FROM COGNITION TO BEING

Prolegomena for Teachers

Henry Davis McHenry, Jr.

University of Ottawa Press

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To
Henry Davis McHenry and
Carol Covington Morton McHenry

For
Henry Dustin McHenry and
Laura Covington McHenry

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the teacher who introduced me to Saussure and Wittgenstein, Austin Quigley stands at one inception of this book. I have longed ever since for more of his guidance. But before I could secure it for my first draft, years ago, he had begun his own family project. I hope the present draft may renew our acquaintance.

My first written attempts were shepherded by Vic Gioscia of the AION Foundation. I have borrowed from him not only phrases but attitudes and stages of thought. I trust he prefers the being of a shepherd to the role of gray eminence, but I'm afraid he must bear both burdens.

At three stages during the composition, Richard Rorty generously responded to my thinking and writing. I told him once that my project might be at its best the contrary of his. He smiled and said, "Well, we'll see." I hope I may have provoked his continued guidance as well.

I encountered the philosophy of Heidegger in courses given by an organization now called Landmark Education Corporation. As I continue to study his philosophy, I find myself returning often to the conversations we generated there.

To Tom Estes, Eric Bredo, Patti Driskill, and Susie Neuhauser; to my students in the Upward Bound program and my crewmates at Outward Bound; and to the Philosophy of Education Society, I am grateful for ever renewed chances to practise my commitment and improvise my material.

And of course, to my father and mother, my children, and my wife—we who have most intimately parented each other—I owe every blessing.

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PREFACE

In a dream I had recently, I am in a hilly, rocky field with shacks and farm sheds. I have come to teach the children of the local population, who don't even take the trouble to scorn the idea of school. I ask one of the ragged kids running around to stop and do something like tuck in his shirt—he complies, then goes right on running and playing with the others. Then I am in the backyard of the house where I grew up. It has become a muddy, sloppy fenced pen and there are horses running around frantically. I overhear a snatch of conversation on a loud CB radio about one of the current occupants of the house: "...he kilt that feller..." I find several sticks that look like discarded trash; I pick them up to throw onto one of the many trash piles lying around. Second thought: maybe the people use these for something—they seem to be put together with nails or screws, pieces of wood joined crudely for an unfathomable purpose.

The crisis in our national educational system is old news—though I would prefer to call it a crisis of schooling, since education is distinct from what schools have been most loudly called upon to deliver. It is not only that schools, ill-equipped to bear the burden of the family's predicament, fail even in conveying to many of their students the basic skills of literate communication and calculation, so that students come out of school before they are enabled to lead responsible lives. There is a failure even more disturbing. A recent study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching found that, after nearly a decade of research and reform, teachers' dissatisfaction with working conditions had actually increased. A large proportion of our teachers (thirty-eight percent) say they would not choose teaching as a career if they could choose again. Thomas Jefferson would be appalled at this statistic. Something is missing—some connection perhaps between the playing children and the crudely constructed sticks—and it is not being supplied by most of the current efforts to reform the American school. About the failure of reform efforts

at Taft High School in Chicago, one participant said: "Instead of focusing on what happens in classrooms, we spent time doing the logistics of restructuring." Tucking in our shirts. After a massive effort at reform in Littleton, Colorado, the school board, responding to community pressure, reinstated the 1984 requirements for graduation from high school. We may indeed need reform, the rethinking and restructuring of curricula and scheduling. But reform, as the word suggests, is a matter of reshaping or reorganizing materials already available. In a reformed room the furniture is rearranged within the shape given by the walls. What would it take to *trans*form our living space, so that it provides us with new possibilities for being together with our communities' children, for engaging in the play of their lives? What would it take to *renew* our schooling, rather than trying to restore it to a supposed prelapsarian integrity?

"Tell me the landscape in which you live," says Ortega y Gassett, "and I will tell you who you are." As if the human landscape were not merely geography and climate, Ortega asks us for the contribution of who we are in what we see and how we experience. The landscape of schooling, not only a set of buildings or a creed of teaching techniques, might grow in the soil of who we are. But here are passages from a special section of *The Wall Street Journal*:

> Across the curriculum, up and down the grade ladder, a new wave of teachers is casting out textbooks, cursing standardized tests, killing drills, and preaching a new creed of "engagement."
>
> As school is usually set up, the kids are supposed to spit back to the teacher everything the teacher already knows. That would be considered a senseless waste of time in real life.[1]

It seems that we are being rather tossed about. Not so long ago the new wave was rushing back to "basics" and to cultural literacy. At one end of the pen there is teaching "content," with its oft-derided goal of memorization and recall; and on the other end, what we call "discovery learning," with its presumed close connection to "real life."

> A substantial body of research... has found that the traditional view of learning—in which teachers impart knowledge to passive students—is misguided. Rather, the studies have found, children learn by actively "constructing" knowledge based on what they already know, as well as on their environments.[2]

The horses must need more space, for the pen is muddy; our backyard is ruined. Maybe what matters, for us and for our students, is not what position we take but something else. Maybe whatever position we take up will work to quicken teaching if we take up this something along with it.

During the eleven years I taught junior and senior English courses at a small private preparatory school, attending the regular faculty team meetings at which we lamented students' difficulties and failures (both academic and behavioral), discussed possible remedies and occasionally implemented an effective one, my feeling grew that too much of the time we made no headway against the problem, as if, climbing a rope in the gymnasium, we had run out of arm strength before reaching the ceiling. But I am not out to provide remediation for teachers, as if bigger muscles would get us up the same rope to the top. I am out to provide for *teaching* as a distinct way of being that goes along with instruction. As it stretches and limbers other muscles, teaching becomes a different acrobatic. As it partakes of persons' commitment to each other, teaching is the poetry of encounter, the inventing of relatedness.

Searching the computer screen in front of us, my child asked me what my book was about. I caught his eye and told him: "It's about you." He thought for a moment and asked, hesitantly, hopefully: "...and Mommy?" I nodded. He brightened. "It's about all the people!" he exclaimed. I could have heard his beaming announcement as cuteness, precocity, or jabber: how does he know, at three and a half, what the book is about? How could one who cannot yet read, much less form conclusions logically, divine the purpose of a *book*? To be sure, at the moment of his jubilant insight, I was not called upon to judge whether he could support his opinion with reasons and evidence. But I did not in fact hear it as an accidental felicity; I heard it as if he were privy to my own most cherished intentions and hopes, as if in his most eloquent vocabulary he were giving voice to me. That moment was a gift: what gave it? Is a simple psychological explanation—a father's sentimental pride in his own son—all there is to it? I am interested in exploring how it is that Being flourishes when we be together. The word "parent" is from Latin *parere*, meaning to bring forth. Though I am the parent, I have no sense that anything I did, consciously or not, caused that moment of what was really heart-stopping communion. Then how was that moment brought forth?

Martin Buber would say that teaching has its life in the relation between people, a relation brought forth by speaking the "basic word I-You." In his view, only that speaking can elicit the whole being of man, can give him the sense of being fully alive in the present, can satisfy his hunger with moments that make a difference for his fellows. Here then is one of the epigraphs for this book, a message I shall be endeavoring to unpack so that its medium becomes ours:

> Speech in its ontological sense was at all times present wherever men regarded one another in the mutuality of I and Thou; wherever one showed the other something in the world in such

> a way that from then on he began really to perceive it; wherever one gave another a sign in such a way that he could recognize the designated situation as he had not been able to before; wherever one communicated to the other his own experience in such a way that it penetrated the other's circle of experience and supplemented it as from within, so that from now on his perceptions were set within a world as they had not been before. All this flowing ever again into a stream of reciprocal sharing of knowledge—thus came to be and thus is the living We, the genuine We, which, where it fulfills itself, embraces the dead who once took part in colloquy and now take part in it through what they have handed down to posterity.[3]

Buber speaks here of his central tenet, the primacy of dialogue, the "mutuality of I and Thou." "All actual life," he says elsewhere, "is encounter." What does Buber mean by "encounter"? Before subject matter is handled between teacher and student, there is, generating the field in which the material is handled, this fact of encounter, of being together, a fact that immerses the concerns of information transfer, of memory, of calculation, of knowing, flooding them with meaning and value. In a small child's delighted sentences you can hear that the function of speaking is not just to refer to things. Speaking is belonging. Speaking brings the child into its family. But Buber calls it "ontological speech": speaking that embodies family is also that which *generates world.* How is that? How does our landscape come from who we are?

In our inquiry here, we ask how a *teacher* speaks the basic word of relation, the ontological word "I-You"? What could that mean? How do we set the perceptions of another "within a world as they had not been before"? Buber speaks of such a fulfillment as a mysterious joining of will and grace, purpose and receptivity, like being in love. I believe there are steps we can take in its direction, a kind of speaking and listening that will fit us for encounter, for breakthrough. Listening with Buber, with Wittgenstein, and with Heidegger, we may be able to listen transitively—to invent in our listening an arena for being related, for sharing mastery, sharing apprenticeship. Though I have done my homework, trying to get the philosophical story as accurate as I can, its accuracy is not finally the point. I am inventing something here, something that bears on the teacher's way of being, on engagement in education, on the *sharing* of mastery. If I can engage you in the inventing, if I can get you to take it over from me, I will have succeeded. If you can hear and answer the song of myself—my enthusiasm, my naivety, my pride in sifting together philosophers, scientists, and poets, my cleverness, my love for my own parents and for the son that is a miraculous mirror of his father and of mine—then my inventing will have found its home. Where inventing finds its way home, beget-

ting its answering family, teaching/learning is present. If we are listening for it, these philosophers speak of an arena where teaching can assume its rightful magnitude in our culture.

Closer to home, there is another poet of facts, displayer and revealer and re-inventor of facts, another teacher who opens the world to our whole hearts. Here then is another epigraph for this book, from that song which contains the antithesis of selfishness:

> This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a grammar
> of the old cartouches,
> These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,
> This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a
> mathematician.
> Gentlemen, to you the first honors always!
> Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,
> I but enter by them into an area of my dwelling.
> Less the reminders of properties told my words,
> And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom and
> extrication...[4]

That is Walt Whitman at the opening of our century, inviting us to consider the possibility of that something beyond a staked-out position, something more like a poetry of dwelling together. We teachers use facts, but facts are not our dwelling. If we are to be poets of our students' school days, we need temptations for the muse.

Even closer to our lives as teachers, listen to Annie Dillard as she opens the possibility of living newly, jumping the past like a hopscotch square:

> For it is not you or I that is important, neither what sort we might be nor how we came to be each where we are. What is important is the moment of opening a life and feeling it touch—with an electric hiss and cry—this speckled mineral sphere, our present world.[5]

While this book is written for an audience—dare I hope it?—of practising teachers, I envision also students in education courses, administrators, school boards, and by extension, anyone who has ever participated with the young in investigating the nature and possibilities of things. With all of you, I want to step for a moment beyond our professional identities and histories, our sorts and conditions and the circumstances we inherit, to engage in a colloquy concerning that moment when with students we open the present world to the touch of our living, and the hilly, rock-strewn field becomes our home backyard.

NOTES

1. *The Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 1992, B1.
2. *Education Week*, November 18, 1992.
3. *The Way of Response*, 108.
4. From *Song of Myself*.
5. From *An American Childhood*.

INTRODUCTION

When my son was two and a half years old, our speaking together did not turn on shared vocabulary. Even now, I can explain the virtues of spinach simply, or recommend it eloquently or sternly—in the presence of whatever vocabulary or rhetoric, he sometimes eats spinach and sometimes does not. Nor do his actions always result from hunger or satiety; he has eaten what I offer when full and refused it when empty. When I ask him if he forgives me for being impatient with him, I do not think he understands what it means to forgive someone. Yet he does unmistakably forgive me, then and there. Something in our being together, like a magnetic field, calls him to be in a certain way, and it is the way of our being together that includes his eating or not, that calls forth his forgiveness. The purpose of my book is to contribute to shifting our cultural conversation so that teachers are enabled as inventors of ways of being together. Other professions—medicine, law, engineering—require skillful marshalling of facts, careful planning according to a vast and developing body of experience and knowledge, astute observation and management of people. The profession of teaching requires all this and something more: a willingness, even a drive, to bring into being that colloquy that waits at the deepest threshold of our mortal hearts. Our calling is to hold open the possibility that the human family may be whole, as underneath our exchanges of information, our structured communications, our methodical lesson plans, there comes into presence the certainty that we and our students partake together of the communion of family, and that we can be responsible, as beings in whose destiny the world lies, for the promise and the dignity of that sharing.

Something of the scope and import of our calling as teachers sounds in the thinking of the eminent Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. His work springs from the conviction that not only literature, but the whole range of human concerns, comes out of our mutual responsiveness. "I live

in a world of others' words," he says, locating our essential humanity in the always flowing stream of our *communion* of speech. (In Russian, the word is *soobschenie*: it connotes joining, sharing, *becoming together*, and not "communication" or information transfer among discrete individuals in their separate social roles.) For Bakhtin, it is not language that is primary, but speaking and listening—that is, particular instances of "utterance," which are constructed, he says, not in accordance with rules of grammar and syntax, but in "anticipation of an active, responsive understanding." When we write, no less than when we address each other vocally, we speak into a listening that conditions our utterance.

In the case of writing, this dependence of speaking on listening implies that to study a text as if its *language* had meaning is to miss its "dialogic" nature. As dialogue, as invented utterance, it has power to constitute a part of the life of those who are engaged in it as speakers and listeners. To study text instead of utterance is anti-humane: it is to speak *about* third parties, rather than *with* or *for* each other. And this is justified, Bakhtin says, "only where the integral and unrepeatable individuality of the person is not required... [when one is acting] not as *I myself*, but as an *engineer*, a *physicist*..." Bakhtin does not complete the list of professions that may not require in their performance "the integral and unrepeatable individuality of the person."[1]

But now suppose, in the case of speech, that one acted as a *teacher*. How much of my time with students is spent in this third-person role to the exclusion of *I myself*? Lecturing, leading discussions, giving and grading tests, counselling difficult cases, monitoring study hall...: who am I for the other participants in teaching/learning? What is it to act as a teacher? Bakhtin's picture suggests that any role, any set of standard activities, can come to substitute for the "integral and unrepeatable" presence of the person in authentic encounter with another person or persons. With Bakhtin, as with Buber, we are moving from the standard conception of a separate individual, who may indeed "play a role," toward a notion of the person as existing by virtue of responsibility—by virtue of his or her responses to and listenings for other persons. Taking a step along this path, e.e. cummings says this: "We do not believe in ourselves until someone else reveals that deep inside of us something is valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit." Here, individuality partakes of mutuality, of encounter; it is the power to enter relationship and thus to touch the world in wonder. Individuality here, rugged or not, is a gift of another's listening, a creature of Buber's "living We, the genuine We."

Jacques Barzun puts the point this way: "There is no such thing as *the* child—at any age. Teaching is not the application of a system, it is an

exercise in perpetual discretion."[2] By discretion I take it he means alertness to the very particular relatedness developing from moment to moment between a child or group of children and a teacher. If teachers are trained in their roles, in the application of systems, and not enabled as beings who can engage with students, we will not get enough moments of authentic communion in education to satisfy our craving for genuinely shared being. Nor will we achieve the kind of education most wanted and needed in a world that calls more and more urgently on our essential humanity, our responsibility to and for each other—in a word, on our love. In the classroom sometimes, do we not feel that delicate blend of teaching with parenting, the bringing forth of family?

As my son gets older I am beginning to notice how few are the times when we actually make intimate eye contact—though an image more apt than "eye contact" would be the old mingled eye-beams, emblem of communion between beings. What we do instead of becoming together, I think, is speak our minds. That is, we give our attention to whatever structure of meaning is currently salient. If I am involved in writing or reading, say, or preparing for class, I have an agenda: my purpose is to complete whatever I'm doing before being with anybody, much less with a small child who demands my unalloyed attention to his every whim. As his vocabulary and command of sentence structure develop, he, too, has sharper tools with which to persist in agendas of his own, so that our interaction becomes not communion of beings but adjustment of agendas. I can usually get the communion to recur by being on the lookout for it—by being committed to its occurring, by putting it in if it's out. ("Dustin," I said once, "I need a hug and a look.") But the experience, if I let myself have it, is always the exact opposite of "getting to know my son." It is rather a leap into unfathomed waters; a leap away from knowledge, not toward it. In gracious moments, one consciously determines to leave the security and comfort of one's customary agenda, to interrupt the language that embodies and perpetuates its concerns, to cast off these moorings and set sail. I sow no more profound risk than this sharing, and reap no more exalted reward.

What is education, then—that quality so precious and rare in schooling? In what cases, in the presence of what kinds of experience, do we want to say "now *this* is education"? The word points us in two directions by virtue of its etymology and its contemporary associations. From Latin *educare*, to rear or bring up, we get these definitions:

1) to bring up (young persons) from childhood so as to form (their) habits, manners, intellectual and physical aptitudes;

2) to train (any person) so as to develop the intellectual and moral powers generally;

> 3) to train, discipline (a person, a class of persons, a particular mental or physical faculty or organ) so as to develop some special aptitude, taste, or disposition.[3]

Hence "education" is used to designate "the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young in preparation for the work of life; by extension, similar instruction or training obtained in adult age; also, the whole course of scholastic instruction which a person has received." I asked Dustin once if he knew what education was. He nodded confidently. "It means he has to go to school," he said.

So much is familiar—so familiar, in fact, that we may not even see what it says any more. For the standard definitions spotlight one feature of our practice in this area of our common life: education as training, preparation, formation, as transmission and reception of information or technique; this is education as bending to pattern. But is this what we envisioned as our job when we chose teaching as a career? What else is there in our experience of that moment of wonder, elation, and bedrock satisfaction that we knew as students of a great teacher, and again perhaps when we caught an illumination in the eyes of our own students, a light not artificially implanted, or even renewed, but new; a light not of understanding only, but of possibility?

The other Latin word, *educere*, means "to lead or draw forth or out," from which we get the word *educe*, "to bring out, elicit, develop, from a condition of latent, rudimentary, or merely potential existence." Early uses of the word suggest its different character, its sense of origination, creation:

> 1603 The Heauens are efficients, which educe the forme out of the matter of the corne.
>
> 1669 Chaos was that ancient slime, out of which all things were educed.
>
> 1781 Hope has the wondrous virtue to educe from emptiness itself a real use.

And in 1816, the poet S. T. Coleridge, blending pictures given by the two etymologies, says that education "consists in educing the faculties and forming the habits."[4]

The Latin teacher at my high school says that *educere* would have been used also to describe the leading forth of an army from the city gates, or of an expedition into the hills. Here, a sense of adventure, of going together into an unknown world, with a purpose and with supporting equipment, but also with a sense of reliance on something else than the already designed equipment, the maps, the provisions. I make it the picture of

Ulysses leading his drenched mariners into a world that must be to us, some thirty centuries later, unimaginably new, a world where they invent a way out of the Cyclops' cave using their native wits and whatever materials come to hand. Ulysses, we are oft reminded, is "a man never at a loss." He is certainly a leader. Is he a teacher? When Dustin goes to school, as indeed he has to, whom does he encounter? What if education means "he gets to re-invent his world"?

I have spent most of my career in an ideal teaching situation: small classes, able or brilliant students, committed and caring colleagues. Even here, our diagnosis of student difficulties often faltered. If we could not find any personal shortcomings like Laziness or Preoccupation with the Opposite Sex or Rebelliousness on which to base our findings and our prescriptions, we were led to blame Lack of Aptitude for the Subject—the categories being Native Ability, Motivation, and Diligence. Of course, Native Ability is filtered through influence from the Family Background, and Motivation may come through several channels, though the most important of these is likely to be Parental Guidance, if not Parental Pressure. Diligence, of course, is mostly a matter of the cultivation of Good Study Habits. In my school it was only a few isolated individuals who had difficulty; they were exceptions who proved a rule. But we assumed that they had their problems *as individuals*. Some people, it seemed, were just wired wrong for our brand of schooling. And if a student was particularly recalcitrant, refusing the extra help we offered, we would say: "Well, you can't help a person that doesn't want to be helped." With this "rule," among others, we constructed the edifice of our practice.

Carefully, conscientiously, soberly, we are dealing with our lives together in terms of the known world, the familiar borders, the paved roads. Nothing wrong with paved roads except that, with parking lots and fast-food shops, they leave precious little terrain for pioneering, for making way in. What is there in our building together that gets lost in the built? When asked what she would do to rekindle teachers, Marva Collins says, "Tell them to stay out of the teachers' lounge in the morning." Why? What arenas come into being in encounters between educators, and students, and parents? Is it possible to shift an arena, to fertilize our encounters? Can the teachers' lounge, the faculty meeting—the conversations among educators—be a source not of dysfunction but of breakthrough results for students?

What paves roads is a paradigm. A paradigm is the medium of our culture, an open set of beliefs and expectations, open because it faces the future expecting to incorporate into itself whatever arrives. A paradigm gives us a set of attitudes and expectations, parameters that actually determine what we can hear and see, and what we cannot, and it provides us with rules specifying how to operate successfully on what we see.[5] To

look at it more organically, a paradigm is a cluster of rooted metaphors, a soil from which grows the familiar vegetation—if pavement hasn't succeeded yet. It is part of this book's aim to shift the paradigm we bring to teaching and learning, to the training of teachers, and to the initiation of students into education. What is the currently dominant paradigm in discourse about schooling or about education? At the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1989, Lawrence Cremin asserts that individuals must learn "how to obtain the education they would like to have at any given period of their lives."[6] So that even if getting educated becomes continual, self-initiated—even if, as Cremin recommends, students learn how to learn—education itself, identified with acquired knowledge or information or skill, remains a quantity to be obtained, a stuff that individuals have and use. We say of persons and classes of people that they are "highly educated" or "poorly educated," as if the past participle might accurately represent a completed state of affairs. Incomplete preparation threatens our national destiny: "Only an educated America can promise our country a future in space," we hear the announcer say. And we applaud the bumper sticker's retort: "Education expensive? Try ignorance!" Though its stentorian challenge has been answered time and again—by Piaget, by Vygotsky in challenging Piaget, by Dewey—still Thomas Hobbes' dismal proclamation of this paradigm of education reverberates: "The minds of the common people are like clean paper, fit to receive whatever by public authority shall be imprinted in them."

Perhaps even our independent minds receive imprints from authorities of one kind or another—I know my mind resonates to authoritative diction, particularly if it's metaphorically delectable. Marching to almost any fife, even the one that trills "beware of fife and drum!", the mind adopts the rhythm and cadence of meaning pronounced in the read or the spoken, and transmits its measure to the hand or voice, which act and react, mechanical in agreement or rebuke. But what of our hearts? And shall I couple soul? What we want is a frontier, an edge beyond which the cadence of the known pauses, its repetition of structured options and impossibilities fading as the voice of commitment, of our responsibility in being for each other, sounds. Notwithstanding the slogan of *Star Trek*, space is not the final frontier, any more than The West was. Where there suddenly comes into presence the possibility of authentic sharing, of *soobschenie*, that is where the frontier appears, and reappears, beckoning like the bright crescent of Ithaca. What we want is *educere*. Even when we present facts, dates, concepts, formulae, our continuing mission is not to imprint: it is to share the adventure of being.

My purpose is not to subvert the traditional concerns of schooling, but rather to renew the background behind them, or better, to notice their ecology. I will not propose that we watch *Star Trek* on the TVs in our

classrooms (though I have observed and participated in classroom activities of less educative import). Instead I will try out another vocabulary in which we might hold "education," one that gives us a picture more like the "becoming together" of Buber and Bakhtin. By developing this other conversation for the background of our educational practice, I am not claiming to reveal more clearly the essence of "true education." I am interested in vocabularies as tools, and the conversational tools at our disposal in the currently operative vocabulary of education, though still useful in some ways, are no longer adequate by themselves to deal with our current crisis. I want to continue to be able to talk about knowledge, curriculum, subject matter, course content, examinations, grades. I want all of our students to have the opportunity to share in the heritage of their culture (or better, cultures), though I agree with E. D. Hirsch that such an important purpose is not likely to be well served merely by requiring exposure to items in a content-sequence.[7] Thus, I do not propose what Richard Rorty calls a "final vocabulary"[8] different from the one we now use. But shared knowledge is at least as much a matter of the sharing as it is of the knowledge. To have an impact on the knowledge shared by a group of pupils or a generation, we must be able to engage the sharing they know. We need another vocabulary, another way of speaking about educational problems and possibilities alongside the canonical one, a system of terms including these: speaking, listening, conversation; inventing, declaring, committing, sharing; and maybe even being. We should be talking about the being of teaching. We will talk about it, in Chapter Six, by reinventing the "wheel of Saying." In Chapter Seven, we will talk about it with some "terms" that are not verbal but experiential; for the vocabulary of being articulates activity as well as thought. But to begin developing this other vocabulary, to find ourselves talking in its terms, we will listen to the conversations of some of our most powerful recent thinkers—Saussure and Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Buber, among others.

In Part One we will be conducting the investigation in an arena called *epistemology*. When we are in this arena we are committed to asking questions about how knowledge is possible and how it can be valid: we are asking how we know what we know. The first modern poser of this question, René Descartes, answered it in a way that has become paradigmatic, inaugurating a way of distinguishing between subject and object that enabled the march of science. In his most influential philosophical works, he proposed a method of authorizing and validating the perceptions and conceptions—the knowledge—of an individual observer. Thus he isolated the Knowing Subject. Less than half a century later, John Locke's writing nailed down the Object side of the distinction, so that we then had a world composed of individuals and objects that individuals apprehend more or less truly. Knowledge, for us, is inextricably bound up with this picture of subjects over against objects. Though Wittgenstein's work does

not dispute the difference between subject and object, or the difference between truth and falsehood, it asks us to inquire into the conversation in which these distinctions are used, and to notice the sociality of their use; in so doing, it provides us with a bridge into a world where teaching can assume its rightful magnitude, its world-opening touch.

In Part Two the arena will shift to *ontology*—though I do not mean by that a division of philosophical thought. Though the word and the arena come to me (most recently) from Martin Heidegger, a philosopher whose massive work is intended to counterbalance the weight of at least four hundred years of scientific epistemology, ontology for me simply means being together with others in a world. When we are talking ontology our interest is in what it is to be present, to and for one another. This does not mean getting along with one another, being sociable, etc. Indeed, it may mean the opposite; it may mean trying each other sorely. I am using "epistemology" and "ontology" to distinguish between arenas that, it seems to me, we usually conflate. For the phenomena of being together are all too often masked by our easy acquaintance with phenomena of knowing together. Thus ontology is a name for a domain of inquiry, an inclination to question, not for a set of answers.

What I mean by "ontology" suggests itself in all the work of Michael Polanyi, beginning with *Personal Knowledge*. That tacit "component" that Polanyi identifies in the background of personal knowledge has much to do with the teacher's way of being, as it has to do also with the listening present in the teaching/learning situation "before" speaking occurs.

> But if we know a great deal that we cannot tell, and if even that which we know and *can* tell is accepted by us as true only in view of its bearing on a reality beyond it, a reality which may yet manifest itself in the future in an indeterminate range of unsuspected results; if indeed we recognize a great discovery, or else a great personality, as *most real*, owing to the wider range of its yet unknown manifestations: then the idea of knowledge based on wholly identifiable grounds collapses, and we must conclude that the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the other must be predominantly tacit.[9]

Polanyi affirms the presence in all knowledge of a tacit dimension that conditions our understanding and use of that knowledge. In one way, the tacit dimension is an unspoken bargain struck between the participants about what entities (including themselves) inhabit the world, the ways these embrace and settle into accord or conflict, what is available or fruitful to be said about these entities, what concerns are to be addressed... how the world of the given situation fits together. In another way, it includes the inclination to question, to launch out into the yet unknown.

The passage above suggests, further, that the authority of what is learned—transmitted to following generations—resides in that tacit dimension. So the job of teaching—and thus of teacher training—is to enable and empower the tacit. We can do so with a vocabulary of being together and inventing that will stand alongside (not replace) the vocabulary of representation and transmission of knowledge that uses us. We want a conversation for commitment or *responsibility* alongside the vocabulary that acknowledges what is so. I will be exploring what such a vocabulary might look like.

I am also using the terms "epistemology" and "ontology" as they are interrelated by Huston Smith, in *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (New York: Crossroad, 1982). In Chapter Eight ("Beyond the Modern Western Mindset"), he postulates a sequence in which our modern motivation to control nature produces the epistemology of empiricism and ontology of "naturalism," yielding finally the lived experience of alienation. That students as well as teachers experience alienation from and in the educational system we have inherited seems clear, beginning at least with the *Carnegie Report*. Smith proposes that, starting with another motivation—"participation"—we might generate a different sequence, through an epistemology of "intuitive discernment" and an ontology of "transcendence" to a lived experience of "fulfillment." Rather than explicating here the meanings of the terms in Smith's sequences, I merely note that the purpose of this book is to begin enabling us teachers to shift our motivation toward "participation," being-together, without losing control of our classrooms.

How is it that students can divine the answer to a question in class by the way you ask it? At least partially, at least sometimes, you can influence the direction a discussion will take by having students pick up on your intentions, no? Or again: one group of students, presented with a game requiring skill, luck, and participation outdoors, chooses to take it on as a challenge and an opportunity for fun. Another group, in the same class section, stands aside talking among themselves as the others perform. A third group declines even to go outside and watch. Where do the influences come from here? What different worlds are there here for students to live into? And when a student consistently makes an effort but consistently fails, in what world is he or she living? When a student makes remarkable progress, taking on the challenge of schooling as if his or her life depended on it, what world has come into being? What world has been occurring when a teacher burns out?

The question that generates the ontology arena is, "How is it that a world comes to be? What is it to *be*?"[10] If we had some acquaintance with that inquiry, we might have some say in the worlds we find ourselves and our students living in. In this arena, the guides will be Heidegger and Martin Buber, a philosopher and a theologian whose works, juxtaposed,

allow us to cross Wittgenstein's bridge into new territory. As you will have surmised, the crossing is supported also by my own children and my students.

As the continuing presence of my child reminds me, however, it is not in using the same vocabulary, once we develop it, that we gain those moments of being that exalt our lives together. I have had occasion to ask Dustin more than once if he forgives me, and though forgiveness has come into presence on each of those occasions, he cannot define the word. Can *I* define it? I know the procedure for looking the word up, but the definition is not what is present in our encounter. The definition is like a picture, an explanation of what happened, after the fact. It is a memory of forgiveness. In educational practice, too, the landscape of memory might at some moments be transformed into a listening for inspiration. Vocabulary and grammar alone do not do that—though it is hard to think what they could be, "alone." But a new vocabulary and a new way of talking do open the door to new possibilities. As they gain a foothold, they present us with the opportunity to ask, "What would it be like to commit ourselves to that vocabulary? What might happen if we used that network of concepts instead? What would the landscape look like?"[11] These are not questions that can be answered in solitude. What they require, what they invoke, is *colloquy*: speaking together. For a new way of talking means a new way of listening, too, so that a new vocabulary can call forth powerful *conversation*: that *turning together*, to and with each other, in which possibilities are invented and then realized. In the present case, it is not that a philosophical conversation will do anything to alter the system of instruction we are immersed in. But it will do something *to us*, and for us. As the sudden vista from a farther ridge opens out, in a new colloquy we may find ourselves inventing new possibilities for dwelling together in the landscape, for owning the landscape of our dwelling. So I am not talking about *relevance*, either. A classroom *is* a real world. The cry for relevance is ontologically vacuous; it may even rupture the fabric of shared being, of encounter, since the very notion of relevance presupposes and trades on the divorce between content and lived experience. Relevance is the enemy of teaching.

What is a teacher? A standard, if crude, answer might be "the one who *knows and tells*."[12] A teacher communicates his knowledge, and maybe his understanding, to his students; and we listen to the question with this standard answer in mind—we listen *from* the answer we have already heard. This is the teacher as given in the paradigm of epistemology. Of course, the current cultural picture of what a teacher is derives from perhaps hundreds of antecedents, including cartoons and popular songs. (In Wittgenstein's terms, the "grammar" of the word teacher is the confluence of innumerable semantic rivers.) In this book, though, I want

to focus on what seem to me two powerful expressions of some notions bound into our current teaching and education. The writings of Locke and Descartes, as the source of much of what we have been hearing in the modern age, provide us with a means of distinguishing or noticing the background that shapes our current colloquy and practice, distinguishing it *as* background, getting a grip on the picture that grips us.

At the outset, then, our task is to establish an unusual kind of relationship with the pictures that give us our own identity and purpose in life as well as our views of the nature of the world and society—pictures that give us ourselves and our students. Like water for a fish, these pictures remain unremarked, untended in the course of an ordinary life; they are the unnoticed medium, the background against which all our experiences occur. My purpose in tracing what philosophers have been saying recently about the pictures we are living in is not to discover more correct pictures. Even if some of our pictures are wrong, I have no privileged position from which to set forth corrections. This is not false modesty; it is not even modesty. Junior year in high school, I had been an excellent student of French, so good, in fact, that I would amaze my roommate by reciting perfectly in class without having cracked the book the night before. I must have been pretty cocky about that, and maybe even about something or other besides, for in the hallway one day the French teacher said to me, as if in passing: "Henry, you don't know everything you want to know yet." I don't remember what else he said. But what I got was more than a message about the incompleteness of my knowledge of French. His remark said something about my way of being, something that, somehow, I took on as ballast rather than correction. What lasted out of our encounter was a new distinction: he had provided a background, and I could see myself against it. He had named the medium in which I had been being, so that when I noticed it as a medium, as the tacit force field which had been shaping my participation, a new possibility of being opened up for me.

One of my students once voiced his dismay at my own failure to fit the traditional picture: "Dr. McHenry, you never *tell* us anything!" I took this mostly as a compliment, if also partly as a tip that I was not meeting the students halfway. But what if a teacher's authority came from authorship, rather than from superior knowledge? What if teachers were the unacknowledged legislators of the world: poets? Then the normal science of teaching would be invention and re-invention, instead of instruction. We would have an art of being together, an art in whose sway our science of instruction would function, instead of spinning its wheels. Not that it always and everywhere spins its wheels. Anyway, there is nothing wrong with instruction, either. Students are, or should be, anxious for us to tell them things.

Where I have made a difference with students, I have somehow been able to *be present* with them in the teaching/learning arena, rather than off searching through a mental file cabinet of information about the subject or about methods of teaching it. We have *become together*. This extraordinary moment of shared being cannot happen unless I am prepared, confident of my command of the subject; but preparation in the subject or content of the lesson will not necessarily produce it. Where I have made a difference with my son—where he and I have been partners, sharing in the joy, the trials, and the mystery of his growing up—there has been that same sense of perfect engagement, of being together at the front of the train: laying the tracks as we go, inventing our way with the wind in our faces. It is not that we arrive at a destination nobody ever heard of before. It is rather that, coming from this kind of inventing, we arrive at the familiar places of family life and know them for the first time. Things are brand new here, not only for him but also for me. And whatever I say or do in this place contributes to him, and what he says and does educates me: when we are engaged this way, our world is ours, like Ulysses'.

This is a "basics" we teachers could get back to: it is a kind of engagement that is possible before culture, even before literacy. And it is always possible between people, not just parents and children. Why did Ishmael go to sea "before the mast"? He intimates that his life as a schoolmaster had something to do with it. Why did his civil soul require intimate contact with Queequeg the tatooed harpooneer? As I jump aboard a New York City bus, at Amsterdam and a hundred and something street, late in the afternoon, why does a woman passenger offer me, my tweed pockets suddenly empty, fifty cents for the fare? Surely there is something more powerful in being together underneath the trappings, the social-conceptual webwork with which our lives are framed and buttressed. The "basics" of engagement not only allow but call forth invention and re-invention. Invention, as I use it here—*in* + *venire*—means coming into a world. Coming into a world together, we are engaged in a promise and a claim. For it is *our* world then, not *the* world. Engagement does not deny knowledge: it is the soul of knowledge. Literacy is the freight; this is the locomotive. A teacher may be the one who knows and tells, but teaching/learning is engagement.

Because this book investigates the ways we talk, and might talk, more than the way things are, I will make use of etymology rather brazenly. Heidegger has been criticized for his "largely fake" etymologies.[13] Though the criticism is surely correct, it does not seem to me apt. It may not have been Heidegger's purpose to produce correct etymologies,[14] and, while I hope I have used the dictionaries conscientiously, neither is it mine. I try only to suggest the ways in which some of our words, in their usual senses, may work together to embody and maintain a picture of man's

relationship to the world, and our relationships in our world, and within that, of teachers' relationships to students. A picture holds us captive, says Wittgenstein.[15] Perhaps we can release ourselves into an area of our dwelling together by highlighting some of the currently transparent senses of our words. We speak of teachers and instructors almost without distinguishing between them, but the verb "to teach" in English comes from an Old English form meaning to show, to let appear. In French the verb is *enseigner*, from Latin *insignare* or *insignire*, to make known by pointing, signalling. By thinking of teachers as instructors (L. *instruere*, to pile up, build), we may miss the distinction between persons building with materials and persons being with persons. It is not the specific names but the vocabularies that are at issue, the constellations of names in the region of our home galaxy. Even Outward Bound calls its leaders "instructors," though their job is to bring present, for and with their students, a new world to dwell in together. Whatever you call yourself, use this book to inquire into the vocabulary of your craft, its methods of training you, of constituting your job, of relating you with your students.

As a record of my own intellectual journey, a sometimes-inspired student and teacher, and of my not-always-delighted encounters with my child, this whole book reads a bit like a drive through West Virginia, twisting between theorizing, inquiry, and observation; philosophy and diary. I do not know how to ride a motorcycle (just as well, perhaps) so I will be driving the car I am used to, a 1967 Chrysler station wagon—a huge rolling condominium of a car, with a luggage rack on top and crannies inside for all the walking sticks and life preservers I have collected since before my mother died. It was her car before I inherited it. I can haul lumber and tools inside and a ladder on top, and I love its aura of expedition. Saved from extinction by care and lucky artifice, it gives a certain context to my building, to my journey. Dustin says it's the best car we own.

It may not surprise a veteran teacher to hear that your way of being is more important in a classroom than what you know. Be careful how you live, the maxim warns; you may be the only textbook a student ever reads. But we still have almost no access to our ways of being; hence we have only hobbled means of making a difference for our students and for society. How are we to recover those moments of magic that we lose in our anxiety for the results that the magic makes possible?

A Cincinnati teacher, offered a magic wand by Harry Smith of CBS, said that the one thing he would wish for to transform his school is a way of working with each student, one by one. If this project succeeds, so that the background of teaching/learning includes the conversation of being—the listening for being—it will grant him his wish. He will be able, even in the midst of his class of thirty or fifty or a hundred students, to be with

each one individually, personally, and intimately, with all the promise and power available in that communion.

I am aware that this is a tall order, and I am writing scared. "Oh, get real; you can't manage *that!*" I hear myself saying. "Be serious! Education isn't a magic show!"

"Not yet, it isn't," I reply to myself, somewhat shakily. Then, warming to the possibility of my task: "There were supposed to be more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in our philosophy."

While we seem to have heaven pretty well down by now, there may yet be marvels available to us on earth. The book will recommend, and reading it may produce for you, a *kind of awareness;* and while I will avoid "steps to better teaching," I will suggest (in Chapter Seven) exercises and activities for preparing for the classroom encounter and for refreshing its power in midstream. But the power of a technique arises out of the listening in which it is used. A technique is not a mechanism, any more than you or I. (The Greek word *tekné* meant art.) So I speak into your listening, and into the listening that uses us both, hoping for grace to reinvent our listening for each other.

NOTES

1. M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, eds. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 143-4.
2. Jacques Barzun, *Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 99.
3. All definitions in this paragraph (except Dustin's) are from the *Oxford English Dictionary.*
4. Definitions from the *Oxford English Dictionary.*
5. I use the term "paradigm" in the sense familiar since Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* A "parameter" is something we measure by.
6. Lawrence Cremin, *Popular Education and Its Discontents* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 77.
7. As Hirsch acknowledges, it is in any case impossible to require exposure—or at least to require that an exposure register as we intend. How would one teach about atomic structure in elementary school? Perhaps on analogy with the solar system. But what if the pupils have not already learned about the structure of the solar system? In a well-known exchange with Hirsch in the *New York Review of Books* (April 13, 1989), Herbert Kohl proposed the following experiential process:

> Ask one of the children to stand up, and then ask another to get up and walk around the first. Then have a third child walk around the first child, only in a larger orbit. Continue this with the whole class illustrating an orbiting structure. As a next step ask students to think of different natural phenomena that could be modeled by their little dance.

But as Hirsch points out, while one group of pupils might take to Kohl's method, another group, with a different "social background," might not:

> They complain that moving around the room in orbits is "too first-gradish"; they decline to get the larger point; they clown, and feel uneasy; they resent the whole exercise. Kohl, with a good teacher's sensitivity to significant differences between groups, would make appropriate adjustments in his mode of proceeding, and would probably abandon the dance-of-the-planets strategy in favor of one that worked...

Hirsch is making part of my point here. With each group of students, the arena that develops on a particular day may defeat the most carefully planned lesson. The kids don't have to take the point of an analogy, or of anything you do; hence the need for "perpetual discretion." But the point that follows, one of Hirsch's "basic principles of teaching," seems to me at least questionable:

> Even in open classrooms, the main work of teaching is conducted by means of verbal communication between the members of the class. There is an inherent link between effective classroom communication and effective learning. If Kohl wishes to suggest that successful classroom learning doesn't depend on students sharing extensive background knowledge, then, with regard to that particular issue, I have no hesitancy in saying he doesn't know what he's talking about.

Hirsch's logic assumes that the reason for their resistance in this case is that, because their social backgrounds have been different, they do not share background knowledge. Effective communication, whence learning, is assumed to depend on extensive common knowledge. I am starting my inquiry with a contrary question: What if the main work of teaching is conducted by something other than verbal communication, something that makes verbal communication possible, perhaps? What besides background knowledge is always present in the classroom as the enabling context for the verbal communication? Hirsch does not claim here that shared background knowledge is a sufficient condition for communication and learning. I am inquiring in this book into the conditions of *sharing*.

8. See *Contingency, irony, and solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73.
9. *The Tacit Dimension*, 1966, 61.
10. "We ask the questions 'How does it stand with being?' 'What is the meaning of being?' *not* in order to set up an ontology on the traditional style, much less to criticize the past mistakes of ontology. We are concerned with something totally different: to restore man's historical being-there—and that always

includes our own future being-there in the totality of the history allotted to us—to the domain of being, which it was originally incumbent on man to open up for himself."

Heidegger adds, with perhaps a touch of modesty: "All this, to be sure, in the limits within which philosophy can accomplish anything." (Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Mannheim [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959 and 1987], 41-2.)

11. These are the questions that the philosophical pragmatist asks about any vocabulary that claims his allegiance. Cf. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 163.
12. See Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon, *Turning the Soul: Teaching through Conversation in High School* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), 4-5.
13. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, irony, and solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 131.
14. E. Levinas says that Heidegger's purpose was to reveal "the *assembling of the whole of Being* about him who speaks or perceives, and who also forms a part of the assembled Being":

    > when in the Iliad the resistance to an attack by an enemy phalanx is compared to the resistance of a rock to the waves that assail it, it is not necessarily a matter of extending to the rock, through anthropomorphism, a human behavior, but of interpreting human resistance petromorphically. Resistance is neither a human privilege, nor a rock's, just as radiance does not characterize a day of the month of May more authentically than the face of a woman. The meaning precedes the data and illuminates them. Here lies the essential justification and great force of Heidegger's etymologies, which, starting with the impoverished and flat meaning of a term apparently designating a content of external or psychological experience, lead toward a global situation in which a totality of experiences is assembled and illuminated. (*Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis [Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhof Publishers, 1987], 78.)

15. "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (*Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd edition trans. G. E. M. Anscombe [New York: Macmillan, 1953], §115. All quotations from Wittgenstein reprinted with the permission of Simon & Schuster.)

PART I

EPISTEMOLOGY

What Is Knowing, and How Do We Know?

We continue with another small story about the way my child talks. He had been playing outside with his "nanny," a third-year law student who had been coming over three days a week to help my wife after the birth of our second child. When I overheard a bit of their banter, Andrea was saying "Why do you get to change your mind so often?" I guess Dustin had been re-making the rules to some game they had been playing, whenever it suited his interests at the moment to have different rules—not a fully ethical practice, but the child is only four now and doesn't know what is required in adult play yet. After only the minutest of hesitations, he answered her question with: "Because I say so."

