

MAKING THE BREAK

How can I undertake and understand my search for an enhanced comprehension of my life through moving beyond forms of existence that are grounded in 'mere formal rationality and instrumental reason'?

Peter Mellett

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P E Mellett
8 September 1994

esspem@bath.ac.uk
pandjm@globalnet.co.uk

Abstract

This dissertation charts the progress over four years of the changing perspective of an individual who engages with a succession of action research questions deriving from the form: ‘how can I improve the quality of my life?’

Starting with an enquiry into improving the quality of my thinking, I come to identify the negative implications of understanding and expressing my being through the cognitive categories of a positivist personal paradigm.

Movement towards an alternative dialogical perspective is initiated as I consider aesthetic sensibility and aspects of feeling as representing the opposite pole to pure thinking. However, any attempt at movement seems to return me to the place from which I start because I am attempting to undertake and understand my search through descriptions and explanations that are grounded in the very categories I wish to transcend.

I move from self-reflection and the analysis of texts to the more public arena of a school where I join my enquiry with that of a classroom teacher who is also engaged in his own enquiry. My understanding of dialogical encounter grows as I explicate aspects of power, authority and control in our relationship and partially resolve these through a consideration of mentoring.

I finally turn to correspondence and conversations with others in order to pursue my search for enhanced understanding through the notion of dialogical communities. I describe, largely through the use of the old categories, the evolution of my understanding of dialogical encounter through practical engagement, and then demonstrate my enhanced understanding operating within the form of such an encounter. In the final pages, I explain what I understand by ‘enhanced understanding’ what it means to me, and how I now express and understand my being through it.

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Foreword

John Wisdom: obituary in *The Independent* 15th December 1993

Photograph: A lean open face with a broad smile; cloth cap, muffler and raincoat against a background of hay or straw bales.

"... His book *Paradox and Discovery* (1965) ... continues his work of showing that philosophy can advance and deepen our understanding, not in the ways with which we are familiar in logic and the sciences, but in a way that good literature does. His last book, *Proof and Explanation* (1990), ... is concerned with the nature of reasoning inside and outside philosophy ... He argues for the fundamental character of the particular case in all forms of reasoning, such as a mother refers to in explaining things to her child. He argues for the priority of "mother's method" over "father's", where the father resorts to general principles in his explanations. It is the mother who has to come to the rescue when the child asks for an explanation of the father's general principles - what they mean and why the child should believe them. ... He did not lecture from notes and brought his students into dialogue with what he was saying. ... Wisdom's philosophy was neither the study of arcane facts, nor the pursuit of complex theories; rather, anyone who has reached a certain linguistic level has, he believed, the capacity both to raise central philosophical doubts and to take steps towards settling them. Wisdom called these processes "provocation and pacification". Unlike Wittgenstein, he stressed the insight (rather than the craziness) that informs even - or perhaps especially - the most paradoxical and most notorious philosophical ideas. ("There is good in them, poor things"). Philosophy thus calls for a perturbation of our apparently stable conceptual schemes, and an uncomfortable deconstruction of what we know; but also for a reconstruction through which the relations between neighbouring conceptual areas are redescribed, and that which we have already known is seen anew. ... psychoanalysis, another enquiry through which that which we in a sense have always known is regained, but with greater vividness, particularity and authenticity. In both philosophy and psychoanalysis there is resistance to such knowledge, and to the exploratory use of free associations of ideas which may feel dangerous or mad. Wisdom ... drew out of his students these often inaccessible thoughts. He was truly Socratic. ..."

This outline of Wisdom's philosophy describes the place from which I now attempt to write.

Making the Break

Introduction

Action research claims to be an emancipatory activity: "...a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality, justice, coherence, and satisfactoriness of (a) their own social practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the institutions and programs and ultimately the society in which these practices are carried out. Action research has an individual aspect - action researchers change themselves, and a collective aspect - action researchers work with others to achieve change and understand what it means to change." (McTaggart 1992 drawing on Carr and Kemmis 1986)

The most common context for action research seems to involve teachers who engage in enquiries which relate to their own practice with their own pupils, as they address questions of the general form:

"How can I improve the quality of my practice?"

I am no longer a practising classroom teacher and yet I am now looking to action research for processes that may help me to (paraphrasing McTaggart) 'change myself and work with others to achieve change and understand what it means to change'. In asking questions of the form: "How can I improve the quality of my own life?" I am appealing to the emancipatory elements that I perceive in the processes of action research enquiry. As a parallel process to those of the teacher, I am regarding my everyday life as my practice; my striving to grow and to make a claim that I understand the process of that growth is my educational endeavour.

My first encounter with action research was nearly four years ago in October 1990. Operating from a paradigm which at that time was almost exclusively positivist and abstract-cognitive in outlook, I initially engaged with the idea of action research as a kind of novel and slightly wayward procedure whose use might lead to new knowledge about the nature of the world I lived in. Whilst no longer a practising classroom teacher, I was engaged in a course of study leading to MEd. As noted above, my perspective at the start of Action Research I was firmly rooted in an understanding of my continuing education as being concerned with the acquisition of externally-certified knowledge (truths) and with the ability to manipulate those truths to make judgements through the agency of a propositional logic. I attempted to express my current concern through the standard form of action research question (McNiff 1988) which asks: "How do I improve the quality of my practice?" I saw my concern as being related to knowledge and thinking. The opening question to my enquiry emerged as: "How do I improve the quality of my thinking?"

At the time, however, I held many unquestioned assumptions about the nature of knowledge and my relation to it. The definition I held of the word *thinking* was narrow and restricted itself to encompass (propositional) logical and rational thinking only. Having always been fascinated by the progress of human thought outlined in books such as Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* I was attracted to the 'philosophical' undercurrents I perceived in Action Research. I had always been an

'introspective thinker' and had assumed that one day, no doubt through a form of Fregerian linguistic analysis, the true reality of the workings of human existence in the world would be revealed once and for all. I assumed philosophy to be the province of systems-builders who thought analytically according to my definition of the word 'thinking'. I had thumbed through my copy of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* since 1967 wishing that I had the intellect to understand it and so to advance my understanding of my existence. Action research looked 'interesting' from an intellectual point of view - or rather, from the cognitively-biased point of view of such intellect as I had.

More than three years have elapsed since I embarked from this rather arid and restricted starting-point. Three years of self-reflection, reading and writing, conversation, and correspondence have led me to the point where my original question ("How do I improve the quality of my thinking?") is no longer relevant to my expanding comprehension of self as an active and participating historical agent. I have reassessed and modified the original question to the point where I am now asking: "How can I improve the quality of my own life?"

The difference between these two questions as written may seem slight, but the movement, in terms of my own perspective, constitutes a major educative change. The writing of this dissertation itself marks the latest phase in my continuing endeavour to enable personal change and growth, to present to a dialogical community a claim that change has happened, and to support that claim with evidence. As such, this dissertation represents the most comprehensive attempt I have yet made to put forward a claim that I understand my own educational development. I offer this account as a contribution to that expanding and living form of educational theory (Whitehead 1985) that has its being within the tradition of action research.

I must now explain the origins of the title I have chosen, representing as it does the main aim of this whole enterprise. The title *Making the Break* derives from a passage in a book that I chanced upon two years ago. The title of the book is *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory* (Roderick 1986) and the relevant section shows the author drawing on the writing of Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1989). The section concerned runs as follows:

".... the Enlightenment project of liberating humanity from myth and the unknown has, by becoming an end in itself, turned into its opposite - a new and more powerful force of domination. The old terror before the unknown becomes a new terror: the fear of anything that cannot be calculated, standardised, manipulated or instrumentalised. Enlightenment progress in scientific- technological knowledge (=power), while creating the objective possibility for a truly free society, leads to the domination of external nature, society and inner nature. What Lukacs analysed as the reification of consciousness was the price the potential subjects of liberation paid for the progressive overcoming of material necessity. Throughout the course of Western civilisation, the rationality of myth, as well as the Enlightenment which replaced it as reason only to become a myth itself, exposes Western reason as a destructive force. Reason abstracts, conceptualises, and seeks to reduce the concrete and the non-identical to identity, to destroy the otherness of the other. Horkheimer and Adorno locate the irrationality of what Weber analysed as rationalisation at its deepest source - the identity logic which is the fundamental structure of Western reason. Human

liberation could be conceived, if at all, only as a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason" (page 40)

Two years ago I was pleased with myself for having found this section; it fitted nicely with an argument I was developing as I addressed my original question: "How do I improve the quality of my own thinking?" In keeping with the habits of a lifetime, my response then was entirely cognitive and intellectual and was disengaged from the historical reality the authors were describing. However, with the passage of time and from my current perspective, I now read this piece of text as a cogent and succinct indictment of myself, of the way I act and comprehend self and others, and of the society in which I live. Engaging now with the question: "How can I improve the quality of my own life?" I return to this extract again and again. At this moment, certain phrases have an added insistence:

" ... Enlightenment progress ... leads to the domination of external nature, society and inner nature.

... the reification of consciousness ... Western reason as a destructive force.

Human liberation could be conceived, if at all, only as a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"

These phrases demand the engagement of 'I', not just as an entity (of the Enlightenment) "employing reason fearlessly applied" (Kant), but as a person striving to change his world, not just to describe it (Marx). With these words as a setting, I see my overall aim to be to explore the possibility for, and the implications for self and others of, "making a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason". It now seems to me that thought - in the sense of my original understanding of the word thinking - is no longer sufficient alone to inform my growing awareness of what constitutes rational significance in my life.

At this starting point (for there have been many previous attempts) I have an intention for this enterprise to consist of two main parts, the one summative and the other formative in essence.

The first part I intend to be a summary that uses a narrative form incorporating self-reflection to give an account of how I now see myself to have arrived at my current state of being (at this time of writing). It will attempt to chart and explain the significance of the movement of my concern from its expression as "How do I improve the quality of my thinking?" to "How can I improve the quality of my life?" As noted above, the account will form the basis of my current claim to understand my own educational development.

The second part I intend to be formative and to act as a living and dynamic form that carries forward my enquiry within the processes surrounding its writing. The question: "How can I improve the quality of my life?" reflects the general aim and intention of my endeavour. However, experience has shown that movement occurs only as I identify and engage with the subsidiary questions relating to action-in-the-world that are implied at the outer reaches of my changing and expanding understanding. In this respect, experience has also shown me that to attempt this enterprise in isolated reading and self-reflection dooms it to failure. Throughout the

past three years, I have repeatedly allowed myself to be seduced by the power of the arguments contained in books. On each occasion I read, I compared and contrasted, I wrote and reflected. Each time the writing progressed for several thousand words and then guttered and died. Its apparent life was not healthy; it was sick at heart and was unable to exist in a vacuum. I have repeatedly forgotten that my enterprise only has life and an educative relevance to me (and hence possibly to others) where I engage in (McTaggart passim):

"...a form of self-reflective enquiry ... in social situations ... with others to achieve change and understand what it means to change."

I have found it all too easy on previous occasions to carry out a "self-reflective enquiry" in the form of a measuring of myself against an expanding knowledge (not comprehension or understanding) of the established literature. In the absence of *others* and outside of *social situations* I have found, in the final analysis, that my journey from Plato to Derrida and Foucault via Kant and Hegel has achieved a change in outlook, but no understanding of *what it means to change*. At the start of my enquiry, I did not realise myself as a historical being; I did not consider context to be significant to understanding.

In striving for change and as a setting for this endeavour I have introduced Horkheimer and Adorno's recipe for human liberation. Questions immediately arise of the form: "Is it tenable for me to maintain with Horkheimer and Adorno that *human liberation (can) be conceived, if at all, only as a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason?*" and "What do I understand by the terms *formal rationality and instrumental reason?*" and "Why are they described as *mere?*" and "What form of reason would I feel more comfortable with?" and so on. But for the time being I am choosing to take the view of Horkheimer and Adorno on trust; I shall not carry out a critical and comparative analysis of it here at the outset. Their view goes wholly against the grain of the tradition in which I was raised and still largely have my being; it is acting as a powerful challenge to me and as a motivator for this whole enterprise. In feeling dissatisfaction with my world-view I am adopting the opinion of Horkheimer and Adorno as a sort of antithetical prejudice to set against that world-view. I expect my enquiry and my writing to have their being within the dialectical tension that exists between these two opposing viewpoints. In this way I suspect it may be that an analysis of the view of Horkheimer and Adorno will form an implicit but covert counterpoint to my continuing examination of its significance to me as my whole enquiry and its perspective evolves. Circumstances may lead me to meet them head-on later; here and now I reserve the option to allow their influence to pervade my actions and thoughts without a conscious and overt challenge. For the moment I am taking up their recipe for human liberation as more of a battle-cry than as a statement of specific intent.

I have spoken of my intention to set out the following account of my enquiry in two parts, the first summative and the second formative. So far as the content of my intended first part (sections 1 and 2) is concerned, the material on which it is to be based already exists; it is from the past and I have only to write it out within a narrative that aspires to be a valid account. Having lived through the generation of that material, I already stand at its end. I therefore already have in mind the form of the bridge that shall stand at the end of the first summative part and link it to the

second, formative, part. This bridge emerged from the activities described in section 2 *Searching for the right question*, and is in the form of two questions which reflect in more actionable terms the concern of my ongoing enquiry. They act both as a conclusion to past and present (sections 1 and 2) and also as the spring for future action (which will constitute section 3).

The seeds of these two questions were present at the start of my enquiry. It has taken over three years for me to cultivate them to the point where I can give them formal expression. I shall set out my questions here and now at the start, as well as at the conclusion, of my account of past and present. In this manner, sections 1 and 2 form (will form, when written) a recursive loop suspended between the statement of my two questions:

Looking inward: How can I undertake and understand my search for an enhanced comprehension of my own life through moving beyond forms of existence that are grounded in "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?

Looking outward: How can I take others with me as I/we strive to understand forms of rational significance that represent movement beyond "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?

These questions, personalised derivatives of the view of human liberation taken by Horkheimer and Adorno, will also provide the initial focus for the start of my third section, where I hope to find some form in which to achieve their resolution. Whether I show the possibility of answering them or whether my focus moves away from them remains to be seen. I suspect the evolving process of trying to respond to my questions may turn out to be more significant than any answers at which I might arrive.

Section 1

Starting to make a claim that I understand my own educational development

(a) Action Research I

In July 1989 I decided to leave classroom teaching. After eighteen years I had come to feel that I had finally stopped learning from my daily practice at school and had ceased to be fulfilled by that all-consuming activity. I had made sufficient contacts over the previous three years to derive an income from freelance writing and my wife was also establishing herself as a psychotherapist. Our two children were becoming more independent and flexible in their daily routines. It seemed time for a change.

However, I may have quitted teaching in schools, but I still regarded myself as one who was engaged in the overall process of education. Most of my writing and editing work was becoming involved with material for secondary school science courses, including teacher's guides, work sheets and text books. I relied heavily on my practical experience yet was forced to acknowledge that it would, in time, become out-of-date and exhausted.

In order not completely to lose touch with the world of formal education, I enrolled in October 1989 as a part-time student on a Master of Education course at Bath University. My intention was to at last explore my eighteen years' practice at leisure and set it into some sort of perspective. I saw the course as possibly enabling a sort of retrospective digestion and appreciation, whilst keeping my options as a teacher open for the future. I now suspect I had chosen this path for the very reason that I was unconsciously dissatisfied with the state of stagnation that had come to pervade my educational development by that time.

In the first year of my course, the Autumn and Spring terms of 1989/90 found me engaging with the two taught modules Educational Technology I and II. Here was a field I could understand and feel affinity for - the underlying structure and the working mechanisms of education: Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain; Gagne's model of learning outcomes and the use of educational objectives; the significance of mediation in learning; information technology and expert learning systems; cognitive engineering. Here was education seen largely from my perspective of *episteme* through certain and objective (scientific) knowledge. I enjoyed immensely the opportunity to investigate a field of knowledge in depth and at leisure. Courses of action I had intuitively taken whilst a practising teacher were illuminated as I viewed them from the perspective afforded by the "Ed. Tech" model. Formal rationality and instrumental reason triumphed and I was well pleased with my efforts and their results.

I finished my year's study in Educational Technology fired with the idea of developing a microprocessor-based interactive expert system designed to produce teaching materials that would evolve with a teacher's growing professional expertise. Would such a system be feasible? Would it work? Someone suggested the taught Action Research modules might be a suitable base from which to explore these questions. I duly enrolled.

Saul on the road to Damascus was as nothing compared to my experience during the first three sessions of Action Research I in October 1990. Gone were the anally retentive phrases that I (Saul) had written a few months before: "The writer would suggest ..." Instead, I (Paul) was empowered to take seriously my own experience, my own opinions and my own values. I learned to say "I" rather than "one" or "you" or "the writer". I saw that I had been a sort of intellectually challenged camp-follower of logical positivism; I saw that my rationality was not absolute but arbitrary, being founded on a logic that I had mistaken to be the logic.

As already stated, I came to the first AR module as a thoroughgoing positivist with a background of eighteen year's chemistry and science teaching, mainly in comprehensive schools, and with Educational Technology I and II under my belt. A white English male born in 1946, I had spent my formative years doing as I was bid in a Surrey grammar school (1957-65) and at Nottingham University (1965-68). Determinism pervaded the world in which I had my being. Indeed, whilst I did not acknowledge it by name, the positivist perspective had underpinned my approach to life for almost the whole of my existence.

As I engaged with the reading, discussion and reflection that constituted Action Research I, this underpinning was called into question as I attempted to deal with the usual forms of personally-based question which ground action enquiries of the kind: "*How do I improve my practice?*" In my own case, I no longer had a practice as a teacher and so my opening question took the form: "*How do I improve the quality of my own thinking?*" Note that I unconsciously substituted the word "do" for the more usual form "can". I now suspect I was not asking myself the question as a spring for my own action; rather I was unconsciously appealing to some external agency *to tell me what to do*. In assessing my initial position, I questioned:

"... having been brought up and educated in post-Baconian scientific Western Europe, what can knowledge be if not empirical and ordered through the agency of an analytic logic? ..."

I then went on to elaborate:

"... brought up in a culture with this perspective, I find myself an empiricist with my knowledge based on sensory observations of individual instances. My logic is propositional and analytic and I subscribe to the mechanism of inductive inference on which our (scientific) beliefs about the natural world are founded. ..."

I (Paul) summed up this opening perspective by putting the following words into the mouth of the erstwhile Saul:

"... I am a rational being and will reject that which cannot be tested by reason. Rationality is reflection in accordance with an analytical logic ..."

These statements represent my starting point from which the subsequent weeks saw me identifying an underlying dissatisfaction with the means that I had traditionally used to generate and hold knowledge. I was forced to confront subsidiary questions of the form: "What is knowledge? ... How can I make a claim to possess knowledge?" I

inspected the foundations of my claim to having knowledge and found them far less substantial than I had previously imagined. Identifying the rules that governed my thinking (and existence) as being essentially positivistic in nature, I found that many commentators spoke out against my assumed position. Carr and Kemmis (1983) drawing on Kuhn (1970) are fairly typical of those who provided a commentary on my naivety:

"... A close examination of how science has developed reveals that personal, subjective and social factors play a crucial role in the production of knowledge. Indeed, the significance of these factors is such that "knowledge" can be more accurately understood in psychological and sociological terms than in purely logical or epistemological terms. When understood in this way, it becomes apparent that the positivist conception of objective knowledge is nothing more than a myth."

(NB. I assume the word *myth* is being used here in its perjorative sense. Myth in its positive sense allied with the Jungian notion of archetype can lead to powerful insights). Trying to understand how the roots of my thinking could be possibly be based in myth (i.e. as a 'widely held but false notion' - OED), I traced the history of modern positivism back through Hume to Descartes and Bacon and finally to Aristotle. The outline features of the argument seemed to have been:

Aristotle (grounding his conceptual scheme in mathematics and geometry) saw causes as the essence of things to be discovered by descriptive analysis; Descartes (referred to as a "continental rationalist") asserted that the exercise of the natural sciences leads to certainty; Bacon (referred to as a British empiricist) developed the inductive principles for amassing and interpreting data. Mach, the Vienna Circle and logical positivism developed the verification principle which states that something is meaningful if and only if it is either verifiable empirically or is a tautology of (propositional) logic or mathematics. (But is the verification principle itself empirical, a tautology, or meaningless?)

I then engaged with the famous assertion of Hume (1740) that the principle of induction on which rests the acquisition of knowledge (based on sense data) leads to the conclusion that one assertion is as valid as any other. I searched the literature for assistance. initially chancing on Ayer's (1936) attempt to answer Hume; I found it specious:

".... it appears that there is no possible way of solving the problem of induction, as it is ordinarily conceived. And this means that it is a fictitious problem, since all genuine problems are at least theoretically capable of being solved..."

Was Hume steadily pressing me towards an acceptance of relativism? I remembered that Kant is reputed to have referred in 1769 to Hume as having "woken him from his dogmatic slumbers". My bookshelf had for years held not only the copy of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* referred to earlier, but also an unwieldy (and equally uncomprehended) nineteenth century translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Popular commentaries on this work (Copleston 1960; Korner 1970) told me that Kant also asked questions of the form 'What is the nature of the world?' and 'How do we know about the world?' but had concentrated first on giving a critique of our faculties. I understood Kant to have used a defence of the idea of *synthetic a priori* propositions

as a means of reconciling continental rationalism with the inductive problematic of the British empiricists. This and other insights into Kant's philosophical scheme added little to my understanding of how I generated and held knowledge. Wherever I turned, there were 'authorities' whose main efforts seemed to involve attempting to coax reason into giving an account of its own experience of itself.

Continuing to use a propositional logic to inform my ongoing comparative analysis of texts, I constructed an argument that helped me both to circumvent Hume and to undergo a distinct shift of perspective. I used the following words to describe this transformation of view:

"... Popper (1953, 1974) enables this transformation by considering the process of induction to be unnecessary for the realisation of human knowledge. Like him, I am now quite happy to admit to the general fallibility of human knowledge and to simply regard its essential character as conjectural. Citing classical Newtonian mechanics as an example, he looks on it as: '... no more than a marvellous conjecture, a strangely successful hypothesis, and (in the light of Quantum Theory and Relativity) a staggeringly good approximation to the truth.' He goes on to assert that: 'Once we fully realise the implication of the conjectural nature of human knowledge, then the problem of induction changes its character completely: there is no longer any need to be disturbed by Hume's negative results, since there is no need any longer to ascribe to human knowledge a *validity* derived from repeated observations. Human knowledge possesses no such validity.' The key word to me in Popper's observations above seems to be *conjecture*. This word has a corporate and cooperative ring to it which stands opposite to the idea of an isolated observer constructing theories. Once I accept the notion of human knowledge as being conjectural, I no longer have to consider different areas, each making its own claim to legitimacy. But the most important implication of my Popper-aided shift in perspective has been to realise that it can in fact be done. Therefore, no one claim to knowledge can demand an innately superior position to any other. The positivist outlook may well "deliver the goods" in the sphere of the sciences, but it cannot lay claim to all areas of human endeavour and understanding. It must wait in line and make out its case ..."

I dropped the notion of a universal validity for knowledge and substituted for it the notion of conjecture shared by a critically-thinking but pragmatic community. By these means I was finally able to comprehend the meaning of the assertion by Spengler (in Bloor 1983) that:

"... if we appreciate each culture in its individuality we will realise that the unshakable truths and convictions of its members are but expressions of one specific existence and one only ... Mathematics is not a universal thing; there is not, and cannot be, number as such. There are different number worlds and the character of a piece of mathematics depends wholly on the culture in which it is rooted, the sort of mankind it is that ponders it ..."

I had earlier seen Aristotle laying the foundations for the positivist paradigm as he grounded his conceptual scheme in the episteme of mathematics and geometry. Carr and Kemmis told me that: "the positivist conception of objective knowledge is nothing more than a myth." I had now come to read that word *myth* in my own non-positivist context as a token of cultural consensus. The character of human reflection

on any phenomenon "depends wholly on the culture in which it is rooted, *the sort of mankind it is that ponders it...*" (my italics).

