

**CONVERSATIONS: HERMENEUTIC INQUIRY UNEARTHING
PEDAGOGIC RELATIONS**

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Maya, Solen, and especially to Paige. Thank you. It is wonderful that you believe in me.

Abstract

What is *conversation* and how is it related to pedagogic relations? *Conversations: Hermeneutic Inquiry Unearthing Pedagogic Relations* utilizes Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of conversation as "the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 368). This definition for *conversation* is a model for the pedagogic relation where the teacher and student experience education together, side-by-side. This thesis explores the themes of pedagogy, vulnerability and living or Being in the context of teaching.

Hermeneutic inquiry -a mode, or art of interpretation-is utilized to inquire into one teacher's experience with students to unearth a deeper understanding of the pedagogic relation. The hermeneutic questions that have informed the inquiry are: 1) What is the nature of the pedagogic relation? 2) What is the nature of the teacher-student relationship? 3) What is the significance of vulnerability in teaching? 4) What is the effect of society on the pedagogic relation? Textual fragments or narrative reconstructions of conversations with students and parents are the site of the study. The study itself employs Gadamer's *Truth and Method* as a tool of inquiry and also explores the writings on pedagogy of David Smith, David Jardine and Max van Manen.

This thesis addresses the nature of a teacher being with another, namely the student and how the teacher must have a measure of self-understanding to nurture the pedagogic relation. The teacher who engages in *conversation* with his/her students will undoubtedly experience a measure of vulnerability as a direct result of the relationship. The thesis concludes with writing about how hermeneutics is a mode of self-understanding and change.

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Forward

Conversations: Hermeneutic Inquiry Unearthing Pedagogic Relations employs the theme “conversations” in three different, but inter-related manners. Firstly, hermeneutics is in a sense a conversation between the researcher and his topic of study. It is through a cycle of questioning and answering (the essence of conversation) that a deeper understanding of a topic will be reached. Hermeneutic inquiry “is a kind of conversational relation that the researcher develops with the notion he or she wishes to explore and understand” (van Manen, 1990, pp. 97-98). The notion or topic of this inquiry is an unearthing of the nature of pedagogic relations.

The second sense of conversation that dwells within this inquiry is the pedagogic relation or the conversation between teacher and student. Within a classroom many different modes of sharing information, or talking and listening may occur. The classroom is a place of discussion, chat, debate, lecture, and conversation. Conversation, as used in this instance, holds a sort of dwelling-together, where Being-a-student is different than Being-a-teacher, but where both are equally important. The conversation between teacher and student “seems to evoke a sense of togetherness and in-touchness” (Li, 2002, p. 88). It is a pedagogic model for an ideal teacher-student relationship, where the very Being-our experience in the world-of teacher and student, dwells within a nurturing place. In unearthing a teacher, one must unearth the very nature of the pedagogic relation.

The third manner of conversation within this thesis is the narrative reconstruction of dialogue between the teacher and student. The reconstruction of conversations of the teacher is the place where the inquiry will dwell. Chambers (1999) states that “our first

challenge (is) to name where we are” (p. 144), and in this inquiry, the very interactions and conversations, the very relationship between one teacher (Mr. Wood) and his students and others is the site of the inquiry. These conversations are the *text* by which this inquiry will unearth a deeper understanding of the nature of pedagogic relations.

Conversations invokes, in spirit the *nature* of hermeneutic inquiry, the *essence* of pedagogic relations and the very *place* of inquiry, the narrative reconstructions.

The thesis is structured in two distinct sections, or colloquies. The first colloquy inquires into what the literature says about hermeneutics. It explores hermeneutics as a way of understanding Being or living. The second colloquy inquires into the nature of the pedagogic relation. The insights and ideas in colloquy one inform the interpretations in colloquy two.

The thesis employs interpretive hermeneutics in order to inquire into the question “what is the significance of *conversations* within teaching?” Hermeneutics is a means to “break open” significant pedagogic-conversations in teaching and to seek a deeper understanding of the nature of teaching as an experience. The conversations themselves are written as narratives in the thesis and are inquired into hermeneutically.

The question “what is the significance of conversation in teaching?” also leads to other questions; “what is the nature of the pedagogic relation?” and “what is the significance of vulnerability in teaching?” and “what is the effect of society on the pedagogic relation?”

The post-modern term “deconstruction” is used when an inquirer tries to hermeneutically “break open” text, but the word seems too rigid, too mathematical, to be applied in this inquiry. The term *deconstruct* carries a notion of dismantling the topic into

disconnected pieces, where in this inquiry I maintain a connection between parts and whole. Instead of deconstruct I use the term *unearth*, which denotes a natural and tender lifting of layers to see what lies beneath. There is, in essence, a notion in *unearthing* that the whole remains intact, to be inquired of, from another direction, or in another manner. This inquiry will unearth an understanding of the teacher's practice, particularly the nature of the pedagogic relationship.

Importance of the question

Hermeneutic inquiry is a type of questioning that unearths the essence or nature of the topic. The significance of the question "what is the nature of the teacher-student relationship" leads the inquiry in two areas, pedagogy and vulnerability in teaching. These questions, asked of the text of inquiry, are the tools with which I seek a deeper understanding of pedagogy, pedagogic relations and vulnerability in teaching.

In *Pedagon: Meditations on Pedagogy and Culture*, Smith (1994) defines pedagogy as "the formal practice and professions of teaching, but also that dense network of activities that surround general care for the young" (p. i). He goes on to consider society's relationship with pedagogy and children and makes the argument that in many ways adults have separated "the voice of the young from the centre of our planning about the future" (p. 195). This idea of the voice or stance of the young within the teacher-student relationship is an important aspect to this inquiry.

Max van Manen (1994), in *Pedagogy, Virtue and Narrative: Identity in Teaching*, states "the pedagogical relation is the heart of good and effective teaching" (p. 137). The "pedagogical relation" is the place where student and teacher attempt, together, to create meaning out of their shared living. The relationship between the student and

teacher can lead to a valuable educational experience, or just the opposite. The teacher-student relationship is an important topic of study and discourse within the living reality, or Being, of the teacher, and is the focus of this thesis.

“What is the significance of vulnerability in teaching” emerges from the question “what is the nature of pedagogic relations.” When one considers pedagogical discourse, one finds vulnerability. Teachers are vulnerable. They stand in front of a group of students, each of whom has his/her own subjectivity and lived experience, and put their effort, ideas, planning, and often heart, up for public consumption. The teacher listens to his students, and creates a space for learning, trying to balance the spontaneity of learning and living with fulfilling a social mandate. A good teacher connects with his students. He connects in a deep and meaningful way. This pedagogic connection enables learning to take place, but also places the very Being of the teacher up for consumption. The classroom becomes a place a “of relating, exploring and inquiry” (Heine, 2004, p. 100). The teacher becomes vulnerable as he opens his heart and living to his students.

The very being of the teacher becomes the place of inquiry. It is through the teacher’s perceptions and prejudices that he understands his own lived experience. This thesis will inquire into the nature of Being, to understand how the teacher dwells within the teacher-student relationship. The pedagogic relationship involves a deep and meaningful connection between the teacher and student. This study inquires into this relationship to reach a deeper understanding of pedagogy, and to identify and address the vulnerability the teacher faces by Being within relationship.

The inquiry delves into the nature of vulnerability in teaching and how that leads to exploration of the *conversation* between the teacher and society. I recently caught a

ride home with a mechanic from the car dealership who politely shared his opinion on how teachers could improve their practice (a common occurrence for teachers). Teachers observe, at times, that members of society perceive them less as mentors and professionals, and more as bumbling fools, or worse predators of the young. The nature of this vulnerability, this perceived threat affects the very Being of the teacher and thus pedagogic relations.

There is vulnerability in the teacher-student conversation, a subtle but real vulnerability that is nestled in the nature of relationship. Pedagogy involves knowing children, relating to them, and understanding their “inner life” (van Manen, 1994, p. 139), and within this deep connection lays vulnerability. Teachers are confused whether a hug is appropriate to comfort a child for whom they act *in loco parentis*, because of the fear of what physical contact represents to others. In spite of this, teachers do become connected with their students, a deep and personal connection that can positively or negatively affect a teacher’s Being.

A documentary film entitled *The First Year* (2004) chronicles the struggles and successes of five beginning teachers. In one segment Maurice Rapp, a South-Central Los Angeles kindergarten teacher, visits his mid-west United States home, and walks past his old elementary school playground. The brightly coloured equipment is new, and attractive, in stark contrast to the bleak concrete schoolyard of his school in Los Angeles. Maurice Rapp says, “This would be beautiful, wonderful for my kids,” and is suddenly overcome by emotion. He is seemingly vulnerable. He refers to his students as “his kids.” Teachers often liken their students to their own children because the connection is similar to that of parent and child. Teachers in a pedagogic relationship connect with their

students; they care about them. They personally and emotionally invest in their student's successes and failures, but more importantly in their student's living. If the term pedagogical denotes a teacher-student relationship (as this thesis claims), then there is indeed a need to look at the vulnerabilities teachers feel from within this relationship.

Inquiring of the conversation

The narrative reconstructions of dialogue are conversations the author has participated in with students, parents, and members of the school community. Occasionally other narratives sharing the theme of relationship or vulnerability, from books, film or media are employed in the inquiry. This thesis is an unearthing, or breaking-open, of the topic of study to get to its root, to deepen understanding of the nature of the teacher's experience within pedagogic relations.

To understand our experiences, we must create a conversation where we question a theme (i.e., what is the nature of the pedagogic relation) and attempt to unearth understanding. Max van Manen (1990) writes, "theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point" (p. 87). It "is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand" (p. 87). Gadamer (2004) states "we cannot have experiences without asking questions" (p. 362). Conversation itself "has a hermeneutic thrust; it is oriented to sense-making and interpreting of the notion that drives or stimulates the conversation" (van Manen, 1990, p. 98). The conversation within hermeneutic inquiry lends itself to finding an answer, or another, seemingly deeper, question within the cycle.

This inquiry will make use of questioning (Gadamerian questioning) as a reflective interpretation to unearth, that which dwells within the narratives. There will be,

in essence, a conversation between the researcher and the narrative text, which unearths a deeper understanding of relationships in teaching.

FIRST COLLOQUY

What is Hermeneutics?

Hermeneutic Inquiry

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
 Healthy, free, the world before me,
 The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.
 (Whitman, 1867/1975, p. 178)

The above excerpt from *Song of the Open Road*, written by Walt Whitman, portrays the beginning of a journey, or an exploration. In this excerpt from the poem there is a notion that the narrator does not know the final destination. The searcher may uncover and choose a direction that experience, or consciousness says is the right path to travel, but where it leads may be different than expected. Perhaps the beginning of the journey, those first steps, the knowing that a journey lies ahead, is all of which the narrator is sure. There is purpose in the beginning, a thrust that will inform where the journey will take the narrator, but there is also a sense of anticipation, of waiting adventure, wonder, and a wander through possibility.

In *Song of the Open Road*, the narrator goes on to say:

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are
 not all that is here,
 I believe that much unseen is also here. (p. 179)

I see this excerpt from Whitman's *Song of the Open Road* as a metaphor for hermeneutic inquiry. There is an inductive path that the researcher reaches and endeavours to tread down. This path is the topic the researcher is studying, the thing that

“addresses” him (Gadamer, 2004, p. 299). It is in answer to something, the journey itself is in response to a moment, or a question, or an experience. As the path leads, the inquiry unfolds, and that which was unseen, may be made visible. Hermeneutic inquiry follows a force that moves one “down a path” but there is much unseen, much to unearth in order to bring about understanding.

Hermeneutics is “a way” but not a “method.” It is a path, but one that slips through the fingers. Chambers writes (1987), “hermeneutics is difficult to define (....). In its broadest sense hermeneutics is the study of understanding but in a narrow sense, it is the methodological principals of interpretation and explanation of text” (p. 14). What does this mean, “hermeneutics is the study of understanding,” or it is in essence the method of “interpretation” of text? Smith (2002) writes,

the scholar oriented by the hermeneutic imagination is not so much interested in pondering the texts and arguments of the hermeneutic tradition as in engaging Life hermeneutically, which means trying to understand ever more profoundly what makes life Life, what makes living a living. (p. 1)

Similarly, David Jardine (2000) writes, “hermeneutic inquiry has as its goal to educe understanding, to bring forth the presuppositions in which we already live” (p. 116). The topic of hermeneutic inquiry is living, or in this inquiry, the living reality of the teacher. Hermeneutics is about making meaning of living and Being.

In a scholarly endeavour the pursuit of understanding is driven by the desire to share that which is understood, where some other may read it, and discover understanding. The hermeneutic inquiry is scholarly at its root, but living at its heart. The researcher is attempting to make meaning out of living to add to the understanding of

living. Therefore, the researcher struggling with the hermeneutic problem must unearth truth within living. She will understand Being differently and deeper; she will, in essence, live with a fuller and deeper understanding of her world. The hermeneutic inquirer, by nature of her journey of understanding, is seeking to live better. It is as if hermeneutics encourages interconnectedness between understanding and living, and once the hermeneutic scholar finds understanding, her Being-in-the-world will evolve and living will be informed and reflective.

The word *hermeneutics* is derived from Hermes, the Greek messenger of the gods. Hermes was known for several significant qualities, “such as eternal youthfulness, friendliness, prophetic power, and fertility” (Smith, 1991, p. 187). He was a “trickster” (Chambers, 2003, p. 228). There is a quality to hermeneutics that enables a “fresh” or “new” perspective on Being-in-the-world, which “reminds humans of their fallibility and potential” (p. 228). The practice of hermeneutics is rooted in discovery; the seeker must be willing to be surprised by what he finds. He must come from a fresh perspective that looks in from outside common discourse of a topic, beyond that which is taken from granted. “The hermeneutic imagination works from a commitment to generativity and rejuvenation and to the questions of how we can go on together” (Smith, 1991, p. 189).

Hermeneutic inquiry embodies a spirit of youthful perspective and collaboration, or conversation between text and reader, where understanding the world will improve living, where possibilities are infinite. Caputo (1987) writes “hermeneutics always has to do with keeping the difficulty of life alive” (p. 2); it “wants to describe the fix we are in” (p. 2) by exposing us to our “ruptures and gaps... the textuality and difference, which inhabits everything we think, and do, and hope for” (p. 6). David Jardine (2000) writes,

hermeneutic inquiry is thus concerned with the ambiguous nature of life itself. It does not desire to render such ambiguity objectively presentable (as if the ambiguity of life were something to dispel, some 'error in the system' that needed correction) but rather to attend to it, to give it a voice. (p. 120)

Hermeneutics, however, "is concerned not only with the individual, but with rational understanding of both ourselves and the world around us" (Chambers, 1987, p. 18). These "ruptures and gaps" to be understood are within our own Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962, p. 65). Interpretive hermeneutics must start with the self, in order to discover the stance, or place of dwelling, of the interpreter as she interprets Being. It is the project of hermeneutics to unearth an understanding of "who we are as individuals inhabiting this place at this time" (Chambers, 2003, p. 228), or our very Being.

The topic of study emerges from a question we have, or when an experience or moment, or thought deeply addresses us, piques our curiosity. To begin the hermeneutic journey, the researcher is motivated by a question, which emerges from the researcher's lived experience or Being.

Being

Hans Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (2004; originally published as *Wahrheit und Methode*, 1960) places great emphasis on the notion that hermeneutic inquiry, and particularly understanding, is rooted in Being. Gadamer's notion of Being was formulated predominantly through Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962). It was Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, or the understanding of dwelling in this place at this time that deeply influenced Gadamerian hermeneutics. "For Heidegger, understanding has its origin in his concept of *Dasein*: one's ongoing encounter with the world-one's

questioning of it, questioning of others, and questioning of one's own being" (Sotioru, 1993, p. 2). "Dasein is simply that of a being which understands [B]eing" (Ricouer, 1981, p. 54). Being in hermeneutic inquiry is the place where the unearthing happens, for "we are ourselves entities to be analysed" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 67). We are never separate from our Being. When the interpreter of the topic engages Being to bring about understanding, she is her. She is a "Being-in-the-world" (p. 65), and she is in the world "Being-with and Being-one's-Self" (p. 65). This inquiry is not a dialogue on the philosophical nature of hermeneutics and Being, but the argument must be made, that if one engages in a pursuit for understanding, one has to be aware that all understanding is rooted in the stance of the Being of the inquirer. And even though "we do not know what Being is" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 25), we have the sense that it is our stance in the now, and the future, and the past.

Being is our place in the universe as established by who we are and where we are and how we got here. And though "what we seek when we inquire into Being is not something entirely unfamiliar" (p. 25), when the seeker embarks upon inquiry, when that "something" addresses us, we must dig into Being to unearth understanding.

What we seek is that which addresses us (Gadamer, 2004, p. 299), an experience that resonates in some deep place within our Being where we find meaning and understanding. The researcher aims to hold experience up to the light, and turn it around, and unwrap layers in order to understand it. We seek to study that which is familiar in some sense, something we have "lived" through, but the reason we inquire is we crave more understanding, more awareness, and more meaning. We wish to know more about our place, our experience, and our Being.

Being is a relationship, between self and what Heidegger (1962) calls “the ‘they’” (p. 164), or the interactions we have with others: the news media, television, government, neighbours, family, colleagues, social institutions, and all others. Heidegger professes that our own identity, one’s own Dasein (the ongoing interaction with the world) becomes more and more “they”-like as we interact within the world around us. It is this colonizing of one’s Being that the inquiry into self, the hermeneutic interpretation, aims to understand. Hermeneutics demands of its interpreters, the courage to break away from “they” and to inquire into Being, and how “they” affect Being. “Hermeneutics thus is for the hardy,” (Caputo, 1987, p. 2) because it looks to unearth the perspective of the masses and check it against the newly understood experience of the interpreter.

The hermeneutic inquirer must be cognizant that reflecting, or interpreting, or inquiring into Being is rooted in the “they” of culture and tradition. Ricoeur (1981) considers “hermeneutics to be concerned with the understanding of being and the relations between beings” (p. 19). Hermeneutics is therefore the study of where one fits with himself, his community(s), his environment and ecology; it is the study of how one fits, and why one fits, and with whom one fits. Hermeneutics is a “methodological concept which has its origin in the process of human life itself” (Smith, 1991, p. 191), that is living with and amongst others.

Smith (1991) writes of Edmund Husserl’s conception of the “life-world” (p. 191), which shaped hermeneutic inquiry. The life-world, or *lebenswelt*, characterizes “our sense of the world as it is there for us before we say or do anything about it” (p. 191). Heidegger’s notion of the “they” is that which affects our stance within the life-world.

We are part of the life-world or the “they,” as the life-world is part of us, and the inquiry must recognize that our Being-in-the-world is in essence a part of our Being.

Hermeneutic inquiry relies on words such as *understanding*, *interpretation*, *inquiry*, and *meaningfulness* and as Smith (1991) points out these words are linked to the “conversational nature of human experience” (p. 192). The hermeneutic inquiry is rooted in one’s Being where interactions and conversations with others lead to reflections and questions, places where an inquiry “takes to the open road.”

One may question hermeneutics here. One may ask, how is it possible to remain objective, when one is intertwined with one’s course of study? How is it that a researcher’s immersed Being can draw an objective, or rational thought or conclusion about Being without raising questions of bias? But hermeneutics is reflective, which in its essence allows the inquiry, or interpretation of being, to happen as the researcher looks into being. Hermeneutical inquiry poses questions about one’s being-in-life in order to acquire a measure of understanding of living. The hermeneutic-phenomenological inquiry follows the philosophy of hermeneutic inquiry of a text, but the text itself is a formulation of moments in Being that have addressed the researcher.

It may appear that this thing that addresses us is too close to the researcher, that because one is within the phenomenon one’s objective, or rational understanding, will be clouded by one’s own stance within the phenomenon. But this “phenomenological understanding” (Palys, 1991, p. 42) of the happening allows the researcher a unique place to study the phenomenon itself. Max van Manen (1990) writes that in order to “explicate” our assumptions and pre-understandings (p. 46), we must

try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow and concealing character. (p. 47)

There is a notion in hermeneutics that the researcher must be aware of being-in-the-world, to seek to understand the nature of the phenomenon to be unearthed. The Being, or living of the hermeneut within the lived reality of the research plays an integral role in the interpretation of the phenomenological text; therefore one's prejudice must be explored.

Gadamer's notion of historically effected consciousness

Our discussion of hermeneutics now leads to *historically effected consciousness*. This dense Gadamerian term is seemingly academic, but if one deconstructs each of the three words that communicate the concept the importance Gadamer places in the notion becomes clear.

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary (2001) defines *historical* as that which is "of or concerning history" (p. 669). The root *history* is defined as the recording and interpreting of past human events. Our being emerges through our experience, thus our history is our understanding of our past events. Our experiences shape the way we understand the world. They change our knowledge of the world, so much so that we cannot have the same experience twice (Gadamer, 2004, p. 353). This notion of experience, and how we understand the phenomenon of an experience, becomes our own history.