My son the poet, again voicing one of the main things I want to say in this book. Of course he may have been parroting, adapting something he heard his mother say in exasperation once, after all her good reasons failed to persuade him. But his utterance, as heard by his alert father, says something else than that the devil can quote scripture. He and Andrea had been having real fun together, and her question expressed not exasperation, but amusement. So it seems appropriate that I cite his saying to introduce my own. Did he know the rules of the game he was playing? No: he was saying the rules, not just selfishly, but so that the game worked for both players. So our conversation about knowing begins with our picture of language. As I hinted in the Introduction and now confess outright, it is not a conversation that does justice to the two millennia of epistemological theory and thinking since Plato. What I know of our investigations of knowledge and knowing is here to be put at the service of another endeavor than epistemology. I am committed to exploring what it is about knowing that evokes and involves our mutuality, our being-together with our community's children. Thus I return again and again to examine my own being together with my child, reminding us who teach that, at the moments that matter, teaching is an avatar of loving.

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1
OUR PICTURE OF LANGUAGE

> Philosophers reduced the scope of their inquiries so much that Wittgenstein... said "the sole remaining task for philosophy is the analysis of language." What a comedown from the great tradition of philosophy from Aristotle to Kant!
>
> —Steven Hawking[1]

> I conclude that there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language users master and then apply to cases.
>
> —Donald Davidson[2]

Even such a contemporary master of the use of invented pictures to handle reality as Steven Hawking still sees language as reality's little brother. He looks back to the tradition, both empiricist and rationalist, of investigating a nature independent of and vaster than the human. Even for us lay people, this tradition is so intrinsic to our way of being in the world that we seldom see any other possibility. This is why the task of "analysis" seems so fundamental. If we are given a world, a reality with the components we recognize (tables and chairs, trees, people...), then the job of cutting that reality up into appropriate parts and figuring out how these relate to each other seems like the most important job we can do. But this job goes along with a particular picture of language's nature and function. It is not even that we assume the subordination of language to reality: I am supposing that our very ways of being with other people,

thinking and speaking, hoping and wishing, opining and despairing, are tied up with the presumption that what language does is abstract from reality, from what there is in nature, and then describe it. For the most part, it is rather as if this notion assumes us, takes us up into itself like the atmosphere; it is part of the sustaining air we breathe. For a précis of this state of affairs—our respiration of and in language—see Walker Percy's essay "The Mystery of Language."[3] Percy says that we are breathing cause and effect; I agree and only add that we are breathing another colorless, odorless gas as well, called reference.

There is fresher air. Though it has taken the better part of a century, it is fairly well accepted nowadays in linguistic circles that language works because of social convention. I can remember the precise moment when I first got this idea clearly; it was like finding a new walking stick, of exactly the right length and suppleness and elegance. I didn't know yet where I might be walking with the aid of this stick, but it looked very useful indeed. I owe the idea to one of my first teachers in the English Department at the University of Virginia; he showed it to us in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguist working in Geneva during the first decade of this century. Saussure's work has since served in several intellectual traditions, most notably as the foundation of what was called structuralism. In Wittgenstein, to whose conversation Chapter Four is devoted, cousins of Saussure's ideas shifted the ground underneath philosophy.

To say that meaning occurs because of social convention is to say that there is no necessary relation between a sign and what it signifies; the signifier is, as Saussure asserted, arbitrary. (What breathy emphasis my teacher gave to the word "arbitrariness"! He spoke as if here were the knot of our whole intricate relation to the world.) Saussure does not mean that the arbitrariness of the sign results from a kind of willful or capricious act. His idea might have been better rendered by a word like "accidentality." (Somewhere P. F. Strawson remarks that a sign gets established because it works, and then it works because it is established. In the two-year-old's developing speech, one can watch as this contingency of sign practice flowers in the milieu of shared human doings.) The arbitrariness of the sign might be exemplified as follows. Look first at words in different languages for what we see as the same idea. The word *arbre* works just as well for the community that uses it as the word *tree* does for its users, though the two words obviously bear no formal relation to each other. Neither word, then, corresponds in its shape or sound to any characteristic of the idea that it evokes. Or look at the way we can, on the spur of the moment, use any sound to serve the purposes of communicating: imagine a child, alone in his sandbox, building a sand castle. His father comes into the vicinity, strikes a pose of obvious astonishment, and says "Goo gah!" Beaming, the child responds "Goo gah goo gah!" In class later that day the

teacher, as an experiment, asks his students to open the doodahs of the classroom to let in a little more air.

Locke had seen this much when he looked at language in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. But in Saussure's use the idea of arbitrariness brings more with it. It is not just that we can couple any sound with a meaning, or with a "referent"—it is also that the sounds do not work by referring to the objects. It was clear to my students that a doodah was a window because opening one would let in more air. The cluster of signs—open, doodah, let in, air—worked together against (or within) a background of common practice. Saussure's crucial insight was that to use language is not to arrange sounds or marks so that they correspond with things in the world and in ourselves. Rather, it is to navigate within a constellation and among constellations, not of stars but of arbitrary "values." On this view, the system of tools that comprises our language is like an immense network of commodities and exchanges among commodities. Words, sentences, parts of speech, grammatical patterns, shrugs, even silence—all are commodities with relative value. That is, each of these commodities has its value neither because of anything inherent in its structure or essence, nor by virtue of the content of its referent, but because *all the other elements have what value they have.* As vowels and consonants define each other in the stream of speech, so do nouns and verbs, requests and assertions, black and white, red and pink: they set each other apart, imbibing meaning through association and contrast. A value is defined by its simultaneous similarities to and differences from other values in the system that the values make up. It would be equally correct to say the system makes up the values.[4] The parts of speech and the whole of speech arise together interdependently.

We may immediately think: surely some commodities—gold or diamonds, say, or wheat—have intrinsic worth, intrinsic value. But how would we say what that value is? Isn't it what we can buy with the commodity, what we can exchange it for, compare it with, or use it to do? Gold is trading today at, say, three hundred eighty-five dollars an ounce. But what is a dollar worth? Well, it's worth 1/385 of an ounce of gold. In the system of monetary values as it stands today—in today's state of the system of monetary values—gold and currency stand in the ratio 1 to 385. (That, of course, was the ratio when I began this chapter. As I complete the book, it stands closer to 1 to 335.) We specify one unit in terms of other units. The money value of wheat is the wheat value of money, and we measure the prospect of satisfying our appetite just as readily in terms of our income level as of the level of flour in the bin. Another example or two will make this notion of a system of values clearer. I will follow Saussure almost verbatim.

First, consider the case of the express train from Geneva to Paris that leaves every day at 8:45 p.m. Is this the same train every day? We say so,

even though locomotive, cars, and personnel may all be different from one day to the next. "The 8:45 express to Paris" is a name we give to a place in a system, here the system marked out in the railroad timetable. What gives the express its identity is the hour of its departure, its origin and destination, and all the other circumstances that distinguish it from other expresses, and other trains, and other modes of transportation. Similarly, if Elm Street is demolished, say to upgrade utilities underneath, and then rebuilt, with wider sidewalks and a landscaped median where before there was none, we might remark with pleasure how nicely the city planners have restored Elm Street, though nothing of the old street remains. What makes it Elm Street is its position relative to College, Grove, and High Streets, not anything in its material or even its proportions. We call it Elm Street because we can use that name to locate ourselves in the city, to navigate. We have a map of the city, on paper or in our head, and the name Elm Street holds a unique place in the system of which the map is one portrayal.[5] Or suppose our purpose is to play a game of chess: does it matter if we have lost one of the knights? Of course not. We simply put down a bottle cap in the place of the knight, and play on. We *call* it the knight without a second thought, simply by continuing our play.[6] For my child, any stick is a sword; any place, inside or outside, Sherwood Forest. When he pretends, what he's doing is setting up a system of arbitrary values, defined as elements of the game he wants to play.

All of these are examples of what Saussure calls "semiological systems." Semiology (from Greek *semeion*, sign) is the name of a science that Saussure envisioned and inaugurated, studying our use of systems of values, "the life of signs within society."[7] In any semiological system, as we see, the elements hold each other in their places in equilibrium—this is what it is for meaning to be given by "value."

Are scholastic systems semiological systems? Let us look at, for example, letter grades. "A" means "Excellent", "B" means "Good", "C" Fair, "D" Poor, "F" Failure. This system works well, particularly if you add the possibility of "+" and "–" to the letters. But it works, as we all know, by comparison within the group of students in a particular class at a particular school, as well as by reference to more objective standards. Bill gets a B on his paper partly because Jill's paper earned an A, and Will's a C, and so on. That is, A means Excellent in comparison and contrast with other performances, and it is some human speaker who makes the comparisons. (Standardized "objective" tests are no less exemplary of the dependence on human speaking, human judgment, as the controversy over the fairness of the S.A.T. (Scholastic Aptitude Test) shows. The test is "objective" and "standardized" for a chosen speech community, which may coincide with a particular socio-economic class. The question becomes not "Are they objective?" but "Who chooses to use them, and for

what purposes?") Someone has to have the final *say* about what grade is given—or several someones. This is as it should be. But it does not mean that so-called "objective" tests are really subjective. I am not really interested here in the subjective-objective polarity as a scale for measuring educational phenomena. Instead I am looking at the social context, the semiological system where, with its myriad correlated distinctions, the subject/object dichotomy, along with the letter grades and the rest of our vocabulary, channels our collective practice.

Though my own final say is often influenced by how much effort I think has gone into a student's work, how much improvement is evident, I am always grading with one eye on the "objective" (standard) descriptions of "A work" or "C work" promulgated by my institution and the other on the particular history of the student in question, sometimes as plaintively urged by himself. In other words, I am making active use of the system of values that encompasses the letter grades, the verbal descriptions, and my conversations with others in my community. I am saying what the case is for each of my students' work, but I can say it only within, and in the terms presented by, a system of values. And—this is crucial—that system comes out of colloquy, conversation: with other teachers, with the students themselves, with the reputation and aspirations of the institution, including its published grading standards, and so on. The system not only comes out of colloquy but lives in it, moment by moment.

If a new category were added to the five conventional ones—say, "S" for Superlative—I would have to re-calculate everything, for the equilibrium between the values would have been disturbed. Middle-grade work could now be assigned either a B or a C, and I would have to make a new set of decisions, of comparisons and contrasts. The value of a B would not be the same in the two systems. How would I go about using the new system, making those life-or-death decisions about where to rank student performances? I would find out how other teachers were using it, how the administration intended for it to be used, how the students expected it to be used, and so on. I would engage in colloquy to reach some kind of agreement with my associates.[8]

The prime fact about any semiological system, Saussure says, is that it exists only by virtue of the tacit social agreement present in colloquy, in conversation; this is true particularly of the most pervasive semiological system, language:

> Contrary to all appearances, language never exists apart from the social fact... Its social nature is one of its inner characteristics... In fact, every means of expression used in society is based, in principle, on collective behavior or—what amounts to the same thing—on convention.[9]

It is the working *for us* that is the crucial issue. The military has developed a special vocabulary, and special conventions, for radio communication, a slang that helps messages get through noise and jamming: it works where our ordinary language would not. It works, as all languages do, because its speakers share a system of tools for accomplishing things of interest to them. Suppose you are piloting a small fighter plane returning through a thunderstorm to your carrier after a nighttime exercise. As the fuel in your tanks runs lower, you radio ahead to the unseen control tower on the ship: "Bingo fuel," you say. In answer, you hear through the popping and crackling a signal fading in and out: "landing three twenty," it says. "Report angels three five miles." You or I might not be able to understand a message from a field radio back to the command post, for we do not share in the conventions that make it up. Of course, we might be able to figure it out, decode it, based on our knowledge of English and any related experiences we may have had with similar codes. But there is a difference between such an armchair exercise and the airman's actual use of the system in navigating toward a safe landing. It is not just that more is riding on the correct interpretation. For in the actual use, Bakhtin would say, the message is not language but "utterance in *anticipation of an active responsive understanding*." Its meaning is shaped not only by the structure of significations built into the system but by that anticipation, like an electric circuit where current is set flowing by voltage. Convention is code plus something. Convention is coming-together, *con-venire*, the shape of participation. Convention is child's play. We play the game by setting up the rules and the pieces, then launching out into the air.

The play tower I built for Dustin in our backyard is a platform raised on four-by-four stilts, with a railing around three sides. From it depend certain ropes, swings, and a ladder, providing a fixed number of options for playing. Up to a point, the child can invent with his playmates different games using the limited inventory of elements—he can re-invent the swing and ladder to figure in a different story line. And even though the structure of the play tower is fixed, so that there comes a time when the child bumps against its limits, we can (if Daddy feels playful) add a cargo net or a door, opening new possibilities for his operations. The play tower is not only a fixed structure; it is an ongoing invention as well. The latest addition is a pair of wooden pineapples, which he spotted at the building supply store and mounted on top of the railing on one side, thus framing a barrier rather than an entry. It is not, architecturally, a fully grammatical statement, but the whole structure is an improvisation, after all, and the whimsy of pineapples adds appropriately to its fabric.

Within the system of ordinary natural language, though, the game feels different. Here, neither the military's outlandish standardization nor the child's improvisation holds sway. At the beginning of a school year,

flush with the possibility of breakthrough, we aspire for our students to take charge of their language, re-inventing the stubborn structure of English so as to surprise their teachers with brilliant, original, and moving compositions. But by about February we are beginning to wish that they would just learn the grammar, for God's sake, and leave invention off until they have. They have bumped up against the limits of the structure, but have no power to break up the agreements nailed into the system of our grammar—to build a new playhouse—and so have nowhere to go except into rote memory work, or the pleasant drudgery of Harbrace grammar drills. And we have nowhere to go along with them.

To help our students cope with language arts, we ordinarily define the noun as the name of a person, place, or thing, and the verb as designating action or state of being; it is easy to see those definitions as specifying intrinsic characteristics of nouns and verbs. In the language we speak and write—we think of it as *the* language—and particularly in the language we teach, there are, in addition to definitions, rules of grammar and principles of composition and rhetoric; and players cannot make up the rules, any more than the definitions, by themselves. We must adopt the conventions, the grammar, the vocabulary, which we find already in play. We are stuck with a language-game that was already invented when we joined it. Or so it appears. Saussure's work begins to suggest a way around the dead end, a way to recover the voltage that makes the current possible.

To recognize the path he offers, we have to give up the idea that there is such a thing as language. (Don't worry: after we give it up, we get it back in a different way.) "Contrary to all appearances," Saussure says, is the fundamental sociality of language. Now, ordinarily, we have taken language to be a structure governed by rules—in Davidson's words, a "clearly defined shared structure which language users master and then apply to cases." But in Saussure's picture, language is a system of conventions made by and maintained in usage. Of course, if one wants to communicate effectively (especially in school essays) one must conform at least minimally to the norms set out in the grammar. But Saussure makes a key distinction between this imperativeness, this compulsion by norm, and the "principles of regularity" that merely describe the patterns of usage, the arrangement of arbitrary terms in a semiologic system.[10] For a "law" of language, he says, is "a simple expression of an existing arrangement... [it] reports a state of affairs; it is like a law that states that trees in a certain orchard are arranged in the shape of a quincunx."[11] This kind of law is *not* imperative. The trees could have been planted in a circle, if that shape served the purposes of the orchardist and his family. No imperative, nothing intrinsic, determines the value of gold; but its price is determined in a market. Values live in a social matrix. Saussure's picture of the socially

conditioned interdependence of arbitrary signs throws the apparent structure of language up like a projection on a scrim in a theater, an airy luminosity behind which we can see ourselves as the speakers who enact the language. Now, perhaps it is just these speaker-actors, acting for themselves rather than abiding by the structure, who can work at mastering the rules, the ones for whom grammar is not a barrier but just another tool. Isn't it as if some students, some of the time, *choose* to do well? Some students, even, seem to choose excellence for themselves all of the time. We are working on enabling that choice.

Now when we are telling students about the rules of grammar, we may indeed be under the imperative of collective usage: we and they have no room here to invent anything on our own. Isn't it so in your classes? The students figure they have to do it the way the book says or they will get points taken off; and the teacher is obliged to take off points for mistakes. For once we have agreed on a single set of rules and game pieces, it looks as if the game *must* be set up in just the way we have set it up. "The basics" are bedrock now. Don't some students just seem to opt out of this game, perhaps with varying degrees of truculence or despair? Proposing a different basics for us to go back to, Saussure insists on the way arbitrariness and sociality work together in language:

> the arbitariness of the sign helps us understand why it is the social fact alone that can create a linguistic system. Sociality (*la collectivité*) is necessary to establish those values whose only reason for existence is in usage and general agreement...[12]

There is available here a different attitude toward the basics of grammar; for the rules derive from and need our being together, just as the play tower needs our ongoing invention. Saussure is not proposing that we abandon the use or the teaching of grammar, nor is he suggesting that we ought to change the rules every now and then just for fun. Whimsical pineapples are to be used with caution. The Saussurean teacher will still take off points for mistakes in grammar. Instead, Saussure is distinguishing the kind of "basics" that semiology is from the kind of "basics" that grammar is, just as one can distinguish the dwelling from the house. There is a way of looking at and dealing with the house that gives it as an object, a structure of materials; and there is another way of looking that gives it as a possibility for dwelling in together, for engagement, for inventing a family life. Both ways are valid; both are useful. But the Saussurean teacher will take off points in a different way, with a different glint in her eye.[13]

Another of Saussure's marvellous analogies amplifies his suggestion of the way language might be viewed as a human, and humane, system, a structure of differences (of *distinctions*) rather than of rules:

> Visualize the air in contact with a sheet of water; if the atmospheric pressure changes, the surface of the water will be broken up into a series of divisions, waves; the waves resemble the union or coupling of thought with phonic substance [which is language]... Language might be called the domain of articulations... Each linguistic term is a member, an *articulus in which an idea is fixed in a sound and a sound becomes the sign of an idea.*[14]

It is easy to study the substance and structure of the waves, the articulated matter of the grammar as we find it. And we are pulled by our epistemology, by the assumptions built into our very vocabulary, to analyze substance and structure. There is nothing wrong with analysis, of course; it is our bread and butter. But here we find the possibility of going behind the grammar, as it were, to ask what is the changing atmospheric pressure that makes the waves? What wind makes articulation? In Saussure's picture, it is sociality: being together. This is a different realm than the description and transmission of structured information; living in the context of sociality, our choices have different import. Here we are not only correct; we are engaged. Saussure is distinguishing for us a domain whose dimensions are not marked out in rules at all, but in *responsibility,* in dialogue that is continuing promising, continuing commitment.

Approaching a red light at a busy intersection, we do not need to ask *how* it means; we need give ourselves no choice but to obey its imperative. Confronting the given grammar, we are apt to lose sight of the radical arbitrariness of linguistic values, which operates within the radical sociality of language. Thus a "statement" that reads *we have chosen to do things this way* comes to be read *things must be done in just this way.* Given a wheel that rolls—words and sentences that allow us to achieve certain of our purposes—we lose the possibility of re-inventing the wheel. Here, in this lost realm of possibility, perhaps, is the "comedown" that injures our freedom, steals our dignity, and blocks us from being with our children.

Once we set up a convention for dealing with each other, we fall into it. That is, once we agree that a certain set of values works for articulating things of concern to us, that apples are not oranges and neither is a tree a street—then we are both free and not free: free to *speak* now, to articulate as powerfully as our conventional system provides, but not free to articulate anything that lies outside the system. Like children inventing the game at each moment, we are in Sherwood Forest with our swords at the ready, and what we are on the lookout for is the Sheriff's men. But just for this reason, what we are eager to participate in is a sword fight. To us adults, the language can appear not as an invented game, a system with arbitrariness and sociality at its heart, but as an index to the very shape and structure our world, including our relations with each other, must inexorably take. Of course a tree is not a street; what adult would suggest

otherwise? But perhaps that is not the most important thing. Letter grades work well most of the time, but in occasional cases, this sword is too dull to suit our purposes—or too sharp. We feel we cannot use it to make the difference we intend to make for a student. In such a case we may either do the best we can with the system we have inherited, or invent a new system, some other agreement with our students about how we measure their performance. And what about our other scholastic systems? How do they serve our intentions, our commitments? A system gives us a conversational channel that we use to talk with our students and among ourselves: how educative are these conversations? Perhaps it is not only the system that nourishes, but the inventing of the system.

It is time to review where we have been so far. Convention, the social agreement that arises in speaking, gives us a world to live in together. But the same power of convention can, so to speak, hide itself from speakers, if not from linguists, while they use the language to communicate in the ordinary way. By *referentiality* (or *representation*), I mean a way of using language that gets its authority from a powerful unspoken convention: the assumption that most words refer to things, and that our job as speakers is to make our words, and the ways we structure them, conform as accurately as possible to the nature and structure of the world "out there." This assumption, this picture, gives us a way of being with language; it generates a conversation and a kind of conversation. With this assumption unnoticed as the atmosphere we breathe, as the background hum of the city we live in, we talk with each other in a certain way, about certain things, our being together shaped and guided by a mostly unseen force. This assumption is at the center of the clearing from which trails lead off through the forest, trails that make up the culture of referentiality. It is referential language whose mere "analysis" Hawking decries; structured language that Davidson says is not there anyway. It is the picture of language as a referential structure, and its associated culture of knowledge, which I think we need to distinguish from the background and look at carefully. I am betting that if we do, we will give ourselves the chance to re-invent our culture.

If I were as bold as Davidson, I would claim that there is no such thing as knowledge. This might be somewhat self-defeating as well as offensive, though, since the ultimate claim would have to be that there is no such thing as anything (any thing)—which may not be a useful conclusion. But I think is it useful to raise the question of what knowledge is, rather than take it for granted that we already know. For I do want to claim that knowledge is not the kind of thing we have been supposing.

So there is a difference between handed-down traditions and made-up traditions, funded knowledge and discovered knowledge, explanation and invention. To get at that distinction, in the following chapters I pro-

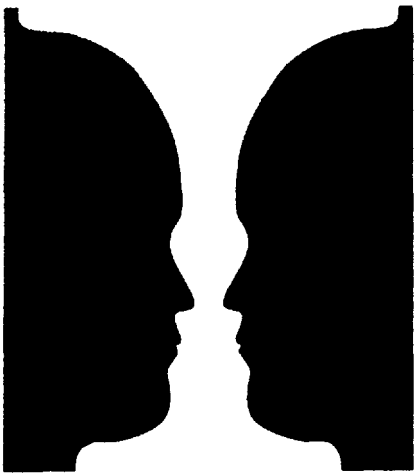
pose to investigate teaching and learning *conversations*: coupled speaking and listening that have power to lead participants out into a newer world. And to begin setting up this investigation, we now leap ahead for a moment to Heidegger, for whom "conversation" means more than taking turns at the microphone:

> It is the custom to put speaking and listening in opposition: one man speaks, the other listens. But speaking is at the same time also listening.
>
> Listening accompanies and surrounds not only speaking such as takes place in conversation. Speaking is of itself a listening. Speaking is listening to the language which we speak.[15]

What it means to speak into a listening, while "listening to the language which we speak," bears much study. For one thing, Heidegger means something non-ordinary by "speaking," by "listening," and by "language" here. The language is not a vocabulary plus a set of rules for syntax, not the object studied by linguistics. It is more like a community, in Bakhtin's sense of a communion of speakers and listeners: it is a space we live in, not an object we manipulate. When speakers and listeners are engaged in languaging, Heidegger suggests, they are breathing a certain air.

For example, contrast what you usually do and say at a cocktail party with what you usually do and say at a school board or PTA meeting. In each situation, Heidegger would say, speaking/listening creates and lives in a community that promotes certain kinds of expression, certain kinds of talk and actions, and rejects others. As a room with period furniture calls up certain associations, each situation calls forth certain possibilities for self-expression. As the terrain of a site and the character of a neighborhood offer possibilities to the architect, so the cocktail party or the board meeting offer a certain atmosphere; and by living in the house, attending the event, you breathe its possibilities—whether they give joy or a headache. It is not that you are not free to behave in whatever ways you see fit. It is that you do see fitting ways of participating in the different atmospheres, and those ways, in normal circumstances, get engaged in your behavior.

If we ask "What sets the conditions in which students engage in learning with teachers engaged in teaching?"—the question of the architecture and neighborhood of teaching and learning—we are led past concern with the intellectual structure and content of lessons into awareness of the power of context to shape perception, understanding, and action. Cocktail party, board meeting, site, and neighborhood—all these are contexts in which meaning occurs, and in which action arises. Surely we have all seen those optical illusions where the outline of a candlestick or a vase can be made to change into a picture of visages facing each other:



What happens here is that you shift the context around the drawing—and you shift it merely by speaking to yourself "face" or "candlestick," perhaps by tracing the outline with your finger while saying "this is the base of the candlestick" or "here is the nose." As you shift the context given by your looking in this way, the structure of the lines—their spatial relationship to each other—remains constant. But the *function* of the lines—their meaning, what they add up to—shifts with the context, with your looking and speaking. Let me quote another explanation of one of these "optical illusions" from the contemporary philosopher Hilary Lawson, for there is more at issue here than an amusing game.

If we draw Wittgenstein's rabbit on the page thus:

> no one will deny that it is a rabbit, even if a magician can produce a duck instead. What was once a rabbit is now a duck, and just as we could describe the rabbit with its whiskers and floppy ears, we can now describe the duck. And how has the magician achieved this? With the spell that is the word "duck." Are we not all magicians at play in the spells that we call language?[16]

In the spell of an atmosphere, a magnetic field, we teach and learn. Does an educative way of being together arise, like a magnetic field, along with our way of listening for and speaking with each other? Is there a possibility and power in classroom languaging, beyond the true picturing of the world, beyond the effective expression of feelings, a magnetic power like that of the context-giving word?

"All life is figure and ground," intones a character in a novel by Samuel Beckett. Did he mean to reduce the overwhelm of modern experience to the pallid generalization that what we see depends on the context in which we see it? Or is there some exhausted irony here, as if being alive involved something more than figure–ground relationships, if only we could get what it is? What there may be, in addition to figure–ground relationships, dependence of content on context, is freedom, that is, responsibility. We need ways of being responsible together. The word responsibility comes from the Latin *spondere*, which means to promise, pledge, or warrant. To be responsible is, then, as for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, to take up a promise, mutually to pledge that the world shall be as you say it shall be. The signers were the authors of political freedom; they made themselves up as the authority in a world that thereby became their home. True, they were authorized by their position in the society of the colonies, their shared background, to make themselves authorities. But what made them *responsible*? Was it the background information they shared? How did they invent the country they lived in? How shall we?

With this question in mind, we may be interested in a story told by Dostevsky in his *Diary of a Writer*. Listen for what it says about the atmosphere we breathe when we give up our reliance on structured referential language.

> One Sunday night I happened to walk for some fifteen paces next to a group of six drunken workmen, and I suddenly realized that all thoughts, feelings, and even a whole chain of reasoning could be expressed by that one noun, which is moreover extremely short. One young fellow said it harshly and forcefully, to express his utter contempt for whatever it was that they had all been talking about. Another answered with the same noun but in a quite different tone and sense—doubting that the negative at-

> titude of the first one was warranted. A third suddenly became incensed with the first and roughly intruded on the conversation, excitedly shouting the same noun, this time as a curse and obscenity. Here the second fellow interfered again, angry at the third, the aggressor, and restraining him, in the sense of "Now why do you have to butt in, we were discussing things quietly and here you come and start swearing." And he told this whole thought in one word, the same venerable word, except that he also raised his hand and put it on the third fellow's shoulder. All at once a fourth, the youngest of the group, who had kept silent till then, probably having suddenly found a solution to the original difficulty which had started the argument, raised his hand in a transport of joy and shouted... Eureka, do you think? Found it? Found it? No, not Eureka at all; nor did he find anything; he repeated the same unprintable noun, one word, merely one word, but with ecstasy, in a shriek of delight—which was apparently too strong, because the sixth and the oldest, a glum-looking fellow, did not like it and cut the infantile joy of the other one short, addressing him in a sullen, exhortative bass and repeating... yes, still the same noun, forbidden in the presence of ladies but which this time clearly meant "What are you yelling yourself hoarse for?" So, without uttering a single other word, they repeated that one beloved word six times in a row, one after another, and understood one another completely.

What do you hear as the moral of this story, the point of my quoting it in the context of schooling? At first I decided I could not use it here, because it does not quite say what I want it to say, does not accomplish what I intend here at the end of the first chapter on our picture of language. For it might be read as demonstrating the banality of how intonation and gesture can alter a word's meaning. Or as suggesting the dubious proposition that we should accept profanity as the most basic level of human communication. Or, considering the purpose of the whole book, will the passage suggest that teachers should get their students involved with each other and with the subject by getting them drunk? Like the revel on Pompey's galley in *Antony and Cleopatra*, this little vignette might be taken to imply that being with others, even if they are friends, requires washing the brain so that it grows fouler.

But if we listen *from* the question, "How do we invent countries to live in together?"—listen with that question in the background—we can hear in Dostoevsky's story another story, in which the drunkenness, like the differences in their ages and temperaments and the fact that it is Sunday night and they must go to work the next day, is part of the background of the subjects' being together. Presumably Dostoevsky is recording an ac-

tual incident here, but the drunkenness of the workers, mentioned in a word at the outset, seems not to figure in the foreground of the story at all, as if it were merely a metaphorical marker meant to set up the atmosphere of the story, like a dark and foggy street lit by a sullen lamp. What happens on that drunken street then is all the more remarkable: no structure but being together; communion enables communication. Of course we immediately ask "Oh, but surely the structure of the language was already present, so that each repetition of the 'beloved word' was really an ellipsis, which the listener could reconstitute, just as, after all, Dostoevsky did in overhearing?" Saussure prompts us to respond to this obviously devastating query: "But where did the structure of the language *come from*? How did it get there to begin with? Are the workmen only using a given structure, or are they also coming together in a function, re-inventing their colloquy at each step? Perhaps it is too pat to notice that, in the paragraph before this one, Dostoevsky speaks of the one short word as a whole language, which "if it were altogether nonexistent, *il faudrait l'inventer*." If we had no beloved words, we would have to invent them. Invented words are beloved. The story does not have to be solely about drunken profanity. As I listen to it, it speaks of being together and inventing.

We have already come a long way, partly following and partly inventing the road through these mountains. We came by way of Saussure so as to establish a bit of a roadway to follow, a way leading past the rules on the surface of language into a domain where dialogue is the modulation of our relatedness. The word "dialogue" says *speaking across* and *speaking through*: we speak to each other through speaking. While this looks at first glance like a circular banality, Bakhtin would remind us that in dialogue we encounter each other as integral and unrepeatable, as authentic persons (*per* + *sonare*, to sound through). We come to be in a colloquy, which may be as wordless as the brimming glance between parent and child and as worded as a sonnet. Somewhere between these two kinds of poem we teachers live among the children. Saussure says nothing about poetry, at least nothing outright. But he opens a road that can lead us back through our traditional ways of knowing, as they were established by Descartes and Locke (among many others), on our way to that bridge that Wittgenstein built between knowing and being together.

NOTES

1. In *A Brief History of Time.*
2. Donald Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," in Ernest LePore, ed. *Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 446.

3. Chapter 7 of *The Message in the Bottle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Noonday Press, 1975).
4. "...language is a system of pure values which are determined by nothing except the momentary arrangement of its terms." Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, C. Bally and A. Sechehaye, eds., trans. W. Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 80. Cf. "assembly of being" in Levinas (note 10 of Introduction); and cf. Kenneth Burke:

   > "...each thing [is] a set of interrelated terms all conspiring to round out their identity as participants in a common substance of meaning." (*A Rhetoric of Motives* [University of California Press, 1969], 22-3)

5. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, C. Bally and A. Sechehaye, eds., trans. W. Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) [henceforth *CLG*], 108.
6. Saussure, *CLG*, 110.
7. Saussure, *CLG*, 16.
8. Saussure, *CLG*, 159.
9. Saussure, *CLG*, 77, 68.
10. Saussure, *CLG*, 93, 86.
11. Saussure, *CLG*, 92.
12. Saussure, *CLG* 157.
13. See, for example, the story called "When a Teacher's Red Pen Can Liberate," in *Education Week*, March 31, 1993.
14. Saussure, *CLG*, 112.
15. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row Perennial Library, 1971), 123.
16. Hilary Lawson, *Reflexivity: the post-modern predicament* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 128.

2
CARTESIAN DOUBT

> What we call common sense—the body of widely accepted truths—is... a collection of dead metaphors. Truths are the skeletons which remain after the capacity to arouse the senses—to cause tingles—has been rubbed off by familiarity and long usage. After the scales are rubbed off a butterfly's wing, you have transparency, but not beauty—formal structure without sensuous content. Once the freshness wears off the metaphor, you have plain, literal, transparent language—the sort of language which is ascribed not to any particular person but to "common sense" or "reason" or "intuition," ideas so clear and distinct you can look right through them.
>
> —Richard Rorty[1]

> What Descartes wants is to acquire means of acting on the universe—in a word, means of giving orders to the world... [Descartes' audacity is] to recognize that what is intuitively evident... is a projection into the physical world of the structure of the self... This projection enables the will, subduing the difference between Self and World, joining World and Self.
>
> —Pierre-Alain Cahné[2]

Saussure's picture, as we sketched it in the last chapter, places social colloquy instead of rule-governed structure at the heart of language. If colloquy, sociality, are more powerful than the "setting" or "affective climate" in which teaching and learning occur, we teachers might benefit from inquiring into the colloquial wisdom of our times, as it informs our speaking and listening, our discourse in the area of education. If indeed we *come to be* in colloquy, as Bakhtin hints, contemporary educational dis-

course may work as much to shape as to comment on our practice. What skeletal truths are widely accepted in the common-sense colloquy that houses education?

In his day, at the beginning of modern times, Descartes proposed an inquiry into the ground of knowing, an inquiry that began by doubting the accepted truths—the formal structure, the dead metaphors—of then-current common sense. His purpose was to generate a new colloquy, a new language, almost to invent a new metaphor of knowledge, so as to enable human performance—to provide new forms for peoples' life and work. The magnitude of his success may be measured in the distance between the medicine man and the nuclear magnetic resonance imager, and also in the speed with which rain forest is obliterated. Of course, Descartes had progenitors, and it is not a linear succession of mutually exclusive positions with which we are concerned. But, starting with Descartes, we can begin to get a picture of the colloquy which, as it has developed over four centuries, still envelopes us today. We are re-reading Descartes, and re-reading him in a particular way, so as to *notice* that colloquy, to bring it up out of the background where in its simplicity and familiarity it is transparent.[3]

Let's say that what we are often doing in our teaching practice is looking *at* ideas. We present the Causes of the Civil War, or the terms used in criticizing fiction, or an example of a geometric proof. We may write the ideas on the blackboard, so as to create for the students a visual handle. We expect them perhaps to copy, surely to digest these ideas, relating them into a growing structure of information and skill. What we seldom pay attention to is the context of ideas *through* which we ourselves are looking. Where does our own common sense or "reason" or "intuition" come from?

Look first, then, at the title of Descartes' first published work:

Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking for Truth in the Sciences

Descartes' first word, "discourse," carries with it, by virtue of those semiological principles that Saussure propounded, a set of relationships between concepts. ("Concepts" is not quite the right word. For Saussure, like Wittgenstein after him, was speaking not about mental contents at all but about the interconnected *uses* of signs. He begins to let us hear the chorality of signification.) "Discourse" is a value in a cluster of values, a conventionally accepted constellation of meaning whose fullest exposition (in English at least) is to be found in the Oxford dictionary.[4] Bahktin would protest: "Meaning is not found in a dictionary but made in dialogic encounter!" I reply, somewhat lamely: Agreed, but the dictionary does give us hints about those constellations among which we have been living, charts to aid our navigation.

Used as a noun, then, "discourse" brings with it "reasoning, thought, ratiocination; the act of the understanding, by which it passes from premises to consequences"—this is Samuel Johnson's definition. In addition, Johnson says, the word brings "communication of thought by speech; mutual intercourse of language"; it is a kind of talk, conversation. Discourse, then, is heard as *rational communication*: the word links thought with human intercourse. And it links them into a hierarchical relationship: first comes thought; then comes language, the vehicle of thought, to carry thought across to others. (Two questions we might ask ourselves in passing: To what extent are we teachers of discourse, our professional lives focused on just this: transmission of thought or understanding through language? To what actions and interactions does the possibility of such transmission lead us?)

To continue: the word "method" brings with it a notion of orderly arrangement, of regular, systematic procedure organized according to a pre-established, stable, validated plan. A Method for Rightly Conducting the Reason is one that will lead and guide one of our distinct mental capacities so that it can be judged to be functioning in accordance with some standard, some criterion of rightness. It seeks for Truth, which, though it may be hidden, is to be arrived at by a rightly conducted reasoning process. This truth is then to be formulated in the Sciences: "A branch of study which is concerned either with a connected body of demonstrated truths or with observed facts systematically classified and more or less colligated by being brought under general laws, and which includes trustworthy methods for the discovery of new truth within its own domain."[5]

Notice in these interwoven strands of usage the desire to posit or develop a fixed, secure picture of the scene in which we humans live: to arrive at correct formulation. By the time Descartes was writing, a new formula was badly needed. The envelope around the human that had been sealed by Platonic metaphysics had been torn open. Astronomical observations had rent the heavens of medieval Christian theology. No longer could one base one's life on the old verities of faith that had tuned man and the cosmos alike to God. Speaking of "the sobering crisis in Occidental mentation" that attended Galileo's invention of the telescope and the "moment" when mathematical analysis exposed "the mechanical laws governing the universe," Joseph Campbell says: "At that moment, nature... became hard and fast and apart."[6] Aristotelian scholasticism, losing its linchpin of faith in a Prime Mover above the stars, faltered as there arose in the Renaissance a celebration of the powers of man, whose mind could discern and express in those laws the complex but apparently fixed structure of the natural world. Whether it was a moment or a trend that still gathers momentum, another contemporary thinker and humanist,

Huston Smith, identifies this phenomenon of adherence to structure as one of the controlling features of the Modern Mind: "the path to human fulfillment," as he describes it, "consists primarily in discovering these laws, utilizing them where this is possible and complying with them where it is not."[7] The universe is intelligible, but intelligible in a different way than before. Now we are not looking for divine guidance to shelter us from the flicks of an inscrutable divine hand; we are capable of figuring the laws of nature to ourselves, and thus required to figure them out. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, then, people's ways of seeing and being with the world they lived in had begun to alter, perhaps more radically than at any previous time in history.

Now it has become commonplace that when everything around you is falling apart, you have to fall back on yourself, to go beyond the failing common sense to wrest into place a new system. This, Descartes boldly attempts for his age. We need a new basis for rationality, science, selfhood, even for faith, he intuits, and since manifestly the God in whom we have trusted would not deceive His own handiwork, I shall try standing alone here with my thoughts to see what I can discover of truth unsupported by these bulwarks of received opinion.

The first principle of Descartes' method of philosophical inquiry seems straightforward enough. His strategy commits him to subject his every idea to careful conscious scrutiny,

> to receive nothing as true which I did not clearly recognize to be so: that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitation and prejudice in judgments, and to accept in them nothing more than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I could have no occasion to put it in doubt.[8]

Good innocuous fatherly advice, perhaps like something Polonius would say. Neither a borrower nor a lender nor a rash believer be. But what Descartes is doing here is proposing to flatten, in thought, the whole superstructure of rationality that Western culture had inherited, setting up a new standard for certifying belief. "I must once for all," he says, "and by a deliberate effort, rid myself of all those opinions to which I have hitherto given credence, starting entirely anew and building from the foundations up." Assuming the mantle of this pervasive doubt as his method of knowing surely, Descartes returns again and again to his questioning of the grounds of his own knowledge: "But what am I now to say that I am, now that I am supposing that there exists a very powerful, and if I may so speak, malignant being, who employs all his powers and skill in deceiving me?" (Though God would not deceive him, of course, the devil might.) From the platform of this rigorous supposition, he now casts

about for several alternative answers, looking for one that fits the "I" whose essence he is trying to discover. Dispensing first with sense perception (perceptions, after all, can be deceptive or illusory) and with anything pertaining to his "bodily nature"—the body, too, might be an illusion produced by a demon—he moves on to consider "attributes of the soul," and rejects these too, one by one, until he arrives at "thinking":

> Here I find what does belong to me: it alone cannot be separated from me. *I am, I exist.* This is certain. How often? As often as I think... I am therefore only a thinking thing, that is to say, a mind, an understanding or reason...

Here at last is the famous—and for the modern Western world picture, seminal—statement; it is an argument known among philosophers as *the cogito*: I am thinking, therefore I am. Descartes' line marks out "thinking" as the ground, the basis, of human being. In reading Descartes over again, then, we need to get a clearer picture of what he meant by thinking.

For what the solitary "I" of the *cogito* does, surveying the world from its subjective platform with the purpose of measuring, ordering, and reporting on the objective universe, is accumulate *knowledge* and *add it to a particular kind of storehouse.* Cartesian knowledge consists of well-defined bits of information in a pre-established structure of information. Such a structure allows and calls for a particular way of looking at, and looking for, the known. Descartes' program sets places, like place settings on a dinner table; it offers a replicable format consisting of spots for knife, fork, spoon, and glass. An instance of knowledge may be a knife or a fork, even a placemat; but it must appear as a recognizable element of the place setting. It is not that no new facts may be discovered. It is that new facts, *to be discovered,* must fit into the place settings already available. To seek knowledge, remember, is to rely on a "method for rightly conducting the reason and seeking after truth."[9] It is to be pulled toward closure, final say: knowledge is the *already invented wheel.*

Having posited a doubt that dissolves received opinion and accustomed thinking like rain dissolving wheel ruts in mud, Descartes now, after the *cogito,* provides for a kind of apprehension, of seeing/knowing, that sheds water. This granite, as it seems, is *clear and distinct perception,* and it comes to us primarily in the faculty Descartes calls intuition. I am made human, in Descartes' speaking, by my capacity for apprehending or intuiting clear and distinct ideas, "primary data," and reasoning deductively from them to conclusions. Thinking, that is, consists of two components, out of which, in my need for knowledge, I construct orders of ideas. Here is some of what he says about the first and main component, intuition:

> By intuition I understand, not the fluctuating testimony of the senses, nor the misleading judgment of a wrongly combining

> imagination, but the apprehension which the mind, pure and attentive, gives us so easily and so distinctly that we are thereby freed from all doubt as to what it is that we are apprehending. In other words, intuition is that non-dubious apprehension of a pure and attentive mind which is born in the sole light of reason... thus each of us can see by intuition that he exists, that he thinks, that the triangle is bounded by three lines only, the sphere by a single surface, and the like.[10]

There is a lot in this passage to be unpacked, a lot that bears on Descartes' picture not only of what it means to think and to know, but, behind these, of what it is to be human.

The first important thing about this kind of knowing is that it is not sense perception. The testimony of the senses "fluctuates" and is therefore unreliable. Let us examine, Descartes proposes, a piece of wax, for example, to see what we can know of it by way of the senses:

> this piece of wax has been but recently taken from the hive; it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey it contained; it still retains something of the odor of the flowers from which it was gathered; its color, its shape, its size, are manifest to us; it is hard, cold, easily handled, and when struck upon with the finger emits a sound.[11]

He tests the piece of wax with each of the five senses, not omitting the aural even though sound does not suggest itself as a key to knowing about wax, and concludes that everything which can assure us that we are getting to know a real body is present in this one. But then he brings the piece of wax closer to the fire near which he happens to be sitting, and describes the result:

> What remains of the taste exhales, the odor evaporates, the color changes, the shape is destroyed, its size increases, it becomes liquid, it becomes hot and can no longer be easily handled, and when struck upon emits no sound.

So much for the certainty of knowledge by sense perception. How can we even refer to the same wax in the two different conditions, since all the properties by which we knew it changed when its environment changed? Knowledge must not be based on sensation, even though we are impelled by habit to *speak as if* the deliverances of the senses gave direct knowledge.

Secondly, a related point: we are not to base a claim to certainty on any image or combination of images. Descartes is suspicious of images because a substance may take on any number of different attributes, as the wax can take on many different shapes, sizes, colors, and so on. In fact, a substance might take on infinitely many different shapes—and might

thus appear in as many different images. Since we cannot know all of these different images, we cannot be certain that we know the substance even when we know several of its images. We might "wrongly combine" those images we know into a composite idea of the substance. Images are no more trustworthy than opinions. Indeed, Descartes says that the sciences of his day, "composed as they are of the gradually accumulated opinions of many individuals," hit farther from the truth than "the simple reasoning that a man of common sense can quite naturally carry out respecting the things which come immediately before him." Thus Descartes dismisses received scholastic opinion in favor of a more direct and untutored apprehension. But we notice that, here at least, he leaves "common sense" unquestioned.