From this point on, the first phase of the dawning of my new understanding was completed as, on my less exalted plane, I found myself treading in the footprints of Wittgenstein. (Remember that I had held until fairly recently that meaning and the nature of the world in which we live would ultimately be sorted out through a form of linguistic analysis). In his early years, Wittgenstein claimed to have solved all the problems of philosophy through the propositional exposition which comprises his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, the volume I had possessed as a sort of talisman for over twenty years. I had not pretended to understand the detailed content of the work or to have grasped its fine structure. However, as I wrote three years ago:

"... 'the world is all that is the case'; 'the world is a totality of facts, not of things'; 'we picture facts to ourselves'; 'logical pictures can depict the world'; 'a picture has logico-pictorial form in common with what it depicts'; 'a logical picture of facts is a thought' - all these statements, taken out of context and treated as aphorisms, resonated during that time with my own world-view. But after over a decade of silence, Wittgenstein began to describe an altogether different philosophy, one which has the closest overall flavour to the state of mind I am trying to substantiate.

"... I found the specific content of his later writing (*vide Philosophical Investigations*) difficult to grasp in itself, yet all the while I felt that I was being encouraged to think in a particular way. But he himself stated that his style had a therapeutic objective against the "error of theorizing". So there is no longer any attempt to impose order and system; all theorizing seems to be avoided. ..."

Popper had spoken to me of conjecture; Spengler of culture. (Quoting again at length from my writing of three years ago) Wittgenstein spoke of the:

"... ultimate claim to have revealed the true identity of the *heirs to the subject that used to be called philosophy* (quote from Wittgenstein's Blue Book): "they belong to the family of activities called the sociology of knowledge.

Here was neither foundationalism at the one extreme nor relativism at the other; rather I was moving towards the idea of conjecture and consensus within a critically-aware community.

"... Justification must come to an end somewhere, says Wittgenstein, but it does not end in a state of intellectual doubt or in the apprehension of self-evident truths. It ends in *an ungrounded way of acting*. The difficult thing to grasp, we are told, is the groundlessness of our beliefs. Language rests on consensus, but a consensus of action, not belief. We are introduced to this by training which rests on an innate trust by the child for adults and accepted authorities. The result is that we inherit a system of belief whose certainty derives from the fact that *we belong to a community*. ..."

Thus, as I attempted to answer the question: "What is your claim to possessing knowledge?" I became involved in a journey through the university library which touched on the thinking of Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, Kant, Hume, Popper and Wittgenstein. Whatever the merits, demerits, internal consistency, validity or

otherwise of the surface-skimming argument outlined above, I had come to see positivism as just one system of thought among many, rather than the sole and pre-eminent route to understanding and the possession of knowledge.

As positivism and its deterministic propositional logic loosened its intellectual hold over me, I turned towards an alternative - dialectical - logic, the logic that informed the Socratic dialogues of Plato which predated the Aristotelian search for demonstrable certainties and axiomatic truths. My earlier focus on content and matters of fact as the stuff of knowledge gave way to an emerging interest in establishing a balance by considering process and value as a means to understanding. Whilst I was attempting to initiate this shift, I was conscious of another of Hume's assertions (1738 - the so-called *Autonomy of Ethics*); statements of value and statements of fact form logically independent realms of discourse. I spoke of establishing a balance, yet I read Hume's assertion as suggesting that the two realms of discourse constituted two mutually-exclusive logics, the former propositional and the latter dialectical.

Yet the process I engaged in at that stage was almost entirely cognitive, reductionist-analytic and propositional. I now suspect that I was, in fact, embracing the tenets of Action Research with the same facility as I had embraced those of Educational Technology. I have already spoken of spending my formative years "doing as I was bid". I now suspect that implicit in such a stance is an element of anticipation, of *doing what I think is expected of me*. As usual, was I trying to *perform* and win the approval of the people I saw as being set in authority over this field of endeavour?

My encounter with the concept (but not the practice) of dialectic developed hesitantly. The written account I gave of my movement away from a positivist outlook was itself couched in a dialectical form of alternating and linked questions and answers. I had reached the stage where I could see the value of making a claim to understand my own educational development (Whitehead 1989) and regarding this as part of a living educational theory. I had also come to view myself as a living contradiction (Ilyenkov 1977) in that I contain two mutually exclusive opposites - the experience of holding certain values and the experience of having to negate them in my daily practice. That which I had moved away from was quite clear as were the reasons for this move. But the dialectic, that which I had supposedly moved towards, was less than clear.

My interest in dialectic had arisen because a propositional logic could not hold these mutually exclusive opposites. ie. Propositional logic eliminates contradictions from theory, an imperative which follows from the Law of Excluded Middle. I counted myself as a newly-recruited dialectician, wholeheartedly embracing the argument that contradictions are necessary in constructing an educational theory which can explain the educational development of an individual. I took (and still take) this approach to contradiction to be the crux of the arguments between dialectical and formal (propositional) logicians. The problem then facing me (as now) was a realisation that the logical form of my educational development does not derive from a propositional logic. The great question at that time became: "Can I reveal the form of dialectical logic". Ilyenkov (ibidem) himself had worried over:

"Can and should a ... contradiction find reflection in thought. And if so, in what form?"

Yet he seemed to wish to put forward a convincing argument for this couched in the propositional form. He wished to reveal the form of a dialectical logic by showing that $p=q \rightarrow q$. It was no small indication of my shift of perspective that I did not wish to join him in such an attempt. I had a growing conviction that a dialectical form of logic dealing with contradictions cannot itself be described in a propositional form. There is no answer to the question: "What is the dialectic?" There is no suitable objectively stated description. I continued this line of investigation into a second phase of study under the module entitled *Action Research II*.

(b) Action Research II

During the module of study entitled Action Research II, I engaged in a second cycle of reflection back on my own educational development since the start of the course, hoping to reveal what the logical form of this development might look like. Implicit in the form of this logic, so I understood, would be a theory of my own educational development. As already noted, I took this to mean that the logic would not be a propositional one, but a logic expressed in and based on a dialectical form.

The second cycle of reflection started with a prolonged period that involved following the trains of thought expressed in books; the second cycle took up where the first had left off - in the library. Progress was minimal until I realised that the form of my attempted analysis of my educational development actually did not fit any of the strands of thought that I had been developing with philosophical texts. I certainly had need to integrate insights from the traditional forms, but the evolution of my understanding could not be reduced to those forms. At that time, The new logic was not to be revealed in terms of the one it had displaced (I reasoned) so I must reflect upon its outer form-in-action in the hope of revealing its internal form and thereby a theory of my own educational development. (Whether this move from 'old' to 'new' was to be in essence a revealing or a construction was a question I postponed answering for almost two years).

At that time I started to established a new strand of thought that related to the phrase "reflect upon its form-in-action in the hope of revealing its true internal form". Reverberations from a letter from Karl Marx to M. Kovalevsky quoted in Ilyenkov (1977) started me on a path which lead to the dialectical apprehension of a form of truth through hermeneutics:

"... It is necessary to distinguish between that which the author in fact offers and that which he gives only in his own representation. thus what Spinoza considers the keystone of his system, and what in fact constitutes this keystone, are two quite different things. Our job cannot be once more to paraphrase the theoretical foundations ... Our job is to help the reader to understand the 'real inner structure' of his system, which far from coincides with its formal exposition. ..."

So it seemed to me that the main thrust of my effort at that stage had to be directed towards revealing 'that which I offer' by reflection on 'that which I have given in my own representation'. This extract represented my first encounter with the idea of having to make my own understanding ('a form of truth' referred to above) out of

making a reading of a text or any other record. An author has written his or her own truths into the text; it was then up to me to engage (*dialectically*) with the text and to construct my own (hermeneutic) truth. Here was added confirmation that if there were no universal truths to be apprehended, even in the field of matters of (objective) fact (Spengler, Wittgenstein), then there were certainly none to be had in matters of value (despite Kant (1785) having attempted to derive an ethics from an analysis of reason alone).

These and other reflections lead me to wish to attempt to move my enquiry on by making a fresh reading of the story I had told myself about the world-view that informed my past life. My first action research cycle was an endeavour to "think better", that is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of my efforts to grasp the thoughts of others. As I slowly came to understand the context of my prior use of such words as 'grasp', 'thought' and 'others' I began to understand the significance of control in my life; both the control of self by others and self, and of others by self.

Roderick (1986) helped me to uncover a further possible reason for my lack of movement when engaged in a comparative analysis of texts in the hope of finding a model to describe my existence:

"... The Enlightenment view, brilliantly expressed by Kant of the rational subject as an autonomous and self-dependent agent who was to examine and judge everything in independence from authority and tradition by means of reason courageously employed..."

In my search for the dialectic I was assuming that a paradigm shift away from positivism and into a dialectic form of understanding was to be completed by the simple employment of pure reason in a rather more courageous manner than usual. But I was treating myself as my own object of contemplation in too detached a fashion. Roderick (*ibidem*) reinforced this realization when he summed up a central point of Marx's thinking as representing:

"... a ruthless critique of the privileged of "ideas" ... a denial of their autonomy and independent power. Ideas are not representations of facts or autonomous active agents, but expressions of the real material life processes of human beings. These 'material conditions' are not simply an object of contemplation, but a field of action."

My dilemma was that I had an incomplete awareness of my 'real material life processes'; I had identified a sense of unease with my current thought processes and self, but was trying to effect change from within by using stratagems that derived from the same within. And above all I was still regarding myself as an 'object of contemplation' rather than as a 'field of action'. I had placed myself in the position of a person who grasps themselves firmly by the hair and tugs hard; and then is surprised not to find themselves rising off the ground. My old roots ran deep and were more tenacious than I ever perceived. These roots were given graphic expression by Roderick as I continued reading and came upon my now oft-quoted passage where he draws on the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: For the sake of completeness, I shall repeat it here:

".... the Enlightenment project of liberating humanity from myth and the unknown has, by becoming an end in itself, turned into its opposite - a new and more powerful force of domination. The old terror before the unknown becomes a new terror: the fear of anything that cannot be calculated, standardised, manipulated or instrumentalised. Enlightenment progress in scientific- technological knowledge (=power), while creating the objective possibility for a truly free society, leads to the domination of external nature, society and inner nature. What Lukacs analysed as the reification of consciousness was the price the potential subjects of liberation paid for the progressive overcoming of material necessity. Throughout the course of Western civilisation, the rationality of myth, as well as the Enlightenment which replaced it as reason only to become a myth itself, exposes Western reason as a destructive force. Reason abstracts, conceptualises, and seeks to reduce the concrete and the non-identical to identity, to destroy the otherness of the other. Horkheimer and Adorno locate the irrationality of what Weber analysed as rationalisation at its deepest source - the identity logic which is the fundamental structure of Western reason. Human liberation could be conceived, if at all, only as a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason...."

In the face of this onslaught, there I was, a child of the Enlightenment, who had embarked on a venture whose prime intention was to sharpen up the grasp of his Western reason (now described as a 'destructive force'). I had initially been concerned with 'the quality of my thinking'. Now Horkheimer and Adorno were telling me that the real problem was the foundation of my reason. However, behind their uncompromising assault on 'the identity logic which is the fundamental structure of Western reason' I did see an alternative path revealed at whose end might lie the alternative dialectical logic.

What had I really written in my first account? What as-yet uncomprehended processes underlay the writing of that account? I had written six thousand words that professed to describe the first steps in a paradigm shift. I now had need to read them; and I needed help to read them.

.....

A deeper understanding of what I had written - an understanding that might be described as *truer* in terms of my developing awareness - did not occur until I experienced a conversation with my partner, Jane, in which she responded to my request that she read the account of my first Action Research cycle and highlight points which she felt were significant to my educational development. This conversation marked (and marks) such a significant shift in my own perspective in that as I re-read it I can re-experience my present focus emerging in its course. As I say below I am directly apprehending '*understanding of the thing in action in front of us as we actually use it*', having in mind the criteria for understanding a dialectic drawn from the work of Eames (1990):

- (a) Is there a movement, through dialogue, towards enlightenment and understanding?
- (b) Is there a logical form of question-and-answer, with elements of contradiction?
- (c) Is there any example of the organic "difference-within-unity" I have said is characteristic of the dialectical form?

However, I had a sense that the thrust of my whole effort during Action Research I had been to treat it as an intellectual exercise in which I was allowed to indulge myself in the first person singular. I therefore set the then-current form of my enquiry in context for Jane by posing the questions:

P. A teacher would have an Action Research planner ... "How can I improve the quality of my practice?" Now I haven't got a practice so I ... thought if I could talk about my own knowledge, my own educational development. ... Can you think of an alternative form? What question should I really have been asking?

I look at this extract now, three years later, and my eye is immediately drawn to the manner in which I simply equated 'my own knowledge' in the same breath with 'my own educational development'. It would seem that I held the notion of the important stuff of life as being constituted by means of a sort of cognitive composite of thought-content/thinking-process presiding over an ever-expanding store of (possessed) knowledge, itself organised under some grand scheme. In retrospect, to hold such a view was hardly surprising, given that my heritage had its roots in the Cartesian subject-object split and the common Western habit of attempting to grasp the totality of the world in a system of categories.

I asked Jane what question I should really have been asking. She responded to this direct request in an oblique manner by turning my attention to areas of experience which she felt I had hinted at but which she felt I ought to address more explicitly.

J. I'm not sure that I can answer it with a word to replace thinking. ... but what I feel this whole thing is about ... you went on to say: "*This question (How do I improve the quality of my own thinking?) has underpinned my motivation for many years*", so you're not just giving it the word but you're actually giving it the sense that you're actually owning it. ... I think it means something to you and I can understand why because if you come from a very concrete place, to suddenly go into areas of feeling and emotion and the process by which you communicate that element of yourself to others, which (is what) I actually think this is about. Because unless you can communicate that element you are not going to give a greater balance to your right (-brain) side. It's very woolly it's creative ... and at times very indecisive.

Out of this (then, to me) rather garbled (and guarded?) response emerged my realisation that feeling, emotion and process were the words which should focus my attention. This was reinforced later on by:

J. You've got here: "*My mounting feeling of disquiet*".

P. Feeling?

J. Yes. ...that word feeling coming in? "*I wondered what knowledge could be if not empirical and ordered through the agency of an analytical logic.*" there is another way of thinking about knowledge as an evolving awareness and understanding. It's not just something you take in and give to yourself. It is something that is processed and changed by you and seen in a particular way by you in some instances actually created by you. ... here's a lovely statement. "*There are different number-worlds, and the character of a piece of mathematics*

depends wholly on the culture in which it is rooted, the sort of mankind that ponders it".

P. This again is the idea of Wittgenstein's language games context is all. ... What Wittgenstein is saying is that if you attempt to justify something you will follow a trail. ... All knowledge is essentially arbitrary. And you therefore have to look for a consensus amongst a critical and self-reflective community.... And this is the way of talking about an "ungrounded way of acting". ... so all we can certainly say or talk about or hold as knowledge is what we actually understand of the thing in action in front of us as we actually use it.

J. ... something I read last night ... in terms of approaching knowledge. It's a process, it's a tool, it's a way of being. ... that's what makes it real ... Because we can get awfully locked into validating what things are in themselves.

One of my major concerns up to this point had been with the structure of knowledge as a controlling force both from my own internal point of view and and for its influence in my control of other people. This point is important to the way in which I saw myself in my professional life in teaching - exerting influence through my good practice which led to my being consulted by others in authority within the school. In this way I was able to exert influence over curriculum planning and school policy through being respected for my good practice and through the agency of the elected position of teacher governor.

Jane put her finger on an exclamation mark she had added to my text.

J. ... I put this exclamation mark right at the end. *"So there we have it ... authority, faith, community - all woven together to show the priority of Life over Reason, Practice over Norms and Being over Thought."* ... And yet! What's your last sentence?

Over her shoulder I read aloud my final words together with Jane's exclamation:

P. *"These words reflect the frame of mind in which I now stand and represent the basis from which I shall endeavour to improve the quality of my own thinking"*. Oh God; we're back where we started!

P.+ J. (in unison): If only you'd stopped there!!*

It is impossible for the text as it stands to convey to the reader the significance of the exclamation marks (!!*) which mark out the direct apprehension between Jane and myself of the following understanding. Jane had realised at that point and I had realised with her the true significance to me of the meaning of *Life over Reason, Practice over Norms, and Being over Thought*. However, what I was doing in my final sentence was moving back into my initial position of wanting to "have" a knowledge structure which I could use to control my own life and the lives of others. Here indeed are Eames' criteria for the dialectic met in full flow.

This exchange was my first conscious experience of the evolutionary power of the dialectic in action. Strictly propositional discourse now seemed to me to be limited in its ability to generate fundamentally new insights (although I was certainly not

advocating its abandonment). Dialectical discourse seemed to facilitate the breeding of fresh ideas and perspectives while the strictly propositional form simply rearranged existing ideas into new patterns.

However, dialectical exchange needs material to chew over, so I reasoned, and the insights gained from the conversation outlined above had been framed by the thinking of Wittgenstein and Spengler and by the process of an action research methodology. I continued with my reading and reflection, looking not so much for knowledge as for enlightenment as I addressed the question: "Why am I as I am?" Making a claim that I understood my own educational development became a real and worthwhile endeavour to me; hitherto it had been a rather abstracted concept which came along with the general baggage of the overall action research canon. Making that claim became the aim of my enquiry. Stretching out of this focus into the future was beginning to form the consequential question: "How can I improve the quality of my own existence?" It is worth noting that I did not supplant the phrase *my existence* with *my life* until much later.

Jane's comments that stemmed from her reading of my first account had pointed me towards the idea of the right-brain and the left-brain aspects of being. I understood the former to relate (crudely speaking) to feeling and the latter to logical thinking. In this context, I identified myself as having a bias towards left-brain operations. My right-brain side - the seat of my emotional, sympathetic, empathic, subjective, affective sensibilities - was not so much under-developed as under-valued. I had learned (having been taught) to keep it in a private place. My right-brain faculties were for recreational purposes only; during the prosecution of *serious business* (always interpreted by me as 'intellectual') they lay under the veto of the logical (left-brain) thinking side. It may seem a facile conclusion to have drawn, but I saw the roots of this lop-sidedness lying in my upbringing.

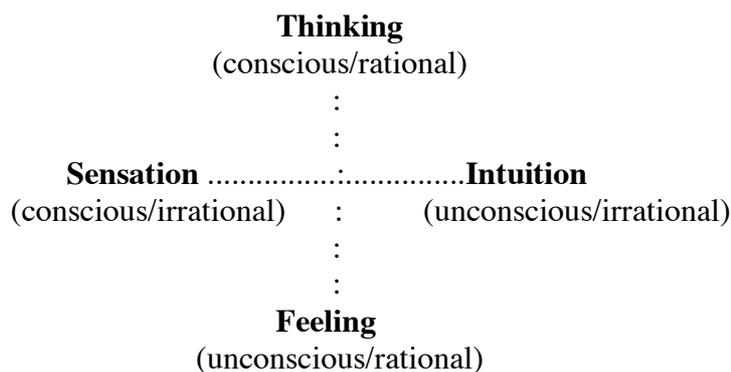
Little of my formal education from 1957 to 1968 (Reigate Grammar School, Nottingham University) reached beyond the assimilation and regurgitation of facts. The same pedagogy was brought to bear on each subject alike, be it Latin, English, Chemistry or Geography, and at all levels. I learned a lot but understood little. I had little *feeling* for or understanding of what I had learned. Rarely was I asked for my opinion and rarely did the notion of value come into any discussion of the subject-matter. I always did as I was told or as I anticipated was expected of me. My definition of the word 'thinking' concentrated solely on the cognitive process of logical analysis and synthesis acting on retained facts with the intention of making impersonal findings or judgements. The logic was propositional with the implication that the impersonal nature of the judgements guaranteed them to be value-free (i.e. safe). I saw imaginative thinking, affective thinking, empathic thinking and their like as belonging to the irrational realm of feeling and therefore not to fall under the sway of the pure logic of my cognitive thinking faculty. (It is interesting to note that Jung classified feeling as a *rational* faculty, as against my assumption above).

Having this perspective I could, for example, see no difference in 1967 between the (matter-of-fact) question "what do you think about the atomic bomb?" and the (matter-of-value) question "how do you feel about the atomic bomb?" I would answer either question with an exposition of the facts as I knew them, followed by an analysis of those facts towards a conclusion. In the context of this example, I had read John

Hersey's (1946) *Hiroshima* but I could not speak about my feelings concerning it. The feelings evoked by that text (then as now) pushed me into a very private and cut-off place, rendering me speechless in their presence. They would not have formed any significant part of my response to any question containing the words "What do you" and "about the atomic bomb/the pill/the price of coffee?" Here was John Wisdom's (1990) "father's method" in action, with its adherence to general principles.

My assisted re-reading of my first account did not leave me with desire simply to throw out the old and to substitute the new. My notion was to move my enquiry forward by attempting to establish a dynamic that could hold and value both. I began to concentrate on myself as a living contradiction described in terms of a tension between what I *cognitively* espoused and had written during *Action Research I* and what I actually *felt* inwardly. I suspected that that in my case as a living contradiction a hidden dialectic was operating in the region between the thinking pole and the feeling pole of my persona.

AR I had been a cognitive (left-brain) operation; AR II was now turning my attention to address the right-brain side of my self, the side concerned with aspects of feeling. In this respect, I found Jung's work on types useful in marking out the relationship between thinking and feeling. Reading Fordham (1986) I came to understand how Jung had identified four elements in the make-up of self; the opposed rational judging functions of ('conscious') Thinking and ('unconscious') Feeling and the opposed irrational perceiving functions of ('conscious') Sensation and ('unconscious') Intuition. Jung maintained values and subjective judgements to be the province of Feeling which is opposed against the Thinking pole (in which my personal paradigm had so heavily invested). Sensation defines things and situations as they are in the present and is contrasted against Intuition that is essentially speculative. I set these opposing sets of functions against each other in the following diagram.



Thinking is the rational way of judging; Feeling is the alternative other way. Jung claimed that each personality acts preferentially and typically by one or other of these functions, informed by perceptions gained preferentially and typically from Sensation or Intuition. Each person is more accurately described as a composite of these four aspects, having their being within a unique area bounded by them.

I identified my own persona as lying in an area heavily biased over towards Thinking/Intuition. Such an analysis of function is compounded by considerations of

extraverted and introverted attitudes. I identified myself as having a largely introverted nature, detailed by Fordham as that of a person who is:

"... better related to his own psychic processes (than an extravert), is reflective and is occupied with his own reaction to external objects, which he approaches only when he is reasonably sure that they are congenial to him; ... Thoughts are objects in their own right and can be enjoyed without reference to reality."

I had concluded my account of AR I by quoting words which formed a sort of exhortation to myself:

"... So there we have it ... authority, faith, community - all woven together to show the priority of Life over Reason, Practice over Norms and Being over Thought ..."

I continued to privilege thoughts as "objects in their own right" and "enjoyed (them) without reference to reality". Reason, through this agency, continued to keep its hold over Life as did Thought over Being. In this way, my existence expressed itself into the world through my Thinking pole; Sensation, Feeling and Intuition orbited around it and informed it, but were valued only as they served its (abstract) purposes. According to the Briggs-Meyers (1980) Type Index, my dominant process would have been described as INTP - introverted thinking supported by intuition more given to perceiving than judging.

Whatever the exact correlation between Jung's typology and my own constitution, his schema had made me wonder how Feeling stood in relation to my Thinking pole within the context of the form of a dialectical discourse between opposites suggested above. The purpose of my enquiry in its then current form was to attempt to reveal a theory of my own educational development whilst concurrently revealing the nature of the logic that informed it. I saw the logic as implicitly being dialectical and the most fundamental (dialectical) tension within me being between my thinking and feeling faculties. In prosecuting my enquiry I was not about to attempt to pull out my (unconscious) feeling pole into the conscious light of day and reveal the nature of the dialectic between them; it was more that I wished to encourage and value my feeling pole and acknowledge its significance to my life.

My search had evolved from: "How can I improve the quality of my thinking?" to "How do I improve the quality of my existence?" I had by this time come to see myself as a living contradiction being pulled in opposite directions by a stunted and negative dialectic between thinking opposed against feeling. In its extreme form, conscious thinking alone led me to a reductionist and reifying tyranny concerned with power, authority and control. I now understood positivism and its cognitivist stratagems to be the route to but one form of knowledge. Was there between my poles of Thinking/(Intuition) and Feeling/(Sensation) a hidden *positive* dialectic whose fostering could lead to a new form of comprehension of my life? Such a form of comprehension would also be a theory of my own educational development. Could such a positive dialectic be fostered and encouraged to bring together thinking and feeling into a composite where the two exist in a state of dynamic mutual respect and dialogue?