To be experienced, we must understand that which we experience. By having an experience, our mind alters the way we understand the universe. The notion that experience changes our outlook of the world and makes it significant for the researcher to

understand history in order to understand a phenomena on the basis of the phenomena, rather than the researcher's perceptions. The purpose of inquiry and interpretation is to find a certain truth, or understanding, and to do so it is imperative for the researcher to find his bearings. Thus *prejudice* is not a negative term in Gadamerian hermeneutics "but rather a sign that we can only make sense of the world from within a particular 'horizon' which provides the starting point for our thoughts and actions" (Smith, 1991, p. 193). By acknowledging this starting point, or history, the interpreter may look beyond Self. "The person is never to be thought of as a Thing or a substance; the person 'is rather the unity of living-through [Er-lebens] which is immediately experienced in and with our Experiences'" (Citing Scheler in Heidegger, 1962, p. 73).

Our person, or our living, is understood through that which we have experienced, or our history. Chambers (1987) states that Heidegger was interested in *historicity*, or "how our way-of-being in the world changes as we achieve some new understanding" (p. 22). Heidegger's insights were expanded by Gadamer whose concept *historically effected consciousness* demonstrates how our stance within history, or tradition, affects our interpretation of text (p. 23). Ricoeur (1981) explores the topic of prejudice and quotes Gadamer; "the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being" (p. 68). One's history affects one's Being, one's understanding, one's living and one's judgements.

One's history and experience has a consequence in one's understanding or interpretation of living. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2001) defines *effect* as the "result or consequence of an action" (p. 446). History can be thought of as the

understanding of experience resulting from an action. Our history, therefore, will have an effect on our understanding; on our very standing with in the world in which we dwell.

One's perceptions of stance within the world can be thought of as consciousness. The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2001) defines *consciousness* as "awareness of one's existence" or the state of being aware of one's existence (p. 300). Being conscious is being "in the moment" or "being present" of and within reality (Heidegger, 1962, p. 254). Our present stance within the moment is consciousness and our consciousness is our own awareness of that stance.

Therefore, *historically effected consciousness* is the way our experience affects our perceptions and interpretations of our living. Our understanding of our own existence, or own Being is "entangled in the context of historical effect" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 234), hence our prejudice is intertwined within our outlook, and it is through this prejudice that we interpret. To know one's prejudice, one's historically effected consciousness is to understand one's self (p. 235). Dilthey suggests, "life itself is ordered toward reflection" (p. 235) and this reflective unearthing of self, which is a mode of living, is a purely hermeneutic task, as reflection is a living practice.

Why Hermeneutic Inquiry?

Hermeneutic inquiry is the study of understanding. It is a task of understanding that which addresses us, but it must also entail why we are addressed, and why we inquire into the topic.

A hermeneutic inquiry begins when some "thing" addresses the researcher; firstly, some question demands to be addressed (what is the nature of the teacher-student conversation or what is the significance of vulnerability in teaching?) and then the quest

begins. The quest has a purpose, to inquire into the topic to bring about an understanding of the topic. But where the interpretation of the topic begins, where the unearthing must start, is with the self. The self and living is the root of the all understanding, and can never be separate from the inquiry.

Gadamer (2004) writes,

Often temporal distance can solve questions of critique in hermeneutics, namely how to distinguish true prejudices, by which we understand from the false ones, by which we misunderstand. Hence the hermeneutically trained mind will also include historical consciousness. It will make conscious the prejudices governing our own understanding so that the text, as another's meaning, can be isolated and valued as its own. (pp. 298-299)

This inquiry began with a desire to understand, more deeply the teacher-student relationship. This is the essence of human science research where "the underlying interest is to interpret more fully the meaning of human social relations" (Chambers, 1987, p. 1). The connection between teacher and student has an effect on learning, health and wellness, perception of school and meaning making particularly in the classroom. To understand the nature of pedagogic relationship is the purpose of this inquiry.

When the researcher begins hermeneutic inquiry into the nature of relationship, the first place to start is the self or Being. The text for this hermeneutic inquiry, the topic of study, is mined from the conversations of one teacher's lived experience in the pedagogic relation. "The goal of human science research is understanding as opposed to the goal of empirical-rational science which is explanation" (Carson cited in Chambers, 1987, p. 1). This inquiry is endeavouring to unearth an understanding of the lived-reality

of the teacher. The inquiry will broadly unearth a narrow area of study, Mr. Wood's practice, as broken open by the question "what is the nature of the teacher-student relationship," to gain an understanding of pedagogic relations.

Those using a form of quantitative research practice "see the important role of theory in guiding and generating research" (Palys, 1991, p. 44). Theory is an idea, or set of ideas that are set forth to explain a certain phenomenon. The process of explanation is being able "deconstruct" the phenomena so that it may be explained. One of quantitative research's greatest strengths is also its weakness. For example, a scientist in a lab studying aerodynamics of a cycling jersey may keep the temperature in the lab standardized, so that temperature does not impact the understanding of the event. In order to explain the phenomena, quantitative research divides the whole phenomena into observable and measurable parts, so that elements of the phenomena don't skew the results. The significant differences can be attributed to the controlled variables rather than those variables that are uncontrolled.

It is difficult (but most certainly possible) to extract an explanation of human interaction with a quantitative approach. It is possible to argue that any study of relationships must take into account the self or being, which is too complex to be divided into manageable parts. Questions of reliability (the experiment can be repeated) and validity (the experiment shows what it is supposed to) are difficult to reconcile in human science research.

Qualitative research is limited, as well. It is difficult in qualitative research to draw conclusions from work that can be generalized and beyond the context of the study. The conclusions in qualitative research, for example human relationships, can be drawn

from a narrow context, in this case, one teacher. Where qualitative is powerful is its allowing of theory to “emerge from interaction with and observation of the phenomena” (Palys, 1991, p. 46). The thesis, as stated, best fits with a qualitative-hermeneutic approach to research, as the phenomena (specific pedagogic relations) is addressed within the practice of the researcher, and in the context or stance of the teacher.

Narrative as research

Hermeneutic inquiry attempts to gain an understanding of living through the interpretation of a text. In this inquiry the text is a series of narrative reconstructions of conversations in the pedagogic context. The purpose of writing narrative can be found in Jardine’s (1992) question “how are we to respond to new life in our midst in such a way that life together can go on, in a way that does not foreclose on the future?” (p. 118).

Narrative reconstruction in hermeneutic inquiry allows the researcher to deeply inquire into living, without any impact on the actual happening, or moment of inquiry. The understanding that is found within the text is what matters. The telling of stories is a conversation between writer and reader; this conversation unearths new understanding and meaning within Being. Stories are a powerful tool of reflecting upon life where the “suffering” of the narrator “is never mine alone but always ours” (Aoki, 1996, p. 410). Through narrative, the inquirer will find meaning within the words that change the way the world is lived. Narrative becomes a mode of reflection on everyday life, which becomes a tool for making meaning. Inquiring of narrative becomes a mode of interpretation where “understanding is always interpretation” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 307).

Narrative is a record of an historical event, even in the context of one person’s lived experience and Gadamer (2004) tells us “understanding is ...essentially historical.”

The notion of understanding must be discussed in the context of historically effected consciousness, which as discussed earlier, is the finding of meaning within the frame of personal experience. Narrative allows the inquirer an opportunity to hermeneutically inquire into living from a stance that is purposefully reflective and geared to finding meaning and deeper understanding. Text “is understood only if it is understood in a way different as the occasion requires” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 309). Hermeneutic inquiry of narrative creates a “different occasion” which is formalised as reflectively searching for understanding of an event (or the narrative reconstruction of pedagogic interactions).

Hermeneutics and living

Hermeneutics is the study of, and quest for, understanding and through the unearthing nature of inquiry one forms a deeper “knowing” of the subject of study. But, “to reach an understanding...is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we are” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 379). We become different, fuller, and deeper with an altered stance within the world. The very progression of hermeneutic inquiry, the focus on living, shapes and changes the researcher.

The ordinary events of our lives are always and already full of relations, full of the whole complex of human inheritance, full of voices and spooks and spirits and desires and tongues, and full of inheritances far beyond the human voice, rivers and soil-edges and the coming of this solstice storm. Small events thus become potentially ‘fecund,’ presenting themselves as gates or ways into the luscious roil beneath the skin of familiarity. (Jardine, 2000, p. 107)

It is in living that one finds the “small events” which are “potentially ‘fecund,’” and within this discovery, or questioning of the events the researcher is “beneath the skin of familiarity.” Inquiring into these events brings about change in the very living of the researcher.

Conversation one: Researcher to reader

Beginning this hermeneutic inquiry, I was lost and disoriented, led awry by my thoughts. I was overwhelmed, and often had a feeling that I was academically “in over my head.” Though I knew the very nature of hermeneutic inquiry was to wade through certain darkness, peeling layers until meaning and understanding emerge, I never expected to be so bewildered. I was in search of a method or taxonomy, or practice by which I could investigate. I wanted someone or some thing, a book or a website, to tell me how to “do” a hermeneutic inquiry, even though as Gadamer (2004) states “a formal technique would arrogate itself a false superiority” (p. xxiii). I wanted a superior to tell me what to do.

I questioned my thesis supervisor, Dr. Cynthia Chambers, asking questions like “how do I ensure my analysis of my narratives is valid?” or “how can I be sure what I am writing will have value to my reader?” Dr. Chambers would patiently ponder my question, and respond with her own, “why do you use the word analysis?” or “explain validity,” or “why do you write for an audience?” I would sit and think, perhaps nod my head, but her response would leave me feeling more confused. I thought “if I’m not writing for an audience, then whom? If I am not analysing, then what am I doing?” But that became a question guiding my inquiry, what is it I am doing? What am I doing in my research, what am I doing in my practice, and what am I doing in my life? This question

“what am I doing” became important in living. What am I doing at this moment? What do I want to be doing in this moment? What am I doing with my children, or my students? What do I want to be doing? What could I be doing? How is what I am doing affecting others?”

The hermeneutic journey, I had begun to understand, is not a well-marked path, but is one’s own searching through fecund yet untamed wild-ness. It is through searching that I have come to understand the inquiry is less about finding answers to questions, and more about finding the right questions. (What is the nature of the pedagogic relation, or what am I doing, or what do children deserve?). It is acknowledging that answers are not the highest form of understanding, but knowing which question to ask involves a deep and meaningful conversation with the text, or thesis, that “deciding the question is the path to knowledge” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 364).

The very nature of hermeneutic inquiry, of procuring knowledge in this context, is- the art of questioning and questioning further; the art of thinking (p. 367), which is the task of seeking out what is signified, but also what is not. It is acknowledging what is some sort of “conversation” or shared truth, but also recognising that in order to find the truth of conversation, one must be prepared, if not willing to search beyond one’s own prejudice, and perhaps find the other voice within the conversation, as presented by the text itself, or what Gadamer calls “the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect” (p. 368). What we seek is an understanding of our own place, our own perceptions and our own stance within our own dwelling. It is recognising that as Buddha suggested, “where there is perception, there is deception” (Hanh, 1998, p. 52). It is recognition that there is more to us than we think, and less. Hermeneutic inquiry, I discovered, is about

living and understanding that which we know to have meaning. It is at first shallow, but what we can understand is much deeper, if only we question.

The following is an example of a hermeneutic-experience. What makes this living experience hermeneutic was that I realised I could see the nature of the event in a way that I had never imagined; it was as “real” as my original interpretation of the event.

Conversation two: Research and living

I grew up playing baseball. Spring and summer were spent at the diamond, hitting long flies, completing infield drills and goofing around with teammates. Each game and practice, from my first year to my last, I heard the same words “keep your eye on the ball.” While I was batting my dad would yell, “Keep your eye on the ball,” while I was fielding the coach would say “Keep your eye on the ball.” My experience in the game of baseball, from playing to watching, my understanding of the nature of the game, could be summed up with the mantra “Keep my eye on the ball.”

When the ball is hit to deep centre-field, it may be caught, or dropped for a base hit, but I watch it. I watch the homerun, fans scrambling to get the ball, and keep it. In baseball you watch the ball, but what I didn’t realise was there was more to see.

Recently, I was sitting in a restaurant 15 stories above the city. A game of baseball was being played on a field far below. A thick-green cottonwood hindered my view of the game, blocked the pitcher, batter, catcher and centre-field. I couldn’t see the ball; instead, I could see what in 25 years of playing and watching, I had never seen before. I first noticed the third baseman, legs shoulder width apart, touch the ground with his glove and focus his attention behind the tree, seemingly to the pitcher and the ball, behind the cottonwood. His body tensed, he moved on to the balls of his feet. He lifted

his glove, smacked his fist into the pocket and leaned forward. He relaxed and settled his weight back into the earth. He looked over his left shoulder and called something to the short stop. They laughed.

My gaze shifted, from third to shortstop and back again. In unison, the two men tensed, pounded their fists into their gloves, adjusted caps and leaned forward. Relaxed. Joked. Stretched. Tensed. Leaned. Relaxed. These two players, third base and short stop, were the game, a dance. They moved together, lived the game; breathed it. I saw, for the first time that the game wasn't just the ball, it was the story around the ball, the experience of the game. I realised that I lived in a "hermeneutic universe" (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxxi). This happening, or experience, was fundamentally hermeneutic because I looked at a text (baseball game) and interpreted it by what was there, rather than by where experience directed me.

My understanding of hermeneutics as interpretation began to become whole; I had a sense of Gadamerian hermeneutics, and had begun to view the world hermeneutically. It was as if I began to understand that hermeneutics is the practice of embracing our Being as a whole within the world (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxx). The process of engaging in a hermeneutic inquiry changes the way the researcher interacts within the world. He becomes more aware of that which he never saw before.

I approached Dr. Chambers one night after a master's class and asked if she would supervise a thesis inquiring into my practice and my "stance" within the student-teacher relationship. When she agreed, she asked me to begin to reflect on my reason for wanting to study the subject. Interpretive research "begins in the place where we (were) granted or given (the) incident in the first place" (Jardine, 1998, p. 40). It is the task of

the researcher therefore to understand what has addressed him, what has become evocative, and why he searches for understanding. It is here that one can begin to understand the phenomena of living.

The following narrative was written during this initial phase of this research, a year before the writing of these words. What they demonstrate is a desire to understand the nature of pedagogic relations. This narrative represents what addressed me, the place of questioning, or the “given incident.”

Conversation three: The given incident

I was sitting at the lake, my daughter with her grandmother reading stories and my son and his cousin creating some imaginary duel involving swords and bad-guys. The wind picked up and I wondered where to start with my thesis. “What addresses me?” I asked.

Was the question leading my inquiry “what is the nature of teaching?” Is it the summers off, or the technology or lack there of? What struck me as I wrote, stemmed from a dream I had the night before.... In the dream, I was at school, preparing for the first day back, still a week away, and I was struck by the realisation that the students I would greet on that first day, will be kids I won’t know. The class I had said goodbye to in June had moved on, and once again, like every September, I would feel slightly alone amongst a group of people.

There are several key ideas from the above that have led this inquiry; firstly, the idea that knowing students is important to teaching. And secondly, the notion that “I would feel slightly alone amongst a group of people,” is important. Teaching is not about

summers spent planning or playing, teaching is not about the politics, the “red-tape” or two weeks at Christmas. Teaching, for me, is about relationships formed to inspire and broaden (both teacher and student), to challenge and to frustrate (both teacher and student), to peak curiosity and to enlighten, (both teacher and student). There was something important about inquiring into the notion of teachers and students knowing one another. There was something in that longing to know my students, which was a new way of seeing myself. It was as if I had looked into my life from a different window. I was shocked to see that I needed my students. The relationships that had grown and I nurtured, for the welfare of my students, had affected me as well.

I began to wonder how this teacher-student relationship affects the living and learning within the classroom. I asked, “how does a teacher create a practice, that does inspire and does change the way students reflect on self, or inspire and change the way teachers reflect on self?” The teacher, after all, dwells within the classroom as does the student, and this dwelling together influences the very Being of each. What is the nature of the pedagogic relation that teachers and students create and how does this relationship affect vulnerabilities in teaching and working and Being?

As these questions emerged out of my wandering, so too did the topic of my inquiry and an understanding that my inquiry would change the way I live.

Inquiry is a living research

Dilthey wrote in 1985:

A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to

me in some sense. Only in that does it become objective. (cited in van Manen 1990, p. 35)

The nature of hermeneutic inquiry is deep reflection upon experience, or Being. The researcher “possesses” the topic, which lives and breathes. The very nature of writing, particularly written communication for the purpose of hermeneutic inquiry, distances the writer, or the inquirer from the experience. It offers up the phenomenon for consumption. The writer is not immune to transformation upon reflecting on the experience. Hermeneutics generates a deep personal transformation within the Being of the inquirer. And therein lies the potency of the inquiry, but also why a hermeneutic inquiry entails a measure of courage, of trust that while facing self may initially be painful it will ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of one’s being, life and stance within the natural world.

Sitting in Dr. Chamber’s office one late fall day, she stood up out of her chair, reached for *Truth and Method* by Hans-Georg Gadamer, and insisted that I find a copy and begin to work my way through it. It was dense, and wordy, she mentioned, but that any serious hermeneutic historian was remiss in his inquiry if he neglected to embark upon *Gadamerian* hermeneutics. I found a copy in the university library.

The book’s red-cloth cover was worn. My mind drifted to the others who had reached for this same book, started a similar journey. I pulled *Truth and Method* from the shelves and ran my hand over the dusty title. When I opened the book I was stopped by the distinct musty-earth odour. There is a certain comfort to the smell of an old book, a transformative moment, which transports the senses into the past somehow. I thumbed through the pages and felt the immediate excitement one feels when embarking on a

journey of sorts. The words were big-academic words. My excitement grew. I was no longer pretending to be an academic, I was charting an academic quest, where I knew I would face rivals of the past and present, but would strive to work through the struggles and in the end, succeed.

I got home, and began to read. My mind, struggling as it may, began to wander, but I trudged on, fighting the fatigue that suddenly gripped my eyes. Try as I might, Gadamer's words left me faltering; words such as *Bildung*, *subjectivization*, *wirkungsgeschichtliches bewusstein* (*historically effective consciousness- or prejudice*), *ontological*, and, of course, *Being*.

In the moment I finished reading, I was a little unsure, perhaps a little beaten, but satisfied, that I would return. Not out of enjoyment, but necessity. "Is it not my responsibility as an education professional to become an expert in my field?" I asked myself. I sensed that Gadamer's words and insights would improve my teaching, my life, and my *verstehen*, or understanding of the world. Gadamer's hermeneutics, or the little I knew of it, resonated within me, as if I had found a way of research that matched my way of living. I was sure that this reflective, "peel the onion," unearthing approach to research -to break the whole into parts and understand them as a whole- was created for me at this moment.

On long winter nights, with snow falling over the lit street, I could manage an hour of reading, covering six or seven pages, comprehending perhaps half of what I read. But again, in the back of my mind was that feeling the inquiry was a responsibility I had, and that it was important to, and emerging from, my own living. The question, what is the nature of pedagogic relations, had emerged not just in the last year, but I realised had

spanned my whole career. I want a teacher for my own children, for my students, who is in relationship or “conversation” with students and so, the questioning of my practice and my career drove me to continue the reading.

I thought once that I might tell Dr. Chambers I couldn’t do it, but two reasons kept me going. The first was Dr. Chambers, my teacher, gave me the book with the expectation that I could complete it, comprehend it, and synthesize its content sufficiently to influence my Masters of Education research. She believed in me, and the impact that her belief had on me enforced my belief in my own students. Secondly, I began to view my struggle as an opportunity to teach my students. I gave them updates on my slow progression, and found it rewarding when they shared their belief in me. Through this interaction with my students I began to see, hermeneutically, that my relationship with my students impacted my own learning and enriched my living.

Hermeneutics’ everyday effect

My excursion into hermeneutics brought about wonder. The quest to understand hermeneutics begin to slip through the porous exterior of my living and I found myself asking more questions about my own Being-in-the-world. I understood that the phenomena I was to study “not only finds its starting point in wonder, it must also induce wonder” (van Manen, 1990, pp. 44-45).

I commute back and forth to my teaching job each day. I live near the school and the fifteen-minute walk allows me to immerse myself in my Master’s studies. I ruminate, reflect, and challenge myself with questions. “Is my inquiry seeking ‘what do students deserve?’ or ‘what is the conversation between teachers and students?’” It was during this wander that I began to see the research I was undertaking as “living.” Max van Manen

(1990) writes “lived experiences gather hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) gather them by giving memory to them” (p. XX). As I would walk back and forth to school I would gather these experiences and attempt to understand their meaning, or break them open with questions.