So if intuition, the first component of knowledge, is not sense perception for Descartes, and is not imagination, and is not opinion, what is it? It comes to us, Descartes says in that passage quoted on page 46, in an experience of clarity and distinctness, of "non-dubious apprehension," with a purity like that of deductive reason. Descartes speaks admiringly of the "easy and simple chains of reasoning" used in geometric proofs to proceed infallibly from what is given to a "remote" conclusion. He speculates that "all those things which can fall under the cognizance of men might very likely be mutually related in the same fashion,"[12] and speaks of the data of intuition as the "givens" to be linked into our picture of the world—our knowledge—by deductive steps like those in a geometrical proof.

> Many things are known with certainty, though not by themselves evident, but only as they are deduced from true and known primary data by a continuous and uninterrupted movement of thought in the perspicuous intuiting of the several items. This is how we are in a position to know that the last link in a long chain is connected with its first link...[13]

Here seems to be another manifestation of the line Descartes is drawing, a straight line from intuition to deduction, a line that challenges us to locate ourselves and our world in our thinking (as he has defined it), and then proposes ways of validating our thinking once and for all. And here too is another hint as to what "thinking" might be: it appears in those deductions from given data that spin out a chain at whose end is certain knowledge.

Never mind for the moment that it might be possible to draw another line—say, *amo ergo sum*, or *loquor ergo sum*. Descartes' position seemed to open the way for personal knowledge, grounded in clear and certain principles and represented in a coherent and unified system. Rational reflection could now proceed with new authority—indeed, a new kind of authority. We recognize immediately that Descartes is authorizing the individual to engage in scientific exploration of the world. I now have the

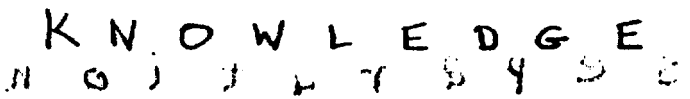
tools, the methodology to validate the results of my investigations. I seem to be standing firmly on the fixed ground of my own nature and contemplating nature's nature. If I look from here, immutable truths are discoverable and representable. Descartes had founded, as he had set out to do, a method for "establishing something firm and lasting in the Sciences."

Or, so we might presume his purpose to have been if we read him in a certain way; if we read, as I first did, only a translation of the content of Descartes' meditations in such a way that they conform with a particular view, one already given by a kind of philosophical/cultural atmosphere. Of course, who reads Descartes himself anymore, voluntarily at least? We all *know* what he said. In the restroom of the Blue Moon Diner there appears this entry: "I think I thought, therefore I might have been." Everybody knows *cogito ergo sum.* Only that is not what he said. That is what we hear our culture telling us that he said—our culture of abbreviations and acronyms. In fact, he abandoned the formulation "I think, therefore I am" after using it once, in the Discourse whose title is dissected above. In its place, in later work, he put a formulation in which his sense of himself as a thinking thing is not as strong as his intuition of himself as an existing thing. *Ego sum, ego existo,* he now says. *Je suis, j'existe.* Why would he have made such a change? What difference does it make in what he is trying to say? To answer this requires some traveling, some backtracking, and a lot more looking *at* ideas. And also some re-inventing.

It is nearly impossible for me to hear Descartes freshly now, but perhaps I can come closest to him if I read with a non-standard view in mind—not one that is simply far out, but one that seems as if its light might reveal a new contour in the topography of his thought. I don't think that reading Descartes as a Marxist, say, will be worth much. But I think I see evidence that reading him as a Saussurean might work. That is, I want to explore some of what he says with Saussure's idea of the network of linguistic "value" in the background. Of course, this is a flaming anachronism, and I make no claim about Descartes' foresightedness. I am exploring, not arguing. I am not out to get anything right, only to follow some leads to see if they open up any promising territory for teachers to explore. (Of course, if I do happen to get something right, I shall graciously concede this point.) If this dirt road leads out into a new clearing, so much the better.

To recapitulate: it seemed to Descartes, then, that "thinking" was bound to lead to and achieve its purpose in knowledge, adding more spokes, as it were, to the already invented wheel. But let us ask: is it therefore the main business of being human to discover and formulate knowledge? If it is, then what would be the main business of teachers and students? Would it be possible for us to have as our most basic interest the finding and maintaining of being-together, the welling-up of community?

Notice that in Descartes' paradigm what comes along with knowledge is the divorce of Subject from Object: on one side of the paper, knowledge; and on the other side, being-separate from the world and from each other. And as the letters on the knowledge side expand to fill more and more of our field of view, so do the letters on the being-separate side:



Thus the Cartesian *cogito*, and the settings it prescribes for knowledge, squeeze out of view the very experience of atonement (at-one-ment), of communion between man, God, and cosmos, which Descartes had sought to restore in his time. Re-reading Descartes, noticing the gulf between self and world in the background of the Western conversation for knowledge, and speculating on the possibilities of affiliation between his work and Saussure's, there may appear another possibility for the being of self and world: perhaps all of it is *articulation*. Perhaps together we speak world. Then it becomes possible to ask the question "Whom shall we be for each other?" and to think that we might have some say in that matter, not as independent individuals resolving to make a difference for others, but as listeners in and for encounter.

Let us return for a moment to the question of what "clear and distinct perception" is. Though, as Descartes said, it requires a "pure and attentive mind," the case is not that the attention is given to things so that we can see them without distortion. Rather, the attention of the mind *gives* clear and distinct perception, and the character of things *follows* from that. Descartes doesn't ask us to imagine a triangle and then to see that it is bounded by three sides only. Instead, he calls our view to the character of intuition itself: an experience of clarity and certainty like that which we get, in geometrical reasoning, from the links between well-defined quantities and entities. What gives us the intuition that a triangle has three sides? Well, that is pretty close to the definition of a triangle, isn't it—three sides, subtending three angles? What this is is a relationship between mutually defined elements. That is to say, *what we get in a Cartesian intuition is a Saussurean system of values*—sides defined by their relation to angles, and vice versa, and all defined in relation to the background against which the figure appears.

What springs to clarity in an intuition—this is Descartes speaking Saussurean now—is not a sudden and distinct sensory input, but rather a full-blown, all-or-none relationship between values. To intuit a triangle or a sphere is to apprehend a network of relationships between what we call lines and angles, or surfaces and, say, volumes. The pure attention of the mind in intuition, Descartes says, calls forth a crystallization that gives us clarity; it freezes the frame of our camera—indeed, it *gives* us a *camera*, a chamber in which to hold a set of relationships between elements. If you invented a word to characterize the working of intuition—the kind Descartes places at the heart of thinking and knowledge—it might be *cameropoetic*. The intuition that gives us sense data is poetic. It doesn't represent, it makes. And what it makes is articulation. Now, when we say we can "articulate" something, we usually mean we can say something that was already there to be said; "articulation" is often used in almost the same sense as "pronunciation." But in this Saussurean-Cartesian picture, articulation is rather the collocation of joints and parts, levers and screws and slots and bearings, that makes a working machine. Articulation is when jointed parts arise together. We know, then, by dwelling in articulation.

Now, I like this combination of Descartes with Saussure. I have no idea whether or not the statement of the connection is true—I haven't read enough Descartes, let alone studied enough seventeenth-century history, to assure me that this invented connection is not flatly contradicted by something else he says, or that what he meant by what I have read is really compatible with Saussure's perspective. I am ignoring for the moment a crucial difference in the two men's thought: Saussure's insistence on the social nature of language, even the social nurture of logic, is absent from the picture Descartes draws of himself, alone in his study, devising a new founding philosophy for the West in perfect solitude. But I think the connection of the two men's ideas might do some useful work, like the coupling of a blast furnace with a rolling mill.

Pursuing this working relationship, let us re-read Descartes' account of sense perception—that kind of knowing whose articulation of the world we take for granted—for now something shows up in the Cartesian account that did not on first reading. When I first encountered his argument, Descartes seemed to be saying that sense perception might not be reliable, but thinking could be, and that if you got your thinking into the right groove, you would not be deluded by the vagaries of sensation. After all, his announced purpose is to attain certain knowledge, and he says often that careful thinking can scotch the errors to which commonplace ideas are prone. It ought to be possible then to perceive truly, to know with certainty, what that elusive wax is.

But now read the following passage, asking yourself: is Descartes talking about perception as a seeing of the wax, or as an "intuition" of a system of values? The passage comes just after Descartes has demonstrated the unreliability of sensation as a source of knowledge. Is he talking about a looking out at something, or a looking into the very way we look? We are about to embark here on some close textual analysis of the trees in Descartes' forest, and while I do not intend to deconstruct the trees, I do intend for us to produce a clearing in which the character of the forest that surrounds us today may be more apparent. We look carefully at Descartes' trees *so as* to see our own forest. Remember the piece of wax:

> Now what is this wax which cannot be [adequately] apprehended save by the mind? Certainly the same that I see, touch, image, and in short, the very body that from the start I have been supposing it to be. And what has especially to be noted is that our [adequate] apprehension of it is not a seeing, nor a touching, nor an imaging, and has never been such, although it may formerly have seemed so, but is solely an inspection of the mind which may be imperfect and confused, as it formerly was, or clear and distinct, as it now is, according as my attention is directed less or more to the constituents composing the body.[14]

Confusing, is it not? He starts by affirming the very thing that he seemed to deny two paragraphs earlier, that sensation gives knowledge of objects: the wax is just what he had been seeing and touching, he says. But then he denies this once more, saying that [adequate] apprehension is not sense perception but "inspection of the mind." Does he mean that, as we first thought, you have to get your thinking straight before you can perceive adequately? So where does the criterion of adequacy come from? (And why those brackets around it?) What is Descartes saying about how we are to make our knowledge adequate? At the end of the passage he seems to focus again not on the wax but on the quality of mental attention, and states again that straight thinking is a matter of clear and distinct perception, clear intuition. And he categorically states that perception has *never* been concerned with sensation at all, but solely with "mental inspection." But then another about-face: the clarity of the mental attention depends on how closely we direct our attention *outward*, to the "constituents composing the body"! Descartes seems to want to have perception as a physical seeing of objects *and* a thinking, a mental intuiting. What a muddle.

But look. What we heard Descartes saying in his most famous dictum was, we found, at least in part an artifact of our current culturally given listening. The way we heard what he was saying came out of what we were listening for. Maybe now if we listen to him in his own language, we will be able to hear some nuance, some way of shading or coloring the

thought that will give us a clearer grasp of what he meant by that most crucial of all his concepts, thinking. Here, then, is the passage as it was translated into French by Descartes himself from the Latin in which he originally wrote it:

> Or quelle est cette cire, qui ne peut être conçue que par l'entendement ou l'esprit? Certes c'est la même que je vois, que je touche, que j'imagine, et la même que je connaissais dès le commencement. Mais ce qui est à remarquer, sa perception, *ou bien l'action par laquelle on l'aperçoit*, n'est point une vision, ni un attouchement, ni une imagination, et ne l'a jamais été, quoiqu'il le semblait auparavant, mais seulement une inspection de l'esprit, laquelle peut être imparfait et confuse, comme elle était auparavant, ou bien claire et distincte, comme elle est à present, selon que mon attention se porte plus ou moins aux choses qui sont en elle, et dont elle est composée.[15]

I hope you can read French yourself, or will check with your French department, because the difference between the original passage and the translation above is no mere matter of nuance or shading. Now that I am looking for evidence that Descartes was a Saussurean, I can see things in the French that are not even present in the English translation. The most obvious is the italicized phrase, which was *added* by Descartes in his French "second edition." The sentence, as Descartes rethought it, reads: "But what is to be noted is that the perception of the wax, *or better, the action by which one perceives it*, is not at all a seeing, nor a touching..." Why would he have added that phrase? What does it do?

We can reveal the answer, I think, by asking a similar question: why distinguish between what we call "typing at a keyboard" and what we call "the neural impulses by which typing is made possible"? What the extra phrase does here is to mark a distinction more clearly: between typing as a phenomenon in itself and a realm of explanation involving altogether different phenomena, different parameters. Descartes' added phrase distinguishes perception, taken as a process or a thing in itself, and perception as the *result* of an "action" of a wholly different kind. This distinction suggests that Descartes was not examining the "adequacy" of sense perception at all, but the difference between sense perception and something else. It opens up a whole new realm for the inquiry, just as Kepler's mathematics had opened up a new realm for the apprehension of bodies and movements in the universe. There is no mention of the notion of adequacy in the French passage; this seems to have been added by the English translator, for reasons of his own.

This cannot be happening, I hear myself saying. Surely the translator in the venerable Modern Library edition knew what he was doing better

than I do. I am an English teacher, not a philosophy major. Without special training I should not even be talking about this stuff. I might better let the experts teach me more before I go any further. Well, perhaps so, I admit, but I like the sense of being on the track of a discovery here, one that might lead me at least into a whole new forest, and maybe to a whole new realm of relatedness with my students. If this track leads into a briar patch, I'll just backtrack and start over again. But I wonder if I already know why the translator imported the notion of adequacy.

My reading of the passage does line up now with a subtlety of translation. The English version says that apprehension "is not a seeing, nor a touching..." But the sense of the French "ne... point," not *at all*, serves to emphasize the distinction between perception and that "action" which makes perception possible. Descartes himself seems to have been on the track of something other than the adequacy of perception, or even the adequacy of "apprehension" as the English has it. What is this "action by which one apprehends"? What realm is Descartes really investigating here? The English translation says that it is the realm of an "inspection of the mind." Indeed, it goes on to indicate that the mind's inspection can be either clear or confused, depending on the degree to which the attention is directed to "the constituents composing the body." Here, it seems, is another mistranslation. In the French, the referent of the pronoun designating the object of the narrator's attention is not "the body." The feminine pronoun "elle" could not refer to the masculine "morceau" (piece), or to some supposed implicit notion of body, for which the French word "corps" is also masculine. It might be taken to refer to "cette cire," which is feminine but occurs two sentences before. No, the word "laquelle" and the later repetitions of "elle" seem each to refer to the immediately preceding feminine noun "l'inspection." Descartes is *not* saying that the quality of his mental inspection depends on how closely he examines the composition of the piece of wax. What he is saying is that the clarity of his inspection depends on his focusing attention on the constituents of *the inspection itself*.[16] Descartes is not as interested in what composes the piece of wax as in the act of mind, the inspection—the looking *in*—through which the piece and its constituents come to be perceived. Now the word "inspection" begins to lose its flavor of dispassionate, leisurely examination, and to take on more the sense of a sudden act of mind—an "inglance." And what Descartes really meant by "thinking" begins to shift: now it seems that he was investigating not a phenomenon like a deduction, but one like *poiesis*. Now, by looking closely at the trees, we have come to see the whole forest in a different light—really, we have come out in a different forest altogether. The march of science has led to poetry.

After knocking politely if somewhat loudly on my office door, Dustin enters, marching. "Daddy, say 'Come here, Sheriff!'" he instructs me,

looking at the lighted computer screen and wondering if I will comply. This is the videotape cartoon of Robin Hood, which he has replayed sometimes twice or three times a day for weeks. As I realize what game Dustin is up to I notice that I have two reactions, like flashes of—well, of intuition. First, I find myself somewhat annoyed at the intrusion. "Do we *have* to go through this again?" I hear myself asking. "How could he get such a charge out of something he knows by heart? Surely he gets his charge rather from breaking into my solitary musings and making me pay attention to him instead. Dammit! How many times can this be cute?"

Such are the values that spring up full-blown in my immediate intuition, the first act of mind in which I apprehend Dustin's words and actions in one particular moment. Though I am also immediately aware that as an enlightened and energetic father I *shouldn't* be feeling this way, our sudden being-together calls up a gestalt, bearing with it intrusion, rote-rehearsal boredom: burden. On this inspection, this first glance into the matter at hand, Dustin's having learned something by heart *means* that it is a potential headache for me, and I put up with it for a while only because of his evident delight in having snagged my company.

Though he is immediately aware that as an enlightened and energetic father he shouldn't be feeling this way, Dustin's sudden entrance calls up a gestalt, bearing with it intrusion, rote-rehearsal boredom: burden. The child's having learned something by heart means that it is a potential headache for the parent, and he puts up with it for a while only because of the child's evident delight in having snagged his company.

These could serve as stage directions, couldn't they? For they tell me how I am to act. As a script, then, this meaning-system simply occurs, without leaving even a split second for my conscious evaluation of it. It is there, present not like a filter or a haze through which I be with Dustin: instead it is what *gives* the interaction between us. For I begin to speak, in words and body postures and facial expressions, in ways that accord with this initial and initiating feeling/thought/perception. I follow the stage directions. It is as if I am at that first moment living in a room of a certain decor, and having frozen it into a stage setting here, I can describe some of the constituents of the tableau. I am now going to focus my attention not on the constituents composing the *bodies* of my interaction with Dustin, but as Descartes recommends, on the constituents that compose, at that first moment, my *mental inspection* of the interaction. I am going to examine the decor of that stage setting.

Of these constituents of the decor, the most readily apparent are generalizations (such as "Why does he *always* have to interrupt?") and assertions (such as "I'll never get any work done at this rate!"). These generalizations and assertions are not spoken out loud, of course; and there are

many more corollaries to these, which are present to me and, as soon as he sees or hears me react, to Dustin as well, though he would be unable or unwilling to verbalize them. "I hate interruptions," he might hear me say underneath whatever I say, and "My time in front of this computer is valuable to me," and "I am doing something important, which I cannot continue with you around." He may hear also—though of course I wouldn't endorse it if it were spoken—a larger declaration behind these generalizations and assertions: "God, this child is a bother! Leave me alone!"

My interacting with Dustin begins, that is, in the context of a certain *conversation*, a set of speakings and listenings that, though not present in the way our bodies and the physical furnishings of the room are present, not physically spoken or heard, actually create the character of the space we inhabit together. An *intuition*, a *mental inspection*, is a *conversation*. Its constituents are other conversations, bits of conversations, speakings and listenings that give the space, so to speak, in which perception occurs. As for how it is that a speaking or listening can be present without a vocal "realization," I leave that as a question I cannot answer yet. It's like the question "How is it that gravity attracts?" or "How can gravity act, without a medium, through the void immensity of space?" I may be wrong, but I don't think there are answers to that yet, either.

Now, as I am reflecting on this recent incident with Dustin, and rereading the passages I've already quoted, together with other parts of the *Meditations* and of Descartes' other writings, I see more and more things that fit with the idea that Descartes' philosophical project was not to cast doubt on sense perception in order to correct it. Instead, he may have begun by exploring the possibility that perception is not finally a matter of the senses at all, but rather that it comes out of something like intuition, the matrix of thinking. Thinking has a maternal character. Perception is born from "thinking," though he seems to mean something different by "thinking" than what I would mean if I used it in the ordinary way. He is interested neither in "perceiving truly" nor in knowing with certainty what the wax is. He wants to know what *thinking* is. He is, in fact, looking into the very way we look. The attendant questions are: How does what is clear and distinct *come to be so*? What is this pure attention of the mind that works such wonders? Is it something we can turn on and off like a spotlight? How do we get to "non-dubious apprehension"? Or how does it get to us? What *is* that which is "born in the sole light of reason"?

So he proceeds as follows. Sense perception doesn't reveal the world to us; we are just bound by habit to *say* that it does. What we say is that we see the wax before us, "the very same which we see and touch," whenever anyone shows it to us. In the same way we may say that we see men passing in the street below our window, when what we are seeing is merely hats and coats moving against the familiar background. Why

couldn't those vestments conceal automatic machines, Descartes asks. "But I *judge* that they are truly men," he says, "and thus I understand, solely by the power of judging which resides in my mind, that which I had believed I had been seeing with my eyes."[17] We judge that the same wax persists through apparent changes in its physical appearance. We are always right about the men, and the fact that our judgment works—that the wax *can* be said to be conserved—masks the fact that we are relying in both cases on judgment, a mental act, an "inspection of the mind." The wax isn't waxing: *we* are.

In committing to the judgment "wax," we are not creating the actual physical item we call wax. We are activating, bringing into play, the system of terms—the vocabulary, the conversation—in which "wax" is a value. We find out more about wax—and about the world in which wax occurs—by using that vocabulary, dwelling in that conversation. To say that a paradigm directs scientific experiments and explorations is to say, not that a theory is "behind" whatever collection of facts we see, but that facts and theory and observations and experiments all fit together in a vast network of conversations. That network of conversations is a network of commitments we're making, bets that whatever we find next will fit into our already-devised network in certain ways.[18] Only the bets, the commitments, the judgments usually slip unnoticed into the background of our investigations, and of our being together. Indeed, they can function only *as* background. That is why science works, why it has such huge success in catching the flies it is out to catch.[19] But it is also why witches get burned at the stake, and it may be why our students fail and we burn out.

Descartes' wax, like Elm Street, is a customary position: a place in a system. It is, precisely, that which we are committed to calling "wax." To preserve our common-sense background notion that perception is a matter of the senses, and not of the judgments embodied in language, the modern English translation must import the notion of adequacy and the correlated supposition that Descartes is examining a "body." Here, at least if this translation gives any indication, the picture we current English-speakers may have of the Cartesian position doesn't seem to agree with his own.[20] Perhaps the modern translator does not see the trees in Descartes' wood because of the forest *we* live in.

Now I'm looking back on the last several pages and asking myself, "Why in the world would anybody care about Descartes' picture of the world? That's all very nice about the mistranslation, but it's a little recherché, don't you think? Surely the jobs most teachers have to do every day don't have much to do with an accurate picture of what Descartes was saying—let alone an admittedly hypothetical picture!" Squirming my

way upright in the chair, I clear my throat and begin: Yes, I have to agree: with the current state of my academic training in the background, my listening for what will wash as an argument, I can tell that my translation probably goes off on a track that Descartes, in the rest of his *oeuvre*, might end up repudiating. If I could win an argument with philosophers about Descartes and his role in the development of philosophy, I would probably be content to let it rest at having made a contribution to the accuracy of our knowledge of the past. That is not what I am committed to here, though, so I justify my intrusion by changing the context around what I am doing. I am at work here to call attention to the background of our being together, you and I. I am at work *on* the matter of background, not *in* a given background.

So you are invited to ask yourself how you are hearing this, reader. What gives you your picture of what is important in our jobs? What judgment is embodied in the language you use to frame your objection? By language I mean the set of mutually opposed values that give you your thinking—values such as "past" versus "present", or the content of what is read versus the interpretation of the content. What Descartes-Saussure is saying implies that the content of anything comes out of the interpretation we bring to it, and not *vice versa*—that content and interpretation depend on each other reciprocally. It also implies, though I haven't shown how yet, that the past grapples the present to itself like a backhoe scooping up soil from behind and swinging it around to the front. We think the present embraces the past and goes beyond it, continually bringing forth new things. What Descartes-Saussure is saying suggests that it is the other way around. The past embraces the present and brings forth versions of the past. What happens is what was always going to happen anyway, unless something like the telescope contributes to a shift in the structured judgments that ordinarily prevail.

But it is not that we need to understand Descartes in order to teach effectively. It is that inquiring into what it is to understand anything at all may open new possibilities in our being together with students *for* education. We can train them passably well without this kind of inquiry, and we should train ourselves to train them well. But to engage them in education is a different matter. That may require us to get beyond the pictures embodied in standard translations, to invent our material newly. When I started writing this book, I had Descartes as one of the founders of the conversation that inhibits education. It turns out what I had was a picture I made up from a standard translation of Descartes. Of course, I am making up my new picture, and of course it doesn't square perfectly with what we have always thought about Descartes' thought. But I bet that, given time and means of talking to philosophy professors, I could make it square with the tradition. I bet I could *add* to the tradition.

So what is the practical relevance of this re-vamping of our picture of Descartes' philosophy? Where does it impact real life? I think that is a legitimate question, and I hope I can answer it. Well, if not answer it, at least suggest a fruitful avenue for exploring the question, and at least a provisional answer. What? Sick of questions? You want a plain answer, by God?! Why? What if the answers, *as answers*, will get you stuck in one position? Don't you wish your students would make the bet that *they* could add something to the material they study, that they could come to own the tradition?

When we left Dustin, he had just interrupted a session of my writing, and I said I realized I had two reactions and described one of them. Now my other, almost simultaneous intuition. Where my initial annoyance had grown like a crystal in a supercooled solution from the seed of Dustin's arrival, this second intuition seems to depend for its virtue on something a little less automatic, more voluntary. The "second" intuition proceeds from two sources; and again, both of these are also conversations.

The first is an inquiry I have been maintaining for some time now, as Dustin grows and changes so fast, it is reliably frightening. I am always asking myself, a moment after I react to something he is saying or doing, "Now, what is really going on with Dustin here?" While posing this question to myself does not fully remove the annoyance of an interruption, or of some obnoxious behavior, it really does change the character of the space we share. Now I am looking and listening to him differently, and my way of being with him is given a new context. There is a slightly different tone in his voice now—so it seems to me, anyway—and my "interior" generalizations and assertions, while still present, are not as insistent or as all-encompassing as they were. It seems to me that I have gained a little room with this added conversation.

The other source of my "second intuition," in this particular case, was the conversation I am having with myself and with Descartes while I am writing this chapter, a conversation about the essential creativity of intuition, the contribution of our mental acts to what we call reality, the near-equivalence of "judgment" and invention. If that's so, then what does it imply about the "perception" I have as Dustin comes up the stairs to my office? It was my immediate judgment that his arrival spelled annoyance, burden. Could I have *invented* that? Or is it really annoying? Well, it surely *felt* like an annoyance—just as it feels like... no, it bloody well *is* an annoyance to have classroom walls so thin that the audio from classes next door disrupts whatever tiny bit of attention you have managed to generate for what you are doing in your own room. How do you invent your way around *that*?

Let's stay with Dustin for a while longer, for I think I may be able to make a transfer from my being with him to our being with students, even

in noisy classrooms. My "second intuition," I said, was more like an intention on my part: as if I reminded myself, after that rush of annoyance, of my ongoing inquiry "What is really going on with Dustin?" and then supplemented the new space that gave by tapping into the conversation I am making up for this book. So my second intuition came to me as something like this: "The kid that wants to play the same game over and over again really *loves* to reinvent the wheel. If I can tap into whatever that is, maybe I'd be able to teach, say, irregular verbs." Now I am "listening" to Dustin's presence in a radically new way. Now I hear him as making a real contribution to what I'm up to, and I'm alive to him, alert for that secret and willing now to play with him, to keep the interaction alive instead of killing it off. Now *I'm like*, "Oho!" instead of like, "Go away!" I use the colloquialism on purpose: *who I am* for Dustin in our encounter has shifted.

In the context given by this "second intuition," then, I have space to respond to Dustin's game more freely and flexibly. As the space of our being-together now occurs, I can see in it possibilities that were not available in that first instant. I could now propose a delay in complying with his request: "OK, Dus; just let me finish these two sentences." (This usually buys me a bit of time.) Notice that in the new space what Dustin says shows up not as an interruption but as a request, to which I can be open and which I can answer with a promise to respond later. Or I could propose an alternate game. This almost always works. For it allows me to shift the focus of attention, to "get his mind off" the recycled video and onto a fresher invention. *I* now have the space to re-own the conversation. In that space I am called to ask myself "What am *I* committed to now, for Dustin and for myself?" As it replaces the generalizations and assertions I began with, that question enables teaching. Now the Robin Hood game, the noisy classroom, has become a *resource* instead of an annoyance. (Or perhaps a resource as well as an annoyance.) It works now as a spur for a re-inventing in which the students can be my partners. As an intuition born in the sole light of articulation, it frees me to go to work with them.

For another experience of that birth, of re-inventing, let us return to the title of Descartes' seminal work, this time not to look at it but to *listen through it*:

Discourse on the Method for Rightly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking for Truth in the Sciences

What if instead he had written:

Dialogue about a Plan for Conducting an Inquiry to Discern the Articulations in which We Transact Reality

What picture of a world, and our jobs as students of it and in it, might be reflected or embodied in those words? What difference is there between a

discourse and a dialogue? What do the ideas of "discerning articulations" and "transacting reality" bring with them, contrasted with the idea of "seeking for truth"? You can record your speculations about this in the spaces that follow. It would be a good idea to look the words up, especially if you already know what they mean. And did you think of the possibility of sharing the exercise with a colleague? (Be sure to set up in the background of the exercise, of course, the question "How might what we are doing together here apply in our work with students?")

Dialogue:

Plan:

Conducting:

Inquiry:

Discern:

Articulations:

We:

Transact:

Reality:

If you worked through this revamped title, you may have seen that it gives a different conversation than Descartes' original. It conjures different associations, spawns different questions. (One of which might be "what *is* it that is conducting my reason here? Are the conjured associations produced by a *method*, or is it more like there is some automaticity at work?) But the title alone does not conjure associations. Only in your listening to the title, using it for something, will it yield its speaking. So if you did not

notice an altered conversation taking shape on the previous page, you are encouraged to change the title around as much as you like, looking up the words and asking always, "What conversation am I participating in now? What further speaking and listening could be entailed or suggested by the context this conversation gives?" And, with colleagues: "How do we feel about ourselves and our students while participating in this conversation? What possibilities does it open for us to make a difference with and for each other?"

What if Descartes' most basic intuition, his first principle, had been *amo ergo sum*? What would follow from that? What conversation would that found? There exist communities that take loving as the ground of being. Whatever we may feel about the doctrinal variants of Christianity, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" may work better as an ontology than as a commandment. "Love thy neighbor" is an *inquiry*: what world does its attendant conversation call us into? What about *loquor ergo sum*? How could speaking be the ground of being? I *speak*, therefore I am? Of course Descartes was not a Saussurean. But what if he had noticed something about human-being-in-the-world, something that, two and a half centuries later, Saussure revisited? If Descartes had read Saussure, what he might have meant by "I am thinking" is "I am speaking." And the purpose of Cartesian doubt would then have been to interrupt the easy and usually harmless assumption that words refer to things, supplanting it with the notion that the world is articulation.

The question posed here in Part One becomes, then: Are we articulate because we know, or do we know because we dwell within an articulation? Are we looking at the particulars of the world, the scales on the butterfly's wing, or are we looking right through a clear and distinct articulation of ideas? Whether we are looking through particulars to generals, or through generals to particulars, Cartesian doubt has opened, briefly, a window on the question *what is it to look through?* Wittgenstein will propose an answer:

> One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.
>
> What looks as if it *had* to exist is a part of the language.[21]

Perhaps to look through is to speak, to be engaged in language. What-we-call a Triangle is *what-we-call* Bounded By *what-we-call* Three *what-we-call* Sides.

There is one further point to be made in this regard. A system, a language founded in sociality, in being-together, makes not only facts possible. It makes *individuals* possible, too. Hence *je suis, j'existe* instead of *je pense, donc je suis. Ego sum, ego existo*, not *cogito ergo sum.* I speak, therefore I exist; and with "I" comes world. (When Helen Keller got "water,"

she got her *hand* wet in the bargain; and she got that *her* hand was wet.)[22] We are looking from Descartes here toward Saussure's insight. Descartes begins to say "I arise together with a world": *ego sum* is world arising. To know yourself *is* to know a set of things that are not you. You exist in distinction, *as* a distinct member of a system of distinctions.[23] We not only look through the system; we *are* in it. We *be* in it. Alone in his study, Descartes says "I judge." With his students in the classroom, Saussure says "we speak."

So now the final question of this chapter: What is the system, the articulation of values, you "be in" when you walk into the classroom each day? Another way to ask it: What pictures do you not notice in the background as you teach? For it may not be the system of values you know about and can manage, the one you design your life around, that has power to shape your experience and your being with students. Looking through the window, you say that you see men passing in the street; but do you see that really you are *judging* that they are men? What I hold as axiomatic is what may design *me*. Or rather, what I take for granted along with the axioms is what designs my life, my being, the practices and pursuits and goals that characterize me.

In his "On the Heavens," Aristotle states what he took to be axiomatic about the universe in which we live:

> The shape of the universe is necessarily spherical. For that is the shape which is most appropriate to what is primary by nature. The universe itself is what is encompassed within the extreme circumference, since we habitually say that the whole, or everything, is the universe.
>
> Let us say that something is heavy when it naturally moves to the center of the universe; and light when it naturally moves away from the center...

Easy as it is to see this as a piece of musty didacticism, not agreeing with scientific "discoveries" we have made since, we should also be able to see it as an articulation of values, a commitment to a system of terms. Its mode is "Let us say." It lays down a pattern to be shared. Thus the ancient system of four observable elements—earth, air, fire, water—was supplemented by a fifth value, the "ether," a value that has only in this century died out of our scientific conversation.

Richard Rorty warns of the "fallacy of seeing axioms where there are only shared habits, of viewing statements which summarize [shared] practices as if they reported constraints enforcing such practices."[24] What if the picture of rationality-as-representation, as it has developed since Descartes, is a constellation of myriad axioms and assumptions mutually

supporting each other—that reality hangs together in a structure of facts; that theories account for facts; that a comprehensive theory accounting for all the facts would solve all our problems; that subject and object, teacher and student, are different kinds of entity; that the social world is made up of individuals; that the individual as rational and moral agent should be the object of our attention; that this individual acts on the basis of knowledge (or sometimes of ignorance)... What if these were not truths about the world or constraints enforcing our teaching practices? What if the axioms of representation were seen as ways of summarizing how the world *shows up now, for us*, rather than ways of getting at the truth of how the world *is*? Perhaps if we look at them as parts of a language, if we hold them as a set of values supported not by the facts of nature alone but by our own agreement in concert with the facts, something will appear that could not appear when they were held as axioms. Particularly for teachers, it may be that viewing axioms as natural truths entails some cost. Descartes himself might have warned us against taking an axiom—for instance, that Aptitude times Motivation equals Achievement, or that Cognition and Affect are separable, or that there is such a thing as an LD or ED kid—for a solid piece of wax. Descartes would not deny that the designations "Learning Disabled" and "Emotionally Disturbed" apply to some independently constituted reality, some features of a perhaps neural organization. But as with the wax, he would notice that it is our commitment to the terms that keeps them in place. We may indeed have good reasons for our commitments, here as elsewhere in our vocabulary. But it does not follow that the designated states are any the less phenomena of judgment. The question Descartes' work may open for us is whether there might be some other terms, held in place by and in a somewhat different system, that might serve us better.

To explore further what is axiomatic for us, the frame that produces what is intuitively clear and distinct for us, we turn next to John Locke. Thomas Jefferson ranked Locke with Bacon and Newton as "the three greatest men that have ever lived without exception." As one of the intellectual fathers of our country, then, Locke has had much influence in the educational system we inherit.

NOTES

1. *Contingency, irony and solidarity*, 152.
2. *Un autre Descartes: Le philosophe et son langage* (Libraire philosophique J. VRIN, 1980), 159 (tr. auct.).

3. In section 129 of *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein notes:

> The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless *that* fact has at some time struck him.—And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful.

4. Of course, Descartes' thinking occurred (and his work was published) in French, but I will start with an English translation of his title and then use the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definitions of its terms. This will give us at least a first approximation of what the words in his title mean, and a preliminary sense of the grammar of his thinking. No one would suppose that a dictionary definition, even one from the magnificent Oxford dictionary, can pinpoint the precise sense of a word as it was intended by its author in a particular work at a singular moment in the development of the culture in which the work lived.
5. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2668.
6. In *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and as Religion* (New York: Harper and Row Perennial Library, 1988), 113.
7. Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, 7.
8. All quotations in this paragraph come from the first two of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *The European Philosophers from Descartes to Nietzsche*, M. C. Beardsley, ed. (New York: Random House Modern Library, 1960).
9. In "The Nature of Language," Heidegger speaks about this kind of method:

> In the sciences, not only is the theme drafted, called up by the method, it is also set up within the method and remains within the framework of the method, subordinated to it... Method holds all the coercive power of knowledge. (In *On the Way to Language*, trans. Hertz [Harper and Row, 1971], 74)

   I think Heidegger is wrong about the relation between method and science here—as Kuhn and others have shown, science depends on meticulous adherence to method partly to produce the surprises that lead to revolutions in scientific views. But in equating "method" with the "*coercive* power of knowledge" he is thinking of a way of using language characteristic not only of the sciences: the way of *representation*. It is this way of depending on language, this assumption about the work our language is doing for us, that makes it so difficult to achieve education.
10. *The European Philosophers*, 80. The translation of this passage from *Rules for the Guidance of Our Native Powers* is by Norman Kemp Smith.
11. *The European Philosophers*, 37.
12. *The European Philosophers*, 16; *Discours de la Méthode*, 21.
13. *The European Philosophers*, 80-1.
14. *The European Philosophers*, 38. The brackets are present in the passage as it appears.

15. *Œuvre philosophique de Descartes*, tome deuxième, ed. Ferdinand Aliquié (Paris: Éditions Garnies Frères, 1967), 426.

16. "Even in spontaneous perception, the faculty which posits the existence of external objects is judgment, and the condition or necessary ground of judging... is understanding. Thus 'the action *by which one perceives*' (the wax) is, even in sense perception, inspection by the mind. But, confused when is is spontaneous and immediate, this mental inspection itself becomes the object of a clear and distinct idea when it is analysed and arrives at consciousness of itself." (*Œuvre Philosophique*, 426, n. 4)

17. Second Meditation, my translation.

18. "After about 1630, for example, and particularly after the appearance of Descartes' immensely influential scientific writings, most physical scientists assumed that the universe was composed of microscopic corpuscles and that all natural phenomena could be explained in terms of corpuscular shape, size, motion, and interaction. That nest of commitments proved to be both metaphysical and methodological. As metaphysical, it told scientists what sorts of entities the universe did and did not contain: there was only shaped matter in motion. As methodological, it told them what ultimate laws and fundamental explanations must be like: laws must specify corpuscular motion and interaction, and explanation must reduce any given natural phenomenon to corpuscular action under these laws." (Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 41. See also ibid., "Postscript," section 2.)

19. Cf. Polanyi.

20. Here is another standard translation of the same passage, Cottingham's:

    But what is this wax which is perceived by the mind alone? It is of course the same wax which I see, which I touch, which I picture in my imagination, in short the same wax which I thought it to be from the start. And yet, and here is the point, the perception I have of it is a case not of vision or touch or imagination—nor has it ever been, despite previous appearances—but of purely mental scrutiny; and this can be imperfect and confused, as it was before, or clear and distinct as it is now, depending on how carefully I concentrate on what the wax consists in. (*René Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham [Cambridge University Press, 1986], 21.)

    The phrase that Descartes added—"or rather the act whereby it is perceived"—is placed in a footnote.

21. *Philosophical Investigations*, §50.

22. Merleau-Ponty speaks of "the system of Self-others-things [which] comes into being..." (*Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, and New York: The Humanities Press, 1962], 57).

23. Levinas speaks of a "saying" which has "a meaning prior to the truth it discloses, prior to the advent of the knowledge and information it communicates, free of everything said, a saying that infinitely, prevoluntarily, consents." This saying which consents to system, to an involvement in each other, he reads as "the *I* that breaks through in the *cogito* when all being is in shipwreck, but before the I is rescued into being, as though the shipwreck

had not taken place..." (Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: M. Nijhof, 1987), 147.)

24. In Rajchman and West, eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 9.

3
LOCKEAN CERTAINTY

> ...when things exist, they are what they are, this or that, absolutely or relatively, not by will or arbitrary command, but by the necessity of their own nature.
>
> —John Locke

> I have no doubt that our discoveries are "objective," simply because the styles of reasoning that we employ determine what counts as objectivity. My worry is that the very candidates for truth or falsehood have no existence independent of the styles of reasoning that settle what it is to be true or false in their domain.
>
> —Ian Hacking[1]

I take it that the first epigraph above expresses one of our bedrock assumptions. That a "thing" has a nature independent of what anyone says about it is so obvious a proposition that there seems no reason to state it. So clear an idea is this that we look right through it. As we have noticed in re-reading Descartes, though, looking through an accepted framework of ideas (or as Hacking puts it, using a given "style of reasoning") may actually produce the objects we see. It is not a question of distortion, but of creation; not that the window may obscure the sight—Locke would heartily agree to that—but that the window may *give* the sight. We fail to see (or to hear, really) Descartes' audacious insistence on the ordering of the world performed by our mental inspection, our *judging*. So it becomes a matter of some interest for us to explore what kind of power the window may exert.

After beginning a conversation that allows for some malleability by including the power of judgment in the design of reality, Descartes went

on to establish as one of his clear and distinct certainties that a material world exists separate from the mind. In Locke, that world hardens like coral removed from the sea, and man's contribution to the world he lives in withers into re-presentation: the copying and recombining of what is already designed. Where Cartesian doubt reveals a "judging" at the heart of things, and thus opens the way for the construction of certainty, Lockean empiricism closes off any possibility that the construction of certain knowledge out of perceptions might be drawn from the well of *inventing*, co-poiesis: the sociality of the human coming-in to a world.

As a master of inventing, Dustin will sometimes pull off a coup of being together. Tonight when I got home he invited me outside to watch him ride his bike. Pretty soon we were racing up and down the driveway, and up and down again, and again, making up different formats for the races as we went, each time trying to outdo the other in preposterous regulations:

"Yay, I win!" he began.

"No, you don't; the finish line is way up *here*!"

"Daddy, you can't go that fast."

"Oh no, my shoes won't roll," I puffed, "you have to drag me."

"When I say go," he responded brightly, "you give me a push..."

I wish I had thought of that one. Once when he had opened up a big lead on me, I turned around to go the other way and called back "Hey, the finish line is *this* way!" He thought that was outrageous. How can you judge a race if the finish line keeps shifting? he might have asked. I might respond: How do we know where the finish line is? Don't we get to *say* where it is? Do you *see* a place on the ground that *has* to be the finish line? Is it in the world, or in our speaking, which *is* our judging? I might have said all that, but I didn't. Dustin hasn't read Saussure, or Descartes, much less made the preposterous judgment that they belong together.

In his own time, of course, Descartes' conversation was not Saussurean, either. His thinking contains only that bare hint of what Saussure would develop into the founding sociality of language. By portraying him, in his Meditations, as a single isolated consciousness, alone in his study day after day or night, Descartes' conversation focused authority rather in the individual, in his thinking and in his representing to himself, in his thinking, the world outside himself. Look now at the way John Locke takes up this Cartesian conversation for the possibility of individual authority—the authority of the mind surrounded by objects but disengaged from them and from other minds—and remakes it into radical empiricism: a conversation in which the highest kind of thinking I can do, the most valorized

act, is to make my ideas "comformable to things as they exist." One does not contribute to reality; one pays tribute to it. In quoting several passages from Locke, I do not hope, of course, to give more than a partial summary of his philosophy, but I do hope to bring into bolder relief for us some of the contours of his thought. I want us to hear the tenor of his conversation with his time, and to ask how nearly these—conversation and cultural moment—are ours as well.

At the beginning of his colossal *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, then, Locke expresses his purpose in an Epistle to the Reader. He has set himself the task, he says, of "clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge." Philosophy, Locke says, is "nothing but the true knowledge of things."[2] How do we arrive at *that*, then? There is a series of questions here: What is knowledge for Locke? How does it qualify or fail to qualify as true knowledge? And, perhaps more easily overlooked but no less crucial: what are the *things* that we aim to get knowledge *of*?

To set the context for those questions, we may ask of Locke what this rubbish is which impedes philosophy's advance toward true knowledge. His answer is not tentative: it is "the learned but frivolous use of uncouth, affected, or unintelligible terms introduced into the sciences, and there made an art of," that ruins philosophy, making it "unfit or uncapable to be brought into well-bred company and polite conversation." It sounds as if there had been a kind of language used by "couth" philosophers that certified not only their breeding but the nearness to truth of their discourses! But I think that while Locke may be positioning his own discourse here so that it fits into the proper social circles, what he is most concerned to expose as false is not the social standing of contemporary discourse, but something about its way of meaning:

> Vague and insignificant forms of speech, and abuse of language, have so long passed for mysteries of science; and hard and misapplied words, with little or no meaning, have, by prescription, such a right to be mistaken for deep learning and height of speculation, that it will not be easy to persuade either those who speak or those who hear them, that they are but the covers of ignorance, and hindrance of true knowledge.[3]

Locke is on a high horse here, intending nothing less than "to break in upon the sanctuary of vanity and ignorance." But what kind of language does Locke approve? What does he certify as the true and valid use of words? What is it for a term to be meaningful? In one kind of conversation we have fallacious depth, vain speculation and ignorance: what kind will give us true knowledge? The answer to that should be of considerable interest to teachers.