Educational development is to do with becoming and so I set out to explore how that becoming might be facilitated by drawing an acknowledgement of feeling more into picture. As asked above, could there be a positive dialectic between thinking and feeling? Did the seeds of such a possibility already exist within me?

At this point I forgot my own advice when I had earlier said:

"... so all we can certainly say or talk about or hold as knowledge is what we actually understand of the thing in action in front of us as we actually use it. ..."

Instead of attempting to show the thing itself - my dialectic between thinking and feeling - in action, I again reverted to my old habits and started this latest part of my enquiry by using my Thinking pole to interrogate aspects of my Feeling pole itself expressed in cognitive terms. Here was no living educational theory, but reductionist analysis couched in propositional terms. The argument went as follows:

"... Feeling is concerned with subjective states; language (unless used as a poetic medium) is almost bereft of words that directly express subjective states; artists function through their chosen medium to give voice to their own subjective states; by experiencing a particular work of art, we vicariously generate within ourselves a form of the subjective state of the artist. I deploy Feeling informed by Sensation, as distinct from Thinking informed by Intuition when engaged in "aesthetic" (spiritual?) activities such as listening to music or reading poetry. Could aesthetic experiences acting through the Feeling pole inform a dialectical discourse with the Thinking pole? I sought to work this idea through by concentrating on music as being my most accessible and repeatable form of aesthetic experience. ..."

Jung's basic scheme sets judgement at some place between the opposing poles of Thinking and Feeling; perception sits between Sensation and Intuition. There is a private and inward part of my life that is especially nourished by music, where form, content and circumstance fuse occasionally (and ideally) to give a state of gnosis. Could this gnosis exist at the place generated by the dual dialectics (as dynamic equilibria) between Thinking & Feeling and Sensation & Intuition? I continued, with gnosis (as the highest ideal) in mind:

"... Sullivan (1927) spoke of music as a mediator when he considered that: '... the feeling that we have from a great work of art that a large area of experience has been illuminated and harmonized for us need not be wholly dismissed. It is true that experience is susceptible of different degrees of organization, and the superior degree of organization of his experience that has been achieved by a great artist may be ... communicated to us.

"... What was the relationship of this view to a valid account of my own educational development? I have lived with such pieces of music as the late string quartets and piano sonatas of Beethoven for thirty years and have noticed how my perception of them has changed as I have evolved. They continue to inform my evolution as a person and indeed do "illuminate and harmonize" large areas of my experience. Collingwood (1924) informs this feeling when he says:

'...and those parts of the work of art which he could not in some sort have invented for himself will pass him by unseen. "How much, as one grows older, one finds in so-and-so," people say, "that one never saw before!" For one never sees in anybody's work but what one brings to it.' ..."

Sullivan and Collingwood gave words to the desire I felt to relate my feeling about a work of art to the giving of a form to my own existence. I perceived a dialectic between me as beholder and me as part of a work of art. Erich Fromm (1949) extended the scope of *work of art* to encompass life itself:

"... living itself is an art, in fact, the most important and at the same time the most difficult and complex art to be practiced by man. Its object is not this or that specialised performance, but the performance of living, the process of developing into that which one is potentially. In the art of living, man is both the artist and the object of this art; he is the sculptor and the marble; the physician and the patient It is interesting at this point to ask why our time has lost the concept of life as an art."

So the dialectic between thinking and feeling was perhaps to be fostered by being awake and open to the art in my life and to the art of my life. I was not, however, about to stage a return of the Wildean aesthete caricatured at the turn of the last century. In more general terms, I was now prepared to view as a work of art anything that engendered a feeling that I might call "aesthetic". In this respect and depending on my personal circumstances of the moment, an otherwise innocent or prosaic object or occurrence could suddenly assume the status of a work of art which might inform the aesthetic sensibilities of my Feeling pole. There would be no artist present in this case producing a Universal Work Of Art; but the dialectical element of Collingwood's observation would still hold true: "*For one never sees but what one brings to it.*"

The basis for my personal world-view was beginning to enlarge (albeit by a form of reductionist analysis) letting in aspects of sensibility that had always been important to me but which I had regarded almost as not being valid. Other people were telling me this perspective *was indeed* a valid one. For example, Reid (1980), writing of "the arts as a form of knowledge", had started with the familiar distinctions between three basic forms of knowledge (knowledge-that, knowing-how and knowledge with a direct object) and had then gone on to wonder where music fits into this schema. I was helped to regard my new perspective as valid as I read:

"... I think that a confined use of "cognition" and "knowledge" ... goes very badly wrong because of a lack of serious study of the relation of feeling and knowing. ... Feeling is not to be equated with cognition, but there is no doubt not only that it can share in cognitive activity, but that it can illuminate it, helping us to see and understand as we could not without it. ... Psychologically - and epistemologically - speaking, feeling is organically related to the conative or active side of mind, and to the cognitive. All three are not separated parts, but clearly distinguishable aspects or emphases in the functioning of mind ..."

I saw (and see) the form of this functioning as being dialectical. As this notion grew, I moved away from wanting to possess knowledge and improve the means of its acquisition. Matters of value were beginning to lose their subservient attachment in my scheme of things to matters of fact. At the time of engaging with the second action

research module, my understanding gradually became informed by an emerging awareness of dialectical processes within me. I had yet to, and still have yet to, turn fully outward to embrace dialectical processes without of me. However, my perspective was shifting as I began to warm to the notion of standing on my own two feet, speaking with and even empowered by the stance of Polanyi (1958) expressed by Whitehead (1985):

"... In grounding my epistemology in personal knowledge, I am conscious that I have taken a decision to understand the world from my own point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement responsibly with universal intent ..."

The intention of any account that I write under these auspices is for it to be educational, in that it may give clues for others to follow towards a fuller understanding of their own educational development. I see that living form of educational theory growing as contributions to it are accepted by the critical dialogical community it informs. Polanyi raised the question of the validity of any such contribution when he spoke of truth:

"... It is the act of commitment in its full structure that saves personal knowledge from being purely subjective. ... Whether or not it is the truth can be hazarded only by another, equally responsible commitment."

Hopkins (1984) suggested to me that 'another, equally responsible commitment' would have to apply distinct criteria to any account I might offer as a contribution:

"... criteria such as validity, reliability and generalisability are necessary if we are to escape the sentimental anecdote that often replaces statistical research designs in education ..."

The criteria relating to validity and authenticity were already established by others. I shall not reproduce a detailed discussion of their evolution here, save to note that they require the four standards outlined by Denley (1987) to be applied through the medium of a shared ideal speech situation described by Habermas (1979) in his theory of communicative action.

In outline, Habermas maintained that the conclusion of a discourse would be determined by the force of the better argument alone in a communication (dialogue) between participants who have a "... symmetrical distribution of chances to choose and to apply speech acts ..." (Habermas 1971). With Denley, I saw the standards forming the subject-matter of such an undistorted communication to be:

Scientific standards reflecting "... the way in which scientific knowledge is generated and ... the way in which scientists work," this referring to the more modern conception of science as: "a more human activity where objectivity is often determined through inter-subjective criticism and where the creative phases of an enquiry are acknowledged ..."

Logical standards based on the "... logic of the dialectic - revealed in the tensions experienced by all educators, often through their attempts to hold together mutually exclusive values at the same time ... shown through a form which reveals the 'I' ..."

Ethical standards revealed "... through the negotiation of some sort of code between collaborating researchers ...", where the main concern is: "... with standards associated with the values practitioners claim to hold."

Aesthetic standard derived from "... Holbrook's (1979) notion of "indwelling" ... (where) the reader of an account ... should be able to vicariously experience "... the process in which an individual struggled to give a form to his or her life ..." In this way the account can be tested to ensure that "... the integrity of the individual or the unity of humanity as a whole" has not been violated."

I realised then that, whilst scientific, logical and aesthetic standards might be agreed by others to have been met, I could not claim similarly for ethical standards. There was no "negotiation of some sort of code between collaborating researchers" and I was not an active "practitioner". I was engaged in a process of self-reflection contained within the hermetically-sealed environment of a university library. My dialectic was contained within a self-reflective analysis itself informed by a hermeneutic exploration of texts - this hermeneutic exploration being carried out by an evolving understanding that was in external dialogue with those texts as it grew by internalising them. Such progress as I had made was limited to my having moved from analytical reductionism to hermeneutical dialectics. Despite all the hints and prods, I had yet to get into extended and active dialogue with others so that I might gain *understanding of the thing in action in front of us as we actually use it*. Moreover, I felt at the conclusion of AR II not to have moved my understanding towards my original aim. I had hoped that reflection back on my account of AR I would reveal the logical form and thereby a theory of my own educational development. At the conclusion, I felt I was still largely wrapped up in the business of reason attempting to account for its own experience of itself.

.....

(c) Action Research III - in a Swindon school

Having completed two cycles of reflection nominally passing under the title of *action enquiry*, I had now reached a stage where I was beginning to perceive the emancipatory aspect of action research processes. Attempting to make a claim that I understood my own educational development was itself forming the current phase of my educational development. The evolutionary processes of AR I and AR II had moved me to a place where a predominantly cognitive and positivist approach had proved to be inadequate to the task of fully comprehending that development. I had come to shift my perspective to foster a dialectic between the (Jungian) thinking and feeling poles of my being so as to encourage consideration of 'aesthetic sensibilities' in general and "the art of living" (Fromm) in particular. I understood the movement away from a positivistic outlook to imply a movement towards a dialectical form of holding my understanding. The positivist division between theory and practice was beginning to close, although I now realise that I had yet to move to the place where I could say: "My practice *is* my theory". My overall concern at that time (at the end of

AR II) was therefore to attempt to reveal the form of a dialectical logic as I made good the claim that I understood the theory of my own educational development; I understood the forms of the expression of the theory and of the logic to be interdependent.

My enquiry had led me to the point where (at that time) I was able to identify the area of interest for my dissertation as loosely being concerned with "dialectical logic". I knew that I had to turn outward from introspection and start relating to the outside world, ideally regaining access to some sort of classroom practice. I anticipated that sharing the practice of a classroom teacher might enable me to complete a school-based action enquiry - as a sixth module - and might also establish a research base for my dissertation. However, it seemed appropriate at this juncture to delay the start of my proposed course of action until a fifth module had been completed.

Perusing outlines of the remaining taught M.Ed modules in October 1991, I was drawn towards the title *Organisation Theory*. Topic headings included: *Structure and Functions of Organisations; Power, Authority and Value Systems; Macro- and Micro-Politics; Problems of Communications*. I shall not deal here with the ensuing content of *Organisation Theory* other than to say that it illuminated many of my more recent experiences as a teacher in a school with a rapidly changing management structure. I found the course engaging, not so much for the factual understanding that I gained of the subject, as for the way in which I experienced myself going about engaging with it. I often became aware of myself participating in the group in a wholly different manner to the one I remembered from my time with Educational Technology I and II. My motivation to action was now a desire to understand, not a desire (as then) to hold the floor and impress, or cognitively to master and possess knowledge. It seemed now more important to listen carefully, to elicit clarification where necessary and to search for questions that helped to carry the discussion forward in its entirety.

At the successful completion of *Organisation Theory*, I returned in January 1992 to my earlier thoughts about a sixth module and dissertation. I approached Andy, coordinator of the action research group at a community school in Swindon, who put me in touch with Bob, a teacher who had "undertaken some action research but needs to re-start". The reality of Bob's earlier activities in action research only later became apparent to me when he referred to having "got my fingers burned". His position at the start of our encounter was well exemplified by the following extract from his writing of that time:

"... But what makes me teach? The hope that one day people will see that ignorance is not bliss and causes a lot of strife. However with education and knowledge comes the responsibility of truth.

"What an educated person is, in my opinion, somebody who has:

- * A willingness to listen
- * A desire to learn
- * A desire to be fair/honest
- * An ability to weigh the evidence and form an opinion
- * An ability to change that opinion
- * An ability to express that opinion in a way that will be understood

- * A willingness to accept that other people think and are different to you
- * An ability to reflect and change/improve ..."

(Bob later put forward these statements as the basis for his own values or *credo*). Dealing specifically with his earlier experience of action research, he then wrote concerning this period:

"... probably the most painful lesson was that what I believe and what I actually do are completely different. ... I spent five weeks collecting together an archive (video recordings) that I believed would give me evidence to prove that I had helped my students become better scientists. All it did show was that I was a complete git of the first order and that what I said I believed and what I did believe were totally different. I kept warbling on about free radical thought and the necessity of non-conformity to give rise to progressive science. What the (video) archive actually showed was me blagging on about deadlines and failing exams if they didn't conform. ... I've come to a bit of a full stop now as one would when one finds out that what one's been thinking for the last two years is a load of old tommy-rot. ..."

Bob was an environmental sciences graduate in his late twenties with responsibility for teaching science, design technology, and maths to a mixed-ability second-year group and for teaching science in the upper school. He was enrolled as an external student with Bath University and was due to make a written submission for the award of an Advanced Diploma. Hence Andy's earlier comment that he had "undertaken some action research but needs to re-start".

Bob and I agreed that I should join with the teaching of his second- year (year 8) science/DT/maths group on Thursday mornings. We could then use lunchtime and his off-timetable session in the afternoon to reflect on our work. These discussions were tape recorded and I transcribed them verbatim to eventually make up an archive some 43 000 words in extent. I edited and annotated this archive to make an indexed running commentary on "what happened" and presented this as an appendix to my final written account submitted for assessment.

We worked together with this second-year group and came to understand each other's interests and concerns. A joint action enquiry initially emerged which subsequently split into two strands, each of which engaged with our own area of particular personal interest. The initial joint enquiry centred on two pupils, Michelle and Joleen. Of lower-average academic ability, they seemed to exist on the margins of the class group as an uneasy friendship pair, poorly-motivated, easily distracted and in need of constant attention. We formulated the idea of an action enquiry entitled "How can I improve the quality of these pupils' access to the classroom?", aimed at improving their self-motivation and their sense of being members of a group with common and worthwhile interests.

I worked with Michelle and Joleen in their science lessons for the five weeks prior to the Easter holiday. During this time I made three video recordings of them working; I also recorded and transcribed five conversations we had together after their class sessions. Negotiating and giving specific attention to Michelle and Joleen became my responsibility as Bob concerned himself with running the whole class group. However, the action enquiry itself was Bob's as we used the afternoon session

together to review the work of the morning and plan the action to be taken the following week.

Stated in the above terms, this enquiry may appear to have been structured and logically organised. I could justify each of our actions against McNiff's (1988) action-reflection spiral and the set of questions she sees as acting as a starting-point for curriculum reform i.e.:

Question 1: What is our initial concern?

Answer: To facilitate Bob's action research into helping two children to access the classroom facilities and to be more self-reliant.

Question 2: Why are we concerned?

Answer: The less-able children seemed to be ill-motivated to undertake practical work without constant attention.

Question 3: What do we think we can do about it?

Answer: Pete to remove Michelle and Joleen from the briefing sessions that comprised the start of science lessons, present them with an outline of the topic on hand and, through discussion, lead *them* to plan the details of *their own* practical activity.

Question 4: What kind of "evidence" can we collect to help us make some judgements about what is happening?

Question 5: How can we collect such "evidence"? Answer: Tape record and transcribe the practical activity planning sessions between Pete, Michelle and Joleen; videotape the practical session; tape record the conversations that ensued as Pete shows Michelle and Joleen the video. Collect written material produced by the two children from before and during the period of this exercise.

Question 6: How can we check that our judgement about what has happened was reasonably fair and accurate? Answer: Internal validation between the four main protagonists, followed by discussions with Andy (who also wrote comments on the archive transcript) followed by observations from Jack Whitehead (my course supervisor at the university).

In reality, matters could not have been more tentative or unstructured. We assumed the enquiry would develop a life and a motivation of its own; our job should be to monitor and evaluate and to nudge that life and motivation rather than to attempt control of the enquiry as a whole. For my part, I acted as the practical enabler of Bob's enquiry and as a co-respondent for his ideas as we engaged in discussion about the progress of the enquiry. My own enquiry emerged as I began to consider questions of the sort:

1 Can I get Bob to make some judgements about his work and the educational quality of what is actually happening?

2 How can I assist Bob to make public the story of his own educational development that will stand up to public scrutiny?

3 Can I help Bob to address his professional dilemmas?

4 What is evolving between us as I attempt these processes?

The notion was that I would help Bob to respond to question 1 as he attempted to make judgements about the educational quality of his work; I in turn would simultaneously also undertake some form of reflective analysis aimed at enabling judgements to be made about the educational quality of what was actually happening between us (in the context of question 4). Question 2 - assisting Bob to make public his story - arose because he was uncomfortable with the form of continuous narrative prose and with integrating insights from the published writings of others into his understanding. I assumed this area could be addressed later in our dealings. In responding to question 3 - helping Bob to address his professional dilemmas - I would be concerned with Bob's *aesthetic of existence* helping him *to give a form to his existence* and helping him *to face his own truth with as much honesty as possible*. These were the possibilities I had in mind for Bob within our educative relationship.

However, as I addressed the first three questions from the perspective of question 4, I was immediately confronted by subsidiary issues relating to aspects of power, authority and control. These issues in their various aspects concerned Bob and I jointly and severally, that is, as three distinct sets of influences. Jointly, Bob and I and were concerned with the progress (control?) of the Michelle/Joleen action enquiry. Speaking as scientists, we expressed our concern by translating Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle into everyday usage and gaining the result: "The more closely you scrutinize human activity, the more you disturb that activity". I later called on Walker (1993) to illustrate our perceived dilemma as he speaks of researchers' issues of "objectifying the voices of their subjects", thus:

"A practical research issue that faces us all is the intrusive and imperial nature of the research voice, for as soon as we begin an interview, draft a question, or engage another in conversation, the very language we use creates frames within which to realize knowledge".

Bob and I felt bound together with Michelle and Joleen in an educative relationship that had the ability to grow in an organic manner and to evolve of its own accord. We had their trust and as a consequence we (naively) just "let it run" with an avowed design not to use the results of conscious analysis to influence the course of events - not to create "frames within which to realise knowledge". We felt that close observation, and, more especially, contemporaneous on-the-spot analysis, would disturb that which was being observed. We understood action research methods to be inherently wary of conscious or unconscious influences that attempt to control what is happening at the time of its happening. Bob was happy with our "just let it run"; I had also to turn to Margot Ely (1989) for my authorisation:

"... case study research ... encourages an open mind, an inductive strategy in which data are first collected and only later analyzed for categories, patterns, themes ..."

I equated Ely's "an open mind" with our "let it run" and her "inductive strategy" with our collection of summative impressions that emerged during our recorded and

transcribed conversations. Our stratagem with the two pupils and our perspective on the (Bob's) enquiry began within a conversation which had started with us talking generally around the idea of pupils "accessing the classroom".

After working alongside Bob for two weeks with the whole class, a practical stratagem for the evolving enquiry began to emerge. Whilst we had both been individually exploring possibilities in our heads, the enquiry evolved formally and out in the open in the course of our third 'formal' conversation. The first two conversations had been very much concerned with getting to know each other's character, values and perspective. The third was carried out in an atmosphere of "wanting to do something"; a plan for action quickly emerged as we allowed our previous private thoughts and feelings to interact within our dialogue.

I worked for five weeks with Michelle and Joleen as Bob's agent, facilitating an enquiry that was nominally his as we negotiated its twists and turns during our afternoon collaborations. I handled the practicalities of that enquiry whilst attempting to steadily hand the enquiry *per se* to Bob. My own enquiry emerged from the relationship that formed as we engaged together in his enquiry and as I pondered over my four questions and the fundamental caveat of Walker raised earlier viz:

1 Can I get Bob to make some judgements about his work and the educational quality of what is actually happening?

2 How can I assist Bob to make public the story of his own educational development that will stand up to public scrutiny?

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And Walker (1993) - researchers' issues of "objectifying the voices of their subjects", thus:

"A practical research issue that faces us all is the intrusive and imperial nature of the research voice, for as soon as we begin an interview, draft a question, or engage another in conversation, the very language we use creates frames within which to realize knowledge".

These four questions and Walker's observation marked out the area of interest for my own enquiry (as distinct from the initial joint enquiry that was intended to become Bob's concern).

I stated earlier that concerns relating to power, authority and control confronted Bob and I as we undertook our joint and then separating enquiries. Our joint concern in this area stemmed from our desire to engage with Michelle and Joleen as four equal partners in a democratic and open-handed enquiry. As this enquiry evolved, Bob and I were separately confronted by our own individual and personal concerns relating to power, authority and control. I shall now separately deal with these two sets of concerns.

My own relationship to power, authority and control expressed itself at that time most obviously through a concern with hierarchy and the process of taking the initiative within a relationship. During *AR I*, my enquiry had revealed my preoccupation with the control of self and others through my desire *to improve the quality of my thinking*. My encounter (in *AR II*) with Habermas's concept of symmetrical opportunities of exchange within ideal speech acts led me now to feel unwilling to set agendas and impose structures. I regarded myself as one who generally floated in the present, allowing circumstance to dictate the running order of experiences and attempting to make sense of those experiences after the event. I gained few contemporaneous insights due to a desire not to consciously influence the flow of events.

I illustrated this posture by referring to one of the aphorisms attributed to Wittgenstein where he suggests that philosophy is a form of therapy. I saw critical reflection upon personal and joint action as a form of philosophy and, by implication, as a form of therapy (with an educational intent - as an educative relationship). A guiding principle within any therapeutic relationship is that one participant does not overtly suggest concrete courses of action for the other to follow; a therapeutic relationship is a joint voyage of discovery. With these (somewhat cognitive) caveats in mind, I purposefully cast my critical reflection in a form that did not attempt to generate *answers* to the four questions encapsulating my enquiry at the time I was holding them and attempting to live through their implications. I had no intention of purposefully guiding Bob, because the purpose would most likely be mine; I would therefore have been imposing a hierarchical structure on our relationship and hence on the evolving enquiries.

I now look back at me-then ask myself the question: "What was going on then? What was my perspective? Where was I?" I had perhaps ceased to be a dogmatic positivist, but I was far from being a dialectician. I now view myself as having then been a sort of humane positivist whose newly-acquired inhibition from making summative statements of "fact" (when authorised by others or self) also inhibited him from asking the sort of questions that might be expected of a true dialectician. If it is possible to make a paradigm shift from propositional forms of thinking to dialectical forms of being, is there necessarily an intermediate phase characterised by paralysis? Inaction in the face of perceived dilemma seemed to have been my chief mode of existence at that time.

This state of indecisiveness was compounded by uncertainty about the basis of the relationship between Bob (the teacher) and I. Did Bob/me = teacher/helper; teacher/observer; teacher/nuisance; student/tutor; researcher/enabler? Was I Jack's agent? Once our work with the two pupils Michelle and Joleen was "up and running" and when Bob was tackling the presentation of his own account, how much overt direction should I give him? At that time, had I any forms of authority with respect to him and, if so, should I exercise them? I assumed the making of unilateral and contemporaneous judgements by me to have implied the establishment of a power relationship between Bob and I. Again, I note these comments to have been the concerns of the suppressed positivist rather than those of the nascent dialectician. I was struggling to free myself - to make the break - from *mere formal rationality and instrumental reason*, but I thought I had no experience consciously constituting a *living form of educational theory* on which to base my action.

I discussed these concerns with Jack Whitehead who *inter alia* pointed me towards the concept of mentoring as discussed by Yamamoto (1988). I immediately found myself back with my established view of living as an *art* as I read Yamamoto marking out his perspective by drawing on Fromm (1956):

"While we teach knowledge, we are losing that teaching which is the most important one for human development: the teaching which can only be given by the simple presence of a mature loving person. In previous epochs ... the teacher was not only, or even primarily, a source of information, but his function was to convey certain human attitudes."

I saw my part confirmed as being to "convey certain human attitudes" as a "significant other" (Yamamoto, *ibidem*), one who would believe in what Bob was trying to do and who would affirm his worth as a human being. It was not for me to attempt to teach Bob how to carry out his enquiry and see it through into the public domain. Did Bob *know* what he was trying to do? Perhaps that was part of my role in leading him to (see above 1 2 3 4) make some judgements about his work and the educational quality of what was actually happening, and to make public a story of his own educational development that would stand up to scrutiny.