I began to understand through my own journey as a graduate student that the very nature of teaching as a profession suggests a level of intimacy that the teacher must have with curriculum and with the living of students. The reader may suggest that *intimacy* is a misplaced word in this context, and as Gadamer (2004) suggests “no text (or word)...speaks if it does not speak a language that reaches the other person” (p. 397). I could use a thesaurus and change the word *intimacy* to familiarity, closeness, understanding, confidence, relationship, togetherness, or rapport. The reader may wish for me to shy away from the word *intimacy*, with its intimations of sexual contact and the vulnerability teachers feel when engaged in student relationships.

The word *intimacy* as defined by the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2001) is “close familiarity or friendship.” The word *intimate* is defined as “closely acquainted, ...(of knowledge) detailed, thorough...essential, intrinsic, ...cozy” (p. 738). A *Concise Etymological Dictionary* (1980) traces the root of *intimate* to “familiar,” or “inmost” (Skeat, p. 266). When teachers have a level of intimacy with their curriculum or their students, they have a deep knowing, a thorough and detailed understanding. This knowing, and the very seeking to know, guides the teacher to an informed and meaningful interaction within the student’s lived experience. The pedagogically sensitive teacher knows students, their life, their cognitive ability, their likes, and their interests.

The nature of hermeneutic research leads to a sense of self-discovery. The nature of graduate studies leads to a similar outcome. In choosing a thesis or project, the student must be challenged to find a path on his own, rather than having one laid out as it was in the University of Lethbridge core classes. David Smith (2002) professes that graduate studies can follow the agenda of the self, that one may emerge in one's own course of study (p. 164). My own journey of unravelling my course of study came with guidance and support from Dr. Chambers, but the process of questioning which has revealed the theme of the pedagogic relation has come from my own practice, my historically effected consciousness, and Being. In choosing a course of study, Master's students must ensure they protect the integrity of life (Smith, 2002, p. 166). Hermeneutic inquiry, and graduate studies, has enabled me to question my practice as a teacher, father, husband, and person through a deeper understanding of living.

Smith (2002) writes that graduate studies are an opportunity to "find oneself, recover oneself" (p. 163). Hermeneutic inquiry begins with an emerging of self, a recovery of finding the "I" within "Thou," that knowing "I can be born of my own deep self" (p. 165). As I search for my Being-in-the-world I unearth more than that which is in the lived reality of the Teacher. The nature of a teacher's role within the interaction with the student is that the teacher holds an element of understanding about curriculum, self and student. But more importantly, our dwelling together is less an "interaction" and more a sense of being-together. And as I "recover" myself through hermeneutic inquiry I begin sense the difference.

If the teacher and student are Being-with one another, and the expectation is that the nature of the pedagogic relation reveals that the teacher-as-mentor leads, then the

teacher must have a sense of Being, a “self-understanding” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 525). This sense of self-understanding is “the being that is concerned with its being presents itself, through its understanding of being, as a means of access to the question of being” (p. 524). Self-understanding entails gaining insight to our present stance within living. It is in essence a mapping of pain, pleasure, love, hurt, religious teaching, beliefs, values, and relationships. It is a way of knowing where you “come from,” and being aware of, or knowing one’s history, one’s prejudice, or historically effected consciousness and does lead to an understanding of one’s perceptions of the world.

The notion that the pedagogic relation begins with a measure of self-understanding has dramatic consequences for the teaching profession, where teachers are expected to be mentors, to put aside their own inadequacies, worries and failings and support their student’s success. But this “putting aside” is not only unnecessary, but may be harmful to the teacher and his students. The teacher is never removed from the Self, but is often expected to act selflessly. He is in constant conversation and thus must endeavour to gain insights into Being and living. Interestingly, the very nature of the hermeneutic practice is self-reflective and “thus the need for hermeneutics is given precisely with the decline of self (...) -understanding” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 183).

Self-understanding and the teacher’s stance in the pedagogic relation

Song of Myself

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,

And what I assume you shall assume,

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. (Whitman, 1867/1975, p.

63)

There is an understanding of living, of one's own and other's when one has a measure of self-understanding. It is as if "every atom belonging to me" my understanding of my living, enables me to understand in a compassionate and empathic manner, that which an Other may live through. At the heart of the teacher's journey is "knowledge that the world is interpretable" (Jardine, 1994, p. 188), and when teacher seeks to interpret, they must have a deep understanding of historically effected consciousness, their history and their Self. The teacher who has a measure of self-understanding gains a valuable insight, that the living of the teacher has a direct impact on pedagogic relations. A teacher's varied experiences and a rich understanding of how those experiences shape his/her interactions with the world, enables the teacher to be an empathetic and compassionate mentor. Gadamer writes, "human self-understanding is deepened by...experience" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 525). But what is self-understanding?

A distinction must be made between self-understanding and self-consciousness. Self-understanding is looking within and accepting what one finds. It is the awareness that our stance within the world is a perception that the way we perceive our world, the way we perceive our children, our friends or our lover, is through our own selfish-filter. Self-understanding is the awareness that when we see another person, that person is "the object of our perception" (Hanh, 1998, p. 53), that our perception is us. Once we have realised that we have a stance within the world by which we interpret our existence, we begin to understand our very Being, our living and our Self. This search for self-understanding is not to inflate one's ego, or hide that which is difficult to face. Self-understanding may come with the desire for change, but it is facing what is truth.

Self-consciousness represents a different sort of probing into self. The self-conscious mind is “in a fight for recognition” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 525). There is an element of defining one’s self through others with self-consciousness, where we see ourselves as other may see us. We change the way we live, to appear to Be in a certain way. The teacher must have a measure of self-understanding to facilitate the emergence of the Other’s understanding. Gadamer (2004) writes “the individual is never simply an individual because he is always in understanding (relating) with others (p. 304). It is through others that we see ourselves. We become the cynic, the clown, the flirt, and the intellect as we compare ourselves to others. Self-understanding is becoming familiar with the why and how of self by engaging hermeneutically within our world-of-being. “Genuine growth in self understanding is the consequence of an on going four-fold action: an opening to others, an engagement with others; followed by a form of self-reflection implying self modification, followed in turn by reengagement” (Smith, 1991b, p. 34).

Teachers gain a sense of self-understanding by attending to self and others in daily life. Attention to attentiveness towards our students, spouse, children, and colleagues leads to understanding of Self. But for this attentiveness to shape teachers’ self-understanding they must depend on what Smith calls “stopping” (p. 34), which is the “creation of a space in which we can truly listen and hear ourselves” (p. 34). Teaching is a demanding profession where great teachers are expected not only to be in a good and rich relationship with upwards of 30 or more people, but are expected to lead in those relationships with little time for “stopping.”

This leading is different for each child, and to understand the living of an Other takes one who understands Self. Stopping is a logical practice to re-engage energy and perspective. Thich Nhat Hanh (1998), a Buddhist monk writes, “the practice of shamantha (stopping) is fundamental. If we cannot stop, we cannot have insight” (p. 24). This ability to see into others (in-sight) is a kind of wisdom that all teachers must possess within pedagogic relations.

Attainment of self-understanding is imperative for the teacher, because teaching requires a certain degree of selflessness, which I define not as forgetting about one’s Self, but as going beyond being dictated by the Self. The hermeneutic investigation “becomes of itself a questioning of things” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 269) where a certain understanding or meaning is to be found. The hermeneutic consciousness undertakes research that is filled with the spirit of “self-reflection” (p. 285) and the quest for self-understanding. The point of origin of hermeneutic inquiry is in self-understanding.

The hermeneutic investigation is a search to unearth an understanding of lived experience, by instigating a conversation with a certain topic, and allowing that conversation to lead to understanding. The exploration is focused on finding ideas or insights, and then reflecting upon and questioning them, thus deepening one’s knowing or knowledge. Knowledge means that one has considered the opposites (Gadamer, 2004, p. 364) and is not satisfied with a simple truth, or explanation of phenomena. Knowing defined in this context is an organic and living phenomenon, where our knowing and understanding is dependent on our own stance of reflection. The context or prejudice of the investigation cannot be removed, only accounted for.

Hermeneutic practice, the interpretation of life, is the living experience of the teacher. Teachers' working reality is in the realm of living, as is the hermeneutic inquiry. Teachers are ultimately responsible for uncovering curriculum, but they can never be separate from a working experience that is immersed in the complexity of living. Every colleague, every student, every parent has his/her own historically effected consciousness and an understanding that consciousness will lead to an understanding of an Other.

Priority of the Question

Hermeneutic inquiry uncovers a path, littered with perceptions, opinions and prejudices, and attempts to unearth hidden understanding using "the structure of a question" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 362). Therein lays the great difficulty of the task of the hermeneutic historian, to choose a topic, which speaks to him and provides motivation for the immense amount of time and thought such a scholarly pursuit requires, and yet the inquirer must remain as open to discovery as possible. The discovery may be rooted in "vulnerability" of the researcher; that which baffles or intrigues him. This inquiry, in fact, led to such vulnerability where the text was in answer to the question "what is the significance of vulnerability in teaching?" This was not the course the researcher had chartered, but the course was found none-the-less.

The question in a hermeneutic inquiry redirects the researcher away from ego, towards an unearthing; of a yet-to-be discovered thought, or insight into the "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 35). There is a spirit to the questioning in hermeneutics that suggests a tendency akin to a journey of discovery, where the destination is unknown, but the method of travel will lead somewhere important. Jules

Verne's (1871) prose from *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* describes the expedition to Centre and the trust the "seeker" must have in order to unearth the question.

'I do not believe in the dangers and difficulties which you, Henry, seem to multiply; and the only way to learn, is like Arne Saknussemm, to go and see.'

'Well,' cried I, overcome at last, 'let us go and see. Though how we can do that in the dark is another mystery.'

'Fear nothing. We shall overcome these, and many other difficulties. Besides, as we approach the center, I expect to find it luminous—' (Retrieved from http://jv.gilead.org.il/vt/c_earth/04.html, July 4, 2005)

This journey is not unlike the hermeneutic journey. The character, Henry, is like the researcher who must believe that he will "overcome" "the dark," in "luminous" centre. A hermeneutic inquirer knows of the darkness ahead and must prepare to muddle through it to find illumination, or insight. Verne's story is a metaphor for hermeneutics and the living conversation in search of the question. The searchers, or researchers, have been intrigued by what they may unearth along their journey, but they are unsure how to overcome their fears of failure, and/or vulnerabilities. They wade their way through the darkness until they find direction (in hermeneutics, the question) and their journey takes on a new life and focus, and belief that the journey will eventually reveal a "luminous" destination.

There is an inherent trust throughout hermeneutic inquiry that one will unearth insights that have meaning. The searcher must be prepared to unearth the direction the inquiry will take as the inquiry unfolds. "In order to be able to ask (the question) one

must want to know, and that means knowing that which one does not know (Gadamer, 2004, p. 363). I find not knowing a frustrating aspect of hermeneutics.

To begin a journey with an idea as the starting point, knowing that one will uncover what one does not know is daunting, but also liberating. There is freedom in giving oneself permission to uncover, to ask questions about that which intrigues or baffles. There is an excitement in searching for the question, which will transfer the researcher from self-consciousness to self-understanding.

There is a need for the hermeneutic-question to be focused, and although the question breaks an inquiry open to be accessible to original and new insights, “the openness of a question is not boundless” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 363). The question design must be suited to fulfill its purpose, which is to create a focused and scholarly dialogue, or conversation, between the researcher and the text.

The text, or the topic of inquiry, is a response, or reply to a specific question. One who engages the hermeneutic tradition must search within the text (in this case the narrative reconstructions), or topic in order to uncover which question(s) is asked.

Robinson (2003) asserts:

To allow a text to speak one must be prepared to be confronted by the new and the unexpected which is negative in so much as something is unpredictable or counter-intuitive. While simultaneously giving oneself over to be grasped by the hermeneutic event one is also incorporating or assimilating the subject matter into one's own horizon. (p. 30)

Robinson writes “the new and the unexpected” can be viewed as “negative,” but the rationale behind engaging in hermeneutic inquiry is the journey to discover, that

which is “new.” The inquirer must have courage (like Henry) to view “the new and unexpected” as a gift, rather than a challenge to one’s Being. The researcher engaged in hermeneutic inquiry is searching beyond what is known, and the “person” who is “skilled in the ‘art’ of questioning is a person who can prevent questions from being suppressed by the dominant opinion” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 367). The researcher then must have a measure of courage, to face questions that probe personal and social vulnerabilities.

The very purpose of hermeneutics is to unearth that which is new, and encourage the researcher to be surprised and “en-lightened” by what is found. Therefore, the researcher must be open to the question to which the text is an answer, rather than directed by what the researcher believes the text should say.

Gadamer (2004) explores “the true superiority of questioning” (p. 362). The questions of this thesis will not have absolute and definitive answers, but they should reveal that which confuses, disturbs, or speaks to the inquirer. The question, the seed of conversation (dialectic) between the inquirer and his text, allows the inquiry to germinate, and grow into text that will speak to its reader. The question focuses the inquiry and thoughts of the reader much like a compass is used to focus the journey of the adventurer.

The richness of unearthing the understanding found in the inquiry is rooted in the text, or topic. It will emerge, and free the inquirer to discover understanding rooted in the text. The question(s) presents itself from out of the text and is the means to interpretation and understanding of a text. Gaining an understanding of a text is “never a static and absolute experience” (Robinson, 2003, p. 29); it is, as Gadamer claims, a cycle of inquiring into the whole and the parts. The question is a means by which the researcher can maintain the whole and the part (much like the journey and the destination are both

the experience) within the horizon of understanding. The art of questioning “is not the art of arguing..., but the art of thinking” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 367). The inquirer cannot begin trying to “prove a point” or support a theory. He must begin his inquiry searching to unearth that, which is buried deep within the richness and layers of the text.

Gadamer (2004) states, “the openness of a question is not boundless. It is limited by the horizon of the question” (p. 363). But the inquiry is also limited by the question(s) which prevents an endless meandering through a field of insights and ideas and presuppositions. Questioning begins the conversation, the respectful cycle of truth finding by giving the inquiry focus, in order to unearth a new meaning.

The questions that have emerged out of *Conversations: Hermeneutic inquiry unearthing pedagogic relations* are:

- 1) What is the nature of the pedagogic relation?
- 2) What is the nature of the teacher-student relationship?
- 3) What is the significance of vulnerability in teaching?
- 4) What is the effect of society on the pedagogic relationship?

Questioning text is a form of conversation. These questions will be used to engage the narrative reconstructions of pedagogic interactions in a conversation. But what is conversation?

Conversation

Hermeneutics is the “method” by which I will inquire into being-as-a-teacher. This inquiry continues with posing questions to find a “truth” or understanding about a topic. In this case I will use the above questions to inquire into the significance of “conversations” in teaching. The question(s) itself is a conversation between the inquirer

and the text that will focus the inquiry to unearth understanding about the pedagogic relation.

Musings on conversation:

Conversation, as defined by the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2001), is the “informal exchange of ideas by spoken words” (p. 308). The word *exchange* structures conversation as an interaction of thoughts and ideas between conversants. The participants are aware of the conversation and are available and willing to open dialogue with the other. *Gadamerian* conversation is possible only when the participants are open, and respectful of one another. The purpose of conversation is not to espouse knowledge, or demonstrate one’s mastery of a thing, but for the participants to share their thoughts and discover, together, the truth of the topic. Gadamer (2004) writes:

Reaching an understanding in conversation presupposes that both partners are ready for it and are trying to recognize the full value of what is alien and opposed to them. If this happens mutually, and each of the partners, while simultaneously holding onto his own arguments, weighs the counterarguments, it is finally possible to achieve—in an imperceptible but not arbitrary reciprocal translation of the other’s position (we call this exchange of views)—a common dictum is a common dictum. (p. 387)

This “common dictum” is conversation, where participants follow a cycle of asking and answering questions in order to find a shared stance, understanding, or truth.

Truth

The idea of truth deserves some further exploration. In the human sciences the notion of truth is viewed differently than a scientific truth. Human science, or the study of

human interactions, is a grouping of several traditions that recognises the need to uncover the meaning of human interaction in a different way than the scientific method. In hermeneutics and phenomenology, the researcher is immersed within the inquiry using experience, feeling and intuition to gain deeper understanding. Scientific method attempts to remove all elements of personal bias in order to increase the validity of the experiment and to find what is “true.” In the human science, truth becomes a subjective term, based on the experience of the truth seeker. Truth (understanding is perhaps the better word in the hermeneutic sense) is framed by experience and the context of conversation.

Musings on conversation

The etymology of *conversation* directs us to the Latin *conversatio* or *convers*, or converse, or an exchange of ideas. *Converse*, meaning opposite or contrary, is rooted in *conversation*, in that the exchange of ideas may bring about differences in point of view as a result of personal history or prejudice, as well as differing ethnicity, age, race, gender and experience. Conversation means talking and listening where the conversants are engaged and devoted to a respectful cycle of speaking and listening. Gadamerian conversants seek to find “an equilibrium between pro and contra” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 363) and between viewpoints and truth.

“The first condition of the art of conversation is ensuring that the other person is with us” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 367). Gadamerian conversation requires that the “other person is with us.” If the truth is to be found through the living (or life-filled) conversation, where the purpose is to uncover understanding, then all participants must be attentive, present and open to engaging in a transformation of ideas and consciousness. This is significant for my inquiry. If pedagogy involves a relating between teacher and

student, then both parties must be present to, and active within, the conversation, where ideas are exchanged in a search for meaning. The conversation between teacher and student (the teacher-student relationship) allows us to break free of what David G. Smith (2002) fears is the “banishment of children from authentic participation in the living stream of things” (p. 203).

“A genuine conversation is never the one that we wanted to conduct (...r)ather, it is generally more correct to say we fall into conversation” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 383). In order to fall into a conversation that is meaningful, and organic, or living, then the participants must believe that each is capable of creating and sharing insights that will unearth meaning. The conversation is a sort of “talking together like friends” (van Manen, 1990, p. 98). The teacher-student relationship must involve a search for shared meaning, or the organic creation of meaning, in order to include children “in the living stream of things.”

Teachers must honour a student’s very Being, and the student must honour a teacher’s very Being in order to fall into conversation. “The term ‘conversation’ seems to invoke a sense of togetherness and in-touchness” (Li, 2002, p. 88). This gentle and unearthing process of conversation “creates a sense or ‘sphere’ of living together in a shared world” (p. 88). This recognition of living-together brings alive the classroom, as the place of dwelling for teacher and student. To dwell together in conversation the teacher must have some understanding of each student’s life.

Conversation with an Other

Conversation can happen between a reader and text (hermeneutic inquiry) or a person and an Other. David Jardine (2000), in *Under the Tough Old Stars*:

Ecopedagogical Essays, writes about an experience, or happening, or conversation he had with a bear. Clearly there was no exchange of language, the bear did not talk to him, but his experience did speak to him, seemingly to his soul. Jardine did unearth meaning, through conversation (interpretation) with “text,”- the text being his environment- that he writes about. This “narrative” demonstrates that a conversation can happen between the self and one’s surroundings, or one’s living and Being. The conversation opens up a meaning for Jardine, one that is clear in the writing of his experience.

“Just spotted a year-old black bear crossing (highway) 66 (at) MacLean Creek, heading north” (p. 225). “Stopped and watched him amble up the shalysteep creekedge. Wet. Greenglistening” (p. 225). “Bear. His presence almost unbelievable, making this whole place waver and tremble, making my assumptions and presumptions and thoughts and tales of experiences in this place suddenly wonderfully irrelevant...” (226). “In moments like this something flutters open” (p. 226). “Something flutters *open*, beyond this centered self” (p. 227). “With the presence of this ambly bear, the whole of things arrives, fluttered open” (p. 227).

Conversation is unexpected

Jardine provides an opportunity to use this narrative to explain conversation and how it is inextricably linked to hermeneutic inquiry. It is feasible to imagine Jardine leaving his house that day, looking for refuge from his writing, in search of peace and beauty, perhaps to “get back to nature.” Perhaps he intended to see nature, hear nature, perhaps even run his fingers through her rich dirt, but as with hermeneutic inquiry and conversation, Jardine found something he wasn’t expecting. What he found was new understanding, a surprising earthy truth that “all beings are (our) ancestors” (p. 229), that

we are nature, all interconnected. As he stood and watched that bear “amble,” that truth “fluttered open.” He is Being. He is never apart from the earth-can never be- and all her creatures, for he is just an Other. I see the story as a way of looking at conversation and hermeneutic inquiry. Jardine began a journey and found something surprising. He learned from his environment simply by open up and allowing his experience to be meaningful. This is the essence of the conversation and hermeneutic inquiry.

Thou and I

When one is in conversation one must always relate the Other, or the “Thou” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 358) to oneself. It is through our own historically effected consciousness that we interpret what the other is telling us. “Thou is... a form of self-relatedness” (p. 359). The manner in which we interpret the experience that happened with the Thou and any insight that is uncovered is related directly to one’s experience (p. 357). In fact, it is “experience (that) teaches us to acknowledge” (p. 357) that which we acknowledge as “real” (p. 357). Much like the Other, Gadamer’s Thou may represent a text, an experience (like Jardine’s bear), or another person in conversation with us.

