i.e. Nature, Divinity), beyond the limits of our sense apparatus. The problem is that this sense of dualism not only distorts and fractures how we claim to know nature, but it also extends the inability to know the "things-in-themselves." That is to say, this primary sense of ineffability, when applied ontologically, renders the "things-in-themselves" mute, with neither discursive rights nor intrinsic value. Furthermore, when this primary sense of ontological extension becomes sedimented, through replication, we have the makings of the problem I call the reification of Life. Yet ontology is not the problem. It is only the above interpretation that I find problematic. Let me elaborate.

In reminding ourselves that knowledge of Nature is not the same as Nature, I am suggesting that there are limits, because our claims of nature can at best only speak of how we know nature, not of the nature of Nature. On the other hand, as fully embodied beings (Varela et al., 1991) our interactions with the lifeworld cannot be limited to "knowing". As the above caution from Pascal suggests, "knowing" cannot be separated from the sensation within our hearts.
Moreover, we are *part* of the nature that the Kantian divide and the Cartesian doubt would make the object.

It is in this sense that I find the existential attractive to casting my work, limiting hubris, when reminded that we are limited beings, as Heidegger (1971) so aptly put it, capable of dying. Thus, to restrict our experience of life to "knowing" is highly problematic, when our life wholly extend to the condition of our human existence and experience as mortal beings. With words like "existence" and "being", we open the portal to experience the world ontologically different through intersubjectivity. Here, our emphases shift from knowing to doing and relationships, as temporal embodied beings-within-the-more-than-human-world, capable of empathy, caring, respect, and responsibility in our awareness of the limitations of the Other through our own sense of fragility of being.

This suggests that a way to resolve the problems of epistemology might lie in approaching our understanding of nature ontologically. Here I am insisting the world is not apart from us, we from each other, and our minds from our bodies. My inquiry does not arise out of Cartesian doubt. Instead when I refer to ontology in this existential sense, I am referring to a specific interpretation of the concept of Nature as informed by the hermeneutical phenomenology tradition which stresses the embodied character of existence with the parts related to the whole (see Bontekoe, 1996).
The "existential" portal appeals to my work, when "knowing" is cast within embodied cognition. According to Varela et al. (1991), we neither exist as "disembodied observers [nor] dis-worlded mind" (p.4). I paraphrase this to mean that we exist as beings-within-the-more-than-human-lifeworld. Here, I share an appropriate phrase from Abram, in how he captures the essence of the human condition: the "body is a sort of open circuit that completes itself only in things, in others, in the encompassing earth" (1996, p. 62). When interpreting the world, the embodied discourse remind us of the need to remain phenomenologically aware in our intentionality of changes as they happen within — *momentarily escaping from the circularity* when the world discloses in immediacy. It is in our human condition that we are as beings-within-more-than-human-world.

4.6e Existence, lifeworld, intentionality, disclosure

One of the key aspects of phenomenology as a "science" of experience is the understanding of intentionality based upon the directedness of consciousness toward an object. Intentionality is intimately linked in its relationship to the lifeworld (Lebenswelt), around immediacy in experience of being, and within the Husserlian concept of intersubjectivity. Here, I turn to supplement my application of hermeneutics with its phenomenological counterpart.
Emmanuel Lévinas explains in Kearney (1984) that Husserl was interested in the "relation between our logical judgements and our perceptual experience" (p. 52). In this sense, Husserl's phenomenology was his attempt to access the ontologically prior lifeworld before science via his science of experience. Husserl posited the possibility of such accessing through the bracketing of the world, where his concept of intersubjectivity allowed for multiple beings to share phenomena.

Jean Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Lévinas, to mention as few continental philosophers, all developed their readings of Husserl with shifts towards existentialism, embodiment, and theology, respectively. Heidegger himself radicalized Husserl's ideas by grounding his transcendental ideas in everyday existence around the conceptions of temporality and existential angst. The uniqueness of Heidegger's mode of inquiry exists as a two-fold conjunction — the fusion of Husserlian phenomenology and Diltheyan hermeneutics, on the one hand, and the conjunction of Eastern and Western philosophy on the other (Bontekoe, 1996; May & Parkes, 1996). This is why Heidegger's mode holds appeal for my work and why I reference my ontolinguistic inquiry to existential interpretation. Although, my interpretation has a Heideggerian bent, I have also included the uniqueness of Lévinas and Merleau-Ponty in their existential leanings.

Throughout the previous chapters, I have repeatedly emphasized that the source inspiring the "deconstructive present" and the mediating flux
between reification and immediacy lies in the juncture where hermeneutics meets phenomenology. Up to now, however, I have only spoken of disclosure — core to this mode of experiencing — in generalities. To finish this section I would like to offer further discussion of this mode of awareness insofar as it differs for me from other forms of awareness, and wherever appropriate, I move to dwell on its pedagogical implications.

While concurring with Lukács' claim that the greater problem lies in the need to lift the "veil of reification" (Lukács, 1971a, p. 86) towards seeing past the veil to the ontologically prior, I also differ significantly. In accordance with Marxist discourse, Lukács interprets the phenomenon of reification in terms of false consciousness — false immediacy to be penetrated by the social activist. I argue, on the other hand, that we need to attend to the hermeneutical-phenomenology tradition which holds that dangers exist alongside grace in the already always before us. Here, I am drawn to Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenological interpretation of Husserlian phenomenology. Unlike Husserl, immediacy from this view is not readily available. Instead, it is obscured due to the givenness and familiarity through our human condition of being-in-the-more-than-human world (see for example, Bontekoe, 1996; Kockelmans, 1988).

The appeal of the combined hermeneutic-phenomenological approach lies in its reversal of the directionality of knowing. In reversing directionality it also opens up a space for humility. The departure lies not in the "active" being but the "attentive" being. To claim that one discovers is to believe that one
moulds the world through one's agency, rather than to say something has been disclosed to one through one's receptivity. Yet to be attentive is not to be passive without agency, rather to be open to possibility without presumption. In setting possibility against presumption, passivity against activity, vulnerability against supremacy, finitude against expansiveness, attentiveness against abandon, we also create spaces for humility against arrogance. Rather than locating agency within the human in terms of discovery of that which is hidden, I propose that it is by being predisposed, open, and attentive, that disclosure and the "bringing forth" of that which already is becomes possible.

4.7 ONTO-LINGUISTIC ANTECEDENTS WITHIN THE TRADITION

4.7a The Arendtian gift

This kind of existentially influenced disclosure is seen in the introduction of Hannah Arendt's, The Human Condition, where her deconstruction takes on an almost ethereal quality. Here, then, is an instance of seeing beyond the familiar, to bring forth what is already present within the mode of technology as presencing. This I interpret as immediacy — the space where, both danger and saving grace dwells (Heidegger, 1977).

In 1957, an earth-born object made by man [sic] was launched into the universe, where for some weeks it circled the earth according to the same laws of gravitation that swing and keep in motion the celestial bodies-the sun, the moon, and the stars. To be sure, the man [sic]-made satellite was
no moon or star, no heavenly body which could follow its circling path for a time span that to us mortals, bound by earthly time, lasts from eternity to eternity. Yet, for a time it managed to stay in the skies; it dwelt and moved in the proximity of the heavenly bodies as though it had been admitted tentatively to their sublime company. This event, second in importance to no other, not even to the splitting of the atom, would have been greeted with unmitigated joy if it had not been for the uncomfortable military and political circumstances attending it. But, curiously enough, this joy was not triumphant; it was not pride or awe at the tremendousness of human power and mastery which filled the hearts of men, who now, when they looked up from the earth toward the skies, could behold there a thing of their own making. The immediate reaction, expressed on the spur of the moment, was relief about the first "step toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth. (Arendt, 1958, p. 1).

Within Arendt's imagery and poetry we see an illustration of how her hermeneutical and phenomenological interpretation of an "earth-born object" discloses the meaning of that event in terms of its significance in altering how Life will henceforth be lived qualitatively differently on the Earth. This reminds me of Latour's (1993) analysis, where he talks of America before and after electricity — quoting the work of Thomas Hughes on Thomas Edison's research into filaments for Edison's incandescent lamp. The latter is not the same America, for "Hughes reconstructs all America around the incandescent filament of Edison's lamp... [as] America before electricity and America after are two different places" (p. 4), Similarly, interpreting Arendt, Life can never be the same again, for the world after the launch of the satellite is not the same world.

By contrast, hermeneutically-phenomenologically speaking, to name the object as a satellite and to understand its social meaning synonymous to that
conferred by media through public consensus, would be not only to miss the phenomenological significance and the message, but also to reinforce its reification as social meaning. It is also instructive to see Arendt dwells in phenomenological experience, at the prospect of elation of escape from the Earth. Within Arendt’s hermeneutic phenomenology, we read of experiencing that might make us stop and wonder if we too can learn to lift the Lukácsian veil of reification, not by penetrating and discovering, but by being open to immediacy as Arendt does.

The implications for pedagogy are profound. I am convinced that the depth of this type of analysis within Arendt, if inculcated through quotidian pedagogy in our students, can help them towards dereifying their human condition. Consider Arendt’s continuing interpretation...

What is new is only that one of this country’s most respectable newspapers finally brought to its front page what up to then had been buried in...science fiction... The banality of the statement should not make us overlook how extraordinary in fact it was; for although Christians have spoken of the earth as a vale of tears and philosophers have looked upon their body as a prison of mind or soul, nobody in the history of mankind has ever conceived of the earth as a prison for men’s bodies or shown such eagerness to go literally from here to the moon. Should the emancipation and secularization of the modern age, which began with a turning-away, not necessarily from God, but from a god who was the Father [sic] of men [sic] in heaven, end with an even more fateful repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky. The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice. The human artifice of the world separates human existence from...animal environments, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man [sic] remains related to all other living organisms. For some time now, a great many scientific endeavours have been directed toward
making life also "artificial," toward cutting the last tie through which even
man [sic] belongs among the children of nature. It is the same desire to
escape from imprisonment to the earth that is manifest in the attempt to
create life in, the test tube, in the desire to ... to produce superior human
beings" and "to alter [their] size, shape and function"; and the wish to
escape the human condition, I suspect, also underlies the hope to extend
man's life-span far beyond the hundred-year limit. (Arendt, 1958, p. 2)

With this extended citation, Arendt interprets the elation as escape from
Mother who has made all life possible on Earth. Arendt exposes the sense of
artificiality embedded in the familiar celebration of this kind of escape, rooting
that impulse to escape from the human condition itself, and locating its
trajectory within the history of the tendency towards secularization emblematic
of the modern age. Moreover, within the lament of Arendt’s text, I cannot help
but detect a twinge of nostalgia, of loss, and of alienation from our
quintessential life-giving Earth. For me, Arendt hints at the possibility of
pedagogy that is unique in its ability to see the familiar as unfamiliar, capable
of lifting the objectification that mortifies Life and situating her interpretation
within history. The next citation dwells on the importance of context and
history in Arendt’s perception of connections between theology, economy,
morality, ecology, and technology:

... It is in the nature of the human surveying capacity that it can function
only if man disentangles himself from all involvement in and concern with
the close at hand and withdraws himself to a distance from everything
near him. The greater the distance between himself and his surroundings,
world or earth, the more he will be able to survey and to measure and the
less will worldly, earth-bound space be left to him. The fact that the
decisive shrinkage of the earth was the consequence of the invention of the
airplane, that is, of leaving the surface of the earth altogether, is like a
symbol for the general phenomenon that any decrease of terrestrial
distance can be won only at the price of putting a decisive distance
between man and earth, of alienating man from his immediate earthly
surroundings. The fact that the Reformation, an altogether different event,
eventually confronts us with a similar phenomenon of alienation, which
Max Weber even identified, under the name of "innerworldly asceticism,"
as the innermost spring of the new capitalist mentality, may be one of the
many coincidences... What is so striking and disturbing is the similarity in
utmost divergence. For this innerworldly alienation has nothing to do,
either in intent or content, with the alienation from the earth inherent in
the discovery and taking possession of the earth. [Here] the innerworldly
alienation whose historical factuality Max Weber demonstrated in his
famous essay is not only present in the new morality that grew out of
Luther's and Calvin's attempts to restore the uncompromising
otherworldliness of the Christian faith; it is equally present, albeit on an
altogether different level, in the expropriation of the peasantry, which was
the unforeseen consequence of the expropriation of church property and
as such, the greatest single factor in the breakdown of the feudal
system...(Arendt, 1958, p. 251)\textsuperscript{47}

Here again, Arendt links the present to the past. Whereas social
consensus perceives the advent of flight or the advancements in measurement
as accomplishments, Arendt finds these developments problematic. For her, the
distance travelled through these accomplishments vary inversely to the distance
the human heart travels in its consequential estrangement arising out of
objective science and capitalistic gain. These hermeneutic-phenomenological
threads that weave throughout the warp and weft of Arendt's thesis are of
significance to my work on addressing the loss of nature from the discourse and
the ensuing loss of meaning.
4.7b The Heideggerian Turn

Martin Heidegger, who was also Arendt’s teacher, is often cited as the theorist responsible for merging the traditions of Dilthey’s (1989) hermeneutics and Husserl’s (1970) phenomenology (see Bontekoe, 1996). Appropriately, the next citation is drawn from an interview with Martin Heidegger in Der Spiegel, and first published posthumously in 1976. Here Heidegger’s interpretation of the photographs of the Earth, appears to be reminiscent of Arendt’s interpretation, but additionally, accompanied by what appears to be a tone of resignation, when he laments that there is “no way to respond to the essence of technology” (p. 105):

Everything is functioning. This is exactly what is so uncanny, that everything is functioning and that the functioning drives us more and more to even further functioning, and that technology tears men loose from the earth and uproots them. I do not know whether you were frightened, but I at any rate was frightened when I saw pictures coming from the moon to the earth. We don’t need any atom bomb. The uprooting of man has already taken place. The only thing we have left is purely technological relationships. This is no longer the earth on which man lives...The frame holding sway means: the essence of man is framed, claimed, and challenged by a power which manifests itself in the essence of technology, a power which man himself does not control. To help with this realization is all that one can expect of thought. Philosophy is at an end...philosophy will not be able to effect an immediate transformation of the present condition of the world.... Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness, through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of the god or the absence of the god in the time of floundering... (Heidegger, 1993, p. 105-106)
Again there is a characteristic distinction to be made. The astronauts and most people, myself included,\textsuperscript{52} saw something like a spiritual aesthetic in the achievement of moon landing (O'Sullivan, 1999). Others credit those first pictures of Earthrise from the moon with origins of the modern environmental movement. Yet in its all-enveloping oneness, Heidegger had ambivalent concerns. For concealed within those pictures, Heidegger saw the supreme danger. The problem as it disclosed to Heidegger was not only in escaping from the Earth, and no longer valuing our historic human condition of being-in-the-world. His concern was focussed upon the all-encompassing en/framing essence of technology — a mode of being that threatens to eclipse, even \textit{preclude}, all other modes of being, perhaps irrevocably, even indefinitely.

4.7c Tester as transformative pedagogy

But the photographs of the earth implied the possibility that all of these stable and taken for granted certainties could no longer be accepted without a second thought. ... a single man... had taken ... photographs which contain within it the whole extent of everything that humanity had done since time immemorial, and everything that humanity can ever do... extracted from a community of humanity... made greater than it. He could gaze upon all the homes and all the achievements of all humanity in relation to the universe even though all humanity could never gaze back upon him... [And] technology... intended to provide a framework for the security and enrichment of human existence, had become able to contain all humanity within it; the artificial world of technology had become able to show that the human is potentially relatively small and trivial... the photographs implies a containment of the meanings of the earth even as they also implied a freedom of humanity... from their natural home. But in that containment... also made the earth a problem to be dealt with; an opportunity to be exploited, a standing reserve waiting for animation by the designs and desires of humanity through technology. [They] made the earth absolutely banal... [but] if the earth is banal then so is humanity...if humanity is able to enframe the earth then humanity cannot be as banal as
the earth; but is therefore.... quite homeless in the universe... [Thus] humanity and the earth have been put into a situation of crisis, and if that was not bad enough, the thinking which might enable us to steel ourselves to our situation is in a state of crisis as well.... They... reduce the earth to the status of a thing... In themselves [they] mean everything because actually they mean next to nothing... the images show absolutely everything and narrate absolutely nothing. ... to such an extent that perhaps we are consigned to irony. The world becomes independent of us and seemingly indifferent towards us even though all our attention is focused upon it raise...questions about the meaning of humanity and they offer no resource whatsoever. They throw us back onto our resources which... deprive of any conventional authority... (Tester, 1995, p. 3-6)

The above citation that mirrors Heidegger’s concern is another exemplar that I would characterize as an instance of onto-linguistic mode of being, within the sense of irony in Keith Tester’s interpretation of Heidegger’s pronouncements concerning the moon photographs appears a quintessential Arendtian-Heideggerian analysis. In one sense, he surpasses the theorists he is interpreting. In fairness, of course, to both Arendt and Heidegger, Tester had dialectical access to new language likely made possible through the labour of Arendt and Tester (which, recalling the title of Tester’s book, The Inhuman condition, against Arendt’s The human condition, appears to have had significant influence on Tester).