To explore Locke's answer, we first need to find out what he says knowledge is, and where it comes from. Locke's most famous idea was the assertion that a person comes into the world without any knowledge whatever. A mind—for that is where knowledge is bound to reside—begins as a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*. If we come into the world with a blank chalkboard in our heads, what teacher writes on it, and what does the writing say?

> Let us suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer in one word, from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself.[4]

Notice that Locke is "putting a case" here: he begins with a *supposition*, continues with a question based on it, and then answers the question so that it accords with the supposition. He does not prove the initial assumed condition. *Tabula rasa* is simply the contrary of the doctrine of innate ideas, which Locke wants to demolish; he is building up a framework to support the opposite notion, to make it seem more plausible. But so far what we have are fairly bare assertions.

So our first and only teacher is experience. What is *experience*, then, and where does it come from? Locke sets up a clear and unambiguous categorization of the sources of the ideas that constitute experience: "All ideas come from sensation or reflection." Here is his first explanation of "sensation":

> First, our senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them... when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external objects convey into the mind what produces there those perceptions.[5]

What Locke is talking about here, in his elaboration of the framework supporting his initial supposition, is the notion of *clear and distinct ideas*, a notion that he has appropriated from Descartes. But there is a subtle difference between Descartes' notion and Locke's. Where for Descartes the intuition of clarity and distinctness entails a fundamental contribution, tacit and powerful, from the perceiver's "mental inspection," for Locke that implicit malleability is a source of confusion. To inspect, as Descartes had proposed, the fact of mental inspection, the contribution to what we see of the way we look, produces nothing but muddy water according to Locke; and in editions after the first he adjoins the following explanation, or admonition:

> *Clear and distinct ideas* are terms which, though familiar and frequent in men's mouths, I have reason to think everyone who uses does not perfectly understand. And possibly 'tis but here and there one who gives himself the trouble to consider them so far as to know what he himself or others precisely mean by them. I have therefore in most places chose to put *determinate* or *determined*, instead of clear and *distinct*...[6]

So what does that move accomplish for Locke? What is the difference between clear, distinct ideas and determinate ones? "Determinate" is used to mean "definitely bounded, limited, fixed so as not to vary."[7] "Determined" is used like the words "ended," "settled," "fixed," "decided," "resolved upon," "exactly defined." Locke's purpose here, it seems, is to fix into place, once and for all, the meanings of the words of our language—to arrive at stable, unfluctuating definitions—and accordingly to fix for all times and all speakers the precise characters of the objects to which words refer:

> [By *determinate* or *determined*] I mean some object in the mind, and consequently determined, i.e. such as it is there seen and perceived to be. This, I think, may fitly be called a determinate or determined idea when such as it is at any time objectively in the mind and so determined there, it is annexed, and without variation determined, to a name or articulate sound, which is to be steadily the sign of that very same object of the mind, or determinate idea.
>
> ...by *determined*, when applied to a complex idea, I mean such an one as consists of a determinate number of certain simple or less complex ideas, joined in such a proportion and situation as the mind has before its view, and sees in itself, when that idea is present in it or should be present in it, when a man gives a name to it. I say *should* be, because it is not everyone, nor perhaps anyone, who is so careful of his language as to use no word till he views in his mind the precise determined idea which he resolves to make it the sign of.[8]

In threading our way through the clauses here, we must be careful of Locke's philosophical vocabulary. An "object" in the mind means an *idea*, not a stone or a table, and all Locke's talk of objective determination really applies to the delimitation of ideas, not to the limits of real objects, things in the world. He is not in danger of claiming that when one speaks the word "table," a table falls out of the mouth. But true meaning, in the paradigm Locke is developing, resides only in "precise determined ideas" and precisely delimited definitions, steady recipes. Ideas are (or ought to be) like chemical compounds, elements joined invariably according to

precise proportions. Thus *knowledge*, in Locke's formulation, depends on and prescribes *representation. The mode of knowledge is representation*, correspondence of this particular "determinate" character.

Nor is the conversation about precise determination unattended with that certain *hauteur* we remarked in the first quoted passage—a warm disdain for careless ordinary usage. In Locke's speaking here, there is present a certain way of being, is there not? What kind of speaking would count as a failure to communicate? Dostoevsky's profanity, perhaps, or slang? In Locke's picture, could silence communicate?

What is it that precisely *determines* the content of an idea, and thus the meaning of a word in Locke's ideal language? At root, remember, the building blocks of ideas are sense impressions; we *receive* ideas into our minds by way of the senses. So what determines what he calls "simple ideas" is things in the world outside the mind, acting through impulses conveyed by the nerves to the brain, which Locke characterizes, in regal spatiality, as "the mind's presence-room." By the end of the thirty-three chapters in Book One of Locke's *Essay*, the vocabulary of Ideas as the Sense-images in the Mind of Objects outside has grown strong and plausible. (And there are still three Books to go.) Locke is here installing into our intellectual discourse the vocabulary of, and conversation for, referentiality. With its pervasive image and metaphor of knowledge as a kind of directed sight, Locke's vocabulary becomes the one in whose terms everything we know and do fits together.

To appreciate how durable this vocabulary and conversation have been, how resilient in the face of challenge, we have only to look at a newspaper, or an article on an issue in education:

> ...the research described here contributes to defining what it means, cognitively speaking, to be an educated person, or at least to define an educated person as one who thinks well... knowing is an ongoing *process* of evaluation, which the ever-present possibility of new evidence and new arguments leaves always uncompleted. Central to this process is reflection on one's own thinking—*metacognition* in its most basic and important sense—and beneath its surface is the structure of argument examined in this article. It is this structure that must be in place for someone to hold a reasoned belief or make a reasoned judgment, which we can think of as the building blocks of educated thinking.[9]

What the researcher is after, in the realm of the cognitions of an educated person, is a *definition*; the educational discourse into which this article fits has called for a recipe for combining *building-blocks*. For beneath the pro-

cess of thinking lurks the *structure* of argument, without which there can be no building blocks for educated thinking. As Locke had put it, "Knowledge and reasoning require precise determinate ideas."[10] And it is seen here to be in the nature of building blocks that they reside in "*one's own thinking*," the mental process of a single person. It is true that the very next section of the recent article is called "Thinking as a Social Activity," and recommends that thinking skills be taught in "argumentative dialogue," which "corrects individual thought." And in the sentence "knowing is an ongoing *process* of evaluation, which the ever-present possibility of new evidence and new arguments leaves always uncompleted," we find the intrusion of a vocabulary of social function into the vocabulary of structured knowledge. But the word "dialogue" is soon supplanted in the article by "discourse," and Descartes is back in his study, arriving at the correct formulations, the correct representational furniture, required by Locke.

In Locke's picture, notice now also that the mind has gained a third dimension along the way; it has become more like a box with slots for input than like a blank canvas. Somewhere in the *Essay* Locke probably acknowledges that he is far from speaking literally in formulating his pictures of how the mind works, that he is himself artfully using metaphors, figurative instead of representational language. Under the auspices of clearing away the rubbish, he is inventing pictures. And the picture of the mind as a factory, operating with its own internal machinery on raw materials supplied from outside, quickly comes to dominate the discussion, so that Locke's second great source of experience, reflection on the mind's own operations, itself looks like another input:

> Secondly, the other fountain, from which experience furnisheth the understanding with ideas, is the perception of the operations of our own minds within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got... which we, being conscious of, and observing in ourselves, do... receive into our understandings as distinct ideas, as we do from bodies affecting our senses.[11]

Locke makes explicit the pictured similarity between sense impressions and internal operations: "and though it be not sense as having nothing to do with external objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be called *internal sense*." When we say nowadays that "an idea came into my head," when we accept without even a first thought the input-output analogy between a mind and a computer, we are re-committing ourselves to this picture of the brain as a box, an enclosed room that receives data into itself like so many bytes. We have settled into a style of reasoning.

How much of the rest of our conversation nowadays arises from and reinforces just this picture? I have heard teachers say—in jest, of course, or maybe in frustration—that kids cannot get ideas through their thick skulls,

or that a child has a "Teflon-coated mind." In no case that I know of has that conversation made any difference in the student's performance in school. It seems rather to have cemented into place a picture of the student with just these attributes: it makes the attributes permanent.

What expressions have you heard and used in your own case? How do these expressions serve you? To what extent do we use them, and to what extent do they use us, channel our thinking about causes and cures? I do not intend this as a rhetorical question; the answers that matter are those that come out of our own examination of the teaching and learning situations we participate in. Derided though it may be, the idea of pouring knowledge in through a funnel may insinuate itself unnoticed into our colloquy and our practice. To the extent that our practice depends on our students hearing what we have to say, the unclogged funnel may be an apt image. To the extent that what we have to say, and how we say it, comes out of Locke's paradigm of knowledge, we may be shooting ourselves in the mouth. For it may be that the only way to pour in the "finish line," to bring it present in a classroom so that everyone can see it and dwell in its presence, is to invent it together. What would such a co-invention look like, then? Does a Lockean pedagogy allow for the sociality of inventing? Let us look further.

Having fixed the character and sources of knowledge into the system of his explication, so that we now have an elaborate vocabulary displaying what knowledge is and where it comes from, Locke expands the picture by, as he says, *observing* another fact about ideas "in" the mind. Once the "simple ideas" of sensation are stored, the mind has the power to "repeat, compare, and unite them, even to an almost infinite variety." It can build castles from its blocks. But it can neither fashion the blocks on its own, nor alter their shape:

> it is not in the power of the most exalted wit or enlarged understanding, by any quickness or variety of thought, to *invent* or *frame* one new simple idea in the mind, not taken in by the ways before mentioned... the dominion of man in this little world of his own understanding, being much-what the same as it is in the great world of visible things; wherein his power however managed by art and skill, reaches no farther than to compound and divide the materials that are made to his hand...[12]

Here again the dominant image of knowledge as sight, and here again the divorce between minds and things material. But the vocabulary of regal presence has shifted: man's dominion in matters of understanding, hence of knowledge, appears rather paltry now, like that of a prisoner in a cell, hardly dominion at all. And here is the treachery: humans are reduced in this way of speaking from architects to slab carriers, constrained in this

picture to re-presentation, the copying and combining of what is already designed. Lockean certainty, as it develops here, is opaque to the self, resolutely turned away from personal (that is, social) contribution, immune to the co-poiesis of meaning. In stark, brute facticity the elements of the world confront us. Outside perception and *before* perception, the elemental objects govern with an iron dominance. To know is to be informed.[13]

That we actually manufacture and destroy, nowadays, the chemical elements which make up matter, is not the point to be made to contrast Locke's picture, though that fact in itself might give us pause in assigning absolute primacy to any set of building blocks purportedly laid close to the foundation of knowledge. (We do not know exactly what's what; and my students, at least, are on to that.) Rather, the point is that whatever elements we take to be primary, indissoluble building blocks, all the way down to electrons, positrons and quarks, are values in a system. Their valueness is no less important than their objectness. (In my home town there is a restaurant whose name lights up with valueness, engaging it in the language of the city's commerce. It is called the Silvertron Café. The food is not bad, either.) In designating the things that we aim to get knowledge of, Locke has assigned ontological primacy to the objectness of objects, leaving out of the picture that "judging" which Descartes-Saussure glimpsed as the engagement of human beings that occurs in a system of values, a language.

Early in the spring a year or two ago, there had been a light dusting of snow during a cold snap, and as daylight faded from the overcast sky, I was wishing, as I had off and on during the winter, that our house contained a fireplace. Dustin, who had been playing outside as I puttered around, sometimes attending to his own interests and more often seeking to interest me in joining his play, suddenly announced: "I know, Daddy! Let's build a snow fire." And he began to gather the icy sticks and leaves that rumpled the surface of the snow-crusted yard, piling them up in a fairly well wrought model of the lean-to fire I had taught him about. But he hadn't remembered to put underneath them any "tinder," shavings or twigs that could be "lighted" with a "match." So I asked him how we'd get the fire to burn, since we didn't have any kerosene to pour on the sticks. "Don't worry," he said confidently, "I know how to handle fires like this." Locke might have smiled benignly at the childish imitation of knowledge.

Descartes, remembering his "knowledge" of men passing in the street, might have worn an expression somewhat more doubtful, as if the nature of Dustin's speaking might not be so plain. For its purpose had clearly been to include the two of us in a shared activity, the adventure of inventing snow fire. Dustin's speaking (as I heard it) had not been geared

to deal with objects in a real world: it was a declaration of possibility. Though Locke would never have wanted to squelch that childish spirit of declaration,[14] his grown-up philosophical position makes it rather difficult to sustain the kind of attention that Bakhtin sets at the heart even of literary study. ("The real object of study," Bakhtin says, "is the interrelation and interaction of spirits.") When I told Dustin, on one of his recent visits to my office, that I was writing about his snow fire, and recounted the story to him, he asked in wonderment: "But Daddy, how did it burn? You didn't get warm from it, did you? Did we really light it with a match?" In these questions about what things are by the necessity of their own nature, I heard him asking another question: What *is* Prometheus?

Over and over again, Locke reiterates that no one can ever "fashion in his understanding any simple idea not received in his senses from external objects, or by reflection from the operations of his own mind about them." Over and over he dismisses received opinion to the contrary as folly, and stands firmly on the ground of his own clear and systematic classification, appealing to his readers' observation of their own experience to certify its validity. The picture in the background is always the same: words represent internal ideas that represent external things. To select a passage almost at random:

> it may not be amiss to consider that though our words signify nothing but our ideas, yet being designed by them to signify things, the truth they contain when put into propositions will be only verbal, when they stand for ideas in the mind that have not an agreement with the reality of things.[15]

In light of Dustin's snow fire, we might say: that may be so, if one accepts the story about determinate ideas and their combinations, but this is not the whole story. In fact, its effect, like that of any vocabulary taken to be comprehensive, "final," is to hide other stories. We want to have an idea of the way fire really works, so that we can handle the real thing, but Locke's philosophical picture devalues the context of human being together that allows for our handling it. There is no *soobschenie* here, no becoming together. We are obliged to build real fires sometimes, but what are *we* building with them? Where is the originary fire located? Perhaps it is the being-together which handles fires, makes fires possible. Maybe the spirit of Prometheus is born here, in our being-together-for-something.

Locke's picture of knowledge and truth as representation, as "agreement with the reality of things," gives him decided opinions about the proper means toward "improvement of our knowledge." Under the rubric of improving our knowledge he is talking about what we would now refer to as research, but his thinking has clear implications for pedagogy

as well. Having in the background now Locke's picture of what knowledge is, and what makes it "true," we can ask what Locke means by "improvement" of knowledge.

In the chapter devoted specifically to that topic, he speaks of "building" our knowledge of a subject, of the "advancement" and "certainty of real knowledge," of "enlargement" of knowledge. We notice the directionality, the implied progress toward the goal of certainty, in the talk of improvement and advance; of sequence and cumulation in the talk of building and enlargement. Here Locke is using a vocabulary appropriate for one kind of improvement: that which comes from observations of and experiments on the physical universe.[16] While the *Essay* elsewhere distinguishes other kinds of knowledge and other kinds of improvement, Locke's overriding purpose, to establish clear and incontrovertible principles that will lead to true and certain knowledge, leads him to set up this kind—the empirical, experimental, "objective"—as the foundation and test of the others. At bottom, this kind is the touchstone of knowledge. Thus Locke shifts the conversation of his time away from reliance on what he calls "general maxims, precarious principles, and hypotheses laid down at pleasure"—away from that merely verbal rubbish that impedes philosophy's advance.

So according to Locke, the question for us teachers must be: what kind of language use, what kind of conversation, will lead toward true knowledge? How do we talk so as to communicate knowledge to our students? In all this conversation between Locke and his contemporaries which we have been overhearing, we have been led to valorize a language that works with two inter-related presuppositions in the background: 1) there is a natural distinction between subject and object, perceiver and perceived; 2) language is referentiality (words refer to ideas of things). From these a third follows: 3) our knowledge depends on accurately communicated information. Locke's whole system, as we have seen, assumes that sense experience involves two distinct terms: the mind inside, and the outside objects that affect it. "Simple ideas, as has been shown, are only to be got by those impressions objects themselves make on our minds, by the proper inlets appointed to each sort."[17] While Locke distinguishes several sorts of ideas other than the simple sense-impression, and acknowledges that most of these are "inventions and creatures of the understanding," his purpose in doing so is to reinforce the separation between words and ideas, whose "seat" is in the mind, and things outside it. The "inventions" of the understanding he calls "creatures": created objects with their own distinct identities, in analogy with the objective identities that make up the material world. An idea, especially a precisely determined idea, has the character of an identity, like the bead of an abacus. In this formulation, that is, this way of talking, Locke has focused

his attention and ours on "inventions"—things *already invented*—thus diverting our eye from the possibility of an ongoing activity of *inventing*. His language enables description and not play. In our interest in the relative motions and spins of the billiard balls, we forget to ask who made the game up, and where the pleasure in playing it comes from.

Interesting. Dividing subject from object has the effect of making everything, subjects included, into an object of one kind or another. The object-objects are *res extensa* and the subject-objects are *res cogitans*. We have extended things, objects whose boundaries are delimited in space, and we have mental or thinking things, whose boundaries are delimited... but rather than completing the partition, notice the dominant background, the whole of which the two kinds of things are parts: everything is delimited, everything is *res*. We don't live in a kingdom any more (much less a Kingdom with a dapple-dawn-drawn falcon for a Dauphin); we live in a thingdom.

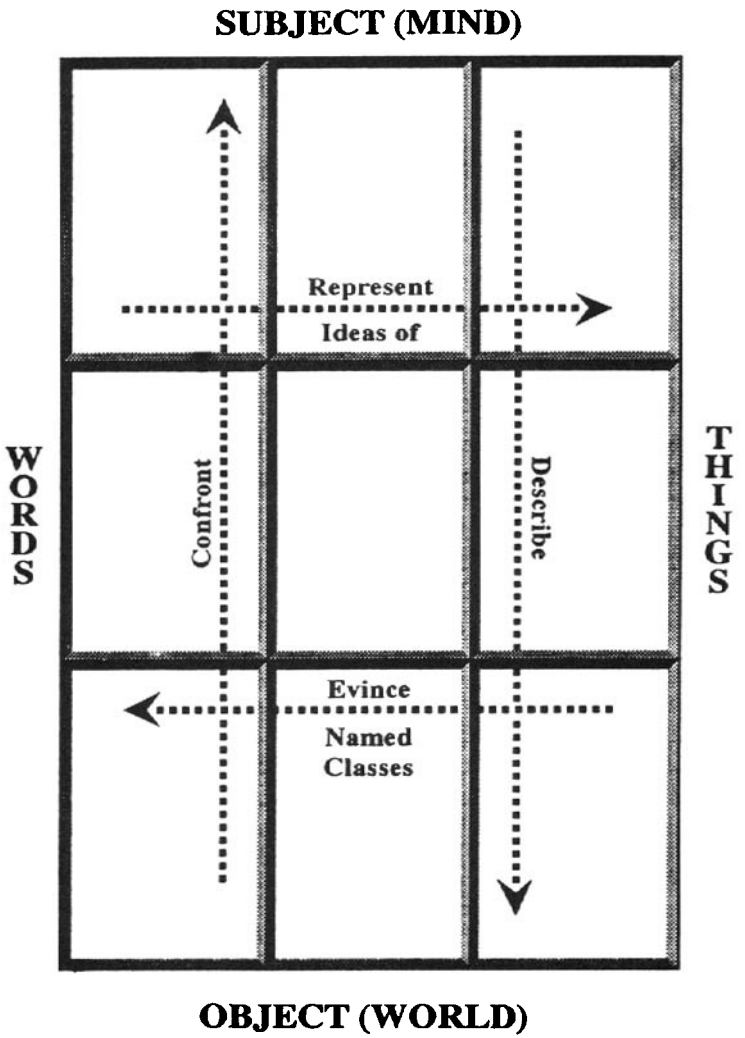
Looking at the "piece" of wax, Descartes had begun his conversation by raising the question whether subjects are really separated from objects. (Reading his early conversations with his reader, one might have asked "*Where* is this piece of wax?") Then, examining the action by which the wax is perceived, Descartes' way of talking draws our attention to *inventing, judging, inspecting* as ongoing actions (or better, ongoing *acting*) rather than already finished processes that have issued in completed products, the objects and ideas we deal with every day. This is a difference of enormous moment. For the opposite of "thing" is not "process." The opposite of thing, surprisingly, is *being*, or more exactly, *giving being*, inventing being. Processes are made up of things, A causing B causing C, D, and F. (Did *our* system, the alphabet, cause you to ask "What happened to E?") Inventing being is made up of nothing. It *gives* things, *gives* systems. These windows are, literally, worlds apart. Locke's window is epistemology. Descartes-Saussure's window opens into ontology. But we are ahead of ourselves here; we will look at ontology in Part Two.

Let us return then to the assumptions that make up Locke's window, the frame around which he traces. One member of the frame, one edge of the window, let's say, is the subject or mind; the edge opposite that is the object world. The other pair of edges that make up the frame come from the background assumption that words *refer to* or *correspond to* or *conform with* things as they exist in themselves. (Or rather, that they *should* so conform if our knowledge is to be as exact and complete as is possible for finite creatures.) Here again is Locke:

> Nature, in the production of things, makes several of them alike: there is nothing more obvious, especially in the races of animals, and all things propagated by seed. But yet I think we may say, *the*

> *sorting of them under names is the workmanship of the understanding, taking occasion, from the similitude it observes amongst them, to make abstract general ideas,* and set them up in the mind, with names annexed to them, as patterns or forms... to which as particular things existing are found to agree, so they come to be of that species, have that denomination, or are put into that *classis*.[18]

We might draw a picture of the frame that is present in this discourse; Locke is drawing it himself in this passage and countless others:



Objects confront men, and men try to describe them. Things produce ideas to which words are "annexed"; words relate to things by representing their ideas. Determinate things solicit the naming of classes, abstract general ideas, like a set of templates for sorting other already determined objects. This, of course, is a crude, first-approximation diagram of what gives Locke his vision. He refines it so skilfully that its presence is not noticed: he sees *through* it, and we see through it with him, not noticing that we are seeing through just *this* window.

What else is there to this window of Locke's? What is the color or tint of the panes, for instance? Locke strives, as his model of knowledge requires, to make them as clear and colorless as is humanly possible. But here is another hint. Man's acumen, weak and stunted compared with the Creator's omniscience, sets a limit on the adequacy of his perception, his invention of taxonomies, on the validity of his ranking of reality. Looking through this window, the purpose of invention is to serve *description*, which can be more or less accurate, more or less "conformable to things as they exist" in God's ultimately unfathomable creation. And here is a bind indeed. We are required to conform our knowledge to an ultimately unknowable fabric of substances and attributes. And then we are required to *speak as if* we had achieved an adequate description:

> For, though men may make what complex ideas they please, and give what names to them they please; yet, if they will be understood *when they speak of things really existing*, they must in some degree conform their ideas to the things they would speak of; or else men's language will be like that of Babel; and every man's words, being intelligible only to himself, would no longer serve to conversation and the ordinary affairs of life, if the ideas they stand for be not some way answering the common appearances and agreement of substances as they really exist.[19]

Doesn't this sound like just plain good common sense? Doesn't it resonate with our sense of how things are, what we have to do to get things accomplished, what our job as human beings is? It is not something one can disagree with.

But notice the window in the background. In the reference to Babel, the coloring of the panes shows up: they are tinted with the prideful insufficiency of man's understanding of the creation God made independently of us. "Here we see as through a glass darkly," Locke implies, and our speech, like our knowledge, "has so great a conformity with our sight"[20] that we can rely on nothing but clear communication to avoid failure. Here is the framework again: *Clear communication*, our stay against confusion and the antidote for pride, presumes and requires an absolute difference between *men* and *other "things really existing,"* and depends to-

tally on conformity between things, ideas, and words—on stable *reference.* And the coloring of the panes appears in that resignation to the limits of our human powers of perception and our aspiring axioms: "our faculties are not fitted to penetrate into the internal fabric and real essences of bodies," Locke concludes.

What are our faculties fitted for, then? Looking through Locke's window, how are we to proceed in improving or enlarging or advancing our knowledge and that of our students? Locke gives us two rules:

> The first is to get and settle in our minds determined ideas of those things whereof we have general or specific names.... And if they be specific ideas of substances, we should endeavor also to make them as complete as we can, whereby I mean, that we should put together as many simple ideas as, being constantly observed to co-exist, may perfectly determine the species; and each of those simple ideas which are the ingredients of our complex ones, should be clear and distinct [that is, determined] in our minds. For it being evident that our knowledge cannot exceed our ideas; as far as they are either imperfect, confused, or obscure, we cannot expect to have certain, perfect, or clear knowledge.[21]

And the second rule is to find out "those intermediate ideas, which may show us the agreement or repugnancy of other ideas, which cannot be immediately compared."[22] "O piling up of information!" Buber would say. "It, it, it!"[23]

I still remember my favorite project in the ninth grade. We were to pick out, somewhere on the school's hundred acres, one square meter of ground, which we would observe, as closely and regularly as we could, for the whole semester. Our observations were to culminate in a report on the contents of our square meter, a compendium of observed data, hypothesized relationships among the facts, and conclusions about the "nature" of our adopted territory. We had to get and settle in our minds determined ideas, and annex names to them—these were the facts we reported. We were looking for "steady signs." We had to look deep, using as many of our senses as we could to explore the phenomena, to amass data for correlation: we had to look for the constant co-existence of datum with datum. And the report was to be an interpretation of the data we had observed, a finding out or supplying of ideas "intermediate" between datum and datum. We had to show how phenomena on one side of our square meter were related to phenomena on the other side. John Locke assigned us that project.

To acquire knowledge, through Locke's window, is to set up a vast honeycomb, with rows and columns of cells into which information is

deposited for later recall. In this array, knowledge is built on prior knowledge; learning depends on prior learning.[24] Though the data that are ordered and correlated in the honeycomb are as various as the impressions entering at our senses, once it is coded into the honeycomb of our knowledge, it becomes just information like everything else. We can recall it, manipulate it, massage it and report it, but it is no longer *ours*. I said the square meter was my favorite project. Why did I get such a charge out of it? Was it because I was finally getting to be outside doing things, instead of sitting at a desk taking notes? But I enjoyed taking notes in other classes, though not in all classes. Was it because my friends were all assigned the same project, and we could call across the pond to each other? ("Oh, man, I found a *stump*!" "Hey, today the ground is wet—I wonder what *that* means?!") Perhaps it was because I had the opportunity to *invent the data*—I got to make up the facts about my territory and the relationships between them. My "observing" was inventing. I got an A+ on the report. How did I know that what I was *supposed* to be doing, even in a Lockean project, was inventing? How did they teach me that?

In fixing the identities of natural and human objects for human subjects to perceive and understand—in cementing the foundations of knowledge—Locke's picture, ratified and augmented by the ascendancy of science, had catalyzed not only the split between man and his world, but also a massive retreat from what might be seen as the responsibility of Adam: that naming of the world that symbolizes man's ever-original say in it. This last, now, is not obvious to us, because the picture we receive through Locke's window prevents us from recognizing the say we have in forming the world, populating it with forms.[25] We are always renewing our culture by speaking and listening in its terms—repeating and participating in its conversation. We are always responsible in committing ourselves by speaking as we do. When Heidegger says that "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture,"[26] he is pointing to the hegemony of representation that Locke so magisterially voiced. If we re-open the questions Locke has already answered so forcefully, we may open a way toward responsibility—having a say in the world—that does not ignore the facts, the rocks, or the rock stars, but re-establishes our intimacy with them. What is it to be with facts powerfully?

When Locke shifted the conversation of philosophy away from the authority of "first principles" toward skeptical observation and experiment—toward structured knowledge as the alpha and omega of consciousness—he undercut another possible way of looking, listening, and being, too: the way I'm calling inventing. Locke's purpose, especially as it was heard by Thomas Jefferson, was to empower the solidarity of free men. "The field of Knowledge," said Jefferson, "is the common property of mankind, and any discoveries we can make in it will be for the benefit

of yours and of every other nation, as well as our own."[27] I am not obliged to genuflect because of some first principle like the Divine Right of Kings. As a political position, this worked rather well. But as epistemology, Locke's writing cements into place a picture of individuals—objects and men and women—acting on each other in determinate ways, rather than generating the possibility of freedom in their encounter. Locke's picture is not wrong: like the old Brooklyn Bridge, its capacity to carry traffic has been exceeded. If a scientific hypothesis must not be made "at pleasure" (which means at random), is it so also for, say, a *declaration* of truth? Do "things" govern the truth of declarations? Do facts in the objective world limit possibilities, constraining invention? Or is inventing the vehicle of engagement, of being together? Can we *be* only when we be together coming into a world?

When you *tell* your child things about the world, when you impart knowledge to him, what happens? Does he use it as information, or as material for inventing, for play? Or does he avoid or ignore information presented as information? Last fall, my son had been playing in a tarp full of leaves that had been left in the middle of the yard. It was a ship for him, and he had been sailing the sea of grass, master of his career through the deep. Because I had had to empty the tarp to get another load of leaves, I was faced with the opportunity to make another ship for him. Filling the tarp with leaves, I dragged one end up onto a small tree stump, so that it looked tolerably like a ship's prow. But now the question arose: how will I present this construction to the child? If I tell him, "See, the bow is riding over a big wave," how he takes this and what he does with it will come out of the way I am being when I say it. If I say it as an already rehearsed line, he may get my saying as acting, and decide either to participate in the play or not. But if I *invent* the line newly, at the precise moment in our dialogue when he needs it or can use it—then he may get my saying as his homeland, and the ship will live again. What is it to invent *together*?—for I need his homeland as the listening into which I may speak. How do he and I both know that what we are supposed to be doing, even amidst the brute facticity, the heavy mass of those millions of leaves, is inventing? How does Prometheus pull off the theft?

NOTES

1. In J. Rajchman and C. West, eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 146.
2. "Thomas Sprat tells us that the Royal Society (the formal organization of scientists in London, given a royal charter in 1662, to which Locke was elected in 1668) believed that 'the true Philosophy must be first of all begun, on a scrupulous, and severe examination of particulars.' Sprat warns against

letting general theories turn into metaphysical systems unchecked by reference to things themselves. Sprat (with some reservations) spoke for the scientists of the Royal Society. Locke was one of them, strongly in agreement with the methods and attitudes of its members." (John W. Yolton, *John Locke and Education* [New York: Random House, 1971], 8.) It is the examination of particulars which frees men from the preconceptions, about themselves as well as about nature, embodied in "vague and insignificant forms of speech." That a person was born with ideas already installed—especially such ideas as attributed to him in scholastic disputations—such an assumption was to be swept away with the cobwebs.

3. From the Epistle to the Reader prefixed to the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in Edwin A. Burt, ed., *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill* (New York: Modern Library, 1939, 1967), 242.
4. *Essay*, II.i.1.
5. *Essay*, II.i.3.
6. *The English Philosophers*, 242.
7. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 268.
8. *The English Philosophers*, 242 and 243.
9. Deanna Kuhn, "Thinking as Argument," in *Harvard Educational Review* (vol. 62 no. 2, summer 1992), 173-4.
10. *Essay*, III.x.22.
11. *Essay*, II.i.4.
12. *Essay*, II.ii.2.
13. This is an oversimplification of the position of the *Essay*, if not an exaggeration of its emphasis. See John W. Yolton, *John Locke and Education* (New York: Random House, 1971), chapter 3, 53 ff.
14. For Locke's genial, caring generosity toward children, see his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, written as letters to a friend between 1684 and 1691, and compiled for publication in 1693.
15. *Essay*, IV.v.8.
16. This is pre-Kuhn. Locke does not get that even experiments are paradigm-determined.
17. *Essay*, III.iv.11.
18. *Essay*, III.iii.13.
19. *Essay*, III.vi.28.
20. *Essay*, IV.xiii.1.
21. *Essay*, IV.xii.14.
22. *Essay*, IV.xii.14.
23. *I and Thou*, trans. Kaufman (New York: Simon & Schuster Touchstone), 56.
24. See E. D. Hirsch, "The Primal Scene of Education," *New York Review of Books*, March 2, 1989.

25. Locke himself recognized that men have the original say, perform the invention that gives them a world, a system to live in. (See Book III, chapter vi, especially paragraphs 36 forward.) But his eye is always turned toward the *adequacy* of the invention: its conformity with the "particular things" made by Nature.
26. In *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 134.
27. Thomas Jefferson to Henry Dearborn, 1807.

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4

WITTGENSTEIN'S INQUIRY INTO STRUCTURE

> We persist in breaking reality down somehow into a multiplicity of identifiable and discriminable objects... We talk so inveterately of objects that to say we do so seems almost to say nothing at all; for how else is there to talk?
>
> —W.V.O. Quine[1]

> But is there then no objective truth? Isn't it true, or false, that someone has been on the moon? If we are thinking within our system, then it is certain that no-one has ever been on the moon. Not merely is nothing of the sort ever reported to us by reasonable people, but our whole system of physics forbids us to believe it. For this demands answers to the questions "How did he overcome the force of gravity?" "How could he live without an atmosphere?" and a thousand others which could not be answered.
>
> —L. Wittgenstein[2]

We have now looked through the window of representation, and have seen it as a window, on our way to developing our vocabulary of inventing into a powerful context for education. We have begun to distinguish between the window of representation, with its associated presuppositions about the structure of reality, and another window, which I have been looking through in moments of communion with Dustin and at other times. I have been talking about it as a window of inventing, or of *giving being*. If Davidson is right (in the epigraph to Chapter 1) that there is no such thing as a structured referential language to match a structured reality, then what are we teachers doing? Here is Wittgenstein's bridge:

what we are doing, he suggests, is *languaging*, engaging with each other in language-games, that is, in "forms of life." "Languaging" is our activity in the realm of systems of values, semiological systems. Languaging is *our* activity—essentially social, arising out of and residing in our being together. What we ordinarily mean by "language"—grammar, syntax, lexicon—is the residue of languaging. The question of this chapter is: what is it to mean something by a word? What is there about *languaging* that is different from "using language," or just plain "talking about something"? We are working on bringing about an extraordinary result: that we look through the window of inventing being with our students even as we look at what we call objects in the structure of reality.

What is an object, for my four-year-old? On occasion, when we arrive at suppertime, our distinct paths of activity will have converged at the dinner table and, having caught the drift of this convergence a moment before, I will take matches out of the buffet drawer to light the candles, perhaps wistfully reminded of the days when, as a small child in my parents home, I would hear mother announce: "Light the candles and gather 'round!" On this occasion at our house, Dustin will say "Let me match the candles, Daddy!" Using "match" as both noun and verb, he infuses the name of the object/action with exuberant fascination. Once, when after supper he had duly snuffed the candles with an implement hardly less radiant in his eyes than the match, we told him that it was his chance to have a cookie, he replied: "And now it's my chance to wash the dishes!" Perhaps his mother simply failed to teach him that doing the dishes is a chore. No doubt he will learn that soon enough. Or perhaps, in his harvest of the ever-new "objects" of awareness that present themselves every day, he has not yet learned to adapt himself to the language-game in whose terms dirty dishes mean chore. For him, in good moods at least, it seems that the language is a form of exuberance, its values to be appropriated and played like drums or flutes. Sometimes we get to see that an object, for him, is a chance, an opportunity.

Before we begin to listen our way through Wittgenstein's inquiry into our adult ways of using language—"processing," we cybernauts might call it—let us return briefly to the pedagogical import. For Wittgenstein, even in the midst of what he calls "doing philosophy," brings us face to face with the possibility of applying it—of doing real life. Wittgenstein's talk of space flight is obviously dated, but this contributes to rather than diminishes its resonance for today's teachers. For, considering "objective truth" in the context of a moon visit, he proposes an example of everyday interaction with children.

> Suppose some adult had told a child that he had been on the moon. The child tells me the story, and I say it was only a joke, the man hadn't been on the moon; no one has ever been on the

> moon; the moon is a long way off and it is impossible to climb up there or fly there.—If now the child insists, saying perhaps there is a way of getting there which I don't know, etc., what reply could I make to him? What reply could I make to the adults of a tribe who believe that people sometimes go to the moon (perhaps that is how they interpret their dreams), and who indeed grant that there are no ordinary means of climbing up to it or flying there?—But a child will not ordinarily stick to such a belief and will soon be convinced by what we tell him seriously.[3]

Isn't this a familiar scenario? Don't students often seem to be members of a tribe with a different mythos than ours? Aren't we in the position, always, of trying to get students to latch onto our stories of the way things are, to buy into our interpretations, our myths? To be sure, if the gentle subtleties of shared mythos fail, we resort to sterner persuasions. But why study anything—why teach it?—unless the study fits, serves to support a system of world in which the student, because of his study and our teaching, owns membership? Are they ordinarily convinced by what we tell them seriously? Are they convinced by the objective reality of it, or by something in the way we tell it? What is it to tell them "seriously"? What could keep the child, or the tribesman, stubborn in his contrary story? What in our being together would let him be convinced by ours? With these questions in the background, we return to the philosophical story.

True to the problem implied by Descartes' disjunction of mental and physical, Wittgenstein's first major work (his dissertation, in fact), weightily titled *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, sets out to represent the foundations on which language can give an accurate account of reality. The axle of his thinking here is the copy theory of language, the notion that what words and propositions do is to compose a picture that corresponds exactly with objects and events outside language and outside the self—a picture that mirrors them perfectly. Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* was trying like Descartes to "see the world aright"; like Locke, to see it steadily and see it whole. In this early view, the world has a stable structure, and the goal of philosophy is to discover and then describe it. The project of the *Tractatus*, then, is to discover the structure of propositions that must correspond to the structure of things in the world. At the outset, Wittgenstein announces: "The general form of propositions is: 'This is how things are.'" Once we *see* the way of *things*, that is, we can utter statements that *express* that way of things, definitively.

Having written the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein spent six years teaching elementary school in small towns in the Austrian hills. While he found some success with the more able of his pupils, these were not, on the whole, good years for Wittgenstein. It appeared that he had set his sights impossibly high for the cultural milieu in which he was teaching. Now,

post hoc is not *propter hoc*. But it was after his experience of teaching living students that his way of looking at the phenomena shifted away from that undergirding concern with fixed *structure*. In his next work, *Philosophical Investigations*, regarded by many philosophers (and a few educators) as the most important work of contemporary philosophy, he used the views in the *Tractatus* like rungs of a ladder on which he could climb up over a high wall to see into a new country. And this meant getting out from behind an old way of speaking. As historian of philosophy James Edwards puts it:

> In Wittgenstein's [later] view, the sort of comprehensive understanding aimed at by philosophy takes a particular form and has a particular (usually hidden) motivation. Its form is *theoretical representation*. For the philosopher, to understand is to be able to depict metaphysically. It is to be able to fix the "object" of one's understanding in some medium of abstract and impersonal representation. It is to be able to *say* what that "object" truly *is*...[4]

In using the method of metaphysical representation, Wittgenstein had been hoping, like Descartes, to "see the world aright,"[5] to assume the position of an independent, isolated consciousness, surveying the world from its study and issuing reliable reports. Like Locke, he had been swept up in the attempt to discover the way of things, to find out by experiment how their simple determinate constituents fit together in a complex world designed by God before we got to it. He had been held captive, he noticed, by a particular view: that there *are* true pictures of reality. That is, he had assumed as basic a particular sort of relation between saying and being: a relation named *representation*, with its associated picture of the world as made up of structures of objects and corresponding structures of ideas. A fact is a correspondence of structures. No one had been on the moon, and the impossibility of space travel seemed equally factual, as firmly ensconced in the structure of reality as the current fact that space flight is not only possible but routine. The point is this: the particular view of reality is ensconced in a *vocabulary*. When we talk of "*saying what an object truly is*," no less than when we talk of space travel within our particular historical situatedness, we are, willy-nilly, swimming in a sea of interrelated assumptions and propositions and conclusions.

It is not only that a proposition false at an earlier time may become true at a later time, or that discoveries and advances do in fact occur. Of course that is so, and it leaves intact the presumption that there is a structured objective reality to which our ideas must conform. But what Wittgenstein had noticed is that it is not just an imputed structure of reality that has power in our thinking and belief. The function of our language systems, the ways we talk—what he calls our "language-games"—also have power to determine what *appears as real* for us. "Phi-

losophy," he now says, "is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language."[6] Between reality and the judgments wrought into the weave of our language the relationship is more like mutual conditioning than like one-way determination.

This point will bear some elucidation. For that one-way relationship, from structured object to approximative representation, is still part of our inherited cultural system; it is natural and unremarkable for us to think in its terms. Because we remain, at least in our intellectual work, children of the Enlightenment, thinking in terms of object and representation is just plain common sense, like breathing. Observer, object observed, and description go together like lungs, air, and diaphragm. Thus, to the extent that our presumptive vocabulary is Lockean, our talk breaks reality down into subjects, objects, and descriptions (or builds it up from these components); and we adapt everything we hear or see or notice to the pattern of that way of talking which embodies our common sense. Having begun already to listen to our breathing, in what follows we shall continue to bring it up out of the background, where it is inaudible, so we can be aware of it. You will have noticed that I am shifting gradually from a visual to an aural metaphor, from talk of pictures to talk of listening (and even to think of the analogous plural, listenings: if ways of seeing give us pictures, surely ways of listening may influence our awareness). My word "elucidation" above, of course, is picture talk; and we are still "looking at" philosophical ideas. But now, alert for the faint rustling of a vocabulary that may enable a new way of being with students, like an animal sensing danger or prey, we have begun to hear the way our being might be attuned to a possibility.

(At first I wrote this last sentence as follows: "But now, like the Victrola dog, we have begun to hear the way our being might be mastered by an idea, our vision of possibilities limited by our reasonable systems of physics." What is the difference between these two versions? Where does each leave you? Does it matter which version I speak?)

So first to the common-sense "view," the picture called representation. For something to be *re*-presented, to be made available again as certain, factual, objective truth, it has to persist in some way, to have the same appearance in later encounters as in earlier ones. It has to be a single, recognizable thing, re-cognizable from one moment to the next. This is what it is to have a structure. "Objects consist in having been," Buber says.[7] The dictionary says structure is "the mutual relation of the constituent parts or elements of a whole as determining its peculiar nature or character." So the vocabulary of structure fits with and interarticulates the vocabulary of "nature," "character," "essence." Things, as objects, have essences. To that structure-talk we might add more: that which has structure is that which exhibits a peculiar nature or character *at every inspection*. A struc-

ture is a relationship between parts comprising a whole, *and to re-present a structure is to affirm the unchangingness of this relationship.* Thinking back to Locke, we might reflect: *A structure is the hand that fits the glove of one of Locke's determined or determinate ideas.* It is almost the definition of structure that you can represent it, present it *again*, present *it* again.

Talking of structure, dwelling in representation, we may say that a carburetor joins fuel jets, a venturi barrel, a float bowl for the fuel, and whatever else a carburetor needs to work. We may also say that a student has this or that characteristic, that his personality, or perhaps his actions, are so structured: we can predict that they will behave in this or that way, perceive things in this or that way. "All that kid wants to do is party!" We try to discover his or her attributes, those perduring qualities that make him who he is and cause him to behave as he does. "I see two possibilities: either she's very stupid or she's not doing any work." Or there may be apparently obvious reasons for a lapse of effort: "She's always with the bad kids, smoking like a steam engine—she hangs out with the wrong crowd." It may come to look as if a student has parts like a carburetor. He has a particular learning style, we may say, or perhaps a learning disability, or an overwhelming susceptibility to peer pressure. A venturi is an essential part of the structure of a carburetor; ineffective work in school is an inevitable consequence of laziness; laziness is like a learning disability. So we say. Only it is easier to fix a carburetor.

As you may have guessed, I am an amateur mechanic. Like Dustin, I love to take things apart and find out how they work. Unlike him, if I can't figure something out, I am totally stopped, stumped. What *he* does when he doesn't know what's what—which is much of the time, of course; he's five years old—is to invent a game to play. He never wastes time being stumped. He's busy inventing structures of meaning, inventing facts, building flashlights and catapults and anything. It may sound like he is merely oblivious to reality—sometimes, exasperatingly, he is—but most of the time, in the midst of his inventing, he is splendidly alert, on the lookout for the real design, the way things really do work. Tonight he was going to make a little fire in the yard out of leaves and sticks, in order, he said, to burn up the aluminum cans we had collected in our recycling box under the kitchen table. He had patiently fished the cans out, separating them from the bottles and loading them into a plastic bag to carry them all out to the visionary fire. When I informed him the cans wouldn't burn, he replied, cheerily and plaintively at the same time: "I'm just gonna *try* it!" At that moment, what I heard him saying was: "I know you're probably right, Dad; but here I've designed this experiment, and done some work to bring it off, and I've got my sights set on doing it now, and won't you please let me?" Was it important at that moment that I already knew cans wouldn't burn? I was my adult self, appraising and appreciating his

childlike enthusiasm, *and I was with him*, sharing his spirit, his alertness, his adventure. We had become together in his re-inventing of the world.