Conversation four: In the classroom

The mid-winter darkness cloaked the gusting of the cold against the classroom window. Mr. Wood sat at his desk, sipping a cup of morning coffee, reading his email before the first of his students arrived. The dark-winter weather seemed to make the lights glow with warmth and the classroom felt cosy. The radio played softly; a midnight jazz riff.

“Good morning, Mr. Wood.” Karen, dressed in a striped sweater and faded jeans, is the first student to arrive. Her mother works as a receptionist at the local dentist’s office and has to be at work by eight.

“Good morning, Karen. Did you stay warm out there?”

“Barely! Guess what?” Mr. Wood’s eyes shifted between the hypnotic-blue of the computer screen and Karen.

“What?”

“My cat had kittens.” Mr. Wood double clicked on the “reply” button and began to compose an email.

“Cool, how many?” Mr. Wood asked as he typed.

“Four. I am not sure if they are boys or girls... well, they are too small to check. I mean...” Mr. Wood shifted his gaze back to Karen.

“Did you name them?”

“Not yet.” Mr. Wood typed. “Well, I’ll see you in a little while,” Karen said as she left.

“O.K.” Mr. Wood sipped coffee and composed an email.

Unearthing meaning

“Collingwood argues thus: We can understand a text only when we have understood the question to which it is an answer” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 370). In interpreting a text, one must begin to unearth an understanding of the text’s meaning.

What are the questions?

Is there an “ideal” teacher-student conversation? Is Mr. Wood in conversation with Karen? If he is not, should he be? If to be in conversation, the other person must be “with us,” where is Mr. Wood? His *eyes shifted between the hypnotic-blue of the computer screen and Karen*. His focus is directed in two places and though he may appear to be listening and responding, he is not in conversation. Why did the conversation end so soon? Why did Karen leave? Was Mr. Wood’s email important enough to ignore a student? Is this the nature of the pedagogic relation? Split focus. What lies beneath?

It is clear Mr. Wood is not in conversation with Karen, but he is rather in some sort of “pretend” conversation. He is hoping Karen does not notice his focus is split. He is assuming Karen doesn’t recognise the lack of conversation, but her excitement is not returned and she leaves. Is it the teacher’s responsibility to be engaged in the ideal pedagogic relationship at all times? If having a sense of pedagogy involves caring and commitment to children (van Manen, 1994, p. 139) how did Mr. Wood do? Is quietly dismissing a student, by feigning interest, a pedagogic act?

How did Mr. Wood feel about the interaction when he reflected later? Was there a moment of guilt for having blown the opportunity to converse, or engage with a student? If he could re-enact the interaction would he forget about his email and give his full and focused attention to Karen? If Mr. Wood did respond to Karen in a manner that would foster the pedagogic relation, what would that look like?

Pedagogically, who deserves focused attention in this scenario, Karen, the recipient of Mr. Wood’s email, or Mr. Wood? If Mr. Wood wanted privacy then why was

the classroom door open? How did Karen feel leaving her classroom? In order to create a place of “dwelling together” what is the teacher’s responsibility?

What if Mr. Wood asked himself, during this interaction, what does this child deserve, or what is important right now? What is it I am doing right now? Would his interaction with Karen been different? What about Mr. Wood’s self in this interpretation? What does the teacher want out of teaching and this interaction? Does he want solitude, or interaction with his student? Is it possible to want both at different times?

Conversation and the question

It is through the conversation that a hermeneutic inquirer has with his text where the question is revealed. The question at play within Jardine’s (2000) conversation was “what is the nature of my relationship with the earth?” This question emerged from Jardine’s very Being, his transformation through experience.

The conversation the teacher has with his students takes place within the workroom that is the classroom, where all participants-students, teacher, parents and others-are inextricably linked, like Jardine and the bear, and nature, and me. The questioning of this text is in and around pedagogy and the teacher’s responsibility to uphold the pedagogic relation. The question then becomes in a pedagogic relation what do students deserve?

Conversation and language

As a researcher and writer I have come to appreciate that in understanding language, one must ensure one’s ideas have been carefully nurtured through reflection and conversation, and the writer must be patient with his choice of words. “Thus, the hermeneutic problem concerns not the correct mastery of language but coming to a

proper understanding about the subject matter, which takes place in the medium of language” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 385). If the reader is engaging in a conversation with the writer, it is the writer’s responsibility to ensure a careful crafting of language which presents a mastery of the subject matter.

The model of the conversation remains true to hermeneutic inquiry. Just as the hermeneutic historian is open to discovering a question that will focus his inquiry and bring about understanding of the topic, the conversants are open to discovery of their own understanding of the topic of conversation, as is the reader in conversation with this text, seeking a truth created and shared by the reader’s history and prejudice and the text itself. Conversation takes a measure of sensitivity on the part of the participants. In hermeneutic inquiry the method

consists of the ability, or rather the art of being sensitive-sensitive to the undertones of language, to the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak. This means that an authentic speaker must be a true listener, able to attune to the deep tonalities of language that normally fall out of our accustomed range of hearing, able to listen to the way the things of the world speak to us. (van Manen, 1990, p. 111)

The conversation revolves around speaking, listening and being open to unearthing. It evolves through language.

Language:

A deep awareness of language is central to hermeneutic inquiry. Language is the way we express our understanding of the world, and it is the way we understand others. The hermeneutic inquiry is attempting to deconstruct the text of study, in order to gain a

deeper understanding of the phenomena of living, as language itself is the medium of living. The inquirer must both come to and convey insights so that understanding of the phenomena opens for the reader. This is a conversation.

“Language is an expressive field and its primacy in the field of hermeneutics means,(...) that as an interpreter (one) regards the texts, independently of their claim to truth, as purely expressive phenomena” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 196). We gain a deeper understanding of a topic or thing through the language of conversation. This conversation may occur between various conversants, but it is only through language that meaning, or understanding, is expressed. “Words are taken to represent the real world, and the real world is invoked by our very speaking about it” (Smith, 1991b, p. 30).

Language attempts to translate the meaning of an idea. The speaker or the writer takes the nature of the idea and decodes the meaning based on his understanding of the phenomena. For this he attempts to find the “right word” for the thought or idea, so that his thought or idea is born forward as it is interpreted by the Other.

As the Other interprets that which was written, or spoken, within a conversation she too brings her own experience and traditions to her translation of what was written or said. The text in a hermeneutic conversation is understood and explainable by the translator “only if (she) participates in the subject under discussion” (Gadamer, 2004 p. 388). It is through the translator’s understanding of the text that she can bring forth the meaning through language. The interpreter of language, or story, must listen to what is beyond her own comprehension, she must not focus on the story, but let the story of the text unfold around her and envelop her senses. She must find what truth is hidden, what the story conveys, rather than what the listener wants it to convey. In this context what

we experience and attempt to put into words, becomes an entity of its own (Heidegger, 1962, p. 204).

It is written text that “present(s) the real hermeneutic task” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 390). Written language is a static presentation of an idea, which only becomes living upon interpretation, and this interpretation is presented by one’s ability to construct sentences and meaning from insight. Language allows for the expression of love, hate, renewal and understanding, and active and engaged interpretation allows those emotions to be one’s own. Whitman’s (1975) words explain the nature of the written word.

Thou Reader

Thou reader throbbest life and pride and love the same as I,

Therefore for thee the following chants (p. 49).

There is a deep connection between language and living as Being. David Smith (N.D) writes “attention to language means also an attention to the life conditions of those dwelling in the language” (p. 245). Hermeneutic inquiry of phenomenological text involves a certain separation of the writer-researcher from the interpreter-researcher. This may prove difficult as the writer and the reader in this case dwell within the same space. But the nature of hermeneutics is to pay attention differently while interpreting, to find and open what is new in the text, rather than what, or why what was written, was written.

Conversation in teaching

Conversation is a pedagogic happening. It is an interaction where teacher (as mentor) and student (as learner) happen to Be together. Ted Aoki writes about “belonging together” (Pinar, 2005, p. 396), where the stress of language is placed on *belonging*. I present here that with *being-together* the stress of language does not fall on together, but

rather on **being**. This stress signifies that within the pedagogic relation that an understanding of self and living is an important quality to create the classroom as a positive dwelling place. The notion of Being-together is integral to the pedagogic relation. The notion of Being is ontological in nature. Heidegger (1962) writes that one's being is difficult, if not impossible to define (p. 23).

There are many things which we designate as 'being,' and we do so in various senses. Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being and so is how we are. (p. 26)

Our being dwells in self and the way that self walks, and talks and interacts. Our understanding of self and understanding of others is our Being. Our stance within our community is our Being in the world. So Being-together would mean a certain living and breathing and failing and learning together. Not as one looking over another waiting to correct, but in some recognition that together we move forward, for each of us. Heidegger suggests that "Being-with" (p. 157), or Being-together does not simply imply we will exist "alone" (p. 157) and "among" (p. 157). There is an essence to being-together that is pedagogic in nature, where those that are together are in conversation. If a classroom is the place of pedagogy, then it must be a place of "friendship, love or family" (van Manen, 1994, 141). This being-together is a dwelling together, and for the pedagogic relationship, the classroom is the dwelling-place.

What is the nature of the place of being, where students are expected to interact with respect, are expected to enhance their *being-together* whilst they are *being-evaluated*? Any inquiry of the pedagogic relation must unearth the context of the

classroom, or the place of the conversation. Heidegger (1962) writes, “authentic Being-one’s-Self, does not detach (Being) from its world” (p. 344). We are beings-in-a-place. Humans require a formal place of being: a church, a town hall, a sacred stone, or the not so sacred one I used to sit by as I survived adolescence. It is here that the teacher dwells. The classroom, the place of the teacher and the place of the student, is the space of being-together, the place of the teacher-student conversation.

As adults and teachers our memories contain our old classrooms; the smell of the elementary school library, or the sun beating in the window as junior high students prepare for exams. The classroom is a place of importance and meaning. It is work space, a place-of-being a teacher. The teacher, as leader, has great effect on the environment in which the conversation takes place, and the conversation, as directed by the teacher creates a place-for-being.

The classroom is a unique place of being; it is a place where students and teachers may wish to dwell, yet it is also a place they (particularly the student) are forced to attend. The challenge for the teacher and the student is to create a place where each will thrive. The classroom, as dwelling-place, must engage, challenge and reward, but it also must be a place of importance, one where teachers and students may find meaning.

The classroom as dwelling place or place of being-together enhances the being of students, but also of teacher. It is a place of conversation where teacher and student “opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 385). It is a place where teacher and student are “Being-their-Selves” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 344) so that they may “authentically be with one another” (p. 344). The voice of the teacher must lead in this creation of place,

but so must that of the student. If being-together places a stress on being, then the student must have the right, within the pedagogic place of being, to live.

“When the young retell the tale the old can learn, but neither about the young or about the old, but about where they might dwell together, this place” (Jardine, 1994, p. 181), the classroom. Jardine’s words tell of a metaphysical place, “*familiaris*” (p. 181), but this metaphysical place can be found. This place where student, teachers, friends “dwell together” for the development of being, is real and tangible and important. It is a place where “we” become “*familiar*” or like family or (L) “*familiaris*” (Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 2001, p. 500), living in the easy and the difficult, the humorous and the painful.

Conversations about classroom as a place of being-together

Conversation five

“Good morning Mr. Wood”

“Good morning Mike.”

Unearthing meaning

The classroom is where important but minute interactions happen. It is the place of greeting, and laughing, and smiling and struggling together, a place where students and teachers interact informally and formally. It is a place where simple conversations emerge about snow or sun or baseball, as do more complex conversation about the nature of life and death. It is a place where teachers may learn to become better teachers, where they may reflect on their practice, their vulnerabilities and their life. It is a place where students learn about and practice living. It is a place where we can “authentically be with another.” It is a “unitary” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 78) place.

It is a place where students engage and learn how to succeed, or learn how not to succeed. It is a place of emotion, of “I love school” or “I hate school.” It is a place where students get to “practice” living. It is a place where saying “Good morning” is important, because it demonstrates recognition of the other, or living. It is a place where teachers and student dwell “alongside” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 81), “being-present-at-hand-together” (p. 81).

Conversation six

Two thirteen-year-old boys strutted into the classroom as Mr. Wood wrote the after-lunch assignment on the whiteboard. The taller of the two, Andrew, the one with the mopyy-brown hair and Eminem t-shirt, grinned and said, “Looks like you’re taking care of the old classroom Mr. Wood.”

“Hey guys, how was the summer?”

“Pretty good,” Andrew answered.

“My dog got hit by a truck,” blurted Eric, the blond skater-boy.

“My dog died when I was eight,” added Andrew.

“Eric, I am sorry to hear about your dog,” said Mr. Wood.

“He was old,” Eric responded.

“We’d better go. Eric has to find Stephanie.” Andrew grinned. Eric grinned.

“Glad to see the classroom still looks good Mr. Wood. See ya.”

“Okay, see you boys. Drop in anytime,” said Mr. Wood.

Unearthing meaning

The classroom as place-of-being creates a deep and meaningful dwelling space. The classroom becomes a home for the teacher and his students. They dwell in the space

for many hours over the course of a year. Students become attached to the space, and return to reconnect to its memories and the feelings evoked. It is a place to share a story, to share emotion. It is a place to return to, to ground one's self when one is shaken by the death of a friend, or to celebrate a success or share excitement. The teacher-student conversation is different within the classroom than any other place. There is a formal and safe intimacy within the walls of the classroom where *being-together* is important and meaningful to student and teacher.

Conversation seven

The silence was broken by the sniffing of noses and the beating of one's heart.

The class sat, silent. "I know the death of a student, a friend is difficult to face. I feel as your teacher that I should be able to say something to make you feel better, but what can I say?" Mr. Wood asked.

"Mr. Wood. I am sorry that Brittany died. I never really knew her, but she was nice," Patty said.

"Yeah," responded Trevor.

"I am crying because of Brittany, but also because I miss my uncle who died of cancer," said Eric.

"I am crying because my mom has cancer and I don't want her to die," said Willow.

"Why are you crying Mr. Wood?" asked Tracy.

"I am crying because of Brittany, and I am putting myself in her parent's place. But also because my wife has cancer and I don't want her to die," Mr. Wood responded.

Unearthing meaning

The classroom, this place-of-being is a space where student and teacher make meaningful conversation about events that impact living. It is an emotional place where love and racism are investigated, where life and friendship unfold. But it is also a type of home where people share intimate thoughts and create moments of trust and deep meaning.

The student who expressed "*I am crying because of Brittany, but also because I miss my uncle who died of cancer*" is reflecting his stance in that moment; he is sharing his own vulnerability; he is offering up his being-present at that moment. He has expected his teacher and his classmates to understand his emotion, his Self, so that they may allow him to feel it, and support him by being-with. This moment of meaning within the class space was important to the student and to the recognition and understanding of grief. He put into words what others may have or have not been feeling, and quietly demonstrated that within the classroom, at that moment, the intense and often private phenomenon of tears or crying was appropriate. Dilthey holds that "the Real gets experienced in impulse and will" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 252), and through the "impulse" of emotion and the "will" to share it this student has lived within the place of the classroom. The meaning of living is expressed in the student's sadness for an "*uncle who died of cancer,*" or the sudden understanding and conveyance that "*my mom has cancer and I don't want her to die.*"

The classroom is a place where private and hidden emotions and thoughts are shared. Where living and learning cannot be separated. Later that day Mr. Wood phoned each student's parents to share and explain the nature of their day, and suggested that

parents may want to have a conversation with their children about the intense and emotional conversations that unfolded as a consequence of Brittany's death. Mr. Wood heard from several parents that their children never show emotion about "my cancer" or "my brother dying." The classroom is a place where students and teacher live. It must be a place where thinking and feeling, where living and being, are real. If the conversation and the pedagogic happening involve an element of trust and safety, then the classroom itself must be a place that embodies such trust and safety.

Conversation eight

The hardwood floor, vaulted ceiling and view of Burrard Inlet were unique to this classroom. The students, in their early twenties, sprawled on the floor, dressed in sweat pants, and dance tights, and tank tops and bare feet, prepared for their first university theatre-class of the fall. There was a quiet thread of conversation meandering through as students stretched and warmed their body. Yoga, Pilates and Aikido were practiced with intense concentration. Professor Diamante, mussed hair, John Lennon glasses and scarf, entered and sat cross-legged in the centre of the floor. He waited patiently as each of the group completed a morning ritual, and moved to sprawl on the floor around him.

"Good Morning. Welcome back. I am Penn Diamante and I will be your instructor for this term." A chorus of "good morning" and "how's it going?" rang out. "Before we get started with you showing your summer Shakespeare assignment, I want to review the rules of the space. These rules, I will remind you, are non-negotiable. If you are in disagreement with any of them you may leave at any time." The Professor waited for any response. The room was quiet. The students still sprawled.

“This room is a space for creating. The creation process begins with the understanding of Self, therefore it is important, no... imperative, that the environment of this classroom, that you, the living part of this classroom, are prepared to give others the freedom to explore Self.” He paused once again, and then continued slowly. “The exploration of Self can be frightening, exhausting, reviling, energizing, but life-changing. This space allows you a unique and important opportunity: the opportunity to understand yourself.

Now, because the first purpose of our being here is to create from the self, we need to have rules. These rules, though a tradition in this space, have been created through trial and error with students. They have not been created by you, but have been created in the spirit of you, the student. We may decide to add to the rules, but in essence, the rules are as much a part of this room as you are; they, are the legacy of students past.” Again the Professor waited. “No eye rolling. If you bump into, or touch, someone in this room you will acknowledge that with eye contact or a simple purposeful touch to the arm. Any debate within this classroom will be respectful, maybe emotional, but about the issue, not the person. And finally, there will be no monsterring, which means you will not clap after a performance you deem exceptional, and you will not hide your eyes, or squirm in your seat during a performance you deem poor. We are about our work, inquiring about our Self, at our own pace, not somebody else’s. This studio space is a place to hone our craft, to make mistakes in order to prepare for the stage. It is not the stage. Any questions? No? Let’s get down to work.”

Unearthing meaning

The above place is less important to this inquiry than the purpose of its existence. The classroom is a place of being-together, or learning to live. That is the purpose of curriculum, of pedagogical theory, of the conversation. It is a place where relationships and understandings emerge, lives intermingle. In the above theatre classroom the whole and the parts are intertwined within the rules. The philosophy that “governs” the space is in response to the need of the classroom as place-of-Being. As the students “sprawled” around the teacher he led the way. For each student to be able to journey towards understanding Self, to find how he/she is situated within the world, the teacher must lead the way. It is within the teacher-student conversation that the teacher must mentor, and make available his own knowing of how student’s best fulfill the mandate of living. But the classroom must also have a spirit of *the student*, where the leading of the teacher is a *legacy of students past*. The classroom belongs to the students who have left, and the students still to come, and both groups have an influence on the teaching of the present dwellers.

The essence of being-together in this place of dwelling is pedagogic in nature. Pedagogy “provides for the fecund case to deeply meet that in the midst of which it might be and remain and show itself as fecund” (Jardine, 2000, pp. 141-142). Being-together, in essence, allows for a rich creation of meaning within the place of dwelling. This creation of meaning, this dwelling together, must be taught. It is in the classroom where the teacher must utilize *the legacy of students past*, in order to facilitate the *exploration of Self*, in order to facilitate the very pedagogic relation. The experiences of those who dwell within the classroom must set the very rules for living within the classroom.

The purpose of the above theatre classroom is creation through the journey of self-understanding. This journey is facilitated by *rules, created through trial and error with students*. The rules are not done to students, per se, but are the legacy of student *trial and error* where a creation of a space to enhance Being is the first purpose. The pedagogic relationship is the purpose of any classroom, where the facilitation and creation of a space of dwelling designed to promote a living-together which enhances self-understanding. Rules such as *no eye rolling*, and *acknowledging another*, allow for the understanding that being and learning, living and challenging oneself are never separated. We as humans are always living, and being within ourselves. In order to go beyond that which we consider our own limits, in other words in order gain a deeper level of self-understanding we must be able to Be-freely, but also to recognise the same need in the Other.

The classroom as place-of-being is created by the small moments, the “good mornings,” the shared laughter of a good story, or the shared pain of the passing of a grandmother. The moments of struggling through success are what makes us, us. The teacher must recognise that all who inhabit the classroom, live within the classroom. The classroom as place-of-being is not a certain way it is the only way. The teacher leads to ensure this dwelling place is a place of growth and safety, of learning and living, a place of collaboration and conversations.

*SECOND COLLOQUY**What is the nature of the pedagogic relation?*

“The frustrating part of this year for me is that I feel like my child is growing away from me. It is as if you know my child better than I do.”