Tester’s reading of Arendt and Heidegger had a profound effect on me. I credit Tester with making me interpret my problem of nature, technology and culture in a wholly new way. It made me realize that I was obliged to move my work onto the ground of being itself, where the question I was posing seemed to have its own teleology in finding itself in being. It was in internalizing the
profound effect of reading Tester that I began to grasp the potential in the understanding of disclosure. I was to later call this an "onto-linguistic" understanding, through which I began to sense Hope in *immediacy*, as the *always already*.

When reading Tester in conjunction with key works in hermeneutics, I was reminded of two literature sources that I previously read in a wholly new way. Within the eco-literary flourish of David Abram (1996) I felt the sense of reverence for a sensate live Earth that speaks. With Winograd and Flores (1986) I appreciated their refutation of the correspondence theory of cognition through their deep critique of representation. Moreover, their work also had affiliations with notions of "complexity" and "embodied cognition" found in the work of Fritjof Capra (1996) and Varela et al (1991). Yet the disclosure did not stop there. The deeper appreciation was for connections that I stumbled into between what appeared to be three disparate texts on nature (Abram, 1996), culture (Tester, 1995), and technology (Winograd & Flores, 1986) in their common emphasis with language. It was out of this understanding and subsequent reading of Heidegger (1977) that my interest in language and disclosure within immediacy congealed as the onto-linguistic disclosure that follows.
4.8 HIDDEN MYTHOS AND TELOS OF AN OBJECT\textsuperscript{54}

We need to look reification in the eye. We need to *deconstruct the present as it unfolds, before us within immediacy*. For instance, in Figure 8. below, what do we see? We may reply that we see a piece of art, a picture, a cultural artefact, or art contemplating the meeting of the animate and the inanimate — the whole and the broken, the useful and useless. It is all of these, for we see and interpret the "thing" through Kantian categories we have been taught to divide the world with (Willinsky, 1998). The practice of classifying and categorizing is reminiscent of our tendency to label difference. But perhaps there is more to what we see. Perhaps we need to transcend categories to "see" the spoon as form, material, potter, or ritual. Or, perhaps, the spoon is a mode of being, praxis, community, becoming, storying,\textsuperscript{55} presencing and truth (Heidegger, 1977).
This is the third time we have seen the spoon in this dissertation. We note that each time that we have seen the spoon it has disclosed more. With each passing, like the jewel turning in the light, we see another facet. We first
saw the spoon when we shared a story around the spoon as we opened the 
invitation to my dissertation. There we saw why this spoon means so much to 
me, even though it is broken, and how, when it broke it disclosed my 
reluctance to discard it. For not only has this spoon travelled across the oceans 
with our family a long time ago when we first came to North America. It was 
also a time when my father was still alive and our family was still whole. The 
spoon is like family in more ways than one. It is only my mother and I who now 
share of the spoon and it is meaningful as presence alone. The spoon through 
its story is also a time and mood shifter, as it can as easily alter my mood, as it 
shifts time. So the spoon is family, even as it reminds me of sustenance and 
virtue.

The second time we saw the spoon it told another story. It spoke of its 
old incarnation as unspectacular, but life-giving mud at the bottom of the 
riverbed, and its transformation through love and craft into pottery or china. 
That is when the spoon appears to us for the first time as a tool, with the 
ability to affect our destiny. But then as we found out, we were in an in-
between space where we only saw the spoon as culture, before it revealed to 
us its original form as earth, and its function as technology. And through that 
turn, it demonstrated the power of the arbitrary in social construction, when 
what is "made" can appear instead as "found". That was when the spoon spoke 
of possibility within the liminal space between these attributes. Here the spoon 
also told us to see form as transferable principle. I suggested then, that if we
fail to see the spoon as technology, there was the danger that we would do likewise with gunpowder, or the unravelling of the genetic code.

4.8a Layered stories in quotidian immediacy

Will the spoon tell us another story? If we are open and ready for disclosure, perhaps it will unfold in immediacy. Pray tell, what we will hear? This time, the spoon, happy to see us, speaks in two voices — of whole and part, before and after it breaks.

Undeniably, this type of phenomenological analysis offers powerful critique of reification. Connected to its evocative power is the characteristic of its depth. Once we open ourselves to disclosure, the spoon reveals even more of itself. Through an artistic pass, we find before us a cultural artefact, a piece of art ostensibly representing "real" objects. An object of culture that testifies of human production that is made, not found. Yet, as Tester argues eloquently, the object, like other objects of "second nature", appears as nature, more likely to be experienced as found, rather than made. In the process, the object has been naturalized, while concealing the labour and the Earth.

Yet, in another sense, could we not have alternatively claimed within a prior sense, that all that goes into the construction of the cultural artefact as representation, as art, can also be found in nature, and hence, not made? In accepting this alternate thesis, we come to the realization that even though all
is nature, we only see representations of the real, or more precisely, social construction. That act of realizing the simultaneity of found and made nature of cultural object carries implications, with potential to subvert the reification of the found as cultural object, and in so doing, in the unthinking of a world, of objects and social construction.

By deepening these lines of critique, we realize that not only is my art found but so is its content. Put differently, moving outward from the picture, the leaf, the ceramic which makes the spoon, and the constituents that went into engineering the technology that enabled the artist to capture and to represent the interactions as a work of art — in all of these nature is found. Here, the found becomes the made, and hence the real, within the disclosure that made objects have their counterparts in found nature.

4.8b Classifying and fragmenting

While the leaf is intact, alive and animate, by contrast, the spoon is broken, dead and inanimate. The leaf and the spoon belong to different categories. After all, intact things are not broken things, things that are alive are not dead things, and animate is not inanimate. At least that is how we are taught to divide the world (Willinsky, 1998). Surely, we cannot violate these categories? Or can we? But if we dare to do so, what havoc lies in wait for us? Disclosure of cultural construction as reification reveals classification in how the act of cultural production through classifying also transforms the living
Earth into an object world. Ecologically speaking, it is not only a question of breaking these categories, but if we are to speak to the peril of crisis of relationships, we must begin forthwith.

As Hannah Arendt (1958) warned us in *The Human Condition*, that although it might be convenient, to think to make, and to classify the Earth, there is also something profound lost within the bargain. To categorize the Earth and reify as separate objects what was once whole is a form of disentanglement, and social delusion. Significantly, with techno-scientific logic, the forms of representations are converted into categories, through which we apprehend and contemplate the workings of the found Earth.

Thus acts of deconstruction as phenomenologically interpreted offer us deconstructive eyes, an onto-linguistic lens through which we can see the world-before-making. Here the praxis works in opening ourselves in humility as attentive beings to possibility of disclosure, resisting ease of conformity and social consensus, while attempting to grasp what the manifestations and/or changes mean. Whereas social consensus sees a satellite, as an object of technological supremacy or spectacular photos of the Earth, if we pay attention to the phenomenon and ask ourselves what it is telling us or what has profoundly changed, we too might arrive at disclosures similar to Arendt’s and Heidegger’s.
Yet no sooner do we start, we are fraught in difficulty as we begin to lose our way. Sure, that green leaf came from something growing in our garden, but what of the broken spoon? Surely we made, if not manufactured, that cultural artefact? But should we be become transfixed on the object as fetish, and only observe the finished form of the object, then our deconstructive acts might come to an abrupt halt. A significant turn opens when we direct our attentions away from the finished form, to recover the materials through which the spoon came to be. The moment we begin to think of the spoon in terms of materials, tools and culture, our deconstructive act is rendered profound. We realize that not only are materials and tools implicit aspects of culture, but when taken collectively they also convey the very definition of what we understand as technology. We acknowledge our spoon represents not only an artefact of culture, or a technological artefact, but technology itself.

4.8c Technology as a mode of being

To push our act of deconstruction further, not only is our spoon a representation of technology, we have revealed our spoon as technology. Here world re-discloses itself as the Earth, and in so doing, helps us to unthink a social world. Central to our deconstruction, when we consider objects at the material level, all becomes found; the leaf is found in the garden, the clay that makes the spoon was once the mud at the bottom of a river, as was its exterior paint, once of plant dyes, or of some derivative of molten rock. In recognizing
our spoon as technology, our acts of deconstruction are even more powerful for another reason. They disclose that in the making of "a" world, we are working with an arbitrary model of singular representation. And should this social construction be exposed as flawed, it signals of danger and expresses many of the problems we are experiencing.

As pointed out by Heidegger (1977) within this form of en/framing of the Earth is the immediate danger of the impulse of the domination of nature implicit to Baconian techno-scientific rationale. According to Heidegger the danger does not stop there. Given the ubiquity of social construction, perhaps the greatest danger lies when we turn living nature into a warehouse of resource, precluding all other forms of experiencing the Earth. In the process, we impoverish the imagination, which in turn, cuts off further disclosure of alternate modes of being. When the world is encoded through digital codes negating the living earth, that optic prevents us from seeing beyond coded reification (Bowers, 1995). Herein lies danger in how we find it difficult to see past illusions. While the screen and microprocessor directly and obviously reminds us of technology, the broken spoon is less readily seen, even hidden as technology.

Through our acts of deconstruction, we open a space for nature, culture and technology to be seen in tandem. And within that awareness of the discursive separation of Nature into ecology, culture and technology, we
realize that the need for *bridging* apparently disparate discourses and *exposing* categories as artificial is one and the same task.

4.8d Enter the actor and community

Our acts of deconstruction promise to disclose more. Combining all our insights, thus far, we have been analyzing disembodied/passive objects of technological culture in nature. But these objects are *for* some purpose, *for* some being. Here then is my debt and tie to Husserlian intentionality. And with the mention of intentionality, we are reminded of existence and ethics, in what is not seen but felt in the picture. The vital links missing from our analysis — the actor/being of this discourse, author-poet, and the social dynamic through which these artefacts obtain meaning. At the risk of over-simplifying the argument, here the significance of the actor is profound. As noted above, at the point when s/he re-enters our analysis, s/he also layers our discourse with existential meaning. Where once we had two "dumb objects" in close proximity, engaging in passivity, with the introduction of the actor a space is simultaneously opened up for meaning to re/emerge through existence. All these objects as leaf, spoon or art are meaningful for the actor. In the realization that the leaf and spoon come together within the act of providing nourishment for living mortal being, what has been absent in this particular analysis is the actor, and the Earth sustaining the actor.
Yet, even this analysis seems incomplete, for what of that social dynamic? For the social is still missing from our analysis — when we make soup we also make community through the social relations of production. It is significant that the act of production and hence of technology, be seen as intimately related to the meaning of being, for it suggests that we might understand something deeper about the *spoon as technology*. For meaning to emerge, we need to bring in a plurality and polis of actors, and the notion of community in space-time (Arendt, 1958). Conjunction of the leaf and spoon suggests communal celebration in the partaking of the fruits of the Earth. With this picture of communal activity, we not only open up technology, history, and the valuing of the material, but we also make sense of these concepts in terms of activities of finite, storied beings, wherein meaning is anchored within lived narratives.

4.8e Disclosure in breakdown

Thus far we have only referred to the spoon as broken. But of what significance is the break that we see? Poetically and artistically, the break suggests multiple meanings. On the one hand, it suggests loss of continuity of meaning through history, loss of identity associated with that object, and the loss of story and history that applies to individuals or collective cultures alike. In so doing, it accentuates the close weave between artefact, culture, activity, history, and identity. On the other hand, the breakdown represents change and promise found within the hermeneutic notion that such breaks open a crack
where disclosure emerges in that breaking. After all, it was through the breaking\textsuperscript{58} of the spoon that this dissertation and cultural artefact was born.

Thus far, when thinking of this break, our analysis of object of culture has not involved the notion of value of the artefact. Here the break also has economic dimensions, with respect to the alienation found in fetishizing, commodifying, and objectifying the world. The utterance of the word “value” is significant here, for with this utterance the economic enters into our analysis to exacerbate the reification discussed previously. Reification is not just any reification. It is the reification of object in terms of utility.

The material structure and activity around communal making of the soup has to do with existence and survival, as necessitated by needs through the praxis of labour. Significantly, through our deconstructive acts, we have not only seen the arbitrariness of categories, but also its power to deceive through, and as representation. Central to our previous analysis, these categories underscore the economic through which all that passes is levelled and reduced. Given that the economic conjoins the techno-scientific, this reductionistic aspect makes the mode of obscuring and preclusion even more worrisome.

In combining the mode of technology and the reduction of Earth to the economic, we find the twin dangers of the conjoined reification of the technological and the economic. Here the broken spoon implies a shift in cultural values — first as commodity and then through its breaking, as waste.
Turning to the spoon as commodity, the danger of arbitrary value is underscored when we consider the material with which the spoon was made. This spoon is made of mud, but had it been made of precious metal, it might have been salvaged. Such a difference in agency bears examination. In exposing this problematic relationship between perceived value of these materials and our actions that flow from this value, we once again see dangers of reification, but this time through an economic eye. For arguably, it is through this very kind of economic valuation that wars are fought — when the material, through potential to respond to human needs, such as with oil, gold and silver, subverts the valuing of Life.

4.8f The dialectic within immediacy

Turning to the second voice of the broken spoon, what value remains within a finished artefact that is no longer whole? For even if we were to rejoin the pieces, there would always be a fracture line. Here, this line of thinking signals yet another problematic dynamic: Once the solid configuration of the object has been compromised, it ceases to be of value, and re-designated as refuse. Combining our all-too-brief analysis of economic valuation of artefact as commodity and its subsequent devaluation as waste suggests the outlines of an extraordinary thesis.

The arbitrariness of the artefact has potential to create very unanticipated consequences from the dynamic originally animated by our
material, such as communal needs as expressed through technology, and economic valuing. The artefact further exacerbates our storied lives, histories, polis and identities to reveal the hidden *impulse of destruction* that hides all other means of valuing. With this all-encompassing economic valuing which threatens to turn all into mere resource, we arrive at the ultimate irony. For what we do to the spoon, *we do also to ourselves*, ever faithful to economics we too, become expendable resources for disposal.

Yet all is not lost, for we are also caring beings. If we seek to be truly attentive to our hearts through our acts of deconstruction and re-visiting originary sites, there is hope for us. For, as Holderlin muses: where danger resides, grows the saving power also. That is to say if we ask the right questions, the dynamic which reduces all life to economic explanation can reveal itself as perverse. In place of found nature, we may find instead made objects that give us ideology as false consciousness, falsehood, false needs, false pride, false identities, false politics, and even false meaning. And in so doing, we would have recast nature as resource, with potential for conflict and self-annihilation.

The task of unthinking of a world is an urgent one of demystifying and revealing the mystical power of fetishization of modern Life under the shadow of reification. Through exposing the power of social construction to make what is a world into *the* world, we need to unthink the world, and the socially constructed meaning of "the world" that issues from the reification of nature.
4.8g From discovery to disclosure

Perhaps the spoon will tell us that we have never invented even a small part of the world. How could we even begin to think so? For the way in which we have pieced together the living world is likely to be one of myriad of ways in which it might be possible to do so. Nay, we did not even discover the world, for the Earth has always been ontologically prior to us. From originary conditions Life has been rendered possible. The point is, the spoon might tell us that the directionality of knowing is important, whether in the case of the fibre optic cable, satellites responsible for the network that connects our labour with the rest of humanity, or in the intricate patterns we cast in earthenware moulds. We need to be aware that disclosure rather than arising in the human, filters through the human as a mode of being.

Put differently, if we are amenable to seeking to be consciously aware and attentive to our hearts, paying close attention to the spoon in how it affects the life of others in community, then we might see things as they are. We may see things as part of the living context of which we help to complete the circuit. These are the times when the living, sensuous world, of which we are all an intricate part, discloses itself to us, should we predispose ourselves to disclosure. Moreover, it is through humility that we might hear the voice of disclosure. As mere mortals, we need to be mindful of the directionality of knowing, for doing so might mitigate against the possibility of anthropocentric
hubris. We might acknowledge that the vector of knowing does not originate within the human, but within the living tissue of the sensuous world that give rise to all phenomena.