For adults in the culture of representation, you could say that structure is a *tool*; it saves effort. Because I know that, in the structure of "things as they exist," cans are not combustible, I don't have to find out every time whether cans will burn. (But then, I don't *get* to find out every time, either.) Or you could say that representation and structure presuppose each other, or that the terminology of structure fits together with our inclination toward representation, that they work in tandem, like a horse and plow. That is to say that one of the furrows we find opened to us in the culture of representation is investigating and specifying ever more precisely the structure of things. And this is to say that one of the ways we are given for dealing with our students makes salient for us a particular concern, prescribes one predominant job: we are to reveal and report on structure as the overriding concern of being together. The structure of their present knowledge, the structure of the lesson plans that must fit onto and expand it, the structure of concepts in a given subject area, the consistency of a student's inabilities across several subject areas, *the* way (so strong is our need for a single generalization) he or she uses her time... And do we feel we have to discover the truth about these structures of meaning, to get them all sorted out, to be *right* about our diagnoses and prescriptions, as we are right about the non-combustibility of aluminum cans?

This way of being that we are given, thrown into by the dominant cultural conversation, is built from Descartes' distinction between subject and object, as Locke codified and hardened it; and as Buber would say, our interactions with objects will be little different when the object is a He or a She: one of our students. The job of the teacher as Subject is to get *things* right—which means, in the lesson, to bring fitting concepts and information together, to choose material of "high interest" for the students taught, to emphasize sequence and cumulation so that logical relations between facts and ideas stand out, to discover those core concepts or skills or facts that the students most need to know... From your own experience, can you add to the list of structure-bearing, structure-laden activities? Has it been your experience, too, that sometimes you just cannot get the students to pay attention to the structure inherent in these, that the structure is lost on them? Is Locke's confrontation—between Subjects and Objects—where *they* live?

Given the outcry about the failure of schools to produce the results needed by our society, to train children for what are conceived to be the basic social, civic, and most crucially economic functions, television and newspapers have devoted more and more "coverage" to educational issues, the problems and solutions. Here is a recent example, headlined "Unlocking Your Child's Academic Potential":

> Your child may obtain high achievement scores, yet he has poor grades; or he may be a B student, but his teachers feel he is capable of more. There are several reasons why a child may not be working to potential, but the two most common are:
>
> 1. He does not have adequate study skills such as time management, using resources, taking notes, listening skills, how to prepare for and take tests; how to read a textbook (this is different than just looking up answers), and problem solving; or
>
> 2. He does not have strong basic skills in vocabulary, reading comprehension, math, or English.

With the headline, we are already emprisoned in an epistemology. What locks up the child's "potential" is that he lacks *skills* of two kinds; what will unlock it, presumably, is giving him those skills. His education, his educability, are matters of what he as an individual *has or does not have.* In the epistemology that gives this diagnosis, which certifies it, makes it plausible, the student is an isolated individual, a subject whose job it is to cognize objects, a receptacle for structures of meaning and processes of internalizing and manipulating them. Skill is manipulation of "resources" for the purpose of mastering subject- matter content: represented structures of meaning. (This is why the notion of "social skills" is so odious. Do you find it possible to be authentic in a conversation with another who is exercising social skills, thereby making you into a representation of a person—a structure of attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and what not? How does one feel about skilled laughter?) With skill as the background of our interactions with students, we are in a world where the goals are achievement test scores, grades, "command" of subjects, manipulation of material and of time with other people. Without another context to enfold this one, it is a deadly world.

Our word "skill" comes from Old Norse *skil,* meaning distinction or difference, the power of discernment or discrimination, and from a verb *skilja,* to divide or distinguish. I wonder if the world of "skill" used to be a world of languaging, of creating *distinctions,* making and using articulations. In early uses, the word associates the human with divinity: man's shape is fashioned in the image of the divine.

> 1380: He made skylful creaturis as angelys and man.
>
> 1440: A skylfull beeste than will y make, after my shappe and my liknesse.

But the *divinity* of the image is conceived as the power or ability to *give* shape, to fashion. As intelligent artificer, man is allied with divinity. Skill, then, implies responsibility for a creation.[8] Some of the early uses of the word do seem to have this resonance, the echo of responsibility, though

the sense of purposeful, creative articulation integral with that sense of responsibility is almost dissolved in the sense of skill as knowledge or mastery of an already defined situation, an already given reality.

> 1587: Of men themselves, the skilfullest make Lawes, & take upon them to rule others.
>
> 1606: The Greeks are strong, and skilful to their strength.
>
> 1631: Choice persons are instructed... wisely to encampe and skilfully to embattaile.

As we think of it today, skill is evinced in timely response, the careful management of given situations according to learned pattern. The prominent definitions in *Webster's* relate to proficiency in the handling of machinery to produce a product. "Skilled: of workmen or labor, having or requiring such training in one occupation as would involve industrial loss in transference to other occupations." Skill in this sense may rely on the kind of repetitive training used in mastering industrial processes, and would not be available outside those processes. It is a matter of the *instruction of* "choice persons."

But if the predominant sense nowadays leans into the vocabulary of a mass production economy, in the earlier uses the response to stimulus, to given situation, comes as the manifestation of an inventive, spur-of-the-moment improvisation. It is *educed in* choice persons:

> 1338: At conseil & at nede he was a skilfulle kyng.
>
> 1387: He was nevere so wroth with man that he would not forgeve if he seigh [saw] skilful occasioun.
>
> 1561: The experte skylfullnesse of so excellent a Pilot.

To improvise, as an expert, is to see occasions skillfully, to apply one's knowledge but also to adapt it, to re-invent it so that it works in particular cases as they develop in ways never before encountered. Twain's portrayal of the riverboat pilot (see *Life on the Mississippi*) gives us skill in this latter sense.

So we have trained response, which is mastery of pattern, and invented response, which is the poetry of pattern. The now archaic use of the word as a verb would once have resonated with a different sense of our responsibility than obtains in the current cultural conversation:

> 1300: Wel sal he cun knau quilk es quilk, fra the wick the god to skil. (Well should he know how to know which is which, from the wicked the good to skill.)

"To skill" is not only to know what's what. It is to invent what's what, creating an articulation in and of environmental circumstances. To skill

you must have the power of distinction at your disposal. Skill not only depends on represented, structured knowledge, but, as *Webster's* also says, manifests a "union of knowledge and readiness." Where does the readiness come from? What *is* readiness? How does the choice person know how to know?

Yes, I have purposes, intentions, even a structured knowledge base and some facility at using it. But I don't have these *as an individual*. I have them only in the older sense of skill: in readiness to be with others in a world. I mean something by a word only in speaking with another. Skillfully, we invent articulation together.

1675: We could skil to modify also the Air about them.

1869: Could he skill to make it seen as he saw?

Readiness, here, is *relatedness*. As a matter of "we-work," of convention (*con* + *venire*), skill entails letting a world appear in colloquy.

In the world of "unlocking the child's academic potential," though, how are deficiencies in the skill of the isolated subject to be corrected? By more isolation, stronger manipulation, by him and of him; in a word, by better structures:

> For high school students who have never had a structured study plan, try a simple, common sense plan. The only way the plan will not help is if they do not try the following suggestions:
>
> 1. Mandatory study time for the high school student is two hours a day. Each student should work on homework, read chapter assignment, review notes from the day's class, study for upcoming tests, and look at short and long term assignments. If your son says that he does not have any homework—or he did it at school—the mandatory homework time is still required (no TV, telephone, etc.). Study time is a priority. Be structured and consistent.
>
> 2. Check out your school's extra help. If your son's school offers after school study skills instruction, enroll him. Let him know through actions (not words and endless discussions) that his academic success is a priority with you.
>
> 3. Communicate with his teachers, and find our why your son is not working to potential (homework, classwork, tests?). Identify the specific problem and work with his teachers to implement a plan.
>
> 4. Praise and reward positive results. The majority of children want to do well. If nothing else, "doing better" keeps us parents

> off their backs! Make sure goals are set in small sections of time. Please do not set six week goals; set weekly goals, and reward and praise those successes.[9]

Several things might be said about this. The first is that it might be good advice, in certain cases. When Dustin is recalcitrant about schoolwork, I will myself very likely adopt at least part of it. But what is the context in which the advice can be effective? Its behaviorist orientation prescribes stimulus-response conditioning, structured to produce automatic responses rather than choices.[10] Even if a particular "underperforming" child does want to do well, we might ask whether conditioning will contribute to his embracing learning as a possibility for continuing to realize his freedom—that is, for managing his responsibility.

The conditioning associated here with cognitive representation of structures works reactively, retroactively, if it works at all. It envisions our reaction to behaviors, to "results," rather than our contribution to generating behaviors, to sourcing results. If the child remembers the reward (or punishment) from last time, and reacts accordingly, his behavior must always be driven and enforced by the past, rather than by a possibility chosen by himself.

Indeed, from the praise and reward, from the fact that his parents are communicating with his teachers, even from the unequivocal action of enrolling him in an extra help program, what the student may get is the parent's commitment to possibility in his life. But this result would be at odds with the paradigm of structure and representation (of subject/object, cognitive epistemology) that prescribes the actions. What the student may just as easily get from these well-intentioned and perhaps effective remedies is more evidence that she is under the compulsions of structure. If the suggestions work to enable education, in the sense we are working toward, the enabling context comes from somewhere else.

It is not that parents and teachers should not punish, much less that we should not reward successes. It is not that human beings are not animals; of course we respond to conditioning. As one successful coach says, the pat on the back must sometimes be a little harder and a little lower. And it is not that the suggested structures, the recommended consistency, are not practical; of course they are eminently practical, given the reality into which they fit and on which they work. But which future shall we create for ourselves: one that is automatically and by necessity an extension of the past, or one that enables our responsibility? In what paradigm, what context, could we *choose* a past excellence, choose to "do well," as an expression of freedom rather than conditioned response or avoidance of subjugation? What are we building? Structure and consistency are valuable *in a context*, and educators need to be awake to the contexts, the spaces in which they and their techniques operate.

> Emphasize to your son that you have a plan; and that the plan will help him improve his grades and maximize his recreational potential. (By learning good study skills he will have better grades, allowing him to participate in more extracurricular activities, and have more recreational time.) That is one potential he will be glad to hear about.

What picture of education emerges? We are watching a movie here, with a particular theme, one which leaves us in a very strongly defined space. What system, what semiology, connects the values "grades," "extracurricular activities," "academic potential," and "recreational time"? How are these values connected to the value "learning"? What listening does the speaking here depend on and perpetuate?[11]

Having noticed this dependence and this perpetuation—the mutual conditioning of reality, speaking, and listening, the interdependence between the content of experience and its social context—Wittgenstein pulls back the corner of the projection screen, as it were, so we can look into the blank, dark space behind it, to see that our insistent looking for meaning as structure entails demands for a pedagogy of procedure, teaching content by algorithm. The picture holding us captive fetters our attention to what we write on the blackboard or in our class notes. And it projects the students as receivers, who either participate by receiving or don't participate. This one is too dreamy, or sleepy, or dumb, to get the presentation; this one is so far ahead that he's bored; this one has attention deficit disorder; these two are bragging about that escapade last night instead of paying attention... Do you hear the conversation about these students in the teachers' lounge? The picture has made them into ciphers, caricatures; though every description be true, every complaint apt, yet, seen from the point of view of the teacher's presumed purpose—to communicate information, to transmit knowledge—the students have one dimension. Either they receive it, through varying degrees of noise in the transmission channel, or they don't. In the faculty meeting or the classroom, while we are immersed in the algorithm that this picture seems to demand, we may no longer be with the real students before us. Already, then, we are not in a felicitous condition for communicating knowledge, let alone for educating. Our next steps follow along as Wittgenstein explores the space behind that screen on which flickers the picture of structure and representation.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, he begins the exploration by describing our shared language with a simile, perhaps peculiarly European in its flavor, like a painting of a medieval town center surrounded by more recent suburbs:

> Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses and of houses with

> additions from various periods: and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.[12]

The ancient-city image gives a picture of language as a structure, but it is a particular kind of structure: one that comprises a wide range of different kinds of pattern, one built up according to different sets of rules that apply differently at different times. There are in language, Wittgenstein says, a variety of regularities, a variety of kinds of use of words. What he is doing here is calling into question the fundamental assumption that rules govern our experience from the outside, as it were, as if there had been written down somewhere the master plan for centuries of growth of a town. As part of his questioning, he asks "How many kinds of sentence are there?", and answers:

> There are *countless* kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call "symbols", "words", "sentences". And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten.[13]

Now if that is the case—if there is no single fixed set of rules at the bottom, no deep grammar that generates the structure of the language—then what does generate it? Where does language come from? What could he mean by "language games"? And more pragmatically, what becomes of the teaching of, say, grammar—those more or less fixed rules from the Harbrace handbook? As teachers, what are we *supposed* to see in this picture? What are we supposed to do? For it seems to pull the floor right out from under us, by suggesting that there is no "way of things" out there from which the ultimate rules of reality are supposed to be derived. Wittgenstein's picture would seem to lead away from the cozy familiarity of accepted, standardized structures of meaning toward a blooming, buzzing, bloody confusion in which no meanings could be depended on as stable, and consequently teaching and learning would be useless. If there is no immutable structure behind or above us, what can we depend on? If we do not live in a single representable world any more, but in multiple, perhaps incommensurate language-games, then what do we teach *for*?

Wittgenstein does not give us something else to depend on. Instead he provides us with the opportunity to get behind this insistent question, to hear its insistence, and to notice that its nagging comes out of a particular picture of the world. Our insistent looking for *meaning as structure* entails these demands for technique, for rules of procedure. What are we to look for, then, if looking for structure creates this bind? Let us start, Wittgenstein suggests, by looking at the ways in which meanings are

taught to young people. Here, then, we begin to examine further the idea we first glimpsed in re-reading Descartes, that non-common-sense "view" in which the relation between language, languaging, and reality is something like "enarticulation" rather than one-way determination.

Even though he taught for those six years, Wittgenstein's work is not primarily devoted to pedagogy, but to inquiry into how language works, and what languaging is. As a philosopher, after the *Tractatus*, he never gets himself into the structure-trap of looking for the "DNA," the code that governs learning and growth. As there is no core definition of the essence of a sentence, nor a set of rules for generating kinds of sentence, neither is there an essential feature of learning situations. Though it falls easily off our tongue, "the learning environment" is a misleading phrase, suggesting a singular and repeatable pattern of events or activities—something that has a structure to it. And while in his portrait of the acquisition of language Wittgenstein does describe what might look like a general feature of a learning situation, the description is not neat:

> How do I explain the meaning of "regular", "uniform", "same" to anyone? —I shall explain these words to someone who, say, only speaks French by means of the corresponding French words. But if a person has not yet got the *concepts*, I shall teach him to use the words by means of *examples* and by *practice*. —And when I do this I do not communicate less to him than I know myself.
>
> In the course of this teaching I shall shew him the same colours, the same shapes, I shall make him find them and produce them, and so on. I shall, for instance, get him to continue an ornamental pattern uniformly when told to do so. —And also to continue progressions. And so, for example, when given: . . . . . to go on: . . . . I do it, he does it after me; and I influence him by expressions of agreement, rejection, expectation, encouragement. I let him go his way, or hold him back; and so on.[14]

He is talking about one characteristic situation among many non-identical others, and accordingly uses phrases like "and so on," "and also," "for instance," and "for example." In the situation described, a young child may be gathering new concepts, and this is not purely an intellectual transaction. Instead it includes several different kinds of interaction, including bodily guidance, and results in an expanded repertoire of actions. The pupil is not learning to represent the structure of things accurately; he is participating in action with others, moment by moment. In this picture, then, teaching is influencing action.

Wittgenstein seems to sidestep the issue of how it is that we recognize a color or a length or a shape as "the same" as another. Indeed, it is as if, in

describing the child's learning, he thinks of the similarity between patterns, the structures we apprehend, as the *result* of the being together of teacher and student, not as something given beforehand:

> How can he *know* how he is to continue a pattern by himself—whatever instruction you give him?—"Well, how do I know?"—If that means "Have I reasons?" the answer is: my reasons will soon give out. And then I shall act, without reasons.
>
> When someone whom I am afraid of orders me to continue the series, I act quickly, with perfect certainty, and the lack of reasons does not trouble me.[15]

Now, in Wittgenstein's classroom, we are not going to teach our hapless pupils by frightening them![16] That is not his point. What he means is that the being together of teacher and learner is not merely the setting or background. Learning does not take place against this background as a separate process of responding to structures of meaning. In the manifestation of skill, readiness comes from relatedness. Learning occurs, in Wittgenstein's later view, in a matrix of sociality—within the restrictions and possibilities alive in the moment of being together.[17] It is a maternal moment, one that brings forth. Certainly every child's biological development is controlled by the DNA of its parents—at least, so we say now. But in what wombs do we develop after birth? In our human need for tools, our reliance on the system of language as we inherit it, we may not see that the structured world, the world the tools fit and help us to manipulate, may depend for its sustenance on another, more encompassing womb: being-in-a-world-together-and-speaking. With Wittgenstein, and with Dustin, we are trying to flesh out this other womb and to distinguish it from the one that bears current educational theory and practice.

In another section of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein is discussing what it means to teach (and to learn) the concept of "talking to oneself."

> What is it like to say something to oneself; what happens here? How am I to explain it? Well, only as you might teach someone the meaning of the expression "to say something to oneself." And certainly we learn the meaning of that as children.—Only no one is going to say that the person who teaches it to us tells us "what takes place". Rather it seems as though in this case the instructor *imparted* the meaning to the pupil—without telling him it directly; but in the end the pupil is brought to the point of giving himself the correct ostensive definition. And this is where our illusion is.[18]

Our illusion is that the definition of a concept comes ultimately and most importantly out of the structure of the world, the solid, stubborn

"thingness" of it—which we call its *nature*. So then teaching should consist of conveying structured information to students in an order determined by purely logical considerations. But though presumably you cannot teach algebra before you teach arithmetic, Wittgenstein has this reminder for anyone who insists that structure is the ultimate hard rock of the world:

> One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.[19]

The social matrix gets lost, the fact that it is *we* who are looking, through a frame of our own. Is it true that 12 x 12 = 221? At first glance, of course not. It is easy to forget that the normal base-ten system is a matter of social agreement. In base three, 12 x 12 = 221. Thinking about the world in concepts, we do not see that there is already framing at work behind concepts and their logic. Their usefulness derives from a social contract—though "contract" is the wrong word, since it implies voluntary, conscious assent. Saussure would say that this framework is social "agreement"; Wittgenstein suggests that it comes from social behavior: being together. Thus a teacher "imparts" meaning, without telling it directly, by being in certain ways; she brings the student to the point of what we call understanding by guiding his hand, by showing approval and rejection in facial, bodily, and verbal expressions, by repeating or otherwise emphasizing important cues, and so on. Now the question is: if neither structure in the world nor the structure of knowledge can give the teacher what we could describe as teaching procedures—what she does and is in the encounter with students—what does give those procedures? Are they "procedures"? Or do they just occur as they do for some other reason than conscious decision or training? If we lived in a different space, how would we influence?

In another collection of paragraphs, assembled at the end of his life and called *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein carries on the exploration of a possible new space by asking a question implied earlier: what is it to be right? What does it mean to say we are certain of knowledge, or certain of anything? Of course I can be sure whether or not I have personally been in outer space—but what is it that makes that a matter of course? Why would any normal person be thought daft who denied the perfect authority of his own actual experience here? Wittgenstein asks, whimsically:

> Might I not believe that once, without knowing it, perhaps in a state of unconsciousness, I was taken far away from the earth—that other people even know this, but do not mention it to me?[20]

Actually, that sounds less whimsical today than it did forty years ago, given the changes that have occurred in what is possible. Can we use

Wittgenstein's exploration to get a handle on the ways in which possibility may *change*? Can we create with our students new possibilities to live into together, ways in which knowing a structure of facts occurs almost as the by-product of our being together in the class?

So back to Wittgenstein's argument. To *assert* the perfect authority of your own actual personal experience—as Descartes had apparently done for us Westerners—you have to have some assumptions, some judgments in the background that you *hold* as certainties. Our judgments of certainty—such as the assumption that you could not possibly have been unconscious while travelling in space, and that even if you had been, someone would have told you about it—these are like anchors, helping us to hold our position in the water. Better, they are like the centerboard that keeps the sailboat from wallowing to and fro at the mercy of the wind and waves, and thus allows it to sail constantly in a desired direction. Varying the position and tautness of the sails works to alter speed and direction only if the centerboard remains fixed in place. As we cannot walk without ground to stand on, we cannot sail without a centerboard for the boat to lean on. Certain propositions, our most basic judgments, hold fast for us in order that we may agree or disagree about others, arguing toward the fulfillment of some purpose.

The combination of sails, centerboard, wind, and rudder forms a *system*, says Wittgenstein, echoing Saussure's term, and echoing also, in his example of the moon-walk, Saussure's insistence on the sociality of systems. *We* use systems to accomplish things of interest and concern to us—not just physical systems like rifles and cartridges, but language-systems as well. As the rifle must be braced against the shoulder—for the shoulder too is part of the rifle-system—so in our investigations and our ordinary dealings there must be some bracing propositions that stand still for us—some truths beyond question, some facts, undisputed if not indisputable. But these facts are not there independent of the system they stabilize. A centerboard detached from a sailboat is useless for sailing; only in our sailing does its value as a centerboard arise. In trenchant examination of our purposeful agreements, our social judgments of certainty, here is Wittgenstein:

> Men have judged that a king can make rain; *we* say this contradicts all experience. Today they judge that aeroplanes and the radio are the means for the closer contact of peoples and the spread of culture.[21]

Atomic structure, molecular structure, social structure, the structuring of gravity and of electromagnetic radiation, the economic structure, the structure of knowledge—are all these, too, judgments? Are they superstitions? Are they ways of speaking, languaging?

Such a question yanks up the centerboard. And in the ensuing loss of control, without the ability to direct our activity in the accustomed way, it is hard to see that it is not the centerboard that has lost its function but the entire system. "Just lower the board again!" we cry. Why would Wittgenstein, having himself taught in school, suddenly raise the centerboard in the middle of a close haul? Why should we follow him, especially during a race in which we seem to be falling farther and farther behind?

Raising the centerboard, noticing our assumed certainties—for instance, the certainty that structured knowledge is the goal of education—this may raise to our attention the whole system with which we operate. We may indeed find that we were falling behind because there were barnacles on the centerboard. Sailing is a splendid system, one of the marvels of human invention, and as long as we are committed to a *sailing race*, the system we have been using may need only to be streamlined. But if we look with Wittgenstein, we may discover in the raised board the possibility of a different system altogether, one that serves to fulfill a different commitment. What if we change the traditional rounded shape of the hull so that the sides are vertical below the water?[22] Then we might be able to sail straight without a centerboard, in shallow water now as well as deep. No less than the possibility of surf sailing, the possibility of space flight arises only when we have two things available: first, a commitment to a new goal or a new activity; and second, an awareness of the whole present system in which our purposes have been being fulfilled (or thwarted) *as a "system" instead of a structure.* For what we do with structure is observe it, receive it, learn it, repeat it: in "covering" the structured material, we make ourselves its prisoners. But with "system," what we are doing is speaking. We have something to say about what's what.

The "space" we are exploring now is opened up by this distinction between system, as Wittgenstein uses the term here, and structure, as we have distinguished it above. With structure/representation as the centerboard, we are pulled to see, to feel, and to be in certain ways. There is a certain common sense about the world, enforcing a way of playing the game, sailing the course. In the game called *language*, words represent ideas that correspond to things, objects confront subjects who describe them more or less adequately. Knowledge depends on "truth," which is a function of this correspondence and this description. Like Wittgenstein, I do not want to depart too hastily after tossing the question "Is there then no objective truth?" We are looking at the question so as to notice the system—including sentences, beliefs, and behavior—in which truth is a centerboard, if not an anchor. We want to notice that asking the question "what is the truth?" nowadays places us in a particular arena, one that presets the answers to other questions—indeed, brings certain other questions into play while hiding others.

If instead of "what is truth?" we ask "what is responsibility?" or "*where* is responsibility?" we may see that there is a further answer possible than "describing reality" or "conforming with fact." Describing reality, communicating knowledge, delivering truth—these are not trivial enterprises. But teachers need a new arena in which to undertake them, one in which they can occur with more power. If, as a context for the teaching of represented structure, we had a different common sense, anchored in what both Saussure and Wittgenstein saw as the nurturing sociality of language, what would that pull for? If "system" were the centerboard, what boat would we all be in together? Would such a common sense allow for, pull for, a new possibility for being related in the classroom, a possibility that what teachers and students do, in their being together and speaking responsibly, their languaging, is share, invent, and bring forth?

Wittgenstein says in *On Certainty* that "one can instruct a child to believe in God, or that none exists, and it will accordingly be able to produce apparently telling grounds for the one or the other."[23] Apparently children live into the commitments of their elders. By now, Dustin can almost match me in making grand generalizations about life, pronouncing as eternal truth whatever he wants to do at the moment. But he also has the skill of snow fire. What if we had, alongside our already given commitment to structured knowledge, a commitment to inventing, sharing, and bringing forth for children to live into? Such a commitment, to be effective, will itself have to be invented. "We are working on bringing about the result that we choose the window of inventing being with our students," I said, and I left the ambiguity in. For perhaps *inventing being* with our students amounts to the same thing as inventing *being with* our students. Perhaps that—inventing together—is, among other things, what it means to mean something by a word. "Words don't mean; people mean," said S. I. Hayakawa in our high school semantics textbook. It is not a sophisticated pronouncement. But it is easy to forget.

Building his bridge between knowing and being, Wittgenstein has taken us behind the apparent structure at the surface of things, to get a glimpse of the social functioning, the being together in which that structure appears *to us* as we mean something by words, in our saying. We now turn to the philosopher in whose work we can glimpse the possibility of inventing saying as a way of being.

NOTES

1. "Speaking of Objects," in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 1. Quoted also in Rajchman and West, eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 136.

2. *On Certainty*, §108.
3. *On Certainty*, §106.
4. James Edwards, *The Authority of Language* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1990), 140.
5. *Tractatus*, 6.54.
6. *Philosophical Investigations*, §109.
7. *I and Thou*, trans. Kaufman, 64.
8. Professor Hoyt Duggan informs me that in the societies of Old and Middle English, people were not excused from responsibility even if they did not intend to commit the crime.
9. My source here requests anonymity.
10. In *Handbook of Applied Behavior Analysis: Social and Instructional Processes*, Thomas A. Brigham and A. Charles Catania, eds. (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1978), there is the following summary:

    > The behavioral reinforcement paradigm represents learning in terms of the changes in response rate or response probability that occur when reinforcement is contingent on the emission of particular responses... "Behavior is learned only when it is emitted and reinforced." The basic units of analysis are responses, reinforcers and stimuli.
    >
    > In applying the behavioral reinforcement paradigm to the construction of programs, the material is arranged to ensure that the appropriate responses are emitted in the presence of the proper stimuli and that such responses are reinforced. The responses to be learned must first be identified, and then provision must be made to see that the responses are emitted. (458)

    This description of the necessary machinery of learning has its roots in Locke's picture of the automatism of sensory perception. Responses, reinforcers, and stimuli are to be as "objectively determined" as the ideas imprinted on the mind. Ten years later, in *Beyond Behaviorism* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988), Vicki L. Lee repeats the echo:

    > The concept of the reflex originated in the work of Descartes and was elaborated by physiologists... it designates a relation between a physical stimulus and a muscular or glandular response. An example is the pupillary reflex in which a bright light elicits pupillary constriction... Stimulus-response psychologies are psychologies based on the concept of the reflex. They identify psychology's task as a matter of finding stimulus-response connections... Stimulus-response psychologies lead us to expect that given a stimulus, we might predict the response, and that given a response, we might retrodict the stimulus. These psychologies organize psychological knowledge around the concept of the reflex. (151-2)

11. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, as the protagonist struggles to rearrange and catalogue the memories of his life, we see that the world of individual manipulation of material, command of resources, has become delapidated. The tape recorder works, and Krapp can use it with facility, but its failure as a medium for

living words, its failure even to reconstitute remembered words, becomes more and more appalling—a mix of bathos and chagrin. Krapp repeats absently, fascinated: "Be again. Be again." I laugh at his absorption in the material on the tape, but I know that every day I am trying to structure a world *for myself*, and to fit into that structure by finding *my* identity, myself as a structure. And I recognize that a world in which I try again and again to be again is at best a cruel joke.

12. *Philosophical Investigations*, §18.
13. *Philosophical Investigations*, §23.
14. *Philosophical Investigations*, §208.
15. *Philosophical Investsigations*, §211 and 212.
16. In his Austrian hill towns, Wittgenstein himself was not so constrained. To spur his recalcitrant students, he would box their ears or pull their hair. This had other results, apparently, than producing the desired cognitive outcomes. Even today, though, we may be sorely tempted to jerk a knot into a kid who, we know, can do better schoolwork. Wittgenstein is saying in this passage that our instinct may be pointing us in the right direction, if we could just find an appropriate and authentic way of answering it, a way that fulfills our impulse to act *with* our students and not merely *on* them.
17. Of course, John Dewey made a similar point in work after work. For a précis of his contribution see Gert J. J. Biesta, "Education as Practical Intersubjectivity," in *Educational Theory*, vol. 44, no. 3 (Summer 1994), especially 304-9.
18. *Philosophical Investigations*, §361 and 362.
19. *Philosophical Investigations*, §114.
20. *On Certainty*, §102.
21. *On Certainty*, §132.
22. This is what Hobie Cat did a decade ago.
23. *On Certainty*, §107.

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PART 2

ONTOLOGY

What Is Saying, and How Do We Be?

We are progressively leaving behind, now, the algorithmic model of teaching as instruction, and moving toward what I hesitate to call a model at all, for fear that it will induce imitation instead of invention—that is, more algorithmic teaching, more instruction. Though there is no need for inventing in algorithmic teaching, there is no room for it, either. But in our best moments together in a classroom students discover, because of the environment for being together that we have created, meaning and purpose in material new to them: then cognition and invention are one. The point is to create that environment which is not a surrounding, like a decorated room, but like an atmosphere, a breathing-space. And the point is not to construct an instrument with which to create the magic environment, the magnetic field—not to answer the question "How do I create that environment?", for that answer is really just a means of manipulating the atmosphere, and probably the people who breathe in it. I'd rather not be a master of manipulation.

Instead, we hope to generate a conversation that pulls for that environment, that calls forth and goes with being together powerfully. Is that a distinction without a difference? Isn't "generating a conversation" itself a technique, a form of manipulation? Since I am building the idea of teaching as a different realm than instruction, I am loath to think so; but I am not sure yet whether I can clarify the distinction between manipulation and generating conversation. So I want to explore a little, to try to tease out the distinction, on our way to creating a new speaking and listening for the act of teaching, of educating. A question opens a door. Repeated questions—continuing inquiry—prop it open.

One of the questions opened in the Introduction was: In an encounter between a teacher and a student, where does power come from? And in

Chapter One, childlike, we began by jamming this first question up against another: Who would you be if you lived in a particular philosophical picture? In the next three chapters, there is thus brought into place a certain inclination, a lean toward a quasi-illegitimate way of describing things. (What does living in a *picture* mean? And what is a *philosophical* picture, that it can be said to be lived in?) I want to establish a queer sort of atmosphere, one whose vapors show up, like fog. For, in the fog, in the indistinct half-light, our sense of hearing is sharpened: though we must walk slowly, we listen acutely, powerfully.

Perhaps, Wittgenstein suggests, there is a bind in the very idea of *looking for* something. For to look *for* something is already to assume that its structure will be manifested persistently outside ourselves: visual acuity is binding, we see at twenty feet exactly that which is at twenty feet from us. We suppose that in representing this structure to ourselves we may achieve mastery of it. But of the paradigm *knowledge-as-structure*—have we achieved mastery of that, or does it master us? Does it not shape our expectations, and so our actions, and our idea of what is possible? If meanings are structured like boards and nails, what else is there to do but saw and hammer? More vapors, perhaps. Let's see if we can listen our way through them.

The teacher's way of being. Engagement. Shared mastery. To pay attention to these, we have begun by inquiring into the ways language occurs for us, in the classroom and in the culture that flows into and out of the classroom, particularly that part of the culture in which young people develop. Following on Saussure's picture of language as a social function, an activity instead of a structure, Wittgenstein re-invented language as languaging. How then are languaging and being related? What does speaking have to do with who we are? We want now to investigate the relation of being with what Heidegger calls "Saying." Perhaps the capital letter annoys us as an undue inflation of a plain word, a plain meaning. But perhaps we can bear with it, for I do think it expands our vocabulary; it marks a different value than the small-lettered word. Being and saying are merged in listening, I will say. Listening gives how we hear what is said; it comes not only out of the paradigms we transact, but also out of the declarations and commitments we speak. What you hear is what you are listening for; what you listen for is both borne in the paradigm of our world and born in the way we commit ourselves in conversation with others. In a teacher's speaking and listening of his students resides the possibility of their greatness. "Speaking must have speakers," says Heidegger, "but not merely in the same way as an effect must have a cause. Rather, the speakers are present in the way of speaking."[24] Could languaging and being modulate each other? Could Saying alter the world?

NOTE

1. *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row Perennial Library, 1971), 120.

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5
OUR LISTENING WITH LANGUAGE

> To say and to speak are not identical. A man may speak, speak endlessly, and all the time say nothing. Another man may remain silent, not speak at all and yet, without speaking, say a great deal.
>
> —Heidegger[1]
>
> It is the man determines what is said, not the words.
>
> —Thoreau[2]

Perhaps at the outset of this chapter I should acknowledge a certain embarassment. At the current stage of scholarship on Heidegger, it seems clear that he was not only personally but also academically committed to the program for German national greatness or "restoration," which developed into the Nazi regime. Apparently he was guilty, as rector of the University of Freiburg during the thirties, of acts that might have supported anti-Semitism; and while debate is continuing about the degree to which Heidegger's philosophical position is implicated in his politics, and about whether or not his politics changed as the full horror of the "final solution" became apparent during the war, his involvement with Nazism remains troubling.[3]

I have nothing to add to this debate. I am using Heidegger's words to say what I want to say, and insofar as Heidegger the man determines what the words say, I may be in dangerous proximity to him. But if I gather passages from Heidegger for footholds, it should be clear that I am climbing a different mountain than he was in the Germany of mid-century, not resting my case on his philosophical position but bringing what he says into the service of a different matter altogether, the matter of our

encounters with our community's children. Karl Jaspers assessed Heidegger as "a significant potency, not through the content of a philosophical world-view, but in the manipulation of speculative tools."[4] Scholars continue to find humanity in Heidegger's writings; I hear in them the passionate commitment to a renewal of spirit. Honoring our commitment to our students, to our children, we can, I hope, listen for the possibility of rekindling as distinct from the wish for restoration.

When I have had occasion to present a fact or an observation or a plan to my child, it has gone sometimes well and sometimes badly. I may, for instance, have the pleasure of announcing to him that Mom has just finished fixing him a treat: "Dus, you know what? There's a surprise in the kitchen for you." Or the message may be less pleasing: "Dus, you know what? You need to learn not to interrupt us when we're talking." I can structure the message in similar ways, but what I think I see is that the structure of what I say does not matter much in the message I see him get, in what he does after my speaking. The content matters more, I think—treat works better than admonition. Not surprising. But what matters most seems to be just this: the way I am being when I speak to the child. And that would seem to depend on the immediate occasion for my speaking to him (what he has just been doing or has failed to do), what I have been preoccupied with today, and so on. There is no easy way to figure out what incidents, thoughts, feelings, etc. may have shaped the way my manner comes across to Dustin at a given instant, and may thus be shaping our encounter for good or ill.

But *is* it these pieces of the day's experience that make the admonition into something he shies away from, if he does? Why doesn't he see how hard it will be for him to maintain amicable relationships if he doesn't let others talk sometimes? Isn't the admonition a blessing with a thin disguise, like spinach? So what is it that makes my speaking ill-received? Is it that he doesn't know the concept "amicable relationships" or its five-year-old equivalent? Why does he sometimes *accept* an invitation to eat spinach? What makes it taste good to him? What makes a treat a treat?

Now, notice something: what is the automatic answer to the question "What makes a treat a treat?" Does it presume something like a structure of meaning, associated with a structure of experience? "He doesn't like the *taste* of spinach!" Answers give closure; they finalize structures of meaning, the spokes of the already invented wheel. Most of the time we listen not only *for* answers; we listen *from* answers. To re-invent the wheel—for I claim that as our calling—let us listen from re-opened questions.

Remember, first, Heidegger's assertion (quoted in Chapter One) that listening is not the opposite of speaking. Here is that passage again, with more of its context this time. It may not seem to you on first reading that

this passage has much to do with getting a treat, but listen, as you re-read it, for the faint, as yet unspoken hint of a relationship between language and freedom.

> Speaking is known as the articulated vocalization of thought by means of the organs of speech. But speaking is at the same time also listening. It is the custom to put speaking and listening in opposition: one man speaks, the other listens. But listening accompanies and surrounds not only such speaking as takes place in conversation. The simultaneousness of speaking and listening has a larger meaning. Speaking is of itself a listening. Speaking is listening to the language which we speak. Thus, it is a listening not *while* but *before* we are speaking. This listening to language also comes before all the kinds of listening that we know, in a most inconspicuous manner. We do not merely speak *the* language—we speak *by way* of it. We can do so solely because we always have already listened to the language. What do we hear there? We hear language speaking.[5]

There are a lot of uphill twists in the trail in that passage. Let us go back over them slowly, trying to become a little more familiar with the topography. As I add more passages from Heidegger to this one, hoping to enrich the background listening that we can bring to all of them, it may happen that you begin to ask yourself: What are we to make of all this? Indeed, these passages, like Bohr's lectures, may be taken as guides for inquiry rather than as formulations of truth. (They must be so taken if we are to honor Heidegger's wishes.) We are to *make* something of them, not at random or carelessly, but intentionally, designedly. So how can we make these almost cryptic passages useful for ourselves as teachers? How do Heidegger's words... I almost said, how do they illuminate our experience? As if on automatic pilot, my discourse flies through the transparent paradigm of visualized structure. What Heidegger would say is, how do these passages shift the listening we bring to our experience?

On purpose, Heidegger begins by blurring the ordinary conceptual separation between speaking and listening, teasing out a replacement for those two values. He invites us to notice the ordinary way of conceiving what speech is: giving voice to thought, changing thought into sound with the mouth. As it is "known" by us, the salient thing about speaking is physiological, an act of production by which, we would say, the stored contents of one mind are transmitted into another. The customary picture of human communication is encoding and decoding messages. Is this the wrong picture? Instead of proposing a more accurate picture, Heidegger suggests a picture with "larger meaning" to supplant this oscillation between speaking and listening as encoding and decoding: rather than

alternating, discrete activities, perhaps speaking and listening should be seen as simultaneous. Or even more strongly, and strangely: perhaps they are the same thing.

Here Heidegger seems to combine two distinct values into one, a molecule instead of two separate atoms. If these two values were fused into a single place in a re-invented system, we might give it the name "speaking/listening," except that the relationship signified by the "/" is more than mere reciprocity, as in "throw/catch" or "I sigh/you sympathize." But the name of the molecule is not just "language." It is a curious new compound, made up of speakinglistening and two new components: "saying" and "showing." In several places in his work Heidegger dilates, sometimes briefly and always abstrusely, on what "Saying," or "Showing of Saying," or "showing saying" means. Heidegger's philosophical vocabulary may take some getting used to. If you will, read through these passages a couple of times.

> Language speaks by saying, this is, by showing... We, accordingly, listen to language in this way, that we let it say its Saying to us. No matter in what way we may listen besides, whenever we are listening to something we are *letting something be said to us*, and all perception and conception is already contained in that act. In our speaking, as a listening to language, we say again the Saying we have heard.[6]

> Saying is showing. In everything that speaks to us, in everything that touches us by being spoken and spoken about, in everything that gives itself to us in speaking, but also in the speaking that we do *ourselves*, there prevails Showing which causes to appear what is present and to fade from appearance what is absent. Saying is in no way the linguistic expression added to the phenomena after they have appeared—rather, all radiant appearance and all fading away is grounded in the showing Saying. Saying sets all present beings free into their given presence, and brings what is absent into their absence.[7]

> "To say," related to the Old Norse "*saga*," means to show: to make appear, set free, that is, to offer and extend what we call world, lighting and concealing it. This lighting and hiding proffer of the world is the essential being of Saying."[8]

Whenever Dustin says anything lately, his voice sounds like some horrific cartoon character, giving raucous orders, demanding capitulation, pronouncing doom. Desperately I ask him to "talk regular, please," and sometimes, briefly, he does. During most of his time, though, he is engaged in making up his own games, imitating characters he sees on television or

singing the songs he learns at school. My dictionary gives little help with this: the Latin verb from which "imitate" comes is *imitari*, to copy, mimic, counterfeit. No surprises there. The school songs are always pleasant to hear, but when what he chooses to imitate is already a mutant of a counterfeit of a superhero, I wince, or worse. Likewise when he aims a gun at me, even if it's the gun I made for him out of two sticks of wood. Is his pointing the gun a kind of speaking? And if his speaking is also my listening, and if, as Heidegger suggests, we are giving being to a world in our speakinglistening, then what is really going on here?

In one respect, what is going on seems to be that Dustin is making up the rules of his games—he invents after what he has already encountered, says after the Saying he has heard, makes up a world to play in. "OK, Daddy, you say "Oh no you don't," and I'll be the bad guy." He actually scripts what I should say next; and when I say it, even halfheartedly, my interests tending elsewhere, it works to create a real game for Dustin. Instead of what looks to me like a dull mechanical repetition, what he gets is the opportunity for full participation. And when I do engage in his re-invention by following his rules, letting him say his saying to me, he positively lights up. Where could this have come from, this way of being?

It is a way that starkly contrasts what happens sometimes when he is called upon, say, to add "please" after a request, or to change an order (now his usual mode of addressing us) into a request. In these cases, he can be perfectly dull and mechanical, repeating the words hollowly, his attention riveted to the television. Here, he is following my rules but there is no engagement between us; neither of us is really present to the other. This second way of being might be called mocking, and it makes me feel as if I were being paid with counterfeit money. The way I be with Dustin when he is imitating is worlds apart from the way I can be when he is engaged in re-inventing. When he re-invents a request instead of counterfeiting it, two things happen: he looks for eye contact, and I am free to respond appropriately, rather than parroting a script of my own. "No, you'll ruin your dinner" sounds altogether different in the two worlds: if we are imitating, he may frown or cry; if we are re-inventing, he may say brightly, "OK, Daddy!" (and come back in a few minutes with a different stategem). Now, I am participating with Dustin in both cases: whether we are re-inventing or mocking, what we say and how we be arise together as we speaklisten our world into being moment by moment. I cannot usually distinguish one thing I have said or done as the cause of the world whose effects and affects show up in the encounter with Dustin. Instead, there arises in our interaction a field, an arena in which and by virtue of which our play proceeds. What interests me now is the difference between these two arenas—really, these two *kinds* of arena. For in the arena of inventing, we get to play, to dance with one another. We get to share ourselves.

Is all this—Heidegger's abstruseness followed by my appropriation of it for family life—a fancy way of recommending for teachers the old-fashioned show-and-tell time? You show what you've got and tell what it is, say something about it. Here is the candle, here is how the wax drips when you light it! We may be entranced, enchanted by the wonder of the presence of the candle, the object, in the child's imagination; his showing and saying may bring the object alive for us as for him. I think this is part of what Heidegger is getting at; but his saying in these passages is showing us something more besides.