The idea of mentoring helped to remove fears of an assumed authority on my part translating into a power relationship between Bob and I. If there was an element of mentoring in our relationship then it was mirrored in the words of Fromm that Yamamoto chose to end his paper:

"What does one person give to another? He gives of himself ... of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge ... of that which is alive in him. ... he enhances the other's sense of aliveness ... and that which is brought to life reflects back to him ... In the act of giving, something is born ... for both of them."

In the light of these comments I told myself that my intuitive 'hands off but try to stay alert and responsive' approach was an appropriate one for the circumstances. *[But here again I was searching for and finding an authorisation or permission to act in a particular way. Bob had said: "I would go back to your teaching ability and just go on your gut feeling with it. You've got too many years of teaching experience to forget that and go into some sort of academic ..." If my practice becomes my theory - is my theory - why do I have so little trust in it? I am struggling more consciously now to make that move towards a true commitment to personal knowledge - away from the truth of power and its hierarchies to the power of a truth shared within a dialogical community and to which I contribute. Comments such as these keep rising to the surface as I attempt to put together in writing a claim that I understand my own educational development. The very act of me-now writing a summative and retrospective account about me-then causes me to constantly doubt the validity of the claim I am purporting to make. Such accounts, despite their calling on transcript and other archive material, seem so often to be smooth and gilded fabrications. I shall return to this theme later].* This approach led to sessions with Michelle and Joleen that seemed to be positive, open and democratic. The arrangement arrived at by Bob and I had them starting each practical science session with the main class and then withdrawing with me to plan how they would carry out the practical work. My task was to clarify the procedure so that each had clear tasks which would be mutually

supportive. I videotaped each practical session, using a wide-angle lens capable of taking in the whole classroom. I later re-played the tapes with the two pupils present and (audio) recorded our reactions to the tapes and our recollections of the practical session.

I like to think Michelle and Joleen were not telling me what they thought I wanted to hear in our final conversation, because it seems to show that Bob and I had actually achieved our initial aim. We had made the pupils feel individually significant (important) within the context of practical science activities. They in turn came to regard the activities themselves as important and worthwhile. They had also come to regard each other as significant and so cooperated and worked together more effectively and gladly. I had been at pains not to deny their "I" in the midst of their classroom scientific investigations. If Yamamoto's concept of mentoring implies, as I suspect, a form of power-free educative relationship, then I aspired to engender this form of relationship as much with the two pupils as with Bob. However, the time had come for me to depart. Could Michelle and Joleen continue without my support? [My annotation in *italics*]:

P ... you can't do all your science this way.

J: We like to do it this way; it's nice.

P: Well what do you think would make Bob or whoever decide that it is a good idea for you to work in this way? What sort of evidence?

They have to show that the alternative method of working is worthwhile and has been effective

J: That we can work really hard by ourselves ... You can see that we've got more work done ... in our book.

P: You've got evidence in your books and you can also look back and say: "That's how we used to work".

Evidence before and evidence after for comparison

M: That was awful. We used to get about that much (separates thumb and forefinger by 1 mm) work done. ... but because we've come out we've got a lot done. We know how to work in class now.

Acknowledgement that practice has improved

P: That's interesting. So what would happen if you went back into ordinary classes?

I read this final set of exchanges between the three of us as strong evidence that the

M: We'd most probably get

distracted again.

*original aims of
Bob and I have
been realised in
practice*

J: No: we'd probably get more of our work done ... because we've learned how to work. We've learned how to work on our own and with each other.

It seemed at this point that Bob and I had managed to oversee (as against steer) the classroom-based enquiry to a satisfactory outcome (".. we've learned how to work on our own and with each other ..."), guided largely by our joint intuitions responding to circumstance. A satisfactory (as we saw it) working relationship had been established and maintained with the two pupils - satisfactory in the sense of partnership within an open and joint enterprise engaged in by the four of us. We had also amassed a comprehensive and still-growing archive of transcript material, video recordings and pupils' written work. Bob had now to write *his* account of *his* action enquiry. Our emergence from the hermetic bubble of the enquiry and into a wider arena caused problems from the outset. In Bob's words:

"... this has now reached the point where I have to do it for somebody else, an audience."

As he surveyed the sequence of events from his first attempts at an action research enquiry through to our association, I came to feel the pressure of outside power structures bearing onto the relationships we had formed - relationships that had purposefully eschewed the influences of power, authority, control and hierarchies. Bob often referred to the business of "jumping through hoops". He saw most of his existence - passing exams, teaching in a school, even writing an action research account - as jumping through hoops of other peoples' making. I had originally asked myself the question (task 3 above) "Can I help Bob to address his professional dilemmas?" Jack had earlier suggested I help Bob in facing his truth and in explicating the aesthetic of his life. However, it seemed it would be "too horrible" for him squarely to face his professional circumstances in the light of his own professed values:

"... One of the reasons I started doing this is because I thought I could do it by jumping through the hoops ... and that's part of the tension I suppose, because it actually made me think about my practice ... before I just did it. And when I started thinking about it I started to question the whole of my educational existence ... and it's too horrible ... it's like a can of worms ... as soon as I looked at it I panicked ... why am I a teacher? Because I can do it ..."

From his perspective, the experience with Michelle and Joleen existed (viably) in a place apart but had little relevance to his mainstream existence as a teacher. Describing his circumstances immediately after his first attempt at an action enquiry where "I got my fingers burnt", he said:

"... this is where the untruth of it comes again. You came on the scene and I was just battenning down the hatches. And I thought let's stir the water a bit with my toe and see

what would happen. But I was playing a game. I wasn't doing it for real. Because I wasn't prepared to relinquish control again. I had built up this control ...

I had the kids under control and I had my emotions under control. I wasn't being traumatised. And I didn't feel ill and I didn't feel rubbish and those things that I used to feel when I tried to be reasonable. And I thought: "OK; lets see if we can do it" and we worked along with Joleen and Michelle. But I knew in my heart of hearts it didn't really matter what happened with Joleen and Michelle because I was still going to carry on the same way with the rest of the class. ... I didn't have to feel ill any more because I knew that I could have those kids there under my thumb ..."

I knew full well from my own past experience as a teacher the significance of the phrase "I had the kids under control and I had my emotions under control". Yet I had the advantage of age and experience over Bob. With specific reference to the personal aspects of action research he had earlier stated: "I think I'm too young to do this". I also had the advantage of being involved in a long-term and on-going critical reflection that was attempting to lead to a claim that I understood my own educational development. (But do we discover ourselves or invent ourselves?) I could afford to let go of any impulse to control others and I could allow myself to relax cognitive control and to encourage myself in the use of Feeling/Intuition to make judgements rather than Thinking/Sensation. In this way I was engaging with my desire to value judgements arrived at through feeling existing in dialectic tension with thinking. I was aware (as it were) of holding the enquiry in my hands, but without touching it; I suspended my breathing, but I was not holding my breath. I attempted to move with the enquiry, not forcing it to move with me, so that we became a composite.

Back with Bob, I attempted to point up the positive aspects of our activities, by referring him to the final part of my last conversation with the two girls, where they affirmed an improvement in the quality of their experience in practical science sessions viz:

"... I actually asked those two - here we are: 'Pete: What would happen if you went back to ordinary classes on Thursday? Michelle: We'd most probably get distracted again. Joleen: No. We'd probably get more of our own work done because we've learned how to work. We've learned how to work on our own and with each other.' There we have those two important things: 'To work on our own and with each other' - the two things that we set out to engender in them at the beginning. ..."

Bob again countered by bringing our hermetically-sealed enquiry into the broader arena where he saw values other than our own holding sway.

"... I can see that Michelle and Joleen can improve by letting them off the leash, by letting them plan their own lessons, and yet at school every day I see it become more and more authoritarian. ..." and "... the school doesn't allow me to teach kids in that way. ... I haven't got time to set things up in that way. ... I can't set up a whole class like that. ..."

He could not allow his previously-quoted set of personal principles and values to inform his daily practice:

"... to be a good teacher. I had my tables in rows, I didn't have my kids talking out of turn ... I had more perceived authority ..." and "... Because to succeed at school I need to be a bastard. To be good at my job I've got to be a git. ... And I've actually come to terms with that now because I can be good at being a git. ... But I must not think about it. Because if I think about it, it starts to hurt and I don't want to know. And that's something I find very sad ... I think that is true of all jobs though. You get to the stage where you are so compromised, what's the point of having values anyway?"

Turning his attention to the practical business of his Advanced Diploma submission and the necessity of writing an account of the enquiry with Michelle and Joleen, I attempted to pull Bob away from his idea of life as an activity composed of jumping through other peoples' hoops:

"... What I am trying to do if anything is to empower you to write your own story, not write somebody else's story or the story you think they want to read. ..."

Much discussion ensued, within which Bob conceded:

"... I need to stop blaming the school and actually do something about it ..." and "... your delivery (as in midwife) means that my experience is valid."

Four months later, Bob submitted his written account; it failed to gain the award of an Advanced Diploma.

I spent the next ten months writing and re-writing and re-arranging my account of my time at the school. I had ventured out of the library and had attempted to engage with the living outside world. I was always dissatisfied with that account. Its subject matter was so complex - or rather the setting for the subject matter was so complex and shifting - and there were many unresolved and loose ends. We 'let it run' of its own volition - and the result was a lack of clear focus and purposeful action.

I finally submitted an account of my enquiries in May 1993, over a year after I parted company with Bob, Michelle and Joleen. With six modules now successfully behind me (I will not say successfully *completed* for three of them), I turned my attention to the writing of a dissertation. I felt I was as far as ever from revealing the logical form and thereby a theory of my own educational development.

Section 2

Searching for the right question

The opening page of the account of my first action enquiry AR I made reference to my having "the influence to control" others. Reflected in this phrase was my personal concern with the (inner) control of self and the (outer) control of a safe environment in which this self could have its being. At the outset, I understood cognition to have ultimate authority (control) over most aspects of my being as I went through life organising facts and possessing knowledge - in an attempt to make sense of that life and to improve its quality. This first cycle of (self-) enquiry and the resulting account called these suppositions into question and led to the second stage of my enquiry.

The second account AR II found me encouraging myself to value the Feeling pole of my nature. I suggested to myself how a dialectic between Thinking/(Intuition) and Feeling/(Sensing) would inform a growing aesthetic awareness of the art in my life and the art of my life. Coming then into a more public arena of action at the school in Swindon, the third phase AR III of my ongoing enquiry engaged again with the implications of control within relationships together with associated considerations of power and authority. I knew my written accounts were only to a certain extent true reflections of the processes I had been through. I also felt the need to stop reworking them - the enquiry was becoming lodged in the actual process of writing itself. I had need to move on from an essentially internal dynamic of reading-reflection-writing to an external field of action.

The question guiding my enquiry was still: "How can I improve the quality of my life?", yet discussions with others reinforced my sense of a need to elucidate a subset of questions which, as addressed, would focus action on my central concern. I understood the expression of such a set of questions to be the starting-point of the formative phase of my enquiry that would take me forward into the future.

At that time there was no focus for action, despite having identified a strong desire to address the implications of Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as described by Roderick. By the conclusion of AR III my perspective had undergone a distinct change and was supported by the attitudes expressed in the writings of Fromm (living as an art), Polanyi (commitment to personal knowledge), Collingwood (the logic of question and answer; aesthetic response), Gadamer (aesthetics; hermeneutic engagement with texts) and Habermas (ideal speech acts). I was also becoming fascinated with the writings and ideas of Foucault (power, authority and control) and Derrida (deconstruction of texts). Above all this hung the as-yet almost completely unrealised but strongly-felt promise of the dialectic as the way to a new (to this age) and humane community of comprehension.

Here was the setting and the time and the place for me to start living through the business of writing my dissertation. But where was I to start? The part of my enquiry that lay in the past had established through its process the beginnings of a new perspective. The part of my enquiry that was to form the main thrust of the dissertation was yet to happen. The accounts I had already written under the headings AR I, AR II and AR III did not of themselves generate or identify an action-question that would draw my enquiry into the future. However, I was at the time (still!) convinced that a suitable interrogation of those accounts and other texts would provide the necessary impetus and focus.

The impetus for my enquiry in AR II had ultimately depended on a reading of my account of AR I by another (Jane). In like manner I turned again to another (Moira - Ph.D student) with the request that she read my existing accounts. The importance of Jane's involvement had not been simply the contribution of an alternative analysis; my comprehension had been moved on by a small portion of our dialogue concerning the text and our reactions to it. The dialogue with Jane had occupied over 20,000 words of transcript. Moira and I agreed to collaborate on our current work-in-progress and to engage in a written correspondence about it. I was to send her copies of my three existing accounts; she would provide me with a copy of the third section *How can I reveal the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationship with*

Sarah?" of her thesis (overall title *The Aesthetic morphology of educative relationships*). There was also an important and tacit acknowledgement between us from the start: knowing our fields of interest to overlap to a degree, we both understood that our questions about the other's work would imply previously-unseen questions we had about our own.

Speaking of her own work, Moira's covering letter (30.7.93) included the question (NB. All quotations "... .." are extracts taken in strict sequence from the specified correspondence):

"... As to this part of the thesis itself, I wonder what you think. It seems clear to me but does it speak to someone who has not been involved in the process? The acid test. ..."

Here indeed is the acid test faced by all action-researchers who offer their writings into a public forum. The theory whose unit of appraisal is the individual's claim to understand their own educational development (Whitehead 1985) is informed by a dialectical logic. That logic is a feeling-based logic (Mitroff and Kilman 1978) i.e:

"While the preferred logic of both the conceptual humanist (CH) and the conceptual theorist (CT) is dialectical, there is a vast difference in the brand of dialectics espoused by each. The dialectical logic of CT is formal and cognitive - it is a thinking-based logic. The dialectical logic of the CH, in contrast, is a feeling-based logic. (By *logic* we mean a style of conceptualising reality, not just the strict sense of formal logics.)"

I sensed that writing which represents and speaks of process and feeling (and, more especially, of aesthetic sensibilities) can be mauled to pieces by an 'acid test' that is propositionally analytic and reductionist. (I expressed my concerns about analysis in a later response to Moira).

In welcoming the possibility of opening a correspondence with me, she continued:

"... As to our conversation about 'how do I improve the quality of my existence?' I would love to be involved in a series of correspondences/conversations with you about (your) developing insights into that. ... What is your existence? Is it what is in your head, your perspectives, or something fundamentally different to that? God! What a question you've set yourself. ..."

Ten days later (11 August 1993) I responded to Moira's text, also enclosing copies of my existing AR accounts. Conscious that a new phase would not start until our dialogue was established, I wrote:

"... I suppose that writing this letter actually marks the start of getting into and writing my MEd dissertation. ... I have run off all the significant (to me) parts of my AR writings of the past three years. ... I suggest a skim ... through it all, if only, as you said, to get an appreciation of approximately where I am at the moment. ..."

Just as at the start of my dealings with Bob, I suspended all conscious attempts to influence the direction of Moira's response. As with current Chaos Theory, I was

awaiting the beating of a butterfly's wings in some undefined place to set in train events that might lead to a gale of fresh comprehension and new insight. The butterfly was the spirit within the text as comprehended by the reader and through the reader. I wrote:

"... At this point I cannot and, indeed, do not want to make any comment on it (the enclosed text) or add any commentary to it. Every time I read through it I see something new of a fresh perspective on what I was then and what I am now. I suppose it is, as an artefact, a sort of reflection or record of a part of the evolving art of my life; it (the writing) is to me a work of art. Certainly AR I and AR II were written with no attempt at artifice; they were honest and I set off into each with a true feeling of naive inquisitiveness, almost to discover something through my writing. ..."

Here again was confirmation of my earlier commitment to reflection and writing as comprising the process of enquiry itself. Although I understood reflection to be a hermeneutic (as against an analytic) activity, my action at the time was still expressed only as an attempt at a dialectical engagement with the text:

"... Also, I feel that there are many occasions when I do not know, or do not realise the significance, of what I am writing - the significance for then, at that time, or for now or for some time in the future. It depends on the form of hermeneutic engagement I bring to it at the/whatever time. To me, *works of art*? I like the observation of Collingwood (1924 - *Speculum Mentis*) about public works of art:

'... and those parts of the work of art which he could not in some sort have invented for himself will pass him by unseen. "How much, as one grows older, one finds in so-and-so," people say, "that one never saw before!" For one never sees in anybody's work but what one brings to it" ...' The punch line for me is: "... *For one never sees in anybody's work but what one brings to it ...*"

I then turned my attention to Moira's text "*How can I reveal the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationship with Sarah?*" I immediately voiced my own concerns about the form of analysis brought to bear in the reading of a text:

"... What can I say in response ...? For a start, I cannot bring a standard (positivist) analysis to bear on a "revealing". To me, a revealing successfully imparted would leave me with a sense of form. I cannot analyse for structure and doubt it would mean anything to me if carried out. I have, in fact, yet to settle the idea of analysis or what I understand as the activity that goes under that title. On the one hand, there is the reductionist form of analysis that uses propositional logic to seek out consistency and inconsistency in the sequential statements perceived as making up the structure of an argument and the position it occupies in its field. That was earlier my sole understanding of analysis. Liz Stanley (1990 - *Feminist praxis*), on the other hand, speaks of *analytic attention* which encapsulates a more attractive perspective for me at the moment. The sort of analysis that I am more comfortable with is perhaps best expressed in the form of *analysis as critical awareness within dialogue ...*"

I now understand this phrase 'critical awareness within dialogue' to refer back to the working relationship I intuitively tried to establish with Bob. Such a 'critical

awareness' sees comprehension lying suspended as an evolving dynamic within a dialectic that carries on through time. An objective strand to this form of analysis ensures internal and external consistency with respect to temporality and factuality (as in "did that event happen then?). A subjective strand brings to bear an altogether different form of scrutiny which attempts to deconstruct the signs left by the living moment (either in actuality or as recorded) and endeavours to hold the parts separate in their relation and significance to each other whilst augmenting them and holding them together. I see this 'critical awareness' as fostering the organic growth of a corporate awareness. I then voiced my concerns about the tense used by the writer of a narrative and the stance assumed as the writer's perspective or vantage-point within the text:

"... Looking again at your title, (*"How can I reveal the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationship with Sarah?"*) I must admit that all my own bogies about writing as an attempted life-enshrining activity rear up. You write "I ... my ..." not "I ... our..."; I understand this as meaning that you are an "I" giving an account of "We" (Moira-Sarah) - are you outside or inside the relationship when writing? Moreover, not only am I stuck in my understanding of the business of position-perspective (and does it in fact matter?) but I am also troubled by tense. Where is the "I" *temporally* that is writing about the "We" who were *then*? Does writing about we-then *now* disturb their form? Is their true form - to me embodied in the aesthetic morphology of the educative relationship - that state of affairs pertaining when they (you - plural) finished their (your) business/educative relationship? Do you (Moira) *still* have an educative relationship with Sarah? And is the aesthetic morphology of that then(/now?) relationship in any case revealable through the medium of the written word? ..."

I was (and remain) fascinated by the possibilities for new understanding that might result from suggesting that aesthetic morphology can contribute to ontological significance (as in 'the art of living'). These considerations became central to the developing correspondence. Moira responded with a letter dated 15 August 1993. It seemed that even though she had already considered many of the aspects I had raised, it seemed my letter had assisted in refining her priorities:

"... What was fascinating, just from the letter (as distinct from the AR texts), was the way in which after reading it I could see what was needed to be done on my thesis so that it would communicate to a reader in the way it would have to. Your questions made me think about what I still needed to do in order to achieve any kind of verisimilitude. Questions about context, the path to analysis, which filters I was perceiving my work through, the responsibility for action and point of view; all these are aspects I have considered, but your questioning gives me a focal point through which I can communicate more lucidly, I believe. ..."

Moira then confirmed the dialectical/dialogical nature of our correspondence as residing in the questioning of the other being also a questioning of self. Here again I see the sense of analysis as 'critical awareness through dialogue', where the dialogue shuttles between parties as it takes apart whilst holding together the elements of our mutual concerns:

"... It seems to me that through raising some of the points you did (for example one's relationship to a written text; and point of view) you not only provoked my reflections on my relationship to my text and the point of view that I was perhaps taking as too universal, but forced me to begin to live with a genuinely dialectic form of communication. Let me explain. You were asking me questions about my text which were, I think after reading your text, questions about your own work too. The quality of your questioning is truly educational in that it probes beneath content and form and scrutinises significance and meaning. Because of your questioning I was/am able to see what needs to be done in terms of my thesis. And yet, I notice how much your questions appear to be manifestations of your own concerns (and I thought that before I read the texts. For example, you ask about the kind of analysis I am adopting, when this is clearly your concern too throughout all your texts. There is something generalisable about understanding the perspectives we use in our analyses (or approaches). Yes, that's obvious, but what makes, I think, the letter/correspondence interesting for me, is in the sense through which in asking each other questions about our work which constitute questions to ourselves too, we learn something very valuable about our preconceptions and about how to communicate with each other ..."

I then read a judgement that I would never have myself made with confidence about my own writing but with which I totally concurred. I had previously suspected as much, but had always *had need of being told*. At last, here it was:

"... I think that all your texts are a search for optimal meaning. You seem to me to be on a quest towards personal meaning in which method must not be divorced from destination, although method and destination are themselves too concrete to encompass the shift in perception you say you've had. ... it seems to me you want to preserve a sense of direct experience in the way that you relate to music, in your life as a whole in terms of making meanings and enhancing your existence ..."

I was immediately left with the feeling: "Yes - that is what I'm trying to do!" I had previously reached the limits of my cognitive intellect; my "search for optimal meaning could no longer be prosecuted through that agency alone. Now my understanding of ontological significance had grown to include the notion of engaging in a dialectical exchange itself informed by an awareness of aesthetic dimensions within that exchange. Moira spoke for herself and for me as she shared and extended my understanding of Collingwood's observation regarding the aesthetic dimension:

"... And as I draw out what it is I care about in your work, I see what it is I care about in my own. Maybe that's my version of, 'for one never sees in anybody's work but what one brings to it'. Yes. And if this is the case, which I think I have just explored with you in the way that I understand it, then an educative dialogue is one in which one finds how to help others through one's own perceptions, as well as helping oneself through the perceptions of another. ... In trying to understand each other's point of view, we come much more surely to our own. 'How can I improve the quality of my own existence?' This is not simply your question, is it? It belongs to all of us. ..."

.....

The conclusion to this letter had confirmed the description I had suspected applied to my evolving perspective. Movement into a future that might be illuminated by and viewed from such a perspective was brought closer by my engagement with the central section of the same letter. Moira had written in her central section ("... ..") and I now annotate [*italics*], drawing partly on my letter of reply dated 23 September 93, thus:

"... I conjecture you are disappointed with your work with Bob because you do not feel you have worked out all the aspects which were making meanings as you were going along. Going with the flow is all very well, but is there such a thing as a conceptual going with the flow? Is not going with the flow an activity which implies an enormous identification with the process, an identification which goes beyond conceptual processes which control. *[I was disappointed with our work together and was disappointed by the retrospective engagement with it and my ensuing text. Our interactions were complex and slippery; I suspect no straightforward narrative text could adequately reflect the processes within those interactions. Had I closely monitored (and so controlled) our progress then it would have been otherwise and certainly not so complex. There was a balance to be struck (which I failed to do) between a pragmatic view of our circumstances and an angst-attended approach that tried to be sensitive to every nuance. So far as the writing was concerned, I have already described how I always felt the processes were able to speak for themselves, without me speaking for them in formulated phrases.*

And I have known the eyes already, known them all -
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
 When I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
 Then how should I begin
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
 And how should I presume?

(Eliot: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock)

I still do not trust the formulated phrase; it modifies and controls that which it purports to describe - but I have nothing, as yet, to offer in its place. My experience at Bob's school was part of the overall process outlined in my foreward (drawing on the later obituary of January 94 for John Wisdom): 'Philosophy thus calls for a perturbation of our apparently stable conceptual schemes, and an uncomfortable deconstruction of what we know; but also for a reconstruction through which the relations between neighbouring conceptual areas are redescribed, and that which we have already known is seen anew ...' My erstwhile apparently stable (essentially cognitive/propositional and controlling) conceptual schemes had been perturbed by the processes of AR I and AR II. I had (have) yet to understand through a deconstruction/reconstruction what it would be to see anew that which I already have known. Bob and I (each for our own particular reasons) existed both separately and together in a quandary of indecisiveness; there was a lack of true engagement with, and identification of, our joint and individual enquiries of the time.]