4.8h Connecting presence, form, praxis and truth

If we give the spoon leave, it will speak more of disclosure. Disclosure is presence and presencing, and presencing is truth. If we ask the spoon again how it came to be, might the spoon tell us the story in another way? It might say it came to be through the form, which constitutes the shape of the spoon, as spoonness. Or it might say it is of mud as well as paint. Or it might say, that it came to be because of the potter. Or it might just say it is here because we care when we sup in celebration and that it assumes the forms through which we express that care in performing the rites of supping together.

In so doing, the spoon discloses itself as presence where truth might prevail. Perhaps in the end it is not the spoon as material, form, or potter, but in what it means to us when we sup, when we manifest its mode as one that does no harm. Here, form reveals itself as praxis, for it is in praxis that the spoon comes to be, as an implement for sharing and joy. When it manifests as an instrument to sup together in joy, it manifests in antithetical form to divisive danger. Reminded once again of the poet Holderlin — within the danger waits also the saving Grace — truth appears in presence and praxis.
Finally, the spoon also discloses that while we cannot produce that immediacy space, it is in practicing hermeneutics as meta-interpretation coupled to being existentially and intentionally aware of the lifeworld in language that makes it possible for us to grasp immediacy as it is disclosing. Whether it manifests in the concrete as the spoon telling the story, or as idea — when virtue comes in the name of Freedom, Hope, or Love — we need to be receptive to immediacy. Pedagogically, it is here at this portal of humility where quotidian pedagogy awaits us.
CHAPTER FIVE: IMMEDIACY, CARING AND ABSENCE

5.1 SIGNATURES IN CARING

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from...
We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree
Are of equal duration....

T.S. Eliot

I can barely recall the room. Yet, unlike the usual, banal, cold, sterile, rooms with little or no colour, this room had a personality of its own. All around me was a sense of attention to care, inscribed in the pattern of pastel flower trim that ran along the walls. It circumscribed the room, high above, where the walls meet the ceiling. Even so, it did not stop there, I could almost feel the care, diffuse as it were, into our beings. We felt deeply touched by the hint of care to detail, in softness that permeated the room. It was in the comfortable reclining chairs for family members, the coordination of subdued fabrics and wallpaper to the background of pastel trim on the walls, even in
the rays of the sun streaming into the room. For this was a gift, a thoughtful and generous space that allowed us to breathe and gather easier, that had even been designed with accommodation for family members to stay while caring for the infirmed.

The view to the outside world was qualitatively different; away from the din and chatter, with a sense of serenity. Sadly, the ornate floral patterns, the wallpaper, the coordinating trims, the soft reclining chairs, the generous space, the serene view outside the window, even the extra bed, were alas also the culmination of a life journey. They were part of the last sanctuary for my dear father in the terminal stages of his cancer. This room was full of meaning and graced by profound expressions of humanity, made possible through blessings of love from the caring of fellow human beings for the departing of one of their kind.

Here then was a space of dignity and respect. We had moved Father from the once sterile, impersonal conditions with bland walls and matching hard chairs and shared space into this personal and private space without greater financial outlay. Welling inside me was a profound sense of gratitude for the deep caring from our society that I had never before known existed. Here too germinates love within anticipated healing from grief in the creation of a last space of meaning and gathering for the terminally ill, who are too sick to retreat quietly into the dis/comfort of their own homes. It is a surrogate
home-away-from-home and a generative space for love to renew and reaffirm itself.

As Father’s disease became terminal, we found ourselves immersed within the multiple weaves of human stories in the palliative care unit of the Vancouver General Hospital. Here, in the hospice, Life takes on a very different aesthetic that is full of appreciation, meaning and poignancy. As the wonderful nurses tell you, patients either take out their anger at their fateful misfortune on the world, or they leave in quiet resignation. Everywhere around us, people were wheeled away, their heads exposed, as if in quiet slumber and contentment. We sensed that was likely the last time we would see their faces.

We cannot help but be pulled into the human stories of others whose fates have somehow converged with our own. For here, sparing none, within the heightened sensorium of the human experience, in sounds, smells, tastes, sights, and tactility threatening to overload one’s senses, is to be found the consistent reminder of the fragility of Life, its preciousness, and our own impending mortality. Permeating the air was a feeling, a pathos that was extremely difficult to convey, yet one whose signature was everywhere. It was, for instance, in the songs I loved and grew up with that I associated with certain nostalgia — the connecting signature that had made me realize the dying woman near me, who looked older than her years was about my age.
This signature in songs was able to bridge feeling across divides of space, time, and bodies. Yet, I could not help but feel somewhat intrusive, even guilty, listening to the beautiful songs played by the woman who occupied the room directly opposite Father's. Unknown to this private, anonymous woman-being, I was quietly sharing in her intimate sadness and pain as she listened over and over to that song. This genteel woman who left a deep impression in my psyche, never had visitors. She gently played her music, and looked out of her little window for hours on end everyday, acutely aware of her impending mortality. Her rhythmic ritual led me to ask whether it had been the world that had forgotten her, whether it was she who had turned her back to the world, or, some combination of the two. Or, whether I should even ask.

The signature was also in how the simplest of things took on new light. Upon hearing my brother play the first notes of Chopin's Etude in C Minor, blank faces of those marked appeared from every corner, slowly gathering around the piano, lured as if to the piper. Maybe the signature was also in my brother's pain escaping through his fingers that the young and old in the room felt and shared. For somehow paradoxically, notes bounced off the grain of this old untuned piano and conveyed a feeling that reached out into the air to touch in silent communication, all who heard its melancholic melody. Its power was palpable, binding us all, transcending our meagre separate selves in the room. One and all we lowered our eyes and heads in synchrony, as though bowing in respect and silent, universal reverence.
5.2 EXISTENTIAL ANGST, AWAKENING, AND ADVOCACY

There, in the palliative care unit, two words that I only later understood as “meaning” and “significance”, began to permeate my being. For what is living, if it is not about something meaningful? The unbearable silence and serenity made me look not outside, but deep into my heart for the answer to the question of meaning. For myself, somehow, I had a sense of what it was not about.

When a person is about to depart, dressed in only a humble hospital gown, it becomes clear what they cannot take with them. In the end it dawned upon me that what the dying take with them, is how they feel about themselves in terms of the world. Through his humble passing my father had shown me it was not about amassing more objects and wealth, or about being seen with status symbols. Neither was it about getting ahead at any cost, without empathy for neither family nor friend. It was not about self-image, good looks, or claims of supremacy over others. For these, as the saying goes, are all fleeting, ephemeral, images that blow away with the slightest wind.

What counted was the awareness of the sense of mortality. Regardless of any theological claims, I realized I would never again see my father in his human form. The labour of his life as development and the love inscribed in that ethereal way in his veins and arms were becoming more emaciated by the day. What counted also, for me, was to try to make a dying man happy. And, although it might sound contrary in the hour of a person's passing, what
perhaps mattered more was quality against mere quantity of time spent in wishing we had done other things together.

What greatly mattered were family, companionship, friendship, conversation, poetry, art, writing, music and love. What mattered also was celebrating the gift of life, feeling grace, and a sense of spirituality animating the world. What mattered was experience over observation. What mattered also was feeling the caress of the gentle summer wind on my skin as I participated within the presence of being, with someone special amidst the embers of the setting sun. I felt the smallness of being. What mattered was having values that one deeply believed in. What mattered was to right injustice. And yes, what was critical in all of this… was to try to save the Earth.

5.3 GRIEF, EMERGENT MEANING, FRACTURING OF WORLD

We all felt powerless, hoping against hope, haunted by the grim truth that Father’s life was slowly slipping away. Each day meant a day less of time he had and one more towards the fateful day. Those were the moments when we all wondered who would be beside Father in the hour of his passing. We were torn in sharing Father’s elation, triumphant after a particularly terrible night, and yet terrified at the same time, knowing he will have to face that same horror yet again. And although Father never once complained of pain, we
all knew he must have been in pain. It was also in those hours that the meaning of euthanasia as mercy killing gripped our beings as we thought about sparing Father from more pain and hurt.

Since Father's pain occurred amidst the continuity of everyday life, we initially observed vigil by his beside. But as his illness progressed and prolonged, the pragmatic returned. Rather than all of us staying vigilant at Father's bedside, my brother had been obliged to fly back to Toronto to return to his family and his practice. And as the toll on us became equally palpable, Mother and I gradually developed a schedule, taking turns to watch over my ill Father. It was a most alienating scene. It felt like we had all returned home after a trip, to find Father missing. I searched for meaning. It was within this alienating context of watching, waiting, caring, amidst hoping and despairing that as I returned to attend my classes, with a pager as reminder of daily exigency. I was prepared for the worst, ready to go at a moment's notice, leaving classes, feeding the meters, cycling daily through that routine, when something odd happened. My world broke in two.

A fracturing that had a most ethereal quality capable of sneaking up on one's heart as it catches one unaware. When the common becomes the strange: daily motions of feeding the meter after classes, going upstairs to care for Father, winding his bed up and down for optimum comfort, returning to feed the meter, returning to feed Father, and collapsing exhausted from the day — expending the most trivial of energies on the most menial of tasks.
One day, almost in slow motion, I was struck hard by the stark contrast in how different life was outside this bubble of care. People whom I witnessed outside, more than often, were in stark contrast to those in the ward. They all seemed to be in a rush, impatient, unforgiving, and callous compared to the sanguine pace with its intimate attention to care and forgiveness of the trespassed. Yet, those I witnessed in the arterial streets where I parked were nothing compared to those on the main street where I walked that day to do some errands. That was when the contrast burst vividly into full view. Along the main street there were signs of greed everywhere. Cars honked impatiently; people walked by briskly over the homeless in the streets, seeming not only without care, but with an added measure of righteous but misplaced scorn.

This fracturing occurred at what had been thus far the most critical time in my life. I was constantly reviewing everything. I remember asking myself, how had the fracturing been possible? In what follows, I attempt to embed the experience of fracturing with the overall changes in our life pattern that we were all experiencing as we mourned Father’s passing. In so doing, I seek to forward a theory of autopoiesis as emergent research.
5.4 AUTOPOIESIS AS EMERGENT RESEARCH

5.4a Questions for topic and method

For my dissertation research, I did not experience problems with theory, because I read voraciously, not just for facts, but for meaning. However, the same could not be said for my topic and method. My particular quandary revolved around the double notion that although it was clear to me for a priori reasons that method could not drive research, I was not convinced the reverse was always tenable. At some point, however, within the unfolding of my research and the struggle with life exigencies, I arrived at what might be called a topical-methodological thesis. I asked myself what corpus of research resonated with the almost unpredictable kinds of perturbations, exigencies, and fluctuations that I was experiencing. The breakthrough came in my answer to my own question when it occurred to me that the state I was in bore a close resemblance to that found in extant work variously known in the literature as systems theory, chaos theory, complexity theory and autopoietic theory.

5.4b Correspondence between life and theory

I could not help noticing certain correspondences. For instance, it occurred to me that the changes in our state, in the extended grieving process
my whole family went through, compared similarly to those of systems far from equilibrium. Consistent with fundamental principles through which systems are explained in terms of oscillation and feedback loops, I believe it was significant that we all went through continuous self-examination while performing repetitious tasks during this period. This repetitious oscillation accounted, at least for myself, as a heightened sense of existential angst where even the smallest of details appeared to me as meaningful signs that were to later profoundly affect my understanding of the world.

5.4c Literature, theory, and lived experience

According to Ilya Prigogine’s theory of dissipative structures (see Prigogine & Holte, 1993; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, 1997), as systems move far away from equilibrium, there arises through processes of self-organization the tendency to evolve into new states of increased orders of complexity. Of significance, this phenomenon also holds true for living organisms in terms of autopoietic theory (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Varela et al., 1991; Winograd & Flores, 1986). Arguably, the dissipative structures and autopoietic phenomenon applied to social systems — systems of duress that I had felt through the loss of my father and characterized by schedules and demands that were far from normal — reminded me of the extreme disorder experienced when systems in general move far from equilibrium. In terms of the social analogue, we have the following line of reasoning. Within our new order of living, consistent with the theory of dissipative structures and autopoietic, we attempt to make sense
of our loss and find ourselves in constant review, doing repetitious tasks similar to those of feedback loops that are fundamental to chaos theory (Capra, 1996).

Consistent with my social reading of systems theory, I theorized that there existed within the liminal spaces of life disorders new possibilities that were forming to eventually destabilize and re-stabilize our lives through higher order, as newfound meaning. Perhaps, because I was already searching for meaning during the moment of loss, my existential angst sharpened in/as academic inquiry. Here is an example of what I have been calling the potential for disclosure, when one might be predisposed through misfortune to enter the space of immediacy.

As I vacillated daily, back and forth between the world of the meters and the space inside my father's room in the palliative care unit, the same reality that had once been one and whole, slowly began to fracture into two worlds, characterized by absence of care, and care. The realities seemed too different to be otherwise. This fracturing in turn opened the way to learn from the quotidian, when (and where) the familiar took on the semblance of the unfamiliar, and where I came back to the same space only to find the space I knew so well was now different.

5.4d Reconceptualizing research as autopoietic

In these two narratives I am interested in the moment when I became aware of a congruence between the topic and the method of inquiry. This congruence runs so deep that the topic becomes the method through
which the topic is pursued. In the first situation, mindfulness became the method of studying mindfulness; in the second, emergent inquiry became the method of studying emergent inquiry. (Oberg, 2002, p. 4)

I began with no idea where to start except with the vague feeling that I needed to respond to the larger problematic within which Father’s illness was located. There were no frameworks and books available to guide me in my amorphous quandary, and without knowing at the time, the poignant introduction of my existential angst was retroactively to be the point of origin of my inquiry. Yet, through a self-organizing recursive process characteristic of autopoiesis, my inquiry emerged out of lived experience, unfolding in reverse, through existential angst, from emphasis on lived repetition, and reading voraciously — placing exegesis over conclusions, meaning over facts, and obtaining meaning for which I knew not the questions.

Two significant influences emerged out of this void. The first is one I have already attributed to Ted Aoki’s advice. The second was my good fortune in coming across the work of Antionette Oberg (2002) who, through her work steeped in chaos theory, forwarded her powerful claim that method might sometimes be topic. As can be seen in Oberg’s citation above, these two influences allowed me to further posit that if it is possible to merge life with work (Aoki, 1996), and topic with method (Oberg, 2002) — through a doubled turn within the autopoietic read — then the theorizing which arises out of a
life inexorable from the research question was itself a method within the four-way isomorphism between theory, life, topic and method.

5.5 A PLACE TO CALL HOME

When you're weary, feeling small
When tears are in, your eyes
I will dry them all
I'm on your side
Oh, when times get rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down

When you're weary
When you out in the street
When evening falls so hard
I will comfort you
I'm on your side,
When times are rough
And friends just can't be found
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down

Simon and Garfunkel, circa 1969

When I asked such questions as what is living on the street like for adolescents, how are the lives of street kids structured, or how do street kids structure their lives, the literature is virtually silent. (Mayers, 2001, p. 135)

Like the prophets admonishing the clan, like the seer who tried to shape the future, street kids are calling us. (Mayers, 2001, p. 119)

... (I)t seems we have forgotten to examine how it might be possible our values, which underscore our society, precipitate or perpetuate the current
climate for kids on the street. Their relationship is most exquisitely exemplified by kids as they expose their perceptions of the underlying market economy values which seep into much of what we do and say, plan and understand.

(Mayers, 2001, p. 122)

5.5a Recovery, Caring and Uncaring

Caring and uncaring, like laughing and crying in the wise words of Joni Mitchell, are the same release, two sides of the same impulse that speaks to our human condition. It is through one that we are most intensively reminded of the other. Here, I invite the reader to share my lessons from the quotidian: In the mirror opposite of caring, in my walk along a long street in my horror at my own apparent inadequate attention to care on that street. These moments allowed me to re-connect with the special caring I experienced so poignantly, and so many years ago, in the palliative care unit; and with the plight of the homeless.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness...
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

TS Eliot

5.6 KNOWING THE PLACE FOR THE FIRST TIME

Like dew drops after the deluge, understandings appeared in the sights disclosed to me in my walk and in my own reaction to those images along that long street. These extremely disturbing images that visited me on that fateful day would not go away, tearing at my bosom, and seeping deep into my subconscious. They reminded me why my experience in the palliative care unit had been so poignant. It was the visceral, found in those disturbing and eerie images looming out of the deep, dark night, as if appearing from a Dickens novel, that interrupted my self-absorption. I had just presented a paper (Feng, 2001e) at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE) in Toronto. I was absorbed in the thoughts of the wonderful people I had just met at the conference. As the images clashed with my thoughts, I was reminded why it was that I had embarked upon my work in the first place.