The above text is a segment conversation Mr. Wood had with a parent of a seventh grade student. These sentiments have been echoed at other times and other instances, and they provide an opportunity to inquire into the **nature** of pedagogic relations. The question “what is the nature of the pedagogic relation?” is hermeneutic in essence. To inquire into the nature of a phenomenon is to unearth understanding hidden within the truths of the instance. I am reminded of once sitting at the family cabin and watching a red-breasted robin land near my chair. I marvelled at his call, and was suddenly immersed in the newness of spring, the coming of green and the return of living to nature. As I sat marvelling, the robin pecked at a black beetle, dropped it and pecked again. It pecked furiously, ripping and shredding the bug into manageable bites. I was, at that moment, reminded that inquiring into “nature” is to recognise the beauty and the horror, the good and the bad. When one inquires into the nature of phenomenon one must realise nature is serene and turbulent, fierce and calm, beautiful and terrifying. The nature of relationship is the beautiful and the terrifying, the security and the vulnerability.

The question is at the heart of this inquiry, the heart of the living reality of the teacher. “To do phenomenological research is to question something phenomenologically and, also, to be addressed by the question of what something is ‘really’ like” (van Manen, 1990, p. 42). “What does it mean to be a teacher?” (p. 42), or what is the nature of the

pedagogic relationship? Or what is the nature of the teacher-student relationship?

Gadamer (2004) writes,

A person who wants to understand must question what lies behind what is said.

He must understand it as an answer to a question. If we go back behind what is said, then we inevitably ask questions beyond what is said. (p. 370)

The narrative text above is an answer to a question. The question must be relevant to teaching, must be relevant to what addresses the inquiry. Van Manen writes “to truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being” (p. 43). This question being at our heart must mean that the question is lived within the researcher. He does walk with it in the root of his being. He talks with it in the root of his interactions. He lives with it, in essence, growing inside him, influencing his day-to-day interactions and his practice of living. The question challenges and informs his self-understanding.

The first layer of this text addresses the teacher-student relationship. “I feel you know my child better than I do,” and the inquiry into relationship between teachers and their students is ultimately an inquiry into pedagogy. Max van Manen (1994) writes, “when students are asked about their experiences with teachers, their anecdotes reveal that classroom interactions are always relational; teachers and students cannot help but stand in certain relations to one another” (p. 135). The relations can be qualified as positive or negative. The relation, or conversation, between students and teachers can encourage a student’s academic, social and personal growth, or just the opposite.

An element of the nature of the teacher-student relationship can be revealed in the cards and messages a teacher receives at the end of the school year. These messages are

inevitably, relational. Students write about what is important to them, instances from the year, funny anecdotes, but most often students write a personal message of meaning like from this grade seven boy *“I will never forget you,”* or another from a grade seven girl, *“I will miss you so much, and I will come and visit you next year.”* This one from a student *“I hope to see you not only next year, but in the future as well.”* A message from a middle school boy read, *“You will definitely be invited to my wedding.”* These actual messages reveal that the students will miss Being-with-the-teacher. There is a tone that this Being-with is important to living and that it can nurture a meaningful being-together.

Being-together is important on a deep level, the mentoring of a student by the pedagogic teacher has great impact on the living of the student, as this note from a parent suggests, *“I truly feel that (student’s) life has found so much more focus this year and you have helped her grow so much, not only as a student but, and more importantly, as a person as well...mentor, that is what you have been.”* There is a notion that being with students, encouraging them to emerge, to gain a deeper level of self-understanding is important. There is a notion that the pedagogic relationship is in answer to the need that the young must *“grow...not only as a student,”* but *“more importantly, as a person.”* The nature of the teacher’s role is to support this *growing as a person*, this emerging, and unearthing of our young.

The essence of teaching is the knowing of students; knowing the way they learn; knowing their fears, aspirations, tribulations, and their families. But knowing students also entails a knowing of childhood. There is a notion in our culture that childhood and adolescence are stages of preparation for adulthood. The desire to preserve cultural tradition compels adults to teach what they identify as right, and true and worthy.

Traditional beliefs and values are passed from generation to generation through the process of parenting and education. The legacy of old-life is kept alive through this passing of knowledge and curriculum from the “old” to the “new.” It is as if curriculum and pedagogy are “enamoured of the old alone” (Jardine, 1994, p. 186) that “the young...(fall) prey to the...ethos of the old” (p. 186).

Within the “old” tradition of the teacher-student relationship, children are encouraged to “grow up,” to “act their age,” to “be a big boy/girl,” to behave as an adult would. The young are recognised and rewarded when they demonstrate “maturity,” are “organized” and “forward thinking.” Education looks to the future, where children “should” demonstrate adult tendencies; where childhood is a state to be coached through, where children will become our “greatest resource.” “We need...(n)ew educational theory which rescues children from the prison of ‘childhood,’ bringing them more centrally into the mainstream of life and giving them work to do that is a meaningful contribution to the common good” (Smith, 2002, p. 167). In such adult-focused ideology children are in need of the pedagogic teacher who leads through knowing children; who enables and facilitates student leadership and strives for a deeper understanding of being-in-childhood.

Hermeneutic understanding of experience-that something that addresses us (Jardine, 1998, p. 40), the conversation of common understanding that bears a “family resemblance” (p. 41)-is rooted in the idea that hermeneutic understanding is one of youthful perspective, one of regenerative thought (Smith, 1994, p. 102). The hermeneutic inquirer must live within the stance that childhood is not to be cured, but to be learned from. The pedagogic teacher must listen to the very living of the child in order to lead the

child through living and learning. The teacher and the student must engage in Gadamerian conversation, in order for tradition to be retained, but also for culture to evolve and improve. It is with a fresh perspective in conversation with tradition or experience that brings about a deeper understanding of Being.

Conversation nine

Researcher: Why is it important to work hard in school?

Maya (6 year-old grade one): So you can learn.

Researcher: Why is it important to learn?

Maya: So you can read?

Researcher: What is the purpose of going to school?

Maya: I don't know, (pause) to get learned out.

Researcher: What question would you ask a grade one student?

Maya: Do you like school?

This conversation between father and daughter, between teacher and grade one student, demonstrates quite clearly that the purpose of schooling is lost on the young. Why is this true? What does a parent, or a pedagogue, or teacher expect of a child when they are engaged in education, or schooling without understanding the purpose? How is it possible to encourage self-understanding when the student is unaware of the reasons for being-in the classroom? The notion that the student is to “get learned out” may be poetic, but it also demonstrates that the purpose of school is lost on the child. From a student’s perspective, why do we learn? What is the importance, or significance of learning? Is it to gain employment, or keep the youth occupied and out of the job market? Do students go

to school to maintain social positioning, or class? Two years of being in the school system and Maya does not know.

What Maya would ask, is “*do you like school?*”. Why is this important? Is this all that is important to her? Is she aware that what we *like* is what is important to us? Is it understood that if one does not like school, there is little in school that reaches one’s very living-Being. The conversation between teacher and student must address teacher-as-Being and student-as-Being, and must open dialogue about living-in-the-classroom. Allowing and encouraging the teacher’s and the student’s voice to create the place of Being, is a pedagogic notion.

Pedagogy is hermeneutic in nature

Pedagogy is hermeneutic. The root of a pedagogic teacher’s practice is the relationship with the child. The teacher’s life is deeply impacted by children, whether in the class or at home. *Pedagogy*, which the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2001) defines as “the art or science of teaching” (p. 1071), is rooted in the being of children. But what is the “art or science of teaching,” and how is it rooted in the teacher-student relationship? Certainly the art or science of teaching is at its root the deep and meaningful connection between teacher and student; pedagogy is connection, or understanding of an-Other. Teachers, in order to be effective and good, must engage their students in Gadamerian conversation where a respectful cycle of dialogue unearths understanding of experience. In the preface to David Smith’s book *Pedagon: Meditations on Pedagogy and Culture* (1994) Smith writes this about pedagogy.

Pedagogy, from the Greek *paidagogia*, originally referred to the work of leading children to school, but in more recent time it has taken on a much wider

signification, referencing not only the formal practices and professions of teaching, but also the dense network of activities that surround the general care for the young. I like to think of pedagogical sensibility as involving a thoughtful concern for all the multifarious ways children are under the influence of adult conduct, and this must include therefore not just the formal plans of parents, teachers, childcare workers etc., but also all of those indirect, subliminal, hidden and unconscious moments when children, on the basis of their experience, make interpretive decisions about the reality they share with adults around them. (p. i)

Pedagogy and the teacher-student relationship are intertwined with the sentiments of hermeneutics. It is fundamentally pedagogic for adults to be concerned about, and attentive to the many ways in which children “*make interpretive decisions about the reality they share with the adults around them.*” Students are in a conversation, where they watch, listen and react to their interactions within their environment, their place of Being. They question, or should be encouraged to question their place in that environment. Unlike Maya who assumed school was *to get learned out* the pedagogic teacher leads the student to understand the personal importance of learning by connecting it to the self, living, the environment, and the universe. A teacher’s understanding of pedagogy must include a knowing that students are affected by interactions within the classroom, but also a knowing about the nature of childhood. “A teacher who does not understand the inner life of a child does not know who it is (he) is teaching”(van Manen, 1994, p. 139). To teach one must know what one teaches, but to be a pedagogue one must know whom one teaches.

One cannot assume that every teacher is pedagogic simply by virtue of his or her education, or teacher preparation. David Jardine (1994) writes about a university student's passion for teaching, and her belief about pedagogy. "Piaget is just a name to me that I memorized in my courses. I don't care about all those theories. I just care about ...the child..." (p. 10). This beginning teacher cares about the teacher-student relationship, but neglects to realise that by opening a conversation with the texts of education (Piaget, Dewey, Plato, Gadamer, etc.) she has the opportunity to affect a deeper level of knowing her students. The teacher in conversation with her students has a notion of pedagogy and that means having a deep understanding of the theories and writings about the praxis of teaching and the Being of students.

The pedagogic teacher, as I discussed above in *Self-understanding and the teacher's stance*, must strive for a measure of self-understanding. This is true of the teacher-student relationship as it relates to pedagogy. The teacher must know students because it is "how the teacher as a person is involved in the student's growth" (van Manen, 1994, p. 139), "that may help or hinder the children's overall growth and development" (p. 139). The teacher must know himself and his student so that he **never** hinders his student's growth. The teacher-student relationship when rooted in pedagogy and self-understanding, anchors the teacher to a stance where supporting a child's understanding of self is imperative, rather than viewing children simply as "our greatest natural resource" (Jardine, 2000, p. 26), a commodity to be mined and exploited.

In "Pedagogy, Virtue, and Narrative Identity in Teaching," (1994) van Manen, writes that the pedagogical relationship is the "heart of good and effective teaching" (p. 137). He goes on to introduce a discourse of pedagogy that highlights the Dutch (his

native tongue) word *mensen-kennis*. “In Dutch *mensen-kennis* literally means people-knowledge, to have a perceptive understanding of people” (p. 137). The notion of *mensenkennis* is, at its heart, pedagogical and hermeneutic. The teacher must have self-understanding to articulate his stance in the classroom, but the teacher, as mentor, must also unearth understanding of his students, knowledge of their age, development, cognition, brain development, emotional life and Being. The teacher in relationship with students must, in a sense, “embrace the Other only as the same” (Jardine, n.d., p. 10). The way to fulfill this pedagogical mandate, is through questioning and interpreting of experience with and around the child.

Insightfulness into human character and human action (like self-understanding) is a quality of the pedagogic teacher. There is an expectation in the field of teaching that teachers become mentors (one needs to be careful here not to write *selfless*) who by being aware of their own needs, weaknesses and strengths fulfill a pedagogical mandate. Pedagogy begins with an understanding one’s self, one’s living so that the teacher is able to understand and resolve the insecurities (vulnerabilities) that hinder the nurturing aspects of the pedagogic relation. When in relationship, teachers must be aware of how their living and being influences the living and learning of the student.

The teacher-student relationship is a conversation unearthing pedagogy as praxis. “To have a sense of pedagogy implies that one is capable of insights into the child’s being or character” (van Manen, 1994, p. 139). Pedagogy, or “the art or science of teaching,” involves an understanding of the nature of childhood, and the living of each student. “The pedagogue is an educator...who feels addressed by children, who understands children in a caring way, and who has a personal commitment...in children’s

education and...growth" (p. 139). The teacher in conversation with a student cares deeply about the student's very Being; a good and honest at-heart caring. What is at stake if this caring is absent from the teacher-student relationship?

Martin Heidegger (1962) writes about the "phenomenon that addresses the researcher," and that this phenomenon comes from "Being-in-the-world" (p. 114). He argues that the hermeneutic inquiry emerges from the researcher's interactions with the world, and the teacher's interaction, or conversation, with the world is rooted in the pedagogic relation. When a parent states, "*I feel you know my child better than I do*" perhaps a truthful response would be (bearing in mind "should" is a dangerous word) "I should know your child."

There is something else in this text, something beneath, something calling and emerging. Why was this comment made? *It is as if you know my child better than I do.* There is a sense of mourning by the parent, but there is also seems to be a strange and subtle tension present between the teacher and parent. The parent, in this instance, is not complimenting the teacher for knowing her child, but is pointing out that "it is **as if**" the teacher knows the child better than the parents does. The "as if" is not a recognition of knowing, it is more a declaration of stance, that the parent feels like she is standing on the outside looking in to her child's life, and there stands the teacher.

The teacher's role is to stand beside, but how does this affect the parent-teacher relationship? Or does it? Could it be that what is of interest here is that any relationship between parent and teacher revolves around what is best pedagogically for the child? If as a parent, I have found myself on the outside looking in, then other parents must feel the same way. Caputo (In Jardine, 2000, p. 117) states the purpose of hermeneutic inquiry is

to restore life “to its original difficulty” (p. 117), and the inquiry is about posing questions to nurture growth in understanding. Unearthing the original difficulty in this instance is therefore what is important in this context. Pedagogic relations are human and subjective. Unearthing understanding in an experience today means that tomorrow’s experience is new, based on yesterday’s understanding. The parent and teacher, within the pedagogic relation, must be aware of the living of the child through their own understanding of self.

Gadamer (2004) writes “a text is not understood as a mere expression of life but is taken seriously in its claim to truth” (p. 297). The truth, or as Jardine (1998) writes, the familial relationship between an idea and its understanding (p. 44), that which seems to resonate among others with a similar outlook, is evident in language. This compels my inquiry to explore the parts, and the whole, of a text to discover its claim to truth and common understanding in the teacher-student relationship.

What is remarkable about the above textual fragment is that the sentiment expressed by the parent “*the frustrating part of this year is I feel my child is growing away from me*” is a sentiment, that the middle level teacher (grades 5-8) hears recurrently. The statement exposes the reality that the parent-child conversation begins to reshape during adolescence, when the adolescent begins the transformation from childhood to adulthood. The child is *growing away-from* her parents once she enters school. The parent, generally, is the main witness of their child’s being, their growing, first words, first steps, first sentence, first injury, and first introspective question. The parent is there for these firsts and the importance of witnessing them is immeasurable. A parent watches his child emerge into Being, emerge into self-understanding, and at times

of distance, like adolescence, the parent feels separated, and out of touch, whereas the teacher, by nature of pedagogy, must be in touch.

Parents find that the preschool years of their child's life is when the parent-child relationship is the focal relationship for the child. Before my wife and I were awakened to pedagogy with the birth of our daughter Maya, we pledged that we would keep our relationship as the primary focus in life. Our naiveté, though charming, was quickly revealed, as Paige and I would later laugh at the realisation that as parents" our relationship as "lovers was immediately overshadowed by focus on the care, love, and rearing of our daughter, and later our son. As a father, I found myself continually more consumed with this role. This fresh perspective altered the way I interacted with the children I taught, the manner in which I viewed the world, and the way in which I interacted within my world. My role as father was a new way of Being. I began to comprehend the trust that parent's endowed upon me to act *in loco parentis*.

As Maya, my daughter began school I felt some disconnectedness from her. One winter evening as I drove her to ballet, we conversed about the night sky, when she interrupted, "Dad, you know what my favourite thing to do is?"

"I am not sure."

"School" she responded.

The teacher in me, that part of me that understands the correlation between academic success and liking school was thrilled but as a parent, it struck me that an important part of my daughter's life was beyond me or my control. Maya had found meaning and importance in the world outside our relationship. What is the significance of that? What is the significance of **control** in parenting? Where does control fit into a

pedagogic relationship? Where does control fit into a relationship, or a conversation? My daughter was finding her own meaning, her own understanding of the world, which signified that she was becoming, her Being was evolving beyond the narrow spectrum of child-of-parent. She was demonstrating to me that she could find meaning in her life-world apart from me. As a father I was (am) proud of her emerging self-understanding, but the truth is that with each step towards a deeper understanding of being, she, seemingly, needed me less and that was a difficult step in my own understanding of self.

Where does control fit in pedagogy? There is an element of control in pre-planning, directing, and forcing. Teachers' working reality has become business like, where the market has invaded the public. Teachers are asked to be accountable, to maintain a balanced budget, and provide a program that is attractive to parent demands. This world seems to stunt collaboration. In a pedagogic conversation where "one really considers the weight of the other's opinion" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 367), the notion of control seems muted, or limited. The pedagogic relation involves mentoring, rather than control where the purpose of the interaction is well being of the student (and teacher). The teacher is paid to "control" the classroom environment, but does that mean being authoritarian, or being a pedagogue opening conversation, creating an atmosphere students see would lead to academic and personal growth and success? Wouldn't it include what Professor Diamante called the "*legacy of students past*"?

I realised I was losing-control of my daughter's living and as a father that made me fearful, but I recalled the words of Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* (1926) who said

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are

with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies, but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. (p. 22)

Gibran's instructions for the parent are pedagogic. Children are not clay to be molded, or property to be invested in. The mentor must care for their students, but not control their thoughts, or understandings. Control has no place in the pedagogic relation. The Hollywood film, *Dead Poet's Society* (Haft, 1989), is the story of high school boys emerging into adulthood. The protagonist of the story is the English literature teacher, Mr. Keating (Robin Williams). Williams portrays Mr. Keating as a teacher who encourages his students to choose their own manner of being within-the-world. He encourages Neil, a young student, to follow his heart and desire and act in a community play. Neil's father was dead against it, because he felt Neil should spend all his free time studying academics rather than wasting his "hard earned" tuition money.

Mr. Keating is fired from his job after his encouragement led Neil to act "against the explicit orders of Neil's parents." Mr. Keating seemed to be in Gadamerian conversation with Neil, while Neil's father was not. Mr. Keating encouraged Neil to tell his father about his desire to act on stage, and his fear that his father is directing his life. Neil responded, "I can't talk to him this way," the way he can talk to Mr. Keating. Neil's father wants to control Neil's life, without explanation, or conversation. Mr. Keating wants Neil, a 17-year-old male, to take some control of his emerging adulthood. In the film, the school fires Mr. Keating for "going against Neil's parent's wishes" and Neil commits suicide.

The relationship between parent and child is, ideally, pedagogic in nature. But with Neil and his parents, and Mr. Wood and his daughter, at times the emotional investment parent's feel in their child's future is anything but pedagogic. The teacher feels empathy with the parent who speaks about being outside of her child's living. If the nature of growing through childhood and adolescence is to begin to live within one's being, away from parents, then where does that leave the teacher-student relationship? The question that "breaks open" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 363) this discussion is what is at stake if teachers don't take a pedagogical role in the adolescent years?

Knowing in pedagogy

Is it important for a teacher to "know" his students? What is at stake if a teacher does not know his students? And conversely what is at stake if a teacher does know his students?

What is the nature of the student-teacher relationship? A teacher can know a student's family. In some cases, she may have taught a sibling, or other relative, or had a social relationship with a student's parents. A teacher can have knowledge of a student's friendships. A teacher can be aware of the struggles and successes a student faces at home, at school and in the community. In many cases teachers are aware of the painful circumstance of a student's life through communication parents, or a school's counselling team. A teacher can know a student's learning style, be it kinaesthetic, visual, spatial, musical, intrapersonal or so forth.

"It is as if you know my child, better than I do." Hermeneutics is inquiring into topics to discover shared truths and asking questions to bring about understanding. The manner of inquiry is established by directing focus beyond perceptions to create meaning

from within a text by understanding prejudices, and opening possibilities for understanding through questioning (Gadamer, 2004, p. 299). The manner of study in hermeneutics is to engage in a conversation with oneself, where one seeks understanding. What does it mean to know the self or another person? If Hanh (1998) writes that what we understand about another is “the object of our perception” (p. 53), then knowing another means knowing self. But allowing another to know us, means trust.

There is *intimacy* in any relationship where one person knows another. The first quality in knowing is trust. To let another “know” us means we must dwell in a certain place where we are not threatened. The classroom can be such a place. The pedagogic classroom can be a place whereby students are safe from the pressures inherent in social interaction and the need for acceptance. This safety creates an environment where a student can take the energy expended trying to belong and transfer it to academic inquiry and excellence.