"... If your question, which you bring out in assignment three, is about enhancing the quality of your existence (and I note you do not say life) then those aspects of your existence which are to do (you say yourself) with your inner being, which seem, from the weight given them in the text (AR I, II and III) - at one point you have to give an example from your own experience of listening to music - to be pivotal of quality in that existence. What is it about this experience of gnosis which convinces you directly of the necessity for a different kind of logic than the one which guided you externally for so long? Is there a possible answer there somewhere? ..."

[Gnosis to me is the ultimate form of revelation through an act of reflection that is essentially aesthetic. The act of reflection senses meaning in the spaces between written or spoken words; it listens with an inner ear to internal resonances set up in the silences between the notes of music. '.. there is resistance to .. the exploratory use of free associations of ideas which may feel dangerous or mad ..' (Wisdom's obituary notice again). Is my life to be enriched by reading Joyce's Finnegans Wake? Must I (having sung in earlier days 'Phil the Fluter's Ball' when three sheets in the wind) translate 'tee the tootle of the fluid hang the twoddle of the fuddled-oh!' to make clear its so-called meaning. Or do I read it as it is written, listening with my inner ear to hear no more than 'but what one brings to it' (Collingwood)? I take it as matter of faith that given back to me is 'a reconstruction through which the relations between neighbouring conceptual areas are redescribed, and that which we have already known is seen anew ...' (Wisdom's obituary yet again). I sense that the logic which demands a translation is propositional. My inner ear linked to the possibility of gnosis calls for a dialectic (a different kind of logic) between that which I bring and the form imbued with aesthetic implications. That form can be universally accessible

- viz *Beethoven op. 111*; a press photograph of a pogrom victim - or entirely personal and prosaic - viz a glimpse of my daughter absorbed in a book. Art is life.]

"... It seems to me that all of your texts, conversations included, are about finding control through an abandonment of control. Control of understanding. Control of action. Control of perception. That's in a sense a genuinely unresolvable paradox, it seems to me. A letting-go of ego, of a sense of time, a sense of goal. In my experience, the greatest moments of insight are those in which there is a sense of perfect balance in me of self and other, of reason and feeling, of consciousness and unconsciousness. ..."

[I do not know how to respond overtly to your impression that all my texts are about finding control through an abandonment of control. I am certainly striving to abandon extreme forms of inappropriately cognitive control - manifestations of an instrumental reason that "abstracts, conceptualises, and seeks to reduce the concrete and the non-identical to identity, to destroy the otherness of the other" (Roderick passim). What form of control do you see me as attempting to find? I know you sense that I live in my head. Is it that I seem to be satisfied, for example, with talking about feeling (intellectualising/reifying feeling) and claiming this to be a paradigm shift, rather than getting on with feeling about feeling? I shall leave this question as the starting-point for my projected so-called 'formative phase' to be engaged with after this summative phase is brought to a close. You ask 'is it only through aesthetic experience that we experience directly the resolution of the control of perception with a letting-go?' I understand your use of 'a letting-go of ego, of a sense of time, a sense of goal' as implying losing self in aesthetic experience. Gnosis, to me, enhances comprehension through a refocusing from a novel perspective rather than through dissipation into a sort of dream-like state. It is not so much the control of perception as the control of conception that I find difficulty with embracing. Conception (concept formation) is where I attempt to make (largely) cognitive sense of my perceptions. (But 'making sense of' is perhaps not the same as 'finding rational significance in' something). The extreme result of conception through the agency of an analytical and propositional logic is reification. Aesthetic experience seems to allow free interplay between perceptions without them being bent to the control of my pre-determining will. Hence my inclination to go with the flow, an activity which, as you earlier said, 'implies an enormous identification with the process, an identification which goes beyond conceptual processes which control'.]

(End of my responses to sequential quotation from the central section of Moira's letter of 15th August 1993).

As acknowledged earlier, my annotations given above to the central section of Moira's letter are based on my reply of 23 September 93. Enclosed with that letter was a text of some 7000 words intended to explore issues that had been raised. I hoped the 7000 words would act as a starting-point for my dissertation in that a clear course for action would emerge. However, for reasons that will emerge in the following presentation of that text, the possibility of movement did not happen until several more exchanges had occurred between Moira (and Jack) and me.

The text of September 1993 – (thoughts on writing a dissertation)

Much of this September '93 text concerned itself with a reworking of established ideas discussed elsewhere in this dissertation. They acted as a setting for the main thrust of the argument I developed. I now reject that central argument but present it here for two main reasons. Firstly, it represents my final relapse into that state where I reduce the account of my educational development to an analysis of texts. I am my own object of contemplation. I *describe* my world rather than concentrate on trying to *change* it. I assume that action will follow from exposition in writing. Emerging from this relapse is the second reason for the text's significance; my propositional reasoning finally hits the buffers. There is nowhere else for me to go on that particular track and the text and its writing conclusively and undeniably *demonstrate* this fact to me.

Three years ago I had read aloud from the very end of my AR I account: "... 'These words reflect the frame of mind in which I now stand and represent the basis from which I shall endeavour to improve the quality of my own thinking'. Oh God; we're back where we started! ..." Jane and I then said in unison, at a point of dialectical revelation: 'If only you'd stopped there!!' Similarly, on many subsequent occasions, my (essentially propositional) reasoning took me along a progress but the being-in-the-world that is the 'I' of me retained its original perspective. The September text and my engagement with the responses of Jack and Moira found me finally and at last in another place where I no longer had that recurring feeling: "Oh God; we're back where we started!"

I began the text as usual, hands-off, rather like an observer at the dawn of time waiting for a cloud of dust to condense of its own random inner volition to form a sun and its planets; thus:

"... At the start of this piece of writing, I have only vague and part-comprehended intentions as to its form and content. In general terms I have a wish to use it as a medium for the exploration of a number of issues that have arisen over the past four years during which I have been engaged in six modules of study at MEd level ..."

As on many previous occasions, I regarded the evolving text itself as a medium for discovery. Thinking of the dialectical aspects of a hermeneutic reading, I exhorted my imaginary readers to:

"... engage *through* it *with me* in a joint effort that aims at a better comprehension of self and the world we live in ..."

In this manner, I was endeavouring to point up the educational aspect of the enterprise even though, because of my circumstances, I could not claim my enquiry to be an *action* enquiry in the full sense of the action research genre. As my own object of enquiry and contemplation, attempting to reflect through writing, I began by describing a long-established sense of quandary that haunted all my efforts, a quandary which had:

"... resulted from a confrontation between the process of enquiry and the process of writing about that enquiry. I understood much of my comprehension to have evolved through the activity of writing itself and yet the final text seemed to me to be an

artifice whose summative form conspired to conceal important aspects of the very process of enquiry I had been through.

"... Paralysis is not a useful starting-point ..."

I had at that stage passed copies of my three previous accounts to Moira (as noted earlier). In retrospect, I was almost asking her the questions: 'Where am I?' and 'Tell me - what I should write about?' In my own admission, I was "... casting about for a place from which to initiate this enquiry and this piece of writing ..." I have earlier referred to Moira's response to my three AR texts, quoting:

"... I think that all your texts are a search for optimal meaning. You seem to me to be on a quest towards personal meaning in which method must not be divorced from destination, although method and destination are themselves too concrete to encompass the shift in perception you say you've had. ... it seems to me you want to preserve a sense of direct experience in the way that you relate to music, in your life as a whole in terms of making meanings and enhancing your existence ..."

However much I agreed with the sentiments implicit in these observations, however I might occasionally come to the states of experience described, I still felt I lacked a voice:

"... I wish to communicate my experience. Indeed, I strive for 'optimal meaning' which preserves 'a sense of direct experience' and yet I find that engagement in the accepted standard form of narrative prose leads me to weave a fiction that is not a true account of my experience. Consider my method of working, which I understand not to be atypical:

"... Reflecting on some aspect of my current concern, I write a block of text. The writing and the reflection fuse and become parts of the same process. Reading the text just written causes further reflection and writing, and so on. However, I am not engaged in a linear process. Each successive bout of reading, reflection, and writing leads me to form new connections between different parts of the enlarging text. ... The text becomes unwieldy in its multifaceted structure and so I start to rearrange it into what I imagine to be a more coherent whole; the text takes on a separate life of its own. The text becomes the end to which the means become subservient and by which the process is masked ..."

Taking an extreme view, I concluded by describing the results of such a process as 'dead fictions'. A second aspect was then added to the quandary I was describing as I turned to consider the relationship of authenticity to the process of reading. The perceived problem became compounded by temporality:

"... And what is involved in the process of reading the 'dead fictions' written by myself or by others? When one person *now* reads a text written *then* by *another* I see problems arising that relate to both time and perspective. The only adequate response to such problems would be for a reader to deploy the hermeneutic approach described by Gadamer and the deconstructive techniques of Derrida. I believe that such forms of reading (such a stance for the reader) are the most appropriate to revealing a significance of the writing to the reader. (Note that I do not say *the* significance).

Turning the discussion now to myself, I feel these methods of reading are no less necessary when I *now* read an essentially autobiographical text written by a me who *then* was not the *I-now*. It may sound pretentious for me to say that re-reading my own texts reveals to me hitherto uncomprehended significances, yet that is often the case. There is more of me engaging with the writing of a text than a purely detached and objective cognitive faculty; if that were all I engaged, then my quandary/dilemma would hardly exist. Significance for me is for now as my reading engages with a hidden sub-text that hangs on the shifting framework of my changing circumstances ..."

Part of me still agrees with the view expressed by these words. When striving earlier in AR III to explain to myself Bob's resistance to writing, I had encountered the story of King Thoth described in Plato's *Phaedrus*. The following commentary is from Norris (1987) and serves further to explicate that view:

"Writing is a dangerous gift because it substitutes mere inscriptions - alien, arbitrary, lifeless signs - for the authentic living presence of spoken language. ... with the access to writing, says the king, men's real powers of memory will rapidly decline, since they will no longer need to remember anything at all - inwardly and actively get it by heart ... pupils will be widely read without the benefit of a teacher's instruction. ... The effect of writing will thus be to break those peculiar ties that ... serve to ensure the passage of authentic truth from each generation to the next. For it is only by respecting the authority vested in the teacher, an authority achieved through mature self-knowledge and not just acquired by reading other men's books, that the pupil can arrive at genuine wisdom on his own account.

"... 'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' Such statements may be found across a quite extraordinary range of the world's religions. ..."

However, I was not content to let these words express a general caveat about the imperfect business of writing words and then reading them. Two aspects in me - the analytical scientist and the Wittgensteinian word-game player - coupled to produce a flight of complete fancy that aimed at advancing the reading of autobiographical texts as a viable form for an action enquiry. I later compared this stream of reasoning to a firework rocket that streaks into the dark sky; it explodes to make a transient but pretty pattern; unseen, the charred stick (me) drops back to the earth below - yet another manifestation of "Oh God; we're back where we started!" The reasoning (thoroughly propositional) ran as follows:

"... We write words to model states of affairs. There are other forms of writing not constituted by words that equally model states of affairs. It occurs to me that the writing of theoretical physicists consists of the algebraic equations they use to model aspects of a known physical reality. The existences of many fundamental particles making up uncomprehended parts of that reality have in the past been postulated by the necessity inherent in those equations; the particles so described have only been physically demonstrated to exist at some later time. One of the most famous examples of such a procedure was Yukawa's combination in 1935 of the equations describing Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and Einstein's relativistic mass-energy equivalence. Yukawa's concern was to develop a theory for the structure of the atomic nucleus. The solution of the combined equations led him to suggest that short-

lived particles (mesons) might exist. Studies of cosmic rays in 1938 gave hints of their physical existence; pi and mu mesons were fully identified in 1948.

"... So, taking mesons as my cue, could it be the case that by enshrining thoughts, feelings, sensations, and intuitions in sentences and by then moving them around into new patterns, I may reveal new understandings that illuminate hitherto unrealized aspects of my existence? To borrow a more up-to-date term from the realm of nuclear physics, is there a necessity inherent in the form of language and writing that can generate the requirement for the existence of a personal Higgs' boson out of a description of aspects of my life-experience to date - *and can I then go on to reveal the thing itself?* ..."

The 'thing itself' (not to be confused with the Kantian *ding an sich*) is what Moira saw as my 'search for optimal meaning', my 'quest towards personal meaning in which method must not be divorced from destination' where I 'preserve a sense of direct experience in the way that (I) relate to music, in (my) life as a whole in terms of making meanings and enhancing (my) existence'. Yet I saw autobiographical writing (making a claim that I understand my own educational development) coupled with a home-grown form of hermeneutic/deconstructive reading as the means to prosecute that quest. I continued to make the fundamental error of looking to an external dialogical community for *validation* of my efforts rather than as a *correspondent* in that effort. I understood validation almost in terms of: "yes, very good; now you carry on down there and see what you find".

I was still stuck with a negative dialectic that could not reconcile those aspects in me of thinking and feeling. My feelings about writing and reading expressed themselves in terms of quandary and dilemma. I had sought resolution by relapsing into dependancy on almost pure thinking and the result was the meditation on Higgs' boson. Perhaps apalled that I still continued to write such stuff, I swung back towards feeling and asked:

"... What have the processes of algebra and theoretical physics to do with the processes of writing? I am not trying to maintain that both constitute the same process and that both will submit to the same analysis. The novelist Lawrence Durrell (1986) summarizes my view with the words he puts into the mouth of his anti-hero Pursewarden:

"Truth is a matter of direct apprehension - you can't climb a ladder of mental concepts towards it. ... Cupid and Psyche were facts to the Greeks, not concepts. Analogical as against analytical thinking! ..."

In attempting a reconciliation between thinking and feeling, I substituted the idea of analogical musing for analysis and then called on Wittgenstein to exorcise propositions by casting them as tools:

"... Theoretical physicists submit their equations to analytical thinking. I submit my passages of writing to a form of analogical half-unconscious musing. I find it interesting to remember that Wittgenstein (1966) also spoke about climbing ladders:

"My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anybody who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright." (p 151)

I continued:

"... Whilst the image of the ladder fits with Moira's identification of my striving for "optimal meaning" which preserves "a sense of direct experience", Durrell's "analogical as against analytical thinking" hints at the form of the logic I wish to use that brings together the processes of solving complex algebraic equations and using the act of writing to reveal new comprehension ..."

And yet despite the references to 'analogical thinking' and the wish to 'transcend these propositions', I had concluded by stating the desire to use 'the act of writing to reveal new comprehension'. ("O God; we're back where we started - Why didn't you stop there!") It was as if I had set myself the task of exploring to the end of each blind alley before being able to say "here is the way forward" - by an exhaustive process of elimination. I pressed on:

"... The text I generate through my reflection on them (i.e. my previous accounts) and about them will form the basic equations of my existence that I shall then move about into new patterns, looking all the while for the necessity inherent in those patterns to throw up new 'fundamental particles'.

"... Tensions between blocks of text indicate the existence of an unknown that is needed for their resolution. The solution of mathematical equations may necessitate the inclusion of an extra new set of variables. Those variables describe the unknown subatomic particle which can then be sought. The unknown whose existence is revealed by tension within written text can be a hitherto unrealized factor that can exert an influence on my existence. That unknown may also suggest an alternative perspective that helps to achieve resolution of the text and a concomitant new comprehension of my life ..."

Question: Yet what was to be the basis for the writing of these 'blocks of text'?

Answer: Reading and reflection.

Question: But reflection on what?

Answer: That which I read in my own text compared with the writings of other authors.

I sensed the futility of attempting to play at being a philosopher. I had read *Truth and Method* and wrote:

"... Gadamer (1989) reinforces this view with the warning:

'The question arises how far the dialectical superiority of reflective philosophy corresponds to a substantive truth and how far it merely creates a formal appearance.'

"... I may engage dialectically with a text or other stimulus-to-action, yet the outcome of such an engagement is often the creation of a "mere formal appearance". Seduced by academic texts eruditely written, I attempt to emulate these examples by setting forth my own writing that is ultimately a mere crafting with words. As my own field of action, *yet basing my perspective on personal knowledge*, I therefore resolve to attempt to use this writing and concomitant reflection to create "a substantive truth" that constitutes a course for future action ..."

[As I peruse all my writings and musings and ways of being up to this (now) time, I am constantly reminded of my propensity for compartmentalisation. I seem to live in one box at a time: dialectics - positivism - personal knowledge - aesthetics - thinking - feeling - love - hate - black - white. When championing feeling, I deny thinking; when considering dialectics, I ignore the contribution and even the worth of propositional forms. I need to break down the walls between the boxes and allow the best elements of all these forms to intimately interplay through me as they contribute to my enquiry (life). Perhaps *Making the Break* will turn out to be concerned not so much with severing ties with 'mere (sic) formal rationality and instrumental reason', but more with breaking down the walls between the boxes - to hold, in dialectical terms, the One and the Many together].

Having resolved to 'attempt to use this writing and concomitant reflection to create "a substantive truth" that constitutes a course for future action', I turned to Thompson (1990), thus:

"The process of interpretation involves a progressive expansion of the horizons of consciousness, whereby the subject apprehends that effort to exist and desire to be which is crystallized in the world of the text."

I read the equating here of consciousness with text as a justification of my position and stated intentions. I shall now quote at length from my September text (with a minimum of annotation), allowing it to speak for itself as it illustrates my journey onwards to an ultimate and inescapable full stop. I was concerned with the relationship between 'the desire to be which is crystallized in the world of the text' and the temporal reality of me and others with respect to those texts. I wrote:

I see the 'world of the text' (Thompson) as including the text itself, my relationship to it (constituted by the me-in-the-text and the me-reading-the-text) and its circumstances. Thompson provides more clues for me when he speaks of circumstance thus:

"The reconstruction of institutions and social structure may induce subjects to reflect upon the circumstances in which they act; and such reflections may enable subjects to grasp, not so much the effort to exist, but rather those conditions of their existence which had hitherto remained opaque."

A link is formed for me here with Polanyi and personal knowledge as Thompson continues:

"It may be suggested that the factual underdetermination of scientific theory elevates the self-reflection of the subject to a crucial epistemological role."

Thus I see crystallized my notion that my self-reflection may indeed be elevated to "a crucial epistemological role" but I would here strongly add the AR perspective that the epistemology for which I intend this contribution is one validated as a "shared way of life" (McNiff 1993) within a dialogical community.

[Remember here my mis-interpretation of the use and purpose of 'validation'].

I have so far registered a desire to undertake reflection, in the name of an educative process that will reveal an enhancement to my experience and comprehension of my life and its circumstances. (The relevance of that reflection to others will lie as much in its process as in its substance). The question arises: reflection on what? If I have a commitment to personal knowledge, reflection involving that personal knowledge must have a sure and appropriate methodology. The dangers I perceive of an over-emphasis on the literature and ready-made schemata have already been stated. Dangers of equal significance lurk on the distaff side where a preoccupation with subjectivity can reduce personal knowledge to mere sentimental anecdote.

Thompson ... continues his own discourse on self-reflection:

"The notion of self-reflection must be detached from the model of psychoanalysis, which is prejudiced by the peculiarity of the analytic situation. Self-reflection must be freed of contemplative connotations, and conjoined instead to the ideas of the active appropriation of an alternative state of affairs."

Neither of these two extremes of methodology (objective textual critique and subjective introspection) seem to give true significance to the "I" of my be-ing in the world and its ability to contribute to the good of that world. I repeat; reflection on what? Ricoeur (1970) confirms the relationship I perceive between reflection and comprehension and then points to a possible focus for that reflection:

"Reflection is the appropriation of our effort to exist and our desire to be, through the works that bear witness to that effort and desire ... reflection must become interpretation because I cannot grasp the act of existing except in signs scattered in the world."

In my case, the most tangible "works that bear witness" to my desire to be *and to become* are the three accounts of my educational development that resulted from three action research cycles, together with this evolving text. I have reached this conclusion already by an alternative route. Can I "grasp the act of existing" through a further cycle of reflection based on an interpretation of those texts as "signs scattered in the world"?

Ricoeur has spoken to me of reflection as interpretation. Thompson (1990) develops this view:

"Interpretation is the route to philosophical reflection, to reflection premised on the assumption that by following the indication of symbolic thought one will arrive at a deeper understanding of being."

I take the idea of 'following the indication of symbolic thought' expressed here to run a parallel course to my earlier speculations about the necessity inherent in the structure of writing (in which I have invested a part of my be-ing) providing the key to resolving tensions within that writing (and be-ing). Thompson then draws again a line of communication for me with the realm of personal knowledge (Polanyi *passim*) when he continues:

"... reflection is necessarily self-reflection ... (raising) afresh the question of what 'the self' might signify."

He then solidly confirms my inclination towards personal knowledge and a hermeneutic approach to my own texts:

"Reflection must incorporate hermeneutics, not only because existence must be grasped in its external manifestations, but also because consciousness is in the first instance a realm of falsehood, so that true consciousness must be achieved by means of a demystifying and corrective critique."

These words seem to encapsulate my intention for a way forward: but I am brought up short here by the commentaries of two other writers, Foucault (1984) in Bernstein (1991) and, again, Gadamer (1989). Firstly, Foucault:

"Modern man is not man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself."

Is not 'compels him to face the task of producing himself' diametrically opposed to Thompson's 'true consciousness must be achieved by means of a demystifying and corrective critique'? Do these two approaches not represent, respectively, construction and uncovering/revealing?

Bernstein sums up for the construction school of self-reflection/action:

"There is no hidden essence to be discovered, there is no hidden depth revealing what we truly are, there is only the task of producing or inventing ourselves."

In any case, self-discovery and self-invention seem to be almost diametrically opposed; could not the activity of self-reflection be a dynamic of the two, with the emphasis sometimes on the one, sometimes on the other, but with a constant dialectical tension between them?

... there is also a nice connection between self-creation (Foucault) and the art of living (Fromm) as Bernstein later talks of the thinking of Richard Rorty as maintaining that:

"... we all have the capacity for self-creation even though it is only the strong poets who succeed in 'giving birth to themselves'. ... the notion of self-creation where we can make our lives into works of art, where we can see 'every human life as a poem'."

This detour through Foucault came at the point where I had quoted Thompson as supporting my inclination to a hermeneutic way forward through my existing texts:

"Reflection must incorporate hermeneutics, not only because existence must be grasped in its external manifestations, but also because consciousness is in the first instance a realm of falsehood, so that true consciousness must be achieved by means of a demystifying and corrective critique."

The last phrase "demystifying and corrective critique" seems to place Thompson in Foucault's school of self- discovery, as does the earlier passage:

"... and such reflections may enable subjects to grasp, not so much the effort to exist, but rather those conditions of their existence which had hitherto remained opaque."

While now understanding through Foucault the significance to me of the self-inventive aspects of my activities, I still feel drawn to the words and phrases of Thompson (reflection must incorporate hermeneutics ... true consciousness ... demystifying and corrective technique). The second writer, Gadamer ... makes comments that have relevance to my embracing the phrase 'reflection must incorporate hermeneutics'.

Thompson speaks for my intentions of grasping existence 'in its external manifestations' through a reflection incorporating a hermeneutic approach. As stated earlier, I take the "works that bear witness" that shall be the subjects of this hermeneutic approach to be the three earlier accounts of my educational development together with this evolving piece of writing. I regard these accounts as being essentially autobiographical and consequently find my way forward barred by Gadamer (1989) - as he speaks of self-reflection and autobiography as:

"... not an adequate basis for the hermeneutical problem ... the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the reality of his historical being."