Like before, it was seeing the familiar, once again, as the unfamiliar. The images reminded me how the single world I once knew had been split asunder into two in the twilight of Father’s struggle, never to rejoin again,
except within the single breath of articulation through which I attempt to make sense of that fracturing. The moments of fracturing had forever changed my understanding of the world, and had provided the secret impetus behind my attempts to make whole a world reduced to object, levelled in meaning, and filtered through the lens of economic-technoscientific-social construction.

I was walking down what could have been any street, typical of any decaying inner core of an urban city, where the homeless struggle in vain to find shelter in misery, and where the rich rush to flee to the suburbs. Ironically, while I had been occasioned to present my paper and to learn from my colleagues, my greatest "disclosure' and understanding came from the quotidian lessons of that fateful walk in the streets. I had come face-to face with the huddled: faceless, amorphous, masses everywhere, sleeping on the streets with pieces of makeshift tarp and plastic to shield their exposed bodies from the dank night air. That was when I realized it was happening all over again. As the images sunk in, it was as if, in slow motion, the world was fracturing again.

5.6a Between affluence and effluence

In stark contrast to the visible human stories in the palliative care unit, the poignancy might have returned because, there was an added effect on the street which had a glaring, but impersonal, anaesthetizing effect upon the reluctant participant in this temporal drama. For at the time of morning that I
was walking, no faces were to be seen, only hint of bodies strewn everywhere, desperately seeking shelter. Poignancy was further exacerbated by my inability to act. For stunned by the sheer magnitude of the plight of the homeless, I found myself in angst again, feeling terribly guilty when I had to step off the curb and face some faceless bodies spilled to the edge of the sidewalk. Where and how would I begin? That was when I realized that I could not help. That sinking feeling, although logical, was extremely unsettling. I was also faced with disgust at my cowardice and apparent lack of compassion. My walk down that street took an eternity as I felt estranged from myself, and when the plight of the homeless had been driven so viscerally home. But my long stroll had been deliberate in atonement for my callousness. And like the classical flâneur of Baudelaire alongside images of Dickens, I walked aimlessly, searching deeply for answers, and asking why it was that I appeared to be acting like those I perceived outside the sphere of care, so many years ago.

It was then that I came to the realization that part of the answer could be found in the sheer magnitude, and the anonymity. Here in the streets, even empathy can assume an amorphous quality when one does not know the humanity below the sheets and when one is unable to see faces, unsure of their fates. Here too within a moment of symbolism with numbing poetic disquiet, I realized that the shopping carts the homeless push around and garbage bags in which they stored their worldly belongings, combine to signify the dispossessed of the streets, of modernity. For these were the refuse of society, the quintessential consumers of waste. The non-human material symbols of
consumption, and human masses; bags designed to collect refuse, and
humanity who depend upon them not for collection for disposal, but for the
disposed.

5.6b Connecting lived experience to theory

Here was an instance of lived empiricism, where popular theory and
immediacy of experience connected for me. Far away from home or my
sanguine little sanitary hotel room, where I read, write, and contemplated
social construction, I became exposed to the most visceral and raw of views,
vulnerable to the real that I experienced and feeling the hollowing of meaning.
Before me were the masses of cultural consumption, caught within axes of
identity, re/production, regulation and representation (du Gay et al., 1997;
Mackay, 1997; Storey, 1999), theorized by the critical theory of the Frankfurt
(Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1998; Marcuse, 1964/1991) School. Here as well is
where we connect with globalization theory (Beck, 1999, 2000; Giddens, 1999;
Korten, 2001; Latouche, 1993; Mander & Goldsmith, 1996; O'Sullivan, 1999;
Sassen, 1998) where hollowness becomes tangible at the foot level, and where
reality lies sprawled before one amassed in the dank night air on the cold
pavement.

Here was a lived lesson in how mass displacement and the loss of
happiness, families and lives, correlates with the costs disproportionately
distributed globally and locally in the widening gulf between the rich and the
poor (Latouche, 1993), an effect of corporate greed (Korten, 2001), and consumer lifestyles that impacts our environment (McKibben, 1999; Meadows et al., 1992). Critically, here is the theme, as per the Frankfurt School, which interweaves together nature and society (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1998), where social and ecological oppression are inextricably entwined (Bahro & Jenkins, 1994). For in the ascendancy of the secular and the rational, nothing it seems is sacred, and none is spared within the ambit of the lust for growth and its unquenchable greed.

Here, too, was where I felt the uneven exposure of the poor to risk being theorized in the literature, and where the untenable lack of humanity, as evidenced in the human condition I had personally experienced, validates why the metaphor of a machine guiding human praxis is profoundly problematic. We meet the undeniable end-result of the justification behind the mechanistic cry championed by the social Darwinists of the day: that in the inevitable struggle for self and society there must be winners and losers. Under that tarp and plastic were the losers of social Darwinism — the abandoned huddling amongst themselves on the streets without a home to call their own, with only the cold night sky and the firmaments for their comfort and roof.

The homeless do have relatives or loved ones. And yet, the question needs to be asked: if they have loved ones, family and people who care about them, where are they? How does the homeless end up on the street, destitute, and past hope? We need to interrogate our hearts and our praxis. How is it that
brothers and sisters who once played alongside each other, and mothers and fathers who once looked after them, can now be estranged from their care? Without romanticizing the problem, and cognizant of the complexity of these issues, what cause withholds their loved ones to reach out to them materially?

And yet the issues are surely more complex than this. Questions beg to be asked: how is it that our hearts have strayed so far? Surely there must have been some warning when the changes began to take place some time ago. And when exactly was that time? What did they do back then? Did they see the changes coming? As with the death of nature Merchant (1980) uncovers, or my example of different parties gathered around the tree. Here again, are seeds for disclosure in quotidian lessons. That is to say, not only are our experiences today the end result of changes that came to pass under the force of history, but that even today, before our very eyes, under our very noses, there are new signs of changes. If allowed to be wrought, these changes will profoundly affect the fabric of lives of our children and grandchildren to come. Here the challenge for us, as educators and researchers, is to not only learn how to see these signs, but to interpret their meanings in intervention and through the practice of quotidian pedagogy. Such intervention requires us to take the time to pause and allow ourselves vulnerability to allow for disclosure in the immediate.
5.6c Symptoms of cultural decadence

I fear that, when we pass by bodies in the street it is symbolic of harbingers and symptoms of deeper societal malady and the shape of things to come. It suggests the magnitude of economic collapse and the betrayal in the loss of love and compassion writ large in the ethos of the times. Without the traditional hearth, which a family can gather around, in a place that one can call home, it is symbolic of the decay of not only the family, its warmth... but of civilization itself.

Modernity, it seems, exacts a high price, perhaps too high. We pay for it dearly, with our happiness, our families, our lives, and our souls. Here is where I fear the loss of the home means more. We need to also remind ourselves, that despite atomistic-individual philosophy, the homeless in the street (as with loss of biodiversity), are collective losses, symbolic of the distance the modern heart has strayed and the ethos of the times that permits the straying. As I have discussed in CHAPTER THREE, given our pivotal role as teachers and researchers responsible for the teaching of future teachers and researchers, we need to have a good grasp of these issues, so that we do not inadvertently end up complicit (Bowers & Flinders, 1990; Jardine, 1998; Orr, 1994; O'Sullivan, 1999). Given the complexity of the issues, this is arguably, a formidable task, yet it is one we must take up. Stating the problem positively, given our immense responsibility and charge, as teachers and researchers, we have the
potential to truly make a difference, through education committed to answer to the same calling.

5.6d Between caring and uncaring

Summing up, I have retroactively written these contrasting accounts of care in the palliative care unit and of its absence in the street. In a sense, these words represent some of what I could not articulate when I was moving between what appeared to me as a zone of caring contrasted against a zone of callousness — at the time of my father’s illness and again with my walk down that long street. When my father passed away, it was almost as if through these recursive oscillations, in accordance to system theory, within the twilight between the two worlds, I fell into an existential crevasse of nothingness. Gradually that null opened in disclosure, to glimpse that which I might not have otherwise experienced.

I am persuaded that within the charged existential state my heart-mind was in, it became possible to glimpse into illuminated and nether spaces, as with Eliot’s poetry, where the familiar becomes unfamiliar. For in place of the familiar there had been rupture, which contrasted what I felt in the ward to the uncaring existence I witnessed and later experienced myself in the streets. This kind of awareness, which I have been calling quotidian lessons, becomes available when the mist of illusion clears for even a moment.
We have seen how violence towards nature is also mirrored in violence in culture. What is significant to remember about this violence is that the prior and more powerful symbolic violence lies in how it obscures the dynamics of change. As we saw in CHAPTER THREE and CHAPTER FOUR, symbolic violence is rendered possible through the lens with which we construct meaning and society where meaning is embodied in practice and lifestyles and reinforced in commercial fetishization of the material. What once was arbitrary and constructed begins to take the semblance of the given and the real.

As we have seen, reification of a world becomes the naturalization of the world, and with the processes of sedimentation, the act of reification is forgotten as it becomes buried within history. I have been underscoring the critical point; these acts of reification and sedimentation importantly involve, and enact through, our conceptions of nature, such that they manifest as the dominant ethos of the age. What lies buried are not only trajectories through which our understanding of nature, and hence ourselves, have become flawed and contorted, but also pathways back to the real. It becomes apparent what is urgently needed is a praxiological understanding and stance to meet both the reification of nature and allow for immersion within immediacy in nature.

Having traced construction through deconstruction, while proposing a redefined topography that includes nature, and a re-awakened sense of caring in presence of quotidian lessons through immediacy in lived culture, I turn next towards immediacy in the wilderness (or at least in this case, cared-for wilderness) and beyond...
SEVEN SPARRIOWS

Seven yellow-backed sparrows
light in the lime tips of a spruce
like ceramic miniatures
from Red Rose tea, small
enough to be almost real

they peck at the branches,
a feast of budworms, while
crows watch from telephone lines
and I sit on Nan and Pop’s patio
sipping a rye and seven

I remember my daughter
carried the spruce home
from S.D. Cook Elementary
on Save the Earth Day,
a seedling in a Dixie cup

Pop planted it in his backyard
because we had none for a year
while on a detour from Alberta
to British Columbia that took
us home to Newfoundland

for years Pop feared he mowed
the spruce with the daisies,
and now it holds sparrows,
the longing of crows,
and memories enough

to keep the heart calling
earth’s rhythms with roots
seeking deep and deeper,
the whole earth sung
in veins of long light

(Leggo, 2002)
The Sung Dynasty in China was one of the greatest artistic periods in world history. It was also a great time in the development of Ch’an Buddhism, with its close affinities to Daoist philosophy. Common themes of Sung Dynasty painters were sparse landscapes in inkwash, decorated with poems. I would like to take you into one of these wonderful landscapes of mountains partly shrouded in mist. You have to look carefully. Down there below is a raging river. A narrow path winds upwards into the lower reaches of the mountain, and here a spidery bridge cross the white waters, a bit further up is a ledge overlooking the river, and yes, there are three figures seated on the ground. Is it a picnic? No, they are drinking rice wine and are engaged in animated conversation. A guarded pine tree leans over the ledge where the three men are sitting. Because of their bearing, we know they are scholars. Or perhaps poets but what are these poets doing in the wilderness?

A sweating traveller, covered with dust,  
Stops at my house for some fresh water.  
“Sit down on the bio rock near the gate.  
It’s noon and there is a breeze in the willows”...

I cite this poem because of its natural grace. It has the quality of a snapshot. In its simplicity, it is both transparent and beguiling. But this simplicity is the achievement of great art. It is simplicity acquired only after a great deal of internal work on oneself... to overcome the Confucian formalities and artifice of the city... now finds genuine meaning... in the simple gesture of hospitality...

(Friedman, 2002)
6.1 CLEAR WATER SPEAKS

If authenticity is being true to ourselves, is recovering our own “sentiment de l’existence,” then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize that this sentiment connects us to a wider whole. It was perhaps not an accident that in the Romantic period the self-feeling and the feeling of belonging to nature were linked. Perhaps the loss of a sense of belonging through a publicly defined order needs to be compensated by a stronger, more inner sense of linkage. Perhaps this is what a great deal of modern poetry has been trying to articulate; and perhaps we need few things more today than such articulation. (Taylor, 1991, p.91)

One moment I remember packing my bags, getting everyone ready and the next moment I was onto the deck and onto the ferry as we neared land. It was a very nice day, with blue-white sky above, and serene pastel blue-green ocean below. I think I know what had triggered the impulse within me. It was somewhere between those soft gusts of the summer air, that gentle rocking of the ferry travelling ever so slow as it literally glided over the waters, with the gulls flying alongside us, and the amazing clarity of the water that could dispel all notions of a polluted world beyond redemption... that the magic began... It must have been that unbelievably clear seawater that first spoke to my injured heart, as the island came closer and closer into view... releasing a symphony of emotions within me. My writing below originated within the vague intentions of some nature writing I had thought of writing when I was gently touched on my shoulder. This feeling that I must include a lived felt experiential moment in my work on recovering nature was directly inspired by my experiences that day, as we touched on the island, when the magic gradually overwhelmed me... The passage below is inspired by, and written in the voice of Rousseau’s articulated sensibility — a sense of inner nature and inner voice that will not let the heart be still...
6.1a The magic unfolds

Imagine, an idyllic setting on a dream island nestled far beyond the deep blue waters that reminds one that despite the spoliation of the last two centuries of warfare, strife, military-industrial-consumer lifestyles, these waters have survived, relatively pristine, as they have for millennia, and before the appearance of the human footprint. Tucked away on the island’s foothills, trails and lakes, one finds the sanguine lifestyle once lamented as forever lost,\textsuperscript{61} with the advent of industrialization and modernity.

Imagine then, upon approaching this refuge on the isle, a gem, within cared-for-but-yet-free wilderness and discovering a voluntarily simpler way of being, recycling\textsuperscript{62} and sustaining life.\textsuperscript{63} Imagine a place reminiscent of life before the first chimneys that blackened the once green countryside and fouled the fresh air. Imagine yourself long before the release of CFCs responsible for the hole in the ozone, long before the warming of the surface of our planet Earth, and long before the scale of loss of biodiversity that threatens the extinction of all Life on Earth.
Imagine if you will, how one's heart delights uncontrollably, without reason as it were, with a gentle whisper, to find gentle human care in their attention to delicate threads of the web of life preserved conscientiously with reverence and responsibility towards the Earth. Imagine further, as one loses yet another heartbeat, when one inhales in disbelief, as the picturesque panorama surrounding one begins to gradually unfold. Here is a place, where animals do not fear humans, as horses frolic and graze in innocence, as in that primeval garden before the Fall, where a dog changes its facial expression to acknowledge arrival at a sacred site: nourishing a special witness, the last of its kind, a survivor and living testament to the blade of progress.

6.1b Sublime witness

**Sublime Witnessing ...**

Beyond the ugly and the beautiful
the modern and the primal
stands the sublime
witness to the Ages
gnarled bark and root exposed

Look here the unkindest cut
that threatened to turn
the organic into resource
Where some see Nature incarnate
a testament for the Ages
Others see only utility and profit
mere resources for the taking
reducing History
in the blink of a blade
into sawdust memories

Look here the unkindest cut
a betrayal of our interconnectedness
an eclipse in our consciousness
a break in the Web of Life
And yet... She survives
to witness a new dawn
when eyes must needs reopen
to that which they have been blind

For even alongside
the greedy cut of gain
we see new Life, new Hopes
to herald in another new dawn
when humans learn to dwell well
in harmony with that
which they are a part

Look here the unkindest cut
that nearly fell Her grace
one that threatened
to reduce beauty to utility
one that mocks the Earth
within the arc of human hubris
one that scorns Life
and makes a mockery of Nature
in a vain attempt to negate
beauty, awe and splendour

Surely Opa will see a new day
For she has Patience
   to wait longer
   for the Turn
in Natural History
When life no longer scorns itself
when humans reconnect with the earth
and return to their sense
   to find themselves
   in humility
only a small figure
before a looming cosmos

But maybe today is that day...
For she has already waited millennia
as the circle has almost gone full turn
with collapse near, perhaps inevitable
as our yearning, increases
   to herald in a new vision..
on the threshold of a new dawn...