The parent, who commented on knowing her child, wants her child to have a relationship with a teacher that involves a certain “knowing.” Parents want to know that those responsible for the education of their children, know them, believe in them and want them to succeed. They want their child’s teacher to “root” for their child’s success.

The teacher who knows his students, and demonstrates to them that they are important to his Being, embraces them as he embraces self. Knowing is pedagogic. “Knowing” involves an awareness of the type of support a student needs. Knowing is a connection of the heart, where the teacher understands that the pedagogic relation is different than a friendship with another adult. The knowing teacher believes in the potential of the student, regardless of student history or lived reality.

In *Truth and Method*, Hans Georg Gadamer engages the matter of knowledge and knowing. He writes that knowledge is the process of understanding both sides of an issue. For one to have knowledge, one must be able to comprehend opposite viewpoints; that “it is the essence of knowledge not only to judge something correctly but, at the same time, and for the same reason, to exclude what is wrong” (2004, p. 364). It is not possible, therefore, to create curriculum delivery to a student’s pedagogical needs, without having knowledge of the student. Unearthing knowledge of the student involves time and care for the lives of students. This kind of knowing is the heart of the teacher-student interaction, and arguably the heart of a teacher’s practice, the heart of the pedagogic relation.

Conversation ten

Mr. Wood stood in front of his fresh-from-summer math class. The students waded through the cobwebs of the previous year’s math classes. “I will ask the question, but please don’t call out the answer. I will pick one of you, randomly to give me your response.” Mr. Wood posed the question, “Using your brain as your only tool please find the product of 17 and 5?” Students shuffled in their desks, squirmed under the smiling gaze of their new teacher. They were eager to please, eager to impress, but fearful of failure. A few hands shot into the air. Eyes bolted to raised hands, then back down to the desk. Mr. Wood waited, and repeated the question, “What is the product of 17 and 5?” He waited as most of the freshly dressed class squirmed. “I will say it another way, what is the answer to 17 times 5?” Mr. Wood waited. The classroom was silent. They had agreed to give one another silence when it was needed. More hands raised into the air,

until only a few remained down. Students nervously waited for Mr. Wood to ask for the answer.

“Steve. What is the product of 17 and 5?”

“I am not sure?”

“Keep trying,” Mr. Wood answered. The class waited. There was a certain air of tension. Steve looked left, and right, he sat, eyes concerned.

“I am not sure,” Steven responded.

“Keep trying,” Mr. Wood said. A few kids shuffled in desks, a girl in pigtails let out an audible sigh. The pressure was building. Steve’s friend, Doug who sits two desks behind, whispered “85.” Steven’s eyes lightened, his shoulders lifted.

“85,” Steven called out triumphantly.

“85 is the correct answer.” Mr Wood responded. “Steven, can I put you on the spot? Ask you a few tough questions?” Steven looked unsure. “I will take care of you. This is important for our year, and our class. I am asking you to do something that is difficult. I am asking you to help out our learning. Can I put you on the spot?”

“I guess so,” Steven responded.

“Doug, can I put you on the spot?” Mr. Wood asked.

“Yeah, sure,” Doug said.

Mr. Wood began. “I would like the whole class to listen to this conversation. I want your feedback on it after. This conversation may be the most important conversation we have in creating the kind of environment we want to learn in for the next ten months of our lives. Steven, are you O.K.?”

“Yes.”

"Doug, why did you whisper the answer to Steven?" The class looked surprised. Mr. Wood knew where Steven got his answer. "It is O.K. Let's figure something out here. Why did you whisper the answer to Steven?"

"To help him out, I guess." Doug replied.

"Anyone in the class recognise that Doug was helping Steven out?" Mr. Wood asked. Every student in the class raised their hand. "So you would agree that Doug was helping Steve out?" The class generally nodded, or voiced agreement.

"Steve, can I put you on the spot?" Mr. Wood asked.

"I guess so."

"Steve how do you feel about finding the product of 17 and 5?" Mr. Wood asks.

"Good," replied Steven.

"Are you proud of yourself?" Mr. Wood asked. "Do you have that feeling like you have accomplished something?"

"No." Steve replied.

"Why," asked Mr. Wood?

"I never did anything?" Steven responded.

"Steven what is the product of 19 and 5?" Mr. Wood asked. Steven let out a sigh.

"I don't know," Steven responded.

"5 groups of 10 is...?" Mr. Wood asked.

"50?" Steve responded.

"Okay. Now take the number fifty and tuck into the back of your head, remember it, store it for later," Mr. Wood said. "The product of 9 and 5?"

"Umm. 45?" Steve asked.

“Great. Okay. What do you have tucked?” Mr. Wood asked.

“50,” Steven responded.

“Add 45 to 50 and you have...” Mr. Wood asked.

“95?” Steven questioned.

“So the product of 19 and 5 is?” Mr. Wood asked.

“95,” Steven smiled.

“Are you kidding me? You just multiplied 19 and 5 in your head during the first week of school! What a year this will be? Steve, are you proud of yourself?” Mr. Wood asked.

“Yes.”

“Does it feel good?”

“Yup.”

“Doug, can I put you on the spot?” Mr. Wood asked. “What is wrong with making a mistake?”

“Nothing. I make them all the time.” Doug responded to laughter.

“Do you want to spend time in this class feeling like you can make mistakes?” Mr. Wood asked.

“Yeah.” Doug said.

“Please, put up your hand if you want one of our classroom rules to be that mistakes are not only okay, but important?” The class, every student, raised a hand.

“Doug, when you whispered the answer to Steve, did you help him?” Mr. Wood asked.

“I guess not.” Doug replied.

“What did you teach him about mistakes?” Mr. Wood asked. The class sat in silence. “I ask the whole class, when you whisper an answer to a friend, what do you teach them about mistakes?” Doug’s hand flew up.

“That they are embarrassing.” Doug said.

“Nice, Doug. When we look to protect a friend from a mistake, we teach them that mistakes are embarrassing. I don’t know about you but I make mistakes, little and big, all the time. I don’t want to fear mistakes so much that I won’t try. What does this conversation mean to our class?” Mr. Wood waited for a response. Hands began to rise tentatively.

“We need to allow each other to make mistakes?” Julie asked.

“You make it sound as if making mistakes is a privilege, that struggling is important?” Mr. Wood asked.

“I think it is,” Julie responded.

Unearthing Meaning

The above narrative is a pedagogic moment. There is a sense of leadership and knowing from Mr. Wood, but also a sense that the needs of the students are directing his leading of the lesson. There is also a sense of learning about living. When Mr. Wood asks *“Can I put you on the spot?”* there is an essence of respect for students, but also for their being. Together within math class, Mr. Wood and his students unearth a truth of living, that mistakes and struggle are viewed as weaknesses, rather than as part of living. When Mr. Wood said to Julie, *“You make it sound as if making mistakes is a privilege, that struggling is important”* he is leading her to a conclusion, seemingly found on her own, that struggling is an important part of learning and living.

Struggle is a part of life, and within the above conversation, the notion of struggle is feared but then the conversation continues until a student gains the insight that struggle is important. The very struggle that Mr. Wood put Steven through when he “put” him “on the spot” by leading him through finding the product of 17 and 5, led Steven to an understanding of math, but also an understanding of the self, of living and struggle.

The ideal teacher-student relationship is pedagogic, but at times, like in the following narrative, the humanity of the teacher can lead to non-pedagogic moments.

Conversation 11

Eryn, a small seventh grade girl, sat on the hallway floor writing down the ideas her group had brainstormed. Dillon, a big, moppy-haired kid, reached over, snatched the pencil from Eryn’s hand and threw it down the hall. Eryn scowled, stood up and retrieved it. The brainstorming continued as Mr. Wood walked over. “How is it going gang?” he asked. Dillon’s eyes quickly found the linoleum floor. The rest of the group, Chase, a wisp of a boy, and Jody, an outgoing and athletic girl, looked to Eryn. “We are, uh, just brainstorming. After we get enough ideas we will decide to present them on a poster or in a skit,” Eryn said.

“Good enough,” said Mr. Wood. “Dillon, what is your role in the group?”

“I am the manager,” Dillon replied.

“Everyone on task?”

“Yup.”

“Great work, you guys. I look forward to seeing how you present it,” Mr. Wood said as he left.

“Eryn?” Dillon asked, “how come our group always does what you want?”

"Do you have another suggestion, Dillon?" Eryn replied. Dillon grabbed her pencil and threw it down the hall again.

The bell rang and Mr. Wood dismissed his homeroom class for their lunch break. One student held back. "Mr. Wood?"

"Yes, Braeden?"

"I don't want to tell on him or anything, but maybe you could watch Dillon. He never works in our group and, he keeps walking passed my desk and taking my pencil and dropping it. He bumps up against me and makes my pen write across my page."

"How would you like me to help?" Mr. Wood replied.

"I don't know?"

"We could do a couple of things. I could go and get him now and ask we could ask him to stop."

"I have already asked him to stop, like five times," said Braeden.

"I could go find him now and we could tell him how you are feeling," Mr. Wood said.

"No offence, Mr. Wood, but if Dillon knows I told on him, he'll just keep bugging me," said Braeden.

"I'm more than capable of making sure Dillon knows that bullying is not welcome in the class," Mr. Wood said.

"He'll just get me on the way home."

"Then you'll come and tell me and we will talk to Dillon again. Or administration will, or Constable MacLean will."

"Forget it," said Braeden.

"I won't forget it. Okay. How about I keep a close eye on him and then if he harasses you in class I can talk to him? It will be like I have caught him in the act, he will never know you came to me. How does that sound?" Mr. Wood offered.

"That sounds good." Braeden said and turned to go. "Have a good lunch Mr. Wood."

"You, too, Braed."

Mr. Wood kneeled next to Doug's desk, helping him phrase a concluding paragraph. Dillon stood, getting out of his seat. He walked past Braeden's desk, pulled the pencil from Braeden's hand and dropped it in the garbage can.

"Dillon, after you have retrieved that pencil, may I see you in the hall please?" Mr. Wood said. Dillon let out a loud sigh. The classroom became suddenly and extremely quiet. Mr. Wood asked Doug a few questions that got him started and he headed out into the hall. Dillon was seated on the wooden bench, examining the math tessellations displayed on the bulletin board. Dillon watched Mr. Wood as he sat down beside him on the bench.

"Dillon, pretend I am the student and you are the teacher. Why is the student out here?" Dillon let out another sigh. Mr. Wood waited.

"I don't know."

"Are you sure?"

"I don't know."

"I'll come back in five minutes and if you still don't know, we will continue this conversation after school." Mr. Wood entered the classroom. Dillon slumped against the painted cinder-block wall. He exhaled.

Five minutes later Mr. Wood re-entered the hallway; Dillon sat up straight and began. "I am here because I wasn't being respectful in our classroom. I took Braeden's pencil and dropped it in the garbage can. I am sorry."

"Nice. Okay. What are you going to do to set things right?" Mr. Wood asked.

"I guess I'll apologise to Braeden."

"Okay. Good plan. I'll go get him and you can do that now. Sound good?"

"Yup."

"Dillon, if this happens again, what do you think I will do?"

"Call my mom?"

A week later Eryn came to Mr. Wood. "Mr. Wood, can I please join another group?"

"Eryn? What's wrong?" Mr. Wood asked.

"Dillon is always bugging me. He calls me goody-goody; he takes my pencil and stuffs it down his pants. He never helps in the group."

"Eryn, do you want me to talk to him?"

"Yes."

"O.K. I will catch him right after lunch."

"Thanks Mr. Wood."

The end of lunch bell rang and the class fumbled in, opened their journals and began to answer the Question of the Day. Mr. Wood crossed over to Dillon "May I speak to you in the hall?" Dillon let out a sigh climbed out of his desk and stomped out.

“Dillon, could you explain what you are doing to Eryn in your group work?” Mr. Wood asked.

Dillon’s face flushed, he looked to the ground. “I am taking her pencil and I’m bugging her.” Dillon replied.

“And putting her pencil down your pants?”

“No...”

“And putting her pencil down your pants?” Mr. Wood waited for Dillon’s response.

“Yes.” They both stared ahead at the wall.

“Dillon, I am hearing a lot about you bullying the other students in this class. If I remember, you agreed at the beginning of the year to the classroom rules, where we would respect one another, and we would all create an environment that is safe. Are you being respectful of Eryn?”

“No,” Dillon responds.

“Are you creating an environment where your classmates feel safe?”

“No,” Dillon responds.

“Dillon, we will go down to the office and phone your mom. I am disappointed and will tell you right here and right now. Look at me. That if you continue to bully in this class, you will not be in this class. Am I making myself quite clear? You see I am responsible for you, but also for thirty other students, you will no longer bully in this class.” Dillon and Mr. Wood walked to the office and phoned home.

Several weeks later Mr. Wood witnessed Dillon physically hurt somebody. Dillon and his group were standing next to Eryn's desk discussing their presentation. Without any obvious provocation Dillon dropped his right hand and hit the underside of Eryn's textbook so that it flew up and hit her square in the face. Eryn's glasses were broken and her nose dripped blood. Dillon stood silently watching as Eryn's face registered shock, and then pain.

Mr. Wood quickly walked to Eryn.

"Eryn, are you hurt badly?"

"I don't think so."

"Hayley, take her to get cleaned up, please."

Mr. Wood grabbed Dillon by the arm, not too gently, and walked him to the office. "Keep up. I can hardly look at you. How dare you do that to somebody else?"

"Mr. Wood, I'm s..."

"Too late, Dillon."

Mr. Wood and Dillon arrived at the Vice-Principal's office. Mr. Wood sat Dillon down beside his colleague and began. "Dillon, I am so disappointed in you. You want respect; yet each time you bully you lose respect. You will not be in that classroom again until you sign a contract that states you abide by rules of respect and kindness. And one last thing Dillon, you had better hope that that girl's dad isn't as protective a father as I am or you might find yourself facing someone pretty angry." Mr. Wood left the office. Dillon was suspended for a day, and paid to repair Eryn's glasses.

Mr. Wood contacted Dillon's mother and found she was fully supportive.

"I don't know what to do with him. I can't even talk to this kid. Oh, wait until his father gets home. Thanks for everything you do for him, Mr. Wood."

Dillon returned with a contract explaining how he would behave in class. He wrote the contract himself and Mr. Wood was surprised to read that he had included all of the rules, stated his belief that the rules are important. He wrote that he didn't want to be a bully, and wasn't sure why he hit Eryn's textbook, and felt remorse and embarrassment for his actions.

"Dillon, I am proud of you," Mr. Wood said. "You have done some deep reflecting and I see this as a turning point for you. You need to work hard to show that you want to be a positive member of the class. I believe you can do that. You have so many great qualities, kid, you just need to believe that those qualities bring you success and respect."

It wasn't long before Dillon was taking pencils off of classmate's desk and knocking their binders to the floor. He began to tease classmates about clothing and personality traits and was once again physically aggressive towards schoolmates. After lunch one day Mr. Wood walked into the classroom to find him choking a "friend." Both students claimed they were just fooling around. Mr. Wood felt like he had been picking on Dillon and decided to take the boys' word that they were joking around. "That type of joking is not appropriate in school, alright boys?"

"Okay, Mr. Wood. Sorry."

Mr. Wood felt frustrated. He couldn't prevent the bullying, and he wasn't helping Dillon. Mr. Wood struggled with supporting Dillon and maintaining high expectations for his behaviour. Mr. Wood, at times, watched Dillon like a hawk, waiting for him to

mess up. He would then feel guilty for doing so; like watching him was failing him. The situation came to a climax when Mr. Wood entered the classroom before school to find Dillon gripping a classmate in an arm bar. The other, significantly smaller student, a friend of Dillon's, was in tears and appeared as if his arm may be broken.

"Stop," Mr. Wood yelled, startling both boys. Dillon began to cry.

"Come with me." Mr. Wood yelled. "I said, now." Dillon followed. Mr. Wood saved his anger until he sat Dillon in with the Vice-Principal then he unleashed it.

"You'd better hope Scott is not hurt. You'd better hope his folks don't press charges. You better hope I calm down, or you will not return to my class." Mr. Wood turned to his colleague, "Frank, I have to go before I say something I regret." Dillon was suspended.

The class had left for the day and Mr. Wood slumped in the chair behind his desk, looking routed. His mouth was tight and the bags under his eyes signified a lack of good sleep. Mr. Wood held a firm belief that every student who came into his class would have his best year ever. And then there was Dillon. "I watch him to catch his screw ups," Mr. Wood thought to himself. "He knows I watch him. I sort of bully him to stop his bullying, how ridiculous is that?" And that is when it hit him, like a freight train that took the weight off of his shoulders. "I will ask the boy why he is a bully."

When Mr. Wood wrote the question "Why are you a bully?" in Dillon's daily journal, he was expecting a response of a few sentences. Instead, upon his return to school, Dillon asked if he could take his journal home and wrote five pages. He wrote: "Thank you Mr. Wood for asking me that question, 'Why am I a bully?' I come to school mad each day. I like coming to school, and I like our class. I feel like this year I could be

smart. But everyday before I leave for school, my brothers hide my shoes, that's why I am late, or tell me I am fat, or that I'm smaller than they were in the seventh grade and that I will never be good at football. Last week they put my shoe in the toilet. They tell me I am too stupid to graduate high school and that I will never make it to college. My parents never do anything about it. If I tell, my brothers call me a baby, they punch me, and pinch me, and tell my parents they are just joking. My parents don't do anything about it. But thanks Mr. Wood, because I don't want to be like my brothers."

Unearthing Meaning

The place to begin is Dillon. The reason for the teacher is the student and though the inquiry is dwelling in the living reality of the teacher, through the student we can learn much about the teacher-student relationship.

At the beginning of the narrative "*Mr. Wood walked over. 'How is it going gang?' he asked. Dillon's eyes quickly found the floor.*" If relationship happens when "there is a conversational relation between the speakers, and the speakers become in a sense animated by the notion to which they are both oriented" (van Manen 1990, p. 98), then what can be interpreted about Mr. Wood's conversations with Dillon? Dillon's *body language* signifies that he has taken himself out of relationship; it was his choice to remove himself from the relationship. What is the reason? Fear? Dillon removes himself from conversation quite often in this narrative. Conversation must ensure that participants are in interaction, yet Dillon removes himself. So why is Dillon out of relationship?

Knowledge and success in school have become cultural capital, where traditions and capitalist ideology are transferred to the population. I once asked a group of third

graders why they should work hard in school, and they responded as a means to get a good job, and buy a big house. Students in the third grade, eight-year olds, know that they must work hard and succeed in school to be a productive and “good” member of society. How does this understanding of “globalized” education affect the student who is not successful in a traditional sense? How does the equation *success in school equals success in life* affect Dillon?

Dillon craves success. He wants to be part of the group and to find success, yet he takes himself out of relationship. He would like an opportunity to lead the group.

“‘Eryn,’ Dillon asked, ‘how come our group always does what you want?’

‘Do you have another suggestion Dillon?’ Eryn replied. Dillon grabbed her pencil and threw it down the hall.”

Dillon begins a conversation about power. “*How come our group always does what you want?*” Dillon understands he must contribute, he understands that leadership is an important quality in society. He wants recognition for contribution to the success of the group. Eryn’s response defends her leadership and opens a conversation about Dillon’s contribution to the group’s work. “*Do you have another suggestion Dillon?*” Both Eryn and Dillon know that if he had another suggestion he wouldn’t share it because he is worried it (he) will appear stupid. Eryn’s defence of her leadership was quite brilliant. It put Dillon back in Eryn’s place for him with the appearance of opening the door to his input. Unfortunately for Dillon, and his place in the group, he faced another humiliation based on his intellectual performance, and he responds in kind by taking power through physical force, and throwing a pencil. Dillon is not different than any others who wish “to become beings with increased control of their own destiny”

(Aoki, 2000, p. 61). It is within the confines of the classroom, and at home with his brothers, that Dillon is frustrated with Being. If Dillon's Being is "grounded" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 78) in his place of dwelling (p. 79) then how is he affected at his core having little or no power? What is the nature of Dillon's Being within a place that belittles his living, and takes away his "control" over his "own destiny"?

Dillon is coded with a learning disability and had spent some time over the course of the year talking with Mr. Wood about his low academic confidence. When he writes his journal entry at the end of the narrative, he mentions that his older brothers "tell me I am stupid." Gadamer (2004) states that "no one knows in advance what will 'come out' of a conversation" (p. 383), but Dillon had been shown several times that any conversation about academics would leave him feeling powerless and outside of his own control.

The teacher has a responsibility to be in and to find conversation with every student he teaches, but Mr. Wood was not in conversation with Dillon. Mr. Wood was in conversation with those students who "followed the rules." When Dillon attempted a conversation "*Mr. Wood, I'm s...*" Mr. Wood stops him, "*Too late, Dillon.*"

What is hidden here is a power struggle between Eryn and Dillon for group leadership. Dillon's strategy was to grab and throw pencils, to take the leadership struggle outside of the learning realm into a social realm. Eryn wanted to keep the struggle inside the realm of learning. Eryn humiliates Dillon by pretending to present him with an opportunity to lead in the learning realm, and Dillon hurts Eryn by hitting her book in her face. Mr. Wood's interaction with Dillon disables his leadership and supports Eryn's.