He says it in three slightly different ways: things speak to us; things touch us by being spoken about; and things give themselves to us in speaking. What happens with speaking, Heidegger says, is that a whole world appears, its constituents announcing their presence and its non-constituents fading into absence. What happens with speaking, he says, is a "lighting and hiding" of the world. Is that a contradiction in terms? How can something cast light and hide what it casts light on at the same time? Well, how are we listening to Heidegger's formulation? If we listen with Locke for language to describe things, we cannot quite make sense of speaking as a "lighting and hiding," nor can we understand it as a cause of phenomena, a giving, a setting free. For language as description would be language that reveals, that illuminates; words would represent things (re-present them) rather than offering or *giving* them to us. And words certainly shouldn't work to *hide* things. Dustin's task would be, as Locke puts it, "to get and fix in [his mind] clear, distinct, and complete ideas"—by which he means solid sense impressions, gained in experiments on objects—"and to annex to them proper and constant names"[9]—by which he means unambiguous, consistently used terms. When Dustin is seriously engaged with the world, learning its ways and its constituents, he should be storing up and cataloguing descriptions. He should be amassing cultural literacy.

But before we describe and catalogue, we are listening, Heidegger says, not only to our interlocutor, and not only while he is speaking, but to *our language*, before we begin a conversation and all the while it lasts and afterward. Speaking *by way of* our language, our cultural conversation, our semiological system of values, we may listen for and hear only what it can provide. Trees, Poems, Streets, Windows, Hats, Coats, Structure...—our language sets forth for us, like an abacus with its wired beads, the items and combinations of items, the configurations of values that make sense among us, that add up to meaningful discourse. And, as the merchant tallies his sales at the end of the day, his fingers zipping the beads back and forth absently, fluently, so with the calculator we use to transact our business: the language is transparent ("inconspicuous") while we are using it. While we are engaged in conversation in this way, the medium

goes unnoticed; indeed, it would hinder us to take notice of its structure, of its structuring. Our fingers would get tangled, we would lose track of the sum. Without even a first thought, I Judge that they Are Men (to capitalize the names of some beads) Because of their Hats, their Coats, and the Way they Move in the Street. We let our language (our system of values) say its saying to us, and our thoughts and actions grow, accustomed in that saying. Where is the freedom in that? you may ask.

For it seems that in our listening to our cultural language, participating in its conversation, whipping the beads back and forth on their wires like electrons without stopping to inspect the instrument, we may be committed willy-nilly to an act of being—we are "letting something be said to us" that foreordains what we see and think. "In that act," Heidegger says, "all perception and conception is already contained." Seeing, feeling, and acting in concert with the saying, we *be* that beads combine into sums, that electrons are part of the structure of reality, that Aptitude and Motivation (along with Basic Skills, Study Habits, and Attitude) combine to produce good or bad grades. In saying again the Saying we have heard, we are *being* in a particular way, too. If the Saying we educators have been hearing is a speaking of and listening for structure and its correlates, then we have been being given a particular way of interacting in the world of our classrooms, a certain mode of being with our students. Our cultural conversation has prescribed a set of procedures which, it Says, are required for education to take place. We have become a system of categories, wired with the beads of the abacus.

What practices and processes in your classes can you see as having derived from, or as meshing with, the paradigm of structured knowledge? Can you characterize a way of being toward or being with your students that fits with these activities? In my case the way of being was something like: "This that I'm trying to teach is sophisticated, tough stuff, and I probably won't be able to have everyone get it. But it is important for them all to get it if they can, and to struggle with it even if they cannot get it." My typical practice was to hand out the material—cleverly arranged, I thought—in small dittoed chunks, to be discussed in class that day, and perhaps followed up in homework assignments. And often, in spite of my best intentions, I would find myself standing in front of the room and talking. (Sometimes, all that was exactly appropriate, and it worked: the question, of course, is why did it work on those occasions and not on others?) If you will take a minute or two—or more—at this point to write down what you see in response to the questions about classroom practices and ways of being with students, we will use the record of your inquiry later on. Teach a class or two with the questions in the back of your mind; then return to consider them head-on again. Ask your students what *they* see in your teaching. After another philosophical excursion—a fairly long

and difficult one—we will return to these practices. The purpose of the philosophy is to make it possible to re-invent them.

If the abacus-language of referentiality, the language of structured knowledge, articulates the activities and the ways of being you have just examined and listed, what other language, or languaging, is there? Let us listen for one. While the merchant may count himself fortunate at the end of a day of high sales, when he goes home smiling to share his good fortune with his family he is no longer tallying. His way of being with the facts of his day's sales shifts. Now he has a different prospect ahead of him, and now his knowledge of the facts about his sales that day becomes something else. Can you hear his pleasure as he tells his wife that he made enough today for...? When he gets home what he will do is *proffer* his success to his family; he puts it forward as a sacrament of their lives together.

How has this transformation occurred? What gives the merchant this different way of being? What happens when a teacher comes home to her family after a hard but rewarding day, a day on which she has clearly made a difference with her students? Is there excitement about the prospect of grading papers? Does she be with her family more fully, sharing her experiences and theirs in ways that embody their love for each other? What arenas occur?

Somehow one of the customs little boys bring with them seems to be reliance on knives and firearms for fun. Moments free of the womb, Dustin raised his arm over his head in a gesture that I gladly took to foretell a career as a great symphony conductor. It now appears that it was only the flourish prefatory to aiming a pistol or stabbing a "bad guy." My saying about what was possible in his case—said before he could understand or respond to it—was soon supplanted by the cartoon vocabulary of shoot-em-up, which he seems to have understood perfectly and immediately. He and I now run around wildly in the front yard, spraying each other with bullets from our "whistle-guns" (Dustin's word for the sound we make to imitate muzzle blast) and laughing as we collapse in agony of mortal wounds. This is his saying, his vocabulary, absorbed from television cartoons, playmates, or wherever, and re-invented on the spot. (Whoever heard of whistle-guns?) Once I take it up as a material, a form of sharing, a *possibility* for sharing, rather than as a structured description, a representation of an occurrence, it is a saying that can give voice to our spirit, our love, shaping our relatedness as a font shapes the poured water. Its shaping saying now becomes a sacrament of our being together. Sometimes—is it just luck?—Dustin's saying, his scripting of possibilities, sets a world free, rather than corresponding to the world or imitating it. When I am presented with a world he has "set free," when I take it up as a participant, I can be co-inventor with him: I am free as well. Is this phenomenon related to the merchant's return to his family?

With Heidegger, and with Dustin's help, I want to propose another re-invention—indeed, not only to propose it, but (with your help) to carry it out. Like Heidegger, I do not intend to throw out referential language and replace it with something else. We could not do that even if the argument here required it. The immense edifice of represented knowledge, structured concepts, and all the apparatus that goes with them, will still be available after this re-invention of language. The merchant will still use the abacus to tally his sales. But he will have, after this re-invention, that other possibility of sharing with his family more fully. The teacher will still grade her papers, but she may find that her family has expanded along with the possibility of parenting her students, bringing forth, with them, education. She may begin to have access to another arena.

Let us start our re-inventing of language, then, by listening *from* this other idea of what language is: instead of description, what if language, as Saying, is creation? *Cogito ergo sum*, we heard Descartes saying. I am thinking, therefore I am. How could *cogito* give not only self but also world: self and world arising together as something like intertissued veils? What if, in the beginning, veiled, is the word?

> The poet names the gods and names all things in that which they are. This naming does not consist merely in something already known being supplied with a name; it is rather that when the poet speaks the essential word, the existent is by this naming nominated as what it is. So it becomes known *as* existent. Poetry is the establishing of being by means of the word.[10]

To listen from this new idea of what language is, we are led back figuratively to Adam, and to that naming which is said to be his God-given prerogative. As we proceed along Heidegger's path,[11] we will be keeping to the question "what is *naming*?" What if *naming* has something intimate and crucial to do with Adam's, and thus our, being?

For Heidegger, what the Old Testament figured as Adam's naming would be a kind of poetry. Indeed, made in the image of a creating God, Adam expresses his nature by naming not only the animals, but the gods themselves, as if *he* had created *them!* To consolidate this turning of the tables, Heidegger says that "being and essence of things can never be calculated and derived from what is present," but instead must be "freely created, laid down and given."[12] So *naming* is a special kind of poetry; it makes something that never existed before, not composing it out of materials already available but laying down the materials, giving what there is to build with. We hear in Heidegger's words the echo of Saussure's idea of the arbitrariness of language, and this combines with an echo of the scriptural account. Neither Heidegger nor Saussure, of course, is necessarily concerned that his account square with the Biblical story—philosopher

and linguist, neither is a Judeo-Christian apologist, nor a proponent of any theology. But why should there be such a persistently recurring echo? Is there something about what it is to live a human life, some antenna that tunes in these faint signals that we usually fail to notice? Since our standard notion of man as a sole subject coincides with our notion of man as confronting and receiving an already structured objective world, perhaps we will be rewarded with an insight into the ways we regard ourselves, what we take to be our place and function, if we explore Heidegger's contrary account in conjunction with this piece of Biblical myth. And it may happen that as we inquire into what *naming* is, we will find ourselves being in the classroom with more power.

In what Heidegger has to say about being-in-the-world there is not a little specialized terminology and usage. Having already encountered some of his vocabulary, you may be acclimatizing already—perhaps we can adjust to unfamiliar ways of speaking as our bodies do to high altitude. Here, as in mountaineering, the key is to pace oneself. If you have a child, or some students, with whom you can spend time between reading the paragraphs of this book, please do so. Create for yourself a route up to the higher base camps, including several return trips.

Heidegger's central term, the focus and goal of much of his philosophy, is "*Dasein*"—literally, "there-being" or "thereness." Heidegger uses the term *Dasein* to mean, approximately, the human way of being. As distinct from animals (presumably) and stones, the way humans be is *in a world*. For us, a world is "there"; and to say one perceives a world is to say *one is* in it. That is to say, each of us is Dasein or has Dasein in us, exactly when a fundamental assertion occurs: "By Dasein we mean... the entity that we each ourselves are, which each of us finds in the fundamental assertion: I am."[13] So in exploring Dasein we are dealing with an assertion, a piece of language—and a particular kind of assertion, at that.

Most of our assertions are predications; they say something like "x is y." For such an assertion to be valid, there must be some evidence that x is indeed y—that the category or thing called "x" is coterminous or coincident with the category or thing called "y." The maker of such an assertion is, willy-nilly, in the position of supplying that evidence if it is not already apparent. For me to assert that the sun is shining, or that I am standing in the sunshine, I have to be there beforehand to decide that I want to make that assertion, on the basis of available evidence. If I assert that Light cannot Escape from Black Holes, I am speaking on behalf of a structure of inter-related facts and theories, relying on the correspondence of this amalgam with a structure of observations. I am expecting you to say "Yes, and..." or "Not so, because..." The point of my assertion is to tie into an ever wider correspondence, strengthening its consistency. Such an assertion calls for investigation and proof, or rebuttal. Our usual way of using

and dealing with assertions, making them and defending them, contains Descartes' distinction between subject and object, and involves us in a characteristic stance vis-à-vis reality. But the assertion "I am," we said, is one that "occurs." We find Dasein in it, says Heidegger.

It is odd to say an assertion "occurs," but we cannot follow Heidegger out of the Cartesian-Lockean ocean of subjects confronting objects unless we see that until this assertion is present, there is no one and nothing there to make it. Of course, this defies common sense. How can an assertion be made, or "occur" even, without anyone to make it? But this common sense throws us right back into the water—for it merely repeats the background assumption that for anything to happen, something must be there to make it happen.

Now this assumption, this pattern of thinking, is essentially circular—it amounts to saying that if anything is there, something must be there. Thus it shuffles off the question of ontology; it takes thereness for granted. Heidegger's project is to get us up out of that water. He asks: where did the something come from in the first place? What is it to *be*? He begins to make a new dwelling for us in a sequence of eight theses (of which we will use only the first three), which he delivered in a lecture to the Marburg Theological Society three years before *Being and Time* was published.[14] To introduce these, he has begun with that definition of the human way of being: "The authentic assertion of Being pertaining to the Dasein of man," he repeats, is "the assertion 'I am.'"[15] What *is* this special assertion "I am," then? There, now, is a question worthy of thinking—like the question "what makes a treat a treat?" Maybe the answers are related: maybe what makes a treat is the possibility it presents of saying "I am," not referring to a thing, but speaking Being.

So what is it when the assertion "I am" occurs? Heidegger answers, first, by denying that what occurs is the isolation of a subject from objects. Here is the first thesis, in which he relegates the *cogito* to the realm of metaphysical legerdemain:

> Human life is not some subject that has to perform some trick in order to enter the world. Dasein as being-in-the-world means... dealing with the world; tarrying alongside it in the manner of performing, effecting and completing, but also contemplating, interrogating, and determining by way of contemplation and comparison.[16]

Here there is no focus on the "structure" or "essence" of contemplation, on the grammatical form of questions or the rhetorical form of comparison. Instead, Heidegger brings into view a body of distinctions, as between *contemplating* and *interrogating*. He is concerned not with language, but

with *languaging*. The concern with distinctions-in-practice—the focus on languaging—extends also into the physical world of what we would call objects:

> When, for example, we walk along the edge of a field but "outside it," the field shows itself as belonging to such-and-such a person, and decently kept up by him; the book we have used was bought at So-and-so's shop and given by such-and-such a person, and so forth. The boat anchored at the shore is assigned in its Being-in-itself to an acquaintance who undertakes voyages with it...[17]

So when the assertion "I am" occurs, concerned subjects and objects of concern *arise together*, in everyday activities—"performing," "effecting," "interrogating," making coffee, etc.—held apart from each other by and in a design that relates them. For us (or with us or in us), he says, as we engage in our normal everyday activities, *system arises*. We simply find ourselves in a world, an articulation, a network where jointed parts, like the boat, its owner, and their voyages, arise together. *Mea res agitur*, Heidegger adds: "I am what is being enacted," or "I am that which concerns me."[18]

Now what does this sound like? Sure enough, in my speakingthinking here I have merged again with the saying of Saussure. For it now appears that Heidegger, in his re-inventing of language, is speaking Saussurean. But unlike Saussure, Heidegger is speaking not just about language, but about our way of being: Dasein. What *human being* is, then, is the springing-to-clarity of a world in and with a system of distinctions, as between "contemplating" and "interrogating," or between decently kept fields and shabby ones, the coffee and the coffee pot and the kitchen. A *system of distinctions* is embodied in language, and that embodiment is us. (Is it hard to think of language as an embodiment—as a body? Doesn't that difficulty arise when we look at everything through Locke's subject/object/mind/world window?) Elsewhere Heidegger says that words "shelter" beings; his most famous dictum—"Language is the house of Being"—says the same. So we have come full circle—but of course, in a way, we started out full-circle, too, with the notion of language as articulation, the arising-together of reciprocally delimiting values along with the valuation of those values—their presence in and as our form of life. Heidegger is saying that world and language arise together, *for us*. "Language is the primordial poetry in which a people speaks being."[19] Here we have arrived at a base camp. *In a primordial poetry, people speak being.* Rest here.

We remember that Locke had defined his project as clearing away the terminological rubble, eliminating old systems, the received doctrines of his day. While Heidegger in his turn disapproves of the consequences that

follow from the received subject/object epistemology, his philosophy is not a firebrand call to revolution. He does not reject the tradition, for the "tradition is rich in truth."[20] But he does raise the question of what ocean the boat is sailing. Is it true, he asks, that all there is are subjects and objects? Or is there another intuition about our situation here that, while perhaps not yet as clear and distinct as a visual sense-impression, hints at another ocean altogether? Here is the second thesis:

> As this being-in-the-world, Dasein is, together with [this dealing with the world in ordinary actions], being-with-one-another, being with Others: having the same world there with Others, encountering one another, being with one another in the manner of being-for-one-another.[21]

So "being-in-the-world" and "being with Others" happen in conjunction. What could it mean that Dasein exists, not as a subject against objects, but as a "being-for-one-another"? How is being-for-one-another *the same* as that fundamental assertion of Dasein, *I am*? Part of Heidegger's point is this: when *we* say "*I am*," in our ordinary conversations, asserting our own existence, we do not mean that others and a world *are* too, arising commutually. Or rather, *if* we ever said "I am," if we ever felt it necessary to assert our own existence, we would not intend that commutual kind of being; we would be referring to our Cartesian self. That is to say, what *we* hear in that fundamental assertion is isolated subject against pre-existent structured objective world. What Heidegger would have us hear in it, instead, is "*Mitsein*"—with-being. We arise together as aspects of each other. Only then does speakinglistening make individuals from a manifold, dividing the workman from his tools.

In re-directing our attention to the commutual character of what we would hear as a Cartesian declaration of the subject's independence, Heidegger wants us, first, to begin to hear this silent assertion that we take for granted; and then to hear it in a different way. In the *hearing* it, we are opened to the possibility of hearing it newly. So in the present book we have already heard the echo of Saussure's idea of "arbitrariness" in language; now comes an echo of his idea of a sociality at the heart of language: Heidegger says there is a mutuality at the heart of being. How are we to hear this? As teachers, we want to explore the possibility of an ocean of mutuality, as it were behind the beginning of things.

Is Adam on his own, a single entity in a world of other single entities with no names yet? Heidegger says not. Rather, it is that along with Adam, along with naming, comes that lighting and hiding "proffer" of the world. Our world, the one *we* live in, arises together with Adam's naming, and not beforehand. How? How do people speak being? What is poetic creation, "originary" speaking, as Heidegger calls it? Saussure in-

sisted that language depends on human intercourse, dwells in sociality. If we see Adam on his own in a world alien to him until he names its components, we miss what Heidegger might be saying here. For if sociality is of the essence of the being of language, of naming, of poetry, then there is no poet without *soobschenie*, mutuality, being together. Here, Heidegger says, *I am = being-for-one-another.*

What are we to make, then, of Adam's *solitude*, a feature apparently designed into the scriptural account of the creation of world? For it would seem to contradict Heidegger's notion of original mutuality. Well, how does Heidegger think this mutuality that his second thesis invokes? Is it like commerce (individuals trading beads or currency or ideas with one another); or like diplomacy (the "art of letting another have your way"); or like politics (the "art" of compromise); or like statecraft (individual nations forming alliances and bargaining with other nations); or like another kind of billiard-ball mutuality on the subject/object table? What is "being-for-one-another"? We are listening, of course, for something bearing on what it is to teach—or better, to engage in teachinglearning. For in the prevalent subject/object paradigm, isn't a teacher an individual over against the students and over against the facts and ideas to be taught?

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger expands his thinking of mutuality, clarifying and making more distinct the related values he calls "being-in-the-world" and "being-with." Against our ordinary common-sense understanding of what another person is—a separate individual—Heidegger distinguishes another sense in which we can encounter Others:

> By "Others" we do not mean everyone else but me—those over against whom the "I" stands out. They are rather those from whom, from the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too... By reason of this *with-like* Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *Being-with* Others.[22]

When I watch a basketball game on television, I can get a sense of what Heidegger might mean here. Perhaps because of a deficiency in my own background, I cannot see individuals interacting as individuals on the court. What I see is more like the flow of the ball and the players back and forth. It looks miasmal to me, or rather miasmal-distillant (to borrow one of Faulkner's astounding coinages), colorful and active, but not designed to illuminate individual persons' colors or actions. I have heard about the amazing feats of individual players, and hard as it is for me to focus attention on one player in the maelstrom, I can sometimes see individual performances. But they always dissolve back into the totality of what is happening on the court. Individuals cannot be-in a basketball game with-

out being-with others. What I see for the most part is not individuals at all but team, maybe even just a "with-world" of teams in play.

But Heidegger is saying more than this. It is not only that we cannot play life alone, as individuals; not only that the individual player cannot shine without his team around him, feeding him passes. It is that we *are* each other. "Dasein in itself," Heidegger says, "is essentially Being-with."[23] Human being *is* being with others. Miasmal-distillant, we arise together. Am I not sitting here alone in my study writing this, then? What could be more indubitable? No. I apprehend my audience, I imagine readers' responses, I hear the muffled sounds of my children playing outside, I wonder where my wife has gone... There is no such thing as a me apart from these conversations. I exist when I am thinking of my wife and children, Descartes had said. What "thinking" means here, Heidegger says in his turn, is "language occurring." Try that exact substitution: I exist when I am language occurring. Language is the house of Being. It is not that I exist only when I am "communicating" with others, as Descartes recognized. But it is also not that I exist apart from others or from the world. The circumference of a circle does not exist apart from its radius; the front and back of a sheet of paper come along with each other. They are distinct but not separable. Same goes for a teacher and his students, a teacher and other teachers, the members of a family.

But since, in the subject/object paradigm of being, "communication" between "individuals" in a group is still of utmost concern for teachers, let us return now to see how Heidegger deals with the issue of communication. In the terms of his alternate paradigm, languaging—Saying—is being-for-one-another. If we grant, as before, that speaking and listening are not opposite, reciprocal processes, then

> Communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another.[24]

What is communication, then, in Heidegger's paradigm? It is of a "more general kind" than the informative assertion or the expression of feelings, paradigmatic cases of what the subject/object paradigm calls communication. For Heidegger, communication is the "Articulation of Being with one another understandingly": "Through [this more general kind of communication] a co-state-of-mind gets 'shared,' and so does the understanding of Being-with."[25] Let's say that Heidegger is pointing here to the classes we have all taught, ones where we would say that "channels were open," where the kids were listening and "getting" the material, where we could speak in "anticipation of an active responsive understanding" (Bakhtin's phrase), where the room was lit up with participation in ideas. In that kind of communication, Heidegger says, "Dasein-with is already essen-

tially manifest in a co-state-of-mind and a co-understanding." The kids are with it, the teacher can be with the kids where they are.

When a magic "co-state-of-mind" or "co-understanding" is present in the classroom, what *is* that? For we have all taught the other kind of class, too, where all our assertions were correct, perhaps where we even expressed our passion about the subject, and all eyes were glazed, nobody was home (or worse, where inattention and disruption were in charge of the class). The co-understanding present at those times (for this too is a form of Being-with) would be called something like boredom, maybe, or defiance. Heidegger distinguishes between several different ways in which "Being-with" can develop in our colloquy, ways not unfamiliar to a teacher:

> Being-with develops in listening to one another, which can be done in several ways: following, going along with, and the privative modes of not-hearing, resisting, defying, and turning away.[26]

When students are following the lesson, going along with the program of the class, there may be in the classroom a "listening" to one another that is working. But what is your reaction, ordinarily, when students resist, defy, or turn away from the lesson? If you are like me, you go away in the other direction—you clam up, too. "All right, I'm doing my part; y'all do yours! Shut up and pay attention!" Heidegger directs our attention not only to what teachers say and do, but to the *listening* present in the classroom. He would not ask us to change our behaviors, but to notice, first, the listening that is giving the behavior (and to notice it as *the* listening, not students' listening or teacher's listening.) Communication as the articulation of Being-together will occur according to the listening present in the room, welling up moment by moment, feeding the discourse of teacher and students, giving them what they say and how they be, determining how the class shows up, its "feel."[27] Defiance is a mode of listening to one another, as is rapt attention. If human Being is essentially Being-with, and what we call the world arises in Being-with, then listening is poetic. Listening is not reception. It is action. In Cartesian terms, remember, the intuition that gives us the data of sensation, constituting our world, is "*cameropoetic*," not a representing function but a *making of the articulated room in which we dwell together.* Here in Heidegger's formulation we are not, as teachers, the ones who know about the room and tell: we are speaking listening, listening that speaks. "The encountering saying of mortals is answering. Every spoken word is already an answer: counter-saying, coming to the encounter, listening Saying."[28] Our listening gives students the world they live in. And vice versa, of course. *Our common world is an encounter,* says Heidegger. *Being-with develops as we listen the possibility of sharing as the primordial poetry.* Here is the next base camp. By all means,

you should rest here overnight, then return to the lower camps to ferry some gear up to this higher elevation.

We *are* each other, Heidegger says. How is that? How are we to think that? Here is the third thesis:

> Being with one another in the world, having this world as being with one another, has a distinctive ontological determination. The fundamental way of the Dasein of world, namely, having world there with one another, is *speaking*. It is predominantly in speaking that man's being-in-the-world takes place.[29]

We are each other in speaking (what he means, of course, is speakinglistening). That is why Adam, the namer and the naming, dancer and dance, is pictured as alone. His solitude, in the Bible, marks the distinctness of man's way of being. What Bakhtin had called "utterance in anticipation of an active responsive understanding," what we have from time to time been calling languaging, becomes in Heidegger the speakinglistening that is Dasein.

In our epistemology of subject and object, I find I can barely hear the subtlety of Heidegger's point here. "The word gives being," he says. How are we to hear that? Again the original German contains a clue: "*gibt das Wort: das Sein.*" The colon makes it seem that Heidegger wants the "giving" of Word to be not preliminary to the event of Being, not the pre-condition or origin of Being, but co-eval with it. Word and Being arise together, not like cause and effect, and not even like soul and body, but like *address* and *acknowledgment*. When you are addressed, your being is acknowledged. In our presence to one another there arises the possibility of mutual conference, and that is a mutual conferring of Being. In the moment of Word, the moment when this mutual giving becomes possible, the moment of becoming together—that is when the kids turn to the teacher, the child to the parent, knowing each other in and as the possibility of giving Being, bringing forth. This is no solicitation by things of named classes, but a being-in-one-another, the "living We," as Buber calls it, that fulfills the present. This is the moment when Dustin and I make what we would ordinarily call "eye contact." Perhaps my reading of Heidegger gets a bit overenthusiastic here. As I did with Descartes, I may have put words in his mouth that he would not endorse. And even with "*Mitsein*," Heidegger does not quite capture the sense of freshness, of possibility, of vitality, of celebratory presence in those moments of sharing that make parenting such a treat and teaching such an exalted calling. For this we can look forward to Martin Buber.

World, thereness, and perception, "subjects" and "objects," arise together, in mutual support, like a system, a sailboat. *Dasein* exists in system, or better, in systeming. For not only do we make up systems, like

mathematics, to explore and describe—here comes the crucial step, the one which fulfills that hint of freedom alluded to earlier—we *are* that making-up. We *are* inventing. That is what the assertion "I am" is: it is Adam's naming, an inventing of Being, not only of my own but of others and of our world. Being, for humans, is inventing being. Languaging is the house of being because it bears the possibility of inventing being, of co-poiesis. And this is not only something that happened in the dim past, like a linguistic Big Bang. It happens, according to Heidegger, moment by moment as we speak with each other:

> In the manner in which Dasein in its world speaks about its way of dealing with its world, a *self-interpretation of Dasein* is also given. It states how Dasein specifically understands itself, what it takes itself to be. In speaking with one another, in what one thus spreads around in speaking, there lies the specific self-interpretation of the present, which maintains itself in this dialogue.[30]

In our dialogue in the teachers' lounge or the faculty meeting, then, we are not describing the facts about students or about school, just as in our classrooms we are not describing structures of facts. We are making up and maintaining the world in which our students and their school experiences (and ours) are occurring. We are stating how we understand ourselves, what we take ourselves to be—though I think Heidegger would say that the mode of this "statement" is more inference and implication, unsaid, like those declarations and assertions that were present in my responsewwhen Dustin interrupted with his urge to play. Spreading a world around in our speakinglistening, we are inventing the context for our common experience. Adam is *responsible*: in our speaking together we promise, pledge, and warrant a self-interpretation of the present.

Has *language* created the world we live in? Yes and no. What we call physical reality might or might not have some mode of being if there were no people to talk about it, to speak it. *For us*, though, it is *languaging* that embodies, manifests, realizes our being-together-in-a-world. Language lives as the trace, the spoor of our sharing. Language, including rules of grammar, syntax, putative deep structure, and all the rest, is what is left over after languaging, sharing, has given us being. "Language is fossil poetry," said Emerson. Languaging, establishing being—for us and among us—is the same as poetry. I am not an object, not my body; nor am I a subject, a *res cogitans*, a thinking thing. I exist in speakinglistening; *we* are in naming, languaging, systeming, distinctioning. Languaging is never left over; it is always with us, preparing the future by giving us world, self, selves, selvesworld.

NOTES

1. *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row Perennial Library, 1971), 122.
2. *Journal*, 1840.
3. See Thomas Sheehan, "A Normal Nazi," in *The New York Review of Books*, January 14, 1993, 30-5. For another way of listening to Heidegger, see Heinrich W. Petzet, *Encounters & Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929-1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993). This book may not have been out by the time Sheehan wrote his damning article; in any case he does not refer to it.
4. In R. Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 148.
5. *On the Way to Language*, 123.
6. *On the Way to Language*, 124.
7. *On the Way to Language*, 126.
8. *On the Way to Language*, 93.
9. Locke, *Essay*, IV.xii.6.
10. "Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry," in *Existence and Being* (London: Vision Press, 1956), 304.
11. In my re-inventing of Heidegger, I am disregarding any differences between "early," "middle," and "late" periods. For a thorough discrimination of these stages, see Gerald L. Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth and Poetry in the Later Writings* (Yale University Press, 1989).
12. *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry*, 305.
13. *The Concept of Time*, 6E.
14. The theses are published as part of *The Concept of Time*, tr. Wm. McNeil (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992).
15. *The Concept of Time*, 6E.
16. *The Concept of Time*, 7E.
17. *Being and Time*, 154.
18. *The Concept of Time*, 8E, 25.
19. *Being and Time*, 171.
20. *On the Way to Language*, 96.
21. *The Concept of Time*, 7E.
22. *Being and Time*, 154-5.
23. *Being and Time*, 156.
24. *Being and Time*, 205.
25. *Being and Time*, 205.
26. *Being and Time*, 206-7.

27. Gemma Corradi Fiumara says that the listening "impinges on the person who is speaking and thus ultimately reshapes the physiognomy of the context underlying the dialogue." (*The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening*, trans. Charles Lambert [London and New York: Routledge, 1997], 145.)
28. *On the Way to Language*, 129.
29. *The Concept of Time*, 8E.
30. *The Concept of Time*, 8E.

6
LANGUAGING AS SHARING

> When will the action of thinking endure, include, and refer to the presence of the living man facing us? When will the dialectic of thought become dialogic, an unsentimental, unrelaxed dialogue in the strict terms of thought with the man present at the moment?
>
> —M. Buber[1]

> A living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process.
>
> —M. Bakhtin[2]

We have now re-invented language as languaging, and we have begun to investigate how languaging and Being might be related, might modulate each other, on our way to re-inventing the wheel of our teaching as an embodiment of what Heidegger calls Saying. There is one more step to be taken, though, a further shift to be made before we attain that place, and for this shift we turn to Martin Buber, particularly to his difficult and immensely rewarding book *I and Thou.* For it still might sound as if languaging were no more than using language, as if using language were a skill in the contemporary sense of executing a set procedure, following grammatical rules with perhaps a canny regard for the social and psychological effects to be expected. In the domain of skill, even of social skill, we experience what Buber calls the "basic word I-It." Then our subject material comes represented in hierarchically ranked outlines, in videotapes, filmstrips, and drill sheets; and our students come in tracks, serried according to their academic history and test scores. In the world of "I-It" we look to predict the future of students on the basis of their past; we look for evidence to confirm our predictions that a demonstrated structure of

behavior will almost certainly produce the same results as it always has; or we seek to modify a student's structure so that it can deal with the structure of the material. We define and classify our students, we confirm and re-confirm our generalizations. Thus we are able to conclude that our experience with students makes sense.

Insofar as we are teachers, we will be dwelling in a different domain: that world of relation established by "the basic word I-You," the domain of sharing being. We want to expand on what Heidegger postulates about being-with, about being-for-one-another, about being-speaking-in-the-world; we want to feel beneath us the swell of another conversation mingled with the vocabulary of experience, where the past stakes its claim. For the vocabulary of experience cannot give us an ocean of mutuality, in which Saying and Being dwell together in the self-interpretation we spread around. Since the distinction between experience and mutuality is of such moment for our lives together, Buber devotes himself to developing the vocabulary of I-You against the rampant vocabulary of I-It that dominates the twentieth century. If Heidegger is the prophet of Being as housed in languaging, and thus in being-with (*Mitsein*), Buber is the prophet of I-You, of relation. He re-invents languaging as sharing.[3] For Buber, it is not language, or even languaging, that houses Being. For him, Being resounds in the originary mutuality of "encounter." If language is the house of Being, then encounter is the front porch of language.

Since I am treating them together, I should note that Buber found Heidegger's philosophy seriously deficient in that it "knows nothing of any essential relation with others or any real I-Thou with them which could breach the barriers of the self... that the individual does not have the essence of man in himself, that man's essence is contained in the unity of man with man, has entirely failed to enter Heidegger's philosophy."[4] In light of the passages quoted from Heidegger in the previous chapter, Buber's criticism seems to me unduly harsh, but I am reading Heidegger's philosophy of *Mitsein* as prefatory to Buber's notion of mutuality—a luxury unavailable to Buber himself. In important ways, Heidegger and Buber are contraries. But I do think there is a further step for teachers in Buber's thinking.

For both thinkers the matter of our relatedness crucially involves our languaging. "The mystery of the coming-to-be of language and that of the coming-to-be of man are one," says Buber.[5] But even if there flickers in and out of Heidegger's theses an idea very similar to this—the almost-identity of languaging, being-with, and being-for-one-another—Buber must still shift our notice away from language as the locus of this communion toward a notion of the ontological primacy of sharing, a communion of beings that seems to arise in a certain kind of *meeting*. When Dustin, at three, asks me a question about why some kids are bullies, or about how a

bobcat that he saw in the back of a pick-up truck had died, there is a certain feel to the conversation between us. Perhaps it is some kind of urgency I feel, some special edge: some kind of sharing is available to us then beyond merely verbal, informational contact. I can answer from my knowledge (or perhaps from my sophistication). But if I do, I have failed to touch that knife's-edge of encounter. And I may have missed the possibility of meeting, in which the "essence of man," in Buber's inadequate phrase, is somehow available between us. How may I share his attraction to, or perhaps fear of, the stilled potency of the bobcat? How do we, who love each other, name death? In speaking, if he and I are Saying, I *listen* the "word" I-You in these questions from a child, and we are awake not to interaction, but to possibility itself.

Buber begins his re-inventing of the ontological primacy of sharing: "The life of a human being," he asserts, "does not exist merely in the sphere of goal-directed verbs. It does not consist merely of activities that have something for their object."

> I perceive something. I feel something. I imagine something. I want something. I sense something. I think something. The life of a human being does not consist merely of all this and its like... For wherever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others. But where You is said there is no something. You has no borders.
>
> Whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation.[6]

In our twentieth-century vocabulary, in the paradigm of being made available there, Buber is hard to hear. What could it mean that You has no borders? Does saying You blot other things out? What is "standing in relation," if it is equivalent to "having nothing"? Does Buber mean You as a concept? No, for concepts have borders; indeed, concepts are valuable because of their edges. One says "the concept of the self" to render discrete a component idea in his analysis. Nor does Buber mean that saying You is an experience. In German the verb "to experience," *erfahren*, links up with *fahren*, to drive or go, and with *befahren*, to drive over the surface of something.[7] Going over the surfaces of things, our experience brings back to our consciousness a report on conditions that obtain, on the already established borders of phenomena. It is hard for us to distinguish between "experience" and "encounter," for in our language both words inexorably name that way of relating to objects that Descartes inaugurated and Locke codified so forcefully. The world of experience is "the world of It, the world of ordered objectivity and private subjectivity."[8]

Buber says "encounter": what then is *encounter*? I am using the generic word so as to discourage our tendency to reify, to make realities into objects, instances, things. (And *an* encounter is a real, concrete, in-the-world phenomenon.) As Buber distinguishes it, encounter is, first, a realm borne in the possibility of *greeting* another. For Buber, greeting is far from simply emitting or hearing the formula, "how do you do?":

> We greet those we encounter by wishing them well or by assuring them of our devotion or by commending them to God. But how indirect are these worn-out formulas... compared with the eternally young, physical, relational greeting of the Kaffir, "I see you!" or its American variant, the laughable but sublime "Smell me!"[9]

"Smell me!" is emphatically not to be translated as "Fit me into your category-system." It means something more like "*Distinguish* me as a presence. Get me in my strongest particularity." There is something "physical, relational" about greeting as encounter. Buber emphasizes the sense of bodily confrontation.[10] In our psychology, we might analyze the punk-rocker's pink spiky coif, the smoky knock-dead makeup and high-heeled boots, or the baggy "low-riders," and unlaced high-tops of the "homeys" as attempts to stake out an individual identity, to stand out from the straight crowd, or to assert membership in whatever cool scene happens to have spun out of mass culture this season. Though as Americans we applaud individual self-expression, these we might regard as, at best, pathetic imitations. Buber's premise asks us whether in the outrage to convention there might not be another drive, potent if unpurposed and unrecognized: perhaps we could see the pomaded spikes as an attempt to get into relation, a lunge toward encounter. It is a *greeting*. Its purpose is to "smell" bad to us, so that we can smell again, have to smell again. The challenge to authority is—*can* we suppose this?—really a challenge to the world of I-It, a commitment, however ill-mannered and ill-managed, to restoring the fecundity of I-You relatedness. Until I listen for this note of commitment, when such a youth confronts me in a class I am not confronted, I am affronted. I am speechless. I am outside his world, he is outside mine. How is this breach to be filled up? Instead of an answer, Buber has provided this riddle, this hint: in the moment when we receive another as other, as You instead of It, we have nothing. But "having nothing" is positive, decisive, crucial. For it is the condition that allows for, calls for, *a naming like Adam's*.

One rainy, gusty afternoon recently, as I was poring over my manuscript up here in my Cartesian garret, I was surprised to hear excited voices outside the window. Since the words on the monitor had begun to blur anyway—I noticed my bleary eyes at the same moment as I heard the voices—I got up from the computer and, hugging the wall of the building

so as to stay under the eave, descended the outside stair to the yard. As there was a lull in the rain when I reached the ground, I ran across the open space between my little house and the big house, up onto the covered front porch, where I found my wife with our year-old daughter in her arms, and my slightly larger son, soaked through and dripping into a puddle at his feet, a tentative grin on his countenance. He blurted:

> "I don't know what came over me—I was just running and running around like crazy in the yard..."
>
> "*I* know," I said.
>
> «What?" he asked breathlessly.
>
> "*Rain-running happiness.*»

His face erupted in sunshine, suffused with joy and satisfaction; and I saw in his eye, heard in his voice, the recognition of our secret, exuberant affinity. Where did that moment come from? The moment was a gift: what gave it? Is a simple psychological explanation—a father's sentimental pride in his own son—all there is to it? The word "parent" is from Latin *parere*, meaning to bring forth. Though I am the parent, I have no sense that anything I *did*, consciously or not, caused that moment of what was really heart-stopping communion. I did not *tell* my child about rain-running happiness; I taught him. We invented rain-running happiness together.

When I get You, then, when I *listen* for encounter, what I get is not a thing or set of things, but the *context* in which things can take place. What I get is a standing-in-relation in which the possibility of inventing world, inventing shared or mutual being, springs up, suddenly present, like a scent.

> When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things.
>
> He is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. Neighborless and seamless, he is You and fills the firmament. Not as if there were nothing but he; but everything else lives in *his* light.[11]

So encounter with You brings with it, as it were, a resplendently fulfilled present world. We might have heard this as a world filled with ongoing experiences, varied and significant; but Buber is careful to scotch this snake. "Experience is remoteness from You,"[12] he says; far from multiplying or deepening our experiences, strengthening the borders between the

objects and the objectives in our lives, to speak You is to pass through the arena where borders matter into an arena of immediate presence, a realm where "eye contact," which occurs in the vocabulary of borders between beings, becomes communion of beings. There are no "significant others" in this realm; the popular phrase is a contradiction in terms. As long as an "other" is significant, it is not truly an other, but merely the locus of a category-system, an already designed set of qualities and attributes, and not a possibility for designing being. A "significant other," in the sense of one who answers to some set of preconditions, cannot really be there for us, for we are present instead to that conceptual screen. Such an other wears plenty of deodorant. As do most of our students. As do we, most of the time. I mean, of course, metaphysical deodorant. Our metaphysics of objectivity, of content and form, data and interpretation, fact and value; all this masks the odor of You, the scent of encounter.

In that redolent moment when we *distinguish* another as other, as You, we have nothing. For Buber, though, "having nothing" is a felicitous condition. For as it is the fecundity of I-You relatedness, it is the possibility for designing being, for inventing rain-running happiness. Here we are as far from Locke as we get. For the empiricist, things are what they are "by the necessity of their own nature." Their names represent their fixed natures, discovered by experiment. By contrast, the You Buber means, the essence of the basic word I-You, is a naming like Adam's. In his originating saying, Adam declared "I name You," and thus became himself: "becoming I, I say You," echoes Buber. The fecundity of I-You relatedness, the possibility for designing being, arises together with such a naming, a naming that does not record discoveries, but makes them possible. Here again is that recurring echo of the *originarity* of naming.

As I try to listen my way into this realm of encounter where naming grows, as Buber reveals it little by little, I am met with a difficulty that seems insuperable. For Buber himself says that you cannot define or elucidate or detail the realm of the You, the realm of sharing, or of shared being; "It cannot be surveyed: if you try to make it surveyable, you lose it."[13] Consequently, "you cannot come to an understanding *about* it with others."[14] To survey the realm of sharing, of shared being, you would have to draw in lines and boundaries, establishing just those borders by which the It-world persists in its intelligibility. If the You-world were to become intelligible in the usual way, Buber seems to say, it would suddenly become the It-world. How can I deal with it as an item in an exposition then? More pointedly, how can I purport to recommend that teachers devote themselves to this immitigably inscrutable non-phenomenon?

That, it would seem, is a killer question. Doesn't it just stop the show? "How can I get out of this trap?" I ask myself. "My own key witness just

said something that casts doubt on my whole case!" Let us replace the question by asking where it comes from: where does the question get its impetus, its force? Where are we standing, you and I, when we ask it? You are the reader and I am the writer, but what does that presume; what is projected out ahead of us as the model for our interaction? What do we expect from each other? Well, what is the vocabulary of our conversation? The notion of a "case" to be made involves the vocabulary of evidence and its valid use, of logical consistency, of persuasion: of meritorious argument. And we are indeed (whether we like it or not) playing the game in that arena, for those stakes. We are pulled into that arena, are we not? But it is exactly the point to notice the arena, to be able to give some body to the context in which forces operate. This is what Buber is doing in *I and Thou*: he is *distinguishing* two arenas for us so we can see the one against the other. It looks as if he is describing the It-world and the You-world, experience and encounter, but he is not. He is naming them, inventing them. For the sake of that rain-running happiness, for the promise it offers, I want to stay with him a bit longer. What else can we glean about naming?

Having now begun to distinguish the realm of I-You from the realm of I-It, Buber elaborates on ways the two realms appear, fading or erupting, supplanting each other like the faces and vase, or the rabbit and duck:

> Every You in the world is doomed by its nature to become a thing or at least to enter into thinghood again and again. In the language of objects: everything in the world can—either before or after it becomes a thing—appear to some I as its You. But the language of objects catches only one corner of actual life.
>
> The It is the chrysalis, the You the butterfly. Only it is not always as if these states took turns so neatly; often it is an intricately entangled series of events that is tortuously dual.[15]

We must be careful not to hear in these sentences a relapse into the ordinary opposition between the "language of objects" and the "language of feeling," say, or the "language of words." For that would plunge us right back into the quagmire of referentiality (words versus objects) or expression (facts versus feelings).

But Buber does envision an alternation between states of being that, though intricately entangled, are radically distinct: between "bodily confrontation" on the one hand, and dwelling in the structured array of preformulated ideas, using the taxonomy of objects and objectives, on the other.

> The I of the basic word I-It, the I that is not bodily confronted by a You but surrounded by a multitude of "contents," has only a

> past and no present. In other words: insofar as a human being makes do with the things that he experiences and uses, he lives in the past, and his moment has no presence. He has nothing but objects, but objects consist in having been.[16]

Buber here fairly designates our occupational hazard. Here is that backhoe, scooping up the soil of the past. Surrounding ourselves with a multitude of contents, the contents of the curricula mandated, the core knowledge we devote ourselves to dispensing, we teachers may often be led to make do with things that we experience and use, with sentences whose kinds we already know. (We might ask Wittgenstein "*Why* are there countless kinds of sentences?" Buber's answer might be: because there are countless unrepeatable encounters.) And then, without a present, we can have no presence in the classroom among our students. Thus we may often lose even the tortuously dual series of events that fuse knowledge into encounter. We may find the chrysalis empty. Even if we are not tied to a textbook's structure of information, or to a curriculum guide, we may find ourselves in the It predicament. For we are led into It by the vocabulary, the conversation of our culture. Fine for us if in the intricately tangled series of events that makes up a classroom day, there shine out sometimes moments of this *con*frontation, this being with another being.