[Here I must (now) break into the progress of my 9/93 text to point out my imminent confrontation with the buffers at the end of the track. The dots came at the point where I had been reading back over what I had written and had seen the significance of the process of having painted myself into a corner. I continued onwards with my reasoning:]

Does this mean that I cannot read my own texts and engage in establishing some sort of determinate meaning in those texts through reflecting on the role of my intention (then) and my contribution (now)? The chapter that immediately follows the previous quotation from Gadamer is entitled: "Prejudices as conditions of understanding". But it is the very significance of my prejudices to my understanding that is one of my major concerns. I am making judgements *about* my prejudices through the action of (I believe an essentially hermeneutic) reflection and writing about self and text and their

circumstances and prejudices that mark out their horizons and what am I doing here? Am I trying to prove that my enterprise goes under the name of the activity known as "hermeneutics"? Why? In the light of a commitment to personal knowledge, do I have to argue with Gadamer about the relevance of giving or not giving the epithet "hermeneutic" to autobiographical reading and writing? Why do I feel obliged to entangle myself with Thompson in a place that as yet contains a vacuum? (A place where my *I* is not to be found). I need him and others to help me to reflect, not to authorize me to undertake that activity. I used the words of Gadamer to warn myself at the outset:

"... *the question arises how far the dialectical superiority of reflective philosophy corresponds to a substantive truth and how far it merely creates a formal appearance.*"

Surely the latter part of this writing has been concerned largely with creating "a formal appearance". (Look back and try to spot the point where my *I* disappeared.) I must remind myself of my previously-stated caveat and intention where I said: 'A commitment to personal knowledge implies an important departure from the usual academic relationship between a writer and recognised authorities and their texts: I can incorporate insights from those texts into my own understanding, but my understanding can never be reduced to an analysis of those texts.'

[I had demonstrated to myself the essential pointlessness of presiding over a battle where salvos of books are launched at castles made from books and where the rules of engagement are set out on the pages of books. But I was still stuck with my problematic that relates to means of expression and authenticity in writing].

Whatever the style of a piece of writing - summative, formative, rhetorical, or reflective - does the perpetrator understand the significance of what he or she has written? My chief understanding at the moment is that my own consciousness is indeed a realm of falsehood. This attitude has been more than adequately summed up for me by Roderick (passim) averring that "Human liberation could be conceived, if at all, only as a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason...." My *realm of falsehood* has its being in my *instrumental reason*. You have just seen it at work - or attempting to work.

[And then ... Oh God; we're back where we started! - If only you'd stopped there!!
The final paragraph ...]:

Thus chastened, I shall now turn to giving an account of how I understand myself to have reached my current state of comprehension. I am still locked into an instrumental reason; my logic is still propositional and reductionist. These things I hope to change. As I shuffle the phrases I use in my attempt to give the proposed account I anticipate that a tension will arise between individual blocks of text and between them and my inner sense of self. My hope is that my own personal Higgs' boson will emerge as a necessity, from within the structure supporting that tension, for its resolution.

.....

Moira responded with a letter dated 4.10.93. As I *now* have, she *then* had difficulty in comprehending what I was saying overtly, on the surface, looking at the words I had written.

"... The first couple of pages of this letter show something of my struggle to understand your text. It is one of the most compactly written and thus difficult-to-understand texts I have read for some time. There is so much in it. I have wrestled with it, thrown it aside several times, attempted answers and in the end waited until the time felt right. It has stretched me very much and for that I am grateful. ..."

I often tape-record the conversations I have with action research colleagues. I usually emerge from a conversation 'none the wiser' than when I started but, as I listen to the recording and live with it over a period of time, the underlying processes and agendas start to condense from all the words. What each of the protagonists 'was about' begins to stand revealed. In the same manner, Moira took time to 'get into' my text. She started to relate to me and my concerns *through* it, (alluding to my Collingwood quote):

"... A third time (of reading) convinced me that I might after all be able to find something to say that could make sense to you. If we find what it is we want in a text, what we bring to it, then what wasn't I finding for the first couple of readings that I wanted to find? What was jarring, (and something was)? ..."

I would imagine the jarring arose from a conflict between the mechanistic Higgs' boson construction laid out on the paper before her and Moira's understanding of my concern (with hers) for making meanings from aesthetic forms of representation. She pointed up the fundamental differences she perceived between our respective viewpoints:

"... Well, I don't think the way you do for a start. You think carefully, logically, from stage to stage. You break things down. You build them up again. I can sometimes see the whole picture but can't always articulate what I see. I can take it apart, but it's difficult to put it together again. I can explain through metaphor not through observation. I was halfway through and I wondered what you do to get out of your head. Your text seems to be in a recursive loop in which ideas and actions are joined end to end/back to front in a Mobius loop of intentionality/outcome."

I have now largely rejected the notions expressed in the central argument of my September text. I had doubts at the time of its writing, as words begat more words and I attempted, in Moira's following terms, to find meaning (isolated) 'inside cognitive equations and expressions of wholeness':

"... But what I find impossible to understand, and therefore it is unlikely I could accept it, is the idea that as a sentient being in search of meaning (which I think is what you are) you seem to be suggesting that you can find this inside cognitive equations and expressions of wholeness. Can a human being exist meaningfully in isolation? Is not the lowest human 'unit' not one plus one other? Is there not always a danger that without a practice in which to experience the self, there is no 'improvement'? No development. No reality worth a damn. You appear to be trying to find a meaning outside of a dialectical reality? Is that possible? You end up, indeed,

saying that the text is propositional. But it's not just the way you are relating to what you are writing. It is actually the thing itself. Your reality as you describe it, as it is embodied in the text, is itself, propositional. ..."

Here also was reference to 'practice'. My apologia had always been: 'I am no longer a practicing classroom teacher'. Understanding that dialectic was central to my enquiry, I had attempted to make out a case for dialectical engagement with texts and with past written claims that I understood my own educational development. I had seen that case fail in my own writing and now I saw it fail in Moira's estimation as she continued:

"... Can you be entirely the subject and the object of your own educational research? The beginning and the end. ... Your text sounds to me like psychoanalysis rather than education. Nothing wrong with that, but is that what you want?

"... Another thought occurs to me, and that is (I've talked to Jack about this): what is for you, your existence (although you call it 'life' this time)? Where are those aspects of it that require enhancing? Existence is not just being, but also becoming, isn't it? I see some 'being' in your text, but not 'becoming'.

Again, she stated what it was we both acknowledged to be the central concern of my enquiry, as seen through and sensed under all the words I had written:

"... On one level I think you are trying to break out of the straightjacket of formalised thinking about rationality. ... The experience of gnosis ... is this the direct knowledge which it seems you seek, rather than the ersatz one contained within categorisation. ... Is there not something else in your quest as well - something about going beyond the constraints of time and place. That's what gnosis does, doesn't it? Takes us beyond time and place to another, barely perceived order of experience. When we try to start and pin that down there are considerable, if not insuperable, obstacles to ever to be able to communicate it effectively. ..."

And then came the insight into and through my writings to the question that I had felt for so long but had not been able to express:

"... It seems to me that you are looking, in action research terms, beyond the question (you ask) which seems to me to be this: 'How can I understand my own search for rational significance using forms of rationality defined by traditional schools of thought?' ... You are, by engaging in this written form of your reality seeking (tell me if I'm wrong) a pathway between self and other, fact and value, rationality and experience, representation and reality. The mediator is this text. ..."

* How can I understand my own search for rational significance?

* I am seeking a pathway between self and other, fact and value, rationality and experience, representation and reality.

* The mediator is the text.

Moira now added a caveat which, whilst acknowledging the universal problem of expression, pointed out the consequences and dangers of attempting a dialectical engagement with written words alone:

"... There's something of the flavour of your writing about Foucault, something of the Tao when you allude to his comments about modernity. In attempting to capture something so often that very quality eludes us because of the nature of the way we go about it. ... I feel to an extent that you are in danger of destroying something infinitely precious unless you keep a dialectic alive in your focus. ..."

If nothing else, writing my September text had lead me to the distinction between growth through self-invention (Foucault) and through self-discovery (Thompson). Moira came together with me over my expressed wish to reconcile the two:

"... you write about: *could not the activity of self-reflection be a dynamic of the two (self-invention and self-reflection), with the emphasis sometimes on the one, sometimes on the other, but with a constant dialectical tension between the two?* Yes, absolutely. If you lose the dialectical form, then where is growth ...?"

.....

I also sent a copy of my September 1993 text to Jack together with a letter that included a number of specific questions about my text. Jack's reply was dated 25.9.93. One question I asked him was: 'Can you perceive an emerging focus?' His response confirmed my own estimation of my position at the time:

"... I can hear your insistent voice searching for understanding. I hear you at the boundaries of propositional language, aware that you and the medium you are using are not permitting the expression of significance, experiences and meanings which have formed your life ..."

Jack then went on to ask what he called 'a pertinent question that will challenge or draw out what I have already written'. His question and its setting immediately resonated with Moira's use of the phrase 'rational significance':

"... The 'I' I hear through the text is calmly reflexive, holistic with his integrity intact and unthreatened. I think you feel at home in the Wittgenstinian language games. The world I live in disturbs me. I find my values threatened in the contexts in which I work. I find the world, which has its loving moments, is full of contradictions. Philosophers interpret the world; the point is to improve it. What kind of question are you wanting to answer? That's my question to you ..."

A series of questions suggested themselves, based on the theme of 'rational significance' blended with my continuing concern with 'making a break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason'.

* Am I rational? What other than rationality informs my existence?

- * How can I understand my own search for rational significance using forms of rationality defined by traditional schools of thought (which I feel give inauthentic expression to the account that search)?
- * How can I engage with others in an educative relationship that attempts to understand forms of rational significance representing movement beyond "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?
- * How can I explore the possibility of making a break with "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason" (and not become mad in the process)?
- * How can I undertake and understand my search for an enhanced comprehension of my own life through moving beyond forms of existence that are grounded in "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?
- * How can I show that dependence on mere formal rationality and instrumental reason is not a sufficient ground for a good social order and how can I take others with me in a search for an understanding of an alternative rationality?

With these questions in mind, I turned my attention to responding to part IV of Moira's thesis. As I concluded the letter constituting that reply, the questions found expression in the form given at the start of this whole account. They are my current response to Jack's question: 'What kind of question are you wanting to answer?'

.....

My letter to Moira was dated 15 October 1993. I think it speaks for itself and so shall reproduce it in full here with few annotations from me-now.

Dear Moira

Friday morning: You handed part IV of your thesis to me yesterday and I have not yet read it. In actual fact, I feel I am not yet *ready* to read it and that I must get myself into the right frame in which to approach it. I keep running over the central words from your main title and I am listening to the resonances that it strikes in me: ... *aesthetic morphology of educational relationships* ...

I started this morning wondering what would be my experience if I brought the *wrong* frame or attitude to bear in my reading. The earlier text you sent me (Sarah) was couched in terms that I understood to make an appeal to the reader's aesthetic sensibilities. I had to listen to my own inner voices. What might other sorts of reader make of it? Jack had said that in writing part IV you had written "Poetry". I have often said that we are in need of someone to write an epic poem. To that extent I am forewarned as to what to expect - a text whose style and appeal is of a different order to the usual academic exposition at this level (and even in this area). With the *Sarah* text, I felt required to take care about my attitude; as I later wrote to you, I could not reconcile the form of the living and writing you had engaged in with the activity known as *analysis* on my part as a reader. You said yourself in Jean McNiff's (1992) book *Creating a Good Social Order Through Action Research* that:

"... while I'm involved in an educative relationship ... by even defining it, it will evaporate ..."

These musings then impelled me on a fruitless rummage through the roofspaces and gloryholes of this house looking for a 1930's set of 78 rpm records of Schubert's symphony number 8 (the "Unfinished"). I wanted to find the booklet that accompanied the records because I remembered the reviewer's notes as constituting a wondrous example of an essentially cognitive analysis being applied to an extended piece of music. He (it must have been a he) used musical notation to quote specific parts of the unfolding symphony and analysed/interpreted the work in such terms as (so I remember) '... uncertainty and longing ... developing through interlinking shades of tremulous and increasing hope ... giving way to a qualified optimism that leads to a temporary ...' etc. etc.

The reviewer had brought his mind alone to Schubert's symphony. The review added nothing to my understanding of the symphony although it did perhaps tell me something about the writer and his willingness to engage in a cognitive analysis of a form whose morphology is almost completely aesthetic. You already know the quotation I use from n (*Speculum Mentis* 1924) to verbalise my own attitude to "artforms" and our engagement with them through aesthetic sensibilities. It will bear repeating here:

"... and those parts of the work of art which he could not in some sort have invented for himself will pass him by unseen. 'How much, as one grows older, one finds in so-and-so,' people say, 'that one never saw before!' ... For one never sees in anybody's work but what one brings to it ..."

What would happen if I bring the frame or attitude of my 1930's reviewer to your writing? What if I cannot understand or if I even deny the existence or importance of an aesthetic aspect to the relationships that inform my life (i.e. including my likely relationship with your as-yet unread text)? What if I allow only cognitive activity to inform my understanding of what is rationally significant? Deploying my intellect and engaging only in cognitive activity is controlled and safe. Liz Stanley (1990) has it when she rehearses the argument we know so well:

"Scientism has thus been at the heart of the social science academic mode: grounded in Cartesian dualisms, in flight from the assumed nightmarish chaos of 'nature' and its relativisms and to the assumed security of science and the foundationalism of its ways and means of knowing ..."

Using such a stance, I can even have vicarious experience of your passion - at one stage removed, representing it to myself as a sort of linguistic report. At the same time I am insulated from the chaos that is part of the process of artistic production. These are the advantages of the cognitive stance. However, in actuality I (in advance) regard your text as work or manifestation of art, not as a report. I must respond to it in kind or my engagement is less than complete and much of value (to me) will pass me by unseen. But I must be prepared to let in elements of chaos, yours and mine, implicit in the process of your creating the writing and in my creating from the reading.

What should I bring to your text as I read? To what within me should I listen as I read? (... The choice between *should*, *must*, *ought*, *may*, and *can* is a recurring theme in my life; I am still undecided about which should (!) be my choice in the last sentence ...). I know that you can no more state what is the aesthetic morphology of an educative relationship any more than we can write down what dialectical logic *is*. The form of either can perhaps only be given by an implication derived from experiencing the thing itself in action. Beethoven wrote over the first page of the *Credo* from his *Missa Solemnis*: "From the heart; may it go to the heart". The aesthetic element of such a form mediates directly between the two hearts or inner understandings. In like manner when considering the aesthetic morphology of educative relationships, I sense that the cognitive faculty has to attend yet stand to one side, understanding only that there are some things it cannot directly comprehend alone.

Coleridge (*Biographia Literaria* chapter 13) speaks of the sort of frame or attitude I am understanding to be appropriate as: "... that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith."

[Coleridge (*Lectures and notes of 1818* section I) also sheds further light for me on the propositional-dialectical and thinking-feeling dichotomies when he says: "Poetry is not the proper antithesis to prose, but to science. Poetry is opposed to science, and prose to metre."]

From my previous readings of *Sarah* and others of your writings, I suspect that the form of your exposition in part IV would engender disbelief in a reader whose sensibilities were essentially cognitive. I must have faith in the poetry in/of your writing and bring to it a willingness to suspend (cognitive) disbelief and to engage with the text through my aesthetic sensibilities and listen to the meaning in the poetry; the meaning that cannot be directly spoken. Am I not engaging in a sort of educative relationship as I read your text? Does it not inform my educational development?

In the same way that you suggest above, I suspect that the aesthetic morphology of an educative relationship is a very fragile and evanescent thing. Meet it head on, try to describe it - and it will evaporate, leaving only the possibility of the dead and irrelevant prose of my 1930's reviewer of Schubert. Suspend disbelief for the moment and its form presents itself, *but not directly to the conscious intellect*. That intellect struggles afterwards to give an account of what it thinks it has experienced at several stages removed through the mediation of other sensibilities.

I suspect there are some who will have trouble getting in touch with their aesthetic sensibilities in order to comprehend the aesthetic aspects of the educative relationships you have no doubt introduced in part IV of your text. I suspect they will deny that aesthetic "feeling" and "all that sort of intangible woolly stuff", *laudible though it is in itself*, can constitute knowledge or be a contribution to it. I was (uncomfortably) in this hole myself two years ago until Jack pointed me towards a paper by Louis Arnaud Reid (B. J. Aesthetics 1980 No 4) - *Art: Knowledge-that and Knowing-this*. Reid suggests an integrative approach that I find straightforward to accept as I closely link "feeling" with "aesthetic sensibility". He says:

"I think that a confined use of "cognition" and "knowledge" goes very badly wrong because of a lack of serious study of the relation of feeling and knowing. Feeling is not to be equated with cognition, but there is no doubt not only that it can share in cognitive activity, but that it can illuminate it, helping us to see and understand as we could not without it. Psychologically - and epistemologically - speaking, feeling is organically related to the conative or active side of mind, and to the cognitive. All three are not separate parts, but clearly distinguishable aspects or emphases in the functioning of mind."

Monday morning: I have tidied up the foregoing. It rambles, as usual, but at least it shows you (hopefully) where I am starting from. I have also read your letter over the weekend and shall now engage with the text of part IV, keeping in mind the specific questions you have posed for me. Here goes

Tuesday morning: I spent most of yesterday reading and making marginal marks on the text. Before I engage with the specific questions asked in your letter, I feel I must pause for a moment and make a general observation about the nature of your whole enterprise. I have an image (developed from that above) of a purposefully unsympathetic review being made of your work by persons invested with power and with little interest in seeing rational significance in anything other than the cognitive - i.e. those persons who seek *things* in words. I am concerned about the idea of vulnerability.

My reading made me think of Keats who wrote as the opening stanzas of *Endymion*:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet
Breathing.

And in *Ode on a Grecian Urn* he wrote:

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

In the instance of *Endymion* itself, the passage of time proved Keats right; but think of the effect on the man himself at that time of the cruel reviews in the *Quarterly* (and in *Blackwood's* which exhorted him to return to "his plasters, pills and ointment boxes"). His epitaph on himself was: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water". You speak of a dialectic between goodness, truth and beauty which sets up a resonance in me with Keats which leads me to ask:

How much of you is invested in this thesis? Why are you doing this? What's in it for you? (I am concentrating here on part IV). You say:

"All my adult life I have been carried along by a spirit ... My literature (fictional) was an expression of this spirit. I feel uncomfortable in my own skin. My fiction was an

expression of spirit. Once however, I started to understand what I was doing ... then it could no longer serve the same purpose ... spirit and self were becoming separate ..."

I know that the final part of this quotation is getting a little out of its true context, but the following questions remain.

- * Can your body not contain your spirit?
- * How much of your spirit is invested within the body of this thesis?
- * Is this thesis a container for your spirit?

The enterprise seems almost too risky if it contains the larger part of the essence your being laid out. I am not suggesting you keep things secret. Your writing just needs to be proof against very clever apes with big sticks. (Cut off their balls! - No - Disarm them - No - They are not apes - Lead them to see the rightness in laying aside their aggression [but not their beliefs] - and welcome them in).

I shall go round the same path again:

You speak of what stimulates your creativity and guides its path and impulses; you do not speak directly of what destroys your creativity. You do talk of violation (p 2), a thing I sense as being very dangerous when put against "*this manifestation of the art of my own existence*" (p 4) and "*the search for wholeness*" (p 5).

I have a feeling that you are engaged with something that is almost unbearable within you (I wrote earlier of creation and chaos). Can your thesis be violated by a particular sort of reading by a particular sort of reader who, whether you like it or not, has power (over you)? Have you guarded in the writing or elsewhere against having your spirit violated? Is it an act of prudence to think that destructive critical forces must be disarmed - for your own safety - or would such a move compromise the form of your giving within your written exposition? You make readers clear of what your stance is, in passages such as:

I am attempting to reveal metaphor not as simple rhetoric but as a grounding for my own reality from which you, the reader, can begin to perceive the point of this endeavour.

What if I, your reader, have a vested interest in not perceiving the point of this endeavour? What if I perceive the "*emancipatory action research*" you speak of as a threat to my own justification of my very existence? There are some bad people out there, outside of the community you speak of as a member. I set your quote from McTaggart against one of mine from *New Internationalist* (October 93 No 248 p 10):

"His conclusion is that educational processes require: '*a reversal of the subordination of moral idealism by materialism and a more egalitarian world*' ... and ... " '*I'm in the business*' says Elaine Mosley, the principal of a corporate (Burger King type) high school in Chicago, '*of developing minds to meet a market demand.*' "

Should/must/ought/may/can we welcome Elaine in? Should/must/ought/may/can we not push her out to sea on a raft made of burgers and chips? What

should/must/ought/may/can we do with the opposing forces? (They hold most of the chips let's show just that - that they are holding out handfuls of chips!)

Tuesday afternoon: I shall now (at last) engage with the specific questions that you address to me at the end of your letter - the last question first:

"Is there anything I am writing about here which has any significance for you?"

Indeed there is - the whole enterprise is a demonstration of the very fact that it can be done at all; to reveal an aesthetic aspect to the morphology of educative relationships as being a form of and contribution to what I understand as rational significance. Both the form and the content of your writing are significant to me.

In terms of the content of your writing, your focus on aesthetic aspects draws out my understanding that began two years ago during my engagement with Jack's Action Research II course. In the context of Jung's typologies of Thinking-Feeling and Sensation-Intuition, I had at that time identified much of the tension within myself as a living contradiction as resulting from an over-investment in my thinking pole. As a first approximation, I came to understand that the dialectic within me between thinking and feeling was informed by my aesthetic sensibilities. Your writing in part IV has broadened my comprehension of this dialectic beyond the essentially contemplative poetry of music, literature and verse to encompass the possibilities of the poetry in the lives that are around me and in which I share. You have shown me its form in action within your own educative relationships.

In terms of the form of your writing, I sense throughout a level of eloquence that I could never emulate. I am too inhibited to produce writing such as yours; I deploy different tendrils than yours into the world and I listen to them differently - but I do have the capacity to appreciate the essential message of your text, or rather, the message it has for me. That capacity is the ability (I spoke of before) to engage in a ... *willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith*. As I said above (before reading the text) I believe the very act of this sort of reading is itself an engagement in an educational relationship. This sort of reading listens for the aesthetic qualities that constitute and inform the developing relationship. I cannot easily report to you what I hear in respect of those qualities; all I can simply say is that I value part IV for the significance it has for my own educational development.

You also ask:

"Does this letter communicate to you something of the significance of this final part of my thesis?"

You state earlier that disillusionment had struck you after the completion of part III because you felt that there was something missing from the thesis in that it gave a description and not an ontology. You believed the thesis lacked an ontological authenticity. If those were your concerns, then I think that the *poetry* of part IV and its elements of rapture carry a sympathetic reader to a place where the ontological authenticity of your enterprise is clearly felt (I do not say perceived). [I suspect that in the hands of many others, the form that you have used could end up in a position

where it appeared to be overblown, bogus and inherently invalid.] All the time, you are drawing on your own writings and the correspondences that result within your own life. What if any of these writings were studied, mannered, or even contrived in any way? These thoughts bring me back to what I see as a question of integrity. You quote (p 8) from a letter you wrote to me earlier (4.10.93):

"If your life is a work of art and you seek to promote the art of your own life both in the living and the description of it, should not that description itself adhere to those standards of judgement that you would make about your own life?"

This sentence made me turn a corner of comprehension when I read it. You wrote it and so I expect its sentiments to be part of your own credo and, as such, to underpin the integrity of part IV. The description of your life as a work of art is completed for me through the fusion in part IV of your fictional writing and your educational writing. That fusion was the novel and inspirational means that enables us (the members of your community) to take a step forward into an area that we previously did not comprehend. It was justified for me through the two forms of writing being drawn together in their integrity under the one standard of judgement. You demonstrate this drawing-together in the early pages of part IV, where I understand you to be (letter - final paragraph):

"...moving through a quandary to something of higher synthesis."

You give the essence of that drawing-together in your letter (second page):

"... the values which I was giving voice to in my fictional works were qualitatively identical to the values in my academic work ... my fiction had the ontological authenticity which I have always tried to bring to education ..."

I understand those standards of judgement to inform an analysis constituted by critical awareness within dialogue, that dialogue being between individuals (in a community) each, as you say:

"... exercising the right to act from (their) own point of view, responsibly, and with universal intent."

I understand those standards of judgement to apply to the two forms of your writing, this understanding for me giving your whole enterprise ontological authenticity.

What if I do not see ontological authenticity? The final page of the letter contains the words "I believe; I believe; I think; I believe"; what steps have you taken to make/help others - who are unbelievers and who are not members of the community - to believe?

In the first paragraph you say:

"I believe in what I have written. How can I make it believable to others?"

My reply is that it depends who the others are. What about those others you speak of who do not believe that "...*the power of being is also communion with the humanity of others.*"

Many have no humanity. Many do not want to, *dare not*, get: "... *closer to an authentic expression of what I am, rather than what I do ...*"

You are a threat to their very existences. They will fight you.