Mr. Wood “catches” Dillon taking Braeden’s pencil and asked to see Dillon in the hall. There was an opportunity to start a conversation, but instead he asked Dillon to “pretend I am the student and you are the teacher.” He literally asked Dillon to take the teacher’s perspective and to solve the problem from the teacher’s stance. In essence, Mr. Wood asks Dillon to understand why he was wrong from his mentor’s perspective. The teacher’s role is to balance the needs of the student with the needs of the classroom, but conversation in teaching involves the teacher and student “being” together. Mr. Wood did not allow Dillon to be, but expected him to solve the problem from Mr. Wood’s perspective, or the teacher’s stance. If knowledge means that one has considered the opposites (Gadamer, 2004, p. 364), where is Mr. Wood’s knowledge? Why is Mr. Wood not asking Dillon if he can “put him on the spot?” Why is he not asking Dillon to tell him what Mr. Wood is doing wrong? Mr. Wood, in the nature of conversation, is talking *to*, not talking *with*. He is forcing Dillon to “see” what is happening through Mr. Wood’s perception, rather than to try and unearth what is happening from Dillon’s perspective, which would support the pedagogic relation.

Dillon was sent into the hall again when Eryn asked Mr. Wood to help stop him from taking her pencil and stuffing it “down his pants.” Again Mr. Wood solves the problem by coaching Dillon how he is to answer, by asking closed questions. “Are you being respectful of Eryn?” Or, “Are you creating an environment where your classmates feel safe?” What was expected of Dillon? What if Dillon had answered yes? Would Mr. Wood have accepted the answer? Once again, Dillon acted out in group time, and once again, Mr. Wood failed to engage Dillon in conversation. He failed to find the truth of the

situation as defined by Mr. Wood and Dillon, and instead dictated the truth as defined by Mr. Wood, Eryn, or Braeden.

Did Mr. Wood take Eryn's and Braeden's perceptions of the interaction over Dillon's, simply because of their grades, or their ability to fit into Mr. Wood's perception of the "good student?" Is there a sort of social capital whereby those students who act as the teacher wishes gain trust simply because of their way of being? Mr. Wood trusted the words of Eryn, and Braeden not because of any evidence, or reflection, but because Eryn fit Mr. Wood's idea of the ideal student and Eryn supported Mr. Wood's vision of an ideal classroom.

Mr. Wood ends this interaction by having Dillon phone home, and telling Dillon that he "*will no longer bully in this class.*" Again, there is no conversation with Dillon, but a hint of a threat. What will Mr. Wood do if Dillon bullies again; clearly something of consequence. Mr. Wood is intimidating Dillon to stop the bullying. The intimidation is subtle, but it is present. What place does intimidation have in the pedagogic relation? What place does intimidation have in Gadamerian conversation? The purpose of Mr. Wood's intimidation is to gain control over Dillon. But control has no place in the pedagogic relation.

The intimidation in this narrative does not lead to the desired effect; in fact, Dillon's bullying escalates to physical violence. He bloodied the nose of Eryn, the girl who represents the academic leadership Dillon lacks. Mr. Wood takes Dillon to the office and tells him he "*had better hope that the girl's dad isn't as protective a father as I am, or you might find yourself facing someone pretty angry.*" There was a clear physical threat made to Dillon. Mr. Wood hints that if Eryn had been his daughter Dillon would

face anger, or worse. Mr. Wood's threat expresses anger, but his words can be interpreted as violent. It is reasonable to interpret the statement to mean that if Eryn was Mr. Wood's daughter, he would have difficulty controlling his anger and might/would physically hurt Dillon. Mr. Wood was clearly out of conversation, though Mr. Wood assumes it was Dillon who was out of conversation. It is evident, as this narrative has been deconstructed, that Dillon's behaviour escalated after Mr. Wood's denial or refusal to engage Dillon in Gadamerian conversation.

Mr. Wood's veiled threat, and Dillon's suspension from school, did not stop the bullying or violence. The violent behaviour escalated again to where Dillon nearly broke a friend's arm. Dillon was suspended from school; sent away from the place of action and out of conversation with the school. But something changed. Mr. Wood sat slumped *in the chair behind his desk* and finally decided to engage Dillon in a conversation. He wrote in Dillon's journal, *why are you a bully?* In answering, Dillon reflected and wrote the story of his own and very personal pain. He was given an opportunity to be in conversation, and once given that chance, released his pent up and hidden thoughts through writing. Where Mr. Wood expected *a few sentences* Dillon wrote *five pages*. Dillon was finally given the opportunity to engage in a conversation and he was finally asked "what was your experience really like?" (van Manen, 1990, p. 99). The nature of written language is reflective. It is the process of finding words to fit our thoughts and experience. Writing allows the thinker to be separate from conversants for a moment and to focus on the happening, or phenomenon that inspired the writing.

Dillon took his journal home, away from the place, and wrote about his lifeworld, what he carried with him. In essence he inquired hermeneutically into an event. He

included a little about historically effected consciousness, about how his brothers bullied him as his parents were bystanders and how powerless he felt. He opened up his-story and took a stance within the conversation about his place in the classroom, and in the world. He saw the world as new, in a manner that changed his way. He gained a measure of self-understanding based on an experience.

Mr. Wood empowered Dillon, only when he asked, "Why are you a bully?" He gave Dillon a chance to express his experience, rather than to take Eryn or Braeden's understanding of their experience with Dillon. Dillon decided he did not want to continue with his own bullying. He was finally encouraged to express his own lived experience, and to create a different stance within the world. He was part of a conversation in teaching, and so finally was Mr. Wood.

Unearthing for Mr. Wood

"Dillon, what is your role in the group?" Mr. Wood asked this question of Dillon because his *eyes suddenly found the linoleum floor*. Mr. Wood asked the question specifically of Dillon, to try and bring him into relationship with the group, but what was missing, pedagogically, in this instance, was help for Dillon to be a part of the group. Dillon had been given a group role as a "management technique," not a learning technique, or a confidence builder. In reality, the true group manager was Eryn. She organized the group, lead the with ideas and kept them on task, yet Mr. Wood assigned Dillon to be the group managaer. If Mr. Wood's motivation for asking Dillon about his role in the group was to engage Dillon, did it work? It was almost as if Mr. Wood asked Dillon, and only Dillon to work harder. There was an eye-winking implication from Mr. Wood, "Dillon, I know you're not working, and you know I know you're not working, so

get down to work, O.K. sport.” But Dillon did not get down to work. He was afraid that if he did, he would fail, and it was better to not try than to fail.

Mr. Wood does ask Dillon if everyone is on task, and Dillon does respond. Mr. Wood does look to empower Dillon, give him a quasi-leadership role. A role where Dillon may feel valued, but does Dillon demonstrate actions of one who feels valued? There seems to be a layer of pretense, that Mr. Wood, as teacher, will give Dillon a “pretend” leadership role for just a moment. It was as if all parties knew what was happening, that Dillon was given a pretend “important” role, not to empower him, but to take his power away, to keep him busy with a “productive” task.

Mr. Wood’s responsibility was to be in conversation with his students, but this can be a difficult task. Braeden came to Mr. Wood and asked him to watch Dillon *“taking my pencil and dropping it.”* Mr. Wood asked, *“How would you like me to help?”* Braeden responded that Mr. Wood talking to Dillon would only make the situation worse. When a teacher “talks” to a student about inappropriate behaviour does a conversation take place, or is the nature of “the talk” more of a lecture? What happens to the pedagogic relation when the “talk” takes place? The teacher takes an authoritarian sense of power, and the student loses a measure of control. Braeden seems to understand this intuitively saying that “the talk” will only make the situation worse; it will be one more instance where Dillon is powerless over self.

When Mr. Wood asked Dillon into the hall and had him pretend he was the teacher, Mr. Wood believed he was engaging Dillon in conversation. But Mr. Wood was simply “managing” his classroom. He was demanding Dillon “buy into” the rules of a “reasonable” teacher. Mr. Wood did not engage Dillon in conversation because he is not

interested in doing so at that moment. He is interested in getting Dillon to behave, in order to “teach.” In the short term, this strategy may work for the students Dillon is bothering but a “strategy” is not an authentic conversation. How does one engage a student in conversation when Gadamer (2004) says a conversation is some thing we “fall into” (p. 383)? Is conversation a strategy, or a philosophy? What could Mr. Wood have done to encourage falling into conversation with Dillon? Max van Manen (1990) reminds us that conversation has a “hermeneutic thrust” (p. 98), and perhaps if Mr. Wood had interpreted the problem hermeneutically, he and Dillon may have fallen into conversation. Perhaps, if Mr. Wood had asked why Dillon bullied (which he later did), he may have gained a deeper understanding of Dillon’s being. He would have gained a deeper pedagogic knowing of his student.

As time passed, the “strategies” Mr. Wood employed to curb Dillon’s bullying were ineffectual. As Dillon’s bullying escalated, Mr. Wood escalated his “method” of “managing” Dillon. He involved Dillon’s mother, and tells Dillon “*he is disappointed in him,*” and that he “*had better hope that girl’s dad isn’t as protective a father as I am.*” He goes on to threaten “*you’d better hope Scott is not hurt. You’d better hope his folks don’t press charges. You better hope I calm down, or you will not return to my class.*” As Dillon’s bullying escalated, Mr. Wood countered with a measure of threats and his own form of bullying. He employed emotional manipulation to influence the way in which Dillon interacted in the classroom and the school. If pedagogic sensibility is “thoughtful concern for all the multifarious ways children are under adult conduct” (Smith, 1994, p. i), Mr. Wood misplaced pedagogic sensibility. He relied on intimidation and threats to “manage the behaviour” of a child. Mr. Wood controlled “the bully” by bullying. He

made no effort, in this case, to engage in a respectful conversation, he was unaware that Dillon is a person with whom to relate, rather a problem to manage.

So why does one bully? Dillon's bullying escalated when he wasn't getting what he wanted, or when he felt vulnerable. The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2001) defines *vulnerable* as "able to be physically or emotionally hurt," or "exposed or susceptible to a destructive agent or influence" (p. 1629). If one bullies because he is susceptible to a destructive agent, or is vulnerable, he is lashing out somehow. But why would Mr. Wood bully a child? Wherein lies his vulnerability in this instance?

The teacher's pedagogic responsibility is to his students, all of them. Mr. Wood felt frustrated because when Dillon faced failure at school, he, too, faced failure at school. Each of Dillon's failures and frustrations were Mr. Wood's to share. Where Dillon acted out and was becoming a negative influence on other students, causing frustration, vulnerability and physical pain to them, Mr. Wood felt responsible in as much as he was "ineffectual" in "stopping" Dillon. He was vulnerable because the nature of his teaching, the safety and growth of his students was threatened.

There is another aspect to Mr. Wood's vulnerability. There is an overriding perception in schools (and Mr. Wood would have shared the opinion) that those classrooms that are "out of control" are a symptom of poor teaching (as if control has any place in the pedagogic relation). Though teachers themselves have been in situations where they understand the nature of their own vulnerability, when a colleague faces such vulnerability that colleague is perceived as weak. It becomes staffroom conversation, "Did you see Ms. Johnson's class today? She can't even walk those kids to the gym without interrupting the whole school." Mr. Wood himself puts pride in his relationships

with his students, and yet here was a student who seemed beyond reach. He was frustrated and confused, and worried his reputation as a pedagogue could be questioned.

Conversation 12: Hannah

As Mr. Wood watched Hannah round the corner into Karen's classroom, his face lit up. One of the many pleasures of autumn for the classroom teacher is the return of former students.

"So, how is high school?" Mr. Wood asked.

"It is so great. We have made so many new friends...it is way better than middle school."

"Yeah, way better. No offence Mr. Wood. We miss this school," added Hannah's friend.

"Yeah, we miss you," smiled Hannah.

"Yeah, totally."

"Well, thank you, I miss you as well."

Unearthing meaning

Former students stopping in to say "hello," returning home in a sense, is important to teachers. It demonstrates that being-together creates important bonds. Why is this dwelling with students important to the teacher? Parker Palmer (1998) quotes the poet Rumi who writes "If you are here unfaithfully with us,/ you're causing terrible damage" (p. 183). What does it mean for the teacher to be-with the student, to dwell faithfully? How is the being or living of the teacher affected? Certainly the rich reward of interactions with children - positive, life-affirming interactions - enriches the living-of-the-teacher. These pedagogic connections are real and important for the teacher. Teachers

watch children learn, make mistakes and challenge themselves to improve. But more importantly teachers allow their hearts to open to children and that connection, or openness of great importance to an inquiry into the pedagogic relation.

A former student once wrote, *"I am sad that the end of the year is coming, but I won't dwell on the coming of the end, I will dwell on what we shared."* When teachers share in deep and meaningful relationships with their students, they are not just deep and meaningful for the students, but for the teacher as well. With that difficulties can arise in defining personal boundaries, and gaining understanding of the nature of the teacher and student being-together and the nature of teacher vulnerability within that relationship.

Conversation 13: Hannah continued

Mr. Wood recalled the day he saw Hannah sitting in the library, with tears in her eyes. It was the year after Hannah had graduated from his seventh grade class and he stopped and asked, "Hannah, are you all right?"

"No, but Mr. Wood I know you are busy, and I am not even in your class anymore, so I don't want to bug you with my little problems."

"Hey, just because I don't get to see you in my class everyday, doesn't mean I won't stick my nose in your business. What's up kid?"

"It's okay. I don't want to bother you." There was a moment of silence as Mr. Wood pondered if what Hannah wanted was for him to leave her alone and was she just to polite to say so, or did she want his help and was to shy to ask.

Mr. Wood responded, "Hannah, I don't want to pry if you don't need me to, but if you need me to...Look, if I see you hanging out after school we will chat, so if you don't

want my excellent listening skills working for you, you'd better split out the back door. Alright?"

"Alright." Hannah responded, *smiling*.

The end-of-the-day bell brought Hannah to Mr. Wood's class. Mr. Wood was tidying the room and was surprised to see Hannah at the door. "Do you want to take a few minutes to catch up?" he asked.

"If you have time," Hannah replied.

Mr. Wood locked up his classroom and walked with Hannah to the library, where they could talk in public-privacy. Hannah went on to share her a story about troubles with friends and how she wanted to break away from a group with whom she had grown apart. Mr. Wood was pleased Hannah trusted him to help solve her problem. He was also delighted to be connecting with a former student.

That discussion cemented deep feelings of trust for Hannah in Mr. Wood. In some part of him he considered Hannah to be like a daughter, not just because of that one conversation, but because they had continued a connection after the end of the institutional relationship of student and classroom teacher.

So it was a great delight for Mr. Wood to watch Hannah walk into a colleague's classroom at the end of that fall day. He followed her expecting a smile. She was looking at a picture of Karen's new baby.

"Hey, Hannah." Mr. Wood called.

"Oh, hi, Mr. Wood," Hannah replied turning back to the picture. Mr. Wood stood awkwardly for a moment then left the classroom.

Moments later Hannah found Mr. Wood leaving the office with a pile of papers and gave him a bone-crushing hug. "How are you kiddo?"

"Great. And you?"

Unearthing Meaning

The reader may recognise the above narrative as a metonymy for teacher vulnerability. There is vulnerability in Mr. Wood's reaction to Hannah, a hidden vulnerability. Something Mr. Wood seems to know, as he *stood awkwardly for a moment then left the classroom*, but something that was unsaid, or unrecognised, but evocative. Jardine (1998) writes "the task of interpretation is to bring out this evocative given in all its tangled ambiguity, to follow its evocations and the entrails of sense and significance that are wound up with it" (p. 40).

It is the vulnerability the teacher, the mentor, the one with the answers, the one trusted to have a level of self-understanding faces when he becomes connected to his students. Writing about teacher vulnerability is difficult. The nature of the pedagogic relation is conversation; it is about connecting deeply and personally with students; and, it is about making-meaning in the classroom, meaning out of curriculum, but also meaning out of living. Students and teachers make life-meaning by *being-together*. It is logical that through creating relationships with students, teachers begin to be-with students. Teachers make the classroom, the school, a place of teaching, but also a place of living, where they share themselves and reach deeper into the depths of their own self-understanding. It isn't possible to have a deep connection, without being-affected. The teacher has much at stake when he is in conversation with a student, namely deep and personal feelings.

The nature of being-together, involves a connection, one that affects the very essence of the teacher's being. The teacher may begin to feel as if their students are their own children (Guggenheim, 2004), and that connection is real and deep. It seems this connection is desirable for parents as one recently said, "I want a teacher who will connect with my child, who will give her a hug when things seem difficult." Giving a hug, the physical connection of two people being-together is a natural outcome of any meaning and important pedagogic relation. Humans are social creatures, who crave interaction, and touch, and children need physical contact as much as adults need to give it.

The most vivid memory I have is when my daughter Maya barely minutes old and seemingly fighting for her life, grasped my finger and stopped crying as I sang to her. Nearly a decade later I can feel her hand on my skin, imprinted on my emotional and physical memory. It is moments of touch we remember; our first kiss from a high school crush or a hug from our father. Touch and the pedagogical relationship are natural, but touch and teaching carry a more controversial and vulnerable undertone. Hatton (2003) writes about a beginning primary teacher who "spontaneously kissed a child on the head and promptly reported herself to the principal in order to retain 'safe' status" (p. 1). There is a notion that connection and touch, though pedagogically appropriate have no place in the pedagogic relation. There is a dichotomy of discourse, where parents, students, administrators, politicians, and teachers want a close and meaningful relationship between teachers and students, but feel that this relationship must be monitored, to ensure that teachers "retain 'safe' status."

The teacher student-relationship has a significant impact in teacher-living, and student-living. We acknowledge that the positive teacher-student relationship is important and healthy, why is it so difficult for the teacher to write about?

Why did “*Mr. Wood (lock) up his classroom and (lead) Hannah to the library, where they could talk in public-privacy?*” Why is there a need for “public-privacy?” Hannah was “*like a daughter*” to Mr. Wood, yet he felt, for some reason that he could not talk to Hannah in the privacy of his classroom, and instead went to the library, where their conversation could not be overheard, but could be witnessed. In Mr. Wood’s first teaching practicum he connected with a young girl who had been molested by her uncle four year previous. The counselling-staff at the school was ecstatic, because this young girl had demonstrated a great distrust of males since her abuse, and seemed, finally to be able to show a measure of trust towards Mr. Wood.

Mr. Wood did not know about the girl’s abusive past until his mentor-teacher suggested that he “should never be alone in a room with her. She has been molested, and at another school she accused a teacher of touching her,” she warned. “Don’t set yourself up for that.” A barricade went up in the relationship for Mr. Wood, and he distanced himself from that little girl. Mr. Wood was vulnerable being seen as a sexual predator and so he distanced himself from a student who needed him.

That same fear, quiet and powerful, crept into his visit with Hannah. Mr. Wood had known her and her family for over a year. He would trust Hannah to look after his own children, but, in that moment, when Hannah was vulnerable, Mr. Wood felt connecting with his students was a burden, a weight of fear that some person, at some

time, may make a false accusation about his intentions. His responsibility, and personal need to connect with an Other, was freighted with the vulnerability he feared.

A female associate recently told a story about her primary class. She had her students sitting in a circle, and as always two students, two boys in this instance, rushed to sit by her side. There were a few parents in the room helping, and she noticed that she had wrapped her arms around the two boys and her hands rested on the sides of their bottoms. She was horrified that the parents in the room had seen her hands and perceived them misplaced and inappropriate. She immediately set about seeking a little extra space from the boys. The teacher faces vulnerability in a pedagogic relationship. When teachers and students are in a pedagogic relationship, where the welfare and being of the student are the catalyst to all behaviour, touch is important. Why then are teachers so vulnerable?

Smith (1991b) writes that the “chief danger in the postmodern condition” is “namely the increasing isolation of persons within the cages of their own subjectivities without any historical, philosophical or linguistic means for establishing deep and meaningful connection to others” (p. 32). In our society, there is a lack of faith in public institutions, education, health, the justice-system or government. This absence of faith leads members of this society to question and challenge these institutions and suspect those who work in them. Teachers are vulnerable to this lack of faith and suspicion, especially in the realm of sexual conduct. Parents, teachers and media are hypersensitive about keeping children from harm, but pedagogically that fear may be damaging.

The news media follows stories of teachers who have broken the law and their professional code of conduct by having sexual relations with a student. The *Calgary Herald Online* (June, 30, 2005) covered no less than five stories/articles about teacher

abuse of students. Three articles reported an Alberta teacher was charged with sexual assault of a student, and two articles about an Ontario teacher who was also charged with sexual assault. The public discourse of “relationship” between teacher and students is framed by concerns about sexual impropriety. There is a danger of misconception using words such as *relationship* and *intimacy* when inquiring into teachers and students. These words seem to be socially charged, they seem to reinforce the potential for impropriety possible within the teacher-student relationship. I recognise that teachers have abused students and am certainly not arguing that this is not so, but this inquiry must be allowed to draw the distinction between impropriety and pedagogy, that intimacy and relationship in the pedagogical context are appropriate and important.