(Feng, 2002)
Within the sanctuary, nestled among the fallen wild, stands the sublime witness, a survivor with a cut to its side and a story to tell, the last of its kind. Here stands a thousand year-old tree that has seen the terrible dislocations from global changes in worldview and history wrought by the imperative to conquer and control nature in accordance with the mechanistic framework of the Scientific Revolution. It has witnessed the twin effects of the social inequities and environmental degradation brought forth by the Industrial Revolution.

The tree weeps for the world, in the consequential loss of lives, human and non-human, in political revolutionary upheavals, brutality and inhumanity of humans to humans and the more-than-human world that ushered in the "modern world". Bearing witness to the ironic, but tragic truth, the tree has felt violence of power and arrogance. The tree has been through colonization of both the natural and social world, and material consequences correlating to the modern ideology of change as progress (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997).

6.1c Weaves of a single loom, strands of joys and sorrows

In this chapter, I again write of the concrete in immediacy, in journeys of the heart within that magical space where virtue, disclosure, and the saving Grace dwells. In both of the experiences I write about here, I share how this kind of immediate essence sneaks up when one’s heart is least aware. In its
power to consume the wonderfully vulnerable space of being within the flux between real and artifice, whether in sorrow or joy, the immediate opens up for "disclosure".

This first piece begins with the experience of immediacy in the wild that seeded my postulate below of the continuing enchantment of nature. Although I modify the construct of enchantment, I also extend far beyond the kind of abstraction implied by the construct. It is in a way difficult to describe why I had begun to feel that way when I was taken in by the experience. I know in part I felt the world was enchanted, and not just the nature that I was immersed in. I know in part it had to do with the refutation of that which is implied by the meaning of the construct called "disenchantment". The term implies for instance that the magic of sacredness and wonder has been expunged from the world, and perhaps with it the correlate reflection of that loss in the spoliation of nature. I had not planned of re-enchanting nature. As I will explain, it was the farthest thing in my heart-mind. I will try to convey the lived-felt meaning of what I mean when I refute the "disenchantment" of the world.

The second segment shares a journey-within-a-journey when the infinite opens to convey quotidian lessons of another kind for finite beings. It is another potent reminder of an experience where those who return to the bosom of affinity can still affect our hearts, and the colours of the day. At the same time, within this same space lies also the knowing that, here, grasping can only
be about the ungraspable, for in the very reaching for the gulf between the finite and Divine lies the lessons of humility.

6.2 ENCHANTMENT AS COUNTER-THESIS

When the ocean spoke to me in time with its soft rocky movements, it made me feel enchanted in that first sense, of feeling awe, wonder and magic that made me feel happy for apparently no reason. It was enchantment in the sensuous, lived-felt, immersive sense. But this sense of enchantment was not alone as it moved dialectically with the material sense of enchantment. Or perhaps it is precisely because I have been reading so much of disenchantment and have seen so many pictures of despoliation and waste that my senses were vulnerable even to the hint of enchantment.

The ocean had truly surprised me with how clean it was that day. Thus, perhaps the ocean spoke so loudly because the magnitude of its persuasiveness was inversely proportional to my own lived-felt sense of loss of enchantment. I really was discouraged by recent news I had heard of black soot captured deep within the ice at the poles that could be traced to the first chimneys of the industrial revolution. But the clarity gave me new hope. Where once I had been despondent wondering how to undo centuries of wholesale damage to our planet, and sickened by the magnitude of the despoliation, when the ocean spoke, I now thought the reverse.
That is, rather than being faced with damage that takes generations to heal, I began to postulate that the damage has been exaggerated in two ways: in terms of degree and scale. With the first, I began to realize that there was the possibility that much of the earth, like the water, remains relatively uncontaminated. With the second, if there remain pockets of relatively unsullied nature, rather than being faced with a task that takes generations to reverse, collectively the pockets of such pristine places refuted the picture of nearly irreversible damage I had internalized.

Let me try to connect my feelings to the ecological literature. According to Gaian theory Life refutes her destruction (Lovelock, 1995). Even the greens of Nagasaki have returned to bloom. In contrast to the "end of the world" thesis (McKibben, 1999) that has been a significant contribution to the literature, as indicator of crisis (one that I highly value), I forward a counter-thesis that "enchantment" remains tenable. Admittedly, my counter-claim is animated through modest, subjective convictions of a beating heart that wants to believe that even after centuries of pollution, we have not succeeded in desecrating, disenchanting and destroying the natural world. We have merely sullied parts of it. That is to say, against conventional environmental critique, a large part of nature survives relatively intact, as testament of her timeless endurance.

My claim can also be supported by Latour’s counter thesis refuting the formidable "irreversible arrow of time" thesis associated with modernity
(Latour, 1993). Elsewhere, on the theme of enchantment, writing with Bill Doll and Stephen Petrina, we have argued that "Nietzsche's pronouncement of the 'death of God and the tales of disenchantment that followed were modern self-fulfilling prophecies. Our cosmos is enchanted" (Doll, Feng, & Petrina, 2001). In this move, our argument works to extend Latour’s refutation of modernity social construction writ large to the correlates postulated in its name (e.g. Weber et al., 1958). Further, when Tester (1995) exposes enchantment as itself a construct that can be subverted and turned towards the object, he suggests the arbitrariness of the construct. Yet, what is more important in Tester’s claim is not the deconstruction of the construct per se, but in how he exposes the pull of the object as enchantment, and hence the danger. By postulating another parallel pathway to enchantment, this time based upon an argument with a material correlate that alongside the irrefutable effects of pollution, I also have affirmations of pockets of relatively undefiled nature that has withstood the ravages of industrial culture. I offer an antithetical alternative in immediacy to counter the problematic thrall of the object in reification.

6.3 HURT AND FOLLOWING AUTHENTIC VOICES WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Let me pick up the citation from Taylor, which opened this chapter. Bearing in mind what I have introduced in CHAPTER FOUR on immediacy as the material and conceptual space of possibility, my work here attempts to grasp the possibility of "authenticity" as immediacy. Within the space of the
quotidian is immediacy that is invisible to all but the heart, if that heart be amenable. I want to expand here on “voice”, “speaking”, and “hurt”.

Charles Taylor argues that Jean Jacques Rousseau develops his conception of authenticity as a “sentiment de l’existence,” at the same time that he formulates his critiques on the estrangement of culture from nature. Taylor writes, “Rousseau frequently presents the issue of morality as that of our following a voice of nature within us” (p. 27). While it may be possible to intellectualize Rousseau’s claim, I am still persuaded that his claim can only be grasped within immediacy, in one’s heart, in nature — and especially so when we speak of injury to the heart. I need to share more of the background to my writing retreat.

Prior to getting onto the ferry, I had been in an unsettled mood where I felt as if I was going through the motions. I had been slowly recovering from the emotional aftermath of the mass tragedy, when planes had roared overhead in the skies of September in New York City. Whereas prior to the fateful event, I had been dwelling on the conceptual, my entire mood had turned toward the mass grief that seemed only too real. These were real people, real families, real stories, and real tears. Initially, the mass tragedy rendered me incapable of writing, as I experienced a moment when I emotionally felt as if I could not think beyond that day. The surreal moments unfolding before my eyes made me want to curl up and return to my body. Affected physically, my body literally shut down. I desperately sought for the
real. Emotions welled within me and I coiled into the proverbial foetal stance, where I dwelled on the visceral, not knowing when I would re-surface.

After incubating for seven days, I gradually came out of my self-imposed isolation to rejoin the world. Still sad, upset, and confused, I was looking forward to an upcoming writing retreat, to a secluded island (Figure 9). In a mood I could only describe as a haze, I was ready to lose myself in the woods, expecting nothing spectacular, I yearned to do some nature writing, unaware that I was opening for the Rousseauan voice that was to gradually sneak up on me...

*Figure 10. Sanctuary and transformation in green*
This voice manifested itself in my nature writings, inspired and written by the ocean and by the majestic and ancient thousand-year birch that had made me speculate about the borders of being. It was under the shade of her wings and gentle green embrace that the words came through hurt appendages that touched the liminal space. When immediacy congealed for me in the material, my experiences in the wild made me wonder if immediacy is fully capable of manifesting in material form as water or another living, and perhaps sentient being. But the question of nature speaking is one that bears further elaboration...

6.3a Lessons in the undergrowth

If we are attentive enough amidst the thick undergrowth we may find little spans of the web of Life through which all life is rendered possible. Interconnected inextricably through the delicate weaves that are threatened daily by increasing human impact, we may find that the unravelling of one part of the web threatens to unravel the whole. Through this disclosure we will begin to appreciate the lived meaning of biodiversity and understand the dangerous implications of its social counterpart enacted within the rise of global monoculture articulated through the discourse of globalization.

Here, too, is where we begin to replace the worn dangerous imagery of nature as limitless resource reserved for storage and application, with the humbler notion of limits to growth and potential collapse (Meadows et al.,
1992; Meadows & Rome, 1972). But, where is that point when the system is threatened with collapse? And, will we have enough warning? Like the wild weeds growing exponentially in a half-empty pond on the eve before the weeds overflow the pond, there will literally be little or no warning, and like the weeds, the next doubling will overflow the measure of the pond. We live within a living world where all affects all in the system and when we exceed the limits of nature, systemic collapse may come in the shape of pestilence, the melting of the caps, global war or Severe Acquired Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

I confess that for an urban-dweller with a green heart I had stumbled upon a picture of harmony within the undergrowth that made me lament and want to acquaint myself with everything I should already be familiar with. For like the typical city being who champions the Earth, I felt ashamed. I could not tell the various ingredients that had gone into the making of that evening’s soup; I could not tell the plants served in the soup by name, sight or taste. Here then in the most basic of ways, the wilderness was already beginning to teach me about sustenance — how to dwell well with the rest of nature, of which we are all a part, how to tell medicine from toxin.

I am convinced that if we open our hearts to the wonder we behold in nature, it has the potential to draw us back from the brink of self-annihilation. The Earth is recovered once again — not as phantasmagoria, or imagery par-excellence through special effects of culture, but in/as its primordial state. Here then is another felt sense of the lifeworld, and the potential to undo the
modern folly of progress. It is perhaps only through revisiting and lingering in the undergrowth that we find how far we have strayed from nature and our hearts, and how much we have deemed as exploitable in the name of progress.

Here, too, is where we can revisit our hearts in ways that can enable us to re-enter the world of progress with new eyes that alert us of its hidden dangers. Here, too, if we give in to the splendour all around us and allow ourselves to be absorbed by its tranquil beauty, as we frolic in the wild, we might find peace within ourselves and harmony with what is around us. We might also find the stirring of some long-buried primordial emotion that makes us want to speak out in defence of the natural realm.

Even as the ancient allure of the woods at once motivates us to preserve its state for its own sake, if we pay attention to its rhythm, its pulse can help develop within us a deep critique. We can begin to question the wisdom of our everyday undertakings, by problematizing its very foundations in the underlying assumptions that buttress dominant claims in the name of Reason. The pulse might also lead us to reassess the mechanism through which patriarchal human hubris, in its ironic claims of knowing nature, estranges us all, even as it lays down the seeds of destruction.

For here, too, we might begin to ask ourselves deeply whether we need to place a moratorium on human impact on the natural world and undertake a planetary project to heal the Earth. Having seen the tendency of instrumental
reason to debase all as standing resource for the taking, or commodity, as it
betrays Life with the flattening of value and the consequential loss of meaning,
purpose and Divinity, here, too, is a chance for renewal. For within the green
lies potential pathways that can lead us out of nihilism and back to significance
and the sacred. Whether in terms of religious or secular overtones, we can all
recognize at least one meaning of the word sacred within the intrinsic value of
all life. The sacred opens spaces for mediation to celebrate the miracle in all
its abundance. Life is itself sacred.

6.3b Does Nature speak?

Moreover, it is not only those entities acknowledged by Western civiliza-
tion as “alive,” not only the other animals and plants that speak, as spirits,
to the senses of an oral culture, but also the meandering river from which
those animals drink, and the torrential monsoon rains, and the stone that
fits neatly into the palm of the hand. The mountains too, has its thoughts.
The forest birds whirring and chattering as the sun slips below the horizon
as vocal organs of the rain forest itself. (Abram, 1996, p. 14)

Thus far, I have spoken mostly of learning from nature and of the
pedagogical import of experiencing the wild. I have also hinted that it might be
problematic to write of nature speaking. Yet, rather than claiming it is we who
are teaching ourselves, it is more appropriate to say nature is teaching us, in
that we are speaking of disclosure through nature. According to my reading of
the literature, however, where I speak of disclosure of learning from nature, I
commit the sin of naturalism (Vogel, 1996) in crossing the forbidden Kantian divide. The prior question is, "does nature speak?"

According to modern thinking, how do we make into subjects what we conventionally understand as objects? How can we use active grammar for what is not human? How can we violate that divide? Or can it be that nature can speak? The apparent contradiction attached to the prior question, whether nature can speak, is the reason that animates this chapter, To say that nature can speak, is alternatively to mean, "to remember nature", and to hear our inner voice through Rousseau's notions of authenticity.

In reply to the question of whether nature can speak, we need to perhaps ask the correlate question: Might not Nature be speaking all the time? Perhaps it is we who do not heed her urgent cries and calls. We believe Nature to be mute in spite of the signs showing up all around us. Perhaps, we might be able to hear nature speak, if we were to shut off the incessant drone of our florescent lamps64 overhead in our classrooms, and the hum of the engines all around us. While these are apparently designed to make our lives easier, we have become oblivious and all too familiar with them.

Within the green, the curious squirrel that just skirted by, the cry of the mighty eagle flying overhead, the forest too — they are all lessons we can learn, if only we are willing to open up our hearts, in gratitude, awe, and humility. There is also something peaceful in surrendering to the beauty of the
pastel sunset as it slowly sinks into the sea — it too has something to say. And the water’s healing message was also a voice. I believe it is extremely significant that not only was the water speaking, but it was asking through that inner voice in a being that was hurt, to open his heart to allow for immediacy to come into the space of healing.

There may be other reasons as well why we might not hear nature speak. For true to modern human conceit, we imagine the voice of nature anthropocentrically verifiable only through human epistemology and language. Yet, we can conceptualize nature speaking through the following series of postulates: As speaking falls under the rubric of communication and communication can be broadened as exchange, where it might be difficult to speak of tornadoes as communication or intelligence, they might be described less problematically as forms of patterning. Pushing this argument further, alternate ways of patterning that differ radically from conventional ones could be expanded to include the movement of earth below our feet, change in heat and direction of the wind, a pitch in an eagle’s cry, or intricate Mandelbrot patterns (see Mandelbrot, 1982). Broadening our interpretation of patterns as possible warning signs, we could include marked atmospheric changes, mass extinction, puzzling animal behaviours, or even shifts in social patterns.

This broadened interpretation of speaking or communication under a Batesonian take (see Bateson, 1972) carries implications for the message of evolution. For even if the message of nature is survival, it might not be that of
survival of the fittest, as postulated by self-centred and self-elevating homo sapiens. To believe human beings should be, first and foremost, the unit of survival might be to commit a categorical error of the first order. The unit of analysis may turn out to be not the survival of the individual, but the viability of the context which makes life possible, i.e. the entire system.

This concludes the segment of immediacy in nature where I have argued of the possibility for the immediate to take material form, and as authenticity. In the same way, the immediate takes material form in my next piece on the space between finite and Infinite.

6.4 BETWEEN THE FINITE AND THE INFINITE

The deferral of presence turns out to imply messianic waiting and expectation, and the deconstruction of presence turns out to be not a denial of the presence of God but a critique of the idols of presence, which has at least as much as to do with Moses’ complaint of Aaron, as with Nietzsche. It is idolatry to think that anything present can embody the tout autre or claim to be its visible form in history, the instantiation and actualization of the impossible, for whose coming, like teary-eyed Augustine, deconstruction always prays and weeps...

(Caputo & Scanlon, 1999, p. 5).