> But the It-humanity that some imagine, postulate and advertise has nothing in common with the bodily humanity to which a human being can truly say You... The ideas are just as little enthroned above our heads as they reside inside them; they walk among us and step up to us... Every word must falsify; but look, these beings live around you, and no matter which one you approach you always reach Being.[17]

And here is the delight of our profession, the source of our calling. Every word, Buber must mean, in the absence of the "basic word I-You," cements the objectivizing, structurizing way of dealing with phenomena. It is not that the basic word of relation must *replace* the words used to refer to things in the object world, as if it were one of them. It is rather that the It-words can only live truly among us—that means, we can only be students—when they, It-words and It-world, have become the occasions of our relating to one another.

> After one has stood in relation, one can no longer live with, or "deal with" the things and beings of the world in the same objectifying way... Our natural tendency is to transform relation into an experience that can be located, staked down, in space and time, since it is by such an approach that our knowledge about the world is secured. But the kind of continuity appropriate to relation is of another sort. From the point of view of one who has

> stood in relation, the world of It, the structure of need and its response, has a new, non-threatening status. Such a person finds himself entering again and again into the world of It with a kind of expectancy, a kind of reverence which he did not have before all the things and beings because one or another of them has been the vehicle or occasion, the minister or partner of relation. The It-world is preserved in its own necessary distance and integrity, but that world has been transformed, has been penetrated by relation.[18]

As a description of the attitude toward the world we might hope our teaching would engender in our students, this is not bad. It suggests that the fact of relation is the soil where Being grows. Teaching that does not welcome and nurture encounter is organic in no ecology. And to encounter others, in the way peculiar to human beings, is to share naming with them—sharing naming being a tautology, of course. Until I can share naming of world with my student, then—until we can share in having nothing—we will not have world to live in together, only the separated worlds given from the past.

If relation, sharing, I-You, transforms our world in this way, could we provide for this kind of standing-in-relation, this pregnancy, this expectancy, in a classroom between teachers and students? How does a teacher speak the basic word of relation so that students are included in what we have called the space of inventing? Is it the same kind of speaking as when he or she delivers information?

For Buber, who devoted considerable attention to the problems of pedagogy,[19] real education happens in the space of the particular kind of sharing we have been pointing to. Already this contrasts with the space of concern about curriculum *per se*. For the question at the base of our concern with curriculum is too often said to be: what facts and skills should an adult know and have? Then the further question is implied: in what order should a child learn these? Here we are caught up in considering the "structure of need and its response." What do adults need to know, and how do we need to teach these things? And to answer these questions, we are impelled to look at ways of building sequences of concepts in the subject matter of a discipline, even if we have one eye on stages of "cognitive readiness" or psychological development. If what a teacher does is select materials and activities—curriculum—that will make a difference for his students, transforming their ideas, interests, and abilities, then how is that achieved? How does it happen that the curriculum, however selected and ordered, promotes our entering again and again into the world of It, the world of experience and knowledge, with reverence and expectancy? What is there *besides* need and its satisfaction?

Here, I think, is the way Buber might answer, commenting on that moment of rain-running happiness I shared with Dustin:

> Sent forth from the natural domain of species into the hazard of the solitary category, surrounded by the air of a chaos which came into being with him, secretly and bashfully he watches for a Yes which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another.[20]

My dripping, exultant child did not know what had come over him. I think it was that his exuberant animality had surfaced briefly, unexpectedly—an exuberance that, to one whose language is becoming human, looks like chaos. He had had in that moment of running a glimpse, as though back over his shoulder, of the natural domain; and from the perspective of the solitary category of *I, me* that develops as our human language refines its categorization, he could only be amazed at his exuberance. Sheepish, bashful, he could only watch for an answering Yes from another human person. When I am available to be that person, it is the best luck I ever have. For it satisfies more deeply than any It can reach.

What is the relevance for teaching and learning of this moment of mutual confirmation? Is there a way of planning for such moments, designing them into the fabric of classroom events? Here is Buber commenting in a less lyrical mode on classroom practice:

> ...the teacher must relate himself to his students... as one being to other beings; as a mature being to maturing ones... his guidance should emanate not from above to below, from his lectern to their desks, but from a genuine interrelatedness and exchange of experience—the experiences of a full life and those of lives still unfulfilled but no less significant. What is required is not merely a search for information from below and a handing down of information from above, nor a mere interchange of questions and answers, but a genuine dialogue into which the teacher must enter directly and unselfconsciously, though he must also guide and control it. This dialogue ought to be continued until in fact it culminates in a wordless being-with-one-another.[21]

We note that Buber does not eschew the vocabulary of experience when he is envisioning an encounter between a teacher and students. So much for absolute categories. But we do have a hint of his distinction between arenas in the difference between "dialogue" and something in which dialogue "culminates." And of course, in my unplanned encounter with Dustin in the rain, it was not a matter of beginning a dialogue and then continuing *toward* a "wordless being-with-one-another"; but of the scent of being-together springing out into presence, suddenly freshening. It was a momentary gift, to which I could only be open. The question for the rest

of the chapter is, what is this openness? How are we to open ourselves appropriately to the experience of a "wordless being-with-one-another" in the setting of a school? Must it remain a matter of luck?

Here is one last passage from Buber, the most explicit specification of "dialogue" or "encounter" that he provides:

> The chief presupposition for the rise of genuine dialogue is that each should regard his partner as the very one he is. I become aware of him, aware that he is different, essentially different from myself, in the definite, unique way which is peculiar to him, and I accept whom I thus see, so that in full earnestness I can direct what I say to him as the person he is...
>
> But what does it mean to be "aware" of a man in the exact sense in which I use the word? To be aware of a thing or a being means, in quite general terms, to experience it as a whole and yet at the same time without reduction or abstraction, in all its concreteness. But a man, although he exists as a living being among living beings and even as a thing among things, is nevertheless something categorically different from all things and all beings. A man cannot really be grasped except on the basis of the gift of the spirit which belongs to man alone among all things, the spirit as sharing decisively in the personal life of the living man, that is, the spirit which determines the person. To be aware of a man, therefore, means in particular to perceive his wholeness as a person determined by the spirit; it means to perceive the dynamic center which stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of uniqueness. Such an awareness is impossible, however, if and so long as the other is the separated object of my contemplation or even observation, for this wholeness and its center do not let themselves be known to contemplation or observation. It is only possible when I step into an elemental relation with the other, that is, when he becomes present to me. Hence I designate awareness in this special sense as "personal making present."[22]

Here Buber's picture of the nature of "genuine dialogue" does not include parameters such as rational argument, mutual understanding, consensual agreement, or the empowerment of problem solving, however the latter may be defined.[23] The simplest tasks of cognition fall away into the background, out of focus. Here there are no taxonomies of educational objectives, no stages of cognitive development. The picture simply elides the question of motivation, as if that phenomenon occurs neither because of a choice by one partner nor out of the procedure that a group may adopt, but by virtue of a kind of awareness that is not perceptual, or at least not

perceptual in the sensory meaning. Though Buber (here as elsewhere) does envision the efficacy of a personal commitment to genuine encounter, he gives us no techniques, no recipes for "having nothing," beyond a description of its "presupposition."[24]

Dialogue here seems to depend on something called "stepping into an elemental relation" with another, attuning our awareness to the person as uniquely "determined by the spirit." It may be useful to notice that we are uncomfortable (if we are) with this formulation: how do we use it, where does it direct us? If, as Buber seems to counsel, we are to step away from the comforts of our already formulated structures, how is such a stepping up to another (or others) and stepping into relation accomplished, or made possible or likely? Does it require an endorsement of some kind of spiritual practice? I think Buber would say no: what it requires is a conscious step away from the position of contemplation or observation that takes the other, the student, for its "separated object," and thus away from the paradigm that governs our perceptions most of the time.[25] This is not a matter of enhancing attitudes of acceptance of tolerance or even openness to others. For attitudes are *my* attitudes, attributes of an individual. But the shift from cognition to being is a breakthrough. It is a matter of being *with* and *for* another person, addressing myself to "the very one he is." "*Becoming I, I say You.*" This step into an "elemental relation," with students and teacher if not with parent and child, needs to be prepared for; it is an opportunity we watch for, even if it cannot by its very nature be designed into the curriculum. Since observation and procedure are such a large part of the algorithm of teaching, we need to make room somehow for these prescriptionless moments. It is not that the position of objective observation is wrong or useless, but that it is insufficient, incomplete. We could work on bringing it about that we have opportunities to turn to each other in "speech in its ontological sense," making available in our speaking an openness to Being. For another feature of encounter, of the step into elemental relation, is that it arises along with the fact of *approach* between persons, with speaking together, with the phenomenon of "address."

In the classroom as in everyday being, there is the process of information transmission, of describing and cataloguing, of exposition and illustration, and there may be also the moments of *address*, recurring like lightning flashes, like the *mana* of primitive myths,[26] without which no exposition can proceed powerfully for long: these are the moments in which teacher and student or students turn to face each other in recognition, standing in nothing, no system of rules or of roles, but acknowledging their relatedness; the moments when eye contact becomes communion. In such a room we are not speaking *about* relatedness; instead we are speaking it with our being. We are coming from a conversation of relatedness, not going toward one. To come from a conversation of relatedness is to

generate relatedness. Our languaging in such a space occurs as sharing, as communion, as service. In such a space there is no need; only wonder, only grace. Imagine that space among all the others which flicker into and out of your classroom.

We have now re-invented languaging as sharing. Far from merely using a language, when we are languaging we are Adam, sharing (we might say) God's power to share her being with the human family; poets who make experience as well as subjects who undergo it; designers rather than only recipients of our life together. We are all, teachers and students together, parents: bringers forth.

See how far we are now from Descartes, or rather from where Descartes' Method for Rightly Conducting the Reason led. For Descartes began with the sole subject, the irreducible "I" sitting by the fire, looking out from its study and confronting what became *the* world. Heidegger has let us notice how inexorable this starting point has become—"What is more indubitable," he asks archly, "than the givenness of the 'I'?"—and points to the consequences that attend on starting at this point. For starting with *this* givenness leads us to "disregard everything else that is 'given'—not only a 'world' that is, but even the being of other 'I's.'"[27] Once we separate subject from object, Heidegger means to say—once we interpret the *cogito* as the activity of a solitary consciousness reflecting on its environment—we have boarded a boat destined to sail in a single ocean. For then we are imprisoned—in epistemology; in knowledge—immured, as Keats lamented, in our "sole self." Each of us, in this paradigm, looks like a single plank. We can build things out of the boards, like houses, ships, towns, and cities; and each plank and each construction retains its identity within the larger construction—its "values," its rights, its individual duties, its political position, its place in a platform, its national destiny, its holy mission...

In these complementary, mutually reinforcing paradigms of structured knowledge and individual identity, my parenting of Dustin is an affair of positionality, of reinforcement, of nailing in place a structure. It is a struggle of agendas, a manipulation, a battle between right and wrong, correct and incorrect, proper and improper behavior. I expect to keep fighting that battle where it is necessary, and (if past is prologue) even where I am pulled into it when it is not necessary. And there is a way of being in the battle that engages our freedom and our responsibility for each other, that derives from and nourishes our mutuality. In the new paradigm instantiated in the philosophies of Heidegger and of Buber, individuals are not primordial. Languaging is. Speakinglistening is. Inventing is. Buber calls it "the common life of the word," and he means to emphasize two notions—"common life" and "word"—equally.[28] Languaging is the house of our common living, of our membership. In

this paradigm, parenting, as it comes out of encounter, is risky, lucky, an affair of transformation, generating context rather than generated content. Here, communion precedes and supercedes communication.

All right, then—what contributes to our openness to communion? Will we no longer have to plan our lessons in this brave new world of relatedness? Or do we just depend on our good luck? How can we be responsible professionals if we depend on luck? Well, what is behind the opposition between planning and control (work) and luck—and, we may notice, the implied denigration of "mere luck"? Is not luck different from skill, maybe even opposed to skill, maybe even a little shady, like gambling? Notice how the conversation has shifted now: we were talking about the virtue (which means strength) of communion, its power in parenting; and our listening has wrenched the topic around to the vacuity (emptiness or inanity) of mere luck. We were talking about the possibility of power, and we ended up talking about our need for control. We were talking about the presence to be found in personal encounter, and we slid into talk of gambling.

Yes, my parenting, of Dustin and with my students, insofar as it partakes of communion, is a matter of luck. But it is not "just" luck. It is a matter of availability for communion—and I am not available for communion unless "I" am at risk. It is not that communion entails *danger*—it is that going forth to the adventure of communion is in fact a risking of what I think I know and who I have considered myself to be. It entails a willingness to commit oneself to something beyond the preservation or enhancement of an image of oneself.[29] When you commit yourself to white water in a canoe, you have a life jacket on to safeguard your ongoing identity, to preserve your personal continuity. But why risk a capsizing, a dunking, if there were not something greater than preservation to be won, something beyond the horizon of past accomplishments? Either I speak the basic word I-It, thereby cementing "my" identity as a thinking thing among extended things, a past with no present; or I speak I-You. What is it, we are asking, to speak I-You? How is this "speaking" different from the using of objects and objectives that we will be doing at the same time, most of the time? For speaking I-You is not a technique. There are three sides to an answer—or perhaps three related inquiries.

For there to be communion there has first to be the *possibility* of communion, of an I-Thou knowing—the possibility of ontology as *distinct* from the epistemology of I-It. Buber calls this distinct realm the "ontology of the interhuman."[30] It will help, then, to dwell at some length in the conversation in which the two realms are distinguished. That is the purpose of Buber's entire work, and it is the purpose of this book to let us begin listening in on that conversation, partaking of it, participating in its possibility. As we begin to gather in more and more of the vocabulary of being

together—which is the vocabulary of adventure—we may find ourselves open to moments of sharing with students that quicken the bloodstream of our profession.

Since we are Adam, now, we—teachers and students together—can be responsible for the speakinglistening that occurs. In the beginning can be our word. We can be responsible, together, for the Saying of the classroom. Lessons seldom speak to students on their own. They occur for *us* in the conversation that gives our world. The question is, what conversation are we dwelling in? What *kind* of conversation is it? If it is a conversation about structures of meaning, about the (correct or correctible) representation of knowledge, is it also a conversation in which *naming* is expected and honored? Is it a conversation that calls for, pulls for, that turning to each other in which our freedom and our responsibility dwell? Does the classroom allow for that "personal making present" that is at the heart of responsible confrontation? Can we *greet* one another in our classes?

First, then: to open the possibility of speaking and listening "I-You," we may remind ourselves of these questions. Keeping them before us may help open us for communion, even in the midst of communication. Just voicing these questions may open us for the possibility that arises in the face-to-face encounter.

Next, look for examples of knowledge conversations—speaking and listening in which the vocabulary is tuned to the epistemology channel. You will find them everywhere, particularly in discourse about schooling, but also in the discourse which *makes up* the schooling we purvey. Here is one taken from the commentary printed on a road map of part of the Pisgah National Forest in North Carolina (the scriptural place name is entirely coincidental):

> Where does the name Pisgah come from?
>
> Mount Pisgah was the biblical name for the mountain from which Moses saw the promised land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.
>
> Local legend attributes the naming of Mt. Pisgah to Reverend James Hall, a gun-toting, whiskey-drinking Presbyterian minister, who acompanied General Griffith Rutherford's 1776 expedition against the Cherokee into western North Carolina. Impressed by the bountiful French Broad River basin, visible from the mountain, he drew upon his knowledge of the Bible to name the peak Mt. Pisgah.

In this conversation—for the map is speaking as we listen—we hear that the source of a name is knowledge of the past. The modern peak is named in analogy with, or in imitation of, a peak with similar characteristics that

we learned about by studying the Bible. If there were to be a test on this text, the question would be "Where does the name Pisgah come from?" And the correct answer would be: it comes from the Bible. To a student who remembered the analogy triggered by the sight of the French Broad, we might give extra credit. But how could we bring into our classes the actual experience James Hall, the Adam of that moment, might have had when he first saw the great river valley spread before him in the distance, shimmering in the morning? For the Bible did not name the peak, he did. Where did *he* get the name? From being with his fellow soldiers in the wilderness, legend says. He spoke the name into their listening.

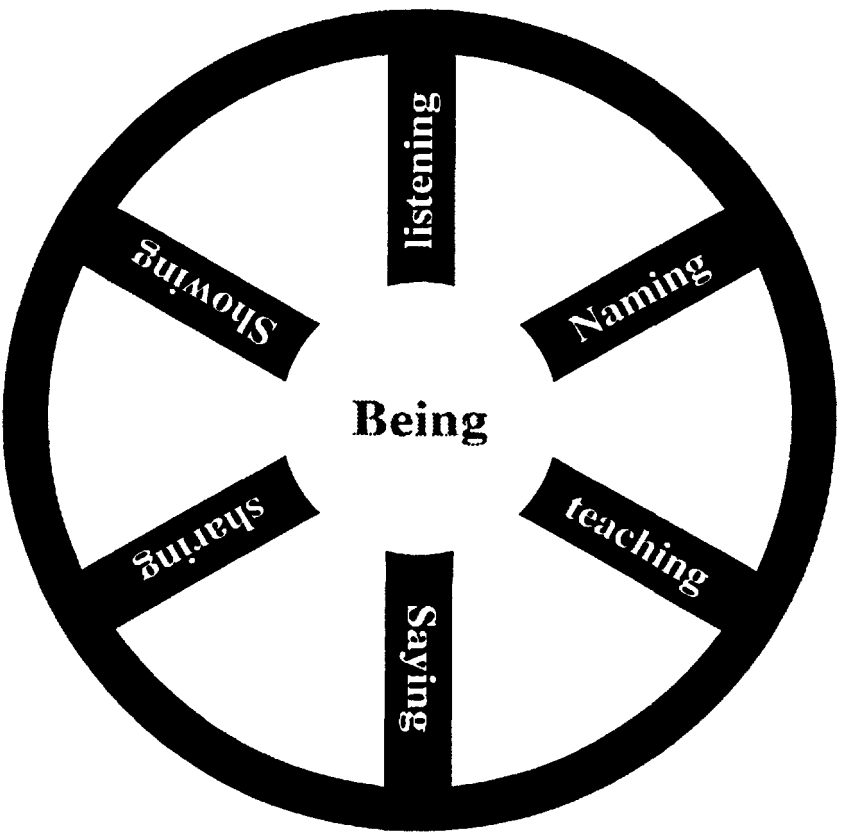
Could we get *sharing in the wilderness* into our classrooms along with the knowledge conversations? What if we could take our students out into the city to name the buildings, the streets for themselves? What if we could, in the "confines" of our regular classrooms, build with students the edifice of knowledge as a house of shared names? In the arena of inventing, coming in to the wilderness together, we are present not to our separate agendas, our scripts, but to each other. As teachers, in the arena of listening for inventing, what practices or activities would occur as embodiments of sharing, would enable, among us, presence to each other? In a lecture, to a hundred or a thousand students, can a teacher *listen* to and for the students? Can she hear them listening to the lecture? If we ask ourselves how our standard practices bring forth the possibility of listening, we may open a space in our classrooms that enables participation. Refer back now to the previous chapter (page 121), where you listed the activities of your class that made sense with the subject/object paradigm of knowledge in the background. Now make up, invent new activities (or re-invent the old ones) *from* the alternate paradigm of a sharing that is poetry. (If you have trouble doing this, read the next chapter first.)

Second, then: looking for, listening for opportunities to educe that kind of sharing from our daily activities may also help open us for communion. Of course it may have to be a wilderness of words, not woods. And we will need to inquire into this: what *is* wilderness? Perhaps the wilderness students encounter in school is a *tabula rasa*; but it is one in which our naming allows for our dwelling. The confrontation Buber means is not between subjects and objects, and not between subjects and other subjects, either. Buber's confrontation is "the essence of man"; "contained in the unity of man with man": it is Dasein that is Mitsein, languaging that is sharing of this particular undetermined and indeterminate but not random character.

A conversation that partakes of naming is poetry, not because things need names, or because anyone can call anything whatever he wants to call it, but because *naming is sharing*. At those shining moments of breakthrough when we feel that whatever we paint into the canvas of the class

hour will fulfill the purposes of the lesson, to the curriculum, of schooling, of our students—then we are poets, existing in our speakinglistening of each other, sharing as mages of origination, making, naming. This way of being together is the antithesis of manipulation.

At the beginning of the road, the signs pointed to a simple equation: Teacher = Inventor, which we quickly re-read as Teacher = Co-inventor. As we have been re-inventing this wheel of Saying along with Heidegger and Buber, we now get simultaneous equations, or rather a circle of values related like spokes:



Teaching belongs in this wheel by virtue of its affinity with naming, with poetry, with sharing. Teaching is Saying: listening that speaks our Being as namers, poets, dwellers in the co-poetic word. The spokes of the wheel of Saying are not related to each other causally. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, they are phenomena among which there is "solidarity."[31] They are values in a system, terms in a vocabulary. With this wheel of Saying we have begun to construct a system of terms, a *conversation* to embody the pragmatic ontology of encounter that Buber has been urging. When we had naming as *labelling*, we were breathing the vocabulary of representation: of portrayal, communication, adequacy; of knowledge and skill; of *educare*. With naming as *sharing*, as co-poiesis, as the scent of encounter, we breathe a rarer atmosphere. True, what we call oxygen is necessary to sustain our physical life. But must we rely on representation as our founding and final vocabulary? Can we let the vocabulary of being together and inventing say its Saying to us? Let us return to the dictionary: can we blend the two vocabularies, can we let them support one another?

As we noted earlier, Heidegger proposes that "Say" means "to show, to let appear, to let be seen and heard."[32] Saying *allows for* a phenomenon. Saying provides the space for Being, and it is a space that opens *in an encounter with another, a con-frontation*. When I bend to listen to Dustin's tale of magic, to take his tale as if it were magic, then we are confronted, not *by* but *in* each other. In confrontation, we *be with* each other in a world. What is confrontation? What is it to speak I-You? What is this openness? The bending down to Dustin's eye-level is not, it seems to me now, a mere adjunct to being open. While my automaticity directs me to stand up straight, to speak to them in generalizations and assertions preformulated and warranted by my adult experience, the getting out among students, where they sit in the classroom, and actually bending to them, embodies for me now some of the praxis, the vocabulary, of openness. More of the practical vocabulary follows in the next chapter.

But to return to the other embodiment, to the etymological playing—my German-speaking consultant does not find the sense of "letting appear for another" under *sagen* or *dichten*. Heidegger may be inventing a sense of Saying that suits his own intentions. To see if it suits ours, let us investigate this fabrication: can we listen to it? Can we let it confront us?

The imputed sense of poetic co-origination does appear in the Old Norse *saga*—legend, fable, myth—also adjoined in Heidegger's "etymology" of Saying. And in the myriad English uses the sense of letting or causing a state of affairs to appear, out of nowhere or out of an indistinct miasma, mingles with the sense of describing or reporting on an extant structure of fact.

> 1829 Gibbon says that the French monarchy was created by the bishops of France.

Gibbon's saying, it seems presumed, goes far toward establishing the bishops' constitutive role. However, we still have less an etymology than a partial compendium of usage, partial in the sense of incomplete and partial in the sense of favoring a particular view. Just as you can quote from Scripture to support nearly anything, so the message from etymology seems to depend on who you are.

That is to say, there may be an opportunity for poetry here, for generating something together. The word arises along with the possibility of confrontation. In the present foray into the dictionary we have been trying to find evidence for Heidegger's "definition" of Saying. If we listen now "through" the wheel of Saying—one of whose spokes is teaching—there arises a new possibility. And following its hint, we find that the closest thing to a match for Heidegger's notion of Saying as *co-* creation occurs precisely in an old English source for our word "teach":

> *tæcan*: to offer to view, present; to show an object to a person so that the object may be attained by the person, to show a way, a place, etc.; to show a person the direction that must be taken, to direct, to cause a certain direction to be taken; to show the course that must be followed...[33]

Even more strongly here, the person of the other is included with us, present for us, along with and as a condition of the attainment of an end. We may hear in the old definition an echo of Buber's distinction: to offer, to present, to show, to direct—all these require and embody *con*frontation. So the once primary sense of our word for teaching resonates with what Heidegger and Buber have been saying about speaking, listening, and dwelling together:

> To speak *to* one another means: to say something, show something to one another, and to entrust one another mutually to what is shown. To speak with one another means: to tell of something jointly, to show to one another what that which is claimed in the speaking says in the speaking, and what it, of itself, brings to light.[34]

The family resemblance between the Old English word for "teach" and the ontological sense of "to speak" is unmistakable. Is it not? What do you think?

Third, then: what if we committed ourselves to this vocabulary of teaching, this association among the values of the wheel of Saying? What is the "essence of man"? Is it a *structured* essence, or is it possibility? Namers, poets, dwellers in the word, we mortals get to share, for *our listening with language, ourlistening, is sharing*. Opening a life and feeling it touch our

present world, we enter into the area of our dwelling together. Being together is the possibility of inventing. And the way of our being together—the way of ourbeing—is listening. Following even further the wheel's hint, its beckoning toward an area of dwelling together for teachers and students, we find that the correlative of *teaching*—of *tœcan*—is not *learning*. It is *listening*, listening of a particular character:

> hlosnian: to listen, be silent in expectation of hearing, listen for the coming of a person, watch, await, be on the lookout
>
> *hlystan*: To list, listen to, hearken
>
> Hê sceal bôclârum hlystan swŷdé georne ("he must pay diligent attention to the teaching of books")
>
> Man láreówum hlyste ("let teachers be listened to")

What I am Saying is not a function of my words only—it is a function of my listening-for and of my being-toward. Erect or slouching, marching or sauntering, Saying dwells in posture and carriage as in the remark, in the lecture. Saying is a function of the body, of bodies as vehicles of spirit, or maybe as homes for spirit. What is the conversation in which my/our world occurs? Speakinglistening Showingsaying. How do I know what I have said? I be silent in expectation of hearing, I pay diligent attention to the encountering answer, the listening Saying, the Being- toward-others-and-myself of my fellows. I take us for poets.

One morning, distressed at lost sleep or something else, I asked my wife: "Is Dustin always like this in the mornings?" As if defending his right to be a little boy, she shot back "Yep—there's nothing wrong with the way he's being!" Had I said there was anything wrong with him? Had my peevish tone implied a denigration of his behavior? Clearly there was more going on in our interchange than encoding and decoding, than exchange of information. My question lived partly in her listening and partly in my speaking: it lived in our speakinglistening. But what Heidegger and Buber are saying is *not* that there is also a psychological side, a matter of shadings and nuances, as well as the more overt character of the exchange of words. It would be easy to observe in this interchange that my wife was listening with a lot of unexpressed feelings in the background. Perhaps she heard my question as revealing my blindness to the fact that I had not been around enough in the morning, helping her out; and the response it drew from her was like a cry of frustration. (This analysis is eminently plausible.) But our philosophers' writings do more. They add another dimension to the consideration of speakinglistening; not a psychological dimension, freighted with its morass of individual cathexes, traumas, memories; but an echo and reminder of that naming which Adam, the progenitor of humanity, brought forth in the simplest

morning of his being in the world, that voice that filled Eden (and, perhaps later, emptied it). What is interesting in our exchange is that a world arises as we speaklisten each other. How do I know what I have said? I pay attention to world arising in my colloquy with others. As with others I speak and listen *for a world*, not merely *to the world*, we assume the responsibility of Adam.[35] Whether or not we are participants in the religious consciousness in which Buber's thinking is rooted—religion, by the way, is from *re* + *ligare*, to tie back together, like a *ligament*—I hope more of us will take up the spirit of this challenge to our vocabulary of knowledge and procedural orientation. For unless we can make possible in the classroom, from time to time and at crucial moments, the "personal making present" that can occur within a group as in a dyad—unless we have some commitment to encountering the spirit of persons—we may lose even the knack of transmitting knowledge, and with it the possibility of re-inventing our culture together.

We are shifting our central metaphor from picture to listening. The picture metaphor gives us something to *look for*—if we are changing pictures, we look for another one—but the listening metaphor gives *listening for* or *through*. Since we can more easily think of listening as an activity, a power, this puts the attention on the listener, not on something structured outside him, and it suggests a different technique for being, an artifice more powerful than hammering.[36] "Technique" and "artifice," though, may evoke the wrong listening: being—especially "being on the lookout"—is not a matter solely of technique, nor is power acquired through artifice. It is not a matter of foresight and prediction and control, but a matter of openness, of communion, of encounter—an epiphany of rain-running happiness. This point is still a mystery for me, of course: I have had occasion to ask my child more than once if he forgives me, and though forgiveness has come into presence on each of those occasions, he cannot define the word. Can *I* define it? I know the procedure for looking the word up, but the definition is not what is present in our encounter. The definition is like a picture, an explanation of what happened, after the fact. It is a memory of forgiveness. In educational practice, too, the landscape of memory could be transformed into a listening for inspiration. This will require artifice of a different kind. Artifice? Rather, a heuristic for being together. One that works down in the city streets.

NOTES

1. *Between Man and Man*, trans. Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 28.
2. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. C. Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 58.

3. By "sharing" I do not mean something like wearing a happy-face button. The short life of that fad is actually a hopeful sign for our culture. For the schematic diagram of happy openness does not constitute sharing or even make it more likely. It puts sharing off, even as "social skills" do.
4. *Between Man and Man*, 171, 174.
5. Quoted in Steven Kepnes, *The Text as Thou: Martin Buber's Dialogical Hermeneutics and Narrative Theology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 62.
6. *I and Thou*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Simon & Schuster Touchstone, 1996), 55. All quotations from *I and Thou* reprinted with the permission of Scribner, a Division of Simon & Schuster. Translation copyright © 1970 by Charl;es Scribner's Sons.
7. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 55.
8. The formulation is Maurice Friedman's.
9. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 70.
10. Here his thinking may be seen to intersect with that of Merleau-Ponty. Cf. "Other People and the Human World," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; and New York: The Humanities Press, 1962).
11. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 59.
12. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 60.
13. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 83.
14. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 84.
15. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 69.
16. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 63-4.
17. *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 65-7.
18. Donald L. Berry, *Mutuality: The Vision of Martin Buber* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 66-7.
19. His addresses to the Third International Educational Conference in 1925 in Heidelberg, and to the National Conference of Palestinian Teachers, Tel Aviv 1939, are printed in Buber *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).
20. See "Distance and Relation," trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, *The Hibbert Journal*, January 1951, vol. XLIX, 105-13. (Quoted in M. Friedman, *The Life of Dialogue* (University of Chicago Press, 1976), 82.
21. In *The Way of Response: Martin Buber*, N. N. Glatzer, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 94.
22. *The Knowledge of Man*, Maurice Friedman, ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1965), 78-80. Of course, though Buber himself may have been thinking primarily of the male when he wrote about "man," we read him as speaking about the distinctiveness of humankind.
23. See Viviane M. J. Robinson, "Dialogue Needs a Point and a Purpose," in *Educational Theory*, spring 1995, vol. 45, no. 2, 235ff.

24. Though in "Elements of the Interhuman" (*The Knowledge of Man*, 1965, 72ff.) there is a catalog of features and characteristics of genuine dialogue or encounter, and some suggestions of how the distance of separated observation may transform into the presence of I-You encounter, these do not amount to a list of steps to take or rules to follow. They are more like a description of the commitments of the participants in meeting.

25. According to scholar-practitioner Deborah Meier, the shift we need to prepare for is not merely a change in "viewpoint," not a perceptual matter at all:

    «Changing one's view" is what many schools of education thing they've accomplished in their Foundations and Methods courses. But what kind of experience or mental shift is required before the difference between millions and billions is real to us? The kind of mental paradigm shift, the "aha" which is at the heart of learning, usually requires more than being told by an authority or shown a teaching/learning, not just more coursework, but a new way of learning about learning. (Deborah Meier, *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem* (Boston: beacon Press, 1995), 140.

26. Buber discusses this "spiritual element of primitive life" in *I and Thou* (Kaufmann), 71ff.

27. *Being and Time*, 151.

28. *The Knowledge of Man*, 86. (Note that "word" is not capitalized.)

29. Cf. *The Knowledge of Man*, 75-8.

30. *The Knowledge of Man*, 84.

31. "The experience which the child has of a familial constellation, his own, gives him more than the simple recording of certain [singular] relations ["rapports"] of human being to human being. It is a whole form of thought which takes root in the child at the same time as he assumes and gives form to his familial relations. It is a whole, a use of language, and a manner of perceiving the world also." (In *Les Relations avec autrui chez l'enfant* [Sorbonne/Paris: Centre de Documentation Universitaire, 1975], 23.)

32. *On the Way to Language*, 122.

33. Jos. Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, edited and enlarged by T. Northcote Toller (Oxford University Press, 1973), 967-8.

34. *On the Way to Language*, 122.

35. After I had all but finished this chapter, I came across Walker Percy's *The Message in the Bottle*, where much of the conceptual groundwork I have been doing here is prefigured. Reading modern linguistics and philosophy together in quest of the nature of the uniqueness of human consciousness, he reaches a conclusion resoundingly similar to mine: "The *I think* is only made possible by a prior mutuality: *we name*" (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Noonday, 1975; 275). The question arises: What is going on, that I retrace Percy's steps unawares? Where does discourse come from?

36. "There is a contrast between the way in which we do not control the range of our hearing and the way we do control our field of vision. It might be said

further that we only limit our range of hearing through obliterating it by making noise. Vision begets the pictorial conception of things and the stance of the spectator; the world as picture holds us and confines our thinking. In hearing, the temporal element is necessary and we do not know in advance what will draw our attention; this is something which is beyond our control. In hearing words, moreover, there is the possibility that we will be called upon. A receptiveness and a readiness to respond is required in hearing while, in contrast, seeing the picture can leave us as we were." (Paul Standish, *Beyond the Self: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Limits of Language* [Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1992])

7

HERMENEUTIC CIRCLING AND THE PRAGMATIC ONTOLOGY OF ENCOUNTER

> Language as *saying* is an ethical openness to the other; as that which is *said*—reduced to a fixed identity or synchronized presence—it is an ontological closure to the other.
>
> —Emmanuel Levinas[1]

> ...as teachers learning along with those we try to provoke to learn, we may be able to inspire hitherto unheard voices... Such a project demands the capacity to unveil and disclose. It demands the exercise of imagination, enlivened by works of art, by situations of speaking and making... We need to teach in such a way as to arouse passion now and then; we need a new camaraderie, a new en masse. These are dark and shadowed times, and we need to live them, standing before one another, open to the world.
>
> —Maxine Greene[2]

> Because it is address, attending always on the response of the addressed, infinite speech has the form of listening. Infinite speech does not end in the obedient silence of the hearer, but continues by way of the attentive silence of the speaker. It is not a silence into which speech has died, but a silence from which speech is born.
>
> —James P. Carse[3]

In this final chapter we will begin to construct, in the vocabulary of Saying, a set of techniques for conducting schoolwork (leading it together)

as being together and inventing. We will be exploring the "saying" and the "said," asking what is the *practical* difference between "ethical openness" and "ontological closure." To what extent do we teachers, as bringers forth, practice "infinite speech"? What is there in our silence, our listening, that calls forth the speech of our students, and how and what does it call forth? If, as Heidegger says, speaking and listening are the same, how does my speakinglistening provide the clearing in which is born Dustin's speech, imitating, mocking, or inventing? How does his provide for mine? How are the character, mood, and feel of the space between us, or the space in a classroom, given? What is there about a "situation of speaking and making" that can bring us into one another's presence, open to the world?

Now that we have, by re-inventing the wheel of Saying, shifted our listening away from one that seeks and expects structured knowledge toward one that invites the being-together of inventing, we may move on to consider some possibilities of operating in the new environment—which, you will note when you wake up tomorrow, is the same old environment. How can a car built thirty years ago be a new car? How can an education system built on a model at least a hundred years old give birth to an ever original mode of speaking and listening in which schooling is the opportunity for inquiry and shared creation? Having spent all this time driving a wedge into the log of algorithmic teaching, the procedural model of instruction, and moving toward what I hesitate to call a model at all, for fear that it will induce imitation (that is, more algorithmic teaching) instead of invention—I am now in a position to rejoin the two. The aim is to make room in the heart of instruction for inventing. In our best moments together in a classroom, we said, because of the being together that has arisen among us, students discover meaning and purpose in material new to them: then cognition and invention are inseparable. What we need, as teachers and as students, is to find ourselves in that environment which is not a surrounding, like a decorated room, but like an atmosphere, a breathing-space. Then, even if the procedures we transact remain as procedures, they are now shot through, interpenetrated with relation, with *greeting*: cognition immersed in being.

So the questions begin to pile up. In Part One: What is articulation? How does it work? Are we articulate because we know, or do we know because we dwell in an articulation? And now: how does the articulation we dwell in mesh with the possibilities we have available for being and for being related? What is a more powerful artifice for being? What would a heuristic for being together look like? To propose an answer, one more idea.

Just as I remember the moment in my graduate school class when my teacher presented for us Saussure's idea of the arbitrariness of the sign, I

recall another idea from that course, the concept of hermeneutic circle. *Hermeneutic* means "of interpretation"—Hermes being the Olympian god who brings messages from the beyond to mortals. When you get the meaning of something, when the light bulb over your head lights up and you say "Aha, so that's it!", you have been visited by Hermes. The hermeneutic circle is a description of a logical peculiarity that characterizes this moment of illumination, the arrival of the message, the act of understanding anything. We should now re-invent the idea of the hermeneutic circle, as it bears not only on cognition or understanding, but also on the provision of that breathing-space of being related.

So first the logical peculiarity. When you understand something, what happens? You get the point, the idea becomes clear, the message arrives: but what is going on when that happens? Here, I hope, is a familiar example. You are in the car on the highway, driving straight and fast, and as you crest a tiny rise there appears below you, in the middle of the road, a pond of water, a lake shimmering in the sun. As your foot touches the brake pedal, you realize in a flash: but it hasn't been raining... maybe there's a flooded creek in the next bottom... oh, I know, it's a mirage! As if three successive realizations had crystallized into one instant, jerking your foot off the accelerator and in almost the same moment keeping it from pressing the brake. In the "first," your sense impression is of a suddenly appearing lake. (Notice that this is Lockean vocabulary: knowledge coming out of sequential sense impression, input. Descartes, at first, would speak of your sudden "judgment" of the lake, making you responsible, at least in part, for the perception.) In the first interpretation of the "data," what flashes in your apprehension, maybe, is "water" or "lake."

But here is the question: did you get the data first, or the meaning first? We cannot assign priority here: the "flash" is data and meaning instantaneously together, and here is the logical peculiarity, the circularity. There is not a one-way causal relationship between data and meaning—first the data, then the interpretation. Rather, the so-called sense data *arise along with an interpretation.* When "lake" springs to clarity, it organizes a whole system of visual and tactile values, a cluster like X/Y/Z/A/B/Q/R...: light reflects off smooth surface/color of surface contrasts with surroundings/water seeks its own level/traction fails on wet roads/... That is, a perception is a relationship between parts and a whole which they comprise; but the parts are not there first, so that they can combine one by one into the whole; and neither is the whole available before the parts that come with it. A perception *is* a part-whole relationship; it is an articulation. Articulation is when jointed parts arise together, remember.[4] The system and its values arise together, making each other up. There cannot *be* parts unless they are jointed into some relationship, even if the relationship is one of disjunction, like a spilled jigsaw puzzle; no pieces without a

picture of which to be pieces; nor, conversely, a whole without parts. When jointed parts arise together in articulation, a hermeneutic circle has arrived and departed, leaving behind a background, a relationship between text and context.

Can we think of a room without walls? A sentence without words, a word without letters? Words without a sentence, yes; but words without a whole language in which sentences also occur? Hardly. Same for letters. There is no such thing as one letter—at least as a *letter* rather than an insignificant mark—any more than there is one word. What there is are systems of letters, words; articulations in whose use meaning occurs; language-games. What we mortals have at our disposal is the power of distinction. Or perhaps we *are* that power. Perception is distinctioning, more like Descartes' judging than like Locke's passive receiving of imprints.[5]

In this example, as I have partly remembered it from my own experience and partly made it up, the first hermeneutic circle includes "lake" or "pond" or "water." This piece, this judgment, instantly fits together with "road" and "fast" and "slippery," say, and with a million other perceptions and memories; all these together make up an interpretation, a relationship between parts and whole, "data" and meaning. "Whoa!" the interpretation says. "We're going too fast to make it through a puddle!" In the "next" instant, though it comes almost simultaneously with the first, the jigsaw puzzle is spilled and disorganized: how could there be water if it hasn't been raining? The lobes of those pieces—the fact of what appears to be water and the fact of no rain—do not join. This is still a hermeneutic circle, though; the message it brings is that further facts must be added to the picture, and the pieces re-arranged, re-joined, so the picture will make sense. But for now it appears as a disjointed picture. Perhaps this "second" hermeneutic circle slows your foot as it starts on its sudden trip to the brake pedal, as if a little bit of hypothesis-testing had occurred almost along with the flash of the first hypothesis, the first meaning, the first "impression." I hope by now the Lockean vocabulary of sense data that arrive uninterpreted and are impressed onto the *tabula rasa* is beginning to appear as, exactly, a vocabulary: one possible way of articulating things. But it is a way that cuts off the "impressed data" from the interpretation where they appear, without which they cannot appear.

Then the third "hypothesis" suggests itself—a flooded creek around here? Again the pieces of the puzzle would coalesce, crystallize into a clear picture; except that now the final hypothesis arrives, the one that gets accepted as relating all the parts into a coherent whole. Of course, I should have known—it's a mirage, like the ones I've seen plenty of times before!

Two things ought to be noticed about this "sequence" of nearly simultaneous events. First, it is not solely a matter of arriving at a true

interpretation, the correct cognition of the sense data. For your actions, too, are elicited, almost without your control, pre-consciously. With a quick reflex, your foot is pulled off the accelerator toward the brake. Again, I am making this up as an illustration. Maybe your foot would be more reasonable. But can you think of cases like it where the reflexive, non-thinking or pre-thinking character of your actions is obvious? Suppose I threw a chair in your direction when you weren't expecting it, or a book, an actual, physical, heavy dictionary—say, a volume of the *OED*—coming at you through the air. Would your hands fling themselves up to catch or deflect it? What happens when I fling etymologies at you?

The second thing to notice is that you do arrive, in a split second perhaps, at an interpretation that satisfies you. But why does the one that gets accepted satisfy you? What is it about that one that marks it as correct, so that you proceed with confidence in the scene it delivers? For is it not with the first circle, just as with the final one, that the parts, the data, are integrated by a whole, a meaning? Why does the scene given in one part/whole composition contain, as it were, a seed of doubt that uncloses the circle so that a new circle may form? Indeed, why does a spilled jigsaw puzzle—since that too is a part/whole circle—usually not satisfy you? (And are there times when the spilled puzzle is exactly what you want?) What is the difference between a hermeneutic circle that works—a hypothesis, a guess that promises to be fruitful—and one that doesn't? Is it that one "fits the facts" better? If the data come into being only in the presence of an interpretation, then outside that interpretation there are no facts to fit![6]

So where does this "fit" come from, this picture that combines thought and perception and action? Do the three successive-simultaneous hermeneutic circles progress from least to most representative of natural facts? Rain puddle——>flooded creek——>mirage: is this the window of representation getting progressively clearer? Certainly, one of these hypotheses accords better with our previous experience and knowledge of facts. Then where does our previous experience and knowledge come from? Do we accept the notion nowadays that the Earth is round because we have better evidence than the ancients? Do *I* have that evidence, personally? No. It is not even that I hear that the Earth is round, that I see the rain puddle or the mirage: I *have heard* that it is round, maybe seen some bit of the evidence and reasoning that supports the proposition. I *have seen* the mirage, plenty of times before. As an interpretation from the past, it is now one of those anchors that hold fast for me, its flukes dug into the sea floor. As part of my language, now, it looks as if it *had* to exist. A mirage is now a represented structure, and looks as if it had to exist! Even as I drive along by myself, there is something off here. I am not talking with anybody, but language is giving me a world, a system of fittings, each one

held in place by those that surround it. There is some vicious circle at work here, in this polyreflex of fittings.

A classroom, for all its presumptive emphasis on knowledge acquisition, is pre-eminently a social place. Unlike the automobile with a sole driver, it envelops its occupants in company, and thus in colloquy. Inevitably, the learning in a classroom occurs in a social field, is born out of a social matrix. What does the magnetic field of being together in a shared space have to do with hermeneutic circles—particularly with vicious ones?