These news stories are part of the public discourse about teaching and that discourse has made teachers vulnerable within relating with students. Public discourse on teacher-student *intimacy* provides a picture that is not pedagogic (*thoughtful concern for children*), but instead reveals our fear of predation. The reader may regard my choice of the word *intimacy* and perceive it as sexual in nature, but the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (2001) defines intimacy as close familiarity or friendship; closeness (p. 738). In adult-child relations’ intimacy intimates sexual contact, but pedagogically *intimacy* is a close mentoring connection that enhances being-a-teacher and being-a-student. It is a non-sexual word in this context.

So when Hannah, a former female student asked Mr. Wood for help, he did not hesitate to listen, but he chose the Place of conversation, based on his fear of some unseen person, or ideology, lurking in the background, looking quietly over his shoulder. Mr. Wood liked Hannah, he cared about her, and perhaps his feeling of care and concern,

their personal connection, was part of the reason the fear could creep into the conversation. Is it possible that opening oneself to caring leaves one vulnerable? Is this not true of a relationship?

What is the nature of vulnerability in teaching?

Pedagogic teachers are searching for connections with their students, seeking out real and meaningful relationships. This connection or “social capital” (Print & Coleman, 2003, p. 123) allows for a sense of “trust” (p. 125) and “social...stability and cooperation” (p. 125). This deep and personal connection between the teacher and student is sought out and important in the pedagogic relation. Mr. Wood would agree with the assessment of teaching made by a male staff member in the staffroom recently; “it’s not the pay, or the summer vacation, it is the kids. I love to be with the kids.” It is the pedagogic connection that propels teachers forward in their lived-teaching. The responsibility of curriculum delivery, the stress of “getting through the curriculum,” pales in comparison to knowing one of the teacher’s students goes home to hunger, or abuse, or loneliness. Teachers connect deeply; they open themselves to their students. This is the teacher’s role pedagogically. But the very notion of being “open” means one is “vulnerable.”

A Concise Etymological Dictionary explains that the roots of *vulnerable* evolved from the notion of harm or hurt. The etymology of the word comes from the Latin “uulnerabilis, liable to injury” which has the stem “uulnus, a wound” which is “allied to uellere, to pluck, or tear” (Skeat, 1980, p. 596). The teacher will feel open to wounding simply by *being* in a pedagogic conversation with students. To have a deep and

meaningful relationship - with another adult or a child - the Other begins to know us, and allowing an Other to know us involves a measure of trust, and vulnerability. So close is the Other to us that Heidegger (1962) states, "Being-alone is Being-with" (p. 156) where what we are at our very core is how we are with. To be with is deeply important to our own understanding of self, and this "knowing oneself [Sichkennen] is grounded in Being-with" (p. 161). Teachers have a real need to Be-with the student, but this Being-with opens the teacher, makes one vulnerable, or open to deeper self-understanding or hurt.

The teacher-student conversation is where student and teacher are open to grow and converse together about "the thinking life, the developing identity, the moral personality, the emotional spirit, the educational learning, and the sociopsychological maturing of the young" (van Manen, 1994, p. 141). This ideal relationship creates profound feelings of connections and it inevitably comes to an end each June. The school year begins with a feeling of loneliness for the teacher, loneliness in a place that just two months prior was filled with meaning and deep connections. But, over the course of the new school year those connections grow again until they, too, are meaningful and important to the students and the teacher. But the nature of school is that the year comes to an end and the teacher must say good-bye and wish students well as they move on. The depth of the pain may signify a pedagogic teacher, because it signifies a loss of connection.

In the feature film *The First Year* (2004) Maurice Kabb, a kindergarten teacher faces his first last-day. He says goodbye to his students, and is overcome with the familiar emotion that teachers face on the last day of school. He worries about his students' future, wonders what they will do without him. He portrays feelings of loss and

hurt. He appears lonely and vulnerable. He says, “I feel the pain of my students. I feel hope. Please don’t let me forget this kind of feeling.” The pedagogic teacher who connects will feel loss, or disconnect when the school year is over. Maurice hopes he has the feeling every June, which would signify a deep connection with his students, a vulnerability that is the foundation of the pedagogic interaction

“Oh hi, Mr. Wood,” Hannah replied then turned back to the picture. Mr. Wood stood awkwardly for a moment, and then left the classroom. Why did Mr. Wood leave the classroom? In that moment, when Hannah turned away from him, that “openness” left him vulnerable and wounded. It was in that moment of awkwardness that Mr. Wood saw into himself, and realised he felt childlike, yearning for attention. He felt humiliation that his excitement to see Hannah was seemingly, not returned, and he felt surprised by the strength of those feelings which lead to a greater sense of vulnerability and shame. He found himself questioning his reaction. “Am I jealous she is finishing another conversation, before engaging with me?” he asked himself. “Why do I need to feel important to a former student? What does a teacher ‘need’ from a student? Is it acceptable for a male teacher to become connected to a female student? Is there something wrong with a teacher who would be hurt by a student’s not stopping to say hello, or turning away?”

What is expected of a teacher, vulnerability?

If deep and meaningful relationships are pedagogic in nature and these relationships leave the teacher vulnerable, should then a **great** teacher feel vulnerability in their conversations with students? Good, helpful and mentoring teachers create deep

and meaningful relationships with their students. This connection, this relationship, this conversation that takes place between the teacher and student is real and it has a real affect, one that enriches being, through *being-together*.

But there are consequences to connecting in a relationship, such as separation at the end of the year, or fighting the notion of teacher-as-predator. Gadamer (2004) states that the priority of the question (in this case what is the nature of the teacher-student relationship and what is the nature of vulnerability in teaching) is to gain certain understanding about or of the topic of the question (p. 364). The pedagogic relationship signifies a being-together. This relationship is real and necessary for the student and for the teacher. One answer to the question what is the nature of the teacher-student conversation is that vulnerability is present. One answer to the question, what is the nature of vulnerability in teaching, is that vulnerability may signify relationship.

Conversation 14: Living in the research

I have had an opportunity to live with my research the last months. I have lived the questions about my role in my student's lives, their role in mine, but mostly I have kept my mind open to the question what does Mr. Wood need from his students? That question is difficult to ask, never mind answer, "What does he need?" I have a notion that summers off and a good wage are all I should ask from my profession, isn't that enough? Teachers are supposed to be selfless, not need anything from their students. But, I have listened to colleagues talking about their need for their students to like them, respect them, enjoy their classes.

I have become hyper-aware of my personal reactions to my relationships with male and female students. I seem to have a different relationship with males and females. I am shocked to write I think my relationship with females seems to be deeper. I have been battling with the idea that if I have a better relationship with my female students, perhaps there is something perverse about my needs as a teacher. Yet I wouldn't call it better, only different. I have no desire to hurt my female students, to touch them in any inappropriate way, in fact the only reason I am afraid to look at this issue is because I am fearful someone else will read something sinister into it. I am not afraid of what I may find within myself.

Tracy is a former student with whom I grew into pedagogic relationship. I feel attached to her. Her parents mentioned at one time that we just seemed to "connect." As I dwell within this inquiry Tracy has begun to email me, though she attends the same school where I teach, just to fill me in on her life and reconnect I guess. I look at her emails to signify that life for her is a little shaky and she needs to re-connect in order to find some support. Tracy does this every once in a while. The trouble is I began to think, "Why do I rarely receive emails from the boys I teach, yet I receive them from my female students?" In all honesty I became uncomfortable with Tracy's email and rather than write a long response of encouragement, I wrote a quick note. She was checking for openness, and I closed the door. I began thinking, why was I so close to Tracy? Was it because of her gender?

Unearthing Meaning

Teachers connect with different students in different ways. The teacher-student conversation is a living reality. Each of the conversants is a being with a history,

prejudices and expectations, which create real and unique relationships. In the above narrative Mr. Wood questions his unique relationship with *Tracy* wondering if his connection to her is deeper because she is female. He was also questioning his reaction to Hannah through the frame of gender. The question becomes: are teacher-student conversations gendered?

The question of gender differences and teaching is best saved for its own inquiry. But a subtle unearthing is appropriate in the context of Mr. Wood's vulnerability. It is too easy, perhaps, to write that Mr. Wood grew through his early childhood with a single mother and older sister and perhaps, logically, this is the reason for his connection to female students. But, this explanation seems too psychological, too easy. All of Mr. Wood's best friends growing up were boys and with them, and his granddad, he was inseparable. Mr. Wood has a son and daughter and is not aware of favouring his daughter over his son; if anything he could be accused of coddling his young son. Besides, Gadamer (2004) writes that in interpreting a *hermeneutic conversation* one is not interested in why the writer arrived at his stance, but rather must "understand the text itself" (p. 388). Consequently what is in question? What can be understood from the text? Could it be possible that Mr. Wood does connect deeper with the girls he teaches? Let's say for a moment he does. Why is this so and how would that "truth" be perceived by a society?

Mr. Wood believes that at the core of his teaching, the place where he dwells, he must create relationships with his students that are meaningful, deep and trusting. He believes in facilitating the creation of the pedagogic relationship. Is it possible that this

emotional and meaningful relationship is more generally suited for girls? Perhaps this model of the ideal pedagogic relationship is better suited for girls than boys.

Does that mean that boys are not emotional creatures, that the notion of the pedagogic relationship is female-centric? This tendril of questioning leads to, "are boys emotional?" William Pollock (2005) has committed his life to researching the emotion of boys. His research--based on thousands of interviews with at-risk, tough, emotionally closed boys--shows that boys are equally emotional as girls. It is just that they have been indoctrinated into what Pollock calls the "boy's code" which is an underlying belief system that states anything girl-like (or likening boys to homosexuality) is taboo. Pollock would say that boys are trapped in this restrictive and harmful emotional prison, and that parents and teachers, that all pedagogues should be "connecting" with boys to understand and help them break free of the code.

Perhaps the ideal pedagogic relationship about which I have been writing is not immediately available to both boys and girls, and Mr. Wood needs to focus more on teaching boys (and teachers and girls and parents) how to engage in the pedagogic conversation. Mr. Wood and Dillon created an emotional relationship that hinged on communication. When Dillon left the school at the end of the next year, he waited for Mr. Wood and gave him a tearful hug. Perhaps Mr. Wood and Dillon stumbled into a pedagogic relationship that was meaningful to them both. Perhaps universities must dedicate more time and resources teaching future educators the importance of self-understanding, the pedagogic relationship and the importance of connecting.

Conversation 15: An excerpt from Mr. Wood's journal

Since the inquiry began I have been paying close attention to my connections with boys. I have made a conscious effort to talk about and model emotion for them. One of the easiest things I did was to tell the class how I was feeling when I was frustrated with their commitment or work habits, or to tell them how important they had become in my life. I also talked to the boys about being open with their emotions and shared my own emotions with my students.

*We had a great discussion after reading Harper Lee's **To Kill a Mockingbird** about the use of the word **girl** as a put down. The boys thought it was interesting that Scout would insult Jem by calling him a "girl." They thought it ironic and a little disturbing that Scout, a girl, would use her own gender as an insult. Several girls in the class squirmed as we talked about the term **girlie-girl** and its use as a put down. Our discussion led to a conversation about pressures on boys to be boy-like, masculine. Several male students shared their worries about appearing girl-like. This conversation led to an unearthing of emotions for the boys in the class. They commented that it wasn't fair boys couldn't show emotion, and if they did they would be called "babies" or "girls," or that being called a girl could never be a compliment, even though it should be.*

In years past, as my students leave the classroom for summer vacation, I would tease them by saying they all had to give me one last hug for the year, right then and there. The boys always tended to pretend to sneak by, but inevitably give me a hug. This year, every boy initiated a hug.

What is the nature of the teacher-society conversation?

If Mr. Wood connects more deeply with his female students, simply because they are more available to the connection within the pedagogic relationship, why does he feel vulnerable, simply *because...someone else will read something sinister into it?* This perpetual gaze of judgement that teachers feel, this vulnerability, comes from somewhere. Barlow and Robertson (1994) write, “there is a collective sense that things are not right at school” (p. 1). This collective sense, this post-modern deconstruction of all that is flawed is directed towards the teachers “protected by hermetically sealed contracts-for-life, enjoying short workdays and long vacations, answerable to no one” (p. 10). The notion that teachers have it easy is difficult to counter. Teachers feel that their profession is hard work, stressful, draining, and an intellectual and emotional challenge. The public recognition of teachers is perceptively negative. Education has been “downsized” through “site-based management” to ensure “productive” and value-based teaching, where teachers and students “reach objectives.” The very nature of the public discourse on education revolves around parent choice, charter schools, provincial achievement tests, and addressing the “problems facing Canadian education” (Hepburn, 2001, p. 1), as if the pedagogic relationship has no value. When education is discussed in the public and political realm, we hear phrases like “school reform” and “educational program;” there is little or no public discussion of the pedagogic relation.

The public discourse tells teachers to “keep their feelings out” of their work, lest they become biased in “evaluating” students. Pedagogues are told they are part of raising our nation’s “greatest resource,” yet feel that children are not a commodity to be mined, but people to be respected and nurtured. When Maurice Rabb, the first year teacher in the

documentary film *First Year* (2004) states he hopes he never forgets the sadness he feels on the last day of school, there is a notion that he fears he might, that the vulnerability is too much to bear over a 30 year career.

Conversation 16: Mike the mechanic

"So you must enjoy the summers off?" Mike, the mechanic, says over the country music playing on the shuttle bus stereo.

"Of course. It is a great time to spend with my kids," Mr. Wood replied.

The air conditioning cooled the van as Mike, the shop mechanic gave Mr. Wood a ride back home. His car was being serviced for the family summer vacation to the cabin, and the garage would need to keep it for a day or two. Though it was only 8:30 in the morning, the summer sun blistered through the glass of the window, and both men were happy for the cooling of the fan.

"I went in to be a teacher. I'm just nine courses short of my history degree," Mike, the mechanic, said.

"Hmm," Mr. Wood responded, wondering where this was going.

"I got into mechanics to pay my way through university, and when you look at what teacher's make, it wasn't worth paying for an extra semester or two of classes to get the degree." Mike, the mechanic, was sweating.

"Teaching is a great job." Mr. Wood didn't know what else to say.

"We moved here from Saskatchewan. I think school there is a little more serious. They give kids stickers and stuff for reading books." The air conditioning seemed to be

failing. "My little girl read 500 books this year. Not bad for grade one, I'll say." Mike said.

"Wow, 500 books." Mr. Wood wanted to walk home.

"In her class you have kids who read 500 books, and then others who read, like, ten books all year. There is a problem with that." Mike was on a roll.

"Hmm." Mr. Wood sank into his seat.

"Some kids have a rough home life, so calling parents won't do any good. These kids just need some motivation. They could read five hundred books, too. These kids would be motivated in Saskatchewan."

Unearthing meaning

There is a certain understanding that Mike, the mechanic, professes about teaching. But what is understanding? Gadamer (2004) defines it as "the original form of the realization of Dasein, which is being-in-the-world" (p. 259), or understanding is contextual to one's Being. "All (...) understanding is ultimately self-understanding" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 260). Our experience, and the way in which we perceive the world, will influence the way in which we perceive the world. Mike sees the world from the eyes of a "not quite teacher," who went to grade school and university, and whose children go to school. He is familiar with the school, and understands it as a place of learning. He wants students to have a measure of success, and professes that if they don't it is a matter of "motivation." Why does this narrative reflect a notion of teacher vulnerability? Perhaps Mike's notions are a little naïve, but his ideas are constructive and insightful.

Mr. Wood reacts as if this critique of schooling is a critique of his teaching. There is a notion in teaching that if a student does not “manage success,” the teacher was negligent in his duties. Mr. Wood sank deeper “*into his seat*” trying to escape the critical eye. What would he be hiding from? Mr. Wood would expect nothing less from himself, to ensure each and every student succeeds. Why would Mr. Wood wilt under the glare of Mike’s seemingly reasonable critique of teachers? Mike is suggesting that motivation is a factor in success. Could it be Mr. Wood isn’t sure how to motivate? Could it be that Mike’s comment and Mr. Wood’s feeling of vulnerability are connected to how he felt with Dillon and Eryn? Mr. Wood does do a great job of motivating those students who are keen to read 500 books, but is puzzled how to motivate students who are struggling. Do teachers know how to motivate beyond “you’d better study” (Li in van Manen, 2002, p. 93)?

If the reaction of self to others is, as Heidegger and Gadamer say, a reaction to Self, what is Mr. Wood hiding? Perhaps Mike is correct. Perhaps it is a motivation issue and Mr. Wood “the professional” is too proud to garner insight from Mike. Perhaps what Mike is suggesting is the pursuit of conversation between teacher and student, and that when students are “falling through the cracks” or are “not motivated” teachers must search to unearth an understanding of the reasons for such, with each student.

Teachers must work to engage their students in conversation about meaningful and relevant topics, such as success, and motivation. When Mr. Wood finally engaged Dillon, a bullying student falling through the cracks, he found the label could be erased, that underneath Dillon was hurting and waiting for someone to listen. Perhaps Mike is suggesting that conversation, and pedagogy, are sometimes missing in the teacher-student

interaction. What is at stake if the teacher does not “fall into conversation” with his students?

The nature of vulnerability in teaching seems to dwell in two places. The first is where a “pedagogic” teacher creates a relationship; building trust and creating relationship and conversation that leads to an openness to other, where “there is a danger of being exposed- to oneself and...to others” (Jersild, 1955, p. 35). This journey may bring about vulnerability, logical feelings of loss at the end of the year, but a deep pedagogic connection throughout.

The second place vulnerability dwells within the teacher is from the gaze teachers feel directed their way from society. This gaze may be, as Mike’s was, an opportunity for the teacher to reflect upon his own practice to ask hermeneutically “what is the nature of this vulnerability?”

Concluding thoughts

As I slowly gathered something of this place, it became clear that I was also 'gathering myself.' And as I gathered something of the compositions of this place, I, too, had to become composed in and by such a gathering... I did not simply remember this place. Of necessity, I remembered, too, something of what has become of me. (Jardine, 2000, p. 136)

When one engages in a hermeneutic inquiry, one changes, evolves within the intense reflection and questioning that the inquiry demands. Throughout the last year of my inquiry I have found myself reflecting intensely while walking home from work, driving to the grocery store or falling asleep at night. The conversation in which I am engaged with my surroundings, interactions, children, spouse, students and my being, has affected me so that I now question my understanding of my being within those relationships. I question what I hold as tradition, and truth. My Being-a-father has changed with the question emerging from this inquiry "What is nature of the teacher-student relationship?" How do I view childhood, my own children, and my students? What is the nature of power in a pedagogical relationship? Which leads to the questions "What do children deserve?" or even more specifically and respectfully, "What do people, who are living in childhood, deserve?"

As a parent and teacher, *in loco parentis*, I have begun to question my beliefs about education and parenting that seemed to have invaded my perceptions and prejudices like a kind of cultural, or traditional potion. There are aspects of my practice or art of teaching that I have never questioned, never evolved. The hermeneutic inquiry certainly involves change of practice, or change of Being. But the nature of the

hermeneutic inquiry is starting from where one lives, with one's historical consciousness, or prejudices, that "the most basic of all hermeneutic preconditions (is) one's own understanding" (Gadamer 2004, p. 294). I have grown to understand the *conversation* and its place in *pedagogy*. The nature of the conversation is respectful, a cycle of listening and thinking and speaking. Gadamer (2004) quotes Heidegger who writes about hermeneutic inquiry,

It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing, and we genuinely grasp this possibility only when we have understood that our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. (p. 266)

Heidegger is explaining that a hermeneutic inquiry cannot be separate from the person, or Being, of the inquirer. I have begun to understand that true conversation is not a strategy, but a perception, a prejudice, a perspective, a very stance within Being-with. This stance must be the teacher's stance. What is at stake if it is not? Student success? Or is it deeper? Is what is at stake the very Being of the teacher and the student, the dwelling within their place? The teacher and student are connected within the pedagogic relation, and that connection holds meaning for both. With this understanding comes a responsibility to my children, my students, and my Self.

There is another understanding that has emerged from this thesis. The struggle in completing a thesis is great for a working teacher. The time, energy, vigour and

commitment become a great sacrifice and require discipline. In the beginning the lure of completing a Master in Education degree provides some motivation. But this hermeneutic inquiry has lead to much more than I could ever imagine. I have come to understand that the journey is of far more worth than the destination. I have begun to question my very notion of relationship, my very notion of power within pedagogy. I have begun to “view the world hermeneutically,” where I rarely let struggle overcome me, but instead begin to question its nature. Completing the thesis has value, but it pales when compared to living the research.

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