For this next segment, we seek to speak of immediacy in terms of the space between the finite and the Infinite. And, when we speak of the finite and the Infinite, we will invite Lévinas to guide us in our travails of the heart ahead. Here, Lévinas is right. It is the face that brings us all to ourselves and it
is not about the closing of difference, but of the gap which celebrates mortality in humility. There is none better who is more qualified to address this liminality than Levinas. And I too share his conviction that the ethical can, indeed should, coexist with the ontological, to become primary.

For ethics, it is only in the infinite relation with the other that God passes... that traces of God are to be found. God thus reveals himself [sic] as a trace, not an ontological presence. (Kearney, 1984, p. 67)

Ontology as a state of affairs can afford to sleep. But love cannot sleep, can never be peaceful or permanent. Love is the incessant watching over the other; it can never be satisfied or content with the bourgeois ideal of love as domestic comfort or the mutual possession of two people...

(Kearney, 1984, p. 66)

6.4a The phenomenal shift into immediacy

We have seen that existential angst connected with the Infinite has been for myself, the portal with which to access immediacy, whether it was in the palliative care unit, the streets, or in found nature. We have learned that immediacy appears to be always present in shifting spatial and temporal dimensions. We saw it in the sharing of food, memories of the child, the walk alongside the homeless in the street, and the angst of losing a loved one. We have also learned that we can be pulled into immediacy without warning if we are open and attentive. We have also learned the irony — that where danger dwells, grows also the saving grace, and that it is precisely through despair that we find possibility for hope.
While grief might not be the only portal, it is one, which animates me. We also need to be reminded that the dead are not gone, not only do they remain in our hearts, they are physically interred sharing in immediacy with us. Even more, they are never forgotten, where even the slightest shift may bring them back into our waking consciousness. To illustrate how immediacy in the Infinite has opened to quotidian pedagogy for me, I want to share with you another instance of disclosure in immediacy.

With her driving, Mother and I are on our way to visit Father. It has been awhile since we last visited him. Perhaps reading David Jardine put me into a receptive mode as I looked up to catch the phenomenon that she was referring to. What was it? It looked like snow! It couldn’t be, but it was — a very late snowfall. As the pattern was gradually forming on my awareness I realized I was experiencing another shift into immediacy. What was it that triggered the shift in reception? Perhaps it had to do with the conjunction of events around mother’s question, the book I was reading, our impending visit with Father, and the air around our customary quiet drive. Or perhaps it was due to the almost hypnotic motion, because like the ferry on the water, the first flakes of snow cascaded ever so gently.

6.4b Snowflakes dancing, green sun, yellow cabs

Seeing these first flakes of snow reminded me of a time when I was not familiar with the snow. That was the time when Father was alive when we
watched snow falling for the first time from our hotel room overlooking the city of Los Angeles. That was when I saw nature transformed into a way that I could barely recognize. After a lifetime around the equator, I remember gazing at the green orb in the sky, befuddled by its haunting surreal colour, its fiery display tempered and discoloured by the smog of industrialization and lifestyle. Yet another completely chaotic dance greeted us, a mechanical one, generated by the hum of the metropolitan bustle of the traffic grids of North American life.

That was also when we learned the lesson of living at the edge of the speed of sight, where yellow cabs do not necessarily stop for people waiting on the boulevard. Those nascent clips and sound bytes were to comprise the concrete informing my journey ahead where these experiences of the green Sol, dancing snowflakes and the metropolitan gridlock were later to inform my environmental consciousness. As I thought about how Father’s *Dao Li* continues to guide us in his absence, it made me sad that he was no longer with us. The snowflakes had transported me to quotidian lessons in the past, and like the spoon and water, they too were time and mood shifters.

6.4c Through the portal of Care, visiting Father

My thoughts of our struggles with Father championing *Dao Li*, and the seeds of discontent that were to shape my later academic life were interrupted when I noticed we were almost there. It had been awhile since my last visit. The giant green oaks and cedars seemed to comfort us, as we went through the
gates, embracing us within their calming folds. As we drove on slowly to find a
parking spot, mother and I could almost feel, without verbalizing how we were,
united in the feeling generated by the poignant sights before us.

The chirping of birds graced the blue skies overhead. In front, amongst
pastoral green, signs of care were everywhere to be found. A panorama of
splashes of red, yellow, orange, pink and blue unfolded before us — colourful
bouquets laid by the tombstones, erupting in muted celebration of Life
reminding visitors of presence, departures, and remembrances. Telling
inscriptions of care, compassion, and love dotted the unfolding landscape as far
as the eye could behold. Here, at last, were the silent witnesses to the final
grounding of unity — the embrace of mortality uniting all beings in the spirit of
humanity and humility that bend us all in quiet genuflection of appreciation,
loss, and sense of the sacred.

I am always torn when I come to the funeral home to visit with Father.
On the one hand, I am always filled with sadness, reminded of the finality of
mortality. Yet, despite its morbidity and the reminder of finality, the pain is
also tinged, nay saturated, with gladness. I appreciate visiting Father and
spending time with him. I am profoundly grateful every time we visit here. The
bustle I mentioned above, which I have become nearly impervious to, gradually
melts away, giving way to quotidian lessons awaiting my heart.
6.4d Lessons of the heart and remembering

Lessons of the heart abound here if one is attentive. As we approach Father, there are fresh flowers in his vase! The freshness of these flowers suggests the trace presence of family and friends who had lovingly placed them mere hours ago. Quotidian pedagogy always follows mother's gentle act of unwrapping the paper, discarding old flowers, refilling the vase with water and placing the new flowers we brought with us into the vase. It is also present in the way that she carefully cleans the tabletop for the next person who brings flowers to remember. Here too, is where we learn the lessons of the heart as we reciprocate in kind. Yet another quotidian lesson unfolds as I watch mother gently take two flowers from the bouquet and place them gently into the vase belonging to the departed mother of the thoughtful family friends who had left Father those beautiful flowers.

6.4e The dance of the flowers

Still other less obvious lessons disclose in revealing appearances. Here is where the real meets the fake, where fake flowers that greet us inside remind us of the bloom we just witnessed basking outside in the sun. Even more, here the real and fake coexists in dance, with the permanent fake flowers that reside in Father's vase always at the ready to manifest alone, when the fresh flowers subside.
We might be tempted to ask ourselves how many of the other flowers that abound in the aisles are also false. Quite honestly, it is hard to tell. In this charged realm, even the false profess truths. Herein lies another quotidian lesson when the reverse is true, when the real imitates the sign of the fake, as when mother gently feels the stems of the flowers, surprised to find they are real! As mother tests the veracity of Life, I am reminded of the irreducible and irreplaceable quality of Life, of its preciousness, and the extent with which the fake has come to represent the real in this complex dialogue, reminiscent of discourses around nature, culture, and technology discussed here.

6.4f Visiting the faces of Love

As flowers yield to tactile and close visual inspection, they reveal as simulacras of the real. They are fake. I am reminded of the extent of the profound deceit. Even the photograph of my father, which greets his visitors and us, is yet another representation. Only this time it is comprised of dots, deposited strategically upon specially treated paper — an image made up of residual traces of chemical reactions from another time. Here we have the ultimate absurdity perhaps, when one can be transfixed and transformed by the sign of the real, in absence of the real. Surely, it must be the ultimate act of absurdity for an extra-terrestrial being, when beholding arrogant mortals genuflecting before chemically graven images that upon close inspection, reveal only as simulacra, composed of mere traces knitting a convincing tapestry to form semblance that remind beings of beings.
And yet, it is all real, too real. Surreal. As the gentle music plays in the background, our eyes well up with emotion as we bow in memory before the small black-and-white picture of Father. Like the rest of the people we meet within this charged space, we have all gathered to honour and to respect the departed amongst us. As Mother and I speak to the pictures before us in the privacy of our hearts, I wonder what she might be telling or asking Father, even as she might be wondering about my inner feelings and thoughts. It is telling that it always takes time for one to settle here in the immediate. Adjusting for the break from complacency and distracting, but vital sounds of pitter-patter of small feet down the hallway is difficult. Even background music, calming as it is, pulls me away from my intent.

Signs of the real, and the absence of real are present. Here arises another quotidian pedagogical opportunity: To ask ourselves why it is important for being-within-the-more-than-human-world, to have these representations as semblances of the real? It is when we ask this question that we touch something deep within us. Fake flowers carry meaning for mortal beings who treasure life, who celebrate, long for, and mourn for others no longer in their presence; who care deeply for other beings who bring meaning in completing their meagre lives. It is within moments of fragility that we find our greatest strength. Mortality attenuates our illusions of grandeur. It makes us ask ethical questions of being. As I reminisce of my father, two significant dates inscribed upon the marble circumscribing a little girl’s face take on a different meaning.
What was her story like that is being celebrated by an outpouring of balloons, cards, and flowers, amidst signs of Divinity?

6.4g Ecopedagogy as performative immediacy

At this juncture, I pause to remember in gratitude why my dissertation on reification of Life and its reversal through reconstruction and immediacy necessarily begins and ends with personal anecdotes from my lived narrative. In so doing, I am emphasizing my thorough conviction within an Aokian (1996) turn that aside from deconstructing the reification of Life and reconstructing gaps in the discourse, we need to open our heart to quotidian lessons in immediacy. These lessons abound before us, in our narratives and in the lived life that gives meaning and utterance to our lives as text.

Before I close I need to acknowledge the book I was reading, David Jardine's (1998) *To Dwell with a Boundless Heart*. Within Jardine's caring text dwells my rationale for my conceptual contribution in lived immediacy, in "affinities between hermeneutics, curriculum and ecology" (p. 1). Importantly, Jardine reminds us as teachers that we need to "interweav[e] meanings and experiences ... in a genuinely, pedagogic way" (p. 6). We cannot estrange ourselves from our lived lives, and theorize in abstraction. We need "theorizing that erupts out of our lives together and is about our lives together" (p. 7). This is precisely the mode of embodied lived-theorizing informing my work. It emphasizes the dynamic, living context which gives rise to it. Theory is
interpreted praxiologically, through experiences and lived life, linked performatively to narrative, life, and concrete experience towards transformation (Fels, 1999; Fels & Meyer, 1997; Linds, 2001).

It is here, within life lived as quotidian lessons that we find the sinews of lived theorizing that webs together the earthly flows in embodied cognition (Varela et al., 1991) and colours our mortal coils, imbuing it with meaning (Jardine, 1998). Like Aoki and Jardine, I, too, believe that curriculum must be located within this lived nexus. Whether we are theorizing about the splitting of culture from nature, ascension of technology from culture, human condition in terms of homo sapiens, homo faber, and homo ludens, the flux between real and simulacra, or material and ideas, it is within lived experience that we must root pedagogy and discourse. Within this embedded interpretation, learning, cognition and life are synonymous (Maturana & Varela, 1980; Winograd & Flores, 1986). Moreover, for curriculum to be meaningful and ethical, whether in teaching, learning or research, it must be existentially grounded within acts of passion and compassion that attempt to grasp at fundamentals of love, community, relationship, and living, in what it means to be human-within the more-than-human-world.

6.4h Father, reification and intervention

The passion of semblances, hidden messages and quotidian lessons are meaningful in another direct way. It has been an extremely challenging, deeply
soul searching, and recursive process to write about historical reification, hermeneutic examination of discursive effects of representation and sedimentation, discourse to address loss of nature, and phenomenological immediacy in nature. Somewhere, with all the disruptions in life, and the looming crisis facing the world amidst rumours of war and mass disaster, my heart had somehow been lost along the way. I was humbled by the sheer enormity of the task I had set myself, saddened by the parallel magnitude of the global crisis. In short, there was a point when I doubted the completion of this long journey I had set out to explore.

As much as I struggled against it, my life would invariably reify. In resetting my lived reification, my visit with Father had jolted my heart out of its complacency. Upon returning from my visit, I became seized with compulsion to put feelings to keyboard. Perhaps, Father had been speaking to me, all along, as the true impetus that guides my fingers. Whether with the critical sights foreshadowing my rendezvous with destiny in writing this dissertation, or quotidian lessons that emerged to awake and make me aware I had been stuck in my writing, it was through visiting my father that I found my heart and courage to complete my journey.
CODA

As for those who would
take the whole world
to tinker with as they see fit,
I observe that
they will never succeed:
For the world is a sacred vessel
not to be altered by man [sic].
The tinkers will spoil it;
Usurpers will lose it. Lao-tze

Oh our Mother the Earth
Oh our Father the sky
Weave for us a garment of brightness
May the warp be the white light of morning
May the weft be the red light of evening
May the fringes be the falling rain
May the border be the standing rainbow
That we may walk where the birds sing
Where grass is green
Tewa American Indian poem
Song of the Skyloom

Difficulty of lived interpretation

I imagine myself moving to a pacific community where I find contentment. As a stranger to the community, I move through life daily, aware of the givens around which community life is organized. One day, I sense something amiss. That feeling subsides when I ignore my intuition, only to return the next day, the day after, the next week, or the next month. Until another day, the feeling persists within a pervasive sense of unease that no
longer seems to go away. Within all of this, not only do I not know what the problem might be, as yet I am unable to articulate that which disturbs the air, since I am a stranger to the community and do not yet know the language. While I initially feel alone with this sense, as I begin to interpret the language in the absence of an interpreter, I gradually grow aware of collective instinct lending credence to my own, even as collective instincts cannot be affirmed, when I am unsure of my translation. But I can never be sure.

As I become acquainted with the language: I am not sure whether the ocean is drying up, or the impending danger might be from fire or earthquake. I even read that it is we who inflict the calamity upon ourselves, but cannot know, when I am learning to read signs, even as I attempt to unravel the problem. Further, to interpret the message, I have to know where to look for references, but in order to look for references; I have to not only name the reference, but also find those who had uttered these references.

The problem is made worse; I am confronted with relativism in that everyone has her or his own interpretations, while the rest carry on seemingly oblivious of the peril. What is worse, no one is sure. While answers might lie in the text, most old, I have to know by what names they were called, and which ones, even as one is learning to read the symbols with a sense of urgency, unsure whether the perceived threat might be from drainage, fire, or earthquake, as time grows short for averting the impending danger...
Existential storying, pedagogy, as meaningful language

After thinking through how I might convey the extent of the difficulty that I feel challenged with daily in lived-interpretation, I realized the best way might be to relate how I feel about the difficulties, challenges, and elations within this kind of work that can sometimes tear at my heart. The imagery and the story illustrate how I have been feeling for an extending period. This story works as a pedagogical vehicle for several reasons. To begin with, the story only makes sense to conditioned beings, mortals who leave behind inscriptions, who interpret text while aware of vulnerability and temporality, without external arbiters for appeal. This sense of storied existence, attests to the power of meaning-making and morality for these temporal beings, through its meandering and the rise and fall of the heart as the story unfolds.

Moreover, gone here is the hubris of beings sure of their actions, arrogant with their power. In its place are tentative beings, capable of love, dying and community. Like Beckett’s (1954) Godot, the play of contingency reminds us of our own existential predicament in the sense that we too are never sure when and if the calamity, will come. In the place of confidence, there is Kierkegaardian (1987) angst rather than Cartesian (1637/1989) doubt. But if one senses the shadow of Nietzsche, one is not wrong. Truly, I had Nietzsche’s fateful passage from the Gay Science in heart when I wrote the above passage, as it read through a Heideggerian (1977) interpretation:
Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" — As many of those who do not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or, is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? — Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried"; I will tell you. We have killed him— you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained the earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell nothing as yet of God's decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. And we have killed him. "How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us— for the sake of this deed he [sic] will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto." Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces, and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of man.[sic] Lighting and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars— and yet they have done this themselves"...

(Nietzsche, 1974, p. 181-182)

As I cite Nietzsche, I confess I am struck with the unintended parallels in my little story that opened the CODA. The drying up of the ocean was an oblique reference to Nietzsche’s imagery of drying up the sea, a reference that held deep impressions for Heidegger and Taylor (1989: 17). But its emergence
in this form suggests perhaps the reason why Nietzsche chose to forward his urgent claim through the story form, given the morality inherent to narrative and common existential implications of the oeuvre. But I too chose to begin with the story for these reasons. In so doing I share what is in my heart-mind on why I chose to embark on this particular journey.

Refuting reification and sedimentation

I need to begin by clarifying that I make my claims in this CODA in relation to a question posed to me: Why re-invoke existentialism after it has been long relegated to history? My short answer is because we need it given the apparent impending urgency and difficulty of interpretation. Although I am engaged in a modest conversation here, and I am not aspiring to grand theory, perhaps I can draw from my story analogy to suggest reversing Lyotard’s (1984) cautions. As the metanarrative of modernity marginalizes nature from the discourse to almost preclude other ways of being, Lyotard notwithstanding, perhaps we need to revisit potentials of existentially-based interpretations in accounts of human ethicality in the lifeworld.