You also say:

"... *my inner and outer worlds need to be in a constant and developing dialectic ...*"

... and yet most of the dialectical relationships you refer to are always between positive attributes - goodness/truth/beauty; truth/love; individuals/community. There are no opposing forces. Where are the dark forces (even within you)? Where is *the other*, within and without - the dialectic between love and *hate* (opposite faces of the same thing) or between community and *isolation*? You and your thesis in themselves are other to your opposing others. Does there not need to be a dialectic between us and these opposing forces for the *whole totality* to move on? I will stick my neck out and suggest that Positivists are stuck; and that Dialecticians are also stuck. Perhaps there is the possibility of a dialectic between these opposite manifestations of human action from which the significance (for all) of embracing the spirit of such as your thesis would be realized (I intend both meanings of the word *realize* here). An exploration of what should/must/ought/may/can make a contribution to our understanding of rational significance might make a contribution to our understanding of rational significance itself. (Wednesday night)

Best wishes, Pete

I had started my enquiry with the question: "How can I improve the quality of my thinking?" As the enquiry evolved, its processes lead me to the point where I was asking: "How can I improve the quality of my life?" I understood this later question to be too general to lead to focused action and so had been searching for its subsidiaries. The correspondences surrounding the September text, the writing of the text itself, and reflection on the earlier stages of my overall enquiry had led me finally to the point where I was able to write the whole of this text up to this point. I was able to settle, for the moment, the history implicit in making a claim that I understand my own educational development to date. Perhaps more importantly, I was also able to frame two questions that I felt would take me into the future.

Looking inward How can I undertake and understand my search for an enhanced comprehension of my own life through moving beyond forms of existence that are grounded in "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?

Looking outward How can I take others with me as I/we strive to understand forms of rational significance that represent movement beyond "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?

As I move into the future and strive to engage with others in my enquiry, I shall be addressing my "looking outward" question; as I write my account of those strivings, I shall be addressing my "looking inward" question.

All questions end with a question mark which is perhaps too readily interpreted as an anticipation of an answer. "What is the sum of 2 and 3?" may be given a single (correct) answer; there is only one answer. "How do you skin a cat?" may properly be given several (correct/satisfactory) answers. "How do I live a good life?" is open to various interpretations as a question because it contains the word 'good' which refers to a value and invites an enquiry into a quality. People have engaged with, responded to, pondered over and stared at this question for millennia without ever claiming to have given any (satisfactory) answer to it. I suspect my questions to be of this sort - they cannot be answered, but rather, they certainly can be responded to. My responses to them will be how I go about living with them, as I "work with others to achieve change *and understand what it means to change* (McTaggart passim - my italics).

Section 3 - A resolution of sorts

Having arrived at an expression of my questions that I felt to be satisfactory, I sent the whole of my text (up to this point) to Jack. He responded with a letter dated 29.5.94. As a representation of the reading Jack made of my text, I shall reproduce his letter here in full. I read it, not so much as the result of an analysis of my text, as a response to me - the person who originated the text and who has invested himself in it.

Dear Peter

I've just read your latest work and tried to telephone to say how much I enjoyed it. It's a delightful piece of writing and I recognise the story of your educational development both from your evidence and analysis and from my experience of your work over the past four years. I'm looking forward to talking about it with you. Until then, here's a response I hope you find stimulating!

In my last response I asked 'What question do you want to answer?' You have responded in the last page of your latest work in terms of two questions, both related to moving beyond a particular epistemology. In the second question, you ask a question of the form, 'How can I take someone else with me ...?' This question comes after your wonderful response to Moira.

Here are unreflective responses - see what you make of them:

There's a tension between answers to your question about 'How do I improve the quality of my life?' and the search for an epistemology which goes beyond your existing understanding. I think you are going to have to break with the form of your epistemology and concentrate on the answer to your question. I think you will then be in a position to understand both that you have transcended the existing epistemology and that you are working with a new one.

I think you have done more than you realise in the form and content of your story. What comes to my mind is the care you take in your conversations with individuals in the Wootton Bassett Group. You express values which enable you to listen attentively

to others, to make a response which is intended to help the other to take their enquiry forward. You draw on your understandings of the work of others in a way which is not imposed on your audience but which shows the benefit you have derived from the ideas in your own enquiry.

I think the break you need to make has already been made in the form and content of your last response to Moira. I think you are clearly expressing your human and educational values and understandings in your responses as you show that you are trying to understand another human being and to see if you can help that person to take their enquiry forward. I think the epistemology you are looking for is already implicit in your practice. I think you have made your break. Your epistemology of practice has broken through! I'd look to see if your questions might be more appropriately focused on your educative/human relationships as you both work at ways of helping the other to move their enquiry forward and of understanding your epistemology. I'd look carefully at the way your epistemology of practice has broken through in the last dialogue [i.e. correspondence] with Moira. I can see it emerging at various points in your text before being submerged in the dominant epistemology. By showing you understand the nature of your epistemology of practice (or embodied knowing), I think you will be helping us to see how the epistemology which has dominated Western discourse need not be abandoned, indeed it can be shown to be valued 'within' your epistemology of educational practice.

See if this makes sense.

Jack. (copy to Moira)

.....

I then met with Moira on 16.6.94 when we spoke together about our current concerns (with the focus on mine). It is worth noting that, during the extended process of writing and reworking this section by reflecting on the content and context of our conversation, I am reading Joseph Campbell's (1976) *Creative Mythology* and listening to Artur Schnabel's 1939 recording of Beethoven's op. 120 - the 33 *Variations on a theme by Diabelli*. At the same time I am also painfully and intermittently picking my way through the opening fifty pages of James Joyce's (1992) *Finnegans Wake*. All three works are redolent with the feeling of movement and development through the bringing-together and association of disparate fragments and themes. Their flavour attends my efforts, rather in the same way that I see myself living with my questions rather than attempting a head-on confrontation with them. In similar vein, I find the manner in which I now read through books has a rather different purpose than earlier in this whole enquiry. Hitherto I used books to sustain impetus and direction for my word games and to provide substance and authority for my account. Now as I read, I constantly attend to the questions: 'What do I think and feel about that bit? What does it do to me?', so that any quote I now set forth here represents something that holds and expresses some aspect of my developing self as I bring it out into the open. I thus cannot agree with Foucault that my task as a modern man is to invent myself; that is only part of the process. Discovery and elucidation must go hand in hand with invention, all in a dynamic equilibrium (dialectic) with 'out there'. I still play word games, but the rules of engagement are different.

.....

Jack had observed (29.5.94): "... There's a tension between answers to your question about *How do I improve the quality of my life?* and the search for an epistemology which goes beyond your existing understanding. ... I think the epistemology you are looking for is already implicit in your practice. I think you have made your break. Your epistemology of practice has broken through! ... I can see it emerging at various points in your text before being submerged in the dominant epistemology. ..."

Moira had observed 9 months earlier (15.8.93): "... It seems to me that all of your texts, conversations included, are about finding control through an abandonment of control. Control of action. Control of perception ..."

These two observations have very different flavours. I can now see Moira's perception of my concerns with "finding control through an abandonment of control" as a valid reflection of the manner in which I had been attempting to respond to the Horkheimer/Adorno assertion that "human liberation could be conceived, if at all, only as a complete break with mere formal rationality and instrumental reason". I was struggling to break away from the dominant epistemology (spoken of by Jack) through the use of that epistemology itself. Yet the dominant epistemology (of which Horkheimer and Adorno make the most pessimistic assessment) is at the centre of the culture in which I was brought up and in which I have my being. Jack sees movement (and I sense movement) where he says: "I think you have made your break. Your epistemology of practice has broken through!". Now ... were I to be tempted to play my usual word games with his last sentence, I would allow the phrase "broken through" to generate the question "into what?" However, I now see the nub of the matter to be my epistemology of *practice*, which is expressed as *a living process*. I have not broken through from one culture/paradigm into another.

I must digress at this point because the business of repeatedly listening to the recording of my conversation with Moira (yet to be 'used' here) and my readings, together with my general life at this time, have pushed me yet again to ponder what I am as a reflection of my surrounding culture. Being on the inside of all this makes it rather difficult to see where I am.

So let me for a while play word-games with the notion of culture (as I use John Wisdom's 'father's method' to concern myself with general principles). I hope this exercise will act as a background for my proposed later attempt at elucidating my epistemology of practice (where I must break through into 'mother's method' and get to grips with the particular case - "I"):

Culture: I find myself brought up within a given tradition. I cannot break with my roots; I cannot "start anew" (Gadamer 1989):

"... as finite beings, we already find ourselves within certain traditions, irrespective of whether we are aware of them or whether we deceive ourselves into believing that we can start anew. For our attitude does nothing to change the power that tradition exercises over us. ..."

This point is reinforced by Campbell (1976):

"... Whorf has demonstrated ... to what extent the language learned in infancy determines not only the manner in which one's thoughts and feelings have to be expressed, but also the very patterns of those thoughts and feelings themselves. ... the imprints of our parish are within us, tattooed on the insides of our skins."

I cannot programme myself afresh, as so many of my previous attempts to find control through an abandonment of control must have seemed to onlookers. However, there may well be a different perspective to be had. I look for a paradigm shift that is the gestalt shift within, not a flight from 'here' to a 'new place'. Continuing with Gadamer I see the need to reassess from within, not to recast (find a new form of control) from without; the need is to learn "how to grasp and express the past anew":

"... But it makes a difference whether we face up to the traditions in which we live along with the possibilities they offer for the future, or whether we manage to convince ourselves that we can turn away from the future into which we are already moving and programme ourselves afresh. For, of course, tradition means transmission rather than conservation. This transmission does not imply that we simply leave things unchanged and merely conserve them. It means learning how to grasp and express the past anew. It is in this sense that we can say that transmission is equivalent to translation."

And yet the form of the reassessment and translation that I have been drawn towards - have grown towards - have come to recognise as giving rational significance to my life - the aesthetic subtext of the art of my life - how I feel - where dwell what passions I might have - is not directly graspable and is fraught with difficulties of communication. Campbell again:

"... the categories according to which our experiences become conscious even to ourselves have been supplied to us by our society and are shared by everybody in it. The really private experiences do not occur until these categories are dissolved; and then the second task emerges of communication: communication that will not immediately drag the whole discourse - and one's life itself - down and back into the now transcended mould."

I am suspended above my old positivistic mould - a mould that I feel I have partially transcended. The state of my suspension is metastable, like a pyramid balancing on its apex. I had been attempting to dissolve the categories of the existing epistemology; the process of that attempt and my concern with its communication has led me to the position described by Campbell above. Jack's assessment concurs as he says: "There's a tension between answers to your question about How do I improve the quality of my life? and the search for an epistemology which goes beyond your existing understanding." I sense that 'discovering' a model of a dimly-perceived aspired-after state by weaving with word-games (even ones played to the later rules) will see me topple back into "the now-transcended mould".

Suspended, metastable as described, I met with Moira on 16.6.94 with the prime intention of exploring the implications of her and Jack's observations quoted above. I

started our conversation with the issues that had arisen 9 months earlier (15.8.93) when she had observed: "... It seems to me that all of your texts, conversations included, are about finding control through an abandonment of control. Control of action. Control of perception ..." At the time I had felt exactly like Prufrock (Eliot 1970):

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelaine, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the Universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all' -
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: 'That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all.'

The opening exchanges comprise a neat summary by Moira of my then-current position:

P. I said (earlier in this text): "I do not know how to respond overtly to your impression that all my texts (up to that point) are an attempt to find control through an abandonment of control." Now that's something that I would like to address. Because I started writing about that and I found that there was nothing that I could say.

M. And that doesn't surprise me because of the very nature of the kind of understanding that you're trying to get to. ... I think that is part of the unresolvability, something of the paradoxical nature which exists within - something to do with ontology; something to do with an existential bedrock which lies more deeply than language. ... and there is a reality which I think you seek, if I'm right in understanding what you've written and sometimes what you've talked about; that there are ways of experiencing - things like gnosis - which go beyond and underneath the construct which we put on reality which I would say is language.

I see the "ways of experiencing" referred to by Moira as those which are implicit in transcending the cultural mould spoken of by Campbell; private experiences that do not occur until the old categories are dissolved. (There is an instant association here with Hegel who famously spoke of dialectical thinking as a form of thought that "dissolves into nothing the detailed determinations of the understanding").

P. Yes. And the constructs are the way in which we report. (yes). Now ... I can accept that (the paradoxical nature) entirely because a lot of what we talk about ... is all to do with ... the idea of aesthetic sensibilities giving some sort of rational significance to what we do (are). But I still come back to that - you assess me as wanting to find control through an abandonment of control ... I'm trying to find it through texts ...?

Moira here links my past actions firmly to the approach I understand Dewey calling 'the quest for certainty' by myself as a repeatedly-relapsing adherent to 'the spectator

theory of knowledge'. It is also important for me to remind myself that Moira is acting as one who is encouraging me - not authorising me - to believe in what I have done and am doing as having significance. In this setting she is my 'significant other' in the sense carried by Yamamoto's (*ibidem*) discussion of mentoring.

M. Yes. And also what you are doing - I think - whether you would intend to or not - and I would suggest that you probably don't - is getting into the kind of ways of seeing that the positivists enshrine in everything that they do and say. Because, if you're trying to find control through texts you are actually making a suggestion about knowledge being 'out there' and that you can stipulate it and you can define it; you can control it; you can use it as a commodity. Whereas I think, from what I've understood ... that you've actually wanted to break that whole conception and practice of positivism to the extent that your whole reality is different. And that, as such, you cannot keep using the same tools that the positivists use. Sometimes they may be appropriate. But perhaps you may be coming to a conclusion - I'm very tentative about this - that some tools either have to be invented, they have to be new, or you have to find within yourself new ways of communicating what it means to be you on a search for a break with the tradition. Does that make sense?

P. Indeed, yes. Because when you say 'the tools that the positivists use' - when I keep relapsing back ... the September '93 text where I end up talking about Higgs' boson and using the variables in sentences that mirror my reality as the variables that within algebra throw up unknown variables that are found later to have a reality ... then I ended up juxtaposing Thompson against Gadamer ... and that's where I got dot-dot-dot-dot as I read back and said: "What am I doing here?" ... I proved to myself that I've hit the buffers and that it (such a methodology) doesn't ... work.

However, whilst I "cannot keep using the same tools that the positivists use", I now understand that I cannot, and indeed should not, attempt to throw them away. Feyerabend (1988) has been reminding me for the past three years that: "There is no idea, however ancient and absurd, that is not capable of improving our knowledge" (analytical index to chapter 4). [For my own context, I prefer to read *improving our knowledge* as *making a contribution to giving rational significance to our lives*]. The September text is (not was) a manifestation of part of my history, a history which Gadamer has intimated I should struggle to "grasp and express ... anew". Perhaps it is not what I write but how I write/read/live it.

Having earlier labelled my September text 'ancient and absurd', I find myself encouraged by Feyerabend to dust it down and see if it has anything of relevance to say to me now. Perhaps I was not alone in looking for unknown but necessary variables (algebraic unknowns) within the written expressions (equations) of my own enquiry. He sees a "cosmology" within grammar:

"I have much sympathy with the view ... that languages and the reaction patterns they involve are not merely instruments for *describing* events (facts, states of affairs), but that they are also *shapers* of events (facts, states of affairs), and that their grammar contains a cosmology, a comprehensive view of the world, of society, of the situation of man which influences thought, behaviour, perception..." p 170

Coincidentally with Campbell, he continues by drawing on Whorf (1956), clarifying the associations I am forming between my understanding of myself through my culture and its process- arbiter, language:

"... the cosmology of a language is expressed partly by the overt use of words, but it also rests on classifications 'which have no overt mark ... but which operate ... through an invisible "central exchange" of linkage bonds in such a way as to determine other words which mark the class'. ... *Covert classifications* (which, because of their subterranean nature are 'sensed rather than comprehended - awareness of [them] has an intuitive quality' - which 'are quite apt to be more rational than overt ones' and which may be very 'subtle' ..." p 171

So at the same time these words help me to connect with two themes that are important to me: one, the constraining influence of my culture and the pre-determinations imposed by language; and two, the way through and beyond this influence through covert classifications - "sensed rather than comprehended" and "apt to be more rational than overt ones." Here I am back with my concern to understand forms of existence that have moved beyond a grounding in formal rationality and instrumental reason. I have already ventured into one such form - itself "sensed rather than comprehended" - marked by my continuing concern with feeling and aesthetic sensibility. I turned to this particular form as my conversation with Moira moved on to the understanding I have of change happening in the time between the Moira's 'control' observation and Jack's "you have made the break".

P. ... in this text I keep referring back to what happened when Jane looked at my first Action Research account - "Oh God: we're back where we started from! - If only you'd stopped there!" ... I keep doing this relapse. But at last I've now got the feeling that I'm no longer going to say that. ... My analogy of the brick with the rubber band. You pull on the band and its gets tighter but the brick doesn't move. Then you pull it again and try a different direction but the brick's still sitting there even though I've made an excursion on the end of the rubber band. I keep going back. But suddenly, with a pull in the right direction and the brick suddenly slides and takes up a new position. I claimed that it happened way back. I suspect it *may* just have happened now.

M. I'm sure it has and partly because - for example this conversation which I am sure is part of the living process of the development - and the dialogues show that you clearly haven't seen what you have achieved. You had made the break [but Jack did send Moira a copy of his letter - is she voicing his thoughts?] and I think that this conversation is living proof of that. And it's the living dynamic that is the break, isn't it? Because I remember an early comment that I made - the lowest common denominator of the human unit is one plus one - and from my understanding of it you've gone as far I could possibly understand within a particular kind of recursive loop -

P. - of those positivist explanations -

M. - of trying to understand what knowledge is and what it means and how it manifests itself. ... But that isn't what you wanted to do. You wanted to go further

than that and actually, it seems to me, to show what it means to take a new form of understanding into educative relationships.

Moira had said earlier: "... you have to find within yourself new ways of communicating what it means to be you on a search for a break with the tradition" following on from Campbell's: "the task emerges of communication: communication that will not immediately drag the whole discourse - and one's life itself - down and back into the now transcended mould." To me, it is the attempt at communicating my search to others that makes my relationship with them educative, both through my conversations and correspondences and through this account. My intent has always been for the processes described in this text to be accepted as a contribution to Whitehead's 'living form of educational theory'. Our conversation moves swiftly to link the idea of educative relationships with growth and then with universal intent.

M. ...it's the bits (of later annotation) that link the fresh (later text) and the dead (earlier text) that actually are the growing bit. .. and that's part of what I think makes this educative.

P. Ah - so what would somebody who came to this absolutely cold make of it?

M. Who would you want to understand it?

P. ... it is an account of my journey ... there are clues for others by analogy about opportunity or possibilities for action as they come across things on their own journey

M. Where is your universal intent? ... as an educational reader, I want to know where the intent is.

P. ... the universal intent is only in as much as somebody would read this and gain waypoints (more likely 'sensed rather than comprehended' - as I have engaged with others in the same manner to the same purpose).

I had spoken of 'clues by analogy'. We then went on to express our common concern relating to the ability of an aesthetic aspect (covertly by metaphor) to say the (overtly) unsayable.

P. ... and again, if I try to get the language too overt, too precise in its external form - too propositional - I am attempting to gain control ... What has to be listened to is the aesthetic - the resonances that there are underneath it. ... If a reader comes to a text that requires that sort of attention and that reader is not sympathetic, then you the writer don't stand a chance.

M. With however much verisimilitude you write ...

P. Because the rule today is still 'can it be measured; can it be quantified?' Because if it can't, then it does not exist.

It is one matter to fall back into the mould as a result of our own action; it is quite another to be pulled back into it by the powerful hands of those whose (vested) interests (or ignorance) keep them there.

M. Yes. If you don't actually enter it (the text), actually become part of it yourself as you are reading -

P. Holbrook - 'indwelling'

M. - dwelling in the hands of the creator - which I think some texts do enable us to do, like pieces of music.

P. Now in one of your previous letters you said ... "the mediator is this text" ...

M. ... I cannot represent my values in a text and I've hardly ever read a text in education that does do it.

P. But do you think it could be there in the sub-text; the space between the words? The aesthetic?

M. Yes. I think that is one of the highest roles of the aesthetic is that it will take over those bits that other affects simply cannot deal with. It's almost like the bit that fills up the pot and gets it overflowing. Otherwise you're just left with something that is half-full and two-dimensional.

We then moved on to that (gnosis) which we perceived as the highest manifestation of realisation (growth and becoming) through the agency of an aesthetic sensibility:

M. Gnosis as a life-experience is some kind of pinnacle, but as this is an educational endeavour, then the communication of either the value of that or the achievement of that or the experience of that gives it that potential to become (= growth) because it's communicated to another.

P. And yet the communication of gnosis itself is impossible -

Remember here in this context how Campbell had earlier expressed our view:

"The really private experiences do not occur until these categories (supplied to us by our society) are dissolved; and then the second task emerges of communication: communication that will not immediately drag the whole discourse - *and one's life itself* (my italics) - down back into the now transcended mould."

M. - you can only do it aesthetically. You do it through metaphor. ... Maybe metaphor is all there is.

P. And the use of metaphor requires the other to have a sufficiently broad vocabulary - both in language terms and in experiential terms. If you are going to ring the bell it's got to be there in the first place to be rung.

M. It's the old dilemma that the very things that need to be said may be unsayable in a direct form.

P. ... evanescent intangibles that are so powerful between us humans but about which we have no direct knowledge at all.

How are we to 'get at' and communicate the meaning in these metaphors and evanescent intangibles? Kant partly describes my intentions when he puts forward a recipe (in *Prolegomena to Every Future System of Metaphysics that May Ever Arise in the Way of a Science*) for sensing the existence of some quantity or quality that is absolutely unknowable. He suggests we consider groups consisting of three knowns (*a*, *b*, and *c*) and an absolutely unknowable (metaphysical) *x*. We then look, says Kant, for a four-term analogy that points to a complete resemblance of two relationships between quite dissimilar things - i.e. where *a* is to *b* as *c* is to *x*. In my own instance, I am inclined to compare the nature of the two relationships through the use of (irrational) intuition coupled with a sense of 'aesthetic feel', rather than through the propositional logic of rational thinking. In this manner I see the free association of ideas, sensations, and feelings leading to the growth of new understanding - its highest manifestation in the form of gnosis being at the opposite pole to deductive reasoning. These thoughts return me to the obituary for John Wisdom which earlier spoke of:

"... his work of showing that philosophy can advance and deepen our understanding, not in the ways with which we are familiar in logic and the sciences, but in a way that good literature does. ... Wisdom's philosophy was neither the study of arcane facts, nor the pursuit of complex theories; rather, anyone who has reached a certain linguistic level has, he believed, the capacity both to raise central philosophical doubts and to take steps towards settling them. ... Philosophy thus calls for a perturbation of our apparently stable conceptual schemes, and an uncomfortable deconstruction of what we know; but also for a reconstruction through which the relations between neighbouring conceptual areas are redescribed, and that which we have already known is seen anew. ... In both philosophy and psychoanalysis there is resistance to such knowledge, and to the exploratory use of free associations of ideas which may feel dangerous or mad ..."

.....

Jack had maintained that I had 'made the break'. If my point of view is essentially one of being on the inside looking out then his was one of being on the outside looking in. I tried to develop some understanding of his view:

P. What you say takes me back to Bernstein - what I've (earlier) been engaged in is what he called 'the essentially cognitive process of reason attempting to explain its experience of itself'... treating myself as my own object of contemplation ... But also something that Pat said to me. She said: "it's all so compartmentalised ... you talk about dialectic and throw out propositional forms; you talk about feeling and throw out thinking; you talk about thinking and don't seem to realise that there are many different forms of thinking". ... I'm beginning to wonder if it's not a question of

'making a complete break with instrumental reason' and etc, but really taking all that there is and holding the whole lot, not throwing anything away.

M. ... the word is *holistic*. .. We do come to things from our own perspective - we have no other way of doing it - and it is a concern not to label thinking separate from feeling. A holistic understanding of reality as we move towards improving the quality of our practice or whatever ... and I think it's important in that you show in this 36 000 words (i.e. up to the end of the September '93 text) a very keen grasp of what Bernstein was talking about. But there are aspects of that which simply cannot satisfy you. They are not clearly the whole of your reality. But if they were, you would be perfectly content with this (text). There is something in you which is part of what wants to be brought out into the balance, which is saying that this is not complete. ... This is not enough. Does this make sense?