When I taught introduction to literary interpretation in the eleventh grade, part of my purpose was to give students practice in carefully supporting their own ideas about what a literary work means, paying close attention to the significant features of the text, examining its details to see how and why they fit together. This kind of activity is new to most students at this level; they are accustomed to clearly demarcated standards of right and wrong, handed down from previous teachers' superior authority or from textbooks. It is important that much of their previous scholastic experience has occurred in "content" courses—especially sciences—where the teacher's superior position is associated with his broader and deeper command of a body of knowledge. My course was not intended to teach the content of pre-formed structures of knowledge, but instead the skill of creating these structures, so if most students were to understand the nature and purposes of many of the course activities, the paradigm by which they would usually operate—their stereotype of the teacher and of schooling in general—had to shift. They had somehow to get into a different hermeneutic circle, where the parts—the class activities, homework, tests, etc.—appeared as contributions to a different whole.

I could talk about the various aspects of a text scholars and critics must consider in formulating an interpretation, but my talk would be wasted unless the students knew how to take it, how to use it, what to do with it. And this is never a matter of their knowing something. You can always tell, can you not, when your lecture, or your attempt to start discussion, or even the discussion you have started, is going right out the window? In a diary I made for a class I taught once, I find: "[I was] not in my class today. Sense of dislocation, disconnection, like I was a talking statue, a curiosity to be observed, not a presence to be lived with." You can sense when students are engaged with you in what you are saying, just as Dustin can always tell when I am listening to him and when I am not. When I am open for business, ready to set forth on an expedition, I can feel him listening and he can feel me listening. We can travel together. But unless the compass needle, swayed by that unseen magnetic field, keeps pointing North, no journey can occur.

Rather than entering now onto a systematic prescription of ways to generate that magnetic field of listening, or to keep it going, I want to ask

you to listen for something that is not a system, not a prescription, not an answer to the question "How do I...?" We are talking about a classroom as a social place, a place in which people *be* together, for a purpose or at cross-purposes, a place where we are interested, first and foremost, not in what is being taught and what is being learned, but rather in how the students and teacher are being together. For the way of their being together is the medium in which will grow the possibility not only of their instruction but, *a forteriori*, of their education. It is not a question of *making* the compass point North. If Dustin is not open for business, I cannot be, either. In telling you my war stories, then, I am not presenting techniques or recommendations. I am listening, even as I write and re-write, for ways in which I am called to be, by and with my students. Trying to catch a whiff of mutuality, I am listening *from* the question that Heidegger raises and Buber deepens: what is being-with?

To shift the paradigm, the set of expectations and rules and heuristics that the students brought with them into the classroom, to bring their hermeneutic circles into service so that I could begin a new journey with them, I would begin the first class with a dittoed handout, an item with particular significance in the society of that school. Because of its social history—teachers of the lower grades had used it as a device for distributing text materials in parcels suited to their courses—it had a role in generating the schema with which students began to understand my course, the hermeneutic circle that occurred as they walked into my classroom.[7] The tenth-grade English teacher (to take the most pertinent example) would issue a weekly "Error Sheet," a compendium of grammatical gaffes and clumsy diction from student writing, which he would correct with students as a class exercise. The ERROR SHEET, so called in capital letters, activated the old accustomed paradigm of teacher-corrects-student, or teacher-supplies-correct-information, so students automatically knew how to use it, or to ignore it. The function of a cognitive schema is to provide for automaticity.

But the Error Sheet worked in other ways, too. Since the author of each error was identified by name, and because there was a certain notoriety in having one's work displayed ("making the Error Sheet") as well as in not making it, my colleague's handout embodied students' feeling of participating in the course. In the hands of this particular teacher, the Error Sheet was a powerful tool; *he* could use it, with laughter and a little irony, to elicit a community that valued improvements in writing.

At the beginning of my course, the handout consisted of several verbal puzzles and a Doonesbury cartoon, followed by two short poems (see Figure 7.1).

The office was cool because the windows were closed.

The trip was not delayed because the bottle shattered.

The haystack was important because the cloth ripped.

* * *

Watching a Peace March from the fortieth floor?

The view was breathtaking. From the window one could see the crowd below. Everything looked extremely small from such a distance, but the colorful costumes could still be seen. Everyone seemed to be moving in one direction in an orderly fashion and there seemed to be little children as well as adults. The landing was gentle and luckily the atmosphere was such that no special suits had to be worn. At first there was a great deal of activity. Later, when the speeches started, the crowd quieted down. The man with the television camera took many shots of the setting and the crowd. Everyone was very friendly.

* * *

"Doonesbury" cartoon strip:

Zonker: Boy, Thomas Hobbes was right. Life is nasty, brutish, and short.
Mike: Zonker, I think you're making too big a deal of this.
Zonker: Where do we have to go, anyway?
Mike: The Post Office.
Zonker: The Post Office, The Post Office is in charge of registering everybody?
Mike: Right.
Zonker: I feel better already.
Mike: I told you there was nothing to worry about.

* * *

Kisses
Give me the food that satisfies a guest;
Kisses are but dry banquets to a feast.

* * *

Heaven-Haven

I have desired to go
  Where Springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
  And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
  Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
  And out of the swing of the sea.

The office was cool because the windows were closed.

The trip was not delayed because the bottle shattered.

The haystack was important because the cloth ripped.

Watching a peace march from the fortieth floor:

The view was breathtaking. From the window one could see the crowd below. Everything looked extremely small from such a distance, but the colorful costumes could still be seen. Everyone seemed to be moving in one direction in an orderly fashion and there seemed to be little children as well as adults. The landing was gentle and luckily the atmosphere was such that no special suits had to be worn. At first there was a great deal of activity. Later, when the speeches started, the crowd quieted down. The man with the television camera took many shots of the setting and the crowd. Everyone was very friendly.

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And out of the swing of the sea.

The meaning of each "text" is not clear until someone supplies the proper context, or a perspective in which it makes sense. One of my puzzles, for example, asks what imaginable state of affairs the following sentence could be describing:

The haystack was important because the cloth ripped.

At the beginning of the course it is usually the teacher who supplies the missing context—the cloth is a parachute—and this fits again into the superior teacher paradigm. But imaginative students will often find a different interpretation, especially if I ask for it. Maybe the cloth is a guerilla's tent containing plans for a surprise raid, into which a spy for our side has cut his way, undetected because of the adjacent haystack. Now we are in a place where paradigm shift can occur. I point to the fact that differing interpretations have arisen, and ask which is better. In the space of our being together around my handout—which started out like the space of being together around the Error Sheet—this is now a new question, to be answered not with information supplied by the teacher but with inventing from the students.

Now we need criteria for judging relative merit. And what is pedagogically important here is the character of our need, the quality of the space in which our need for criteria has arisen, not (at first) the merits of whatever criteria might be proposed. In the hermeneutic circling of the classroom—the already givenness, the interpretive inertia, the way people have already learned to do school—there is now the possibility of a listening for invention. This listening offers, in Carse's words, a silence that makes the speech of others possible. There is now the possibility not only of hermeneutic circling but also of being together, of being-with. In this space we can invent together not only interpretations but criteria for judging interpretations. There is now the possibility, at least, that the compass will point North.

Sometimes, though, what rushes in to fill the slight vacuum that has been created is whatever criterion of judgment is always already present in a particular culture of students. In my school, the funnier or more outlandish interpretation would usually take over the attention of the class. I might have tried to change this automatic criterion *per dictum*, following the old superior-teacher paradigm. But in order to decide between readings, both of which might now earn credit, we can pay the kind of close attention to the text that I was aimimg to teach, that critical care for details contributing to meanings that I want to let appear. I ask whether the phrase "the cloth ripped" implies an unintended and unforeseen event, or an adroitly executed step in a careful plan. Now there is the opening for a consensus (*con* + *sentire*, to feel together), an answer that is

not delivered and received but invented together and thus owned. The possibility of being together has made ownership possible.

To develop the same opening in a conversation about a literary text, I ask at the end of my Interpretation Sheet who the speaker might be in Hopkins' poem "Heaven-Haven." (I omit the telltale subtitle: "A Nun Takes the Veil.") Heaven being a popular metaphor for the easy life, my students will usually decide that we are hearing in this poem from a weary sailor longing for dry land. In the speaking and listening of the society of interpretation that is my classroom, this kind of "heaven" resonates with the gloss on "haven" as a harbor, as well as with the final line of the poem, in which the speaker wants to remove himself from "the swing of the sea." When I reveal Hopkins' subtitle (sometimes after filling out the weary sailor interpretation as convincingly as I can and then announcing "I have misled you") there is new information about the poem available, but it is available now in a particular way. The new information has a certain character; we feel an inclination to use it in a certain way, to incorporate it into our conversation, to honor it according to the space of our being together.

It is true that the space of the classroom at that point might be named "You tricked us!" Sometimes the students would give voice to that feeling, and I then had the opportunity of speaking into that listening, their listening that maybe I had tricked them, that now I was going to give them the *real* answer to what the poem means. What they got, they might be thinking, was incomplete information, and what rushed in to fill the vacuum was something they made up about my intentions, or something ready-made for them by the culture of schooling, say. "Teachers are really just out to trip us up and make us feel stupid." "Does that ready-made space prevent you from using the exercise for yourselves?" I could ask.

But in the space of an invitation to play, to invent, my use of the Interpretation Sheet provides an opportunity, an inclination toward careful re-reading of the poem to make all the images fit. In light of the subtitle, the sea and the harbor that linked it to dry land have *become* metaphorical. Now, it might be said that they were always metaphorical, and the metaphoricity has just now been revealed by the teacher who knows and is at long last telling his students what he has known all along. That is indeed the space of trickery. But now there is another possibility available. The Interpretation Sheet, like its predecessor the Error Sheet, has provided for another way of seeing the "data"; it has allowed for the transformation of the facts of the poem. The new facts about the poem—and *all* of them are new, now—have become metaphorical, now that the possibility of metaphor has arisen *between us*. Metaphor, like humor, is a between-us phenomenon. In the space of metaphor, we can now embark

on the first large unit, on lyric poetry, which one student called the "boot camp" of the course. (I think it was this same student who said in astonishment, "Mr. McHenry, you never *tell* us anything!")

Later in the course, when the question arises whether, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Stanley or Blanche is to be blamed more, we may summon out of the background this space of invitation to a dialogue in which the text gets created and owned by us, a space in which debate about the interpretation of the play can bear the fruit of engagement. At the beginning of the play, Blanche's behavior looks like snobbery, as she holds herself aloof from the raffish Elysian Fields. Then, as she disparages Stanley and Stella for a sexual appetite that we know is healthier than her own, it looks like hypocrisy. Then, as Stanley rapes her, she seems a victim of her own compulsions, not a free agent to be held responsible for her behavior. Though my students usually liked this play, most seemed to stop interpreting it at the first or second of these stages, rarely seeing in the final scenes anything to change the moral that snobs and hypocrites get their just deserts. But in the space of the Interpretation Sheet, they have experienced that they can participate by fitting all the evidence together in different ways, with the purpose of finding the most persuasive accounting for it. In this space of invitation to dialogic play, the drama of Stanley and Blanche becomes more than a soap opera with stock caricatures and predestined plot. It becomes a locus of sharing, of invention.

So what about the test? After all, that is the question already always in the background of whatever happens in the classroom, is it not? How am I going to be graded on this? In the space of transmitted knowledge, grading is easy for both teachers and students, because a structure of information, since it is a structure, persists, stands up to examination. How does the space of shared inventing allow for distinctions between right and wrong answers? Certainly students can be expected to share the common knowledge, say, that a sonnet has sixteen lines, divided into octave and sestet or quatrains and couplet. But in what context are we to teach this? In what way are we to let it appear as a fact, an item to be known?

One design that worked with my students was a modified multiple-choice test. There were three types of question; in the first, students read a short poem and chose from five statements the one that best expressed the poem's meaning. A second type of question asked them to divide a short poem into the sections that best accorded with its meaning. The poem might be a sonnet, and the answer choices would include a division into octave and sestet, or quatrains and couplet. In a third type of question, students would read an excerpt from a work they had studied, think how it fit the author's purpose and pattern of ideas in the whole work, and then choose from four phrases the one that best expressed the most im-

portant connection of ideas made by the passage given. In a multiple-choice test, there is one most correct answer for every question, and I constructed the answer choices and scored the test according to this model. But I immersed this standard, expected structure in another context by requiring students to justify their choice of answer. A well-written and persuasive justification earned full credit, even if the answer chosen was not the most correct one (and some credit was deducted for "correct" answers that were poorly justified).

What is the space that this test helps to articulate? In the classes in which I used it, it supported a shift in the paradigm of knowledge: from the private use of memory to the art of interpreting persuasively, from a binary standard—right or wrong answers—to "infinite speech." It called for argument between us, for the colloquy of interpretation. Since this kind of discussion of the texts has a sharper edge than finding out what a dead poet had to say about life, most students were engaged in it, and I supported their engagement by encouraging them to re-argue orally those answers that did not get full credit. About half the time they would persuade me that their answer deserved more credit, and in half the other cases I would persuade them that it did not. But in any case they usually came to see that the new kind of problem on the test was a genuine one; the chance to raise their grade lured most students to try the new paradigm. Re-arguing for credit was a bit of angling that worked not because of the structure of ideas in the text material or the test question, but because of the possibilities of the social situation, the space in which the ideas were placed. It was a space that, by calling for invention, allowed for our being together powerfully.

What else about that eleventh-grade course contributed to the articulation of a powerful space? What else in the hermeneutic circling of that classroom gave me the possibility of listening for the students' authentic participation in encounters with literature? Here is something else that happened.

After the Interpretation Sheet, and then the lyric poetry "boot camp," we would read my favorite book, Faulkner's *The Unvanquished*. It opens with these two sentences:

> Behind the smokehouse that summer, Ringo and I had a living map. Although Vicksburg was just a handful of chips from the woodpile and the river a trench scraped into the packed earth with the point of a hoe, it (river, city, and terrain) lived, possessing even in miniature that ponderable though passive recalcitrance of topography which outweighs artillery, against which the most brilliant of victories and the most tragic of defeats are but the loud noises of a moment.[8]

Though mild by the standard of later works in their squinting, layered density, this passage presents, in theme and technique, the opportunity to encounter the authentic Faulkner. To make that encounter available to students, I began class once by noting a parallel between Faulkner's first two sentences and a familar classroom event. "When you come into a classroom," I began, "you sometimes find the teacher writing on the blackboard, maybe an outline or a list of things to be covered that class period. The teacher might start off like this: 'Today we'll be talking about the topics I've listed here, as they show up in the poem I gave you last time...' Right? He's doing straight exposition, speaking to you as a public audience, and you're listening for certain kinds of things, too; you're listening for a sequence of ideas, for logical relations. You're listening to that outline, ready to transfer it to your notes. But then after he's started, the teacher begins thinking to himself about the implications of what he's saying, maybe feeling a private emotional significance in the poem, and he looks out the window for a moment while he's talking. His voice changes a little, and you can tell now that he's not addressing you in the same way. Now he's talking more to himself than to you; and you're listening in a different way, too—for different kinds of meaning."

By now my students were indeed listening intently, because the outline had become a personal matter in the space between us, and I could make the transition: "That's just what happens in the first two sentences of this book: Faulkner starts off with a very conventional opening for a story, almost a 'once upon a time,' and then in the second sentence his gaze turns inward; he looks back over the whole long calamity of the Civil War from his perspective as an old Southerner, and he's not just telling his story to you any more, he's thinking to himself about its significance." The next question—"What do you think that significance is?"—leads naturally to Faulkner's sense that human striving is inevitably subject to repeated defeat, and thence to one of his central metaphors, that of flags in the dust. Within this developing context, speaking into our listening made manifest, I could then expand our perspective on the opening sentences by informing students that Faulkner's first novel was titled *Flags in the Dust* and by reading passages from later novels in which the same metaphor appears, and we could ask what Faulkner thinks about human flags: trivial, futile, noble?

Before I began designing classes around the sociality of invention, I had been starting off the first class on Faulkner with the question about metaphor: "Read the first two sentences, keeping in mind that Faulkner's first novel was titled *Flags in the Dust*. Where do you see this metaphor in the opening of the book?" Such a leap, from pre-class socializing to intellection, excluded all but those who already cared about metaphor and how it functions to embody feeling in a novel or a poem. Students less

well versed were tuned out of the class at the very outset because of my disregard of what I would have called the social conditioning of learning. Heidegger might have called it the Being-with of classroom talk. Buber might have fixed me with a challenging gaze and asked: "And where were *you* when you asked them about that metaphor?" It is not that the question itself excluded some of the students. At the beginning of particular classes, in my use of it, it had that effect. I am describing what I did with my students, and what I did may not address the problem you have with your students, at a particular classroom moment, in your school-community. There may be little power in my description as a tip or a technique that you can use, but there may be considerable power in noticing the listening in which any technique is used. The listening of each classroom (let us call it) is unique, depending as it does on Bakhtin's integral and unrepeatable authenticity of being with others. There may indeed be certain kinds of activity, certain designs, that are likely to work better than others. But whether they work depends at least as much on the character of the relatedness available in the classroom as it depends on the character of the technique itself. When you hear "model"—are you listening for a structure of parts, like a model airplane; or for a person?

The being-together of the classroom can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. It is our being-with that makes the difference for our students, not just the structure of the activities and content of our classes. Indeed, we can say that the structure of a class comes out of the ongoing conversation deriving from the listening of teachers and students in concert. For techniques apart from our relatedness are empty. By itself, a technique may have no character at all. There can be no treat in a technique.

So the arrival of a hermeneutic circle is the provision, and the provisioning, of the space of our being together. The room it makes comes with furnishings, with a décor. As perception, it makes the Gestalt of figure and ground. As language, it organizes systems of values so as to "limit arbitrariness" (this is Saussure's phrase[9]) so that each value, each word, can appear to refer to some thing; thus it lets the world appear for us as a structured place in which prediction and control are possible. As a component of "the listening," it shapes the character of the space between us, conditioning what we give to and get from a classroom situation. As a continuous event, the arrival of the hermeneutic circle is described by two science teachers as the inter-relation of text and context, background and form, that occurs in our speaking:

> Every speech act occurs in a context, with a background shared by speaker and hearer... background is a pervasive and fundamental phenomenon. Background is the space of possibilities

> that allows us to listen to both what is spoken and what is unspoken... The background is not a set of propositions, but is our basic orientation of "care" for the world.[10]

In a book about computer design, here is a contribution to a new vocabulary of teaching. Let us expand on it. To get at the "basic orientation of *care*" with our students, what tools do we have? What access do we have to this phenomenon of "background," if we cannot use propositional handles in our customary descriptive way? If the philosophers are right, the phenomenon of background springs up along with our languaging, making it possible for us to listen and understand; and languaging is what occurs when the intuition *ego sum, ego existo* springs up along with our *naming*, our common humanity, our being-with-in-a-world, the judging or distinctioning we live in together.

So how can we get languaging, judging, distinctioning—*naming*—into the world of the classroom? Is it possible to *declare* an "orientation of care," to manage the arrival of spaces, of possibilities; or is our conversation always emprisoned in the hermeneutic circle, the structure of the past? The philosophers suggest that an art of background might dwell in the area of inventing a languaging. The rest of this chapter will be devoted not to questions, but to a proposal. If there are enough questions, enough inquiry in the background now, the context it provides will give what follows the character of a proposal, a putting forth for consideration. It is important that we hear it as a proposal rather than as advice; for only if it occurs as proposal can we engage with it as a possibility to be explored rather than an option to be evaluated. Only then will we be able to reinvent it for particular students in particular classrooms rather than use it as a standard procedure.

In the Harvard Educational Review, Maxine Greene reminds us of an ideal of caring, for people and for the world, that is at odds with the contemporary perspective. She envisions "a reaching out towards becoming *persons* among other persons, for all the talk of human resources, for all the orienting of education to the economy":

> To engage with our students as persons is to affirm our own incompleteness, our consciousness of spaces still to be explored, desires still to be tapped, possibilities still to be opened and pursued. At once, it is to rediscover the value of care, to reach back to experiences of caring and being cared for... as sources of an ethical ideal."[11]

Reaching back to experiences of care surely nurtures that reaching forward for possibilities that can so enliven a public discourse. But what I envision here is not so much the declaration of solicitude for the rights and feelings of individuals of different ethnicity or cultural provenance as

it is the prior possibility of establishing in a classroom a background of "infinite speech," an orientation of care in which speaking, languaging, occurs as the condition of freedom, that is, of ethical openness to others.

So I propose as follows. As teachers we have the opportunity to open and maintain conversations that make a difference for our students. As Ms. Greene suggests, conversation that makes a difference is an event of "unveiling and disclosing," a "situation of speaking and making," an ongoing work of art. What makes a difference is being engaged in inventing. The House of Being is one that, unlike language, can be *entered* together: for it is not a structure, but an invention. In other words, the context we want to set up for our students is probably not "doing schoolwork," for that is an exercise in language rather than languaging. What context, what background conditions the relatedness of teachers and students as they interact, as they use the materials, the worn books, the chalkboard, the video? What gives us our dwelling-place? What is the name of the space you inhabit with your students? The conversation for inventing, the conversation that enables engagement, dwells in four areas or realms of speakinglistening. These are: the realm of speaking the basic word I-You, in the face-to-face encounter; the realm of speculating, asking "what if...?"; the realm of promising, of pledging; and the realm of acting, performing. For the pragmatic ontology of the encounter to be fully functional, students and teacher must participate together in all these realms, if not simultaneously, at least in fair proximity.

After Dewey, such an ideal space might be called something like "learning through living." But even if that were the motto of an actual school, embossed beneath the shield on its coat of arms, say, what transpires in the classrooms, the dining hall and the dormitories of that school will always be pulled back into the realm of the objective, of the I and the It, of the I as an It. Hard as it is to surmount that "tortuously dual" twofold, we are working on bringing it about that we turn to each other in inventing, in Saying, opening the world to the touch of our living. As in the previous chapter we focused on a story about an encounter between a parent and child, here I am telling some stories from the sites of actual classrooms, hoping to show how the background of sharingnaming can be introduced even where social class and racial distances, all the incommensurabilities of cultural discourses, are the ineluctable foreground.

Except for five or six rows of synthetic-wood and tubular metal deskchairs, with wire notebook-size shelves beneath the seats, the classroom at first seems empty. Absent the students who will pour fitfully into the room next period, and the teacher who will arrive purposefully, cautious and expectant, the room exudes space, a space filled with qualities, attributes, predications. Of course the chairs, self-contained on their four legs and re-arrangeable, are not the only contents of the room that speak

these predications about the students and the kind of enterprise they will be expected to pursue when they get here: things written and drawn on the two chalkboard walls (assignments, perhaps); the television on a swivel shelf high in the corner; the teacher's desk jammed into the opposite corner. The third wall, separating the classroom from the hallway, consists of large panels of glass; inside the panels, tiny filaments of wire form a cross-hatch like a chicken-wire fence. Across most of the glass panels, taped paper signs and posters announce the school play, the visit of the representative from the yearbook manufacturing company or the class-ring salesman, interrupting the view into the corridor. (One poster is mounted to be read from the corridor as students pass by the classroom. It says "Free Knowledge: Bring Your Own Container.") Adjacent to the entrance door, part of the glass wall is obscured by a massive double-door cabinet, also of hard composite (resin-impregnated sawdust perhaps). On the opposite wall (made partly of some stuff to which notices can be pinned) a hip-high bookshelf contains some frayed paper workbooks, and textbooks with the pictures on their once-hard covers worn through and doodled on.

As I walk into the already brimming classroom, I am not blank, either. With my platform in hand, I am both worry and élan. I have been here twice before, on Mondays just before 12:30, to introduce myself and my project briefly, and ask the kids (twenty-five "basic level" eleventh-graders) if they would be willing to work with me. Since they could sense the prospect of something outside the ordinary classroom English which most of them had already learned to dismiss as boring and useless—I had told them that when I visited, we would not be doing standard kinds of activities in the classroom, and would be going outside from time to time to do what I called "challenges"—and since, perhaps, they saw in me another opportunity for having fun instead of doing schoolwork, they had accepted my invitation. In the space of that emptyfull classroom, though, I worry that as soon as they see through my plan, which is in fact to re-engage them in schoolwork, they will shut me off as effectively as they have been shutting off teachers for most of their time in school so far. This is in fact what happened. But it happened more than once. Several times, these recalcitrants opened up to the Monday activities, to the possibility that school could be different than it had been, only to close down again the minute they got a whiff of standard operating procedure—as when I first handed out my Interpretation Sheet.

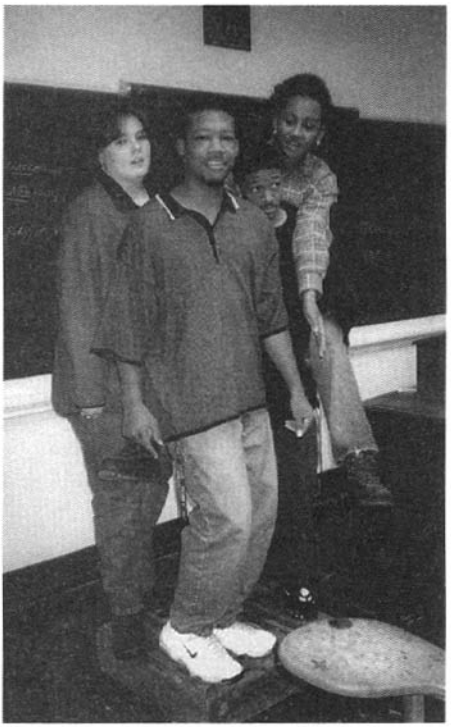
But now about that platform, and about the élan. At Outward Bound,[12] on the first day when students have arrived together from their separate homes and lives, before exchanging their clean travelling clothes for the shorts and T-shirts, before exchanging leather for rubber-soled shoes, before even being introduced to one another, still mostly just human faces

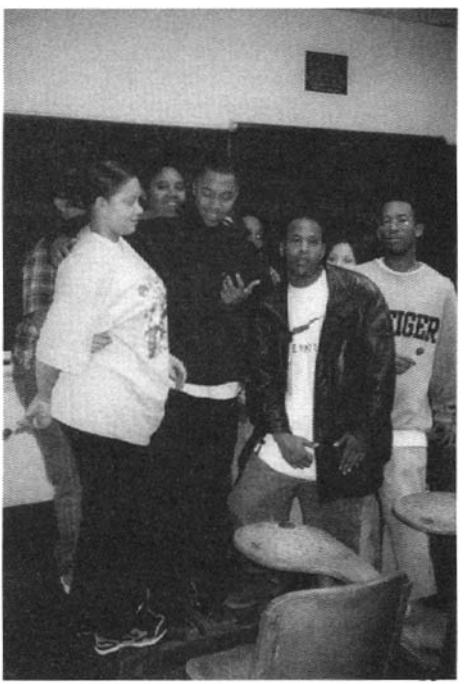
to each other, persons with this or that history, these or those relatives, one or another regional accent or identity—these individuals might encounter each other on one of these platforms. Two-and-a-half feet square and raised ten inches off the ground on stubby anchored legs, it is called the "All Aboard," and the object is to get all ten or twelve members of the group up onto it, standing, leaning on each other, braced or hooped or cantilevered in a controlled balance, for, say, three seconds. As they confront the challenge to their slippery leather soles and the clothes they still need to keep clean for the trip home after the course—a challenge that they think they will meet with their strength or their abilities, their skills of communication and cooperation—there arises between them the prospect of something that does not depend on ability or skill or effort: an unencustomed being-together, a moment of communion as unsettling as it is enticing. It is not something that will be prolonged past the three or so seconds of their almost-airborne clustering on the platform, but its voltage feeds my élan, charges my step as I enter the charged classroom. Plain nerves has a lot to do with it, too.

To bring that moment of blank synergy into the classroom, I built a portable platform out of some scraps of lumber, two-by-six cedar decking left over from a poorly built deck that had collapsed under my wife at our old house. (She wasn't hurt.) I had mitered the corners of the four edge boards so they would fit together snugly like the corners of a picture frame, and nailed more lengths of decking across this frame, leaving an inch or so between these top boards so it would work out that none of the top boards overhangs the frame. In fact, some of the left-over boards had been bevelled forty-five degrees at the ends, and I placed these ends with the bevel sloping in toward the center from the outside edge of the frame. Even if two people stand on one edge with no one on the opposite edge for balance, this deck will not flip up out of place. If this piece of classroom engineering is to succeed, it has to be safe. Its safety is as critical a part of its design as its outlandishness; craftsmanship, and not accident, is integral to designing breakthroughs.

Cedar at these short lengths is as strong as pine, but since it weighs less, I can carry the platform into and out of schools and down corridors with no strain. As an itinerant teacher, I keep it in the trunk of my car along with several other items designed to educe that moment of relatedness and possibility.

The moment of synergy—I call it so not only because there is muscular cooperation involved, but because because there arises in the moment a kind of sharing that is not as obvious as the cooperation of carpenters raising a joist. That is a task they already know how to perform, have already performed ten or a hundred times. Unless there is something special about *this* joist, some circumstance that makes raising it into posi-




TIGER

tion unlikely, that requires that instead of repeating the task they invent it, the kind of relatedness that appears on the platform does not occur. To be sure, there is teamwork among carpenters, camaraderie and effective action; but there is not necessarily this space of creating out of nothing.

When students have been attempting to mount the platform for a minute or two, beginning to have fun with it and be frustrated by it, someone will usually ask some version of the question "how are we supposed to do this?" Relishing the moment—it is Bakhtin's "once-occurrent event of Being"—I answer: "I don't know. No group just like yours has ever done this before. It is yours to do." Now the space between us is blank: if I have created it freely, it is free of history, of preconditions, of directives, of reasons. Or at least, these have been attenuated momentarily, and what the participants are facing is not a picture from the past to be copied, but a possibility for a future to be invented. They are standing before each other, open for a moment to a world they can create. Between us, we have Nothing. They have the chance to Name a system, a way of getting more people balanced. There is before them a world to be brought into being.

Now, it is true that not all of the eighteen or so kids present for that third class session were involved in this conversation. At first, only five or six had volunteered to get up on the platform together. But gradually, with my own cheerleading and the coaxing of the regular teacher, one by one several more were persuaded to join in the fun. Against the grain, against and alongside the norm of stolid non-participation, there is developing a light-heartedness, a willingness to cooperate, a speaking and listening for participation, for relatedness, for sharing in the possibility of creating together. The context of the classroom is changing, though slowly and stiffly.

The stiffness, in some measure, is probably embarrassment at the prospect of close physical contact. As some of the kids feel safe enough or comfortable enough to begin, though, to approach one another and hang on, it begins to be possible for others to relinquish their stand-offishness. With personal, grinning, in-their-face appeals from me and their teacher, they get up out of their chairs—which we have moved to the periphery of the room—reach a hand across the laughing, groaning amalgam on the platform, and are absorbed. (Among the notable characteristics of Mrs. Zajak's teaching, in *Among Schoolchildren*, is that she gets up close to them, in their faces, and touches them a lot.) If I see in the eyes of one or two a longing to be involved, to play, I may ask them to get up and be "spotters" around the periphery, for it often happens that, as enthusiasm outstrips judgment, the whole mass of people will come tumbling off one side of the platform, and it's good to have someone standing by to brace the

floormost person. The platform thus becomes an occasion for Greeting, not only for the participants, but (at least partially) for the observers as well.

In the context developing, I can now bring in the other realms of speakinglistening in which engagement dwells. As the number of people on the platform approaches its apparent limit, I can say "Good work, you guys! Now how about it: do you want to try for one more?" I am asking them, in the space of encounter and possibility, for a commitment, a pledge. As the wheel of Saying is gathering speed, engaged by our sociable action, our being-together around and on the platform, and accelerated by the possibility of inventing a new way to get more people up, *naming* a new system, it begins to look as if setting ourselves a goal and going for it all-out might be the same thing as having fun. Somehow it is worth it, for the participants in this event, to give an honest effort, even to fail several times; to improvise, to use their heads as well as their arms and legs and shoulders; to commit themselves to trying to do what they don't yet know how to do. In the midst of the almost-mêlée, though, I am not yet speculating on the parallels between this surpass-your-best-because-you-say-so event and an irregular verbs contest.

The platform, of course, is Deweyan. It nurtures shared construction of a reality that is social through and through; it provides for moment-by-moment invention of community. Mind occurs on the platform *as* sociality. But though this may be hands-on, multisensory learning, what is going on here is not merely that. For one thing, there is nothing that we would recognize as conceptual happening in the group, unless we would want to say that figuring out a new way to get more people up is conceptual—and I don't think it is. The absence of conceptuality would be enough to disqualify this event as learning, in the "knowledge model" of education currently in question; but even if we admit the non-conceptual into the arena of learning, we still have not captured what transpires on the platform. The transactions here involve the physical being, they generate uninhibited conversation, and they enable a certain authenticity among the participants. If an elbow pokes you, you let it be known vociferously. We have confrontation; we are bathed in the presence of the basic word I-You. (We can smell each other, too.) If some members of the class want to hog the platform, or to show off, it becomes clear among the participants that that way of being will not get the job done; the task requires instead delicate cooperation, timing, and patience. Rather, it requires these if *we say* it requires them and act accordingly. In an activity of this kind, it can become clear to the participants that *what is being said* has a powerful effect on what is happening. What is going on here, it gradually appears, is that we are inventing a process and an outcome by Saying them. And we can invent according to an old pattern, expecting an outcome already avail-

able in the past, or we can invent according to our commitment, our declaration of a possibility for one more person up on the platform, or for one more second of stable balance, of cooperation, co-invention, co-poiesis. What is happening on the platform is a re-inventing of the wheel of Being. It is this presence to each other that will enable the main work of teaching, once we return to the cognitive curriculum.

In one physical education class where I tried the platform, for instance, there began to develop a kind of horseplay, a competitiveness between cliques which, I suppose, had existed prior to my visit. There seemed to be two leaders in the group, and as each asserted her own dominance over the game, its character shifted from cooperation to competition, and then to see-who-can-push-who-off. After a few moments of this, I called a time out, and asked: "What's the name of the game here? Are you all playing King of the Mountain? or Cooperation? Or is the name of this game Revenge? What are you saying here?" Just this question was enough to re-establish the common purpose that time, though it is true that there may have been some mild reproach in my manner of asking it. The question revealed to the participants their own responsibility for what was going on. It asked them to examine their commitments in the matter, bringing those commitments up as commitments rather than as a structure of habits. "Oh. You mean we have a say in how things go. So it doesn't have to be the way it usually always is."[13]

What about the kids who resist being involved the whole time, sitting passive in their immovable chairs? I can ask them—though by now I am shouting above the din—"What do you think is keeping you in your chairs?" So it's not just about doing another stupid activity, so as to come away with some equation or formula or list of facts about people—it's about who you are, what you do in situations, or what does "you"; what owns your life; and about owning what owns you. It is not an offer of freedom from academics or from homework. It is an offer of responsibility for one's own experience. (Buber would correct me here: No, he would say, it is an offer to *trade* experience for responsibility, to let responsibility supplant experience.)

In the basic-level English class, it was always usually noisy; the kids had made disruption and inattention into a fine art. And they had been captured by the system they had created, so that when I arrived with my platform it was literally impossible for them to pay attention to a lesson. They would have said that they were in charge of their lives in that classroom, that except for being made to come there one period a day they were free to do pretty much as they pleased. They needed to be impressed with the degree to which they were not free, the extent to which the pattern of disruption and inattention owned their lives. So I used another exercise with them to shift the class from being the effect of its system, to

generate the possibility of being its cause, actually, instead of apparently, owning what went on in the classroom.

The exercise, as I designed it for this class, consisted of two parts. First, since I had the advantage of outsider status for my first two or three visits, I could propose an activity that seemed to have no relevance to the practical tasks of schooling: Count Off. It is easy to count off the number of people in a line or a circle; the first person in line says "one," the second "two," and so on to the end of the line. But as they sit in their individual chairs (movable or not), a class of students usually does not see in itself the potential for such an organization as a line or a circle. So the task I gave them is to count the class off, without planning which person was going to say which number and without any two people saying a number simultaneously. The task, that is, is to invent this perfect count-off out of thin air, with nothing to start with except a simple "begin" from me and nothing to go on from then on except whatever is there in the silence of their listening for each other to speak the numbers consecutively. Since what is going on here is obviously not School, it becomes possible again for the students to pay attention to each other. Perhaps Buber would not call the students' experience in this exercise one of "bodily confrontation," but it does bring Presence into the room. The listening it allows for is exquisite.

And I can point out to them, when they have completed this part of the exercise, that what they did was invent something that would not have existed otherwise. They invented a medium, a way of being together for accomplishing a task. The medium of their accomplishment came from nowhere but themselves. While I can imagine that a class might hit on the expedient of counting up and down the rows of chairs, it has never happened that they spontaneously achieved this organization as a medium for accomplishing the task, though such a stratagem would itself qualify as an invention if it came out of the silence of their listening, instead of as somebody's bright idea of how to beat the game. Whatever happens, I can point out to the students that a perfect count-off can be achieved without pre-planning and without tricks—most classes can get it after three or four tries. Thus I can *distinguish* inventing, the silent engagement of listening, from those other ways of being together.

On the next Monday, perhaps,[14] I might carry out the second part of the exercise, which we could call "Invent Silence." The game here is simply for everyone in the room to be perfectly silent for a specified period of time, say a minute at first. It is remarkable how difficult this is in the eleventh-grade class. Why is it so hard to be silent, I ask them. Inevitably, the quick response: *I* was quiet, but *those guys* were talking. But notice the game you are playing, I say. You're playing "I be quiet for one minute." What game are those guys playing? Maybe they're still playing "I talk no

matter what." But the game I proposed is different from either: *we* be silent for one minute. Now how about that game? Do you all want to play that? If they Say yes (and this is different from their just saying "yes"), then the space of the classroom is suddenly given by their commitment to inventing the game, inventing a mode of engagement with each other, rather than by what always automatically happens in that room. As it actually happened, the students in the eleventh-grade Basic English class invented silence for nearly two minutes at the end of the Monday period, and afterward, when they noticed that they were being noisy and that I wanted to say something to them, would sometimes cry "Invent silence!" This became partly a joke, and it never worked perfectly, but in the few sessions I had with them, it began to take hold as a possibility they could return to. With the experience of inventing in their repertoire now, they could begin to assume the responsibility of having a say. Accordingly, the hermeneutic circling of the classroom began to admit of something beyond hermeneutic circling, to allow for new possibilities.

In that class, then, we had begun to set up a conversation for freedom and for responsibility. At first it was very tenuous, lost more often than found, as the old hermeneutic circle of disruption and inattention claimed its patrimony time and time again. But as the wheel of Saying gathered momentum, as my initial request and their acceptance began our relationship, as inventing possibilities and acting on them nurtured our relatedness, our sharing provided the space for more inventing of possibilities and for more launching out into the unknown of possibility, more committed action. Occasionally, some of the students began to listen *for* something that we had ourselves generated. On those occasions, the questions for the class become: "What are we saying here? Would it be possible to say something else, something different? Do we commit to trying out that possibility? How are we doing with enacting our new commitment?" You could print those questions on a standard business card and hand them out as reminders to everyone in the class. On the card I actually handed out, the questions were:

What conversation are you living in?

What conversation would empower you?

Who has a say about what conversation you live in?

Of course, like all the material we give out, anything that has the stamp of Schoolwork on it, this card is soon lost in the shuffle of papers into and out of the wire shelves below the seats. But I have plenty more of them to replace the first ones; and besides, it is not that the little card contains anything the students need to have. As teachers, what we want our students to have is the blank space of freedom/responsibility on the platform. We want them to say "You" to each other and to schoolwork, so that they may have nothing. So I give out the card, not hoping they will lose it, but intending that it cease to be an item of Schoolwork.

The scenes above describe my first attempts to bring the spirit of encounter into some classrooms. The mechanics by which this was accomplished, when it was, were activities with which I had become comfortable through practice at Outward Bound and elsewhere; it is not unimportant that they are connected with my life experiences and with the cluster of commitments that seem to have clung to me, organizing my identity not only as a teacher but as a person. They are the mask through which my person sounds. But the mask now actually becomes a resonator, a channel through which we make real our relatedness. Of course, teachers need to master the material content of their courses in a way that students cannot. But we need to know our stuff in another way, too. We need practice in bringing who we have been and who we are to the classroom in such a way as to establish a voltage, a potential energy that can result in the spark of encounter, the moment of "personal making present." In the classroom group, Buber affirms, even where there has been an institutionally sanctioned and rationalized draining of You from the lifeworld, there remains the possibility of authentically facing each other not as roles but as persons. There is in the flatness of the institutional floor an actual invitation to step into the presence of another, to step onto the slope of being together. We need teacher trainings that focus our energies, our personal histories, and our commitments through the lens of this invitation to encounter. "What can I do to help them learn?" then becomes several interrelated questions: "Who are they? Who am *I*? How can *I*, with my own history, predilections and idiosyncracies, make available in the relatedness of my classroom a mutuality of commitment? How can *I* greet my students so that we can name our world together?" For asking these questions so as to enable personal making present is, among a host of other things, what it is to be present as a teacher.

We say confidently that we draw upon knowledge. Perhaps we know that what we draw upon really is being together, being human, in the wilderness. Of course, in some cases, the past actually harbors the ecology of encounter; teachers and students dwell in it without forethought. But the crisis of our time is the destruction of wilderness: as the trees fall and the It-world consolidates, Adam has nowhere to turn. If we got *greeting*,

sharing in the wilderness into our classrooms, would a present world open to the touch of our living? What if we could take our students out into the city to name the buildings, the streets for themselves? What if we could, in the "confines" of our regular classrooms, build with students the edifice of knowledge as a house of shared *names*? What if the poster announced into the corridor:

Free Being

Bring Some, Get More

NOTES

1. Levinas, dialogue with Richard Kearney, in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 29.
2. In *Teachers, Teaching, and Teacher Education*, Margo Okazawa-rey, James Anderson, and Rob Traver, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review, 1987), 248.
3. James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), 132.
4. Again I use the non-standard expression grammatically (as part of our grammar here): when jointed parts arise together, articulation comes into being. And further: Dwelling-place is when articulation arises.
5. For a view of perception as a creative process, a delight, see Edmund Blair Bolles, *A Second Way of Knowing* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1991), especially 160.
6. Kuhn's point is not quite so extreme. In describing the changes in paradigm-induced procedures of scientific investigation as changes in world view, he says that facts appear and disappear, or sometimes change guises, as when a stone swinging back and forth on a chain (which scientists trained in the Aristotelian paradigm had seen as an instance of constrained fall to a terminal position of rest) changed into the pendulum (a "body that almost succeeded in repeating the same motion over and over again ad infinitum") with the emergence of the impetus theory of motion. Galileo saw a pendulum, rather than a swinging stone, because of "perceptual possibilities made available by a medieval paradigm shift." (Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 119)
7. The concept of "schema" was developed in the work of Ulric Neisser. See his *Cognition and Reality: Principles and Implications of Cognitive Psychology* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1976).
8. William Faulkner, *The Unvanquished* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 3.
9. Saussure, *CLG*, 133.
10. F. Flores and T. Winograd, *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1986), 56-57.

11. Maxine Greene, "In Search of a Critical Pedagogy," in *Teaching, Teachers, and Teacher Education*, 247.
12. Outward Bound is an international organization of schools and centers whose programs are dedicated to ensuring not the survival of individuals, but of what its founder, the philosopher Kurt Hahn, regarded as the most important qualities of individuals' lives in society: "tenacity in pursuit, an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion." Most of the Outward Bound schools are located in remote wilderness areas and use back-country expeditions and challenge to show participants the possibility that a human life is most powerfully and happily lived as contribution. Compassion is "bearing or suffering with others"; contribution is "giving with others." The work of Outward Bound, in my experience at least, is to bring into being that living and genuine We of which Buber spoke.
13. There are many, many other exercises of this kind available for, and inventable by, teachers who, if they are willing, can set their old identities aside for a class period or two and take up the role of an "outsider." The largest collection I know about was assembled by Karl Rohnke of Project Adventure, and is available from Kendall Hunt Publishing, P.O. Box 1840, Dubuque, IA 52004 (1-800-338-8290). They will send you a price list for *Cowstails and Cobras, Silver Bullets,* and *The Bottomless Bag,* each of which contains descriptions of numerous "initiative games" and instructions for building or setting them up. Used as vehicles for breaking up habits, begetting the excitement of working together, the élan of invention, they are dynamite.
14. I say "perhaps" because I am designing the experience of these students almost minute by minute in my limited time with them. It might be that this piece of the design would fit better before the Count-Off exercise. It depends on how I can see to fit what I have with what they need on a given day. I am planning and improvising at the same time, improvising on the basis of a prior plan, or just plain making it up without a plan.

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