There are also other reasons why I have chosen to locate my work at the hermeneutic phenomenology nexus that comes to the fore when this problem is posed in the question: What indeed, could possibly come after deconstruction, Marxism, existentialism, Neo-Kantianism, mechanism, objectivity, secularism, loss of nature, and loss of sense of the sacred? I submit bringing nature back
through a renewal of the sacred. There can be no alternative to spirituality since we are, as my little story above suggests, profoundly spiritual beings. My tentative answer after others in the literature (Caputo & Scanlon, 1999; Lévinas, Peperzak, Critchley, & Bernasconi, 1996) would be to retain a sense of the sacredness of Life within hermeneutic-phenomenological consciousness.

When we are no longer amazed by contradictions, when fragmentation abounds, when historical consciousness is subverted by/replaced with scientific consciousness, when construct is more real than the Life it seeks to imitate, when discourse is distracted— all within a large reading of reification about to sediment into history (Husserl, 1970) and other modes of being are in danger of being foreclosed and precluded (Heidegger, 1977)— as moral beings we need to retrace our way and be open to disclosure from the lifeworld. Perhaps here lies the real fear of the inquisition of Galileo. With his claims, not only did Galileo move heaven and earth, but these claims when ushered in through the door left ajar inadvertently by Aquinas via reason to faith, eventually culminates via Luther, again unexpectedly, in the loss of the Divine and the devaluation of all value in Nietzsche. Now reification as object writ large (Lukács, 1971a) threatens to annihilate the pathways to the Infinite, fusing together Kantian scepticism, Hegelian alienation, Heideggerian forgetting, Kierkegaardian despair, Marxist commodification, Nietzschean nihilism, and Weberian rationality (Critchley & Schroeder, 1998).
Obstacles to exegesis

In my dissertation, I formulated a procedure to bring nature back to the discourse through the form of exegetical exercise I have called onto-linguistic inquiry. As I have indicated there are many obstacles. Some of these concern basics like nomenclature. Others have to do with being alert both to frequency of words and in ways they are interpreted and employed. Still others require not only knowledge of the biography of key theorists, but the context and their contemporaries. I have had to learn to read words within historicity to prevent mistakes from anachronism in order to grasp the ideas behind words in older texts that correlate to their modern conceptions. I learned for instance, to read broadly and to follow the threads that lead, no matter how obscure. When the text was unavailable, I searched the web. When I needed to locate key words, I scanned texts so that I could search the text for occurrences of key words.

Where threads appeared only to disappear, I learned to seek out threads that are less obvious in correspondences between theorists and their contemporaries. Here it is critical to be informed of genealogies with respect to ideas, heritage, and transformations. In all of this, in order to understand contexts and progression of ideas, I read thoroughly to be informed of history and the history of philosophies. In order to seek out the origins of concepts, I have, wherever possible, sought original sources and read texts in their entirety.
Traces where nature have been marginalized

It was through overcoming these obstacles that I found multiple ways by which nature was marginalized from discourse that were often working in conjunction. For instance, although it might sound obvious, the engagement of key thinkers and types of debate they engaged with or raised, profoundly affected turns in discourse. Think of the origins of Nietzschean nihilism, in terms of the Kantian divide/impasse in response to rationalism in Cartesian doubt on the one hand, and empiricism in Humean scepticism that issue from Locke.

Moreover, the meaning of words and privileging of one interpretation over another were critical in this respect. For instance, think of Hannigan's (1995) work tracing the privileging of materialist Marxist interpretation over the ecological thread within Marxism. Merchant's conception of immanent tendencies becoming their polar opposites in the overcoming of restraints was another critical tool to trace the loss of nature. Furthermore, as pointed out by Simon Critchley (Critchley & Schroeder, 1998), labels like postmodernism that "prevent rather than enable an appreciation of their work" (p. 2), or how prolonging of divide between continental and analytical philosophy serve to obfuscate rather than elucidate. Added to this, as Critchley also points out, there exists the problem of nomenclature.

While clearly Critchley makes these claims in lamenting the problematic divide between continental and analytical philosophy, his claims also speak to
my work tracing the loss of nature from the discourse. For example, here, when faced with the problem of nomenclature, I had almost been excluded from an awareness of Critchley’s arguments that speak to my work. However, I found the rubric through broad sustained engagement with my readings in hermeneutics and phenomenology, and in tracing the genealogy of concepts and thinkers. Critchley’s claims of "insularity and intellectual sectarianism" (p. 14) and problems with eliding origins of discourse through naming also makes the claim for how the loss of nature could have been made possible. Then there are problems internal to continental philosophy that have to do with the density of the text that makes the reading a formidable challenge.

Perhaps one of the most significant ways that I found the loss of nature from the discourse was within the interaction between discourses that profess to speak in nature’s name from which they sought to derive authority and the effects that issue from competing claims. Take for instance, what I found from reading Leclerc (1986). I confirmed, as I suspected, that science had usurped the name of nature. With the advent of science as the new "philosophy of nature," debates were contested in nature’s name: whether within analytical philosophy that takes science as its object of inquiry, claiming to be working with nature; or within Marxist dialectics with science as framework. It was also helpful to contrast how, when the effort is made to speak in nature’s name from the side of naturalism it is thoroughly refuted by those who claim transcendental authority through nature as science.
Hermeneutical phenomenology to the rescue

Having summed up some of my findings, I close on a more personal note. When I began my long journey, I was caught within existential angst. I was lost without any conception of what I was to do, or how to do it. My long and difficult journey ahead deepened and was prolonged through the untimely passing of my father. Yet all the time, in my hunger for meaning, my task had been a hermeneutical one by definition, even when I did not know it by name but read voraciously for meaning. The arc I travelled that was autopoietic by its unfolding nature was also at once also similar to travelling around that great hermeneutic circle, each time coming to see the world differently.

Within my existential angst that often accompanied my work, I held no illusions of cumulative awareness, for the reversed appeared to be the case. The more I picked at my task, the harder it got, and the more I had to read in following the traces I set out to follow. There were times when I secretly thought I would never complete my work. But as I write these last words, I may be finally finishing this phase of my journey, fully aware I have only opened a small fragment of a dialogue that needs to happen.

What made this turn of events possible were two events through which I finally began to understand my work in an alternate sense. The first lies within an unremarkable turn within the realization that every time I thought I made a discovery, the inverse was true. Yet when I began to truly celebrate being
open, attentive and predisposed to reception, the lifeworld revealed something of itself. Where once vibrancy was threatened with banality, new meanings and the hope sprang up. Importantly, these hopes were incarnate in the shape of the beings I credit and acknowledge in the beginning of my dissertation.

The second discourse, which I discovered late in my research after seeing my work as living autopoietic inquiry, had the effect of crystallizing much of what I was still querying that had resisted all my efforts at theorizing. As I slowly overcame my fear of my inadequateness in believing that disclosure would come from the lifeworld, this lens began to disclose gradually, through mentors and colleagues as hermeneutic phenomenology consciousness.

In humbling acts of disclosure in sequence, all the spaces where I had once been blocked began to slowly open up as I followed the hermeneutic threads. In one respect, it affirmed what I already appreciated but was not sure whether to bring into the discourse. In another, it opened anew within the old texts I had been grappling with for some time. For instance, finally reading Merchant to completion made my return to critical theory immanent, and with that return, the pieces that did not fit within Vogel’s reading of Lukács’ work, began to make sense. That is, only after I realized the hermeneutic roots within Lukács, which, to certain critics like those of the Frankfurt School who dismissed hermeneutics, Lukács’ work smacked of irrationality.
That was when I began to see Lukács' ambiguity in terms of the uneasy tension between his readings of Dilthey and Marx, where Lukács subscribed to an anti-scientistic view while retaining hermeneutic leanings. Here the problem was rooted in the status of nature, as Vogel argued, but not as I believe in the logic argued by Vogel. Lukács' ambiguity towards nature was effect rather than cause because the status of nature was already in debate; no one, not even Lukács himself could get past the impasse at the time.

The shift required me to recognize that nature had been usurped by science. For instance, Marxism's dialectic of history had also been founded on nature as science. Dilthey, as well carried the ambiguity in his retention of objectivity in the work of the Human Sciences as pointed out by Gadamer (1975), in *Truth and Method*. Gadamer's lineage from Heideggerian fusion of hermeneutic phenomenology merges together ideas of Dilthey and Husserl, with Husserl's own ambivalence in retention of science, but not its positivism. We have a mess. This is because we have a situation where Romantic ideas were retained in hermeneutics; the polarizing of science and philosophy of science supported science through analytical philosophy. Any appeal to nature outside of the scientific method and its correlates in analytical, had been valued on par as animism. We now know continental philosophy included part and whole within its conception of the complexity of nature (Capra, 1996).

By contrast, in our time, and given consequences, flawed logic discloses within historicity when certain questions are posed to the discourse. Unpacking
the problem of nature in Lukács was challenging. It took readings of his correspondence and Lukács’ works before words like “totality” emerged as telltale signals of hermeneutic presence. With that unpacking the problem of typology, which I postulated and wrote about, I was aware of its lack that I could not describe. I began to correlate the split in Brentano through Husserl and his other student Freud, each with links to continental and analytical traditions respectively.

Given the development possible through re-reading under hermeneutic phenomenology, I turned to draw the implication that perhaps a re-reading of the literature is in order at the juncture where hermeneutics meets with phenomenology. Here I need to caution, however, this missing piece, analogous to a piece of a puzzle, is not the last piece nor is there a definitive puzzle. Rather it was a piece that required, to some extent, taking apart some of the pieces that we once thought had fit and to find one of the pieces that had previously been in place prevented more work on the puzzle until the problematic fit was discovered. I attempted to illustrate that systemic thinking was a lens made possible by hermeneutic phenomenology. In a sense the whole of this chapter speaks to this process.

Of course my work is incomplete. There are likely historically conditioned blind spots within my own thinking. Putting it all into perspective, my work is only one small fragmentary conversation in a long dialogue and lifetime of research. I am hopeful that I have accomplished in some measure
the problem I set out to grasp: the problem of nature in technological culture. It has been a long journey, one that has been full of heartaches. Completion was only possible with the help of faith, warmth of friendship, support of compassion, incandescence of love, and sparks of hope lighting the clearing towards making difference.

Paraphrasing T. S. Eliot's fateful words, we have journeyed far, only to come around to return to where we began and know our place again for the first time. Here the familiar is experienced as unfamiliar and the lifeworld opens for a fraction of an instant to re-disclose itself in all its immediacy, in the celebration of Life as it already is.

Traces of the originary text

[God] resides quite as comfortably in the circuits of a digital computer or the gears of a cycle transmission as he [sic] does at the top of a mountain or in the petals of a flower. (Robert Persig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle maintenance)

The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflection; the water has no mind to receive their image. (Zen poet, circa 700 A.D.)

In this dissertation, I was reminded of the need to recover the loss of nature from the discourse. I have sought to apply myself to the humbling task, hopeful that within the renewal of spring's new hope, we can convey the healing magic of the nexus where hermeneutics and phenomenology converge with our hearts in Life. I am hopeful of our journey together. The poignant stories emerge from within its sinews, and our heartfelt dialogues will continue
beyond the binding making whole these pages. It can be transformative when we stop taking our world and actions for granted in reinterpreting phenomenologically the ontologically prior lifeworld of nature, within all its vibrancy.

Perhaps we are not too late for the Gods and Nietzsche’s madman, coming not early but appropriately at the appointed hour when the monkey stood at the door has come and gone... We might once again be inclined, even groaning from under the shadow of the secular, to widen the meaning of interpretation to include the traces of the originary text prior to found nature. Within the sparks of Divinity our lives are made meaningful in attesting to the continuing miracle of Life. Perhaps the repressed return, when the pretender that usurped nature’s name to unchain the earth from the sun that threatened once to shut out the Divine, has lost its transcendental grip that at once blocks our access and precludes the world. I am hopeful that new language has found its way into my text in the awareness that our life’s praxis has always been about languaging the world. Perhaps it is in this sense, I am told, that my labour tracing the loss of nature, in the end, turns out to be an attempt to find traces of the Infinite in first nature.
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NOTES

1 Worded differently, this is the problem which Nietzsche (1974) poses as the problem of nihilism, Husserl (1970) sees as loss of the lifeworld, Heidegger (1962) posits as forgetting of Being, Sartre (1957) exalts as nothingness. Taylor is also appropriate as advance organizer to unfold my proposal around loss of meaning because the retrieval project that I am advocating is similar to the one that he is calling for.

2 Although this is a phrase commonly attributed to Weber — Gerth and Mills clarify that Weber borrowed the phrase from Friedrich Schiller, the romantic.

3 To qualify, this is my interpretation of Bruno Latour’s work. Latour’s theorizing has influenced me in profound ways. It was Latour who alerted me to the flux of purification and translation in the discourse, which I re-interpret as reification and remapping. Besides making me aware of discourses around nature, culture and technology, Latour alerted me to sources of competing authority; divine, natural, and social that influence the shaping of the modern world. Latour’s recognition of the continuing power of divine authority, in contrast to the shifts towards the secular, was also pivotal in turning my work towards the existential.

4 Steven Vogel frames his claims through neo-Kantian interpretation, a framing that helped me to formulate my own critique. Vogel, whose work in located at the nexus between Marxist critical theory, post-empiricist philosophy, and sociology of science, also made me aware of the corresponding mappings, as culture, nature, and technology. Additionally, Vogel’s examination of Lukács’ Marxist critique of reification and contemplation, and Vogel’s critique of naturalism, based upon his interpretation of the Kantian divide, denying human capacity to “know” the things-in-themselves (hence the problematic legitimacy of giving voice to nature), were all pivotal influences to my work. Of significance, the status of nature remains unsettled, remaining to haunt critical theory. In sum although Vogel saw no problems with dumb nature, his approach towards the debate educated me on the elements of the debates.

5 Poggeler attributes the phrase to Martin Heidegger, inspired in turn, by Holderlin’s poetics. See Heidegger (1971) for his poetic attribution to the poetry of Holderlin.

6 Martin Heidegger casts a problematic shadow in twentieth century philosophy. Thus we have Bertrand Russell’s (1945) compilation on philosophy from antiquity to the present without mention of the philosopher of Being. And yet, when we consider how Heidegger combines the hermeneutical thread in Dilthey with phenomenological thread in Husserl (see Bontekoe, 1996) Heidegger’s influence becomes obligatory. While I too am uncomfortable with Heidegger’s affiliations with National Socialism, my research has nevertheless convinced me of the significance of his contribution. Heideggerian deconstruction also holds potential for quotidian pedagogy. Consult Wolin (1991) and (Philipse, 1998) for clarifying the controversy in Heidegger.

7 I need to make a necessary distinction here, although there is admittedly an effect that might be construed as therapeutic in my work, I am neither trained in psychoanalysis, nor is my work intended as therapy. What I propose is something more modest, to work with a conceptual language to explore the flux between hope and the existential basis of students’ queries.

8 Note the similarity between hope and despair with disclosure and concealment above. This is not an accidental pairing, although more nuanced. Disclosure can unfold as hope, but concealment, by its very nature, hides all, perhaps even despair. My phrase is not merely poetic, it is also meant as a literary device to critique the problematic portrayal of emotions as binary.

9 Note the interesting juxtaposition of Winograd and Flores with Abram; effectively they are all expressing their fields as language, the first from technology and the second from ecology. Inherent in the flux between separation and unification in language that they speak in common, is my PhD thesis.
10 Somewhat obtuse, although he does not articulate the argument in the same way, I got the idea from Bruno Latour when he plots the "trajectory" of an object, the vacuum pump, along an existence-essence vertical axis, in terms of its improvement over time, over a nature and subject "polarity" horizontal axis. To get an idea of this abstraction, read Latour (1993).

11 I have seen the term in Bookchin (1996), Tester (1995) and Vogel (1996). Given the nature of my inquiry, I have been curious of the words "second nature", a most apt construct I first found in Bookchin. I have traced the term to Lukács (1971b), it appears he may well have coined the term.

12 This section is intended to clarify my awareness of the problem of implementation, and is intended as part of the general sketch of the problematic.