Perhaps here is the whole point - if I had not undergone some distinct growth or change in perspective over the past 9 months (bracketed by Moira and Jack's observations standing at the head of this section) then I would be "perfectly content with this" text.

P. Oh indeed! It takes me back to Jack's letter to me. He said ... "you have made the break". It is a question of identifying within myself (and within my relationships) and me growing towards that realisation of exactly what is in here [that is, what is implied by the whole text itself, by the process of its living and its writing, and by my efforts to realise the need to learn (Gadamer) "how to grasp and express the past anew"]. Understanding what I have written and been through - because it is only an imperfect record ... the first thing is that Jack uses the word epistemology - now ... four years ago ... I was involved with the whole idea of epistemology and the business of making a claim to possessing knowledge, and saying 'this is the area in which I have my knowledge' and 'this is what it is grounded in'. I then almost got rid of it in my usual way of hopping from one box to another. I stopped living in the epistemology box and hopped into another one. ... Perhaps making the break is not making the break from 'mere formal rationality and instrumental reason' but actually breaking down the walls between the boxes so that I can live in amongst the contents of the boxes.

M. Absolutely; holistic.

P. So what now is my epistemology? ... Is it the grounding of the values that are expressed in that (my dissertation draft)?

M. Yes

P. Oh ... right! ... He then goes on to say: "I think that you are going to have to break with the form of your epistemology and concentrate on the *answer* to your question. I think you will then be able to understand both that you have transcended the existing epistemology and that you are working with a new one". I see that.

M. Yes. And it's very neatly put. I can see that too I think. I can sense (but not demonstrate) that I have indeed transcended the existing epistemology

- but to be told: 'it is now time to stop playing (word-) games; it is time to answer the question' !

P. [reading] 'I think that the epistemology you are looking for is already implicit in your practice. I think that you have made the break. Your epistemology of practice has broken through'. Now this is the whole thing about *action* isn't it? [yes] in as much as I have finally emerged from the library as it were and realised that it is only in correspondence, it is only in interaction - live interaction - informed by insights from texts that any real - becoming? - is achieved. [yes] So we're talking about dialectical logic which is the logic that describes or almost is part of the unit of appraisal of a claim that I understand my own educational development. So in fact, my epistemology of practice that Jack says has broken through ... is beginning to reveal the form of the logic that is the unit of appraisal ...

M. That's exactly it.

P. Which is actually what I was setting out to do in AR II ... so there may well be recursive loops

M. Oh there may well be - surely that is part of how we learn, part of the action research process.

P. (Reading) "... I'd look to see if your questions might be more appropriately focused on your educative human relationships. I can see it emerging at various different points in your texts, before being submerged in the dominant epistemology". Well, in the September text I finally wrote out - dot-dot-dot 'What am I doing here?'

But, as I quoted earlier from Campbell:

"The imprints of our parish are within us, tattooed on the insides of our skins."

What am I? Campbell again, speaking of a person (such as I) who is living at the time of the advanced state of a culture "made up of topics and phrases":

"His individual, effective and always primitive "I" is replaced by the "I" which is people, by the conventional, complicated, cultured "I". (p 390) 'People' is the "I" of society, the social "I". ... I have made myself 'people'. Instead of living my own life, I am *de*-living it by changing it to otherness ..." (p. 576) "Out there" we are not ourselves, but at best only what we are expected to be, and at worst what we have got to be. ... there is dawning upon many a new and painful realisation of the depth to which the imprints, stereotypes and archetypes of the social sphere determine our personal sentiments, deeds, thoughts, and even capacities for experience. (p 86)

... And it was my own experience of this "painful dawning" that led me to grasp on to the Horkheimer/Adorno recipe for human (i.e. my) liberation. I have already suggested that a more fruitful use of this recipe is to regard it as a battle-cry rather than as a blueprint for action. In a similar manner, I do not propose to attempt a head-on confrontation with my two questions in an attempt to 'answer' them.

Here are my two questions again, both seen by Jack as "related to moving beyond a particular epistemology".

Looking inward How can I undertake and understand my search for an enhanced comprehension of my life through moving beyond forms of existence that are grounded in "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?

Looking outward How can I take others with me as I/we strive to understand forms of rational significance that represent movement beyond "mere formal rationality and instrumental reason"?

Jack suggests that "the epistemology you are looking for is already implicit in your practice" and his advice is to "break with the form of your epistemology and concentrate on the answer to your question", looking to see if "your questions might be more appropriately focused on your educative human relationships".
Here goes

.....

1st/2nd September 1994

Dear Jack

As you know, I came to our conversation of two days ago with two things foremost in my mind: a justification for what I had been doing and a desire to sense and present a conclusion to it. I spoke to you of my justification in terms of the second and the final chapters in Bernstein's (1991) book *The New Constellation* where he suggests that if Weber's analysis of the 'iron cage' is valid (and he suggests there are, on balance, convincing reasons to accept it) then the 'rage against reason' and my progress under a banner inscribed with the Horkheimer-Adorno recipe are appropriate responses. I also spoke in my opening preamble of how I read Bernstein as also in his own way advocating the desirability of 'making the break'. His conclusion and resolution seem to lie with what he calls 'engaged fallibilistic pluralism'; mine seem to be in the same sort of space as I strive to break down walls within my being and encourage growth through a holistic deployment of my sensibilities. At the same time I am concerned with the contributions that 'aesthetic' sensibilities - and what might loosely be called 'intersubjectivity' in the interplay between our aesthetic natures - make to my understanding of rational significance in my life. Over all this hang my two questions, one 'looking inward' and the other 'looking outward', together with my overarching concern with 'how do I improve the quality of my own life?'

You had said earlier (29.5.94): "I think you have made your break. Your epistemology of practice has broken through!" This I sense I have shown, but I have not seen it myself. This I hoped to address as I came to our meeting and our conversation.

I have spent the whole of yesterday listening to and transcribing the tape-recording of our conversation. By mutual agreement the aim of that conversation was to explore ways of concluding this dissertation and I am addressing you now in the form of a

one-sided dialogue in an attempt to mark out a conclusion which will appear valid, convincing, and educative to you, to me, and to my unseen and future readers.

I tried to be alive during that conversation, wholly, sensitively, and appropriately responsive to the emerging points; but as I listen to the recording I hear myself constantly missing the point at issue, shooting off after red herrings of my own making, speaking falteringly, and failing adequately to give expression to what is inside me. So what can I do with this transcript now sitting at my elbow?

I have now reached the stage where I cannot fool myself with an analysis given from an external perspective - a perspective from where I bone and fillet the transcript and add a commentary to make a 'logical' conclusion that follows on seamlessly from the foregoing text. I must actually convince myself *and feel myself to be convinced* that what I reveal in this writing is an authentic representation of my true understanding of where I have finally 'ended up'.

Looking underneath all the fumblings and circumlocutions that I hear and then read, I do feel there is a thread of confirmation, development, and conclusion. I sense it, but my task now is to give a plain guide which enables each of us - (as I said before) me, you, and my unseen and future readers - to conceive it each in our own manner. The points of significance making the thread of the argument I perceive are scattered randomly and out of sequence through the transcript; I find that the actual start of this thread of significance for me comes a third of the way through, where you say:

"I don't think yet that you've focused on your "I" actually in an educative practice with others and then shown us what that was like for you."

Indeed that is the whole point - you have put your finger right on it. For example, I certainly have been in an educative relationship with Moira, as marked by our correspondences, but my account did not concentrate on showing its significance to my "I" *and what that educative relationship was like for me*. I remember Campbell marking out my perspective when he spoke of my "individual, effective and always primitive "I" ... replaced by the "I" which is people, by the conventional, complicated, cultured "I" ... at best only what (it is) expected to be ..."

The focus for what I am now writing comes from the constantly repeating ground bass to our conversation contained in the idea of establishing dialogical communities and the significance of being a member of one. In this respect, (and as made out in much of the foregoing text in this dissertation) I see the alternative to my compromised "I" whose behavioural nature and value-base are essentially positivistic, to be the dialogical "I" who is a member of a dialogical community, with all that the achievement of such membership implies. I feel myself to be part-way towards realising such a shift within my educative relationships, but

..... as usual I am looking within this writing (looking for things within words) for what to say next, rather than within myself -

I think of the question you asked:

"... The break that you talk about - the walls coming down - rather than abandoning a particular epistemology you see it now as a case of showing how different walls within the boxes have been taken down. There then comes the question: 'do you then create something new in the sense of an original synthesis, having taken the walls down?' And if we then use the idea developed here about categories and the need to dissolve the existing and traditional categories when they are no longer seen to be appropriate to the task you set yourself. As you break down those categories - and they are dissolving - it's not that they no longer exist in your history ... but once the boundaries have been loosened you can see between them - is there then something new? ..."

Is there something new in the sense of an original synthesis? Yes, I would claim there is: to invert your first question, it is focused on my "I" actually in an educative practice with others - and I shall show you what that is like for me, both as within that practice then and as within this practice now, writing this letter to you.

The starting point is where, after we had filled one side of a C90 tape and then had lunch, you passed to me a copy of your latest paper *An Action Research Approach to the Professional Development of Reflective Teacher Educators*. As you said:

"... I gave it to you in relation to your last question ... which was looking outward. ... it might be helpful in what you were talking about earlier about the space between people and I then brought in Buber's work about the special humility of the educator which listens attentively and attempts to make a response to the particular needs of the other, which I think then means there is a break in a kind of linear transition mode of communication from the teacher to the pupil. And what I try to do in that paper is to try and show how with Dawn she has integrated and acknowledged integration of three ideas from my own work but in a way that has enabled her freely to accept or to reject. So there is space ..."

My response was to concentrate on the space Dawn had created in which she and (her pupil) Thomas could meet. The nature of the space seemed to determine the nature of the meeting; I said:

"... She starts off by saying: 'My plan was to start off by giving him the space to talk about anything that he wanted but as a catalyst I gave him back his poem ... The conversation was quite magical. He began a process of becoming before my eyes. Although we were ostensibly talking about Thomas' poem our dialogue was more prominently an interchange between two unique human beings.' ..."

As you and I talked together, I started to see the space - in which becoming can happen - to be one that allows for the existence of dialogical exchange. In microcosm it is the possibility of the smallest unit of a dialogical community (1+1). I also came to understand that what is drawn into such a space is the aesthetic ('feeling') side of my nature; as a result my facility with language is rendered far less articulate than when I am in ranting positivist mode.

You Jack then covertly set about creating such a space for me and you - a space in which I might, to paraphrase what you said earlier, 'focus on my "I" actually in an educative practice with another and then show what that was like for me.' I do not

think that 'what that was like for me' is made manifest by the transcript. I am going to tell you the 'what that was like for me' now, as well as explicating and drawing out the responses I made at the time. You returned to our theme of dialogical communities by saying:

"... At the end of that paper I am expressing some unease about one of the groups (of teachers in training) where I am conscious of my need to create a greater sense of community - I wonder if you've got any ideas there that might help? ..."

In the exchanges which followed, you may remember that I touched upon (and gave incomplete expression to) the following sequential ideas (which I now take the opportunity of filling out):

- * Each group of people and each set of circumstances is unique - don't expect one group to run the course in the same tracks as another group in another place at another time (even though you are using a tutorial booklet and following a prescribed curriculum.

- * The magic ingredient which makes for a successful outcome (in this case the realisation of a dialogical community) is likely to be constituted in what I call 'those evanescent and undemonstrable intangibles that are so important to us humans but about which we have so little direct knowledge'. Attend to them with all the sensibilities you have.

- * Qualities which you might express to encourage the development of a sense of community include: affirmation of where each student is at the start of the course; starting yourself from where their values are at the start, whilst holding 'tacit' the values that commit you to your ideal; showing how the concept of power relations can be removed from the arena.

- * Each student should become aware of how growth and 'becoming' can be drawn out of his or her own sense of personal integrity and worth; having done that with self, each is thereby enabled to go on to facilitate it in others.

- * What it is fully to be a teacher is, by implication, what it is fully to be human. This holistic and idealistic observation is often at variance with the pragmatics of the classroom or any other place where people meet (and power relations intrude). In this respect, engender the sense of the emancipatory aspects of action research - it is not simply a recipe for making teachers more 'effective'.

- * The space in which all the foregoing may best be achieved is a dialogical space where members of a dialogical community can meet. That space is maintained by the practice of dialogical encounters within it.

- * Truly dialogical encounters depend on a willingness and an ability to listen. The art is not to make theoretical interpretations or clever connections - it is a reflective process, each feeding back to the other what each is experiencing in themselves, checking this out with the other.

* At each exchange in a recorded conversation, each student can practice the art of listening by giving the gist of what their interlocutor has just said before framing and making their response.

* It is one thing to know - and quite another to feel one knows and then to know one knows. Members of a dialogical community carry a dialogical space within them in and through which they know they know the significance of such terms expressed elsewhere as 'living contradiction', 'personal knowledge', and 'a living form of educational theory'.

All the while I was talking with you around this matter and all the while I am now writing about it, I am trying to be me, and you, and your students - all at once. But first and foremost it is me speaking out, drawing on my own personal knowledge and addressing my own concerns as I address yours and, by implication, theirs.

You then confirmed what I had suspected:

J. Listening to the tape you will hear in the last 15/20 minutes a qualitative change in the nature of our conversation. .. you have been in the role of tutor in a sense that those were genuine questions that I was asking - that is a real concern that I'm going to act on in three week's time. Now I think for the first time in our relationship you have taken on certainly the sense of an equal partner in a dialogue if not being put in a more authoritative position ... and I think that will come out in the nature of your responses and I think that you will be able to show all the kind of qualities that you were expressing almost on my behalf and those are the kind of qualities that I shall be expressing to my students in the conversation that we've just had.

P. Were you to have put me in that position four years ago, you would have got a very different response ... it would have been a (didactic) response rather than an attempt at any sort of engagement. ... what I would have said ... far more cut and dried, far more lucid, closely argued point by point. It would not have faltered and it would have been over in four minutes. And that actually to me is a very potent piece of proof that something has happened in terms of me using action research in its emancipatory role, not just to understand my values but to move them on - not perhaps by a process of invention but by a process of re-ordering, re-assessment, re-evaluation.

J. Yes and I feel that you were listening very attentively to what I was actually saying. You might hear yourself initially not so much go off at a tangent but as the conversation developed it became much more focused on helping me to move my enquiry forward. ... I experienced most of your replies as having difficult and complex meanings which did need time to talk about -

P. - You almost had to translate them -

J. - That's not what I was conscious of doing. what I was trying to do was to listen to what you were saying and then to ask myself whether or not in the words that I was using ... I could put those into an action plan which both of us would actually understand behaviourally so that if you were to look at some evidence that I had gathered from my students ... would we be able to understand that this really was related to the fundamental issues that you were raising for me. ... you said earlier

today about not being sure of your values - I think you will find that in helping to clarify some of the things which perhaps I ought to be doing next year you will have drawn out some of those for yourself. ... they have shone through your work. You can see that those values are undoubtedly there, and the changes that you are describing ...

Your concern was to improve the quality of your students' understanding of the value of belonging to a dialogical community. To that end you drew me into a conversation aimed at addressing your concern. In the interests of moving your enquiry forward, you suspended or even reversed the hierarchical aspects usually underlying our relationship to empower me and to create a space within which I could engage with you and your concerns using my own personal knowledge. You listened so intently - you were listening for both of us - that you were able to move forward by drawing out meaning from even my half-formed responses. And in addressing your concerns I was able to address my own and thereby - then, and now in this current process of reflection - move them on.

Our encounter helped me to understand that the dialogical space for me is a listening space. Such is the concern of each to hear what the other is saying that each empathically becomes the other. As I said a moment ago: "All the while I was talking with you around this matter and all the while I am now writing about it, I am trying to be me, and you, and your students - all at once. But first and foremost it is me speaking out, drawing on myself and addressing my own concerns as I address yours and theirs." I sense that we meet with acknowledgement of and respect for each other's aesthetic natures. We are all unique individuals moving through time and space in pathways we explicate and validate for each other. Much of this explication is gained through the interplay between opposing views within dialectical exchange. We welcome the energy which comes from difference.

And so at last I return to my two questions.

Looking inward How can I undertake and understand my search for an enhanced comprehension of my life through moving beyond forms of existence that are grounded in 'mere formal rationality and instrumental reason'?

Looking outward How can I take others with me as I/we strive to understand forms of rational significance that represent movement beyond 'mere formal rationality and instrumental reason'?

You suggested to me a few months ago, Jack, that it is time for me to answer them. I think I am now ready to take them down from the banner under which I have been travelling and address them directly. Most of these direct answers are fairly brief.

So far as the first question is concerned, I think I can give a valid answer by maintaining that *how I undertook* my search is chronicled by the courses of action described by this text; *how I understand* my search *and know that I understand* it is revealed in the points I have drawn up above as a result of engaging with your (implied) enquiry 'How do I improve my students' sense of the value of belonging to a dialogical community?'

The second question is not 'right'; it never has been. To be honest, it is simply a derivative of the first that I constructed to discharge the obligation I felt at the time to be seen to wish to turn outwards and engage with others. You and I talked about re-phrasing it in our discussion but we never resolved the matter. So, starting with your enquiry cited above - how's about:

Looking outward How can I use insights gained through my search for an enhanced comprehension of my life to move forward with others as we engage with enquiries of the sort: 'how can I show the value of belonging to a dialogical community within the context of a good social order?'

An uncharitable person might regard this new 'looking outward' question as a piece of sophistry or as a thinly-disguised tautology, but I now find myself framing it as a natural consequence of an inward search for growth turning outward *of necessity* for the next stage of its resolution. The answer to this newly-phrased question returns to your earlier point where you say: "I don't think yet that you've focused on your "I" actually in an educative practice with others and then shown us what that was like for you." The insights I used to address your enquiry concerning your students were gained as I addressed my first 'looking inward' question. The intention of this letter has been to try to show the state of mind and being that engaging with you in your enquiry has engendered in me, together with the values I find myself now bringing to such an activity.

I claim to have made a break; not the break, but a break. I know I have made it and I know it to constitute a fundamental shift in how I engage with my own life and those of others - how my "I" is. Have I shown you? (But more importantly to me, have I shown me?) No, perhaps not - because all along I have been *alluding to* what I understand to be "an enhanced comprehension of my life." I have talked about the existing categories and the limited forms of life I see them offering. I think I show you how at home in them I am whilst all the while feeling that there must be something better. I have talked about dialectical logic, dialogical communities, evanescent intangibles, and our aesthetic natures. But I haven't *shown* you what it is like for me - how I understand it and express it in my being. Try this:

.....

I stand in the middle of this work-room den of mine and look around for inspiration, feeling as if I have just reached the top of a rather rickety ladder. The shelves around me hold many books. As glue is made from boiled down bones, so the ladder I have climbed is held together with boiled down book extracts. cursory inspection of the top rung reveals that most of it comprises bits of myself and others held together by affinities I feel for Richard Bernstein's (1991) *The New Constellation*. This last rung supports my foot with such phrases as:

* Gadamer in his ontological version of hermeneutics has been arguing that our ontological condition, our very being-in-the-world, is to be dialogical beings.

* One of the primary lessons of the new constellation is that we engage in critique as second person participants and not as third person neutral observers.

But we all know what Wittgenstein said about ladders. I step off the final rung and onto the landing-stage; I kick the ladder away. I perceive the possibility that above me is another landing stage and I know that the manner of my striving for its attainment shall be very different from my recent efforts. I climb towards understanding and I climb in order that I may understand my understanding when I get there. I am not being obtuse; I need to know that I know - I need to understand my knowing. But in the future, rather than trying to stick together a ladder of rungs, I shall participate with others in a sort of Indian rope trick - where the rope is made of people and it clammers up itself.

So what is it like for me, here on my landing stage labelled 'enhanced comprehension'? To give you an idea, I shall go back to lunchtime today. After eating my cheese and pickle sandwich, I felt drawn to sit down and listened to the slow fugue which opens Beethoven's string quartet op. 131. I am always aware that when I 'get into' a piece of music, it 'gets into' me, but on this occasion I felt, not so much that I was listening to it, as it was listening to me as I responded to its probing and questioning. I am sure such strong feelings reflect the state of awareness I am in at the moment (struggling to write this) but always with such music ('that state to which all other art-forms aspire') I have the sense of the boundary between self and not-self being broken down. I find the very act of turning my attention to it causes all thought of propositional forms and their categories to retreat far from me. And it is this state of preparing myself to listen to music that I now see to be the key to expressing my understanding of the enhanced understanding I claim to have achieved.

I think back to the circumstances of my first being attracted towards music of this kind when an adolescent. My few relationships at the time were focused on my school and were largely of a cognitive 'out there' thing-based orientation. I now suspect that I used music as a sort of responsive container where I kept apart and nourished the non-cognitive feeling-based side of my nature. At times I experienced actually falling in love with a piece of music, physically aching until I could hear it again. I have known that same sensation again when it later attended my relationships to and with some other people.

So what is the enhanced comprehension that I am claiming as a result of having moved beyond forms of existence grounded in 'mere formal rationality and instrumental reason'? I see that comprehension in its highest form to be gained through a meeting with others in the same place that I met this lunchtime with the fugue from op. 131. Nothing is expected; nothing is assumed; but an unlooked-for resonance of questioning and answering sets itself up in which we become bound as one, pushing back the boundaries of the space within which I have my being and into which the music has come. When the music stops and leaves my space, its boundaries retain their new extent.

I now know that, at largely unpremeditated moments, I can attend to other people as I know that music and I can, unlooked for, attend to each other. Seeking new understanding in the realm of value, I and another allow the separate spaces in which we each have our being to overlap. [Assumptions of power relations which divert attention and corrupt free exchange are left outside the overlap]. We exchange speech-acts which are grounded in propositional forms, whilst attending for the first sign of a shared resonance of understanding to be sensed (rather than apprehended).

The resonance is maintained and its amplitude increases through an interplay of question and answer (not to be seen as alternating stimulus and response) which builds on that first understanding, deriving energy and substance from the interplay of contradictions. Such shared and developing understanding is largely sensed by us aesthetically and internally while we try to give it external expression through metaphor.

I spoke earlier of ideally meeting in a state almost of suspension, in the absence of concepts of power and wholly as equals in intention. Such a state of meeting and dialogical encounter demands we both face certain facts about ourselves as separate beings, acknowledging that we normally hold the (temporally suspended) distinction between self and other as a means of protection. Being within a dialogical community encourages confusion between and mingling of self and other. In the con-fusion of two selfs-and-others, each takes into themselves that part of the other which leads to new being and understanding.

However, the prospect of engaging in such a process can cause some people to feel threatened and to elicit expressions of anger and hostility from them. The whole ethos of our culture (and education system) seems to be bent towards maintaining this division between self and other through its objectivising praxis. It concentrates on just one of the possible ways of knowing that are available to our species. We are all brought up to see the world and our relationship to it through intellectual knowing where we have to keep separate self and other, subject and object. I have glimpsed an alternative - or at least what I believe to be an enhancement of the norm.

I have kicked the ladder away and so find there are only two books left here in my den that have any relevance to my final words here. One is a copy in the Do-it-Yourself series of "Teach Yourself to Fly". There is no inspiration to be gained other than from its title. The other is Marion Milner's "On not being able to paint" an extended metaphor on the dilemma of living today. I leave the last words to her eloquence to sum up how I like to think I now see myself:

"... the poet and the artist in us, by their unreason, by their seeing as a unity of things which in objective reality are not the same, by their basic capacity for seeing the world in terms of metaphor, do in fact create the world for the scientist in us to be curious about and seek to understand. ..."

As usual, best wishes

Pete

P.S. to my other readers:

I have an image I would like to share with you which arises from all this reflection, analysis, invention, discussion and telling; it is an image of R. G. Collingwood (of my 'for one never sees ... but what one brings to it' quote) metamorphosing into a bald-headed TV detective with a lollipop stuck inside his cheek. Kojak, for it is he, leans out of his car window, looks me and you straight in the eye and laconically, dreamily, and ironically asks: "Who loves ya, Baby?"

Now, for me, the answer to this question is not "the wife and kids" or "Jesus". My response, the latest manifestation of my 'looking outward' question, in turn asks: "but who am I prepared to love?"

It's your turn now; consider your answer carefully:

"Who loves ya, Baby?"

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