13 Orr makes the key distinction between problems in education and problems of education, whereas the former describes typical everyday problems in education, while the latter calls attention to the fundamental question of the purpose of education. Thus while the former involves important issues like relevant curriculum, parental involvement and class size, the latter is founded on the fundamental question around the meaning of education. Or to put it in Orr's words, complicity begs the question, "what is education for?" (p.7).

14 I learned this technique from reading Nietzsche and Dilthey; making statements in the imperative voice, without citations, as truism, more of style than of empirical rigour, but effective, as it catches the reader's attention in its brash attitude towards declarations.

15 Here I identify with Taylor's project in several ways. Like Taylor's, mine is also a "essay in retrieval" (p.10) concerned with a "quest" (p.17) around "loss of horizon" (p.19). In seeking to similarly expand the sense of the moral, I am also obliged to critique scientific frameworks that dismiss ontological claims to ethicality under the epistemological cloud that Taylor calls the "modern naturalist consciousness" (p.5). Moreover, I note these parallels appear to offer my work a measure of validity. While my pathway is different from Taylor's, it nevertheless appears similar both in outline and ambit, suggesting perhaps, a degree of internal coherence and consistency around inquiries in ethicality in discourses of nature.

"[a]n important strand of modern naturalist consciousness has tried to... declare... irrelevant to morality... ontological accounts"

16 My originary impulse was framed within an existential question posed by my father, wherein the direction in which his question led me, eventually manifested as a form of ecological consciousness. See Feng (2001b) and Feng (2001a) for an idea of my nascent formulations of my current contribution. My book chapter was an important milestone for my dissertation. This is because it not only documents a stage in the emergence of my work, it also created the model with which I was to revisit my writing, this time making a hermeneutic turn, with an appreciation that although I did not know it at the time, the exegetical orientation to my work has always been profoundly phenomenological and hermeneutic.

17 Perhaps one of the most poignant instances I recall was the sight of a Buddhist monk on the television who had doused himself with kerosene and set himself on fire. Here is the kind of fear that I define as existential. I knew with that act, that monk condemned himself in this world and the next, for according to my understanding of Buddhist teaching, not only did he lose his life, he might be condemned for an eternity, as the taking of one's own life is the ultimate karmic setback in terms of reincarnation. The fear that gripped the child was within the riddle posed by his singular act. I could not understand what force, what good, could impel someone to sacrifice himself for eternity, and abandon all hope. Here was a political but existential act that burned into the memory of a child before he even understands the concept of critique.

18 I arrived at this formulation through reading Vogel's critique of the ambivalent status of nature that he calls the problem of nature in Lukács. Lukács' work is significant for multiple reasons. Not only was it one of the inaugural first interpretations of Western Marxism, it was also one of the first critique of scientism and social construction, paving the way for those in the Frankfurt School who wrote in naturalism like Marcuse (1964/1991), and those like Vogel who critique naturalism. Importantly, through Vogel I learned the language of this debate. See (Marcuse, 1964/1991) for an idea of how he "speaks" for nature, on the side of naturalism.
This was an impasse for me. Thankfully, Ted Aoki made me aware of the legitimacy and possibility of connecting the questions that tore at my heart with the requirement for topic question and rationale.

Here I found the advice of my committee members invaluable, as they helped me to steer me through uncharted waters, while I, trying to conduct research, was plunged into serious existential angst.

As I expand later, I found this reference through the emergent work of Ian Cook (2001) around narrative, with whom I also found a measure of affinity.

I am grateful to Stephen Petrina for introducing me to the du Gay et al (1997) model in particular, and to cultural studies in general that helped shape the conceptual underpinnings integral to my critique of reification.

Rather than refer to direction as clockwise or counter-clockwise, which can be confusing, I reference movement towards reification and towards immediacy.

I came to the realization that it was inadequate to take down the structure alone; one needs also to rebuild another in its place. As it turns out, this may be an obligatory pass when one deals with existence and ontology. I was stunned when I came across this citation from Philipse (1998) on Heidegger’s plan. In a way it not only makes sense, as I found, since at another level, the two are part of a single moment, as are reification and immediacy are part of the same dance, two sides of a singular phenomenon, as we shall see in CHAPTERS TWO and CHAPTER THREE, that dialectically feed on each other.

Here again, I bring up the unfolding nature of my work, pointing out the uncanny parallels. Where my work disclosed as autopoietic, Cook found his work related to George Marcus’ (1995) ethnographic thesis around emergent fieldwork. Where I followed threads of existential angst, Cook followed the lines tracing the trajectory of a tropical fruit. What was also interesting is what was common between two “unintentional” projects, we both weaved through complexities of nature, culture and technology following complex paths, and we both found our narratives as the pivot around which our dissertation turned and made sense. I am grateful to Kadi Purru for the Cook reference that although very different from my own work, nevertheless appears to mirror my own lived experience, where life meets research, generating topic, theory, and method.

For instance, I do not and cannot, claim my work on tracing nature as an exhaustive history of the loss of nature. Rather the work that I offer represents select moments in the loss of nature from the discourse.

As I searched for a way to make central narrative within my life praxis in accordance to Father’s Dao Li, I am grateful to Munir Vellani for pointing me to MacIntyre’s appropriate and wise words.

I confess to incurring an anachronism, but this as one that Merchant infuses into her work, in putting inverted quotes around ecology (see p.36). Also the notion of anachronism is an interesting one when one is undertaking exegesis, as we will see when we visit the work of Marx and Engels in the next chapter.

Here is the original reference that Merchant uncovers. I am indebted to Steve Petrina for informing me of this Agricola source that is still available in its Latin versions.

Through reading Vogel, I realized that appeals to speak on the side of naturalism have historically been dismissed on the basis of irrational claims about nature’s absolute otherness, which by Kantian definition lies beyond human knowing. This citation is relevant to my thesis in several ways. Not only does what appear as irrational claims have rational origins in Engels’ materialistic science, this source also betrays the manner in which science too, attempts to interpret nature’s absolute otherness through its re/constructions.

Perhaps not too coincidentally, as Marx emphasizes how these elements connect in the internal logic of capital, I could not help but notice these are also the constituents in my hermeneutics of nature around the intersection of nature, culture and technology.

Although I also cannot rule out the possibility from a letter written by Marx to Engels on having “just finished correcting the last sheet... so this volume is finished” (Marx & Engels, 1967, p.2), dated 1867, prior to the publication, that Marx might have been informed of the
work of Ernst Haeckel who coined the word in 1866. See Worster's (1977/1994) ecological history for the origins and dating of the word ecology in Haeckel, "First appearing in 1866, Oecologie was one of the many neologisms of Ernst Haeckel the leading German disciple of Darwin..." (p. 192)

33 A etymology check with the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) reveals the presence of a pre-Kuhnian conception of the word "paradigm" dating back to 1483 with Late Latin and Greek roots as archetype, exemplar, and idea. See Kuhn (1965) modern interpretation of paradigm as philosophical framework.

34 Here 1 I am grateful to Jerry Coombs for his reminder that these hard-won gains issue from the same modernity and Enlightenment under critique.

35 These notions of natural rights and natural law, although not critiqued in this pass of our discussion, nevertheless become the seeds of contention when we take up the issue of the representation of nature.

36 Based on my engagement with the literature, social theorists like Weber and Simmel, act as gateways as it were between the nineteenth and twentieth century. George Lukács and Walter Benjamin also stand out here although the latter is likely more acknowledged, with the notable exceptions as we see here in Held (1980), where Lukács' name is spoken in the same breath as the prominent figures of the nineteenth century.

37 Cf. One cannot make this utterance without mentioning Gary Snyder. Although I take a different approach here, it is appropriate to pause at this question associated with Synder. It is relevant to point out that instead to finding a strict dichotomy denying or professing the social construction of nature, I not only found a range of expressions, but also traversed along the range myself. I began with a position similar to that exemplified by writers like Gary Synder who refutes the notion of a constructed nature. But prompted by my reading of Merchant's work around the metaphors of nature, I gradually moved towards the midway positions of Neil Evernden and Kate Soper. It was not until I stumbled (in my search for literature connecting nature and culture) into environmental sociology in works by sociologists like Klaus Eder's and John Hannigan that it began to dawn on me it was precisely in social construction that I needed to locate myself. It was through my tenure in the environmental sociology literature that I became interested in the notion of reification and sedimentation in the construction of the social, and the relationship of that question to the loss of nature from the discourse.

38 These are three obscure paragraphs, which one can miss if one blinked. While I have not read the text in full, I have yet to run into another clear position in the book. Very difficult to find, and easy to miss, I only found it through a search engine.

39 While discussion often revolves around epistemological questions concerning knowing the status of nature as created or not, accessible or inaccessible, transcendent or immanent, determined or free, it appears to me we are in effect struggling with another set of questions around ontology. Questions not about knowing nature per se, but more fundamentally in terms of what is nature? Moreover, relevant to my research, we need to be reminded we are not speaking of nature per se, but of our constructed and represented knowledge of nature.

40 At risk of sounding solipsistic, I am aware that I cannot speak for others (Alcoff, 1991), what I share here is not meant as generalization, but particular to my lived experience. I am however; hoping some of this might transfer through the sense of intersubjectivity to convey the sense of the possible I am trying to describe.

41 In making this claim, when I go back to the original text and read Adam Smith, I am struck with his utopianism. It appears Smith really thought his formula for the wealth of nations would bring about a better world for all. See (Smith & Stigler, 1776/1957) for an understanding of the context in which Smith's work was embedded.

42 To clear up the seeming contradiction with mention to responsibility, here I am speaking of those who insist assuming responsibility is the corollary to social construction, yet who abrogate it in practice, in terms of the broader interpretation of responsibility, beyond the self, as I have sketch out here.

43 As the control of signals is a key requirement for microprocessor architecture, prior to designing a microprocessor, I had to design a traffic control intersection. That was when I
realized that real live people were more like an afterthought to the design, where the goal of
the design was to maximize the number of cars at any given intersection, not people.

As people are too light to trip the relays that change the light, they have to manually
change the light. The problem is while they are doing that, the cars automatically trigger
the light change. Thus we have the unfortunate situation where the car turns left even as the
pedestrian crosses, where the engineer knows of the inherent flaw, but it exists as systemic
flaw. As it was through the pedestrian-left turn problem that I first became aware of the
problem of representation in design, and it illustrates well the problem of reification, the
above makes a good exemplar illustrating the intersection where internal flaws meet with
reification in the everyday.

44 I appreciate Karen Meyer’s reminder of this central aspect of our mortality. When
mortality raises its head, it can humble even the most arrogant. Moreover, mortality is also the
mode of being we share in common with all life.

45 In Husserl’s notion of bracketing allowing us to suspend our judgements, we find
hints of Husserl’s mathematical background, in his links with analytical philosophy via Brentano
and Frege, and lingering traces of Cartesian doubt.

46 Interestingly, Arendt does not name the “object”, perhaps, to increase the force of
her argument by calling attention to the phenomenon and event rather than the naming.

47 Here is an instance where familiarity with themes in theology helps me to connect
modernity and the loss of nature from the discourse, when modern intuition only make sense,
interpreted as secular attempts to replace the spiritual framework shattered by the advent of
the historical intersection of the Scientific Revolution and the Protestant Reformation.

48 The account of their relationship would be distorted if we did not also acknowledge
Heidegger’s clandestine relationship with Arendt. See Wolin (2001) for the background to their
relationship.

49 The historic interview was also reprinted under the chapter “Only a God can Save Us”
in Richard Wolin’s (1993) reader, The Heidegger Controversy, from which I obtained this
citation.

50 Heidegger acknowledges in the Der Spiegel interview that references to uprooting
arose within the context of his conversation with Rene Char, the poet and resistance fighter.

51 Here I note the first publication of Arendt’s classic was in 1958; nearly two decades
before Heidegger’s interview.

52 The destiny of Neil Armstrong was ironically also the visual impulse that led me to
study computer design at one of the locations where my conjoint interests in computers and
space flight converged, in Houston, Texas. Perhaps destined, while I was there, I also learned
far more about the south and the problem of colour than computers, an experience that was to
become formative in awakening my social consciousness.

53 I express my profound gratitude of the hermeneutical phenomenology breakthrough I
experienced through the heartfelt pedagogy of Munir Vellani and Karen Meyer. It was under
their guidance and encouragement that I made my turn, and they who gave me courage to take
up the ground of critical ontology.

54 The idea has its origins in a phrase I loved from Richard Kearney (2002); "the hidden
cause of things" (p. 13). The reading of the spoon is quintessentially Heideggerian.

55 I express my gratitude to Jacqui Gingras for her encouragement and suggestion to
write out the story of the spoon. In this sense then, it is in Jacqui’s spirit that the spoon speaks
in celebration.

56 I express my gratitude to Sharon Fuller in my social geography course where she
impressed upon me the significance of classification in sociology, and by extension, for the
sociology of education.

57 The definite article for "the" Earth and indefinite article of "a" world is appropriate
as a literary device here, since it underscores the power of social construction. Thus, although
"a" social construction is rendered, when the claim is made universally, it can be naturalized,
as "given", to become "the" world, synonymous with "the" Earth.
I accidentally dropped the spoon at a juncture in time when I was searching for an icon to represent myself in my hermeneutics class. As will be seen, it was through this breaking and the need to reconcile this breaking that my dissertation came into being.

I pause to express my gratitude to Munir Vellani and Karen Meyer for this inspiring TS Eliot poem, which has guided my heart, even as it inspires my pen.

The journey has not only been in my mind. In the intervening years of my research, I have been travelling by greyhound to distant cities like Toronto, Indianapolis, San Diego and Seattle to present papers, reading and theorizing along the way. As an educator it amazes me that we are so anxious to get from point A to point B, when pedagogy is the journey between the two points. The point is, my work flows out of my lived experience, for instance, it is very likely reading Vogel on the way on this trip, added to my experience. When my good friend Warren Linds met me in Regina, Saskatchewan, he was the one who affirmed the rudimentary sketches of my circuit of nature that I had just formulated. Very likely, the stories I heard along the way, the sight of seeing the forest as façade, tales of the super stacker in that nickel town, and the refuse I saw flow into the night air as the thick clouds of industrial plumes ascended to the heavens, all played in part in the conceptualization of my model.

As we shall see, my personal view differs from the literature. Although my sentiments are similar to the positions held by Berman, Merchant, Weber of the need for re-enchantment of the world, my heart tells me, and I want to believe, that while the dominant worldview has changed, the found world before the social change persists within our midst.

This is also a place where one has barely finished one's meal when it is gathered into the compost heap and recycled.

Here I emphasize the need to sustain life, over the sustainability of resources, a term although still helpful, has been appropriated by corporation as Roszak (1992) warns.

Thanks to Luanne Armstrong for the critical reminder that some of us have been hypnotized by the buzz for too long...

Herein lies pedagogical potential around relationships and ethicality within our daily existential encounters with others. Both our awareness of our vulnerabilities and limitations as temporal beings, and our yearning to learn, help to create conditions for quotidian lessons in compassion. Insofar as the existential condition also limits other sentient beings whom we encounter, pedagogy that reminds us of our commonality in everyday praxis open spaces to ground education around caring in communities of learning. This shared intersubjectivity can also be extended to aspects of the lifeworld to teach children/students to interpret ethicality in the physical world and in non-human beings around them. As embodied beings, children can for example, link bodily the inherent ethicality and responsibility behind an act (such as picking up broken glass) that impact upon the Other. Within the embodied awareness that broken glass can cut others even as it cuts them, children can relate caring to the properties of materials around them. Similarly, caring for vulnerable animals based upon their intrinsic worth rather than utility, as kindred beings capable of suffering and mortality deserving of respect, also helps to eco-pedagogically expand the circle of ethicality.

I am extremely grateful for this question posed by Carl Leggo, one of my committee members, as it made me ask myself the same question even though I had already answered Carl. In staying at the forefront of my consciousness, this pivotal question has shaped my subsequent writing focused on bringing out the appeal of the existential for myself.

To get a better context of this citation, see Pirsig (1988). With apologies to Robert Pirsig, although it might detract from his intentionality, given the transcendental quality of these words, and themes like reincarnation central to his own personal meaning, it is with due care and respect that I substitute his original words, "The Buddha, the Godhead", with the appeal of the Divine residing in the hearts of my readers. This citation is placed appropriately, at the end of my dissertation in recognition of the computer scientist, Richard Rosenberg who first showed us the passage between technology and society, when he opened my eyes so many tears ago to the critique of computing, in what I would come to understand as implications of technology.